Effect of Customer Satisfaction On the Profitability of Fast Food Outlets in Akwa Metropolis of Anambra State

Chendo, Nkoli Augustina
[1]Department of Marketing
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Igbariam, Anambra State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT: *The study examined the effects of customer satisfaction on the profitability of fast food industry in Akwa Metropolis of Anambra State. The specific objective is to determine the extent to which customer service affects the profitability of fast food industry in Awka metropolis. To evaluate the extent to which customer experience affects the profitability of fast food industry in Awka metropolis. To examine the extent to which product quality affects the profitability of fast food industry in Awka metropolis. The research utilized a survey research design method, a structured instrument developed by the researcher to reflect such options as strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree popularly refereed as five (5) points Likert scale was used to obtain information from the respondents. The population of the study comprised of 324 employee of fast food in Akwa metropolis.297 copies of questionnaires was duly completed and returned showing 96% response rate. Research hypotheses were tested using Chi-square. Findings from the study show that Customer service has significant effect on profitability of fast food industry in Awka metropolis. Customers experience has significant effect on profitability of fast food industry in Awka metropolis. Product quality has no significant effect on profitability of fast food industry in Awka metropolis. Maintaining existing customers should be a better option than chasing for new because a customer who is satisfied will have a positive dissonance about the service and who always recommend the service to friends and family who are potential customers. Further research should be carried out in order to enhance the understanding of the concepts of service quality and customer satisfaction, how they are measured because they are very important for service organizations in terms of profitability, growth and market share.*

KEYWORDS: customer satisfaction, profitability, customer experience, product quality, fast food industry

INTRODUCTION

It is an obvious fact that every organization tends to move to a position where customer satisfaction is given a favourable consideration. Customer satisfaction must be met optimally for efficient and effective achievement of stated objectives, and for smooth continuation of business (Afrim, 2015). Customer satisfaction is an integral part of organizational objectives that must be fulfilled for an organization to maintain its customers. Customers are valuable asset that must be properly kept satisfied. The existence of any business oriented organization is the performance of business activities that will flow from the organization to identified target customers through the provision of need satisfying packages in order to satisfy their needs and achieve the stated objectives set by the organization (Ananaba, Nwosu, Otika & Osuagwu 2021). The satisfaction of the respective customers gives room for an opportunity to retain the customer and create customer loyalty for continuous patronage. The level of customer retention dictates to some extent the level of achievement of organizational, objectives. If customers fail to patronize or repeat the purchase of the products of the organization, definitely sales and profitability of the organization will drop which will adversely affect the entire performance of the firm. In a nut shell, the degree at which organization retains their customers depends, to a large extent, the degree of satisfaction customers derives from the services of the organizations.

Importance of customer satisfaction in today's dynamic corporate environment is obvious as it greatly influences customers repurchase intentions whereas dissatisfaction has been seen as a primary factor for customers" intention to switch (Faiza et al 2011). It is therefore obvious for business organization to create and maintain favourable relationship with their customers in order to not only give room for repeat purchase but also create room for customer retention. When there is a favourable relationship between the organization and the customers, customers tend to repeat purchase and continue patronizing the organization, thereby telling their favourable experiences with other members of the society which can have positive effect on the organization. More so, dissatisfied customers are more likely to tell people about their unfortunate experiences which will negatively affect the performance of the organization. In other to achieve customer satisfaction, organization must be able to build and maintain long lasting relationship with customers through satisfying various customers' needs and demand which resultantly motivates them to continue to do business with the organization on on-going basis (La Barbera and Mazursky,2013). Customer satisfaction is an integral part of business objectives of any organization irrespective of the nature of the organization and however, more pronounced in business oriented organizations can be achieved through understanding the needs of the target market and the provision of needs satisfying packages in meeting and satisfying these needs at a greater extent, thus, building and maintaining long lasting and favourable relationship with the target market (Ibojo, Olawepo and Akinruwa, 2013).

The need to create and maintain customer satisfaction has been emphasized by researchers and academicians. This is because the realization of other business objectives leans on the level and degree of satisfaction received by the target market. This is the reason why organizations are focusing on customer satisfaction. Khan, (2002) maintained that customers who are satisfied are likely to have positive relationship with the organization. It is therefore necessary for organizations to make sure that all activities tend to the satisfaction of their customers. This will create a path way for customers to see the possibility of integrating their loyalty with the organization, taken into cognizance continued purchasing and repurchasing of the organization's products.

