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Customer Loyalty and Retail Outlets Patronage in Nigeria

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Abstract: The evolving trend of establishment of intra-national, transnational and transcontinental retail outlets providing quality service offering across countries of the world has made complex the level of competition and drive for acquiring loyal customers in order to increase their market share The value added role of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in retail service delivery has impacted in no small measure on customer choice profile, thereby providing them with an array of options on which service provider to patronize. The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of customer loyalty on retail outlets patronage in Nigeria. The study evaluates the basic concept of retail service delivery and its effect on customer loyalty, equity theory in combination with the six (6) dimension of retailing experience was adopted as the theoretical framework for the study. The respondents for this study were customers of the South African Retail outlet giant – Shoprite in three basic locations of its Lagos, Nigeria outlets namely; Lekki, Ikeja and Suru- Lere. The study methodology was presented using the descriptive statistical technique of administering questionnaire to respondents and personal interview for the purpose of data gathering. The result of the study was obtained using Pearson Correlation Coefficient technique; the study findings and discussion showed that there is a positive relationship between customer loyalty and consistent patronage of retail outlets in Nigeria. The study concludes that retail outlets should create a robust relationship with their customers through consistent satisfaction and quality service delivery.

Keywords: Customer Loyalty, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Retention, Patronage and Quality Service Delivery

1. Introduction

The increasing pace of astute competition around the world has not left any of the industries unchallenged; a greater chunk is most often felt in the consumer goods retail sector where service providers are persistently working towards increasing their market share through touch point quality service delivery, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and retention. The impact of development in Information and Communications Technology has complicated the matter through increased level of awareness and interaction of the final consumers, which has invariably increased the pressure on service providers to equate such needs and wants with quality product service offering [48, 31] The application of technological resources in retailing increased dramatically in recent years, a lot has been made possible on the shopping floor such as; customer self service devices, payment options and resources as well as delivery modalities, with sophisticated built in technological

resources to match consumers ever increasing needs and wants [40, 51].

Invariably, the retail service industry has proven in no small measure its readiness to match the sophisticated consumer desires through consumer driven product services; backed up by the latest technological resources available in the retail sector profitably. These surge in competition has necessitated the need for quality product service offering to be delivered speedily, reliably and efficiently, in the process, the consumers are satisfied, their sense of loyalty is increased and their desire to consistently patronize the retail service provider will increase [19, 6, 28] The process of consistent patronage must therefore be driven by customers total service offering experience beginning from the point of first contact with the service provider up to product service delivery or customer point of exit, hence, retail service providers must

reappraise every step in the delivery process to ensure that customers are satisfied and will be ready to patronize the retail outlet which leads to customer loyalty [24, 39, 49].

Customer loyalty is a relationship driven concept that retail service outlets must earn through consistent satisfaction of the end user through quality service delivery built holistically on previous experience, The basic elements of loyalty driven approaches must be injected into any marketing campaign, these includes; effective customer relationship management, a formidable ordering system (online/offline), an accurate billing system, authentic inventory management system, a functional reporting/analytics and a dependable customer feedback management system [33]. The basis of consistent patronage in retail business lies in the service providers ability to satisfy customers with quality product offering more than business rivals; hence the ability to forecast customers' wants and expectations is a resultant effect of effective relationship management. One of such avenues of predicting customers want is based on aptness to information access on trends in customer preferences/behavior and how it influences their buying habits. Customer demographic data is another mechanism that could aid in predicting possible direction of customer preference and purchase decision. Increasing level of cultural variation is another factor that retail service outlets must seek to understand how changes in societal norms and values could affect purchase decision making [15].

The Shoprite Group of Companies (JSE: SHP), is the largest South African retail store chain founded in 1979 with headquarters in western cape province of Brackenfell, Cape Town, South Africa. [11]. It has a minimum of 2,689 shop outlets in 15 countries across the continent of Africa as well as the Indian Ocean Islands [14]. Shoprite is a public limited liability company listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE), it also operates a secondary listings in Namibian and Zambian Stock Exchanges. The group has a teeming workforce of about 144,000 employees Shoprite [44, 45].

