

Experiential Marketing as a Driver of Customer Loyalty in the Nigerian Fast-Moving Consumer Goods Industry.

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Abstract

This study examines experiential marketing as a driver of customer loyalty in the Nigerian fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry, with particular attention to sense experience and feel experience. Grounded in the stimulus-organism-response theory, the study argues that customer loyalty is shaped not only by functional product attributes but also by the sensory and emotional meanings consumers attach to brands. A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was adopted, and data were collected from 255 traders in Alaba International Market and Idumota Market, Lagos State. The data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The findings show that both sense experience and feel experience have positive and significant effects on customer loyalty. However, feel experience has a substantially stronger effect, indicating that emotional satisfaction, attachment, and positive feelings are more influential in sustaining loyalty than sensory cues alone. Sense experience remains relevant, particularly through packaging, colour, taste, smell, and product presentation, but its role is largely complementary. The study contributes to experiential marketing literature by showing that emotional experience is the dominant loyalty mechanism in Nigeria's FMCG market. It recommends that traders and brand managers combine sensory appeal with stronger emotional engagement to improve repeat patronage and customer retention.

Keywords: *Experiential Marketing; Sense Experience; Feel Experience; Customer Loyalty.*

1. Introduction

The digital era has reshaped the dynamics of global consumer behaviour by intensifying the desire to establish meaningful and engaging brand experiences, dropping traditional advertising, and prioritizing emotional and sensorial interests. As the technology further shapes the manner in which consumers process information and make decisions, the strategic value of experiential marketing has also been achieved in the firms as one of the means of being recalled through memorable customer experiences that solidify consumer ties. This shift is an outcome of an overall shift in consumption habits, where consumers are creating increasingly custom, immersive, and value-added experiences, which influence perception and loyalty in fast-changing markets (Faridi et al., 2025).

Experiential marketing has become a concern in the digital dimension because a consumer is in a position to interact visually and in an action-oriented manner with the brand and to touch the brand more innovatively using digital tools that combine the physical and computer-mediated snapshots. Companies in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan have embraced experiential-oriented strategies to render their interactions more entertaining to mirror the contemporary digital lives that consumers live. Consumers demand closer consumer involvement and closer brand equity, including more significant consumer involvement and more demanding brand separation (Iwegbue & Nelly, 2024). These innovations demonstrate that digitalization can enhance the ability of brands to create an emotional and sensorial experience that can resonate with consumers at different levels and that experiential marketing is a vital practice in contemporary market contexts (Icha et al., 2025).

Experience marketing works particularly well in consumer goods sectors where the rivalry is intense and products are identical; thus, firms are left with no option but to distinguish their products using experiences as opposed to relying on the solely practical qualification. Brand exposure in the digital world has led to consumers evaluating brands based on price and quality as well as the compatibility of the brand experience with their life and emotions. This development has prompted consumer goods firms towards the incorporation of experiential factors that affect decision-making and brand equity, particularly in fast-moving product segments where the frequency of purchase behavior is intense and is driven by familiarity and routine (Meeprom & Kokkhangplu, 2025).

Consumer judgment is shaped by sense experience in a way in which senses are appealed to by product packaging, color, taste, smell, and texture that bolster strong first impressions towards purchase. Although these senses are not digitalized, they are crucial to the digital world, as they strengthen expectations and product remembrance initially before a consumer comes into contact with the tangible product. Sensory experience work as an effective tool to develop attraction and satisfaction but might not be persuasive enough alone in maintaining long-term loyalty, which many times may demand alternative reinforcement that engages consumers more personally with the brand (Icha et al., 2025).

The focus of the feel experience is on emotions that consumers grow throughout their consumer engagements with a brand, such as excitement, satisfaction, trust, or nostalgia, which are playing a more significant role in shaping consumer behavior in the current experience-based markets. Emotional involvement has become a key factor in determining consumer preference in most African nations, such as Nigeria, where consumers react intensively to brand stories, brand identity, and value communication. Through effective evocation of positive emotions, when the brands capture a deeper attachment and customer loyalty that cannot be overcome by other competitive options, emotional experience is thus a key component of experiential marketing strategies (Zohra & Boukerch, 2025).

Customer loyalty is a long-term view that a customer displays by making repeat purchases and having positive attitudes toward a brand due to the cumulative quality of interaction with a brand. Experience and value in the marketplace have become very important in terms of loyalty since the digital presence has broadened consumer decision-making and enhanced brand switching. Companies that deliver high-quality sensorial and emotional experiences would be in a better position to gain loyalty since they develop trust, satisfaction, and attachment stronger than traditional marketing (Vrtana & Krizanova, 2023). However, in the digital-driven market environment where experiential marketing is increasingly becoming more and more important, most Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) brands in Nigeria are still having a challenge with formulating effective sensory and emotional experiences that can determine a lifetime customer loyalty.

