

Effect of Service Quality on Customer Loyalty of TV Service Providers in Nigeria

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Abstract: *The study examined the effect of service quality on customer loyalty of Cable TV branches in Nigeria. The cross sectional survey research design method was adopted for the study. The stratified random sampling method was used for the study. A sample size of 234 employees were selected from the existing Cable TV branches such as DVSt, MetroDigital, CTL and Star Times operating in Asaba, Delta State and Benin, Edo State. The research instrument used for the study was the questionnaire. The study engaged descriptive statistics, correlation and multiple regression analytical technique. Findings showed that empathy, access to service and service reliability have positive effects on customer loyalty. The study concluded that service quality has positive effect on customer loyalty in the Nigerian Cable TV service firms. The study recommended amongst others that service providers should make service delivery more professional and satisfaction inducing to customers.*

Keywords: Service Quality, Customer Loyalty, TV Service Providers

Introduction

Despite the fact that most companies in Nigeria's and sub-Saharan Africa's service sectors are intensely competitive, they have a misguided notion of what constitutes high-quality service performance. The liberalization of the telecom sector has helped Nigerians as well as TV service providers including DSTv, MetroDigital, CTL, and StarTime. In recent years, these providers have received licenses to provide a range of services for all-encompassing entertainment and information. The telecommunications sector in Nigeria has grown significantly since the start of democracy in 1999. In our rapidly globalizing culture today, people are aware of the need for more pleasure and knowledge both at home and at work. Home entertainment, if anything, makes life easier, more valuable, and, most importantly, keeps people updated about trends extending over numerous channels that give newsfeeds, sports entertainment, political events, children's entertainment, sports, and even religion.

Additionally, service providers like TV service providers must give their customers with the best services available in order to maintain competitive advantages over competitors. Because business success depends on the quality of the services they give, it can be challenging for service providers to assess it. It is difficult to evaluate the quality of services because of their diversity, intangibility, and separation problem. The importance of the service level as a tool in the service industry has also increased. Saghier and Nathan (2013) asserted that the phrase "service quality" is crucial in the service industry and is crucial for financial service providers who struggle to distinguish their offerings for customers. In addition, a great deal of research on service quality has been done, and a great deal of theories and models have been created to address this problem and underline how crucial it is to apply different elements.

Service quality is a concept that was developed to define the overall evaluation of a specific service provider that results from comparing that provider's performance with the customer's expectations for how firms in that sector should function. Service quality is probably regarded to play a big role in industries with high levels of involvement, such as television services. Organizations in this competitive and tough age must endeavor to focus on consumers' desires and requirements in order to meet and surpass their expectations because doing so was a strategic issue in the preceding 20 years. Customers' repurchase patterns and swagger are assumed to be influenced by their level of contentment, which in turn influences future business revenues or returns. Improved service quality, according to Wilkins, Merrilees, and Herington (2010), encourages customer satisfaction and loyalty while boosting customer retention, profitability, and long-term competitive advantage. Strategic rivalry is regarded as a game-changer and may even influence the success of certain brands on the market. Services have remained essential to the survival of enterprises in a competitive market. Its effects have been shown to affect the rate of growth and development of several economies, both in developed and less developed nations.

All businesses base their marketing initiatives, plans, and strategies on the idea that satisfied customers are the center of the universe. Customers have a strong propensity to switch to the next available service provider if they are not happy. As a result, service providers modify their methods for delivering services in order to stop this transfer and take part in client retention programs. This is based on recent study evidence that shows it is preferable to use retention strategies to keep consumers rather than actively pursue new ones. Therefore, the primary goal of all marketing initiatives, particularly the activities of sales representatives and service providers, is to

create this "good feeling" and "contentment" in customers after they have purchased and used a product. The so-called "Free-to-Air" sorts of cable network services are now watched in almost every house and, in more recent years, office. However, many of them have limited access if payments are not paid. Customers typically complain when services are stopped and raise a variety of concerns and observations about the caliber, consistency, or lack thereof of services being received or given. In addition, how complaints are handled is also addressed in this.

