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CUSTOMERS' LOYALTY AND SALES PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
The study examined the association between customers' loyalty and the sales performance of Dangote Sugar Refinery in Nigeria. The study focused on emotional loyalty and service quality and how they affect sales performance. The study employed survey research. A sample of 84 respondents was used for the study. Data for the study were generated from the questionnaire distributed to the respondents. The hypotheses were tested with Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at 0.05 level of significance with aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 20.0. From the analysis, it was found out that there is a significant relationship between emotional loyalty and sale performance of Dangote Sugar Refinery. There is a significant relationship between service quality loyalty and sale performance of Dangote Sugar Refinery in Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others, that strategies that boost emotional loyalty, such as product adverts should always strive to be in line with product functionality; and, salespeople should always be encouraged to base arguments on actual product functions, not fictitious claims.

Keywords: Customers' loyalty, Emotional, Service quality and sales performance

INTRODUCTION

Globalization, intense competition, advancement in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and changing consumer demands, among several other factors, pose a challenge to the survival of any organization in this 21st century (Obasan, Ariyo, & Hassan, 2015). Customer loyalty is not a one-off thing but is achieved over time through multiple transactions (Khadka & Maharjan, 2017). It is affected by a plethora of factors, such as product quality (Amegayibor & Korankye, 2021). Accordingly, product quality is an attribute that ensures the continued purchase of a product or service by a customer from the development of emotional and behavioral loyalty. Thus, customer loyalty is crucial to the survival of any business in today's highly competitive environment for two reasons. First, a positive link exists between customer loyalty, satisfaction and profitability (Chi, 2005). Secondly, the cost of acquiring new brand favourites is relatively far more expensive than maintaining existing customers (Kimura, 2021; Magatef & Tomalieh, 2015). To survive businesses need to build and maintain relationships with customers and more so transform such into a competitive advantage (Cannon & Perreault Jr, 1999).

In the Nigerian context, studies have focused on customer satisfaction and organizational performance (Ndubisi & Nwankwo, 2019) and/or determinants of customer loyalty (Solomon, Stanley, & Ufuoma, 2017), et cetera with a great emphasis on the service industry, such is commercial banks. However, customer loyalty is an increasing prerequisite for the continued success of any business globally. From an organizational perspective, performance is often linked with the capacity of an organization to meet its goals over a period of time. It is often described using a combination of quantitative and qualitative metrics, however, Samsonowa (2011) delineated four dimensions often employed to describe such to include: sustained increase in market share, rising profitability, growth and return on investment. The increase in market share and rising profitability are related to the issue of sales performance which has been linked to customer loyalty.

Most of the related studies were conducted in the banking industry, service firms, telecommunication industry and Brick & Morter Stores. This observed dearth of research on customer loyalty and sales performance in the manufacturing sector of Nigeria has been considered as another motivation to execute this study in Dangote cement Nigeria plc. This study was conducting on Dangote Sugar Refinery which most prior studies are yet to consider in their research. This therefore seeks to explore the effect between emotional loyalty, service quality loyalty and sale promotion of Dangote Sugar Refinery in South East region.

Review of Related Literature

Many of the researchers such as Kaura, Prasad and Sharma (2015), Huang *et al* (2020) and Ismail and Yunan (2016) claimed that the customer loyalty as the most crucial aspect of a company's performance in the market which is defined by the customer's intention to re-visit and repurchase product or service from the same company. Customers consistently buy the same brand of items because the company places a high priority on their loyalty, which benefits them (Sriram et al., 2007). Since customers who are loyal to a certain company tend to only buy a product or service from that company and have no interest in the equivalent products or services supplied by the competitors, customer loyalty has become a crucial component in evaluating a company's success in the industry (Mahabub, Mohammad & Md. Saiful, 2023). Therefore, loyalty might be seen as a customer's commitment to a business, in which the consumer will continue to use or repurchase goods or services from the business and refrain from doing so from competing businesses (Islam & Rahman, 2016; Wilson, 2018).

