

## QUANTITATIVE PERSPECTIVE OF THE IMPERATIVE OF CUSTOMER SERVICE DELIVERY ON CUSTOMER RELATION AND ATTRACTION IN NIGERIAN STORE-BASED RETAIL BUSINESS

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigated the effect of customer service delivery on customer relationships in selected retail businesses in Lagos state, Nigeria. Quantitative technique was used as a research design; the population size was infinite. Survey means through a questionnaire was used to gather the primary data; Godden's (2004) model sample size was adopted and 246 were arrived as sample size, multistage sampling technique was employed in the study. Out of the 246 copies of the questionnaire that were administered, 150 were finally retrieved and coded for data analysis. Standard multiple regression (SPSS version 26) was adopted to analyze the data. The conclusion of the study shows that there is likelihood for retail firms to build enthusiastic customer relations that will undoubtedly lead to customer desirability and loyalty when the retail firms are able to devise a good and satisfactory customer service delivery pattern that is customer-oriented. The study suggested that service providers have to work on customer service delivery plan that will have the objective of generating lasting customer relations with the objectives of attracting new customers, maintaining the existing ones, build brand awareness and improve customer and employee retention.*

**Keywords:** Complaints Handling, Customer Relationship, Customers' Patronage, Customer Service, Retail

### **1. Introduction**

Customer service is all about meeting and going beyond the expectations of service providers' target customers. The significance and involvement of the retail sector in any nation's economy can never be ignored in recent years. Retailing consist all the activities that embrace the process of selling products and services to meet an individual need of the final consumer (Adebayo, 2023). Such activities as sales, order processing, merchandising, inventory management, supply chain management etc.

Retailing generally contributes about 5.8% to the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of Nigeria's economy (Marketresearch.com, 2021). The sector which comprises the activities of both wholesales and retails are the third largest contributors to nation's GDP, contributing about 16 percent of the total (Obayagbona, 2022). The sector is also one of the largest contributors to employment opportunities in Nigeria despite the government reliance on revenue from crude oil and gas.

To meet this customer's desire, this calls for the considerate of customers' needs and how these needs could be profitably met in a way that would pledge customer desirability and repeat purchase. Customer service entails all those activities performed by the retail service provider that positively affect the ease at which an intending customer can patronize an outlet or gain knowledge of about what the retailer offers. The effortlessness at which a transaction can be completed without delay by the potential customer and attempts to purchase to be ease and the customer satisfaction that will emanate with the transaction (Parasuraman et al., 1994 cited in Jain & Gupta, 2004).

Customer service management is considered to be the sole responsibility of the retail service providers and not restricted to individual in an organisation. And that is the more reason why future profitable retail service provider will realise that the demand of their offerings is not just only price elastic as opined by economists but also service elastic. Furthermore, because of the need of the service providers to put up a loyal customer that will be over and over again patronizing their stores, the store-based retail outlets service providers have repeatedly involved in personalizing the customer experience. This is indispensable since a large part of the store-based retail customers would desire to purchase from outlets that offer some type expect personalized service. Customers expect personalized offers based on their inclinations. With this lofty loyalty program, the retail outlets would find it more expedient to maintain track of their customer's buying habits, brand and product preferences and offer them appropriate rewards.

These days, due to the forceful competition in the retail sector operating in brick-and-mortar, valuable, modern and good service quality guarantees consumer satisfaction which at the end of the day leads to customer loyalty. Many retailing organisations have stirred from product-centric to customer-centric marketing to provide want-satisfying products and services to their esteem customers. The foremost major factor in every customer-centric organisation is a superior customer satisfaction programme that will pledge an organizational level of success.

Furthermore, parts of the dilemma experienced in store-based retail outlets today is the call for the customization of products and services from the service providers of retail outlets. Customers prove very demanding and they are persistently and gradually searching for special and exceptional knowledge that will allow them to have and modify their own products. The customization approach of customers' service encourages service providers to adapt the service to meet each customer's personal needs (Banwari & Walfried, 1996 cited in Levy & Weitz, 2012).

