Network for Research and Development in Africa
International Academic Journal of Management and Marketing
ISSN: 2384-5849, Volume 11, Issue 1
PP 120-135 (May, 2024)
DOI: 67321425661116
journals@arcnjournals.org
https://arcnjournals.org

Service Responsiveness and Customer Patronage of Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State

Dr. Patience Goda Oguru[1] and Prof. Paul Meeting Nadube[2]
Department of Marketing, Faculty of Administration and Management, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt

***Abstract**: This study examined the relationship between service responsiveness and customer patronage of deposit money banks in Rivers State. The study specifically aimed to determine the extent to which service responsiveness relates with customer retention, referral and profitability. The population of the study comprised the twenty two (22) deposit money banks operating in Rivers State as enlisted in Yellow Pages (2013-2014) edition. The entire population formed the sample size for this study. However, five (5) top management staff were drawn from each of the twenty two (22) banks under survey. Hence a total of one hundred and ten (110) respondents which includes the Customer Care Managers, sales Managers, Marketing Managers, branch manager and Information Technology Managers. Both primary and secondary data collection methods were used to gather relevant data. Secondary data were sourced from extant literature while primary data were generated from the respondents by the use of a well-structured questionnaire designed in the Likert five-point scale 0f strongly disagree to strongly agree. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.7 was adopted as threshold to determine the reliability of the research instruments. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to investigate the relationship between the hypothesized variables. Data analysis relied on the Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) version 22.0. From the analysis, it was found that the relationship between service responsiveness and customer patronage of deposit money banks in Rivers State was positive and statistically significant. Based on the findings, the study concludes that service responsiveness is a creditable factor for achieving customer patronage. The study thus recommends that deposit money banks in Rivers State who desire to stimulate customer patronage should lessen the gap between users' expectations and their experiences by adopting quick response strategies that will help them attend to customers' questions, complaints and requests promptly in order to enhance customer retention, referrals and profitability.*

Key words: *Customer patronage, referral, customer retention, service responsiveness, profitability, deposit money banks, service scape gaps theory.*

INTRODUCTION

In recent time, the drive to provide effective and efficient customer service has been recognized in the service sector considering the increased competition in their industry and growing sophistication in customer demand and pursuit of higher standards of service (Nasir, 2014). This stiff competition has compelled service providers, particularly the banking industry in Rivers State to compete in the market and to differentiate themselves to prevent their customers from switching to other competitors at almost zero cost (Kumaradeepan & Rajumesh, 2011). The banking industry is on the constant look out for

better ways to engage their customers and improve their relationship with them (Paul, 2014). Banks and other financial institutions are searching for ways to keep their existing customers while they gain new ones (Peppard, 2000).
The banking industry in Nigeria's economy is probably the most popular one in the financial service sector (Ibudialo, 2019). Traditionally, banks operated in relatively stable environment for decades, but today the industry is faced with increased competition from upcoming new banks and micro finance institutions (Momanyi, 2014). Customers' demand for better services has compelled banks to constantly search for knowledge that will give them distinctive competence and set them apart in the marketplace. The banking industry is on the constant look out for better ways to engage their customers and improve their relationship with them (Paul, 2014). Banks and other financial institutions are searching for ways to keep their existing customers while they gain new ones (Peppard, 2000). Hence, better service quality provides competitive advantage to the organization; therefore, service providers should ensure the best service quality to the customers and to be customer centric in managing interactions (Krishnakumar & Rashmi, 2018). Adebisi and Lawal (2017) postulated that for any organization, service quality remains a critical success factor to achieve a competitive advantage.

Service responsiveness is a vital determiner of service quality. Liang, Chang and Wang (2011) opined that service responsiveness is a critical variable for quality in service contexts. The responsiveness aspect of service quality has an influence on customer satisfaction and loyalty (Siddiqi, 2011). To customers, service means being satisfied, delighted, urgently and properly attended to, and having a cordial relationship with the employees (Coker, Iyamabo & Otubanjo, 2013). Thus, service firms propel their employees to handle customers' requests and complaints promptly (Liang, *et al*. 2011). However, customer complaint about bank service failure is alarming due to some identifiable pitfalls in their operation. This include inadequate technological innovation, slow digital transformation, poor customer experience, product-focused approaches, high interest rates on loans and deposits, poor interest rate for customers, poor service delivery such as inefficient complaint feedback mechanism, inconsistent ATM services, poor network service for online transactions and long waiting periods for mobile users, long queue and huge crowd in the banking halls, among others (Louis, 2023).