Shoprite made its foray into the Nigerian retail market in 2005 by acquiring Food-world with 13 stores, it opened its first shopping center in Victoria Island area of Lagos, Nigeria. In recent years, the retail giant has registered its presence in almost all the state capitals in Nigeria including Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory, carrying out its operations with the most current retail infrastructural resources technology could provide, it also delivers state of the art quality retail service offering to all its customers in all its stores across the country [27] The choice of this retail giant for this study is due to its contribution in transforming the retail shopping business in the country, and affording its customers a satisfying shopping and its ability to engage its customers in order to satisfy them, hence, the researcher perceives that this retail giant is quite suitable for a study of this magnitude.

Meanwhile studies on retail activities in Nigeria are extensively done in the banking sector such as; Customer loyalty in the banking sector [9], and Customers Satisfaction and its Implications for Bank Performance in Nigeria [5]

Other research studies done have been on the significant value of customer product service offerings [10, 18, 35]. The foregoing explains the fact on the existing gap in literature on the evaluation of relationship between Customer Retention and Retail Outlet Patronage in Nigeria, hence the essence of this study is to accomplish the purpose of enriching and filling this literature gap on the impact of technology on retail outlets patronage for effective quality product / service offering delivery to their customers.

2. Statement of Problem

The issues affecting consistent patronage by end users globally is the inability of retail outlets to create a robust relationship that could provide valid information on the possible direction of customer taste and preference. It becomes an uphill task in developing economies were comprehensive information about consumer goods are not readily available. Thanks to the overwhelming effect of information and communications technology which has made it possible for retail customers to access valid information on retail product service offering.

Retail customers will be ready at any point in time to pay a premium for quality product service offering, hereby customer loyalty and consistent patronage is most often driven by previous retail service delivery experience, for customers to prefer a particular service provider, the service offering as delivered by the retail outlet to the customer must satisfy the customers need and wants in totality. Service delivery is a process that must be well guided before and after the service, to avoid creating a wrong impression before the customer. Customers will always purchase a product based on their perception (before the consumption of the product service) and expectation (after the consumption of the product service). If the experience is satisfactory, customers will always patronize the service provider and vice versa. It is quite evident that customers learn to acknowledge quality through the experience gained from repeated exposure to such product service.

Quality Service delivery is a concept that has elicited significant contributions by researchers based on the in-depth understanding of its implication on the customer satisfaction on the one hand and as a tool for sustainable competitive advantage to service provider. The need to provide quality service to customers is because it is equivalent to excellent performance and implacable high standards in product service delivery. The quality of service delivery may not best be expressed by the service provider, but by the customer who eventually consumed it. Hence, the process of having loyal customers lies in the capacity of retail product service providers to manage customer relationship effectively by offering quality product services that meets the need and want of customers. It should be noted that quality of a service delivery is subjectively perceived by customers during the process of their interactions with the retail outlet.

Objective of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of

customer loyalty on retail outlet patronage in Nigeria. To achieve this, the under listed objectives are outlined;

i) To examine the relationship between service offering experience and Customer loyalty in Shoprite Nigeria retail outlets.

ii) To evaluate effect of quality service delivery on customer loyalty in Shoprite Nigerian retail outlets.

Research Questions

i) What is the relationship between service offering experience and Customer loyalty in Shoprite Nigerian retail outlets?

ii) What is the effect of quality service delivery on customer loyalty in Shoprite Nigerian retail outlets?

Research Hypotheses

H_1: Service offering experience has no significant relationship with Customer loyalty in Shoprite Nigerian retail outlets.

H_2: Quality service delivery has no relationship with customer loyalty in Shoprite Nigerian retail outlets?

3. Conceptual Literature

3.1. Concept of Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is a concept that has aroused a lot of attention and interest in the research literature because of its complexities, the success of any organization depends on patronage from her loyal customers, hence there is a need for originations to understand the need and wants of her customers in order to attain these objectives.

Customer loyalty refers to the sustainable desire of the customer in preserving a continuous relationship with retail outlets by patronizing its product service offering. [16].

