

# QUALITY CUSTOMER CARE PRACTICES FOR SUSTAINABLE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM THE HOTEL SECTOR IN RIVERS STATE

OBIORA, Judipat N.

Department of Hospitality Management and Tourism, Faculty of  
Management Sciences, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria  
judipat.obiora@uniport.edu.ng

and

ETUK, Joseph S.

Department of Hospitality Management and Tourism, Faculty of  
Management Sciences, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

## ABSTRACT

*This study empirically investigates the relationship between quality customer care practices and sustainable customer satisfaction in selected hotels in Rivers State. This cross sectional survey was conducted with a sample size of 185 customers that was obtained using the Freund and William's sample size determination formula. The scales used were within the acceptable Cronbach Alpha values of 0.7, which was interpreted to be reliable. A total of 183 copies of completed and usable questionnaire were used for data analysis. Furthermore, descriptive statistics were computed at the primary level of analysis, while the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used at the secondary level of analysis. The result of the analysis showed significant relationships between the dimensions and measures of our predictor and criterion variables respectively. It was therefore recommended that hotel management should enlighten staff and lay emphasis on the role of service reliability and responsiveness. We also recommend that employees' capability toward customers, such as interpersonal concern and personalised service should be emphasised and rewarded by management. This is because a combination of good customer care practice and customer satisfaction can lead to the survival of the business.*

Keywords: Customer care, customer satisfaction, empathy, revisit intention, responsiveness

## INTRODUCTION

Most hotel services are easy to replicate and when hotels provide nearly identical services, they can only distinguish themselves on the basis of the quality of service delivered. Therefore, it is worthy to note that customer/customer satisfaction and care is potentially an effective tool that hotels can use to gain strategic advantage and survive in today's ever-increasing competitive environment (Obiora, 2019). Customer/Customer satisfaction in its truest essence entails a customer's perception of the value expected from the organization and the value actually delivered (Akbar et al, 2010). Clemes , Gan & Ren (2011) opine that customer satisfaction is tied directly to the achievement of any hotel's profit. In the hospitality industry, satisfaction is considered the foremost activity developed to create customer delight (Kotler & Armstrong, 2000). Furthermore, Srinivas & Padma (2013) reiterate that satisfied customers are likely to be loyal, revisit and continue to use a wide range of service offered by the same organization, which invariably leads to increase in sales volume, revenue generation and new customers' patronage of the hotel industry.

Hitherto, Churchill & Surprenant (1982) corroborate that improving customer satisfaction had a significant and positive impact on an organization's financial performance. Furthermore, Azman, Hafizah & Ilyani (2016) suggest that customer satisfaction is achieved after the combined assessment of the service factors that constituted that service. This therefore goes to point out the relevance of identifying the various antecedents that best influences a customer's experience and improving upon them at all times. It has been proven also that there is need to always aim to affect both the expectations and experience of customers when seeking to attain customer satisfaction, through quality customer care services (Obiora, 2019, Kukoyi & Iwuagwu, 2015). Customer care is focused on making the customer comfortable, creating memorable interaction in the minds of the customers, making them feel better and satisfied than they were before the transaction and stimulate customer retention (Ngahu, 2001; Chen & Hu, 2013). There is a growing literature on customer care and satisfaction. Most of these studies had concentrated on other sectors such as banking, manufacturing, telecommunications, and insurance companies, especially in industrially advanced nations. There is an abundance of literature

on the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction ( Eshetie et al (2016), Soleiman & Einolahzadeh, 2018 ) but it appears that there is a dearth of literature on the specific relationship of customer care. More antecedents like customer care in particular, as a subset of service quality appears to have a dearth in empirical substantiation. Moreso, there is limited knowledge in extant research streams on the role of customer care on customer satisfaction in the hotel sector in Nigeria. This has created a gap in the literature that needs to be bridged. Therefore, a study linking quality customer care with customer satisfaction in the hotel sector would be an invaluable practical and theoretical contribution. This is what this study has set out to investigate.