Although, some scholars have carried out studies to determine the connection between service responsiveness and customer patronage, none of these studies was found to have investigated the nexus between service responsiveness and customer patronage of deposit money banks, particularly in Rivers State. On this premise, this study seeks to streamline the extent to which service responsiveness relate with customer patronage of deposit money banks, particularly in Rivers State.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE STUDY

This study is anchored on the service scape gaps theory. The service scape gaps theory is associated with Parasuraman, Zeitheml and Berry (1985) as cited in Kwabena, Mabel, Inusah and Kwesi (2011). The gaps theory establishes two different types of gaps in service marketing. These gaps are the customer gap and the provider's gap. Service providers' gap is considered as internal gap within a service firm. Services help in closing the customer gap at some extent, which means, the gap between customer expectations and perceptions. In the banking sector, consumer expectation is naturally high in terms of reliability, responsiveness and empathy. Relating this theory to our study, bank managers must understand the perception and expectation of customers and create a service environment or service quality with responsiveness among other elements to boost service delivery and enhance customer patronage.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK / STUDY VARIABLES

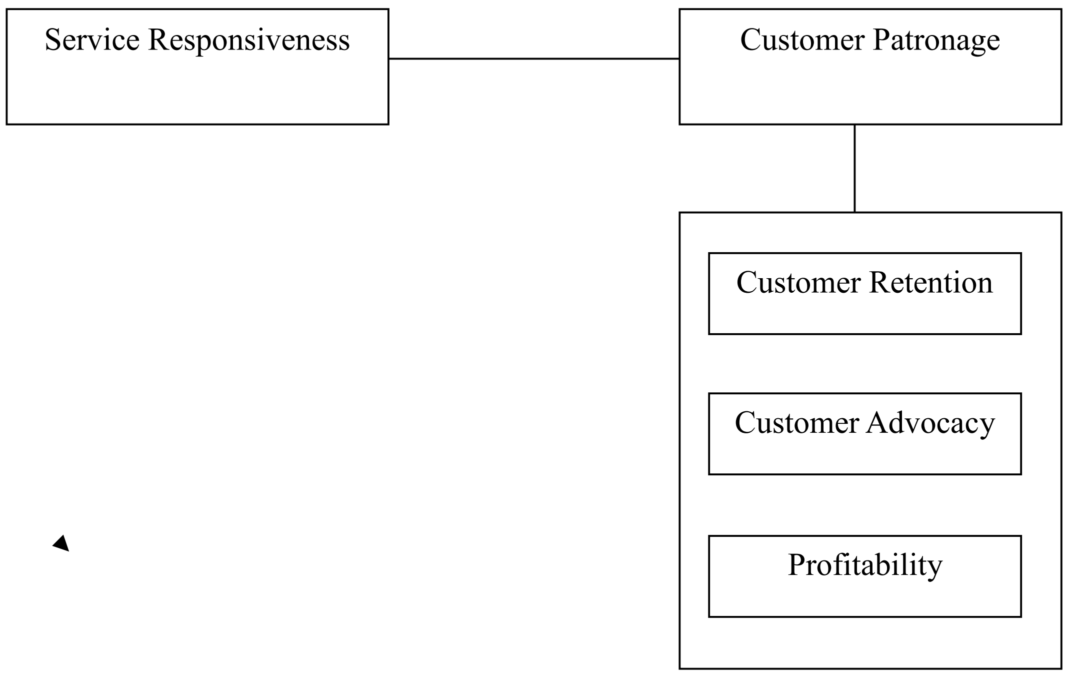

Fig 1: Conceptual Framework of the Relationship between Service Responsiveness and Customer Patronage of Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State.
Source: Researchers' Conceptualization (2024). Adapted from Adebisi and Lawal (2017).

THE CONCEPT OF SERVICE RESPONSIVENESS

Responsiveness can be used as a guideline to assess the reliability of a firm. A firm is known to be responsive when it communicates to its customers how long it would take to get answers or have their problems dealt with (Iddrisua, Noonib, Fiankoc & Mensahd, 2015). Companies consistently meet their customers' expectations and handle disputes by competently and proactively adapting to their changing needs and preferences. Responsiveness, customarily measures the ability of a company or firm to respond to customers with readiness and the promptness of the service (Parasuraman, *et al.*, 1988). This definition has been modified by Fida, Ahmed and Singh (2020) to include the timely delivery of services with speed to counter the problems of long queues and waiting periods. According to Iddrisua, *et a*l. (2015), service responsiveness is concerned with dealing with the customers' requests, questions and complaints promptly and attentively.

