



EMPLOYEE TRAINING, SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMERS' PATRONAGE OF SATELLITE PRODUCTS AND SERVICES: EVIDENCE FROM SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigated whether employee training and service quality influence customers' patronage of satellite products/services companies in the South-South region of Nigeria. To do this, 400 questionnaires were administered, out of which 373 were completely retrieved and found usable. Data obtained in the survey were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Findings indicated that there is a significant relationship between employee training, service quality and customer patronage of satellite products. The implication is that employee training and service quality serve as means of improving or enhancing the patronage of customers. Given that service quality positively affects customers' patronage, there is a need for the management of satellite products/services to sustain their service quality mechanisms in order to attract more customers further. As a matter of fact, they should further strengthen their product by seeking more outlets or well-trained individuals who are capable of installing and repairing their products (decoders) when customers seek their attention. This study contributes to knowledge by using hybrid theories to describe employee training and service quality effects on customers' patronage of satellite products/ services in Nigeria.*

KEYWORDS: Aftersales services; Employee training; Customers' patronage; Service quality; Satellite product



INTRODUCTION

Practically, some industries, particularly manufacturing, service provider and distribution, might disregard the prime role of after-sales services, notwithstanding the ever-growing issues facing them. This might be a result of low customer patronage, a shortfall in profit-making or overspending in after-sales services (customers care support) branches nationwide, thereby closing various state services centres to centralise services centres to the only head office alone. In most cases, customers foot the bills for sending the products to the approved after-sales services, specifically, the care centre's headquarters office. The call centre process used by this satellite/ Pay-Tv provider charges their customers too high, especially when customers are calling their Lagos, Port-Harcourt and even Abuja lines for complaints and assistance.

The toll-free line they have is always busy, making it difficult for customers to access that toll-free line. The worst part is when you have a faulty decoder that is under warranty, they could tell you that there is no decoder on the ground, and secondly, they are not too sure when decoders will be available, thereby indirectly forcing the customers to buy new one or pay money to do an instant swap. In some cases, they will tell you that parts to fix the decoder are not available. This can be frustrating. Following the latest technology, and changes in the products, some product becomes old either by performance, size or memory space, thereby making it difficult for customers who purchase old model, whose warranty has not elapsed, to swap. This is because if the enterprise wants to make money, it will ask you to pay an unnegotiated amount, which puts the customers in a tight corner to pay, thereby making an additional profit to the company.

The issue of pay-per-view is not taken into cognizance, as many customers do not have the right to choose what they want; rather, the providers give you what they can afford. Notably, every business exists principally to make a profit unfortunately, some organizations do not make maximum profits reason being that they are unable to realise the reasons why they lost numerous customers. Most economies rely on the manufacturing and service industries, contributing to their economic growth (Okoro & Egberi, 2019; Okoro, 2014). Thus, inefficient method towards aftersales services in areas of training and service quality has necessitated the researcher to look into the effect of employee training and service quality on customers' patronage, particularly as it concerns satellite pay-tv products/services in Nigeria in areas of aftersales dimensions like employee training and service quality with special reference to Multichoice and Startimes companies in South-South region of Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customers' Patronage

Patronage is defined as the standard to which a customer shows repeat purchase behaviour from a service distributor, hopeful assurance, long-lasting attitude and disposition towards a services provider (Gremler & Brown, 1996 as cited in Muhammad, Haseeb & Sadaf, 2018). From the view of Oliver (1999), customer patronage is described as a deeply held commitment to repurchase a firm's products at the expense of a competitor's offering.

From the views of the aforementioned authors, it indicates that the turn-up of patronage is a great mechanism towards the rate of business survivors. This agrees with the view of Ogwo &



Igwe (2012) that the main reason for starting up a business is to build customers. A customer is a specific person who deliberately decides to buy goods or services from a special shop/service outlet frequently (Mojekeh, 2011). Also, a loyal customer is one who regularly repeats purchases and has a degree of immunity to competitors indicating that the customer is satisfied. Customer satisfaction itself is not an indication of the customer's retention and loyalty.