Customer loyalty is an offshoot of Customer satisfaction which is the accomplishment customers expectation I the process of using a particular product services offering). [50]

The customer has a delightsome experience after consuming a particular product service, this will lead to customer loyalty. The continuous establishment and operation of business activities by organizations is basically founded on consistent loyalty of organizational customers. [5]

Loyal customers could be seen as valuable assets to retail outlets based on their contribution to the growth, development and sustainable profitability of the firm It is the feature of loyal customers to always express by words or action their ultimate commitment to the retail outlets they patronize and to use Word of Mouth (WOM) to make tangible referral of the retail outlet to family members and friends [25].

Loyalty depicts the traditionally parlance used in describing allegiance and enthusiastic commitment to a cause, an individual or a group. It is used in business context to explain customer's willingness to continually patronize a firm over a given period of time, and also referring the organization to family and friends. [3, 21]

Customer loyalty according to [3] has "Five Rs" models which includes; i) repeaters, ii) recommenders, iii) reminders,

iv) rebuilders and v) reapers-developed. Retrospectively, retail outlet remains a significant unit in the process of ensuring customer loyalty [32], and the dispensation of consumer and industrial goods to individual and group(s) based on their wants, needs and preferences [42].

Customer loyalty is a precept that is driven by the determination of the organization to create and harness a robust customer problem handling and problem solving system which listen to customers' complaints, identify what customers' problems are and fixes such problem promptly. Such steps by organization will always glue such customers to patronize the firm consistently. Increased level of loyalty by customers means that such customers are willing and ready to patronize the service provider than rivals.

3.2. Concept of Customer Satisfaction

Customers could be explained as one of the vital stakeholders in any organizational setting, firms owe their establishment and continuous operations to the willingness to customers to patronized their product service offering; and in enabling them to achieve their set goals and objectives, while firms offer product service offerings to their customers, customers reciprocate by encouraging firms through patronage [5].

According to [17] satisfaction is defined as the personal experience of accomplishment or disappointment obtained by customers through the comparison of perceived product performance to the initial expectations. Customers satisfaction is a complex term in which the customer and not the service provider could express based on the outcome of service quality offering consumed It also connotes encouraging the customers to express their feelings before and after consuming the product service as well as establishing an effective customer feedback system.

The ultimate goal of firms is profit maximization, and this could mainly be achieved through the provision of quality service offering to customers. Satisfying customer could earn firms the following benefits; i) Increase income growth due to consistent customers' patronage tend to make them more of a long term asset to the firm. ii) When customers are satisfied, they become self-appointed ambassadors to the firm by recommending and referring the firm to friends, associates and family member and iii) satisfied customers will be ready to pay a premium due to the assurance that the firm will always deliver quality service. [12]

3.3. Concept of Customer Retention

Customer retention refers to a strategic decision by firms to consistently aspire to establish enduring interrelationships with their customers. Customer retention could be explained as the percentage of total number of active customers that are in consistent commercial transaction from the beginning of the year to the end of the financial [7].

The process of attracting and retaining loyal customers increases the firms' profitability and reduced cost in maintaining them unlike disloyal loyalty which increases

customers maintenance cost to the firm. A 5% increase in customer retention could increase the level of profitability between 25% and 60% [38].

According to [37] customer retention is a marketing strategy of restraining customers from moving away from the firm to patronize rivals through provision of satisfactory product service offering that will make them loyal to the firm.

Research has proven that it is five times cheaper for firms to retain customers than to acquire a new customer [17]. In essence, retail firms should provide quality service offering that will induce customer loyalty. It is quite pertinent for retail outlets to emphasize on quality product service offering to customers because if the significant interrelationship between; service quality, customer satisfaction and customer retention and future use of product or services [20] One of the main drivers of consistent customer patronage is when firms provide post sale services [41].