Also, Kara, Lonial, Tarim and Zaim (2015) viewed service responsiveness as the ability of service providers to help and provide fast and appropriate services to consumers with clear delivery. Coker, *et al*. (2013) identified responsiveness as a firm's capability to acknowledge and adequately adjust to the constant changes in their customers' preferences and business line. Srinivasan, *et al*. (2021) also described responsiveness as the ability to react quickly or willingness to help customers promptly. For example, to avoid keeping customers waiting for no cogent reason. To Kuo, *et al*. (2019), responsiveness is the awareness and desire to help consumers and provide services quickly. In the words of Ahmad and Sungip (2018), it is the desire, response or alertness of employees in helping consumers and providing fast and responsive services. Gupta and Agarwal (2013) posited that, responsiveness is a firm's willingness to assist its customers by providing fast and efficient service performance. This is in harmony with Wieseke, Geigenmuller and Kraus (2012) assertion (cited in Nadube & Barango-Tariah, 2020) that, the willingness or readiness of employees to provide the required customer service without any inconveniences at any time will strongly influence the level of customer satisfaction. Base on the sting competition among players in the telecommunication sector, mobile telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt need to be very proactive and prompt in addressing customers' concerns so as to gain competitive edge over their rivals and remain viable in the market (Nadube & Barango-Tariah, 2020).

THE CONCEPT OF CUSTOMER PATRONAGE

Any successful business organisation must acquire new customers and get existing ones that will continue to patronize its products and services for the actualization of organizational goals and objectives. Hence, firms must consider service quality as a vital component for their competitive advantage and pay close attention to same, so as to retain and improve their level of competitiveness. Omar and Orakwue (2006) maintained that efficient service quality and speed of transactions have significant positive influence on customer patronage.

Customer patronage has been regarded as a fundamental determinant of long term customer behavior (Renner & Ezekiel-Hart, 2022**).** According to Akintan, Dabiri and Kareem (2022), patronage is the impulse desire and consideration within the consumer or customer which induces the purchase of goods from certain outlet or company. Customer patronage refers to when a customer wishes to consider, recommend or make purchases from retailers in the future, the desire to buy from it, and the willingness to recommend to others in the future (Mathwick & Rigdon, 2001) cited in Dabiri, *et al*. (2017).

However, the low patronage experienced by some deposit money banks in Rivers State can be attributed largely to the inability of banks to inspire a feeling of security on customers' deposits, exhibit their expertise and communication skills to deal confidentially with clients' requests, offering competitive interest rates while their transactional cost are reasonable, good arrangement of transaction counters, tables and cabinet for keeping documents, inability of customers getting through on the telephone with customer service to lodge complaints, inconvenient locations of banks, low service delivery, using customers' accounts for fraudulent activities or divulging their confidential information. Also, frequent breakdown of network and computer systems, inadequate and malfunctioning of ATM at strategic locations such as markets, government ministries and higher institutions, lack of enough serving points in banks and inadequate Point Of Sales (P.O.S) centres are the factors responsible for long queues in banks which in turn leads to low customer patronage (Dabiri, Ojenike & Akintan, 2017).

MEASURES OF CUSTOMER PATRONAGE

For the purpose of this study, customer patronage is measured with customer retention, referrals and profitability respectively.

Customer Retention

Due to the dynamic nature and enormous number of players in the Nigerian market, keeping the existing customers is a huge challenge. Consequently, many financial institutions have been building their organizational capacity in this regard by emphasizing on the effective management of relationship with customers (Srinivasan, Maheswari, Kavitha & Navaneetha, 2021). This has necessitated the need for customer retention. The marketing concept states that in order for a firm to survive in the long term and make profit, it must ascertain the genuine needs and wants of specifically defined target markets and then produce goods and services that meet their requirement (Nwokah, Opara & Adiele, 2012). Thus, Companies that seek to enjoy improved relationship with customers must make customers the pivot of the company's marketing programmes (Didia & Otite, 2017). This is paramount because, improving customer experience is one of the important strategies to build strong customer loyalty and retention. Also, understanding customers' needs and desires, providing good product or service, building good loyalty programs to reward the customers and staying in touch with the customers will help to improve customer loyalty and retention.

Customer retention plays a pivot role towards the success and survival of firms in today's competitive market (Ibojo, 2015).The customer is one of the most important stakeholders in any organization; as no organization is likely to succeed without customers (Babatunde and Olukemi, 2012). Hence, service firms such as banks, should strive to attract and retain customers by satisfying their needs and wants in order to create a competitive edge in an ever increasing competitive market place (Sokefun, 2011). To increase profits and market share, firms should pay much attention to the quality of services they provide to their customers (Kemp & Rotmans, 2005).

Customer retention is when a consumer intends to repurchase from the same service firms, to keep an optimistic attitude towards the service firm, and to willingly refer the service to others (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000). Most often, when people are satisfied with a product or service they tend to make repeat purchase of that product or service rendered. Retention of existing customers is undeniably cheaper than attracting new ones. Retained customers provides truthful and productive feedback, they increase the volume of their purchases with the firm, they never mistreat firm employees and they enthusiastically provide referral to their relatives and friends (Shoemaker & Bowen, 2003). Dick and Basu (2009) maintained that retention behavior can take on several forms, but is usually viewed as future intention to repurchase products and services or continue a working relationship. The level of customer retention is measured by examining the frequency of purchases or the amount of brand switching (Ahmed, Hadiza & Queensley, 2021).