Emotional loyalty is achieved when a customer feels that a brand corresponds to their value, ideas, and passion (Khadka & Maharjan, 2017). Emotional loyalty consists of a commitment or trust in a company's product or service which result in a purchase. The study by Kumari and Patyal (2017) on a sample of participants in India using primary data argued that consumers' emotional loyalty is exemplified by a refusal to transfer to a rival. This emotional loyalty attribute was also demonstrated by Ndubisi & Nwankwo (2019) in Nigeria on a sample of customers in banks, and found that feelings related to banking experience increased the rate of acceptability by the customers of such banking institutions.

The firm's ability to create and sustain competitive advantage depends upon the high level of service quality provided by the service provider (Yoo & Park, 2007). Therefore, providing a consistently high quality service quality can differentiate one GSM provider from others (Adeleke & Aminu, 2012). Theoretically, positive relationships between service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty are well documented in the extant literature. Services Quality is considered as a major determinant in customer retention and building value relationship (Venetis & Ghauri, 2004).

The implication of the above discussion is that with high service quality, GSM customers are attracted, and when happy and satisfied, and have an increased propensity to stay longer with their GSM service provider. Empirical findings have shown positive relationships existing between service quality and customer satisfaction, on one hand and between service quality and customer loyalty, on the other hand in a number of industries. For example, Coner and Gungor (2002) found that service quality would lead towards more loyal customers in the Turkish Metropolitan retail market. Turel and Serenko (2006) found that perceived service quality and perceived value are the key constructs affecting the customer's satisfaction with mobile services. Satisfaction in turn leads to customer loyalty. Zeithaml *et al.* (2008) develop a conceptual model that correlates service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The model shows that service quality results from reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy and tangibles. Service quality is determined by reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. These can be considered as the determinants of the broad service quality, but what are the specific determinants of telecommunication service quality? Jahanzeb and Tasneem (2011) discuss these under the following broad headings: communication guarantee, settlement service, value added service (VAS) and technology innovation (Adeleke & Aminu, 2012). Communication guarantee results when the quality of network of the service provider is satisfactory and there are negligible rates of call failure. The settlement service refers to the prompt and accurate billing service that also enhances customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction level can also be influenced by VAS, for example, GPRS, Media file sharing, news updates and so on. Finally, technology innovation refers to the feature where in the service provider rolls out new technology on a regular basis.

Sales performance has been conceptualized in frameworks and various literature reviews to be the result of a vast array of endogenous, moderator, and mediating variables (for example, Verbeke, Dietz & Verwaal 2011). Despite significant progress, unfortunately, our ability to predict sales performance based on the extensive, published research on topics such as sales per- son selection, buyer–seller interactions, job design, incentive systems, sales controls, supervision, and many other topics in the sales/sales management domain has been less than ideal. Because extant research can explain a relatively small variance in sales performance, there is ample opportunity for advancing our understanding of sales performance and a need for new theoretical models to accomplish this goal. The purpose of this paper is to identify five under researched topic areas believed to provide promising opportunities for future

researchers who are seeking to advance marketers' understanding of the sales performance domain. No doubt the act of selecting these five areas overlooks promising opportunities elsewhere; however, there is an underlying rationale for the topics addressed. These five topics were selected and are viewed as particularly salient based on recent changes in the sales environment, and they represent significant differences from status quo research. As such, these research topics potentially may lead to large as opposed to incremental advances in sales performance models and frameworks.

More specifically, these five topics are based on the following considerations. First, managing customer relationships in an ever increasingly complex marketplace with growing evidence of the vital role of customer relationships and solution selling is placing a different set of demands on today's sales force. Man- aging today's selling environment calls for client interactions that involve complex alignments of both the buying and selling firms' resources; hence, being able to manage these resources has become an important skill for salespeople. Second, the process of securing and maintaining these client relationships places additional pressure on salespeople to identify and execute creative solutions; thus, salesperson creativity is a particularly relevant consideration. Third, this creativity often manifests in the need for the identification and execution of effective influence techniques that are sensitive to buyer needs. Furthermore, the need to establish credibility with buyers as a basis of influence is especially critical today given growing buyer skepticism and resistance. Fourth, this resource alignment behavior and creativity should attend to ethical activities if salesperson credibility is to be maintained. Finally, these issues are particularly imperative when many individuals are selling in team contexts where the nature of individual effects may differ greatly from team effects and sales performance becomes a multilevel phenomenon.