Deng et al (2010) observed that failure to meet or exceed the expectations of customers in the industry leads to low patronage, increase in negative word of mouth, low profit and low sales volume, which in all hampers the growth of service organizations particularly hotels. Part of the major issues faced in the hotel industry is that most of these hotels do not set developmental programmes for their employees which have led to their inefficiency in service delivery (Jiang & Zhang, 2016). Secondly, they lack qualified and experienced workforce which has led to the reduced standard of service provision to the customers (Azman & Yusrizal, 2016). Other observed challenges faced by the hotel industry include reduced quality standards, unfair prices, inefficient customer handling skills, inefficient delivery and heightened customer complaints, unskilled hotel guides, insecurity, the lack and insufficient customer attention, insufficient and /or lack of parking space, inefficient 24 hour front desk services, insensitivity and psychophysical detachment of the customer (Kukoyi & Iwuagwu, 2015, Nduka et al, 2017 Obiora, 2019; Obiora & Asiegbu, 2019; Obiora & Ekeke, 2019). There is a belief that an organization's customer care practices influence satisfaction to a large extent. However, it appears that this belief has not yet been substantiated by a rigorous and concerted research effort in the hotel sector in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinning of this study owes its origin to the HOTELZOT theory, which emphasize that optimum customer satisfaction be achieved by identifying the range within which customers' desired service and adequate service (Halir & Kashif, 2005) falls. Drawing from this therefore, the desired

expectation can be seen as the level of service delivery the customer expects to receive while the adequate expectation is the level of service delivery that has met the customer's expectation (Almsalam, 2014; Kah & Sook, 2017). This theory therefore identifies this reciprocal relationship as that which triggers customer satisfaction. Accordingly, since service delivery is governed by reciprocal relations, customers would not be satisfied if the norm of reciprocity is violated. Parasuraman (2004) identifies HOTELZOT theory as a useful indicator that strengthens the SERQUAL theory, which directly asserts what service should be without adequately taking into consideration what service 'can be'. Zeithmal et al (1993) corroborate this assertion when they opined that the zone of tolerance describes aptly the extent to which customers recognize and are willing to accept heterogeneity. The usefulness of the zone of tolerance (ZOT) include not only providing information on what a hotel customer deems as 'acceptable' level of performance but also as an internal organisational standard to enhance the existing customer care practices (Parasuraman et al., 185, Tsaur, Chiu & Huang, 2002; Fosgerau & Karlstrom, 2010; Eshetie, Seyoum & Ali, 2016).

The subsisting argument of the HOTEL ZOT theory with respect to this study is that, embedded within the reciprocal relationship of the desired and adequate service delivery are vital assumptions about them. These assumptions are characterised by norms of reciprocity that operates within an ethical climate of justice, honesty, integrity, kindness, respect, fairness, trust, commitment, equity and loyalty. These would hitherto assist in adequate service responsiveness, reliability and empathy on the side of the employee and loyalty and revisit intention on the part of the customer. This therefore justifies, in our opinion, the logic that quality customer care creates a better psycho-emotional atmosphere for customer satisfaction in the hotel industry. Understandably also, is the fact that the process of looking after customers to provide reliable, responsive, and empathic service would trigger their satisfaction. This is so because customer care takes a personal approach to identifying the customer's zone of tolerance, and applies this appropriately to make the customer feel respected and cared for before, during and after the stay.

### The Concept of Customer Care

Azman et al (2016) described customer care as any activity and program a seller provides to make a relationship satisfying for his/her customer. Furthermore, it is observed that any service rendered to a customer is the one referred to as customer care. Kotler (1995) opined that given the diverse environmental

influences of any organisation, customer care enables responsive service delivery that aids in the achievement of customer's request within the nature and capability of the organisation, without jeopardising the existence of the organisation. Adding a deep reflection to the relevant view of Kotler, to the basic tenets of the mission and objectives of any organisation, we argue that Customer care therefore should be on the basis of a unitary ideology of the workplace, as there seemingly should not be oppositionary elements or negative pluralistic objectives among organisational members. Accordingly, Obiora (2019) opines that in the process of service delivery, actions by workers should be driven by the company philosophy and paying close attention to the needs of the customer.