The corporate objective of any bank, is to maximize of shareholders' wealth; and this can only be achieved if customers are satisfied and retained (Sokefun, 2011). Davoudian (2010) indicated that superior service quality enables companies to distinguish themselves from competitors, attain sustainable competitive advantage, and improve their functionality. Omar and Orakwue (2006) asserted that efficient service quality and speed of transactions have significant positive influence on customers' bank selection decision. However, poor service delivery and lack of innovation in developing new products that will meet customers' demands is one of the reasons why some banks are not able to retain their customers (Shafie, 2004).

Referrals

The impact and importance of customer referrals are undeniable. It is a powerful tool to acquire new customers without actually making a big dent in your marketing budget. Client referrals are important because it shows your business is doing something right and that your customers are willing to trust you. A personal comment or recommendation is often sufficient to convince another person to try particular products or services (Ellis & Watterson, 2011). In the marketing literature, referrals and word-of-mouth (WOM) influence are sometimes interchanged. Word-of-mouth (WOM) has proven a valuable marketing tool for acquiring new customers, because people consider their friends and family to be trusted sources of information (Dhiraj, 2023).

A referral is primarily introducing someone to one or more providers of the service they are seeking and enabling them to make their own choice. Referrals can be regarded as an informal communication from a customer, directed at others about the usage or characteristics of particular services or a related service provider (Gremler, Gwinner & Brown, 2021). The Cambridge English Dictionary defined referral as an act of sending someone or something to a person or place where what is wanted or needed can be obtained. Referral in marketing refers to a method of spontaneously promoting a business's products and services to new customers by word of mouth (Monica, 2008).

Personal recommendations go a long way in building trust and are perceived to be more reliable than advertising. New customers who are referred by a close friend or family are considered high-value customers because they tend to be more reliable and loyal. Customer referrals are an excellent way for a business to grow its customer base and acquire new high-value clients. Referral marketing builds on positive word-of-mouth to gain greater market awareness (Indeed editorial team, 2022).

Profitability

Profitability is the primary goal of all business ventures. Without profitability the business will not survive in the long run. So measuring current and past profitability and projecting future profitability is very essential. Profitability is a core measure of the performance of a firm and it constitutes a vital aspect of its financial reporting. For a firm to remain in business and withstand competition from firms operating in similar industry, profit maximization is key. It is a major pre-requisite for long-term survival and success of a firm; as well as a key pre-condition for the achievement of other financial goals of a business entity (Gitman & Zutter, 2012). This assertion agrees with that of Yazdanfar (2013) who viewed profitability as an indicator of firm performance and a significant prerequisite for firm survival and long term achievement. Ritu (2016) maintained that the Profitability of a business is an indication of its financial ability and income earning capacity. It is a measure of an organization's profit relative to its expenses. Organizations that are more efficient will realize more profit than less-efficient organizations. Zeeshan, *et al*. (2016) posited that profitability maximizes the values of stakeholders as well as investors and also show the performance of any firm in competent environment.

Profitability is one of the most important forms of economic efficiency. In the view of Ritu (2016), profitability is the ability of a company to use its resources to generate revenues in excess of its expenditures. Cojocaru (2000) defined profitability as a company's capacity to obtain profit from its economic activity, by using its resources and it represents an economic instrument which underlies all the company' decisions regarding activity management and relationships with the business partners. Marinela (2011) asserted that profitability represents the fundamental criterion of assessing the efficiency of an economic activity, its value reflecting the relation between the efforts made and the results obtained by the enterprise. It expresses an enterprise's capacity to generate profit; that is to cover the expenses by incomes and to obtain a surplus value represented by the profit. There is a strong bond between profitability and firm's growth (Marinela, 2011). Profitability is the profit making ability of firms and an essential factor for their perpetual existence. Margaretha and Supartika (2016) asserted that profitability reveals the firm's ability and capacity to generate earnings at a rate of sales, level of assets and stock of capital in a specific period of time.

Regrettably, the business environment has remained very unfriendly, with many businesses, regardless of their years of existence, as they witness downward trend in their profit earnings (Angahar & Ivarave, 2016). Many Nigerian firms have performed far below expectation in terms of revenue generation and profitability. This dismal performance is attributable to low customer patronage arising from poor service quality (Odusanya & Yinusa, 2018). High rate of performance of firms indeed contribute effectively to income generation and overall development of an economy (Lazar, 2016). Profitable firms create value, hire people, tend to be more innovative, more socially responsible and are beneficial to the entire economy through payment of taxes (Marinela, 2011). It is therefore in the best interest of every organization to maximize their return rate to satisfy shareholders, attract new customers and ensure continued operations.