Moreover, becoming a loyal customer takes place in stages. Investing in customer satisfaction pays off; neutralising competitors can achieve the highest returns and subsequently by investing in champions. In services, effective service recovery can provide a way to total satisfaction without perfect design and delivery of services. This is due to the nature of the services, which makes it likely that mistakes will happen. Customer relationship management is required to build a lasting relationship with a customer. Customers with a personal relationship with the supplier's staff will likely become loyal. Developing customer loyalty may require increasing amounts of contacts with the customer; after-sales provide a natural link between the supplier and the customer.

Storbacka et al. (1994) highlight relationship strength and relationship longevity as important contributors to and instruments for explaining the chain from service quality to profitability of customer relationships. Anderson and Mittal (2000), cited in Itunuoluwa, Ayodele, Adesuyi and Ayo (2021), have recognised that the relationships in the satisfaction-profit chain are off-balance and non-linear. Companies can enhance customer satisfaction by improving product and service elements. Improved customer satisfaction is likely to lead to greater customer loyalty. Increased customer loyalty is anticipated to lead to greater profitability.

Employee Training

Training is an essential tool that grants learning opportunities that could lead to customer satisfaction through organisational commitment. Organisation commitment is the bond an employee's come about with their employer. Noticeably, employees that are committed to their organisation normally see themselves as part of the organisation, feel that they are relevant also and understand the organisation's aims. Every business organisation aims to win customers and retain them for life, and only satisfaction will open to customer patronage.

Furthermore, training is a vital tool that enhances the total performance of an organisation in numerous ways, viz personality development, problem-solving techniques, time management skills, soft skills development, quality improvement skills, goal setting and workplace communication. As aforementioned, training helps management/staff acquire skills, knowledge, competencies and abilities which are put into use to solve challenges experienced in the organisation and sometimes to assist staff to realise their aspiration and career goals. Therefore, it will be an important policy to invest in the developmental processes of workers' skills to improve effectively and efficiently in productivity.

Lee (2012) opined that training could be depicted as a vital driving tool of customer service and an extension of desired output, like customer satisfaction. The organisation's main objectives are to satisfy customers, which will lead to customers' patronage. Training enhances employees to interact with customers effectively and answer their problems in a timely way. Numerous organisations have introduced customer service training programs. As a result, employee skills and abilities are amplified to enable them to serve customers with quality



services, which in return will result in customer patronage and profitability. Training has a remarkable positive effect on productivity which could lead to customer satisfaction and has the capacity to increase brand quality.

Training customer about one's products or services is a fantastic process to differentiate you from another competitor. Customer training is designed to assist customers in accessing or using company products or services most effectively and efficiently. The objectives of this training are to help customers master the usage of the products. Training is a way of educating customers on how best to use the product or services to get the maximum benefit that will lead to customer patronage. Moreover, to attract more customers in the marketplace, companies must become aware of their desire for skilled, well-trained, qualified, knowledgeable and reliable staff to gain customer patronage, gain competitive advantages and achieve organisational goals. Through employee training, companies are capable of increasing the ability of the workforce, which is important to the obligation undertaken by personnel. In other words, grow their involvement and satisfaction with the company.

Service via training can lead to maximisation of customer satisfaction, which can enhance customers' views and expectations towards patronising one's organisation. In addition, continuous training has evolved into a strategic tactic for most companies and appears as a new method of preventing the obsolescence of human capital knowledge, the reason being that it serves as a catalyst for maintaining a dominant position and competitive advantage over rivals. Kumari et al. (2013) stated that in the current competitive business environment, customer happiness is the main target of organisations. That's why companies are seeking to give customers better service in order to satisfy their consumers. Organisations are seeking to provide excellent services and products in a good time that is beneficial to customers in a competitive market. Employee training enhances positively by contributing to customer patronage, as qualified staff and an excellent performing workforce can meet the requirement of consumers.

