



EFFECT OF QUALITY SERVICE DELIVERY ON CONSUMERS PATRONAGE OF CHEMISTS.

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Abstract: *Customers demand the fast delivery of services that maintain reasonable prices while offering high levels of quality. Consumer preference extends to service delivery without prolonged waiting time in queues. Chemists struggle with customer retention because their facilities cannot deliver high-quality services quickly to numerous customers that match new service concepts. This study focused on consumer patronage in relation to service quality delivery through a study of chemists. Cross-sectional was selected as the primary research design. This study applied Cochran's (1977) method to determine the population at 384 respondents. Tables and frequencies together with percentages presented the data while multiple linear regression evaluated the research hypotheses. Quality service delivery measured by service reliability together with service responsiveness and service tangibility leads to substantial impacts on customer patronage. This study advises chemists to develop rapid consumer complaint solutions by creating clear complaint procedures together with dedicated complaint handling departments.*

Keywords: Service quality, service responsiveness, service reliability, service tangibility, customer patronage

Introduction

In today's competitive era, organizations that must achieve success must pay adequate attention to satisfying their customers' needs. Due to the benefits of customer retention, this is the main objective of business organizations, and excellence in quality service delivery is essential to accomplishing it (Ehigie & Karlay, 2018). Multiple research studies led by Cronin, Brady, and Hult (2000) and Kang and James (2004) alongside Yoon, Suh, Cho, and Park (2004) establish that delivering superior service quality drives businesses toward gaining new clients and retaining existing ones while managing costs and building reputation which generates profitability.

Superior service quality, in the opinion of Davoudian (2010), helps organizations to stand out from rivals, achieve long-term competitive advantage, and enhance functioning. Customer patronage has been demonstrated to be influenced by service quality, and pharmaceutical businesses may

gain a competitive edge by providing excellent customer service to their large clientele. It is held that an organization can only accomplish any goal if its clients are happy and stay loyal. The harsh market competition demands that drug shops satisfy customer needs and preferences to establish market dominance.

Additionally, clients are becoming more and more picky, expecting high-quality, inexpensive, and rapid service since they are sick of waiting in huge lines (Sokefun, 2011). According to Renner and Ezekiel-Hart (2022), customer patronage has been viewed as a crucial factor in predicting long-term consumer behavior. The organization can achieve both success and maintain its existence by meeting stakeholders' needs as well as their wishes (Dabiri, Ojenike, & Akintan, 2017; Dabiri & Kareem, 2022).

The study discusses the difficulties in determining how much a client uses a certain service provider. Due to the fierce rivalry in the sector, pharmaceutical retailers in Nigeria struggle to keep their consumers. Customers have many alternatives thanks to competition, which makes it difficult for a pharmacy to retain clients. Even if the pharmacist makes an effort to satisfy its consumers, their rivals provide them a lot of options. Because many consumers need to consider other options and get a taste of various settings, the pharmacist cannot be certain that it will keep its clients. This makes it challenging for many pharmacies in Nigeria to keep their clients over time.

The number of customers in these chemists increased as a result of customers from the less successful chemists switching to those that was thought to be more successful. Organizations must exert the most effort and utilize their resources to the fullest in order to get a competitive advantage over their rivals. As a result, it takes longer to finish service transactions.

Customers are tired of waiting in lengthy lines in order to receive services and seek great quality, reasonable prices, and rapid service delivery. The lack of appropriate equipment prevents chemists from providing high-quality services promptly to their many customers thus resulting in poor service quality and minimal innovation of new service paradigms for customer satisfaction.

Customers sometimes find it difficult to convey how they feel about the services provided by pharmacists, and even when they do, the chemist stores do not answer in a timely or correct manner. They also disregard the fundamental principles of doing business, such as treating customers like royalty, paying attention to their needs, and providing products and services that live up to their expectations. Drug companies' lack of dependability—which ranged from their incapacity to honor commitments to their unreliability in delivering high-quality service—made it impossible for them to retain customers.

Unquestionably, the two main hot themes that center on every marketing theory and practice are client loyalty and service excellence. In the current competitive environment, success depends on offering top-notch services. Customer input on service quality and quantity is essential for organizations trying to create marketing tactics that work.

Measuring customer support pertaining to service quality is difficult, though. A gap exists in this area, as indicated by several studies. In opposition to this, the researcher believes the topic to be an issue that merits studying utilizing a few chosen chemists in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria.