Hence, customer loyalty is an important driver of a service firm's profitability. The profits derived from loyal customers come from increased purchases, reduced operation costs, referral of new customers, and price premiums. Also, customer acquisition costs can be amortized over a longer period of time. It is therefore crucial for business owners to find a balance between driving profits and keeping customers happy, as unhappy customers can lead to a loss of revenue. Companies that prioritize customer satisfaction tend to have a more loyal customer base, which can translate to long-term profitability (Fores, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the cross sectional survey research design to determine the extent of relationship between study variables. The population of the study comprised the twenty two (22) deposit money banks operating in Rivers State as enlisted in Yellow Pages (2013-2014) edition. The entire population formed the sample size for this study. However, five (5) top management staff were drawn from each of the twenty two (22) banks under survey. Hence a total of one hundred and ten (110) respondents which includes the Customer Care Managers, sales Managers, Marketing Managers, branch manager and Information Technology Managers. A well-structured questionnaire designed in a five point likert scale of Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree(1) was administered to all the respondents to collect primary data for the study. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.7 was adopted as threshold to determine the reliability of the research instruments. Univariate descriptive statistics such as the pie charts, percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to analyze each of the variables under investigation; while bivariate inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to investigate the relationship between the hypothesized variables. Data analysis relied on the Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) version 22.0.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis of Items on all Variables

S/N	Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients
1	Service Responsiveness	4	.742
2	Customer Retention	4	.704
3	Referral	4	.836
4	Profitability	4	.677

Table1 illustrates the coefficients of the instruments for the variables. The evidences shows that instruments has reliability coefficient above 0.7. The evidence from the tests revealed that while the instrument for referral (a=.836) has the highest level of reliability, service responsiveness (a =.742) has the lowest. However, all instruments based on the substantiality of the scores, are considered reliable and as such, suitable for the analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 2: Relationship between Service Responsiveness and Customer Retention

		Service Responsiveness	Customer Retention
Service Responsiveness	Pearson Correlation	1	.754**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	101	101
Customer Retention	Pearson Correlation	.754**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	101	101

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

From results of the analysis shown on table 2, there is a strong, positive and significant relationship between service responsiveness and customer retention evident in the correlation coefficient is 0.754 and the probability value of 0.000 which is less than the alpha level of 0.05 (i.e. p = 0.000 < 0.05) indicating that the relationship between service responsiveness and customer retention is significant. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis which states that service responsiveness does not significantly relate with customer retention and accept the alternate hypothesis.

Table 3: Relationship between Service Responsiveness and Referral

		Service Responsiveness	Referral
Service Responsiveness	Pearson Correlation	1	.443**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	101	101
Referral	Pearson Correlation	.443**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	101	101

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

From results of the analysis shown on table 3, there is a moderate, positive and significant relationship between service responsiveness and referral evident in the correlation coefficient is 0.443 and the probability value of 0.000 which is less than the alpha level of 0.05 (i.e. p = 0.000 < 0.05) indicating that the relationship between service responsiveness and referral is significant. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis which states that service responsiveness does not significantly relate with referral and accept the alternate hypothesis.

Table 4: Relationship between Service Responsiveness and Profitability

		Service Responsiveness	Profitability
Service Responsiveness	Pearson Correlation	1	.669**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	101	101
Profitability	Pearson Correlation	.669**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	101	101

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

As shown from results of the analysis shown on table 4, there is a strong, positive and significant relationship between service responsiveness and profitability evident in the correlation coefficient is 0.669 and the probability value of 0.000 which is less than the alpha level of 0.05 (i.e. p = 0.000 < 0.05) indicating that service responsiveness significantly predicts profitability. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis which states that service responsiveness does not significantly relate with profitability and accept the alternate hypothesis.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The relationship between service responsiveness and customer retention was found to be strong, positive and significant evident in the correlation coefficient is 0.754 and the probability value of 0.000 which is less than the alpha level of 0.05 (i.e. p = 0.000 < 0.05) indicating that the relationship between service responsiveness and customer retention is significant. Similarly, a strong, positive and significant relationship was found between service responsiveness and profitability as indicated in the correlation coefficient of0.669 and the probability value of 0.000 which is less than the alpha level of 0.05 (i.e. p = 0.000 < 0.05). Also, there is a moderate, positive and significant relationship between service responsiveness and referral evident in the correlation coefficient is 0.443 and the probability value of 0.000 which is less than the alpha level of 0.05 (i.e. p = 0.000 < 0.05). Based on these results, the formulated hypotheses were rejected.

