

THE NEXUS OF INNOVATION FOCUSED AND CUSTOMER RETENTION OF PRIVATE MEDIA ESTABLISHMENTS IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between innovation focus and customer retention in private media establishments in Rivers State. Customer retention was assessed through three key indicators: customer involvement, service quality, and customer loyalty. The population of the study comprised fifty (50) private media establishments in Rivers State, and one manager from each establishment was selected as a respondent. Managers were chosen based on their intellectual and official capacity to provide accurate and relevant data for the study. Primary data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire, designed in a multiple-choice format and incorporating a 5-point Likert scale. Two hypotheses were tested using Spearman's rank-order correlation. The results revealed a significant positive correlation between an innovation focused and customer retention in private media establishments. The study concluded that an innovation focus is strongly linked to customer retention in these establishments. It is recommended that management in private media establishments in Rivers State prioritize and promote innovation to enhance their ability to retain customers.

Keywords: Innovation focused, customer retention, customer involvement, service quality, and customer loyalty

Introduction

Media establishments serve as key channels through which diverse audiences stay informed about societal events. Supporting this, Azubuike and Ikiriko (2019) noted that in this era of globalization, media broadcasting and electronic platforms have become the primary means by which various audiences are kept updated on environmental activities. Given this role, private media establishments can enhance customer retention by focusing on customer involvement, service quality, and customer loyalty. According to Didia (2004), organizations typically have two main objectives: providing products that satisfy customer needs and wants, and achieving profit-related goals. The product, in this context, becomes the vehicle through which these objectives are realized. Private media establishments offer a range of products and services across different mass media platforms, including radio, television, film, books, sound recordings, newspapers, magazines, the internet, billboards, comic books, posters, direct mail, matchbooks, and buttons. These establishments disseminate messages to large, diverse audiences quickly and broadly, aiming to influence them in various ways. Information dissemination, facilitated by these media, occurs not only between individuals but also between the government and the public. The tools used by media establishments include recognized sounds, signs, and symbols that are official and universally understood.

In acknowledgement of the highly multifarious, energetic and viable environment private media Private media organisations must intentionally create original material to function effectively. McQuail (2010) asserts that media output always mirrors the objectives of its owners and financiers. Different forms of ownership exist for various media, and the powers associated with ownership may be exercised in diverse ways (Dogari, Shem & Apuke, 2018). Asemah (2009) asserts that media serves as a conduit or technical apparatus for transmitting messages to a diverse audience; they function as vehicles for delivering information from a source to a broad destination. The media serves as the conduit via which the bourgeoisie articulates its perspectives to the working class (Oberiri, 2016). Throughout the years, the ownership and management of media have raised concerns among communication experts worldwide (Dogari, Shem & Apuke, 2018).

Media entities may be either privately held or government-owned. Privately owned media are managed by people or organisations and tend to be more responsive than government media due to business motives; if they fail to function as watchdogs, they will not be compensated. Government-owned media facilities include those that are entirely funded and overseen by the government, including the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, and several state-owned radio and television stations (Oberiri, 2016). Media ownership and control in Nigeria has become a critical problem in journalism, since media proprietors, particularly the government, often use the media as a platform to promote their agendas, sometimes to the cost of developmental concerns (Dogari, Shem & Apuke, 2018).

Nigeria operates a mixed economy, whereby the means of production are partially held by the government and partially by private entities. Nigerian private media enterprises thrive, however their stability depends on adherence to governmental authority. Media is owned by private persons, but government regulations affect its functioning (Oberiri, 2016). To alter the existing status quo, private media organisations must continually innovate (Chan & René, 2005). The saturation of the market and elevated levels of competition within the media industry have led to the emergence of client retention strategies. Customer retention signifies the expressed commitment of customers to maintain a commercial connection with a company (Keiningham Cooil, Aksoy, Andreassen & Weiner, 2007). Customer retention is a crucial element for organisations, with extensive study literature accessible (Kumar et al., 2017). It is often seen as a metric of acquisition success; however, the variables affecting it have never been examined within the context of serial acquirers (Degbey, 2015). Customer retention is crucial for organisations, since the expense of obtaining a new customer substantially exceeds the cost of retaining an existing one (Ro-King, 2005) as referenced in (Kuria & Muturi, 2018). Numerous companies hinder their entities from transitioning away from the firm due to various factors, including exorbitant, inequitable, and misleading pricing, as well as hassle (Nasir, 2017.).