In addition, as suggested by Palmer (2010), one of the significant ways to achieve competitive advantage and build a formidable customer relationship with retail customers is by successfully managing the experience of these customers. In this perspective,

customer experience emerges as new phenomenon which also motivated customer to patronize some retail outlets for shopping. Moreover, as evidenced by Oracle in the year 2012, research findings show that 89 per cent of the customer will defect to competitor's business as result of poor customer experience emanated from poor customer service delivery. Taking this into account, this study is trying to examine the extent at which customer service delivery relates with customer relations and attraction in store – based retail outlets in Nigeria with special reference to the selected retail firms in Lagos state metropolis.

## **2.0 Review of Relevant Literature**

### **2.1 Conceptual Review**

#### **2.1.1 Customer Service**

Consumers are very important asset because no institution or company will be able to survive when ignored by their customers. Customer Service is one of the most important activities carried out by the retail firm because it involves the future course of the company (Tax et al., 2013). Kotler (2006) postulates customer service as different things to different people and according to different circumstances. Lalonde and Zinser (1976) conceptualize customer service as the variety of activities between the organisation and customers to improve or simplify sales and using of products and services. It also involves the operations of service providers for customers during the whole transaction. From this assertion, it is noted that customer service is not only limited to the effort of service providers in the exchange process with the consumers but extends to giving information to the customer on how the products will be consumed and other things thereafter which is known as post-sales services in marketing.

The role of customer service to create customer loyalty by providing quality service to its customers is to implement a Customer Relationship Management (Sam, 2019). In retailing business, the execution of CRM in formulating effective communication with the customer seems very important in delivering superior services to its customers as this can be the starting point of acquiring new customers, maintaining and developing existing customers (Wirtz et al., 2016).

Rinehart et al. (1998) assert that customer service is assumed to be a common factor for the integration of marketing and logistics. This opinion justifies customer service as a unifying variable in ensuring that the want pleasing products and services produced by a company get to the final consumers at the right time and in the right form. This is in contrast with the position of Boove and Thill (1992) cited in Kanovska (2010) that perceives customer service as what all organisations make for satisfaction of the customer and helps to realize the big advantage the customers enjoy by purchasing the products or services. The study further added that customer services are also actions that can add more value to the product purchased and finally consumed by the customers. Customer service is also viewed by Buchanan (2011) as the provision of service to customers before, during and after purchase while the discernment of its success and achievement depends on the staff who can adjust themselves to the personality of the customers. The

capability of a service provider to increase returns and create more sales rests exclusively on firm's magnitude of customer service.

### **2.1.2 Customer Relationship Management**

Customer relations are marketing principle that has a connection with the organisation's shareholders. Coehlo and Henseler (2012) conceptualised customer relations as a fundamental tool that are planned to achieve corporate objectives and develop a sustainable competitive advantage by entering the market of marketing programs that are used to serve the target markets.

Customer relationship management (CRM) is a management technique that connects and patterns information technology with marketing. It was first used in the United States in the late 1990's, and till date, has been acknowledged in a various number of companies globally. In difference, some people have unenthusiastic impressions of CRM; such opinions hold that it is complex to execute successfully and that its cost-benefit performance is meager, among other condemnations. That notwithstanding, customer relationship management (CRM) is a generally known, widely implemented strategy for managing and fostering a company's relations with customers, clients and sales prospects to pledge incessant patronage. It also involves using expertise to organize, automate, and harmonize business processes, primarily sales activities, but also those for marketing, customer service, and technical support (Zamil, 2011).

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) focus on the worth that customer gets rather than the products or services to be put up for sale by the company. Through the execution of Customer Relationship Management (CRM), companies are expected to be able to set up communication and a better-quality relationship with their treasured customers. This circumstance is also anticipated that the company will not only market a product and service with good quality and competitive prices but also be able to answer customers' desires and needs as opined by Indah (2013) which can lead to satisfaction and customer loyalty.