4. Empirical Literature

A close review of other studies conducted by various researchers are highlighted herein; The study of [22] on. Effect of Marketing Strategy on Customer Loyalty in the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry: The Mediating Role of Consumer Perceived Value, the study examined that customer loyalty as a value creation strategic marketing effort. The study administered 550 questionnaires in ten (10) Oil and Gas Companies, data collected were analyzed through regression and correlation analysis. The findings of the study revealed that marketing strategy positively affect both customer loyalty and consumer perceived value in the Nigerian oil and gas sector, the study provides predictive implications on improved consumer perceived value and customer loyalty. Hence, the study concludes that improvement in consumer's perceived value and customer loyalty could be used to direct strategic control.

The study of [29], on Analyzing the moderating effect of customer loyalty on long run repurchase intentions, the study examines the moderating effect of consumer loyalty on repurchase intentions in telecommunication industry in Lagos, Nigeria. The study made use of survey design by administering 250 questionnaires to respondents, Pearson Correlation and regression technique were used to analyze the data. The study affirmed that there is a significant relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the telecommunication industry. The study conclude that repurchase intentions and brand loyalty could elicit overall profitability. The study recommended that that customer satisfaction, service quality, and loyalty should be enhanced by telecommunication concerns in Nigeria.

In a similar study by [30] on Store Layout and Customer Loyalty of Supermarkets in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, the study examined the relationship between the multi-dimensionality, a survey of 400 respondents were selected from ten supermarkets in Port Harcourt, the outcome of the study revealed that there is positive relationship between each of the dimensions of store layout and customer loyalty. The study, therefore, concludes that store layout could be a means of gaining strong competitive advantage in a retail business.

The study by [34] on Factors Influencing Customer Loyalty and Choice of Retailer While Buying Fast Moving Consumer Goods, The study examines the changing trend in the growth of retail stores, the objective of the study is to examine factors that influences customers choice of retail outlets when buying Fast Moving Consumer Goods. The study made use of descriptive survey, The outcome of the study after analysis revealed that; Price, Product Quality and diverse brand availability affect customer loyalty irrespective of demographic variance.

In a similar study by [36] on Perceived Service Quality and Customer Loyalty: The Mediating Effect of Passenger Satisfaction in the Nigerian Airline Industry The study investigates the relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty in the Nigerian airline industry. The study made use of survey design approach in data collection through questionnaires for 800 respondents. The data collected were analyzed using correlation and multiple regression analysis. The findings of this study reveal that there is an interrelationship between perceived service quality and passengers' satisfaction and loyalty. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher conclude that perceived service quality does influence passenger satisfaction, and by extension, loyalty to the airlines. Thus, sustainable improvement of service quality, differentiation and competitiveness could increase customer loyalty in the airline industry. The study recommends that airline operators should develop and implement market-oriented service strategies to identify customers' needs and expectations in order to serve them better.

Finally, a similar study conducted by [2]. The Determinants of Customer Loyalty in Nigeria's GSM Market, the study evaluates the determinants of customer loyalty in the GSM market in Nigeria. Descriptive survey method was used in obtaining data through questionnaire. 252 questionnaires were administered to respondents in Lagos State. Pearson Correlation was used to establish the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The study findings revealed that service quality, customer satisfaction, and corporate image are important determinants of customer satisfaction and loyalty in the Nigeria's GSM market. The study concludes that GSM companies should emphasize on these factors for overall growth.

4.1. Theoretical Literature

The theory of customer loyalty is based on its definition as a robust model of interaction between customer and an organization; this relationship must involve reciprocal exchanges based on a strong sense of equity. Relationship induced Customer loyalty theories can be listed as; i) Attraction theory, ii) Social exchange Theory and iii) Equity Theory. For the purpose of this study, the equity theory will be used as it underpins this study.

4.2. Equity Theory

The establishment and nurturing of relationship is synonymous to the recompense as well as the cost of maintaining such relationship, when the recompense is less than what is required by equity, it result to people being dissatisfied and could lead to the termination of the relationship, Equity theory therefore means that the importance of establishing relationship with end users is for the purpose of customer retention, Customer retention is the brain child of customer loyalty and consistent patronage that could increase the firms bottom line [26]. Substantial evidence of the increasing level of responsiveness on the term 'equity' or fairness of commercial relationship refers to the basis of continuity in customer relationship with an organization [13]. In spite of the foregoing, marketing experts has de-emphasized on the role of equity [46, 47] in creating customer loyalty. In referring to social identity theory, humanity prefer to categorize into diverse social segment. As a result, the norms and values of individual is examined and compared with that of the customers [4].