H₁: Employee training has no significant impact on customer patronage

Service Quality

Service quality is the driving force of any quality services rendered to customers (Mojekeh 2017). The services that various satellite organisations offer play a major role that will lead to customer patronage of any organisation that shows a good sense of responsibility towards giving effective and efficient service quality. In other words, service quality is all about the regimen a service organisation gives to a customer. To retain and satisfy consumers to a greater extent, it is necessary that service quality should be high (Cronin & Taylor 1992, cited in Arinze & Oranye 2021).

Quality of service/product has a positive effect on customer satisfaction. Quality of the service also helps in regulating the company's global delivery system for the products or services. Customer satisfaction and quality of service have a temporary correlation with each other, and service quality controls future purchase behaviour (H, Hu et al. 2009). To keep and satisfy consumers to a larger extent, it is imperative that service quality should be great (Cronin & Taylor 1992, cited in Arinze & Oranye 2021). It will be noted that quality of service/product has a significant effect on customer satisfaction.



Evans and Dean (2003) see this as a judge of quality, insight towards customer needs, and futurity and now, it's essential with regards to keeping pace with the ever-changing marketing, which requires an effective strategy for paying attention to customers' choices of services needed, as well as learning from customers relatively, by measuring satisfaction with regards to competitors and also building customers relationship. Dissatisfaction and satisfaction of services provided by these satellite services are needed to enable organisations to improve in their service in other for customers to get satisfied because it's only satisfied customers that will be loyal, which in return leads to customer patronage.

Organisation performance can only be rated positive towards satisfaction by Multichoice/StarTimes customers who have used such products that meet their expectations. An organisation with a very high level of service quality has the capacity to meet customer needs. These customers examine the quality of service rendered by evaluating their needs or expectations of what they are watching (Fotiadis & Vassiliadis 2016). Notably, the performance of a service company has been evaluated through the type of quality service rendered. These service providers are aware that greater quality services give advantages over their competitors in the satellite industry, which they believe will make customers be loyal. Where service meets customer needs, it is expected to be called quality service (Shahim & Samea 2010).

Customers are the driving force of all successful organisations. Due to modern technological development, human activities are moving faster (McArthur, 2016), and sociological desires change as individual satisfaction changes. More also, as the marketing environment changes, business is faced with a tougher mechanism to adapt to ensure customer value and satisfaction are met. While Zatham and Bitner (2003) defined it as the process of delivering service quality in compliance with the desired expectation of the customer; in other words, service quality is the outcome of the analogy posited by customers about their expected results from a service firm and also the perception of the expected performance of the firm providing the services.

Schneider and White (2004) see service quality as the customer's evaluation of the superiority or excellence of services provided by the service provider. In order to remain in business, organisations must improve their service quality. In the views of Palmer (2005), the exemption of physical expression or display makes evaluating of service quality strenuous. Gupta and Rati (2015) state that in order to improve the performance of the business, organisations must recognise the importance of quality as a strategic tool towards achieving operational efficiency and effectiveness. Zaithaml and Bitner (2003) defined service quality as a process of giving out one's best terms of service to its customers.

Adat and Noel (2014) opined that service quality is a strategic subject matter that is widely researched in the service industry. Its modules of operands have granted it a success story in the competitive market of service organisations. One of the major contributors to customer satisfaction is service quality which has to be given a level of importance in the service sector in other to increase the customer base. According to Vavra (1995), quality is regularly delivering products and services that meet consumer expectations and needs optimally. Quality is defined by Storbacka et al. (1994) in the following terms: product or service quality requires a total system, evidence of customer specifications, designs product/service to requirements, and shows a production or service delivery system to produce in line with the requirements.