In addition to enjoying substantial savings from keeping current clients, customer retention "enables the organisation to withstand the intense competition" (Kuria & Muturi, 2018). According to Nasir (2017), these companies are aware that maintaining consumers is more cost-effective than obtaining new ones due to factors like new account setup, credit searches, advertising, and promotional charges. Companies want to increase client lifetime value because customer retention is economically beneficial and there is

good evidence of it. When customers join a relationship, their goal is to get the most out of it (Nasir, 2017). An organization's profitability may be further accelerated with even a minor improvement in customer retention rate (Ryals & Knox, 2005), as noted in (Kuria & Muturi, 2018). Consequently, consumers form and sustain connections with businesses when they see a return on investment in doing so (Nasir, 2017).

In light of the above, customer engagement, service quality, and loyalty were the metrics used to evaluate client retention, and a focus on customer retention precedes an emphasis on innovation. Creativity and innovation are cornerstones of entrepreneurship and show that a company wants to do things differently, which might lead to the development of new products, services, or technological processes. According to Olannye et al. (2016), there are many different kinds of innovation. On the one hand, there is technical innovativeness, which mostly involves research and engineering efforts aimed at creating new products and processes. Market research, product design, and advances in advertising and promotion are all examples of product-market innovations. Therefore, innovation has the potential to be a valuable asset that boosts a company's competitive edge. According to Cooper (2000), innovativeness is an essential component of every successful organization's performance. A hallmark of entrepreneurial marketing is a concentration on meeting unmet market demands and an innovation-driven approach (i.e., driven more by intuition and ideas than by consumers).

A growth plan that is innovation orientated may help corporate managers achieve durable competitive advantages. This is particularly true for organisations that consistently demonstrate innovative behaviours and features. There are four ways in which a company's innovation efforts could be characterised, according to Wang (2015): product, process, organisational, and marketing. Including these company operations as innovations is a key component of innovation-focused management theory (Wang, 2015; Wang & Ahmed, 2004). The idea of innovation emphasis, which refers to the amount of innovations that a company implements, is highly commendable in business practice. In other words, it's the capacity of a business or organisation to come up with fresh concepts and implement them consistently across time (Ruvio, Shoham, Vigoda-Godat, & Schiwabsky, 2014). Innovation is characterised by being proactive, creative, future-oriented, knowledgeable internally, and able to handle risks (Ruvio et al., 2014).

Rubra and Kirca (2012), Kim, Kim, Garrett and Jung (2015), Dogari, Shem & Apuke (2018), and Walsh, Lynch and Harrington (2018) are only a few of the many research works that have examined the relationship between various innovation-related factors and customer retention. Accordingly, McNally, Cavusgil, and Calantane (2010) investigated the following: financial performance, project procedure, product advantage, and the innovation-focused dimension of products. The longevity of Nigeria's state-owned media was also investigated by Dogari, Shem, and Apuke (2018), who looked at issues like media ownership, financing, and implications. Through the mediating forces of instrumental and symbolic brand advantages, Kim, Kim, Garrett, and Jung (2015) examined the effect of organisational Innovation focused on customer value and product Innovation focused on innovation inside products. The link between an organization's innovation emphasis and its financial success was also studied by Rubera and

Kirca (2012). Entrepreneurial innovation and performance were the subjects of research by Naude, Szinnai, and Goedhuys (2015). Plus, Walsh, Lynch, and Harrington (2018) tried to look at innovation-focused outcomes, innovation-focused dimensions, and the antecedents of the conceptual framework. Nevertheless, not a single one of this research looked at the possibility of a connection between an innovation emphasis and client retention. Accordingly, this study's overarching goal is to examine, via the lenses of customer engagement, service quality, and loyalty, the connection between innovation emphasis and customer retention at private media institutions in Rivers State. The following conceptual framework serves as the study's guiding principle.

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundation

Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT) (Oliver, 1977;1980)

One cognitive theory that attempts to explain how expectations, perceived performance, and disconfirmation of beliefs all play a role in how satisfied someone is after a purchase or adoption is the expectation confirmation theory (ECT). How people's preconceived notions about a thing impact their observations and evaluations of it is the central question that the theory attempts to answer. An important tenet of social comparison theory—that individuals gauge their own worth by comparing themselves to that of others—is the theoretical foundation upon which this theory rests. ECT is based on cognitive dissonance theory as well. This theory states that individuals feel uneasy when their thoughts and actions don't line up. The idea behind expectation confirmation theory (ECT) comes from the fields of social and cognitive psychology. Based on the data collected by ECT, it seems that people's expectations and the degree to which those expectations are met greatly impact their attitudes and actions towards a product or service.