Empirical Review

Mahabub, Mohammad and Md. Saiful (2023) explored the influence of brand image on customer loyalty especially in reference to banking companies in Bangladesh. Brand awareness and brand satisfaction are the two sub constructs which are used to represent the brand image of the companies. The study served a structured questionnaire and collected data from 363 respondents from the clients of ten commercial banks of Bangladesh. Employing the structural equation model (SEM) with Smart Pls, the study found significant influence of brand awareness and brand satisfaction on the customer loyalty of the surveyed banks.

Vikas, Kyuhong, Carly, Markus, Muzeeb, Narendra and Shrihari (2023) synthesize research on the relationship of customer satisfaction with customer- and firm-level outcomes using a meta-analysis based on 535 correlations from 245 articles representing a combined sample size of 1,160,982. The results show a positive association of customer satisfaction with customer-level outcomes (retention, WOM, spending, and price) and firm-level outcomes (product-market, accounting, and financial-market performance). A moderator analysis shows the association varies due to many contextual factors and measurement characteristics. The results have important theoretical and managerial implications. Rizwan, Tanveer and Hammad (2022) studied the intervention of customer satisfaction in the association between service quality and corporate image to customer loyalty in the Pakistan banking sector. The population of this research is banking customers and a sample size of 210 respondents. This study uses the SPSS, Correlation, ANOVA and regression analysis techniques along with AMOS methods. The results of the study showed that service quality and corporate image of the banks are not associated with customer loyalty, but this association is possible due to customer loyalty. This study shows that banks must focus on customer satisfaction to engage customer loyalty. CL is only achieved through customer satisfaction. The Pakistani banking sector, therefore, improves customer satisfaction, so the association between service quality,

corporate image and customer loyalty must be enhanced. Tri, Wulandari and Sri (2022) examined the effect of product quality and price perception on customer loyalty mediated by customer satisfaction. A sample of 96 respondents processed data using the Smart PLS 3 program. The results showed that: product quality had a direct and positive significant effect on customer loyalty and customer satisfaction. While price perception has no significant effect on customer loyalty, but price perception has a direct and negative significant effect on customer satisfaction, customer satisfaction has a direct and positive significant effect on customer loyalty, customer satisfaction can mediate the relationship between product quality and customer loyalty positively. Customer satisfaction can mediate the relationship between price perception and customer loyalty negatively. Intan, Ratih, Henny (2021) examined how post-usage effects customer loyalty in the context of mobile banking, as well as the function of satisfaction as a moderating factor. For these goals, research hypotheses based on content analysis of prior studies were established and tested among 100 Indonesian consumers of mobile banking services. The actual results of regression analysis revealed that post-usage had a favorable and significant impact on consumer loyalty. Furthermore, satisfaction mediates the association between post-usage and client loyalty. These results provide an important contribution to the literature on post-usage customer and customer loyalty and satisfaction by offering clear direction to the bank's management on how to effectively use post-usage and customer satisfaction to increase customer loyalty. Harma, Gupta, Gera, Sati and Sharma, (2020) determined the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty and the factors influencing these concepts. Further we will get to know that how these concepts affect the relationship that customers have with the organization that helps the organization to be at a better place in the market or beat the competitors. A highly satisfied customer will spread positive WOM and a loyal customer leads to an increase in both sales and profitability. Customer satisfaction affects the trust and customer trust is an antecedent of loyalty. When customers connect with emotions through the product/ services of the brand then it creates a bond between the customer and the brand. The relationship between satisfaction and loyalty influences the profits. The more customer is satisfied, the more loyal towards the brand. A loyal customer leads to an increase in both sales and profitability. Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between customer loyalty and service quality. Ogunyemi (2019) investigated the impact of customer loyalty on organizational performance in the hotel industry; the data for this study were obtained from primary source where a survey was carried out on selected Hotel organizations and their customers in Abeokuta Metropolis of Ogun state. The five (5) selected hotels in includes Green legacy Resort, Daktad Suites, IBD international hotel, Jambed hotel and Suites and Mokland Hotel. 100 respondents were chosen as the sample size while 100 questionnaires was administered to the respondents and only 80 questionnaires were carefully filled and returned, and the data was analyzed using statistical package for social science version 20 with a descriptive and inferential statistics, From the findings it shows that 76.3% of the respondents agreed that with an effective customer loyalty, hotel services remain the best despite competitors product from other hotels. Abdullahi Ndagi Yakubu; Salihu Shehu & Nwokenkwo Ben Olubunmi (2019) sought to find out the pricing strategies adopted by companies and its impact on customer's loyalty. This study used the descriptive survey design, the use of this design facilitated an in depth analysis of the role of pricing strategies on customer loyalty. The population of this study was the hi-malt and 7up and coca cola bottling company with a population of over 1000 and sample size of 100 in Kaduna metropolis. The collected data was sorted edited and coded before the analysis, using non parametric, percentage pie chart and chi square to test the Hypotheses, the finding confirmed that, price has impact on the customer loyalty. The researcher recommended that company should endeavor to compare price of products with that of competitors before setting price compare prices. Tahmeem,