FMCG products are highly homogeneous, easily replaceable, and have frequent purchases, but brands typically struggle to differentiate their product offerings with meaningful experiences that consumers cannot overlook when engaging with the product or its attributes. Meanwhile, sensory messages like

packaging, coloring, and texture are not consistently used across brands, and emotional appeals are weak because not enough stories are being told, consumer connections with the brands are poor, and value-based communication is minimal. These issues have led to high levels of brand switching, low retention, and volatile loyalty trends within the Nigerian FMCG sector, and hence the need to comprehend how sense and feel experiences actually impact loyalty in consumers (Usman et al., 2025).

Previous studies indicate that there has been a paucity in the number of studies that have empirically focused on the relationship between sense and feel experiences and the extent to which loyalty in consumer markets that are frequently purchased is cognizant. Experience marketing study is established in developed countries such as United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan; however, parallel study in emergent markets remains insufficient, and it poses contextual and empirical gaps (Iwegbue & Nelly, 2024). There is also little discussion on the interaction of digital era implications and sensory and emotional responses that determine the end result of loyalty. This study thus fills these gaps. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the effect of experiential marketing on customer loyalty, with a focus of how sense and feel experience influence customer loyalty.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Experiential Marketing

Urdea and Constantin (2021) defined experiential marketing as an anthropocentric marketing strategy that involves the provision of interactive experiences that prepare customers with encounters that stimulate cognitive, emotional, and sensory senses, unlike conventional approaches to marketing. This type of marketing transitions beyond product features and places consumers in the context of valuable brand experiences that develop perception and shape behavior. Equally, Meeprom and Kokkhangplu (2025) also affirm that experiential marketing allows brands to engage with the most competitive markets by being attentive to the unforgettable moments that create personal relevance and emotional connections. Theocharis and Tsekouropoulos (2025) argue that experiential tactics assisted FMCG companies to strengthen the brand value, improve customer engagement, and create deeper behavioral intentions by engaging in continuous exposure to personalized experiences. Likewise, Icha et al. (2025) emphasize that experiential marketing strengthens consumer-brand relationships through the integration of emotional, sensory, and symbolic signals in influencing the decision-making process of the consumer.

Although there are numerous dimensions that the experiential marketing theory has laid out, such as sense, feel, think, act, and relate experiences (Schmitt, 1999), in this study, the emphasis will be laid on sense and feel experiences due to the nature of the FMCG market under investigation. Informal and traditional markets also rely more on instant sensory stimulation and emotional experience between traders and customers to influence consumer decision-making, rather than on cognition of a problem to be solved or even social identification. The significance of sense and feel experience as the most important dimensions in low-involvement product categories of high purchase frequency was also emphasized in previous studies (Urdea & Constantin, 2021; Yamini & Nisha, 2024). This study thus excludes think, act, and relate experiences in a bid to maintain contextual and analytical attention.

2.2. Dimensions of Experiential Marketing

2.2.1. Sense Experience

Sense experience involves the process of utilizing the sense stimuli to generate consumer perceptions and responses. According to Yamini and Nisha (2024), sight, smell, taste, sound, and touch are important in product information processing and preliminary attitude formation regarding the quality of a product brand. These sensory signals are used to attract attention to FMCG brands in a short period, a feature critical in those categories where consumers make fast purchasing decisions. This opinion is supported by Murwani et al. (2023), who clarify that sensory impressions are crucial to initiate the first-time product

trial and preference formation, particularly in the retail settings where there is a visual congestion of competing products. Consequently, sense experience has a facilitative role in appealing to and capturing consumers at the pre-choice point. Additionally, according to Skolastika et al. (2025), a consumer with a memorable product might be more likely to remember brands when there is a repetition of the purchase. Nevertheless, sensory experiences can generate the fleeting excitement, which needs to be further supported by inner emotional relations in order to build loyalty.

2.2.2. Feel Experience

Feel experience is the emotional reactions that consumers experience when interacting with a product or brand. He et al. (2022) state that emotions like joy, excitement, comfort, and satisfaction are strong determinants of consumer attitudes since they affect the way people internalize and appraise brand encounters. The emotional experiences bring about personal meaning and lead to increased attachment to brands, which makes consumers more willing to be devoted in the long run. According to Awasti et al. (2024), emotional engagement is vital in rapidly moving consumer markets because products that are regularly consumed are more likely to create repeat emotional dynamics that inform buying behavioral trends. These affective connections enable the consumers to differentiate brands at levels other than functionality. In addition to that, Thamilselvan and Rakeshyanand (2024) argue that felt experience is a powerful force contributing to customer loyalty since emotional attachments to a brand are more robust and persistent than cognitive considerations alone. Emotional attachment to a brand causes consumer to be more willing to overlook small inconveniences, and it also makes them depict greater repurchase (Zohra & Boukerch, 2025)