## **2.2 Empirical Review**

Adebayo (2023) conducted a study to scrutinize the implication of atmospheric ambience on customers' experience in service marketing with a special concentration on store-based retail businesses. The quantitative method was used as a research design the population size was the customers of 19 retail outlets in the Lagos state metropolis. A survey method through a questionnaire was used to collect the primary data; Godden's(2004) model sample size was adopted and 246 was determined as the sample size, convenience sampling techniques was employed in the study. Out of the 246 copies of the questionnaire that were administered, 150 were finally retrieved and coded for data analysis. Standard multiple regression was adopted to analyze the data. The conclusion of the study shows that retail store ambience is conceivably one of the most major factors in attracting and retaining customer and enhancing customer experience. The study recommended that retail stores practitioners should try as much as possible to emphasise more on ways of improving their retail store environment.

Research carried out by Juanamasta et al. (2019) to examine the problems company faced that make a company to have appalling image and cheapen the levels of consumer loyalty. The research study applied the use of qualitative method, and also makes use of Positivism, Naturalistic and Interpretative research philosophies. The data for the research was collected using interviews, documentation, and observation methods.

Kursunluoglu (2011) conducted a research work titled “Customer Service Effects on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty: A field research in shopping centers in Izmir city in Turkey”. The intention of the research work is to review customer service effects on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The field study is applied by using survey methods on a face-to-face and electronic mail basis as interview methods including four hundred shopping mall customers who live in Izmir city in Turkey. The research model is formed for measuring customer service effects on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The research model is tested by three hypotheses via regression analyses. The results explain that 13.9% of the variance in customer satisfaction, 12.5% of the variance in customer loyalty and also customer satisfaction can explain 43.2% of the variance in customer loyalty. Consequently, customer services can explain both customer satisfaction and customer loyalty as it must be improved by retailers.

Teshita and Gemedi (2021) conducted a research work to examine the customers’ relationship management practices on customer retention and loyalty of Oromia credit and savings share company in Bule Hora city Ethiopia. The study makes use of simple random sampling technique. The data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis and inferential statistics methods by using SPSS version 20 for analyzing the data collected. The study revealed that the four customer relationship management dimensions are strongly related and customer relationship management has a significant relationship on customer retention and loyalty of the company.

Suleiman (2018) examined a study to determine the effect of customer relationship management (CRM) on customer satisfaction and its effect on customer loyalty of Islamic Bank in Aceh’s Province. The population of the study embraces all the customers of the Bank. The study adopts the use of convenience random sampling with a sample size of 250 respondents. The data collected was analysed through a structural equation model (SEM). The outcome from the analysis reveals that customer relationship management has considerable influences on both satisfaction and customer loyalty as satisfaction also affects customer loyalty to the bank. The study further reveals that customer satisfaction plays an important role as well as a fractional mediator between the influences of customer relationship management on customer loyalty. The implications of the study shows that the management of Bank needs to work on how to develop its customer relationship management programs that can perk up customer loyalty.

Karyose et al. (2017) investigated a study aimed at analysing the influence of service quality, corporate image, and customer relationship marketing on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The population of the study consisted of 180 bank customers in Malang city of Indonesia. Structural Equation Model (SEM) was used to analyse the data gathered. The results of the analysis revealed that service quality, corporate image, and customer relationship marketing has influence on customer satisfaction, and service

quality, corporate image. More so, customer relationship marketing has significant influence on customer loyalty. In addition, customer satisfaction has effects on customer loyalty and Customer satisfaction mediates the effect of service quality, corporate image, and customer relationship marketing on customer loyalty.