Service quality is one element of the service equation. Frequently, the results are more important to the customer than the process quality. In certain cases, price and other acquisition costs can be more important than process quality. As customer needs are different, customers are willing to pay very different prices for a given service, depending on its importance. The resulting value to the customer over the costs creates potential profit. It has been appraised that a 5% refinement in customer loyalty would result in a 25-85% improvement in profit in service industries (Heskett et al., 1997, cited in Sari, 2020).

H₂: Service quality has no significant impact on customer patronage

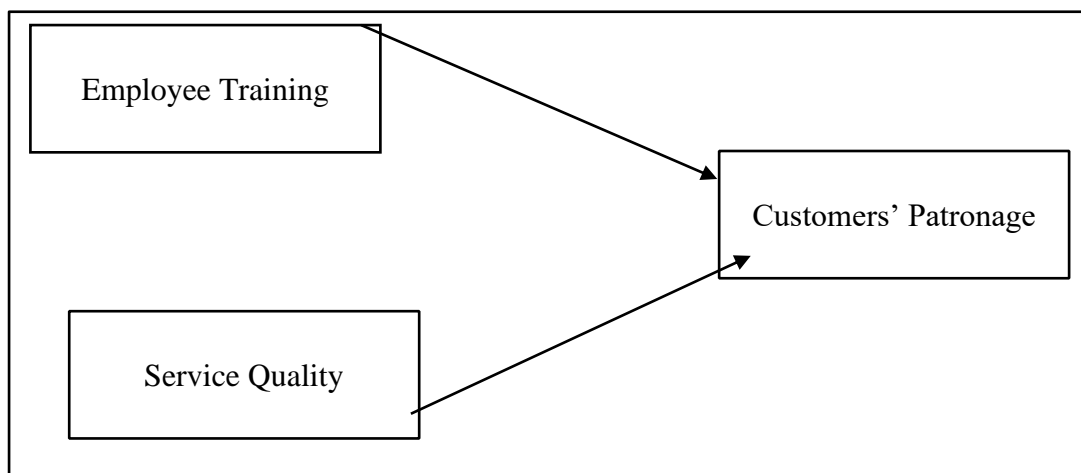


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Study

(Source: *Conceptualized by the Researchers, 2023*)

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is hinged on service quality and consumer behaviour theories. First, theory of service quality is based on product quality and customers' satisfaction. Oliver (1980) prognosticates that customers will conclude that a product or service is low when the products or services performances do not meet the desired expectation of the customers, but when the quality of services or products increases, performance will increase to exceed customers' expectations.

In other words, the expectations of customers serve as the basis for which customers will judge service quality. This implies that the quality of one's products or services creates room for patronage and the likelihood of an increase in sales. The service quality theory is also relevant to the study because only satisfied customers can patronise any enterprise that renders quality services and satisfactory services that will enhance repurchase decisions.



Second, the theory of consumer behaviour is the study of how human being makes decisions when they buy goods and services. This theory states that consumers make purchasing decisions based on their feelings, hope, aspirations and fears (Sabine 2012). In this theory, the consumer is seen to be a purchaser, paymaster and enjoyer; thus, it has a passion for re-stating the impact of a customer, placing an uppermost importance on customer retention and customer relationship management. This connotes well that management should strategies at first meeting the satisfying their customer's needs while thinking of making a profit. Knowing well that it is only the need to satisfy their customer that can give word of mouth to other customers, thereby attracting more customers to the organisation.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study used a descriptive survey (quantitative) to obtain the views of respondents on employee training, service quality and customers' patronage of satellite products/services in the South-South region of Nigeria. The population of the study comprised Pay-Tv subscribers in Delta, Edo, Bayelsa and Rivers States; hence a total population of 1,005,900 active Pay-Tv subscribers to Multichoice/Startimes was obtained.