Customers' impressions and feelings towards a service or product are affected by how well it meets or falls short of their expectations, according to expectation confirmation theory. A person's expectations shape their views, evaluations, and actions; they are rooted on their past experiences, knowledge, and beliefs. As a cognitive process, the confirmation bias describes how people look for, understand, and remember data that backs up their expectations while ignoring or downplaying data that contradicts them. Oliver published a pair of articles in 1977 and 1980 that laid the groundwork for the hypothesis. A popular theoretical framework, expectation confirmation theory (ECT) states that people's expectations impact their views, attitudes, and actions towards an upcoming event, product, or service. The theoretical underpinnings, empirical data, and criticisms of ECT are summarised in this review.

According to research, consumers' attitudes, levels of satisfaction, and likelihood to use or buy a product or service are all positively impacted when their expectations are fulfilled or surpassed. When customers' expectations aren't satisfied, they're less likely to be satisfied overall and less likely to use or buy the goods again. In order to escape intense competition, businesses might take use of product diversification to set themselves apart from the pack. The ability of an organization's management to keep consumers coming back for more. In order for a business to differentiate its products, it has to know who its

competitors are and how to make them obsolete. In light of this, the study's theoretical foundations are in expectation confirmation theory of management and organisation.

The Concept of Innovation Focused

The operational business landscape is ever evolving. Only innovative institutions can adapt to the market, customers, competition, economics, technology, governmental regulations and policies, and sociocultural factors (Stoner, Gilbert & Freeman, 2013; Kotler & Keller, 2012). Given the tumultuous nature of the current economic environment, innovative approaches to commerce are essential. Strategies centred on innovation are praiseworthy for their ability to adapt to the requirements of a dynamic corporate landscape and improve industrial competitiveness (Robert & Allen, 2010; Okpara, 2007). In light of the significant changes occurring in the business landscape, primarily driven by globalisation and market liberalisation, companies that emphasise innovation are essential.

Globalisation and market liberalisation have made the business environment more dynamic, competitive, and volatile. Innovative entrepreneurial marketing consistently equips flexible organisations, products, services, processes, and technologies to fulfil the demands of the contemporary business landscape (Stoner, Gilbert & Freeman, 2013). Innovation-centric marketing is an essential aspect of company, and the introduction of novel concepts poses one of the most formidable challenges for an entrepreneur; it requires not just the ability to create and conceptualise but also to understand the many contextual aspects involved. The duo Hisrich and Ramadani (2020). Morris et al. (2002), as cited in Otieno, Bwisa, and Kihoro (2012), assert that innovation-centric companies can maintain a continuous influx of novel ideas that may be converted into new products, services, technologies, or markets.

Gupta, Tesluk, and Taylor (2007) assert that focusing on innovation allows aviation businesses to transcend mere opportunity recognition by employing new or existing resources in innovative manners (Morris et al., 2002). Innovation is crucial to marketing for entrepreneurs. Sharma and Chrisman (1999) assert that firms under the entrepreneurial marketing paradigm have challenges in creating the internal circumstances and institutions necessary for radical innovation. Consequently, they are poised to alleviate the burdens of air travel by providing serene and strategic connectivity, giving customers many network options and an expanding fleet of modern aircraft. Berger and Kuckertz (2017) assert that an innovation-focus addresses the need of prioritising customer contacts in both routine operations and strategic planning. Furthermore, they noted that the relationship between the consumer and the company is seen as a partnership, indicating that concentrating on and comprehending the customer establishes the foundation for customer equity and brand identity.

Innovation-oriented marketing initiatives, according to Becherer, Helms, and McDonald (2012), allow the company to zero down on concepts that could result in novel goods, services, or methods. An innovative marketing strategy may range from completely new market creation to incremental market building, depending on the company's level of success. While incremental innovators rely on preexisting customer connections and industry knowledge, market creators must forge new paths to provide consumers really new value. Creative marketing tactics may be the focus of organisations without the means to meet or maintain industry standards (Carson & Gilmore, 2000).