Ramdhani et al. (2017) conducted study to investigate the impact of service delivery on customer satisfaction. The study therefore shows that service providers offering high levels of customer services are in a strong position to attract new customers to their brand. The study further reveals that there is an inconsistent level customer service delivery that exists amongst dealerships which translates into the fact that there is difficulty being experienced by Ford automobile to ensure consistent levels of service across its dealer network and the fact that there is a gap in terms of service delivery in the automotive market for Ford.

Gbadeyan (2010) researched into Customer Relationship Management and Hospital Service Quality in Nigeria. The Objective of the study is to examine how customer relationships management can be employed to bring about improve health service quality in Nigeria. The data for the study was collected through questionnaire instrument administered to 200 health workers at the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital Ilorin, Nigeria. Exploratory test was conducted to ascertain the mean age of the sample distribution, while Chi-square, Kolmogorov Smirnov test and Factor Analysis were used as a Statistical tools to further perform data analysis on the study. The findings of the study reveal that the mean age was not significantly different from the hypothesized value, customer relationship management (CRM) has significant effects on the quality of Hospital Services in Nigeria ( $\chi^2=0.000$ , d.f=2 and  $P \leq 0.05$ ). The study recommends pre-planning and understanding expectation of stakeholders for CRM successful implementation.

Almsalam (2014) investigated a study with the primary goal of analysing the relationship between two of the most important antecedents of customer satisfaction, namely customer expectation and perceived service quality and customer satisfaction. Data were collected through a survey, including samples of 250 customers from the 5 Banks in Damascus, Syria. SPSS was used to test the hypotheses. The finding shows that customer expectation and perceived service quality have a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

Sakar and Islam (2021) conducted a research study to explore the relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality of the commercial banks in Cumilla district. The total number of sample was 400 and the data for the study was collected by face to face interview using structured questionnaire method. Closed ended and open ended question were able to be used to gather data for the research work and total number of five hypotheses was used in relation with five major factors of SERQUAL model. The study concluded that the considered five factors play a significant role in improving the service quality.

### **3.0 Methodology**

This study made use of quantitative method to evaluate the consequence and imperative of customer service delivery on customer relation and attraction of selected store-based

retail outlets in Lagos state. Survey technique was considered through a self-administered questionnaire in order to ascertain the perception and position of target beneficiaries about the imperative of customer service delivery on customer relation and attraction with evidence from selected store- based retail outlets in Lagos state Metropolis. A multistage sampling techniques was used through purposive sampling that was adopted to focus on the three major store based retail outlets (Shoprites, Spar and Buyrites) while availability sampling was used to determine customers that were available on weekend days when the research was conducted at all outlets of the selected retail stores in Lagos state. The final stage of the sampling was the stage of using the random sampling through mall intercept to select the respondents for the study and administer the questionnaire to the customers of the selected retail stores in Lagos state. And the instrument used for the analysis was SPSS.

### 3.1 Model Specifications

A model of the relationship is hypothesized, and estimates of the parameter values that are used to develop equations. The study is based on two major constructs, namely customer service delivery and customer relationship and attraction, that is,

$$Y = f(X)$$

Where Y = customer relationship and attraction.

X = customer service delivery

#### Model for the Hypothesis

$$CUR = f(CS) \dots\dots\dots 3.1$$

$$CS = COH + PSS + e \dots\dots\dots 3.2$$

Substituting (3.2) into (3.1)

$$CUR = f\{COH + PSS\} \dots\dots\dots 3.3$$

$$CUR_i = \alpha + \beta_1 ed_i + \beta_2 rd_i + u_i \dots\dots\dots 3.4$$

Where:

CUR= Customer Relationship and attraction

CS= Customer Service delivery

**Table 1 Validity Statistics**

s/n	Validity Test	KMO	Barlett's Test	Sig.
1	Customer Service	.684	61.382	.000
2	Customer Relations	.735	77.221	.000

**Table 2 Reliability Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients Table**

Variables	Cronbach Alpha Coefficients
i. Customer Relations	.853
ii. Customer Service	.751