Having considered various descriptions of customer care, it is opined in this study that quality Customer care services can be described as the programmed and non-programmed service delivery that meets and/or exceeds customer expectation. The programmed customer care practices arise from a structured or routine mode of operation as determined by the organisation. These activities include specifications and laid down rules, regulations and procedures that explicitly state the mode of duties observance. Furthermore, these are for routine and repetitive job tasks which rely primarily on an earlier established norm of behaviour. This is in effect, service delivery being made by precedent. The non-programmed practices are those unstructured, involuntary, novel and ill-defined services that need reliable, empathic and apt responses. This triggers emotional attachment to the organisation by the customer. These non-programmed practices are discretionary but must be under due diligence in line with the professional code of ethics. It serves to delight the customer and enhances their loyalty. It has been documented severally that since the only reason for the existence of a hotel business is to serve customers adequately and promptly, customer care practices are not a 'one-off' procedure but that which operate before, during and after the purchase of a product or service (Itani & Inyang, 2015, Ivanauskiene & Volungenaites, 2014). Extant literature documents customer loyalty, positive word of mouth, enhancement of competitive advantage, improved customer satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, employee commitment, enhancement to corporate image and market share as vital importance of quality customer care (Akbar et al, 2010; Gonia & Adob, 2018, Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000).

The definition adopted in this work reiterates previous descriptions of customer care, which operationally measure customer care based on service reliability,

responsiveness and empathy toward the maintenance of considerably healthy relationships at the workplace. Service is described by Kotler and Armstrong (2010) as any intangible act or performance that one party offers to another. Reliability means accomplishing the services on time and in consistent manner free from error (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996). Service reliability as defined by Rao & Sahu (2013), is the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. Fosgerau & Karlstrom (2010) emphasize that reliability means doing what you say will do. The aim of proving service reliability is to satisfy customers. Measuring service reliability is a better way to detect whether the promised service performed are good or bad and whether the customers will or are satisfied with it.

Service responsiveness is defined as the willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service (Akbaba, 2006; Al-Borie & Damanhour, 2013). Solving the complaints of consumers efficiently creates a positive image about the quality of service but if consumers are kept waiting, it creates negative impression about the quality of service. Ibrahim, Nyame & Kumah (2014) stated that customers judge a company's responsiveness by assessing the amount of time it takes and the attentiveness that is offered in response to their requests, questions, complaints, and problems. Responding quickly to request or complaints leads to a higher rating on this dimension.

Itani & Inyang (2015) describe empathy as that process of understanding another person's experiences by imaging oneself in that other person's situation. Empathy also has to do with the provision of caring and individualized attention to client including access, communication and understanding the customer. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the thoughts or feelings of another.

### The Concept of Customer Satisfaction

The Customer of any hospitality establishment is an invaluable resource of the organization. This is so because the way customers are treated determines a great deal on the survival of the organization. The ultimate aim of any hospitality organization, therefore, is to ensure that quality customer care services are delivered to ensure customer satisfaction. Considering the underlying philosophies and models espoused by researchers, one can describe customer satisfaction as the positive state of mind of the customer after the service delivery (Deng et al 2010), that triggers an 'I'm coming back here', attitude on the part of

the customer. This is so, because customer satisfaction appears to be a total, comprehensive and inclusive evaluative judgement of the efficiency of service delivered and serves as a basis to compare the desired, expected and adequate service rendered. Accordingly, customer satisfaction is the primary mental state of the customer which comprises two things: Expectation before patronising and perception about performance after patronise (Almsalam, 2014). Furthermore, Azman et al (2016) opined that customer satisfaction is widely recognized as a fundamental factor that enhances the performance and profitability of organizations in the hotel and tourism industry. Furthermore, Clemes et al, 2011 and Jiang & Zhang (2016) described customer satisfaction as the degree to which a business's product or service performance matches up to the expectation of the customer. Radojevic, et al (2014) distinguished customer loyalty and revisit (repurchase) intention as among measures of customer satisfaction.