Businesses that thrive on innovation and are skilled at coming up with new ideas for products and services often adopt innovation-focused marketing strategies (Carson & Gilmore, 2000). This facet allows businesses to zero down on ideas that might pave the way for brand-new products, services, or markets (Becherer et al., 2012). In contrast to customer-orientated strategies determined by market requirements analysis, innovatively focused firms often prioritise innovation driven by concepts and instinct (Morrish, 2011). Therefore, it is important to engage in an imaginative endeavour that can transcend customer expectations (Santos-vijande & Alvarez, 2001). Proactive businesses that search out new opportunities, rather than relying only on current skills, are also considered innovative. Taking initiative by anticipating and pursuing new opportunities and by participating in emerging markets also has become associated with entrepreneurship (Akani, Ogan & Simeon, 2024)

By using and implementing these traits, innovation-focused organisations and countries can revolutionise current markets, create new ones, and boost economic development. What Maritz, Waal, and Verhoeven (2011) mean when they say innovation is "doing something new with ideas, products, service or technology and refining these ideas to a market opportunity to meet market demand in a new way" is innovation orientated. Changes, a focus on customers, integrated marketing, a concentration on the market, and distinctive selling points are all hallmarks of innovation-focused strategies. According to Abasag and Breman (2017), entrepreneurial marketing is all about innovation. It's about coming up with new things and processes to meet market needs and meet customers' changing expectations. By doing so, it improves customers' lives, the organization's stakeholders' lives, and the company's brand success in the market.

In order for an innovative firm to successfully innovate, it is necessary to have the correct leadership, strategy, and culture. In order to successfully innovate at work, the organisation must once again gather the necessary resources, including human capital, competences, organisational structure, financial resources, external cooperation, and procedures (Alexe & Alexe, 2016). Management of organisations, sectors, and markets that are in a constant state of flux may benefit greatly from an innovation-focused framework. Organisations adopt this approach to change management in the workplace when they want to gain a competitive edge that will last (Rubera & Kirca, 2012; Knowles, Hansen & Dibrell, 2008). According to Kraus et al. (2008), this idea is crucial for businesses of all ages and in all sectors.

In order to steer the organisation to success, the inventive one should handle business risks and environmental hazards in an imaginative way. Here, we'll go over risk management as an aspect of the entrepreneurial marketing paradigm. Businesses that are able to weather storms are those that use innovation-focused marketing strategies (Becherer et al., 2012). Since aviation businesses may lack the wherewithal to reach or maintain industry norms, Carson and Gilmore (2000) argue that these organisations should instead concentrate on entrepreneurial marketing strategies that are both inventive and creative. According to Morrish et al. (2010), EmP takes a fresh tack in marketing by aiming to build new segments instead of responding to the actions of current ones.

The Concept of Customer Retention

Customer retention denotes the ability to maintain and encourage customers to consistently support the organization's brand. client retention refers to the efforts made by a selling organisation to minimise client attrition

(Osei Boakye, 2011). Customer retention has emerged as the primary initiative for firms that prioritise sustaining reciprocal relationships with clients, while also serving as a crucial mechanism for generating product concepts aimed at retaining customers. Mostert, Meyer, and Ransburg (2009) define customer retention as the strategy through which organisations concentrate their efforts on existing customers to perpetuate business engagements with them. Customer retention denotes the prolonged commercial connection between customers and the primary organisation. Customer retention is a strategy by which an organisation preserves its clientele by consistently recognising and fulfilling their demands. Retaining customers involves fostering customer loyalty by prioritising customer value above profit maximisation and shareholder interests.

Customer retention is a primary aim of relationship marketing (Tamuliene & Gabryte, 2014). The significance of customer retention is crucial for firms, particularly in a period marked by intense competition and discerning consumers who make choices to remain or move based on logical and emotional factors (Langat, Bonuke, & Kibet, 2021). Companies have used several retention strategies based on their company type and operational environment. Customer retention is both a cost-effective and lucrative approach, and it is essential in the contemporary corporate landscape (Osei Boakye, 2011). Retained customers are often less costly to serve; they are willing to pay somewhat higher rates and anticipate reductions more than new customers.