## 4.0 Research Findings/Results

### 4.1 Mean and Standard Deviation of the Customer Service Delivery

The mean and standard deviation indicated in Table 1 show that there are 10 items representing customer service delivery with two dimensions (complaint handling depicted in the table 1 as CH and post-sales services shown in the Table 3 as PSS). All the items recorded high levels of mean score. "Customers' patronage is aroused through immediate and instant response to the technical problem encountered by the customers" recorded the highest mean score ( $M = 4.16$ ,  $SD = 1.093$ ), whereas "Excellent post sales services increases the chances of a retail store in building customer loyalty" recorded a lowest mean score of ( $M = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 1.101$ ) respectively. This result shows that "Customers' patronage is aroused through immediate and instant response to technical problem encountered by the customers" is the main characteristic representing the customer service delivery in selected retail store in Lagos Nigeria.



**Table 3:** Mean and Standard Deviation of Customer Service Delivery

Code	Detail	Mean	SD
<b>Complaints Handling</b>			
CH1	Service provides effort in providing immediate and quick responses to questions raised by the customers to guarantee good customer relationship	4.15	.908
CH2	Timely response to customer's orders and transactions by the service providers' representatives enhances customer satisfaction	4.15	.925
CH3	Customers' patronage is aroused through immediate and instant responses to technical problems encountered by the customers	4.16	1.093
CH4	Ability of the retail officers to apologise to customer when mistakes are made enhance customer's repeat purchase	4.09	.976
CH5	Immediate handling of complain enhances customers' expectation	4.11	.914
<b>Post Sales Services</b>			
PSS1	Store-efficient post-sales services contribute to customer satisfaction	4.05	1.060
PSS2	Store quickly resolves problems in the delivery or receipt of products enhances customer attraction	4.01	1.141
PSS3	Store excellent post sales services increases the chances of retail store in building customer loyalty	3.95	1.101
PSS4	Store-effective post-sales services generate online reviews and recommendations	3.98	1.071
PSS5	Store brand image and product prestige are improved through excellent post-sales services	4.01	1.114

*Sources: Field Survey, 2024*

#### 4.2 Mean and Standard Deviation of the Customer Relations

The mean and standard deviation indicated below reveal there are five items representing customer relation shown in the table 4 as CUR. All the items recorded high levels of mean score. "Customers' perception of the stores that celebrate customers on their birthdays and other festive periods build loyalty" recorded the highest mean score (M = 4.07, SD = 1.153), whereas "Customers are satisfied when service providers communicate with them through different platforms" recorded a lowest mean score of (M = 4.00, SD = 1.153) respectively. This result shows that "Customers' perception of store that celebrate customers on their birthdays and other festive periods build loyalty" is the main characteristic representing the customer relation in selected retail store in Lagos Nigeria.

**Table 4:** Mean and Standard Deviation of Customer Relations

Code	Detail	Mean	SD
CUR1	Good communication between the service providers and their customers guarantees customer loyalty	4.04	1.134
CUR2	A store that rewards loyal customers enjoys continuous patronage of customers	4.05	1.116
CUR3	Customers are satisfied when service providers communicate with them through different platforms	4.00	1.153
CUR4	Customers build trust in a retail firm that addresses customers' complaint and negative feedback swiftly	4.01	1.156
CUR5	Customers' perception of stores that celebrate customers on their birthdays and other festive periods builds loyalty	4.07	1.153

*Sources: Field Survey, 2024*

### 4.3 Regression Analysis and Hypotheses Test between Customer Service Delivery and Customer Relations

Multiple regression analysis was conducted in determining the relationship between customer service delivery (complaints handling and post sales services) and customer relation of selected store- based retail outlets in Lagos state Metropolis.