2.3. Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is defined as the preference that consumers have for a brand, which is expressed in terms of purchasing a brand repeatedly, having positive attitudes, and weak switching. As Damaschi et al. (2025) put it, loyalty is behavioral, as it is manifested on the basis of purchasing patterns, and attitudinal, which embodies the idea of emotional connection and long-term dedication. FMCG companies cannot afford to ignore loyalty since repeat buying behavior forms the bulk of a stable market share in competitive segments. Since loyal customers tend to ignore small fabric problems, refer their friends to the brand, and show a higher price sensitivity, supporting the competitive edge of the firm (Mulima, 2025). Further to this, Theocharis and Tsekouropoulos (2025) note that rewards such as loyalty are formed not only based on the performance of the product but also on the value that the customer returns to the experience of interacting with a brand. Favorable emotional and sensorial experiences reinforce the satisfaction and reaffirm the decision to stick on the part of the consumers (Urdea & Constantin, 2021).

2.4. Hypotheses Development

2.4.1. Sense Experience and Customer Loyalty

Experience of senses is one of the aspects of experiential marketing and refers to the intentional appeal to the senses of the consumers such as sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch, during the process of brand interaction. Sensory inputs such as packaging design, color, texture, taste, and aroma have a potent impact on a consumer in the instantaneous assessment of the product during the moment of purchase in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry (Yamini and Nisha, 2024; Murwani et al., 2023). Urdea and Constantin (2021) assert that sensory stimulation enhances consumer memory and attention to the brand by creating distinctive experiential stimuli in addition to the functional attributes. Within the competition settings of FMCG markets, the repeat sensory components facilitate quick brand recognition and strengthen good associations during repeated purchase cases and, consequently, facilitate preference formation (Skolastika et al., 2025). Yamini and Nisha (2024) also state that sensory marketing improves consumer satisfaction as one of the antecedents of repeat purchase behavior and loyalty.

Murwani et al. (2023) demonstrate that the sensory properties of products heavily influence consumer behavior because they contribute to the formation of the experiential judgment and brand recognition,

particularly when it comes to product categories in which the tactile and olfactory senses play a significant role. However, according to Urdea and Constantin (2021), the experience of sensations may not lead to long-term loyalty in the absence of reinforcement through emotional involvement. Sense experience is an external stimulus in the S-O-R paradigm that initiates internal cognitively-affectively mediated evaluations, which subsequently influence behavioral outcomes such as a repeat purchase and the brand preference (Murwani et al., 2023). Based on this, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H₁: Sense experience has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty in the fast-moving consumer goods industry of Nigeria industry.

2.4.2. Feel Experience and Customer Loyalty

Feel experience is the emotional attitude that arises when a consumer engages with a brand, and they include satisfaction, enjoyment, trust, excitement, and emotional attachment. Meeprom and Kokkhangplu (2025) state that emotional engagement is one of the fundamental mechanisms through which experiential marketing contributes to the development of consumer-brand relationships, and Urdea and Constantin (2021) emphasize that emotional stimulation assists brands in moving the functional value to the affective one. He et al. (2022) opines that emotions exercise control over consumer judgment because they dictate how internalization and recall of brand experiences occur, particularly in competitive and digitally influenced environments. The intensity of the emotional experiences associated with the frequently purchased FMCG segments promotes familiarity, trust, and attachment with reduced brand switching and more long-term engagement (Awasthi et al., 2024).

Awasthi et al. (2024) demonstrate that emotional engagement fosters brand loyalty significantly as it enhances psychological attachment and repurchase intention. According to Thamilselvan and Rakeshyanand (2024), emotionally engaged customers are also more willing to maintain the relationship over the long term and forgive minor product defects. It has been asserted by Iwegbue and Nelly (2024) that emotional attachment is highly predictive of brand loyalty in a competitive environment in Nigeria. The stimulus-organism-response approach reveals that feel experience is a kind of affective stimulus, which evokes positive internal conditions pleasure, trust, and attachment which are reinvented into loyal behavioral responses (Vrtana and Krizanova, 2023). In this respect, the study hypothesizes that:

H₂. Feel experience has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty in the fast-moving consumer goods Nigerian of Nigeria industry.