Statement of the Problem

It might be challenging for many cable TV users to comprehend the root causes of the industry's issues. Most of the time, membership fees are not met by the services, and some customers feel that the services are not provided satisfactorily. It is evident that several service delivery-related components are missing; if they were included, the industry's level of service would increase. For a very long time, marketing researchers have been puzzled by the lack of consensus in the definition of service quality attributes. The emphasis is more on product than service because people in this part of the world perceive service as an abstract good that cannot be seen, quantified, or valued and, as a result, should not have a significant price attached to it. Despite the fact that many consumers understand the value of service delivery in modern marketing, they regularly express dissatisfaction with the level of service they received. Many customers struggle to reach the highest degree of satisfaction and feel misled by the subpar service delivery.

Many supply or seller-side salesmen, both on the street and in shopping centers, think that their job is finished once things are traded for money and nothing else. If they choose, customers can turn to other technical service providers to complete the task or acquire the technical component needed to ensure that the product provides the right level of value when employed. This is due to the fact that a large number of service providers and sales representatives lack adequate training and are unable to even comprehend the components or factors that make up a service, let alone how they can help the customer ultimately derive the most benefit and degree of satisfaction from the purchase and use of services. Due to a combination of these and other issues that restrict service delivery and the level of service development in Nigeria, the service industry in that country has underdeveloped. As a result, lots of customers are upset. First and foremost, a lot of service providers, especially those working in the cable TV sector of the telecommunications industry, are not aware of the service quality attributes they should be utilizing and optimizing to improve the professionalism and satisfaction of their customers' needs in the services they provide.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the effect of service quality on customer loyalty. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Assess the influence of empathy on customer loyalty.
- ii. Ascertain the effect of access to service on customer loyalty.
- iii. Evaluate the influence of service reliability on customer loyalty.

Review of Related Literature

Concept of Service Quality

A thorough customer review of a specific service and how well it fulfills their expectations and provides satisfaction can be used to determine service quality (Al-Jazzazi & Sultan, 2017). To build service plans and standards, managers must be prepared to understand the gap between client perceptions and expectations (Titko, Lace & Kozlovskis, 2013). Due to their increasing awareness, customers are more concerned about the quality of the services they receive; depending on their level of happiness, they may choose to continue with their current TV subscription or switch to other TV subscribers. Liu, Guo, and Leea (2011) defined service quality as the general level of service that customers experience after using the service. Businesses must uphold a high quality of customer service and compete to provide the finest value-added services to their customers. Offering exceptional customer service and implementing strategies designed to increase customer value are the best options for firms in a highly competitive industry (Liu et al. 2011; Daniel & Berinyuy 2010). The level of client satisfaction will increase as a company enhances the caliber of its interactions and offerings. The organization's tangible and intangible resources should be managed to raise perceived quality (Segoro 2013).

Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is a continuing emotional bond between a company and the customers that shows in their willingness to interact with the brand and make repeat purchases from the company as opposed to competing firms. When a customer has a good experience with a company, loyalty develops naturally and helps to build trust. An overall customer evaluation of a service can be seen as how well it meets and exceeds customer's expectations (Al-Jazzazi & Sultan, 2017). TV subscribers must develop plans to improve service quality and work methodically to acquire, monitor, and maintain this quality in order to attain the highest degree of customer satisfaction. Indicators of how well a company serves its consumers' needs include customer satisfaction. This provides a different metric for assessing the service's quality. Customers can essentially provide feedback on goods and services by emphasizing the latter's favorable features (Al-Jazzazi & Sultan, 2017, Cheng, 2013).

Companies who don't provide high-quality goods and services in the contemporary economy lose customers to competitors (Cheng, 2013). Businesses must concentrate on meeting the demands of increasingly demanding and high-standard consumers, building relationships with them, offering them the best possible goods and services, and focusing on market engineering. Businesses today keep an eye on their competitors, their own performance, and even the needs of their customers. Customer satisfaction, in the opinion of consumers, refers to the findings of an evaluation process that contrasts what they received from the service and the product with what they had anticipated, according to Sharmin, Tasnim, and Shimul (2016). A customer must assess if the services and products meet their needs and expectations and provide a sufficient level of consumption-related fulfillment in order to be satisfied. Businesses are well aware of how service excellence may give them a sustainable competitive edge. For firms considering market expansion, rivalry, and growth, customer satisfaction and service quality are essential success elements (Angelova & Zekiri, 2011).