Fast food industry has experienced an influx of new entrants, new competition and a new way of doing business in these recent years. Fast food lose the majority of their customers because the service rendered to them is not satisfying and sufficient, so they tend to switch from one Fast food to the other (Anifowose, & Olaleye, 2016).

The problem is that some of the Fast food render insufficient service to customers and due to that they become dissatisfied, all because customers are recently becoming more demanding. However, many researchers has dealt on customers satisfaction with divergent findings and inconclusive results: Ndubisi, & Nwankwo, (2019) examined customer satisfaction and organizational performance of the banking sub-sector in South-East, Nigeria. The result revealed that there were positive significant relationships between customer satisfaction and banks performance in all the variables tested. Bakare, & Fetuga, (2020) examined the impact of customers' satisfaction on business profitability from Nigeria perspective. The results showed a positive relationship between customers' satisfaction and profitability which implies that mobile operators need to maximize customer satisfaction in order to influence the extent of loyalty and retention on the products' patronage. Ananaba, Nwosu, Otika, Osuagwu, (2021), focused on the relationship between corporate reputation and customer satisfaction. The finding of the analyses revealed that trustworthiness corporate social responsibility, credibility and reliability were respectively significant and exhibited significant positive effects on customer satisfaction.. Afrim (2015). Anifowose, & Olaleye, (2016). Assessed customers' satisfaction on service quality of fast food restaurant in akure metropolis, Nigeria. The study found that service quality has significant impact on customers' satisfaction.

In Nigeria, the current study, therefore, complements the existing empirical studies by carrying out the study in the fast food restaurants. The present study will further complement the existing ones by using Analysis of variance, as well as percentage table to analyze the effect of customer's satisfaction on the profitability of fast food industry in Awka metropolis, Anambra state

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to examined the effect of customer's satisfaction on the profitability of fast food industry in Awka metropolis, Anambra state. The specific objectives are to:

i. To determine the extent to which customer service affects the profitability of fast food industry in Awka metropolis.
ii. To evaluate the extent to which customer experience affects the profitability of fast food industry in Awka metropolis
iii. To examine the extent to which product quality affects the profitability of fast food industry in Awka metropolis

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

The theory underpinning this study is assimilation-contrast theory. In a highly competitive marketing environment like the telecom industry in Nigeria, an understanding of assimilation and contrast effects is of substantial interest. The theory was introduced by Anderson (1973) in the context of post-exposure product performance based on Sherif and Hovland's (1961) seminal research which suggest that judgments of objects can be affected by contextual factors (Joan and Brian, 1993). For the purpose of this study, the contextual factors that can affect consumers' judgments of telecom services include the core product, pricing system, distribution strategy, promotion tools and customer service. The theory states that if performance is within a customer's latitude (range) of acceptance, even though it may fall short of expectation, the discrepancy will be disregarded, that is, assimilation will operate and the performance will be deemed as acceptable whereas if they fall within the customer's latitude of neutrality, there will be minimal change. On the other hand, if performance falls within the latitude of rejection, contrast will prevail and the difference will be exaggerated and the good or service will be deemed unacceptable (Oxford, 2014).

The theory suggests that satisfaction is a function of the magnitude of the discrepancy between expected and perceived performance. When the expectations and the actual product performance do not match, the consumer will feel some degree of tension. In order to relieve this tension, the consumer will make adjustments either in expectations or in the perception of the product's actual performance. Consumers will tend to assimilate or adjust differences in perceptions about product performance to bring it in line with prior expectations if the discrepancy is relatively small. However, if the discrepancy is relatively high, contrast will occur and consumers will magnify or exaggerate the discrepancy and the product would be rejected as totally unsatisfactory.