Kabir and Sugandha (2018) conducted on private and public banks of Bangladesh with a respondent number of 210 to unveil the interdependence among the dimensions as well as their cumulative effect on customer loyalty. For analysis SPSS 16.0 has been used for descriptive analysis and AMOS 16.0 has been employed for measuring the impact of the exogenous variables such as trust, complaint handling and technology adoption as well as on the endogenous variable namely customer loyalty. The study unfolds the significant relationship of all of the three independent variables on the dependent variable, customer loyalty. The implication of the research contributes to the existing theory of CRM by signifying its particular contribution on creating loyalty of customers. Moreover, practitioners can execute the implications of the study to improve their managerial strategies to retain more loyal customer base.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design in which data were collected across sampled segment of the population. This design is also preferred as it makes enough provision for protection against bias and maximizes reliability (Boniface & Ambrose 2015). Furthermore, survey is considered best research design suitable for collection of data from large sample of respondents since individual are the unit of analysis.

The population of the study covered the staff of Dangote Sugar Refinery South East region. The elements of the population were the regional sales team, field sales managers and registered dealers / direct distributors. This refinery is just one that situated in NPA Wharf, Apapa, and then distributions/sales points in every state in South-East Region. The population includes;

Due to the size of the population and its possible accessibility, the study used purposive sampling technique to adopt the entire population comprising 84 respondents as the sample size of the study.

Data were collected by means of survey using copies of structured questionnaire as research instrument. The instrument was coded in five-point Likert rating scale format as follows; Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The questionnaire was divided into two sections; section A and section B. While section A will deal with the bio-data of respondents, section B will dealt with essential issues concerning relationship between customer loyalty and sales performance of Dangote Sugar Refinery. The instrument was mainly to elicit information from the respondents.

Method of Data Analysis

In testing the hypotheses formulated, data were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at 0.05 level of significance with aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 20.0. This method was adopted so as to ascertain the strength of the relationship, patterns, significant connections, and trends between the variables in the hypotheses.

Mathematical formula for Correlation Coefficient is stated as;

$$r = \frac{N\sum xy-(\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[N\sum x^2-(\sum x)^2][N\sum y^2-(\sum y)^2]}}$$

Where:

N = number of pairs of scores
$\sum xy$ = Sum of the products of paired scores
$\sum x$ = Sum of x scores

$\sum y$ = Sum of y scores
$\sum x^2$ = Sum of squared x scores
$\sum y^2$ = Sum of squared y scores

Decision rule

Accept the alternative hypothesis when the probability value (p-value) is less than alpha value of 0.05, otherwise reject.

Out of eighty four (84) copies of questionnaire administered, seventy three (73) were completed and returned, this represent 87%.

Data Analysis

The table below is the descriptive statistics that was computed to show the mean, median, standard deviation, minimum, maximum values, and Skewness-Kurtosis statistics, etc.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
SLP	5	1	193	73.00	84.926	.773	.913	-1.496	2.000
EML	5	2.00	178.00	73.0000	76.01316	.593	.913	-1.568	2.000
SQL	5	3.00	186.00	73.0000	79.18333	.727	.913	-1.170	2.000
Valid N (listwise)	5								

Source: SPSS 20.0 output, 2024

The descriptive statistics for the independent variables, emotional loyalty (EML), behaviour loyalty (BHL), and service quality loyalty (SQL) and the dependent variable; sales performance (SLP) was represented in Table 1. The mean is used to establish a baseline. The maximum and minimum numbers, on the other hand, aid in the detection of data problems. The variation from the mean is represented by the standard deviation. It is a risk indicator; the greater the standard deviation, the greater the risk. The standard deviation is a metric that expresses how much each item in a dataset deviates from the mean. It is the most reliable and extensively used metric. The standard deviations in the firms are 76.01, 79.18, and 84.93, for EML, SQL and SLP respectively.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between emotional loyalty and sale performance of Dangote Sugar Refinery in South East region.