Research Objectives

This study evaluated the relationship between service quality delivery and customer loyalty in chemists located within Ilorin West. Particularly, the following specific objectives served as the study's direction:

- i. To assess the extent to which service responsiveness related to consumer patronage
- ii. To assess how closely service reliability and customer patronage are related.
- iii. To examine the impact that service tangibility has on customer patronage.

Research Questions

The study investigation follows these research questions as its direction:

- i. How does service responsiveness influence consumer patronage?
- ii. How much does service reliability influence consumer patronage?
- iii. How does the tangible nature of the service impact consumer patronage?

Scope of the Study

This study examined customer patronage and the delivery of high-quality services. The consumers are the target audience for quality service delivery, hence the clients of certain chemist stores in Kwara State, Nigeria's Ilorin West Local Government Area were the focus of this study. The service quality delivery aspect of the study focuses on service responsiveness, service reliability and service tangibility. The research will cover the period of 2012- 2022.

Literature Review

Concept of Service

A useful act, action, or effort that is carried out to meet a demand or satisfy a need is generally recognized to be service. In order to provide customers with solutions to their problems, service providers offer a variety of more or less intangible activities that generally speaking—though not always—occur in interactions between customers and service representatives as well as with their physical resources, goods, and/or systems (Dabiri et al., 2022; Gronroos, 2004)

Perspective of Service Quality

Wicks and Roethlein (2009) observe that quality exists with multiple definitions which fail to receive worldwide acceptance as a standard definition. Akitan (2016) alongside Haider (2001) explain that product or service quality emerges from all features that influence effectiveness in fulfilling customer needs. Each customer reaches satisfaction through effective evaluation of their attitude objects according to Wicks et al. (2009). People understand the term quality in multiple ways based on individual circumstances. Lovelock and Wirtz (2007) together with Akitan (2016) discovered five viewpoints on quality according to their study.

The transactional quality theory uses inherent excellence as its definition representing high standards and successful achievements. The perspective mainly surfaces when discussing performing and visual arts performance. According to some theories, individuals can only learn to recognize quality via repeated exposure. Managers or customers may also be able to detect if something is of poor quality if they can see that it won't be very useful to them.

The product-based approach, on the other hand, views quality as a specific and quantifiable attribute. It is said that differences in the amount of a component or feature present in the item or service cause variations in quality. This is a completely objective point of view so you cannot wonder whether there are differences in the needs, preferences, and tastes of particular customers in general or any group of customer segments.

Thirdly, there are user based definitions which begin from the standpoint that superiority is a case of opinion. Excellence is total satisfaction, according to these views. The arbitrary and demand driven outlook is that different clients have different wants and desires.

The third strategy makes use of most of the engineering and production techniques and least of the economic and marketing strategies.

And last, value based definitions for quality define it as “affordable” as it involves definitions in terms of value and price and the trade off between perception and price.

Perceived service quality, in the words of Ismaila (2016) and Zaithaml and Bitner (2003), is an evaluation or judgment regarding the excellence of a service. These days, there are a number of methods and acceptances for evaluating the phenomena of service quality (Okeke & Nonso, 2021). Study on service marketing claims that service quality is measured by the overall assessment of service which is done by a consumer (Ajirowo et al., 2023; Ismaila, 2016; Eshghi, Hanghton & Top, 2007). Service quality (Negi, 2009; Okeke et al., 2021) has attracted the interest of scholars and the professionals. Okeke et al. (2021) and Turgary (2014) defined service quality as an assessment based on cognitive meaning from a comparison of the service (perceived service) quality that a single customer receives to how services should be with a service quality determined from a customer's expectation of the service quality before making available the buy.

As perceived by Rashed and Chowdbury (2014), if firms are willing to provide good services they will enhance and sustain the competitive edge as well as customer satisfaction. According to Renner and Ezekiel-Hart (2022), service quality delivery is the difference between customer expectation and the results of the delivery that can actually deliver as expected. A company's service thus seems to possess high quality delivery when a company fulfills a customer's expectation and low quality delivery when the company doesn't meet a customer's expectation.

A study by Dabiri et al. (2022), Ajirowo et al.(2022); Okeke et al. (2021), Ehigie et al.(2018) and Lensa (2015), states that a quality of services is assessed by customers base on five factors which include dependability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles. These standards demonstrate how consumers organize knowledge about excellent customer service. Following is a detailed explanation of these five dimensions:

Responsiveness: The capacity of the service provider to offer prompt service is known as responsiveness. This means taking care of the customer and quickly addressing any problems or worries they might have. Being responsive is being ready to collaborate with the client to strive to meet their needs and provide the service as soon as possible.