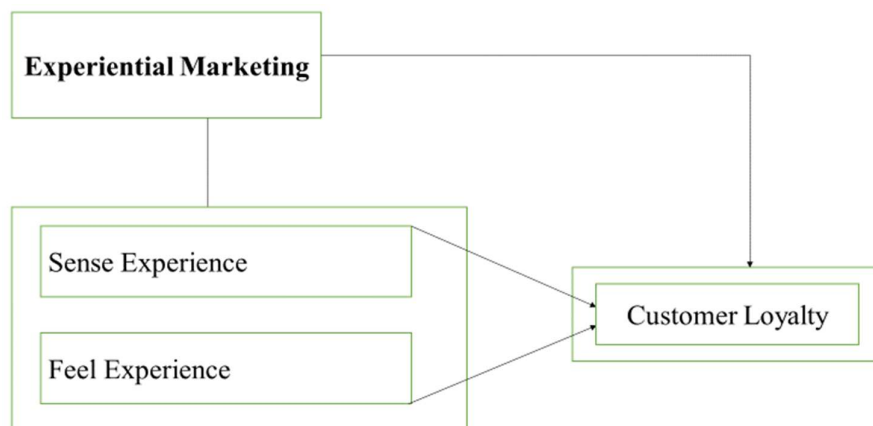


Figure 1. The Conceptual Framework of the Study.

2.5. Underpinning Theory

This study is based on the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) theory by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), which explain how environmental stimuli influence the internal psychological state of the individual and, by extension, the behavioral reaction. The S-O-R model has been widely applied in marketing research

to explain the relationship between customer experience and attitudes and actions such as satisfaction and preference in addition to loyalty. The stimuli mean external marketing incentives in the context of experiential marketing that trigger emotions and senses of the consumers. Sense experience and feel experience are the two primary stimuli where FMCG brands are encountering consumers in the study. Experience inputs encompass sensory appeal (visual appearance, packaging, taste, and texture) and emotional appeal (produces pleasure, trustworthiness, and attachment), resulting in experience outputs that influence how consumers judge and consider a brand (Vrtana & Krizanova, 2023; Murwani et al., 2023; Onyeke et al., 2024).

The S-O-R model is an organism aspect, which is the internal mental and emotional state that occurs as a response to such stimuli. When consumers are subjected to positive sensory and emotional presentations, they develop positive internal considerations, including satisfaction, pleasure, trust, and emotional attachment to the brand (Urdea & Constantin, 2021; He et al., 2022). These internal responses determine consumer perceptions of brand encounters and set the level of psychological attachment to the brand. The response element will reflect behavioral implications of such internal appraisal. Customer loyalty is among the fundamental behavioral responses in the FMCG context, which is shown in the form of repeat purchase, brand loyalty, and switching-averse behavior (Vrtana & Krizanova, 2023). According to the S-O-R model, positive internal states become reinforced with repeated exposure to positive sensory and emotional stimuli, thereby increasing the probability of developing sustained loyal behavior.

Extant studies such as Faridi et al. (2025) examined the links between experiential marketing and digital marketing and brand loyalty by a mediating variable, electronic word of mouth (eWOM). The research design is a quantitative study that uses a structured questionnaire, and 180 respondents (patients) of a heart specialty hospital located in West Java, Indonesia, are involved in the research. The data collected was analyzed using SmartPLS 4 software to test the relationship that exists between the variables under study. The findings confirm that experiential marketing and digital marketing are significant influences that can affect eWOM and brand loyalty. This means that eWOM is also a moderating force, and it improves the effectiveness of the marketing strategies towards patient loyalty. These results show that the positive patient experience plays a big part in eWOM that, in combination with effective digital marketing, will result in creating better brand loyalty.

Meeprom and Kokkhangplu (2025) explored the structural relationships among customer experience, customer satisfaction, advocacy, and customer repurchase intentions with a precise idea of the mediating influence of tourist satisfaction in the customer experience-customer advocate relationship as well as in the customer experience-customer repurchase intentions relationship in the Thailand specialty coffee cafes. Purposive sampling was applied with a method of a self-administered survey, and 300 valid questionnaires were analyzed in a path analysis based on partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). Based on the social exchange theory, the results of the study showed that the affective and intellectual experiences directly affected customer satisfaction in a positive way. Customer advocacy was positively and directly influenced by intellectual experience and negatively affected by senses and spiritual experience, and repurchase intentions were influenced by intellectual experience, sense, and spiritual experience as positive and negative influences, respectively. Results also indicated that sensory, affective, and intellectual experiences have a negative relationship with customer advocacy, and repurchase intentions mediate a negative relationship with customer satisfaction.

Icha et al. (2025) investigated the motivation factors of buying intentions regarding Tokopedia e-commerce, product advertisement, experience, and e-trust. The study methodology was quantitative; 107 respondents were selected sampling. According to the results, e-trust did not significantly influence the purchase decisions on Tokopedia. This means that the element of electronic trust does not have a direct influence on consumer decision-making in this platform. Training in marketing and advertisement, however, has been observed to create a good and substantial impact on the purchase decision. Consumers can be interested in buying the products because of the value that can be given to them through involving them in interesting interactions and appropriate advertisements. These findings indicate that positive

customer experience and proper advertisement are the causes of a buying decision on Tokopedia, though e-trust is not significant.