Customer loyalty is the commitment of the customer or customer to remain with the organisation having evaluated their services as satisfactory. It is seen as that valuable and significant intangible asset that any organisation must hold in high esteem. Loyalty is considered a significant intangible asset for numerous companies (Jiang and Zhang, 2016). Furthermore, Oliver (1999) described customer loyalty as “a deeply held commitment to rebuy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour” (p.34). It has been proven that customer loyalty brings about enhanced employee performance, commitment, and profitability, revisit intention (Kah & Sook, 2017; Chen & Hu, 2013). Customer loyalty is built on an established relationship that even in the midst of competition and vagaries in the market, the customer will always be committed to the organization. This is the ability to remain a customer irrespective price, convenience and competition, as a result of service that had been earlier delivered with reliability, responsiveness and empathy. It has been documented severally that loyal customers do not switch brands easily (Eshetie, Seyoum & Ali, 2016; Soleimani & Einolahzadeh, 2018).

The concept of revisit intention owes its origin to behavioural intention of the customer. This behavioural intention is the likelihood that the customer would be coming back to the same service provider as a result of a positive evaluation given to the services earlier rendered by the provider (Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1996.). A revisit decision may be the outcome of limited

availability, rather than loyalty. These customers seek quality, value, good customer service, convenience and are often price sensitive. While revisit intention contribute to an organisational profitability, it does not serve as a protection against competitor tactics and customers may switch brands when deemed fit (Kah & Sook, 2017).

### Quality Customer Care Practices and Customer Satisfaction

Quality customer care practices have become a core strategy for the achievement of a satisfying relationship with the customer and a key element for success among competitors. We argue that when customers' needs are aptly met, in terms of the provision of convenient, reliable services, security, parking space, accessibility, appreciation, efficiency, affordability, front desk services, attractiveness, prompt and timely service delivery, technical/after sales services, customer engagement and personalised services, increases their sense of loyalty, identification and a positive behavioural intention to re-patronize the organisation. This is further supported by Srivinas & Padma (2013), who observed that when a customer is offered value, it enhances the confidence of the customer toward the organisation and makes them continually identify with the organization. This is made possible through the personalized service offered and their perceived inclusion and contribution to the decision making process. Ibrahim et al (2014) argue that when there is reliability and responsiveness to required service, in such a way that service rendered is equal to and/or exceeds desired or expected service, then the customer is deemed to be satisfied. Empirical evidence (Ngahu, 2001; Kotler, 2010; Moeed et al, 2013; Azman et al 2016 ) shows that quality customer care practices, which assists in meeting and/or exceeding customer expectation is associated with customer satisfaction. Accordingly, Kotler (1995) affirms that customer care is a veritable instrument for creating emotional attachment of the customer to the organisation. A quality customer care practice appears, therefore, to increase the customer's sense of attachment and triggers a behavioural intention to remain a customer of the organisation and continually patronize it.

Drawing from the above argument, it is therefore our opinion that quality customer care practices would be a precursor toward the actualization of customer satisfaction. Based on the above argument, the following hypothetical statements are postulated and depicted in the framework below:

H0<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between service reliability and customers' loyalty in hotels in Port Harcourt.



H0<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between service reliability and customers' revisit intention to hotels in Port Harcourt.

H0<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between service responsiveness and customers' loyalty in hotels in Port Harcourt.

H0<sub>4</sub>: There is no significant relationship between service responsiveness and customers' revisit intention to hotels in Port Harcourt.

H0<sub>5</sub>: There is no significant relationship between empathy and customers' loyalty to hotels in Port Harcourt.

H0<sub>6</sub>: There is no significant relationship between empathy and customers' revisit intention in hotels in Port Harcourt.

The hypothesised relationship is as shown in Figure 1.