Reliability: This refers to the capacity of the service provider to supply the services accurately and consistently; it is not the same as product reliability. This implies that the company fulfills its commitments about price, service delivery, and client dispute resolution. Consumers like to do business with companies who keep their promises, especially when it comes to the core components of their offerings.

Tangibility: the facility's outward appearance, which includes its contents, gear, and employees. This improves the company's reputation and gives the consumer a more favorable impression of the service. All of these give clients, especially new ones, tangible examples or visuals of the services they might make advantage to gauge their quality.

Assurance: the ability to deliver services with expertise. This includes the staff member's professionalism and tact, which both help to build trust. Customers who have trust and confidence in the staff also have faith and confidence in the company. This particular element most likely particularly important when it comes to services that the client perceives as high-risk or for which they do not know for sure about their ability to evaluate outcomes.

Empathy is the considerate, personalised service that a business offers to its customers. The essence of empathy is demonstrating to clients that they are unique and special through personalised or tailored service. Customers want the companies they do business with to treat them with respect and understanding. According to Ladhari (2008), a firm's battle to differentiate itself from its rivals is aided by service quality.

Customer Patronage

Patronage, according to Gremler and Brown (1996), is the degree to which a client continues to have a favourable, enduring attitude and disposition towards a service provider in addition to doing business with them again. 'This validates Oliver's (1999) viewpoint, according to which a customer's loyalty is defined as their passionate desire to keep purchasing a company's products instead of those of a competitor. Patronage, as defined by Seock (2009), is the act of making repeat purchases of the same or different things from a certain shop. The writers previously mentioned contend that a company's capacity to thrive depends critically on its ability to retain customers.

Theoretical Review

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Skinner introduced the Social Exchange hypothesis in 1950. According to the social exchange hypothesis, obtaining rewards and avoiding penalties are the primary drivers of contact (Enerson, 1978; Renner et al., 2022). Using a cost-benefit framework and alternative evaluation, the notion explained how individuals engage with one another, build bonds and relationships, and form communities through communication exchange (Homans, 1958; Renner et al., 2022). Thus, According to the social exchange hypothesis, the advantages of engagement, minus the disadvantages, affect attitudes and actions. This implies that expressing gratitude to customers for a particular kind gesture raises the potentiality that they'll come back for more business. The concept is that people avoid costly acts and participate in rewarding behaviors. Put differently, each act of social trade stems from a person's subjective evaluation of the benefits and drawbacks of participating in a social transaction.

Empirical Review

Dabiri et al. (2022) conducted a study on the effect of service quality on consumers' support of cooperative organisations. Based on the views of 171 members of a cooperative society, the results of regression and correlation analysis effectively demonstrated that service quality had a significant and positive impact on customers' patronage. Customers' spending was shown to be

positively and statistically impacted by the reliability, tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy aspects of service quality.

Renner and Ezekiel-Hart's 2022 research found a strong correlation between customer support and service quality for deposit money banks in Port Harcourt. According to the survey, offering top-notch services may boost customer spending.

Oladele et al. (2019) investigated the impact of facility quality on patronage among a particular group of hotels in the South-Western area of Nigeria. The results demonstrated a favourable and substantial correlation between the quality of the facilities and hotel customer service.

According to the study results and conclusions of Ehigie et al. (2018), customer satisfaction is impacted by the level of responsiveness, empathy, and clarity. Customer satisfaction is mainly affected by the service's price.

Methodology

A survey research design was employed in this investigation. Customers who had visited pharmacies inside the boundaries of the Ilorin West Local Government Area to buy medications or receive medical attention made up the target group. Because of the nature of this inquiry, the target population was endless. 384 respondents were selected as the sample size using Cochran's (1977) methodology. The study used 384 convenience/accidental randomly chosen respondents' questionnaire responses. Multiple regression analysis was used to evaluate the associated values, and frequency distribution tables were used to present the results.

Model Specifications

To assess the correlation between the variables in the research, a model was put out. Customer satisfaction and the delivery of high-quality services are the two main components that are the focus of this study. Consequently, the 'X' construct, which represents exceptional service performance, and the 'Y' construct, which represents customer patronage, were developed.