Empathy and Customer Loyalty

Customers need to believe that the business prioritises them when providing services. According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1994) as cited in Miklós, Hossam, János, József, and Oláh, (2019), empathy is described as offering services, attending to each client's needs, and displaying compassion. The essence of empathy is expressing a sense of the customer's specialness and individuality. Credibility, security, and access have been utilized in quantitative research to quantify empathy in order to define the components of the service quality model (Parasuraman et al. 1994 as cited in Miklós, et al 2019). Ennew, Waite, and Waite (2013) posited that the empathy dimension of service excellence includes being attentive during communication circumstances, comprehending client demands, acting graciously, and attending to each individual customer's needs. Navaratnaseel and Periyathampy (2014) opined that empathy is the capacity of service providers to look out for clients and offer attention to each one of them, especially when providing services.

Furthermore, it was argued by Parasuraman et al. (1988) as cited in Miklós, et al (2019) that exceeding competitors' expectations in terms of knowing customers' expectations and providing them with care and individualized attention has a big impact on the degree of customer satisfaction. Ananth, Ramesh, and Prabakaran (2010) claimed that individualized service, practical working hours, a better understanding of customers' specific needs in the banking industry, and the empathy component are all elements that affect changes in customer satisfaction (Krishnamurthy, SivaKumar & Sellamuthu, 2010; Shanka, 2012; Selvakumar, 2016).

Thus:

H1a: Empathy has significant positive relationship with customer loyalty of TV service providers.

Access to Service and Customer Loyalty

One of the most unpleasant situations in the marketing of goods and services is being unable to access a certain product or point of sale. In fact, the creators of the 4Ps of marketing struck the point when "Place" was considered to be necessary to purchase. If the market is unavailable and customers are unable to locate the site (market) where they may purchase or adopt products at a cost, it becomes a very frustrating experience. One needs access in order to enter an area where business can be done. Both consumers who wish to use a product or service and the merchants who sell those products and services depend on access. In entrepreneurship and company placement literature, access to or the location of businesses have been debated so frequently that it is now believed to decide whether a business should be established in one location or another. Cost is sometimes an issue for business owners when dealing with access considerations and problems.

Yarimoglu (2014) view accessibility as approachability and simplicity of contact, which includes elements like telephone accessibility, a short wait time for services, practical hours, and a convenient location. Aspects of access include how easily and comfortably customers may use the services that service providers offer. According to research, greater service accessibility has a direct impact on increased customer contentment (Flavian, Torres & Guinaliu, 2004). Client loyalty and happiness may be significantly impacted directly or indirectly by accessibility as a component of the service image (Ladhari, Souiden & Ladhari, 2011). The term "access" describes how easy, simple, and convenient it is to contact the service.

It features flexible office hours and window of opportunity for transactions. Four measurement elements for this construct were taken from (Flavian, Torres & Guinaliu, 2004). Access to service refers to how easily and comfortably customers can utilize the services that businesses provide to their customers. Contactability and approachability are the two key components of accessibility. Studies show that greater service accessibility results in greater customer satisfaction (Flavian, et al 2004). Clients' satisfaction and loyalty may be significantly impacted directly or indirectly by accessibility as a component of the service image (Ladhari, et al 2011).

Thus:

H2a: Access to service has significant positive relationship with customer loyalty of TV service providers.

Service Reliability and Customer Loyalty

There must be a track record of trustworthy staff performance for services to be considered reliable. Kotler & Keller (2016) asserted that performance is the ability of the consumer to compare the level of satisfaction experienced to that which was anticipated. If the standard is exceeded, the provider of the good or service has done so successfully. Reliability is the propensity of the service provider to continuously provide excellent service to customers' satisfaction, regardless of pressure or workload for any particular day. Being dependable means having the ability to consistently meet expectations and even please clients when they make purchases. Reliability of service providers is a surefire way to win over a consumer, keep him or her, and eventually win them over to retention and loyalty methods.

Ennew, Waite, and Waite (2013) posited that a company's reliability can be characterized as the degree to which customers can depend on the service it has promised. Reliability is described by Parasuraman, et al (1985) as cited in Miklós, et al (2019) as the organization's capacity to equip the service both dependently and independently. Customer satisfaction is significantly impacted by reliability as a measure of service quality (Parasuraman et al. 1988 as cited in Miklós, et al 2019). Reliability was described by Ennew, Waite, and Waite (2013) as the capacity to execute and deliver the required service for clients reliably, accurately, and as promised, as well as the ability to address issues that may arise. It's crucial to take action to address issues, to deliver services on schedule or to do the necessary tasks the first time. Peng and Moghavvemi (2015) asserted that precision in completing orders, maintaining correct records and quotations, accuracy in billing, and providing promised services are the most crucial variables in keeping clients in banking services. The main components of reliability are as follows. The available research has also demonstrated that in the banking industry, dependability and customer satisfaction are positively correlated (Kant & Jaiswal, 2017; Peng & Moghavvemi, 2015; Selvakumar, 2016; Shanka, 2012).