Iwegbue and Nelly (2024) examined the relationship between brand loyalty and experiential marketing (EXPMKT) in the telecommunication industry in Nigeria: a case study of selected telecommunication companies in Warri, Delta State, Nigeria. The sampling unit herein is the employees, supervisors, and top managers of the employees working in the offices of MTN, GLO, and Airtel in Warri in Delta State. A total of seventy-five (75) questionnaires were given to the employees, supervisors, and top managers of the employees working in the offices of MTN, GLO, and Airtel in Warri in Delta State. To analyze the research questions, descriptive statistics and a correlation matrix were implemented. The statistical tool of multiple regression usage was chosen as the background of testing hypotheses, and the hypothesis of the study was tested with the help of SPSS version 23. The findings indicated that the relationship between SEM and BL is significant ($0.048 < 0.05$); the relationship between AEM and BL is significant and positive ($0.048 < 0.05$).

Saurabh et al. (2025) examined the impact of exclusivity marketing on millennial consumers who are thought to belong to a generation of authenticity and individualization of the brand and the relationship between the brand and the consumer. The key objective is to explore how the primary dimensions of experiential marketing, such as sensory experiences, emotional connections, and intellectual and behavioral involvement, influence the effects of loyalty, brand trust, contentment, emotional involvement, and advocacy among millennials. Based on an extensive review of all the interdisciplinary literature in marketing, psychology, and consumer behavior, the present research proposed a conceptual model, defining the correlation of the experiential and millennial consumer loyalty. The model also acknowledges the potential mediators (e.g., brand authenticity) and moderators (e.g., digital engagement) to control this relationship.

Based on the S-O-R theory on experiential marketing, sense experience has fewer long-lasting effects on consumers in regard to emotional attachment and psychological bonding, whereas feel experience has more compelling, enduring effects on consumers (Awasthi et al., 2024; Iwegbue & Nelly, 2024). Therefore, the emotional stimuli are likely to have longer-lasting loyalty impacts as compared to the sensory stimulus, which plays the patronizing role of attaching the brand recall and consistency in the experience. It is a rational ground of study of hypothesized relationships between dimensions of experience marketing and customer loyalty in the current study.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design, Population and Sample

The study used a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to investigate how experiential marketing affects customer loyalty within the traditional market setups. Cross-sectional survey design is suitable as it allows gathering standardized data about the respondents at one moment in time and allows the statistical analysis of the relationships between the study variables. The technique is commonly utilized in social science studies to explore the perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral consequences.

The study was carried out at Alaba International Market and Idumota Market in Lagos State, Nigeria. These markets were chosen due to the fact that they are highly interactive trading markets in terms of close buyer-seller contact, product presentation through senses, and exchanges of relationships. These are suitable environments to study experiential marketing because traders interact with customers frequently using demonstrations, interpersonal persuasion, and emotional interactions, which have a direct impact on purchasing behavior. The target population were active traders in Alaba International Market and Idumota Market. Based on the records taken by the market associations in the two markets, it was estimated that there were 750 traders in the two markets.

To determine the sample size to use in the study, the Yamane (1967) formula of the finite population formula with a 5 percent margin of error was utilized and delivered a minimum required sample size of 261 respondents. A stratified random sampling method was used to make sure that the traders of the two markets are well represented. The strata based on market location (Alaba International Market and Idumota Market) were used to first divide the population. The respondents selected in each market were then proportionately allocated. In each stratum, simple random sampling was used in selecting respondents. The number of distributed questionnaires was 261, and 255 valid questionnaires were retrieved and subsequently used in the final analysis, a 98% response rate.

3.2. Instrument for Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data from respondents. The instrument was developed from established scales in experiential marketing, brand experience, and customer loyalty literature. It was divided into two parts: the first part captured respondents' demographic information, while the second part measured the study constructs: sense experience, feel experience, and customer loyalty. The items were adapted to fit the Nigerian fast-moving consumer goods context, particularly consumers' experiences with brands they buy, sell, or use. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

The Items for the study variables are captured in Table 1. Sense experience was adapted from Schmitt's (1999) experiential marketing framework and Brakus et al.'s (2009) sensory brand experience scale. It captures the extent to which brand-related cues such as packaging, colour, design, appearance, smell, taste, and presentation appeal to consumers' senses. Feel experience was adapted from Schmitt's (1999) feel module and Brakus et al.'s (2009) affective brand experience dimension. It reflects the emotional responses consumers develop toward a brand, including positive feelings, satisfaction, and attachment. Customer loyalty was adapted from Yoo and Donthu (2001) and Zeithaml et al. (1996), covering consumers' intention to continue buying, preference for the brand, and willingness to recommend it to others.