Table 2: Correlations

		SLP	EML
SLP	Pearson Correlation	1	.995**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	5	5
EML	Pearson Correlation	.995**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	5	5

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: SPSS 20.0 output, 2023

Indeed, from Table 2 above, correlation coefficient of 0.995 a positive correlation between emotional loyalty and sale performance. To get an idea of how much variance the two

variables share, the coefficient of determination (R) is calculated. R is 0.995 x 0.995= 0. 994. It implies that emotional loyalty help to explain 99% of the variance in sale performance of Dangote Sugar Refinery South East region.

From the above result, the study discovers that the confidence level between emotional loyalty and sale performance is very high, and that correlation coefficient is significant at 0.01 levels. Since p-value 0.000 is less than 0.01, the study rejects the null hypothesis and accepts alternate hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between emotional loyalty and sale performance of Dangote Sugar Refinery in South East region, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two

H_{O3}: There is no significant relationship between service quality loyalty and sale performance of Dangote sugar refinery in South East region, Nigeria.

Table 3: Correlations

		SLP	SQL
SLP	Pearson Correlation	1	.997**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	5	5
SQL	Pearson Correlation	.997**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	5	5

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

Source: SPSS 20.0 output, 2023

Indeed, from Table 3 above, correlation coefficient of 0.999 a positive correlation between service quality loyalty and sale performance. To get an idea of how much variance the two variables share, the coefficient of determination (R) is calculated. R is 0.997 x 0.997= 0. 994. It implies that service quality loyalty help to explain 99% of the variance in sale performance of Dangote sugar refinery South East region.

From the above result, the study discovers that the confidence level between service quality loyalty and sale performance is very high, and that correlation coefficient is significant at 0.01 levels. Since p-value 0.000 is less than 0.01, the study rejects the null hypothesis and accepts alternate hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between service quality loyalty and sale performance of Dangote Sugar Refinery in South East region, Nigeria.

Discussion of the findings

Emotional Loyalty: There is a significant relationship between emotional loyalty and sale performance of Dangote Sugar Refinery in South East region, Nigeria. Imply that consumers' emotional loyalty is exemplified by a refusal to transfer to a rival, hence, consists of a commitment or trust in a company's product or service This result is in line with the study of Nosike and Egbunike (2022) results showed a positive significant relationship between emotional loyalty and consumer purchase intention; and, a positive significant relationship between behavioral loyalty and consumer purchase intention.

Service quality loyalty: There is a significant relationship between service quality loyalty and sale performance of Dangote Sugar Refinery in South East region, Nigeria. it means that

customers are impressed on service quality of the organization and its service offerings as it considered as a major determinant in customer retention. The result agreed with Rizwan, Tanveer and Hammad (2022) contradict the results and revealed that service quality and corporate image of the banks are not associated with customer loyalty, but this association is possible due to customer loyalty.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study examined the association between customers' loyalty and the sales performance of Dangote Sugar Refinery in South East region of Nigeria. The study focused on four consumer loyalty factors, such as emotional, behavioral, service quality and corporate image loyalty and their effect on sales performance. Data for the study were generated from the questionnaire administered to the respondents. From the analysis, it was confirms that the four customers loyalty components (emotional, behavioral, service quality and corporate image loyalty have positive and statistically significant association with sales performance. The study therefore concludes that customers' loyalty and the sales performance of Dangote Sugar Refinery in South East region of Nigeria.

Based on the conclusion, the study makes the following recommendations;

1. Strategies that boost emotional loyalty of customers such as product adverts should always strive to be in line with product functionality. This entails that Sales personnel should always be encouraged to base arguments on actual product functions, not fictitious claims.
2. The industry should strive to earn, maintain and sustain customers' trust through consistent upgrade in production and provision of quality product or services delivery.

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