Therefore,

H3a: Service reliability has significant relationship with customer loyalty of TV service providers.

Theoretical Review

Assimilation Theory

Assimilation theory is based on Festinger's (1957) dissonance theory. The dissonance theory states that consumers compare a product's performance to their cognitive expectations about it. Customer satisfaction literature originally introduced assimilation theory, a perspective on consumer post-usage evaluation. Anderson (1973) asserted that customers attempt to avoid dissonance by altering their perceptions of a certain product to make it more compatible with their expectations. Customers can also reduce the stress caused by a mismatch between their expectations and the performance of the product by either altering their expectations to reflect the performance of the product or by increasing satisfaction by minimizing the relative importance of the disconfirmation they experienced.

The assimilation theory, according to Payton et al. (2003), has a number of shortcomings. First, the method presupposes that expectations and satisfaction are linked, but it says nothing about how an expectation's failure can lead to satisfaction or discontent. Second, the theory assumes that consumers are sufficiently motivated to alter either their expectations or assessments of the performance of the product. Numerous studies have found that taking into account how well the actual product performs may produce a positive association between expectation and pleasure. Therefore, it would seem that unless the evaluation processes began with adverse consumer expectations, customer unhappiness could never occur.

Methodology

The only services included in the analysis were DSTv, Metro Digital, CTL, and StarTimes. The explanation for this is because they successfully balance the operating and service costs for both high-end and low-end consumers, which accounts for their appeal. It is thought that the market for these Cable TV Service Providers is substantial and diverse enough to permit the accuracy of the data acquired. The study used a cross-sectional survey research design approach. The study employed the stratified random sampling technique. For the study, a sample of two States in southern Nigeria was chosen. The population of the study consists of 620 employees of Cable TV branches such as DVSt, MetroDigital, CTL, and StarTimes in Asaba, Delta State, and Benin, Edo State. The subset of the population was determined by using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination calculator. A sample size of 234 staff was randomly selected from the total population of 620 staff. The comments from the many people who use these cable networks in these cities supplied accurate information that was utilized to make generalizations about how effectively or poorly different service delivery quality delivery characteristics were extended and appreciated by the customers. The headquarters and major distribution branches were given copies of the questionnaire so that clients could access them for purchases, inquiries, and complaints. In order to get information from the respondents, the researcher used a set of verified questionnaires. To determine whether the questionnaire's content was appropriate and pertinent to the study purpose, content and face validity tests were conducted. The study used a test-retest reliability technique. However, a pre-test of the questionnaire was conducted for this study.

The researcher was able to identify any abnormalities that would have compromised the validity of this study thanks to this pre-test. Cronbach's Alpha test coefficient is set at 0.7 as the optimal value (Hair, Bush & Ortinau, 2006). Table 1 showed that the reliability coefficients are higher than the threshold of 0.7. The overall, all items yielded favorable, reliable scores. The estimation's internal consistency was found to be acceptable. Descriptive statistics, correlation and multiple regression analysis were used in the study. With the help of multiple regression analysis, the hypotheses were tested.

Results of Analyzed Data

Table 1: Correlation among Variables, Descriptive Statistics and Alpha Value

S/N	Variables	1	2	3	4	Mean	Std. Deviation	Alpha (α) Value
1	Empathy	1				19.03	1.029	0.731
2	Access to service	0.561**	1			18.97	1.062	0.733
3	Service reliability	0.888**	0.425**	1		18.97	1.070	0.735
4	Customer loyalty	0.839**	0.767**	0.801**	1	18.97	0.953	0.734

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

The correlation result in table 1, indicated that empathy has a strong positive correlation coefficient $r = 0.839^{**}$ with customer loyalty. Access to service showed a strong positive correlation coefficient ($r = 0.767^{**}$) with customer loyalty. Service reliability has a strong positive correlation coefficient ($r = 0.801^{**}$) with customer loyalty.