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Empirical Review

Ananaba, et al (2021), focused on the relationship between corporate reputation and customer satisfaction. The survey research design method was employed in the study. The research instrument was a validated structured questionnaire. The reliability of the questionnaire was estimated by assessing the internal consistency of the items representing each construct. Cronbach's alpha was used to establish the reliability of the constructs. The correlation and multiple regression analyses were used in the study. The sample size of 135 respondents was administered with the questionnaire. The finding of the analyses revealed that trustworthiness (B = 0.251, P<.001); corporate social responsibility (B = 0.283, P<.001); credibility (B = 0.198, P<.001) and reliability (B = 0.219, P<.001) were respectively significant and exhibited significant positive effects on customer satisfaction. The major conclusion that emerged from the findings is that corporate reputation is a multifaceted construct whose dimensions have significant positive relationships with marketing performance outcome of customer satisfaction in the mobile telecommunications services industry. In the competitive context, managers should apply the dimensions of corporate reputation that is appropriate for their target segment and develop their customer satisfaction strategy.

Bakare and Fetuga, (2020) examined the impact of customers' satisfaction on business profitability from Nigeria perspective. The SPSS package was used to analyze the linear regression in order to establish the relationship between the variables involved in the study. The results showed a positive relationship between customers' retention and profitability which implies that mobile operators need to maximize customer satisfaction in order to influence the extent of loyalty and retention on the products' patronage. However, this study recommends that mobile operators should not just rely on profit margins as a good indicator of business performance but rather should develop strategies that better capture customers' perceptions of their service offerings.

Ofosu-Boateng and Agyei (2020) investigated the effect of customer satisfaction and marketing communication mix on customers' loyalty in the Ghanaian banking industry. Explanatory design was used to investigate the association between the independent variables: customer satisfaction, public relations, advertising, sales promotion and the dependent variable: customers' loyalty. Questionnaire was the main instruments for data collection from 250 customers of banks in Accra, Ghana. SPSS version 20 was employed for data analysis. The study revealed a strong positive relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the Ghanaian banking industry. Also, the study showed a moderate but significant relationship between public relations and customers' loyalty in the Ghanaian banking industry. On the bases of these findings, the study recommended that the banks should continue to strive to achieve customer satisfaction by fulfilling customers' needs and wants since it can engender customer loyalty. This can be done by understanding all the factors affecting customer satisfaction. Also, it was

recommended that public relations must not be discarded but strengthened to complement the other marketing communication mix to help encourage customer loyalty in the Ghanaian banking industry.

Akunja, (2020) examined the effects of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty in the hotel sector in Kenya. The sample size for the study was 253 and six marketing managers who were used as key informers. The study employed purposive, stratified and systematic random sampling. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha resulting in a value 0.924. Factor analysis was used for data reduction while simple regression was used to analyze and test the hypothesis. The findings of this study indicated that customer satisfaction (t=13.940, p<.001) significantly affected customer loyalty. It was concluded that an improvement in customer satisfaction would likely result into improved customer loyalty.

Ndubisi and Nwankwo, (2019) examined customer satisfaction and organizational performance of the banking sub-sector in South-East, Nigeria. The general objective of this study was to evaluate the relationship between customer satisfaction and banks performance. The study adopted survey design, with bank customers and staff as the population of the study. Questionnaire designed on five (5) point likert-scales were used to collect the respondent's opinions and interests respectively. The study used inferential statistical techniques which comprises of kolmogrov-smirvov test and Kendalls co-efficient of con-cordance test to test the hypotheses. The result revealed that there were positive significant relationships between customer satisfaction and banks performance in all the variables tested. The study therefore, recommended that banks should increase customer satisfaction through improving their financial service quality and meeting their expectations.

Babar, et al. (2019) investigated the relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty. In order for a bank offer to reach the customers, there is a need for services. These services depend on the type of product and it differs in the various organizations. Service can be defined as an intangible offer by one party to another in exchange of money for Service quality in the management and marketing literature is the extent to which customers' perceptions of service meet and/or exceed their expectations. Thus service quality can intend to be the way in which customers are served in an organization which could be good or poor. A loyalty program may give a customer advanced access to new products, special sales coupons or free merchandise. Our study shows the three basic aspects of a customer in the banking sector which are service quality, customer satisfaction and banking loyalty in the banking sector. The findings of our study show that most of our respondents are well satisfied with banking services to provide by different commercial and Islamic banks such as Habib Bank Limited (HBL), United Bank Limited (UBL), National Bank of Pakistan (NBP), etc. in Peshawar sadder. The services provided by the banks particularly ATM OPEN ACCESS machines are very praised by the

customers. The loyalty provided to customers by the banks was also very good and most of the respondents were satisfy from that but there were also some major problems in these banking sectors for customers which should be handled as soon as possible for their good services we also find out that the banking policies for customer services and to maintain loyalty with customer should be enhanced more precisely.