The regression equation of the form of

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + E$$

Where:

Y= consumer patronage

X= quality service delivery (measured by service responsiveness, service reliability, service tangibility)

β_1 = coefficient

β_0 = is a constant term and

E=Error term in the equation

The regression model given below will be used to test the H_{01} , H_{02} , and H_{03}

Model for Hypothesis 1, 2, 3

$$PAT = f(QSD) \dots\dots\dots 3.1$$

$$QSD = RES + REL + TAN + e \dots\dots\dots 3.2$$

Substituting (3.2) into (3.1)

$$PAT = f \{ RES + REL + TAN \} \dots\dots\dots 3.3$$

$$PR_i = \alpha + \beta_1 res_i + \beta_2 rel_i + \beta_3 tan_i + u_i \dots\dots\dots 3.4$$

Where:

PAT= Patronage

QSD= Quality Service Delivery

RES= Responsiveness;

REL = Reliability;

TAN= Tangibility;

α =Constant term;

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ = coefficients of the variables

U_i = Error term

Data Analysis

Table 4.1 Gender Distribution of the Respondent				
		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	135	35.2	35.2
	Female	249	64.8	100.0
	Total	384	100.0	

Source: The Researcher’s Field Survey, 2023.

‘According to Table 4.1, there were 35.2% of male respondents and 64.8% of female respondents. This suggests that there was an equal distribution of involvement.

Table 4.2 Age distribution of the Respondent				
		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-25years	17	4.4	4.4
	26-33years	144	37.5	41.9
	34-41years	110	28.6	70.5
	42-50years	61	15.9	86.4
	51years and above	52	13.5	100.0
	Total	384	100.0	

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey, 2023.

An analysis of Table 4.2 shows that 4.4% of respondents fit within the 18-25-year-old group while 37.5% fell between 26 and 33 years old, 28.6% were aged 34-41, 15.9% ranged from 42 to 50 and 13.5% exceeded 51 years old. Research participants between 26 and 33 made up the majority of respondents due to their age qualification for accurate research reporting on the study.

Table 4.3 Marital Status of the Respondent				
		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	163	42.4	42.4
	Married	221	57.6	100.0
	Total	384	100.0	

Source: The Researcher’s Field Survey, 2023.

Table 4.3 above shows that 42.4% of respondents were single and 57.6% of respondents were married. This implies that married people made up the bulk of the sampled respondents.

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Primary	32	8.6	8.6
	Secondary	37	10.0	18.6
	OND/NCE	103	27.8	46.4
	HND/BSC	139	37.6	84.0
	Others	59	15.9	100.0
	Total	370	100.0	

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey, 2023.

10.0% of respondents had finished secondary school, 8.6% had finished primary school, 27.8% had completed their ONDs or NCEs, 37.6% had completed their HNDs or B.Sc.s, and 15.9% had completed other certifications, as shown in Table 4.4. This suggests that the bulk of responders in the sample possessed the HND/B.SC certificate. Consequently, most of the participants possessed the requisite educational background to furnish the study with the requisite data.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were developed to guide the study:

Ho1: Customer loyalty is not significantly impacted by service responsiveness.

Ho2: Customer patronage is not significantly impacted by service reliability.

Ho3: Service tangibility has no significant effect on customer patronage.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.797 ^a	.635	.632	.860

a. Predictors: (Constant), Service responsiveness, Service reliability, Service tangibility

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey, 2023.

The model summary is presented in Table 4.4a. The results show that the correlation coefficient, or r, is 0.797 (or r = 0.667), indicating an extremely strong relationship between customers patronage (the dependent variable, or the variable being predicted) and the caliber of the services offered (the predictors or independent variables, which are service responsiveness, service reliability, and service tangibility). The data also reveals a r² value of 0.635, or around 64%, for the coefficient of determination. This suggests that 64% of the change in the proportion of customer patronage may be attributed to an improvement in the quality of service delivery (service responsiveness, service reliability, and service tangibility).

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	320.739	3	106.913	212.974	.000 ^b
	Residual	184.261	367	.502		
	Total	505.000	370			

a. Dependent Variable: customer patronage
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Service responsiveness, service reliability, service tangibility

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey, 2023.