The theoretical framework that further buttresses this study is the 6 dimension of retail experience adapted from [33] the figure below emphasizes on the six (6) basic elements necessary for a successful retail outlet that could attract customers' loyalty to includes; i) An effective customer relationship management, ii) a good ordering system (online/offline), iii) an accurate billing process, iv) an authentic inventory management system, v) a functional reporting/analytics system and vi) a dependable customer feedback management system.

Figure 1. The 6 Dimension of Retail Experience Adapted.

Adapted: 6 Dimension of Retail Experience, (2015), POSist Technologies Pvt. Ltd.

From the foregoing, the equity theory matches cost and benefits obtained from a business concern to prepare stakeholders in creating and nurturing relationship with their customers; bearing in mind the positive expected benefit of returns on investment (ROI). Customer loyalty in retail outlets could invariably be guaranteed through consistent quality service delivery; based on the consistent application of the 6 dimensions of retail experience geared towards total customer satisfaction. when customers are satisfied at all

times, a high level of patronage will be achieved, this will further increase sales turnover and firms' profitability.

5. Methodology

The cross-sectional survey research design method was adopted to enable the researcher to gather data from the respondents through structures questionnaires administered. The choice of the three locations of Shoprite shopping centers in Lagos State (Lekki, Ikeja and Suru Lere) is due to the fact that Lagos is the commercial capital of Nigeria with huge population of customers patronizing the service of the firm. A total number of 397 questionnaires were distributed between the three selected locations of the study as follows; Lekki = 184 questionnaires representing 46 percent, Ikeja = 117 questionnaires representing 29 percent and Suru Lere = 96 questionnaires representing 24 percent of the total number of questionnaires distributed in the three locations. The study also conducted personal interview to enhance the collection of detail information not covered by the structured questionnaire, based on personal encounters by the respondents on different aspect of their relationship with each of the relevant location.

5.1. Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

The questionnaires were given to experts to validate the content of the instruments before issuing it to the respondents. The instruments were further subjected to reliability test to affirm the internal consistency of the survey instrument known as Chronbach Alpha, the verified outcome of the Cronbach's alpha of the measure was 0.87 which implies that ii should be accepted, since the internal consistency of the variables used for the study exceeds the advocated benchmark for acceptability of 0.7 chronbach alpha [43] Data collected from respondents were further analyzed using Pearson coefficient correlations techniques. Based on the total number of questionnaires administered to the respondent, the total number of valid and useful questionnaire returned to the researcher were 369 (93.00%). The total number of questionnaires that were not returned at all to the researcher were 12 (3.00%) and questionnaires that were actually returned; but were rejected by the researcher due to non-eligibility and mutilation by respondents were 16 (4.00%). Data analysis was tested using the null hypotheses crafted by the researcher in the study.

5.2. Hypothesis One

Service offering experience has no effect on Customer loyalty in Shoprite Nigerian retail outlets.

The outcome of the Pearson correlations coefficient analysis is .906, this affirms that there exists an interrelationship between service offering experience and Customer Loyalty in Shoprite a retail outlet in Lagos, Nigerian. The total sample under consideration is 397, the robustness of the relationship (r) between service offering experience and Customer loyalty in Nigerian retail outlets

is .906 and the level of significance is sig = 0.000. The study therefore reveals that is a positive correlation between the variables of the construct. The result of the analysis is expressed as follows; [r=906, n=397, p< .0005]. Hence the null hypothesis should be rejected, and the study concludes that there is a positive interrelationship between service offering experience and Customer Loyalty in Shoprite a retail outlet in Lagos, Nigerian.

Table 1. Correlations 1.