Table 1. Measurement Items and Sources of Adaptation

Construct	Code	Measurement item	Source of adaptation
Sense Experience	SE1	The packaging, colour, design, and presentation of this brand appeal to my senses.	Schmitt (1999); Brakus et al. (2009)
	SE2	This brand creates a pleasant sensory impression when I see, buy, or use it.	Schmitt (1999); Brakus et al. (2009)
	SE3	The physical features of this brand, such as its look, feel, smell, taste, or overall presentation, make it attractive to me.	Schmitt (1999); Brakus et al. (2009)
Feel Experience	FE1	This brand makes me feel good whenever I buy or use it.	Schmitt (1999); Brakus et al. (2009)
	FE2	I have positive emotional feelings toward this brand.	Schmitt (1999); Brakus et al. (2009)
	FE3	My experience with this brand gives me a sense of satisfaction and personal attachment.	Schmitt (1999); Brakus et al. (2009)
Customer Loyalty	CL1	I intend to continue buying this brand in the future.	Yoo and Donthu (2001); Zeithaml et al. (1996)
	CL2	This brand would be my first choice among similar products.	Yoo and Donthu (2001); Zeithaml et al. (1996)
	CL3	I would recommend this brand to other consumers.	Yoo and Donthu (2001); Zeithaml et al. (1996)

The questionnaire was reviewed by academic experts to establish face and content validity. Their comments focused on the clarity, relevance, and contextual suitability of the items for the Nigerian fast-moving consumer goods industry. Minor wording adjustments were made to improve readability without changing the meaning of the original scales. A pilot study was also conducted to assess the internal consistency of the instrument. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine reliability, and all constructs

exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency for the main survey.

3.3. Method of Data Collection, Response Rate, and Control of Common Method Bias

Data was collected through face-to-face questionnaire administration with the support of trained research assistants who were familiar with the market environment. This method was considered appropriate because it allowed respondents to seek clarification where necessary, improved the accuracy of responses, and reduced literacy-related non-response. The survey was conducted among active traders operating in Alaba International Market and Idumota Market in Lagos State. A total of 261 questionnaires were distributed. Of these, 255 were completed and returned, while 6 were incomplete and excluded from the analysis. This produced a response rate of 98%, which is considered adequate for empirical analysis. The high response rate reflects the suitability of the face-to-face approach and the accessibility of respondents within the selected market locations. The common method bias was taken into consideration because the study was based on self-reported questionnaire data. To minimize this risk, respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, which reduced evaluation apprehension. Moreover, full collinearity variance inflation factors (VIF) were also checked to identify the possible common method variance. VIF values were all less than the suggested value of 3.3, which means that the issue of common method bias was not a major problem in the study.

3.4. Method of Data Analysis and Model Assessments

The Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) and SmartPLS 4 software were used to conduct the data analysis. The demographic profiles of the respondents were summarized with descriptive statistics, and the relationships between the dimensions of experiential marketing and customer loyalty were tested with the help of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The reason behind choosing PLS-SEM was that the research model is appropriate when the study is predictive in nature and contains complex relationships with latent constructs in the social science research (Hair & Sabol, 2025).

The two-stage PLS-SEM procedure was followed, where measurement model assessment and structural model assessment were done. The first evaluation was conducted using the measurement model, testing the reliability and validity of the constructs. The reliability was measured in terms of Cronbach alpha and composite reliability, and the recommended threshold values were considered to be 0.70 or above, which represented satisfactory reliability. The convergent validity was determined by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), in which 0.50 and above indicated that the construct accounted for extra over fifty percent of the variance in its indicators. The validity of discrimination was assessed based on the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) with anything less than 0.90 signifying sufficient discriminant validity between constructs (Hair & Sabol, 2025).

Having established the sufficiency of the measurement model, the structural model was then assessed to test the hypothesized constructs' relationship. The structural model test was performed by reviewing the path coefficients (b) to identify the direction and strength of variable relationships. A bootstrapping procedure was used to determine statistical significance; it produced t-statistics and p-values to be used in testing the hypothesis. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was analyzed as well to assess the explanatory power of the model, and the effect size (f^2) was employed to define the contribution of each predictor variable to the dependent construct (Hair & Sabol, 2025). The level of significance tested was 5%, and since all the hypotheses were directional in nature, a one-tailed significance test was used in the analysis of the structural path coefficients.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Respondents' Demographic Characteristics (N=255)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	140	54.9
	Female	115	45.1
	Total	255	100.0
Age	18–24 years	35	13.7
	25–34 years	85	33.3
	35–44 years	100	39.2
	45 years and above	35	13.7
	Total	255	100.0
Education	Secondary school	95	37.3
	ND/NCE	50	19.6
	HND/B.Sc	80	31.4
	Postgraduate	30	11.8
	Total	255	100.0
Purchase Frequency	Daily	45	17.6
	Weekly	90	35.3
	Monthly	70	27.5
	Occasionally	50	19.6
	Total	255	100.0

Source: Field survey (2025)