The ANOVA table appears in Table 4.4b. The statistical significance emerges as an F-statistic from the table because its probability value of .000 falls underneath the alpha threshold of 0.05. The accuracy level of model definition was established through these results.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.092	.150		.616	.539
	Service Responsiveness	.348	.062	.294	5.610	.000
	Service Reliability	.621	.057	.567	10.817	.000
	Service Tangibility	.430	.065	.395	6.606	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer patronage

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2023.

The independent factors coefficient can be found in Table 4.4c. Industry studies reveal a solid relationship between service responsiveness and client patronage based on the computed coefficient value of 0.348. The results demonstrate significance between service responsiveness and customer patronage because both the p-value of .000 and [t-statistics] value of [5.610] exceed the alpha level of 0.05. The implication is that improving service timeliness is a significant factor in increasing consumer reliance. The findings of this investigation support earlier research findings. According to research by Abdul et al. (2018); Renner and Ezekiel-Hart (2022), Dabiri et al. (2022), Ajirowo (2019); Ehigie et al. (2018), and Dabiri et al. (2017), there is a substantial correlation between client patronage and service responsiveness. They concluded that effective responsiveness is a panacea for customer patronage.

The data reveals a robust relationship between customer loyalty and service dependability because the service reliability value reaches 0.621. A strong connection exists between service reliability and customer patronage according to research because p-value, likelihood, and [t-statistics] value of .000 and [10.817] exceed the .05 alpha level. The implication is that customer retention is similarly influenced by changes in service dependability. This is in line with the results of Dabiri et al. (2022), who discovered that when management continues to provide reliable and correct services to its members in order to serve them better in a well-mannered manner on a larger scale, it surely generates more patronage.

Additionally, a moderate association between service tangibility and consumer spending is shown by the coefficient of service tangibility's 0.430 value. The significant relationship between service tangibility and customer patronage is supported due to two primary reasons: the p-value being less than the alpha level and the high values of both [t-statistics] and probability of .000 and 6.606. The implication is that increasing the tangible nature of a service also encourages client loyalty. This is corroborated by research by Abdulkareem et al. (2023); Oladele et al. (2019), Amadi-Ofu (2018), Uvais and Sulaiman (2017), who found a positive and substantial relationship between service tangibility and consumer patronage.

According to the regression equation above, customer patronage will be 0.092 when all components (service responsiveness, service dependability, and service tangibility) are held constant at zero. The results also demonstrate that, with all other independent variables (such as

service responsiveness) set to zero, an increase in service responsiveness of one unit would result in a 0.294 (29.4%) increase in consumer spending. Similarly, it was discovered that a touch on service dependability will increase consumer spending by 0.567 (56.7%), when the service reliability is maintained constant. It was also shown that an increase in service tangibility will lead to a 0.307 (30.7%) increase in consumer spending. Overall, the impact of service dependability changes on consumer spending is considerably greater than the effects of service responsiveness and service tangibility’.

Conclusion

The study came to the conclusion that the customer patronage of pharmacy shops in Ilorin West is highly influenced by the service quality delivery based on the information gathered from respondents. Likewise, the research found that usually,

- i. Customer patronage of pharmacy stores in Ilorin West LGA is significantly impacted by service responsiveness. The problem of service timeliness is crucial for maintaining a client base.
- ii. In the research region, there is a sizable positive association between patronage and service dependability. When an organization keeps its commitments on delivery, service, problem-solving, and price, this is accomplished.
- iii. This study brings about the realization that an organization's success or weakness depends on the quality of its personnel and how well-kept its facilities are, which encourages repeat business.

Recommendations

By studying the experiences of pharmacy shops in the Ilorin West LGA, This research has highlighted how important it is to provide customers with high-quality service. The study's findings showed that organizations that implement well-planned service delivery methods will likely do better than those that hire staff based on stakeholder influence over corporate decision-making. The following suggestion is put out in light of the field study's findings:

- i. Drug stores should respond to client complaints as soon as possible by establishing a straightforward and speedy mechanism for processing them and designating a distinct department to do so.
- ii. Drug shops should enhance their insurance services to the level of quality that was first promised, with consistency in performance not only throughout the underwriting process but also during claims. By implementing technology that can expedite the service process, they should demonstrate a true desire to address customers' problems and so raise the overall level of service quality concerns. Additionally, they must follow through on promises made and keep accurate records in order to increase the credibility of the business and the services it provides by avoiding overpromising and under delivering.
- iii. In order to improve customer satisfaction, personnel should embrace tangibility and other criteria. Organizations should aim to enhance the tangibles since doing so will raise consumer satisfaction levels.

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