To obtain the sample of the study, multi-stage sampling techniques (probabilistic) and stratified random sampling were used. Taro-Yamane sample size determination formula was used in obtaining a sample of 400 and was divided among the Pay-Tv subscribers in Delta (130 Pay-Tv subscribers), Edo(110), Bayelsa (37) and Rivers (123). Questionnaire on a four adjusted point Likert scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree was used. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was used in ascertaining the reliability of the instrument (see Table 1)

Table 1: Reliability Coefficients of the Research Instruments

Item	Obs.	Sign	Item-test correlation	Item-rest correlation	Average interitem covariance	Cronbach Alpha
Satcusp	40	+	0.8547	0.8001	0.5890	0.8877
Satempt	40	+	0.9010	0.8390	0.4937	0.8772
Satsqty	40	+	0.5620	0.4166	0.6842	0.9330

Source: *Researchers' Computation (2023)*

Given the formulated hypotheses, the following models were specified:

$$\text{satcusp} = f(\text{satsqty}) \quad - \quad \text{eq. 1}$$

$$\text{satcusp} = f(\text{satempt}) \quad - \quad \text{eq. 2}$$



Equations 1-2 are the implicit forms of the model; however, equations 3-4 were expressed in their explicit form:

$$\text{satcusp}_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{satsqty}_{it} + u_{it} \quad - \text{eq. 4}$$

$$\text{satcusp}_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_2 \text{satempt}_{it} + u_{it} \quad - \text{eq.5}$$

Where: $\beta_1, \beta_2 > 0$; Satcusp = Customer Patronage; satsqty = Service Quality; satempt= Employee training; Sat = Satellite; U_{it} = Error Term; B = Intercept; $\beta_1 - \beta_2$ = Coefficient of the Independent Variables. Data obtained were evaluated via descriptive and inferential statistical methods, and the statistical analysis was carried out using STATA 16.0

RESULTS

Table 2: Summary of Descriptive Statistics

Statistics	Satcusp	Satempt	Satsqty
Mean	3.45	3.50	3.48
Std. Dev.	0.19	0.14	0.17
Skewness	0.12	0.49	-0.19
Kurtosis	3.75	4.62	4.15

Source: *Researchers' Computation (2023)*

Table 2 captured the descriptive results of the perceptions of respondents on customers' patronage(satcusp), employee training(satempt) and service quality(satsqty)of Multichoice /Startimes users in Edo, Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers State. The mean values for customers' patronage are 3.45, employee training 3.50 and service quality 3.48; this showed that the respondents shared similar views on the research theme. The standard deviation values revealed that the highest standard deviation value was recorded by satcusp (std. dev. = 0.19) and the least by satempt (std. dev. = 0.14); this implies that customers perceive employee training as the most vital dynamic influencing customers' patronage.

Furthermore, the skewness values showed that satempt (0.49) is positively skewed while the satsqty (-0.19) is negatively skewed, suggesting that employee training moved in one direction with customers' patronage while service quality moved in the opposite direction with customers' patronage.

**Table 3: Pearson Correlation Matrix**

Stats	Satcusp	Satempt	Satsqty
Satcusp	1.0000		
Satempt	0.3156	1.0000	
Satwrty	-0.3623	-0.6343	1.0000

Source: *Researchers' Computation (2023)*

Table 3 showed the Pearson correlation matrix and the results depicted that Pearson r for employee training was positively correlated with customers' patronage while service quality was negatively correlated with customers' patronage. Also, none of the Pearson r exceeded 0.8, hence suggesting the nonexistence of multicollinearity in employee training, service quality and customers' patronage model (Gujarati, 2003 as cited in Okoro & Ekwueme, 2021; Okoro, 2016)

Table 4: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

Stats	VIF	1/VIF
Satempt	1.02	0.9818
Satsqty	1.01	0.9905
Mean VIF	1.02	

Source: *Researchers' Computation (2023)*

The average VIF = 1.02 and is less than accepted average VIF of 10; suggesting that there is the nonexistence of multicollinearity in the models of employee training, service quality and customers' patronage