These findings are in line with the findings of Nadube and Barango-Tariah (2020), who investigated the relationship between corporate responsiveness and customer satisfaction of stock broking firms in Port Harcourt and found a strong, positive and statistically significant relationship between corporate responsiveness and customer satisfaction. The study concluded that corporate responsiveness significantly relate with customer satisfaction and therefore, recommended that stock broking firms should be, responsive enough in order to deliver the desired satisfaction to their customers and gain loyalty. The results are not different from the findings of Srinivasan, *et al.* (2021) who carried out a study to identify the various variables influencing customers on responsiveness factor and to analyze the influence of responsiveness factor on customer satisfaction. The study revealed that a significant relationship exist between responsiveness factor and customer satisfaction in the telecommunication sector. Results of this study conforms to the findings of Renner and Ezekiel-Hart (2022) who explored service quality delivery and customer patronage of Deposit Money Banks in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The study findings uncovered a significant relationship between service quality delivery and customer patronage of deposit money banks in Port Harcourt. The study therefore concluded that effective service quality delivery is a panacea for customer patronage and recommended that deposit money banks in Nigeria, particularly those in Rivers State, should be responsive in terms of their service delivery as it would enhance customer patronage.

Our findings also corroborates with the findings of Akintan, Dabiri and Kareem (2022), who sought to examine the effect and relationship between service quality dimensions and customer patronage in Oyo State college of Agriculture and technology Cooperative Society (OYSCATECH), Igboora. Results of their analysis showed a statistically significant and positive relationship between service quality dimensions on customer patronage. They recommended that the cooperative society's management should ensure that their employees improve on caring and providing individualized attention to members to increase their patronage as well as sustain and continue to offer dependable and accurate services to their members to serve them better and support their patronage. The results of this study are consistent with Dabiri, *et al*. (2017) who carried out a study on perceived service quality and customer's patronage of selected banks in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria. Results from the findings revealed that there was a strong positive relationship between the six service quality dimensions and customer patronage and thus recommended that banks should focus more on the six attributes of service quality dimensions of Bank Service Quality model in order to enjoy strong patronage by customers. This study further agrees with the findings of Ahmed, Hadiza and Queensley (2021) who examined the effect of service quality on customer retention of listed food and beverages companies in Kaduna State. Findings of their study unveiled that service quality is significantly associated with customer retention recommended that the management should give equal opportunity to all employees irrespective of service quality, so as to enhance effectiveness in the organizational performance and customer retention.

CONCLUSION / RECOMMENDATION

From the data analysis, the study revealed that service responsiveness has a very strong, positive and statistically significant relationship with customer patronage of deposit money banks in Rivers State. On the basis of these findings, the study concludes that service responsiveness is a creditable factor for achieving customer patronage. Based on the conclusion of this study and its relative consistency with results of similar previous studies, we therefore recommend that deposit money banks in Rivers State who desire to stimulate customer patronage should lessen the gap between users' expectations and their experiences by adopting quick response strategies that will help them attend to customers' questions, complaints and requests promptly in order to enjoy customer retention, referrals and profitability.

REFERENCES

Adebisi, O. S. & Lawal, K. O. (2017). The impact of service on customer loyalty: A study of pharmaceutical firms. *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review,* 4 (2).

Adiele, K. C. & Opara, B. C. (2014). Analysis of corporate identify on customer patronage of banks in Nigeria. *International Review of Management and Business Research*. *3*(4), 1809-1818.

Ahmad, A. & Sungip, Z. (2018). An assessment on service quality in the Malaysia insurance industry. *Communications of the IBIMA*, 1, 13-26.

Ahmad, S. A., Raja, N. R. Y., Haslinda, H. & Nor, J. (2018). Customer loyalty: Antecedents, approaches and influences of culture and religion. *Journal of Islamic Management Studies,* 2(1), 62-78.

Ahmed, B. A., Hadiza, S. A. & Queensley, A. R. U. (2021). Impact of service quality on customer retention of listed food and beverages companies in Kaduna State. *Gusau International Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, Federal University, Gusau, 4 (1).

Akintan, M. Dabiri, M. A. & Kareem, Z. (2022). Assessment of service quality and customer patronage of Oyo State college of agriculture and technology cooperative society (OYSCATECH), *Igboora. Himalayan Journal of Agriculture,* 3 (4), 1-9.

Azman, B. I., Yusrizal, Y. & Mohd, J. (2016). Service quality as a predictor of customer satisfaction and loyalty of banks in Malaysia. *International Journal of Consumer Behaviour*. 26(8), 211-222.

Babatunde, A. & Olukemi, L. (2012). Customer satisfaction and its implications for bank performance in Nigeria. *British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, .5 (1), 14-28.

Coker, A., Iyamabo, J. & Otubanjo, O. (2013). Investigating service responsiveness in customer perception of the corporate logo. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 8 (11), 8119-1833.

Dabiri, M. A., Ojenike, J. O. & Akintan, I. I. (2017). Perceived service quality and customer's patronage of selected banks in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria. *TRJ*, 3(1), 2454 -7301.

Dabiri, M. A., Ojenike, J. O. & Akintan, I. (2017). Perceived service quality and customer's patronage of selected banks in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria. *The Research Journal*, 3 (1), 4-9.

Davoudian, F. (2010). Survey customers' satisfaction of Refah Bank and its relationship with quality of bank services. *Unpublished Master Thesis*, Sanandaj Islamic Azad University.