Banahene, Mensah, and Asamoah (2018) analyzed the impact that customer satisfaction has on customer loyalty. In addition, the study investigated the mediating role of trust in the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The study was conducted on 825 useable responses which represented 82.5% of questionnaires distributed. Explanatory research design was used and Stata version 13 and IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20 were the software used in data analysis. The study used Structural Equation Model for data analysis to explored direct, indirect and total effect relationships. Confirmatory Factor Analysis was used for data purification. The study concludes that customer satisfaction has positive and significant relationship with customer loyalty in the banking sector. The study also found that customer satisfaction positively and significantly affects customer trust in the banking sector. In addition, customer trust also affects customer loyalty positively and significantly. The study also revealed that customer trust partially mediates between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. However, customer trust does not mediate between specific dimensions of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. This means that researchers and managers of banks should find innovative ways to build service performance and aligned their services to as a way to increase customer satisfaction to promote customer loyalty. The customer trust partial mediation role and customer trust failure to mediate customer satisfaction specific dimensions with customer loyalty need future research.

Anifowose and Olaleye, (2016) identified the journey so far on assessing customer satisfaction on service quality of FFRs in Akure metropolis Ondo state, Nigeria. The analysis unveils how consumers perceive service quality through SERVQUAL model that poor or low and unsatisfied services were rendered to the numerous customers by the selected FFRs management in this study area. Despite with all these poor service offered, customers are still patronizing the selected FFRs due to its location and food quality. Measuring service quality can help management provide reliable data that can be used to monitor and maintain improved service quality. In conclusion, using the SERVQUAL model to assess service quality enables management to better understand the various dimensions and how they affect service quality and customer satisfaction. This will help them to identify their strengths and weaknesses and thereby make necessary improvements

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design
The research design will be used in this study is descriptive survey design. This indicates using the questionnaire to obtained the responses of the target respondents drawn from the study area.

Population of the Study.
The population of interest therefore consists of all the employees of fast food in Awka. However has a total population of 324. This population figure was derived from survey research.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique
Given the nature of this study, since the population is not up to 1000 respondents the research will utilize the entire 324 population

Sampling Technique
The research adopts purposive sampling. Purposive sampling enables the researcher to choose at respondents that was of interest to the study

Sources of Data
With respect to this research work, the study will use primary data. The primary data are the responses of the respondents gotten with the aid of the questionnaire.

Instrument for Data Collection.
The major research instrument adopted for the study is the uses of structured questionnaires to elect responses for the sample population. This instrument of the collection is divided into two.

SECTION A: Deals in the bio-data of the respondent while
SECTION,B: Deals with the questions which respondents are expected to respond to, depending on their choice.

Method of Data Analysis.
Statistics such as frequency count and percentages were put to use in the analysis of research questions while research hypotheses were tested using correlation analysis and simple regression analysis. The research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Analysis was carried out with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter presents the data obtained from the respondents through the administered questionnaires. Three hundred and twenty-three (323) were administered, among the staff of fast

food industry, in Akwa, Anambra state**.** However, two hundred and ninety-seven (297) questionnaires were retrieved. Therefore, the analysis and interpretation of data were only based on the returned questionnaires. The validity and reliability of this study is highly ensured, despite the number of questionnaires not returned.

Demographic characteristics of Respondent

4.1.1 sex

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	female	49	82.7	16.5	83.5
Valid	male	248	16.3	83.5	100.0
	Total	297	99.0	100.0	

Source: SPSS Version 21, 2023

The above table reveals that the two hundred and forty-eight (248) of the respondents which represents 83.5% were female respondents, while forty-nine (49) respondents which represent 16.5% were male respondents. By implication, female respondents were more than male respondents by 67% in our selected population sample for this study. The implication of this is to enable us to know the number of female and male that successfully returned their questionnaire.

4.1.2 Statues

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	single	128	42.7	43.1	43.1
	married	74	24.7	24.9	68.0
Valid	divorced/separated	95	31.7	32.0	100.0
	Total	297	99.0	100.0	

Source: SPSS Version 21, 2023

In the table above, out of the three hundred and thirty-four (334) respondents, one hundred and twenty-eight (128) of the respondents were single. While seventy-four (74) respondents which represent 24.9 percent are married. It is therefore glaring that the majority of the respondents are single as at the time of this study. Thus marital status table help us to know the number of single, married, and divorced respondents that answered the distributed questionnaire.