**Table 5: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.629 <sup>a</sup>	.510	.496	.96751	1.902

a. Predictors: (Constant), Post sale Service, Complaints Handling

b. Dependent Variable: Customer Relations

*Sources: Researcher's Survey, 2024*

The model summary as indicated in table 5 above shows that R-Square is 0.510; this implies that 51% of variation in the dependent variable (customer relations) was explained by the customer service delivery variables (complaints handling and post sales services) while the remaining 49% is due to other variables that are not included in the model. This means that the regression (model formulated) is useful for making predictions.

**Table 6: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12.904	2	7.472	8.910	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	112.216	147	.839		
	Total	118.221	149			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Relations

b. Predictors: (Constant), Post sale Service, Complaints Handling

**Sources:** *Researcher's Survey, 2024*

The Table 6 summarized the results of the analysis of variation in the customer relations with large value of regression sum of squares (12.904) in comparison to the residual sum of squares with value of 112.216. The result indicated that the model fit to explain a lot of the variation in the operation customer relation. Thus, the estimated F-value (8.910) as given in the Table 6 with significance value of 0.000, is less than p-value of 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ). This means that the customer service delivery as a whole can jointly influence change in the customer relations.

**Table 7: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.167	.474		1.501	.000
	Complain Handling	.204	.093	.172	2.206	.029
	Post sale Service	.256	.074	.269	3.416	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Relations

**Sources:** *Researcher's Survey, 2024*

The dependent variable as shown in the table 7 clarifies the influence of customer service delivery variables (complaints handling and post sales services) on the customer relation. This was used as a yardstick to examine the influence between the two independent variables.

## 5. Discussions of Result

Specifically, Hypothesis H<sub>1</sub> predicted that complaints handling is positively related to customer relations. Result indicated that complaints handling had a significant positively relationship with customer relations ( $\beta = 0.204$ ,  $t = 2.206$ ,  $p = .029$ ). The result revealed that the complaints handling will eventually serve as the determinant of customer relations. Therefore, Hypothesis H<sub>1</sub> is supported.

Hypothesis H<sub>1</sub> predicted that post sales services is positively related to customer relations. Result indicated that post sales services had a positive and significant relationship with customer relations ( $\beta = 0.256$ ,  $t = 3.416$ ,  $p = .001$ ). Thus, the Hypothesis H<sub>2</sub> is supported at 5% level of significant. The overall summary of this regression analysis result in relations to the coefficient of customer service delivery have significant influence on customer relations of store- based retail outlets in Lagos state Metropolis in the area of complaints handling and post sales services). This implies that the null hypothesis was rejected, hence, the alternate hypotheses was accepted. Thus, customer service delivery has momentous influence on customer relations of store- based retail outlets in Lagos state Metropolis). The observed findings of the research conducted by Juanamasta et al. (2019), Kursunluoglu (2011), Gbadeyan (2010), Rhamdhani et al. (2017), Venkateswaran and Sundram (2021) are indifferent to the finding of this research work.

## 6. Implications of Findings

The objective of the study was to determine the relationship between customer service delivery and customer relations in Nigerian retail outlets. The result of the multiple regression analysis conducted to test the hypothesis whether effective customer service delivery has important relationship on service provider's customer relations posture reveals that the sub-variables used to proxy the customer service delivery (complaint handling and post sales services) have significant influence on customer relations. The implication of this is that there is possibility for retail firms to build lasting customer relation and attraction that without doubt will lead to attraction and loyalty provided that the retail firms design a good and satisfactory customer service delivery model that is customer-oriented.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study shows that there is likelihood for retail firms to build dynamic customer relation that will unavoidably lead to customer desirability and loyalty when the retail firms are able to design a good and up to standard customer service delivery model that is customer-oriented. Therefore, swift reply to customer needs and grievance, effective and efficient order processing and provision of technical support are indispensable constituents which sustain service quality and customer loyalty. The study recommended that service providers as a matter of inevitability need to work on customer service delivery agenda that will have the objective of generating long lasting customer relation with the objectives of attracting new customers, maintaining the existing ones, create brand awareness and improve customer and employee retention.

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