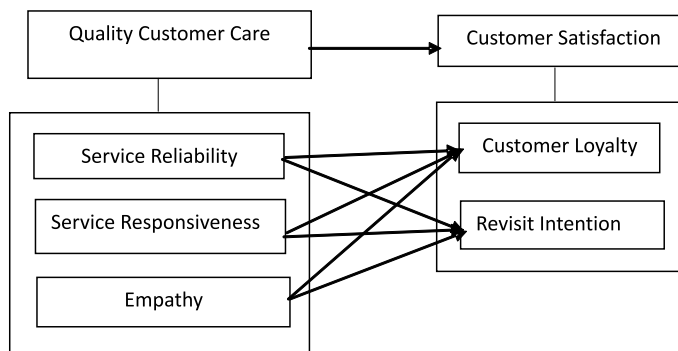


Figure 1: Operational Framework

Source: Conceptualized by the researcher (2019). The dimensions and measures are modified forms of Parasuraman et al (1985) and Michalska-Dudik (2015) respectively

## Empirical Review

According to Kotler & Armstrong (2010), growth of business in most service industries is built up on a reputation for providing customer satisfaction through good standard of attention and care. Clemes et al (2011) carried a research on the impact of service reliability on behavioural intentions among motel industry and found useful correlations. Azman et al (2016) obtained significant linkages

between service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in Malaysian Armed forces Medical Organisations. Al-Borie & Damanhour (2013) using a SERVQUAL analysis technique obtained useful correlation in the satisfaction of service delivery among patients in Saudi hospitals. Furthermore, Jiang & Zhang (2016) obtained a positive correlation among service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty in China's airline market. Khandampully & Suhartanto (2000) and Almsalam (2014) empirically validated that a correlation exists between customer satisfaction and the corporate image. Furthermore, Nduka et al (2017) obtained positive relationship between service quality and service outcome in Nigeria Hospitality Industry. Obiora (2019) obtained a strong and positive correlation between employee responsiveness and customer satisfaction in the Hospitality Industry in Rivers State.

## METHODOLOGY

The correlational research utilised cross-sectional survey research design and adopted the customers of selected 3 and 4 star hotels (registered with the Tourism Board), in Port Harcourt Metropolis, as its study units. The researcher adopted convenience non probability sampling method. The population size of this study was large and unknown. Therefore, the Freund and Williams (1994) formula, a sample size of 185 customers was utilised. The questionnaire was divided into two sections (section A & B). Section A contains the demographic information of respondents, while section B consists of questions relating to the subject matter of inquiry. The dimensions and measures are modified forms of Parasuraman et al. (1985) and Michalska-Dudik

(2015) respectively. Five questions were obtained for each. The questionnaire (Section B) was structured along the modified Likert 5 – point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U) Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with a corresponding value of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1. The researchers adopted Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient to obtain the reliability index of above 0.7 which is appropriate for this study. Univariate analysis was done using mean and percentages while bivariate analysis was done using Pearson Product Moment Correlation with the assistance of the SPSS 23.0 software.

## DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

### Data Analysis and Results

On the whole a total of 185 copies of questionnaire were distributed out of which

183 were retrieved at 98% response rate. This is considered adequate for representation. The study revealed that 94 (53.8%) in the study are male respondents, 89 (46.2%) respondents in the hotels were female. It also shows that more of the respondents fall between the age brackets of 25 – 34 years (45%) followed by the 35 – 44 years (25%), 45 - 54 years (19%) and 55 years and above 11% respectively. The study also revealed that majority of the respondents have obtained OND (45%), 34 (25%) of the respondents obtained B.Sc./HND certificates, (19%) are of the respondents are M.Sc. certificate holders and (11%) are Ph.D holders. This shows that the respondents are educated.

### Bivariate Analysis (Testing of hypotheses)

The result of the correlation is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Correlation Matrix for Dimensions of customer care and Measures of Customer satisfaction

			SREL	GL	REV	SRES	EMP
Pearson rho	SREL	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.699(**)	.731(**)	.000	.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	183	183	183	183	133
	SRES	Correlation Coefficient	.000	.690(**)	.654(**)	1.000	.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	183	183	183	183	183
	EMP	Correlation Coefficient	.000	.818(**)	.868(**)		1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	183	183	183	183	183
	GL	Correlation Coefficient	.699(**)	1.000	.000	.690(**)	.818(**)
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	183	183	183	183	183
	REV	Correlation Coefficient	.731(**)	.000	1.000	.654(**)	.868(**)
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	183	183	183	183	183