Service providers and marketing managers formulate effective service enhancement strategies despite resource constraints, and with successful implementation of these enhancements, user retention may increase in the foreseeable future (Hung, Doi & Inoi, 2020). Client retention is crucial for both the client and the organisation, since it mitigates the difficulties associated with obtaining new customers. Customer retention may be analysed from several perspectives based on the organization's commercial activity. For bargain stores, it is the persistent recurring patronage from customers. It entails ensuring consumers feel valued via consistent and appropriate communication to encourage their return. Companies aim to minimise customer attrition to rivals, since a decline in market share and revenues may lead to the company's downfall (Osei Boakye, 2011).

Successful customer retention starts with the first engagement between the organisation and the client, continuing throughout the duration of the commercial relationship. The capacity of an organisation to attract and keep new consumers is determined by its service to current customers, the reputation it establishes in the marketplace, and the brand it presents. To retain clients, it is essential to surpass their expectations; this fosters loyalty and transforms them into brand champions or evangelists. Customer retention fundamentally involves mitigating the issues that lead to customer attrition by focusing on retaining clients that demonstrate loyalty to a certain organisation, owing to the advantages associated with committed customers (Ghavami & Olyaei, 2006). Customer retention is the marketing objective of dissuading consumers from switching to competitors. Customer retention refers to the strategies used by organisations to maintain ongoing relationships with current customers (Mostert, 2014).

Customer retention may also refer to the quantity of consumers who remain with the supplier for a certain duration, such as one year (Davis, 2014). To surpass your competition, the crucial differentiation is the provision of constant and superior customer service standards. Customer retention transpires when clients persist in acquiring a product or service over an extended duration. Customer retention pertains to maintaining a customer's patronage instead of allowing the client to engage with rivals' offerings. Osei Boakye, 2011. Customer retention denotes the measures used by a business to avert consumers from switching to a competitor's brand. Successful client retention begins with the first contact and continues throughout the whole duration of business interactions.

Customer retention offers several advantages, including enhanced income, reduced customer acquisition expenses, and heightened recommendations.

Asagba, Coker, and Okwudu (2019) assert that customer retention strategies are initiatives designed to provide value for consumers, hence fostering their long-term loyalty to the organisation. A highly satisfied customer exhibits prolonged loyalty, increases purchases with the introduction of new and upgraded products, speaks positively about the company and its offerings, exhibits diminished interest in competing brands, demonstrates reduced price sensitivity, provides product or service suggestions to the company, and incurs lower servicing costs compared to new customers due to routine transactions (Osei Boakye, 2011). Hume (2006) defines customer retention as the customers' choice to participate in future interactions with a service provider and the nature of those future activities. Moreover, companies across all industries have increasingly begun to manage customer turnover proactively, often by identifying customers at the greatest risk of attrition and directing retention strategies towards them. Ascarza, 2018

Measures of Customer Retention

Tordzro, Buame and Narteh (2014) decomposed customer retention in terms of bank service quality customer relationship, management, switching barriers and loyalty rewards.

Customer Involvement

Involvement is a characteristic of individual diversity that affects customers' decision-making and communication behaviours (Michaelidou & Dibb, 2008). The notion of engagement became associated with marketing with Krugman's (1967) assessment of involvement in advertising. Since then, particularly in the 1980s, extensive focus from consumer researchers has produced a substantial body of work that has conceptualised and assessed engagement across several settings, including involvement with a product class. Involvement derives from social psychology, particularly from the literature on persuasive communication, where the social judgment-involvement framework has been used to elucidate attitude and attitude development (Sherif & Sargent, 1947) as mentioned in (Michaelidou & Dibb, 2008). Jones and Sasser (1995), as mentioned in Huang, Liu, Hu, and Su (2017), acknowledged that consumer engagement is a crucial component influencing customer behaviour and contended that varying levels of customer involvement impact buying behaviour. Knox and Walker (2003), as referenced in Huang, Liu, Hu, and Su (2017), assert that consumer engagement influences the ultimate choice in the purchase process, with more engaged customers exhibiting greater loyalty. Customer participation is a behavioural goal that facilitates the preservation of commercial relationships between customers and firms (Huang, Liu, Hu & Su, 2017).