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4.1.3 Level of Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	WAEC	101	22.0	34.0	22.2
	OND	131	33.7	44.1	56.2
	BSC/HND	65	21.7	21.9	78.1
	Total	297	99.0	100.0	

Source: SPSS Version 21, 2023

In the table above, out of the three thousand and thirty-four (334) respondents, one hundred and one (101) of the respondents are WAEC holders. While one hundred and thirty-one (131) respondents which represent 44.1 percent are OND holders. Sixty-five respondents (65) which represent 21.9 are BSC holders

4.1.4 Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-25	86	20.7	28.9	20.9
	26-33	93	31.0	31.3	52.2
	34-40	84	28.0	28.3	80.5
	41-50	34	11.3	11.4	91.9
	Total	297	99.0	100.0	

Source: SPSS Version 21, 2023

The table above shows that respondents whose age bracket falls between 18-25 yrs were sixty-eighty-six (86) which represent 28.9 percent. This is followed by those with age bracket of 26-33 years with ninety-three (93) which represents 31.3%. Also those within age bracket of 34-40yrs were eighty-four (84) which represents 28.3%. This is followed by those with age bracket of 41-50 years with thirty-four (34) which represents 11.4%. The implication of this age distribution is to enable us to check if the questionnaire was directed to the right age group.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses One
Ho_1: Customer service has no significant effect on profitability of fast food industry in Awka metropolis.

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ANOVA

Table 4.3.1

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	139.809	4	34.952	47.346	.000
Within Groups	90.065	293	.738		
Total	229.874	297			

Sources: SPSS Output 2023

In testing this hypothesis, the F-statistics and probability value in table 4.7 is used. Decision support system variables have a F-statistics of 47.346 and a probability value of 0.000 which is statistically significant. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypotheses which state that customer service has significant effect on profitability of fast food industry in Awka metropolis

Hypotheses Two

Ho$_2$: Customers experience has no significant effect on profitability of fast food industry in Awka metropolis.

ANOVA

Table 4.3.2

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	182.143	4	45.536	40.358	.000
Within Groups	137.652	297	1.128		
Total	319.795	293			

Sources: SPSS Output 2023

Second hypothesis has f-statistics of 40.358 and a probability value of 0.000 which is statistically significant. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypotheses and conclude that customers experience has significant effect on profitability of fast food industry in Awka metropolis

Hypotheses Three

Ho$_3$: Product quality has no significant effect on profitability of fast food industry in Awka metropolis.

ANOVA
Table 4.3.2

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	182.143	4	45.536	40.358	.000
Within Groups	137.652	297	1.128		
Total	319.795	293			

Sources: SPSS Output 2023

Second hypothesis has f-statistics of 40.358 and a probability value of 0.000 which is statistically significant. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypotheses and conclude that product quality has no significant effect on profitability of fast food industry in Awka metropolis

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion
The study concludes that customer service, customer experience as well as product quality has positive effect on profitability of fast food industry in Akwa metropolis and such effect is strong and statistically significant. Their coefficients are statistically different from zero at less than 5 percent level of significance. It is obvious to management that customer service, customer experience and product quality are sine qua non for stimulating profitability in any fast food organization. When the customers are not well attended to, it leaves a feeling of dissatisfaction and displeasures on the customers and this in turns affects the profitability of the organization. It is therefore, important for any organization to consider the needs and feelings of its customers if it is to thrive in the industry.' The study concludes that, both customer experience and product quality has significant positive effect on profitability in fast foods industry in Anambra state, Nigeria.

Recommendations
The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.
1.   Maintaining existing customers should be a better option than chasing for new because a customer who is satisfied will have a positive dissonance about the service and who always recommend the service to friends and family who are potential customers.
2.   Further research should be carried out in order to enhance the understanding of the concepts of service quality and customer satisfaction, how they are measured because they are very important for service organizations in terms of profitability, growth and market share.
3.   Fast food companies should be objective about the quality of their foods and get feedback from customers to know how best to satisfy them. Fast food franchises should implement

feedback system to get the opinions of customers and how to give better services. This would enable them improve their performance.

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