Table 1: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Research Data, 2019

From the bivariate analysis, all hypothesised null relationship were rejected at 0.01 level of significance with  $H_{0_1}$  ( $\rho = 0.699$  pvalue .000);  $H_{0_2}$  ( $\rho = 0.731$ , pvalue .000);  $H_{0_3}$  ( $\rho = 0.690$ , pvalue .000);  $H_{0_4}$  ( $\rho = 0.654$ , pvalue .000);

$H_{0_5}(\rho = 0.818, p\text{value } .000)$  and  $H_{0_6}(\rho = .868, p\text{value } .000)$ . This implies a significant relationship between the hypothesised dimensions and measures.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The important finding of this research is that there was a significant and positive relationship between service reliability and customer's loyalty. This was revealed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient which indicated (0.699). This means that when reliable services are being rendered in the hotel industry, it will relatively associate with customer's loyalty. This is in line with Rao & Sahu (2013) who supported that efficient and dependable services relate significantly with customers loyalty. Also, Fosgerau & Karlstrom (2010) corroborated this finding when they asserted in their study that reliability is a necessary criterion for the success of any organization. These findings therefore imply that employees should be able to do what they are expected to do and at the right time because customers would always want to count on service providers to perform the promised service consistently, dependably and accurately.

In bivariate analysis two, it is disclosed that there is a positive and significant relationship between service reliability and revisit intention. This was predicated in the Pearson correlation coefficient which indicated (0.731). This indicates that organizations that wish to survive in the changing business environment must exert considerable efforts in improving its service reliability strategies for enhanced revisit intention. The aim of proving service reliability is to satisfy customers. Service reliability is a better way to detect whether the promised service performed are good or bad and whether the customers will or are satisfied with it (Clemes et al. 2011),; Azman et al. 2016). They further corroborated this finding when they opined that understanding the customers' expectation toward services delivery is a sine quo non in enhancing customers' perceived service quality, in terms of consistency of performance and dependability, accuracy in billing, keeping records correctly, performing the service right at the designated time.

The null hypothesis three was tested statistically at a 0.01 significant level; the correlation (r) value of 0.690 revealed that there is a significant relationship between service responsiveness and customers' loyalty. The implication is that when an employee renders prompt and speedy service to the customer it will result to customer's loyalty. The finding is in agreement with Azman et al. (2016) and Churchill & Surprenant, (1982) who concluded that service responsiveness

results in satisfying customer and customer satisfaction results in loyalty. These findings therefore imply that service providers respond quickly, promptly, rapidly, immediately, instantly to customers request and they should be willing to help customers as and when due. to perform the promised service dependably, accurately and 'just on time'.

The null hypothesis four was tested statistically at a 0.01 significant level, the correlation (r) value of 0.654, revealed that there is a strong and positive relationship between service responsiveness and customers revisit intention. This indicates that organizations that wish to survive in the changing business environment must be ready to respond to customers' complaints promptly and attend to their request at the right time, in order to win the minds of customers in the hotel industry. This finding agrees with other studies that observed that service responsiveness positively interrelated with customer revisit intention (Kar & Sook, 2017; Fosgerau & Karlstrom, 2010) where they have stated that responsiveness is an important aspect that will influence revisit intention in their study. These findings imply that service providers must have the willingness or readiness of their employees to provide timely service, such as mailing a transaction slip immediately, calling the customer back quickly and giving prompt attention when due.