Table 2: Analysis of Variance

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	172.755	3	57.585	477.996	.000 ^b
	Residual	26.022	216	.120		
	Total	198.777	219			

a. Dependent Variable: customer loyalty

b. Predictors: (Constant), service reliability , access to service , empathy

The *F*-ratio in table 2 showed that the overall regression model is a good fit for the data. The table indicated that service quality statistically significantly predict customer loyalty, $F = 477.996$, $0.000 < 0.05$. This implies that the regression model is a good fit of the data.

Table 3: Coefficients Values of the Dimensions of Service Quality

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.246	.496		.497	.620
	Empathy	.178	.055	.193	3.227	.001
	Access to service	.428	.027	.477	15.739	.000
	Service reliability	.380	.049	.427	7.811	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer loyalty

As depicted in Table 3, based on the multiple regression test, the expected model is:

$$Y = f(\beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3)$$

$$\text{Customer loyalty} = 0.246 + 0.178X_1 + 0.428X_2 + 0.380X_3 + \epsilon$$

Table 4: Model Summary

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.932 ^a	.869	.867	.3471

a. Predictors: (Constant), service reliability , access to service , empathy

The test result in table 4 showed that change in customer loyalty was brought about by the components of service quality as indicated by the adjusted R² value by 87% (0.867).

Discussion of Results

A total of 234 copies of questionnaire were distributed; 221 of them were returned, and the remaining 220 copies were accurately filled out and used for analysis.

Table 3 showed that empathy has positive effect on customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.193, 0.001 < 0.05$). The test of H1a in table 3 showed that empathy has significant positive relationship with customer loyalty ($0.001 < 0.05$). This result supports the finding of Miklós, et al. (2019), which revealed that providing customers with care and individualized attention has a substantial impact on their level of happiness and that having a better understanding of consumer expectations than competitors does. This shows that the ability of service providers to look out for clients and take them into account as individuals, especially when providing services, has an impact on consumer pleasure.

Access to service which is the second variable has a higher positive effect on customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.477, 0.000 < 0.05$). The test of H2a showed that access to service has significant positive relationship with customer loyalty ($0.000 < 0.05$). This result is in line with the findings of Flavian, et al (2004) that more service accessibility leads to increased customer satisfaction. This demonstrates that access to service is highly valued by both customers who want to adopt a product or service and merchandisers of goods and services.

Similarly it was shown that service reliability has positive effect on customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.427, P < 0.05$). The test of H3a showed that service reliability has significant positive relationship with customer loyalty ($0.000 < 0.05$). This result is consistent with studies showing a connection between service reliability and customer satisfaction in the service sector (Kant & Jaiswal, 2017; Peng & Moghavvemi, 2015). This implies that a company's reputation for dependability is a certain strategy to attract customers, keep them around, and finally win them over to your cause.

In summary findings showed that empathy, access to service and service reliability have positive effects on customer loyalty.

Conclusion

According to the study's findings, consumer happiness in Nigerian cable TV service companies is influenced by service quality. Empathy is fundamentally about expressing a sense of the customer's specialness and individuality. The capacity for service providers to care for clients and treat them as unique individuals, particularly when providing services, is known as empathy. Consumer happiness is influenced by a better understanding of customer expectations and the supply of care and personalized attention to customers.

The simplicity and comfort with which clients can use the services that service providers supply are both aspects of access. The two most important parts of accessibility are approachability and contactability. Customers are more satisfied when services are more easily accessible.

Service reliability is the propensity of the service provider to continuously provide high-quality service to customers' satisfaction, regardless of pressure or workload for any particular day. Reliability of service providers is a surefire way to win over a consumer, keep him or her, and eventually win them over to retention and loyalty methods.

Recommendations

- i. Service providers must make sure that clients are given top priority by providing high-quality services, as this will increase clients' loyalty.
- ii. Customers have a very high propensity to switch to the next available service provider if they are not satisfied. In order to prevent this move and implement client retention methods, service providers should develop their service delivery techniques.
- iii. Service providers should improve the professionalism and consumer satisfaction of their service offering.
- iv. Managers must be willing to grasp the discrepancy between client perceptions and expectations in order to establish service strategies and standards.
- v. Customers are more picky and have higher standards for quality, therefore service providers need to focus on their needs and give them more for their money.

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