Correlations		Customer Loyalty	Retail Outlets
Customer Loyalty	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.906
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	.397	.397
Retail Outlets	Pearson Correlation	.906	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	.397	.397

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

5.3. Hypothesis Two

Delivering quality service has no effect on customer loyalty in Shoprite Nigerian retail outlets.

Table 2. Correlations 2.

Correlations		Customer Loyalty	Retail Outlets
Customer Loyalty	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.898
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	397	.397
Retail Outlets	Pearson Correlation	.898	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	.397	.397

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The outcome of the Pearson correlations coefficient analysis is .898; this affirms that there is an interrelationship between delivering quality service and Customer Loyalty in Shoprite a retail outlet in Lagos, Nigerian. The total sample under consideration is 397, the strength of the relationship (r) between delivering quality service and Customer loyalty in Nigerian retail outlets is .898 and the level of significance is sig = 0.000. The study therefore reveals that is a positive correlation between the variables of the study. The result of the analysis is expressed as follows; [r=.898, n=397, p< .0005]. Hence the null hypothesis should be rejected, and the study concludes that there is a positive interrelationship between delivering quality service and Customer Loyalty in retail outlet in Nigerian.

6. Discussion of Findings

This purpose of this study is to examine the effect of customer loyalty on retail outlet patronage in Nigeria by evaluating the underlying effect of service offering experience and Customer loyalty as well as the role of quality service delivery on customer loyalty in Nigerian retail outlets. The result of the study was obtained through Pearson Correlation Coefficient, which established a link between the variables of the construct.

The findings of this is study based on the result of the hypothetical analysis revels that about 90 percent of the customers seek to patronize the service offering based on previous experience, hence the results therefor indicate that that there is a positive interrelationship between service offering experience and Customer Loyalty in Shoprite a retail outlet in Lagos, Nigerian as listed herein; [r=906, n=397, p< .0005]. Also, the study also shows that there is a significant relationship of over 80 percent between the variables based on the quality of service delivered by the organization, indicating that there is a positive interrelationship between delivering quality service and Customer Loyalty in retail outlet in Nigerian, the expression is also expressed as follows; [r=898, n=397, p< .0005].

Based on empirical evidence, this study seems to create a new dimension by assessing previous experience and service quality as a prerequisite towards customer patronage of retail outlets in Nigeria. Such empirical evidence includes: Marketing strategy on customer loyalty, [22] moderating effect of customer loyalty on long run repurchase intentions, [29], Store Layout and Customer Loyalty, [30] Customer Loyalty and Choice of Retailer, [34] The foregoing has revealed that previous experience and quality service delivery were never considered, hence this study has helped in filling the literature gap by assessing these variables.

Moreover, one of the main pivot of this study is its outstanding significant departure from existing literature in lined with the theoretical justification on the arguments on the perspective of a relationship induced Customer loyalty theory (Equity Theory); by further buttressing the 6 dimension of retail experience adapted from [33], these elements are necessary for a successful retail outlet that could attract customers' loyalty to includes; i) An effective customer relationship management, ii) a good ordering system (online/offline), iii) an accurate billing process, iv) an authentic inventory management system, v) a functional reporting/analytics system and vi) a dependable customer feedback management system.

7. Conclusion

Conclusively the study evaluates the impact of is Service offering experience and quality service delivery on customer loyalty and consistent patronage in Nigerian retail outlets. Taking cognizance of Shoprite a South African shopping giant is premised on the organizations ability to create a robust relationship with all facets of its customers in all the locations under study.

The incorporation of technological infrastructural resources that could aid the process of delivering quality service to its customers has added positive value to the organizations due to increased patronage, the establishment of a robust customer feedback system is worth mentioning;

as customers complaints are resolved as they occur. Hence, retail outlets in Nigeria should realign their strategies to address all the elements that could increase customer loyalty.

The effective buying population in Nigeria is a strong indication to the firms shareholders deploy, invest and expand its services locations to all the states in the federation as well as prospective local government areas; where existing market research has proven the availability of buying population, the firm should then position itself to access such markets, carry out effective profiling of such market targets and deploy its quality service resources to satisfy them.

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