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of 255 traders in the Alaba international and Idumata markets; 140 (54.9%) were males and 115 (45.1%) were females, thus indicating that the male population was dominant, although the female population was also large. The age distribution showed that 35 (13.7%) fell within 18 to 24 years of age, 85 (33.3%) fell within 25 to 34 years of age, 100 (39.2%) fell within 35 to 44 years of age, and 35 (13.7%) were over 45 years of age, indicating that the population was mainly economically active. Regarding educational attainment, 95 (37.3%) had secondary school education, 50 (19.6%) had ND/NCE, 80 (31.4%) had HND/B.Sc., and 30 (11.8%) were postgraduate. Lastly, in the purchase frequency, 45 (17.6%) purchased FMCG products daily, 90 (35.3%) weekly, 70 (27.5%) monthly, and 50 (19.6%) occasionally, indicating that most of the respondents had a regular purchase of FMCG products, with most purchases being made on a weekly basis.

4.2. Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was assessed through indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. As shown in Table 3, the outer loadings show that most indicators loaded adequately on their respective constructs. For sense experience, the loadings were SE1 = 0.787, SE2 = 0.645, and SE3 = 0.724. Although SE2 fell slightly below the preferred 0.70 benchmark, it was retained because the construct still achieved acceptable reliability and convergent validity. For feel experience, the indicators recorded loadings of FE1 = 0.867, FE2 = 0.747, and FE3 = 0.740, while customer loyalty recorded CL1 = 0.876, CL2 = 0.783, and CL3 = 0.726. These values suggest that the indicators were generally suitable for measuring their intended constructs.

Table 3. Measurement Model Assessment

Construct	Indicators and loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE	Decision
Sense experience	SE1 = 0.787; SE2 = 0.645; SE3 = 0.724	0.705	0.764	0.520	Accepted
Feel experience	FE1 = 0.867; FE2 = 0.747; FE3 = 0.740	0.710	0.829	0.619	Accepted
Customer loyalty	CL1 = 0.876; CL2 = 0.783; CL3 = 0.726	0.713	0.839	0.636	Accepted

Source: SmartPLS 4 output, 2025.

Table 3 shows that the internal consistency was confirmed through Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability. Cronbach’s alpha values ranged from 0.705 to 0.713, while composite reliability values ranged from 0.764 to 0.839. Since all values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, the constructs demonstrated acceptable internal consistency. Convergent validity was also established, as the average variance extracted AVE values were above 0.50 for customer loyalty, feel experience, and sense experience. This indicates that each construct explained more than half of the variance in its indicators.

4.3. Structural Model Assessment and Hypothesis Testing



Figure 2. Structural model.

Figure 2 structural model was assessed using the coefficient of determination, effect size, and bootstrapped path coefficients. The R² value for customer loyalty was 0.877, indicating that sense experience and feel experience jointly explain 87.7% of the variance in customer loyalty. This is a strong explanatory value and suggests that experiential marketing is a substantial predictor of customer loyalty in the Nigerian fast-moving consumer goods context. Yet the strength of the model is driven mainly by feel experience rather than sense experience.

Table 4. Structural Model Assessment

Endogenous construct	R ²	Predictor	f ²	Interpretation
Customer loyalty	0.877	Feel experience	3.496	Large effect
Customer loyalty	0.877	Sense experience	0.032	Small effect

Source: SmartPLS 4 output, 2025.

In the Structural Model Assessment in Table 4, the f² results reinforce this point. Feel experience recorded an f² value of 3.496, indicating a very large effect on customer loyalty. In contrast, sense experience recorded an f² value of 0.032, which reflects only a small effect. This distinction is important: sensory appeal may attract consumers and make a brand noticeable, but emotional experience appears to be the stronger basis for loyalty. In a competitive FMCG market, consumers may admire packaging, colour, taste, or presentation, but loyalty seems to deepen when the brand creates satisfaction, attachment, and positive emotional meaning.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta	STDEV	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	Feel experience → Customer loyalty	0.879	0.023	37.543	0.000	Supported
H2	Sense experience → Customer loyalty	0.084	0.033	2.507	0.012	Supported

Source: SmartPLS 4 output, 2025.

The hypothesis testing results in Table 5 show that feel experience has a strong, positive, and statistically significant effect on customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.879$, $t = 37.543$, $p = 0.000$). Therefore, H1 is supported. This finding implies that customers are more likely to remain loyal when a brand generates positive feelings, emotional satisfaction, and personal attachment. The result gives emotional experience a central role in explaining loyalty; it is not merely an additional feature of brand experience, but the dominant pathway through which experiential marketing translates into repeated patronage.

Sense experience also has a positive and statistically significant effect on customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.084$, $t = 2.507$, $p = 0.012$). Therefore, H2 is supported. However, the effect is weak when compared with feel experience. This means that sensory cues such as packaging, colour, design, smell, taste, and presentation contribute to loyalty, but their influence is limited unless they are able to move beyond surface attraction and generate emotional value. The evidence therefore suggests that Nigerian fast-moving consumer goods brands should not rely only on sensory appeal; they need to convert sensory contact into affective attachment.