Table 5: Regression Result for Employee Training and Customers' Patronage

Source	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	No. of Obs.	373
Model	5.0570	1	5.0570	F(1, 371)	41.05
Residual	45.700	371	0.1231	Prob. F	0.000
Total	50.757	372	0.1364	R-Squared	0.099
Satcusp	Coeff.	Std. Error	T	Prob.	
Satempt	-0.167	0.0267	-6.41	0.000	
_Cons.	4.087	0.0794	51.44	0.000	

Source: *Researchers' Computation (2023)*

Table 3 showed the regression result for employee training (*empsat*) and customers' patronage (*satcusp*). The R-Squared is 0.0996, indicating that the independent variable (employee training) explained about 9.96% of the systematic variation in the dependent variable (customers' patronage). The small R-Squared value implies that employee training has a low predictive ability on customers' patronage and that, most likely, there are other variables predicting customers' patronage. The f-ratio indicates that employee training ($F=1, 371 = 41.05$; Prob. $> F = 0.0000 < 0.05$) significantly affects customers' patronage.



Furthermore, t-value ($t = -6.41$; $P > |t| = 0.0000 < 0.05$) revealed that there is a negative and significant relationship between employee training and customer patronage of Multichoice /StarTimes products and services in Edo, Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers States. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was accepted; this means that there is a significant relationship between employee training and customer patronage of satellite products. This result corroborates the views of Muhammad *et al.* (2020); Sanjupa and Kumar (2016), who found that employee training affects customers' patronage.

Table 6: Regression Result for Service Quality and Customers' Patronage

Source	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	No. of Obs.	373
Model	6.6612	1	6.6612	F(1, 371)	56.04
Residual	44.096	371	0.1188	Prob. F	0.0000
Total	50.757	372	0.1364	R-Squared	0.1312
Satcusp	Coeff.	Std. Error	t	Prob.	
satsqty	0.1726	0.0230	7.49	0.000	
_Cons.	2.8946	0.0948	30.53	0.000	

Source: *Researchers' Computation (2023)*

Table 6 showed the regression result for service quality (*satsqty*) and customers' patronage (*satcusp*). The R-Squared is 0.1312, indicating that the independent variable (service quality) explained about 13.12% of the systematic variation in the dependent variable (customers' patronage). The small R-Squared value implies that service quality has a low predictive ability on customers' patronage and that, most likely, there are other variables predicting customers' patronage. The f-ratio indicates that service quality ($F=1, 371 = 56.04$; $\text{Prob.} > F = 0.0000 < 0.05$) significantly affects customers' patronage.

Furthermore, t-value ($t = 7.49$; $P > |t| = 0000 < 0.05$) revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between service quality and customer patronage of Multichoice /StarTimes products and services in Edo, Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers States. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was accepted; this means that there is a significant relationship between service quality and customer patronage of satellite products. This result corroborates with the findings of Mojekeh (2017); Olowe and Okeke (2020); Aslam and Farhat (2020); and Paulo *et al.* (2019), who found that product quality strongly affects customers' patronage.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Predominantly, organisations are keen on retaining existing customers as much as they can. One way they can do this is to encourage employee training and increase or improved service quality. This study examined the relationship between employee training, service quality and customers' patronage of satellite products/services in South-South of Nigeria. Specifically, the study concluded that there is a significant relationship between employee training, service quality and customer patronage of satellite products/services in Nigeria.

Given that the service quality of Multichoice/StarTimes products positively affects the level of customers' patronage, there is a need for the management of Multichoice/ StarTimes to sustain their service quality mechanisms in order to attract more customers further. Multichoice/StarTimes companies should further strengthen their product by seeking more outlets or well-trained individuals capable of installing and repairing Multichoice/StarTimes products (decoders) when customers seek their attention. This study contributes to knowledge by using hybrid theories to describe employee training and service quality effects on customers' patronage of satellite products/ services in Nigeria.

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