Service Quality

Service quality is a global attitude or assessment of the superiority of services, although the real the extent of this attitude reveals a lack of consensus (Sari & Mugiono, 2018). Service quality has emerged as a key approach aimed at delivering superior service to clients (Hamilton-Ibama & Ihunwo, 2022). High-quality service fosters customer trust in service providers, attracts new clientele, enhances business with current customers, minimises dissatisfaction through fewer errors, maximises profits, and elevates customer satisfaction (Lee et al. 2009). Service quality is a conjunction of the terms 'service' and 'quality,'

highlighting the importance of providing high-quality services to end consumers. The word quality pertains to the standard or specification that an entity providing services guarantees. A definitive threshold for quality is unattainable. The quality of service has garnered heightened interest from researchers in the field of service marketing literature. Service quality pertains to the alignment with customer requirements in the provision of a service (Chakrabarty & Dalvin 2007). Thus, service quality is the result of a customer's comprehensive assessment of a service provider, achieved by contrasting client expectations with the perceived quality received.

Service is a kind of product that provides intangible benefits and pleasure for sale, resulting in no ownership (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). They said that exceptional services that provide happiness arise from cultivating consumer interactions with their brand. It was emphasised that, to achieve core strategic positioning, banks must prioritise the quality of services provided to their consumers (Hossain & Leo, 2019). The quality of service is a crucial factor that influences a business's competitiveness. Banks must always enhance service quality, since there is no guarantee that the present exemplary service will be adequate in the future. Therefore, banks must formulate a new strategy to meet client needs and provide superior service to differentiate themselves from competitors (Siddiqi, 2018). Service quality is a critical notion in the service sector, particularly for financial service providers that struggle to demonstrate product difference to their consumers. Service quality is seen as a crucial component influencing the total profitability of organisations. This significance is elucidated by two fundamental roles. Service quality is a critical component that differentiates services, enabling enterprises to achieve a competitive advantage by attracting more consumers and enhancing market share. Secondly, service quality is considered a crucial element for client retention (Venetis & Ghauri, 2014).

Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty denotes the propensity of a consumer to persist with a product despite competitive offerings that may be as appealing, mostly due to their prior familiarity with the existing product (Ahmed & Moosavi, 2013). The loyalty of consumers may be easily assessed by evaluating the frequency of repeat purchases from the same clientele. Customer loyalty plays a crucial influence in a business's health (Hamilton-Ibama & Ihunwo, 2022). Efficient measurement and modelling of customer loyalty is essential for maintaining and expanding customer relationships (Hamilton-Ibama & Ihunwo, 2022). Customer loyalty is essential for an organization's success, particularly when customer acquisition alone does not ensure long-term viability. Customer loyalty may be assessed via many methods contingent upon the company model (Fulasia & Otinga, 2021). Oliver (2009) characterises loyalty as “a profound commitment to repurchase and support a favoured product or service in the future, regardless of situational factors and marketing strategies that may induce switching behaviors.” consumer loyalty is the determination of a consumer to remain with a certain company despite the emergence of new items from rivals. Kivetz and Simonson (2002) assert that loyalty awards may evoke sentiments of intellect and pride associated with obtaining something without incurring the usual cost, along with a sense of gratitude among consumers who associate benefits with being a favoured or exceptional client.

Conceptual Framework

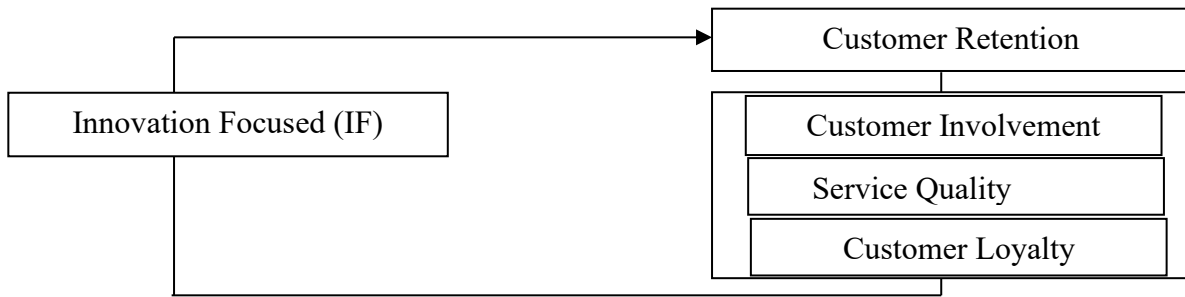


Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework of product innovation and customer retention of private media establishments in Rivers State.