4.4. Discussion

According to the study, there is a statistically significant positive relationship between feel experience and customer loyalty. This finding emphasizes the importance of emotional engagement in creating an effective relationship between consumers and traders in Alaba international and Idumata Markets. This positive perception that consumers have over a brand based on satisfaction, enjoyment, or emotional satisfaction tends to bring about a higher chance of creating loyalty. This result is in line with Awasthi et al. (2024), who have concluded that feelings are central to building a deeper relationship between consumers and brands and, as a consequence, brand loyalty. Similarly, He et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of emotional bonds as an essential feature of consumer loyalty, suggesting that the feelings of individuals towards a brand are the precursors of repetitive purchasing and long-term communicative interaction.

Additionally, Iwegbue and Nelly (2024) affirm that emotional attachment is significant in the development of brand loyalty and explain that emotionally satisfying brands are the ones that are more likely to retain their customers. This very high effect of the feel experience on customer loyalty is explained by emotion-oriented and relational nature of the classic market conditions in Nigeria. The buying habits in such an environment are highly defined by constant contact with other people, interaction based on trust and familiarity based on emotions between the traders and the customers. The emotional sense of trusting, friendliness, and felt care therefore enables them to control customer affection far more than either functional or sensual aspects.

However, on the other hand, the study reveals that sense experience has a positive yet less influential influence on customer loyalty. Though the senses, such as sight, taste, and smell, can influence the perceptions and involvement of the customers, the perception of long-term loyalty is not as high as the one of the emotional experiences. This aligns with the findings of Urdea and Constantin (2021), who suggested that sensory experiences, which matter the most when making an instant consumer response, lack similar potential to enhance loyalty to a brand when compared to emotional ones. Yamini and Nisha (2024) also argued that sensory marketing is useful in capturing attention and creating a memorable experience for consumers, but the emotional connection is what keeps them loyal in the short term. Furthermore, Zohra and Boukerch (2025) stated that sensory experience, despite its strength, can generally be used alongside emotional engagement to create an encompassing and long-term customer experience.

4.5. Implications, Limitations and Future Research

The findings imply that experiential marketing is an important route through which customer loyalty can be strengthened in the Nigerian fast-moving consumer goods industry. However, the results also show

that the two experiential dimensions do not operate with equal force. Feel experience is the stronger driver of loyalty, while sense experience has a weaker but still significant effect. This suggests that attractive packaging, colour, taste, smell, and product presentation may help a brand gain attention, but loyalty is more likely to endure when consumers develop positive emotions, satisfaction, and attachment toward the brand. Managers should therefore treat sensory appeal as an entry point, not the final basis of loyalty. Stronger loyalty will come from repeated brand encounters that make consumers feel assured, valued, and emotionally connected.

The study is limited by its geographical scope, as data were collected only from Lagos State, particularly from Alaba International Market and Idumota Market. Although Lagos is a major commercial centre, the findings may not fully represent consumers and traders in other Nigerian states or geopolitical zones. The study also focused only on the fast-moving consumer goods sector and examined two experiential marketing dimensions: sense experience and feel experience. Future studies should extend the model to other regions of Nigeria and compare different industries such as retail, healthcare, transport, agriculture, and manufacturing. Further research may also include other experiential marketing dimensions, especially think, act, and relate experience, to provide a broader explanation of customer loyalty.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined experiential marketing as a driver of customer loyalty among traders in Alaba International and Idumota Markets, using sense experience and feel experience as the main predictors. Grounded in the stimulus-organism-response theory, the study shows that customer loyalty is shaped by the way brand experiences stimulate consumers' senses and emotions, but the two pathways do not carry the same weight. The results indicate that feel experience has a strong and significant effect on customer loyalty, while sense experience is positive but much weaker. This means that in the Nigerian fast-moving consumer goods market, loyalty is not built only through packaging, colour, taste, smell, or product display; it is sustained more deeply when customers associate the brand with satisfaction, trust, familiarity, and emotional attachment. The study, based on 255 valid responses, therefore contributes to the experiential marketing literature by showing that emotional experience is the stronger loyalty mechanism in traditional market settings.

The study recommends that traders and FMCG brand managers should prioritise emotional engagement through friendly interaction, personalised attention, trust-building, after-sales concern, and loyalty-based incentives. Sensory strategies should also be strengthened, but they should support emotional connection rather than stand alone. Attractive packaging, product presentation, taste, and display should be designed to create positive feelings and reinforce repeat purchase. Since the study was limited to Lagos State and only two experiential dimensions, future studies should extend the model to other regions and include think, act, and relate experiences.

Declarations

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.


Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

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