Dhiraj, N. (2023). The importance of referrals for your business explained. https://birdeye.com/blog/importance-of-referrals-for-your-business-explained/

Dick, A. S. & Basu, K. (2009). Customer loyalty: toward an integrated conceptual framework. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 22, 99-113.

Didia, U. & Otite, W. (2017). Customer orientation and loyalty behavior of users of global system of mobile telecommunication services. *International Journal of Marketing Research and Management*, 7 (3), 38-46.

Durga, R. (2018). Customer loyalty in business. Views of students of Centria University of applied sciences. *Thesis*, Centria University of Applied Sciences.

Ellis, N. & Watterson, C. (2011). Client perceptions of regional law firms and their implications for marketing management. *The Service Industries Journal*, 21(4), 100–118.

Fida, B. A., Ahmed, U. & Singh, D. (2020). Impact of service quality on customer loyalty and customer satisfaction in Islamic banks in the Sultanate of Oman. https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/open-access-at-sage.

Forbes (2023). 14 strategies to balance profits and customer satisfaction. https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2023/03/06/15-strategies-to-balance-profits-and-customer-satisfaction/?sh=655246e6256e

Gremler, D. D., Gwinner, K. P. & Brown, S.W. (2021). Generating positive word-of-mouth communication through customer–employee relationships. *International Journal of Service Industry Management,* 12 (1), 44 –62.

Gupta, V. P. & Agarwal, P. K. (2013). Comparative study of customer satisfaction in public and private banks in India; A case study of Meert Region of U.P. *Global Journal of Business Management*, 7(1), 16-26.

Harcourt, H., Gbegeh, B. D. & Kuku, E. (2019). Brand awareness and customer satisfaction of deposit money banks in Rivers State. *Journal of Marketing Development (Special Edition*), 4, 24-32.

Harry, A. H. (2019). *Customer value analysis and customer satisfaction of pay television firms in Nigeria.* (M.Sc. Dissertation), Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020919517

Ibojo, B. O. (2015). Impact of customer satisfaction on customer retention: A case study of a reputable bank in Oyo, Oyo State, Nigeria. *IJMSR*, 3(2), 42-53.

IIddrisua, A. M., Noonib, IK K., Fiankoc, K. S. & Mensahd, W. (2015). Assessing the impact of service quality on customer loyalty: A case study of the cellular industry of Ghana. *British Journal of Marketing Studies,* 3(6), 15-30.

Indeed editorial team (2022). Referral marketing**:** Definition, benefits and strategies. **https://www.indeed.com/careeradvice/caree**r- development/referral-marketing.

Kandampully, J. & Suhartanto, D. (2000). Customer loyalty in the hotel industry: the role of customer satisfaction and image. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management,* 12 (6), 346-351.

Kara, A., Lonial, S., Tarim, M. & Zaim, S. (2015). A paradox of service quality in Turkey: The seemingly contradictory relative importance of tangible and intangible determinants of service quality. *European Business Review*, 17(1), 5-20.

Keiningham, T., Vavar, T., Aksoy, L. & Wallard, H. (2015). *Loyalty myths: Hyped strategies that will put you out of business and proven tactics that really work.* New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Kemp, R. & Rotmans, J. (2005). The management of the co-evolution of technical, environmental and social systems. Towards environmental innovation systems. Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 33-55.

Krishnakumar, P. & Rashmi, K. R. (2018). Service quality dimensions in mobile telecommunication sector. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM)*, 20 (7), 52-56.

Kumaradeepan, V. & Rajumesh, S. (2011). The impact of service responsiveness on customer switching in telecommunication industry, Jaffna District, Sri Lanka. *International Conference on Competency Building Strategies in Business and Technology*, At: India.

Kuo, Y. F., Wu, C. M. & Deng, W. J. (2019). The relationships among service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction and postpurchase intention in mobile value-added services. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 25(4), 887-896.

Kwabena, N. S., Mabel, S., Inusah, A. & Kwesi, A. (2011). Service quality and customer patronage of three-star hotels in Ghana's metropolitan city of Accra. *European Journal of Business and Management,* 3 (4), 119-131.

Liang, R. D., Chang, C. S. & Wang, T. S. (2011). The effect of service responsiveness and social emotions on service outcomes: An empirical investigation of service firms. *African Journal of Business Management,* 5(8), 3155-3167*.*

Louis, T. (2023). Banking. *Legacy banks*, Finstechmargarzine.com/article.

Marinela, G. (2011). Economic efficiency and profitability. Studia Universitatis, Vasile Goldiş Arad. file:///C:/Users/ADMIN/Downloads/Economic_Efficiency_and_Profitability.pdf

Monica, L. (2008). Customer referral management: The implications of social network. *The Service Industries Journal,* 28 (5), 669 - 683.