In analysis of hypothesis five, the relationship between empathy and customers' loyalty suggested that empathy was significantly related to customer's loyalty. This was revealed by the correlation coefficient of 0.818. This means that an employee with empathy knows how to relate with customers and influence their loyalty in the organization. This result corroborates that of Deng et al. (2010) and Itani & Inyang (2015), when they empirically established that personalised care triggers customer satisfaction. This finding implies therefore that service providers must provide caring, individualized attention and have customers' best interests at heart

The null hypothesis six was tested statistically at a 0.01 significant level, the correlation value of 0.868, revealed that there is a strong and positive relationship between empathy and revisit intention. This finding agrees with Chen, & Hu. (2013), who supported that empathy has a strong correlation with revisit intention. Akbaba (2006) also supported that empathy enables any employee understand customers experience by placing oneself in that other person's situation. Soleimani & Einolahzadeh (2018) corroborates this finding

when they validated that in the presence of understanding customer's needs, providing caring and individualized attention, learning and providing the customer's specific requirements, revisit intention is achieved.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated the relationship between quality customer care practices and customer satisfaction in selected hotels in Port Harcourt. We therefore conclude that as employees' exhibit reliability, responsiveness and empathy in their customer care services, there would be a distinct increase in the loyalty and revisit intention of customers. Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations were given:

First, Hotel Management should lay emphasis on service delivery by constant training and retraining their staff. Second, Hotel management should enlighten staff and lay emphasis on the role of service reliability and responsiveness. Third, employees' capability to be involved in helpful actions toward customers, such as interpersonal concern and personalised service should be emphasised and rewarded by management

## REFERENCES

- Akbaba, A. (2006). Measuring service quality in the hotel industry: A study in a business hotel in Turkey. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 25(2), 170-192.
- Akbar S., Mat Som A. P., Wadood F., & Jamil Alzaidiyeen N., (2010). Revitalization of service quality to gain customer satisfaction and loyalty. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 5(6), 113.
- Al-Borie H. M., Damanhoury A. M.S., (2013). Patients's satisfaction of service quality in Saudi hospitals: a SERVQUAL analysis. *International Journal of Health Care Quality Assurance*, 26(1), 20-30.
- Almsalam, S. (2014). The effects of customer expectation and perceived service quality on customer satisfaction. *International Journal of Business and Management Invention*, 16(5), 79-84.
- Azman I. & Yusrizal, S. (2016). Service quality as a predictor of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. *LogForum*, 12(4), 269-283
- Azman I., Hafizah O. Z., Ilyani R. R. (2016). Interlinkages between service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in Malaysia? A case study of armed forces medical. *Organizations* 7(7), 47-59.
- Chen, P. T., & Hu, H. H. S. (2013). The mediating role of relational benefit

- between service quality and customer loyalty in airline industry. *Total Quality Management and Business Excellence*, 24(9), 1084-1095
- Churchill G. A. J., & Surprenant C., (1982). An investigation into the determinants of customer satisfaction. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 14(11), 491-504.
- Clemes M. D., Gan C., & Ren M. (2011). Synthesizing the effects of service quality, value, and customer satisfaction on behavioural intentions in the motel industry: An empirical analysis. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 35(4), 530-568.
- Deng, Z., Lu, Y., Kee Wei, K., & Zhang, J. (2010). Understanding customer satisfaction and loyalty: An empirical study of mobile instant messages in China. *International Journal of Information Management*, 30, 289–300.
- Eshetie, S. K, Seyoum, W. & Ali, S. H. (2016). Service quality and customer satisfaction in hospitality industry: The case of selected hotels in Jimma town, Ethiopia. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research: e-marketing*, 16(5), 1-15.
- Fosgerau, M., & Karlstrom, A. (2010). The value of reliability. *Transportation Research Part B* 44(1), 38– 49.
- Goni, K., & Ado, A. B. (2018). Service quality and financial performance of hotels in Kano Nigeria. *NDA Journal of Accounting and Management*, 2(2), 1–15.
- Halir, N., & Kashif, H. (2005). Diagnosing the zone of tolerance for hotel services. *Managing Service Quality*, 15(3), 259-277.
- Ibrahim, M., Nyame, R. K., & Kumah, A. (2014). Quality service delivery among telecommunication service operators in Ghana: A Case of vodafone - Ghana. *International Journal of Economic and Management*, 11(5), 1-17.
- Itani, O. S., & Inyang, A. E. (2015). The effects of empathy and listening of salespeople on relationship quality in the retail banking industry. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 33(6), 692–716.
- Ivanauskiene, N., & Volungenaites, J. (2014). Relations between service quality and customer loyalty: An empirical investigation of retail chain stores in emerging markets. *American Journal of Social Science*, 3(2), 113-120
- Jiang, H., & Zhang, Y. (2016). An investigation of service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty in China's airline market. *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 57, 80–88.
- Kah, B. L., & Sook, F. Y. (2017). A study of revisit intention to boutique hotels in Melaka. *The European Proceeding of Social & Behavioural Sciences*, 792-805 .

- Kandampully, J., & Suhartanto, D. (2000). Customer loyalty in the hotel industry: the role of customer satisfaction and image. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 12(6), 346 – 351.
- Kotler, P. & Armstrong G. (2010). *Principles of Marketing*, 13th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc.
- Kotler, P. (1995). *Conceptual Frame Work for Customer Services Philosophy*, 2nd edition, Prentice Hall.
- Kukoyi, I. A., & Iwuagwu C. (2015). Service delivery and customer satisfaction in hospitality industry: A study of the divine fountain hotels limited Lagos, Nigeria. *Journal of Hospitality and Management Tourism*, 6(1), 1-7
- Michalska-Dudek, I. (2015). In search of customer loyalty model of tourist services. *Services Management* 2(16), 85-95.
- Moeed, A. S., Syeda, S. M., Asad, U. R., & Saira, M. (2013). Service quality dimensions impact on customer satisfaction in telecom sector of Pakistan. *Journal of Basic and Applied Science Research*, 3(8), 27-34.
- Nduka C, Okocha R E., & Chris-Nnamchi, J. N. (2017). Diagnostics of customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry: Evidence from Nigeria. *British Journal of Marketing Studies*, 5(1), 68-77.
- Ngahu, A. P. (2001). Factors of business success and growth. *Business Review* 2nd edition 212-215.
- Obiora, J. N. (2019). Employee responsiveness and customer satisfaction in hospitality industry in Rivers State. *Journal of Management*, 4(1), 63 – 72.
- Obiora, J. N., & Ekeke, J. N. (2019). Employees' emotional intelligence and customers' retention in selected hotels in Port Harcourt. *International Journal of Advanced Studies in Business Strategies and Management*, 7(1), 212-223.
- Obiora, J. N. & Asiegbu, U. A. (2019). Job design as an indicator of affective commitment in restaurants in Rivers State. *Educational Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Studies*, 8(1), 53-62.
- Oliver, R. (1999). Whence Consumer Loyalty? *The Journal of Marketing*, 63, 33-44.
- Parasuraman, A., Berry, L., & Zeithmal, V. (1985). A conceptual model of sq and its implications for future research. *Journal of Marketing*, 49, 41-50.
- Parasuraman, A., Berry, L., & Zeithmal, V. (1988). SERVQUAL: A Multi-item Scale for Measuring Consumer Perceptions of SQ. *Journal of Retailing*, 64, 12-40.
- Radojevic, T., Stanistic, N., Stanic, N., & Sarac, M. (2014). Measuring customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry: an empirical study of the hotels in



- the capital cities of Europe. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261876220> on May 21st, 2020.
- Rao, P. S., & Sahu, P.C. (2013). Impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in hotel industry. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 18(5), 39-44.
- Soleimani, G. A., & Einolahzadeh, H. (2018). The Influence of service quality on Revisit Intention: The Mediating Role of Word-of-Mouth and Satisfaction, *Cogent Social Sciences* 4, 1-4.
- Srinivas, P. R. & Padma, C. S. (2013). Impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in hotel industry. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 18(5), 39-44.
- Tsaur, S. H., Chiu, Y. C., & Huang, C. H. (2002). Determinants of customer loyalty to international tourist hotels - a neural network approach. *Tourism Management*, 23, 397-405.
- Zeithaml, V. A., Berry, L. L., & Parasuraman, A. (1993). The nature and determinants of customer expectations of service. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 21(1), 1-12.
- Zeithaml, V. A., Berry, L. L., & Parasuraman, A. (1996). The behavioural consequences of service quality. *The Journal of Marketing*, 60(2), 31-46.