Nadube, P. M. & Barango-Tariah, M. U. (2020). Corporate responsiveness and customer satisfaction of stock broking firms in Port Harcourt. *International Journal of Innovations in Management Science and Marketing Research,* 7 (1), 3248 – 4233.

Nasir, A. (2014). Customer loyalty in telecom sector of Pakistan. *Journal of Sociological Research*, 5(1), 1948-5468.

Nwikinaka, B. L. & Poi, E. L. (2023). Customer care practices and customer patronage of telecommunications firms in Port Harcourt. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, Accounting and Human Development*, 8 (2), 3371 – 3647.

Nwokah, N. G., Opara, B. C. & Adiele, K. C. (2012). *Marketing dynamics*. Owerri, Nigeria, Avan Global Publications.

Nwulu, C. S. & Asiegbu, I. F. (2015). Advancement inclination behaviors and university academic staff patronage of deposit money banks in Port Harcourt. *International Journal of Research in Business Studies and Management,* 2(6), 94-104.

Odusanya, I. A. Yinusa, O. G. & Ilo, B. M. (2018). Determinants of firm profitability in Nigeria: Evidence from dynamic panel models. *SPOUDAI Journal of Economics and Business*, 68 (1), 43-58.

Okike, O. S. & Barango-Tariah, M. U. (2019). The association between trust and customer loyalty of deposit money bank in Rivers State. *Journal of Marketing Development (Special Edition*), 4, 127-134.

Oluwagbemige, A. G. & Mylius, O. (2019). Price-off strategy and brand loyalty in the fast moving consumer goods sector in Port Harcourt. *Journal of Marketing Development (Special Edition*), 4, 135-142.

Omar, O. & Orakwue, E. (2006). Gender-based choice of retail banking in Nigeria. *Journal of Business and Retail Management Research* (JBRMR), 5 (3).

Opara, B. C., Kuku, E. & Gbegeh, B. D. (2019). Penetration pricing and customer retention of paint manufacturing firms in Rivers State. *Journal of Marketing Development (Special Edition*), 4, 201-208.

Palmatier, R. W. (2012). A *theoretical perspective of relationship marketing.* Cambridge: *Marketing Science* Institute, 7(4), 13-30.

Panichpathom, S. (2016). Building customers' repatronage intention through service quality of community mall in Bangkok. *Entrepreneurial Business and Economics Review*, 4(2), 9-25.

Paul, M. A. & James, K. (2013). Relationship between corporate image and customer loyalty in the mobile telecommunication market in Kenya*. Journal of Management Studies,* 2(5), 299-308.

Peppard, J. (2000). Customer relationship management in financial services. *European Management Journal*, 18(3), 312-327.

Poi, E. L. & Opara, B. C. (2021). Inventory optimization and customer satisfaction of petroleum marketing firms in Rivers State. *Journal of Accounting, Marketing and Information Technology*, 118- 133.

Renner, B. A. & Ezekiel-Hart, J.C. (2022). Service quality delivery and customer patronage of deposit money banks in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. *British Journal of Management and Marketing Studies,* 5 (2), 97-108.

Ritu, T. (2016). Concept of profit and profitability of commercial banks in India. International *Journal of Science Technology and Management*, 5(12), 2394-1529.

Shafie, S. (2004). Adopting and measuring customer service quality in Islamic banks: A case study of bank Islam Malaysia Berhad. *Journal of Muamalat and Islamic Finance Research*, 1, (1), 1-12.

Shoemaker, S. & Bowen, J. (2003). Loyalty: A strategic commitment. *Cornell Hotel & Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 47-52.

Shukri, S. M., Yajid, M. S. A. & Tham, J. (2020). Role of responsiveness, reliability and tangibility on customer satisfaction. *A Multifaceted Review Journal in the Field of Pharmacy 1007 Systematic Reviews in Pharmacy,* 11(1), 1007-1013*.*

Siddiqi, K. O. (2011). Interrelations between service quality attributes, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the retail banking sector in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 6(3), 12-36.

Sokefun, A. (2011). Customer service and its effect on the banking business in Nigeria. *Journal of Research in National Development,* 9 (2).

Srinivasan, A.V., Maheswari, G.S., Kavitha, M. & Navaneetha, K. R. (2021). Impact of responsiveness on customer satisfaction in telecommunication sector. *Webology*, 18 (6).

Uvais, M. & Sulaiman, E. (2017). Influence of service quality on customers' patronage intention in commercial banks: An empirical evidence. *Journal of Business and Management, (IOSRJBM),* 19(6), 62-66.

Yazdanfar, D. (2013). Profitability determinants among micro firms: Evidence from Swedish data. *International Journal of Managerial Finance*, 9 (2), 150-160.

Zeeshan, F., Zahid, A., Farrukh, S. & Nasir, M. I. (2016). Determinants of profitability: Evidence from power and energy sector. *Studia Ubb Oeconomica*, 61(3), 59-78.