Source: Researchers conceptualization (2024) ,

Empirical Review

Akani, Ogan, and Simeon (2024) investigated the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing strategies and marketing performance of soft drink distributors in Port Harcourt. The objectives of the study was to ascertain the extent to which entrepreneurial marketing strategies relate with marketing performance of soft drink distributors in Rivers State. The primary data was collected through a questionnaire that is designed in Likert scale of very high extent to very low extent. The population of this study was thirty-seven (37) soft drink distributing firms registered with the Rivers State Ministry of commerce and industry. Three (3) managers-marketing managers, sales managers and customer service managers were respondents from each of 37 soft drink distributing firms totaling 111 respondents that provided primary data that used to ascertain the relationship between the variables. The spearman rank order coefficient was the test statistics, using SPSS. 22.0 for all statistical work. The results of the test showed that entrepreneurial marketing strategies have significant and positive relationships with customer acquisition and customer retention of soft drink distributors in Rivers State – the measures of marketing performance.

Akani, Nadube and Harcourt (2022) investigated entrepreneurial proactiveness and organizational resilience of domestic airlines in Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined entrepreneurial proactiveness and organisational resilience of domestic airlines in Nigeria. Organisational resilience was measured in terms of anticipatory ability, robustness, organisational adaptability, and organisational ability. The study adopted an explanatory research design. Pearson product moment correlation served as the test statistic, relying on SPSS 22.0. The study found that entrepreneurial proactiveness relates to organizational resilience of domestic airlines in Nigeria. The study concludes that entrepreneurial proactiveness informs organisational resilience of domestic airlines in Nigeria; and recommends that domestic airlines in Nigeria that seek improved reliance should be proactive by anticipating and reacting to foreseeable changes in the business environment, and also embrace positive changes. McNally, Cavusgil, and Calantane (2010) examined the dimension of product innovation, together with product advantage, financial performance, and project protocol. The research used structural equation modelling to assess the importance of the study variables. The research concludes that product innovation by pharmaceutical businesses in North America positively influences financial performance.

Dogari, Shem, and Apuke (2018) analysed the implications of media ownership, financing, and problems for the survival of state-owned media in Nigeria. The research specifically evaluated ownership, financial issues, and their implications for the survival of state media in Nigeria. The study included two research methodologies:

survey and focus group discussion. The participants consisted of 66 accredited journalists from Taraba State Broadcasting Service (TSBS) and Taraba Television (TTV). The researchers analysed the whole population to entirely eradicate sampling error. The tools used for data gathering were the questionnaire and the focus group. Sixty-six (66) questionnaires were disseminated to the selected population. Of the sixty-six (66) questionnaires sent, sixty-two (62), or 94%, were answered properly by the respondents. Two questionnaires were not returned, and three were inadequately completed, thus deemed invalid. Additionally, a focus group discussion was held on November 5, 2017, with six participants from each media station within the studied population. The study's results indicate that government-owned media in Nigeria are now in a dire condition economically, managerially, technologically, and politically. Kim, Garrett, and Jung (2015) examined the impact of organisational innovation and product innovation on customer value, mediated by instrumental and symbolic brand advantages. The research demonstrated that the company's emphasis on innovation promotes product innovation and yields instrumental brand advantages.

Tamuliene and Gabryte (2014) investigate the determinants of client retention in the context of Lithuanian mobile providers. Extensive study has investigated customers' intentions for repeat purchases; yet, there is no consensus about the elements influencing customer retention or the methods for its evaluation and measurement. The research developed a theoretical model of customer retention and validated it within the practices of mobile operators in Lithuania. The empirical study findings indicated a statistically significant positive association between the variables. Hamilton-Ibama and Ihunwo (2022) investigated service quality and customer retention at deposit money banks located in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The research specifically investigated the correlation between Service Quality and Customer Retention in Deposit Money Banks located in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The research population comprises personnel from the 21 Deposit Money Banks located in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The research had a sample size of 168 randomly chosen staff members, from which 150 completed questionnaires were obtained and used for analysis. The hypothesis was evaluated via the Spearman rank order correlation coefficient. The research demonstrated that service quality, along with its qualities such as tangibility and empathy, has a strong and positive correlation with consumer satisfaction and loyalty towards their respective financial service providers.

Rubera and Kirca (2012) examined the relationship between organisational innovation focus and business performance utilising the Pearson product-moment correlation, revealing that organisational innovation focus positively impacts both market and financial positions. This link is more pronounced in both smaller and bigger institutions (Rubera & Kirca, 2012). The OECD (2012) examined the link between innovation and economic growth, revealing that innovation is not confined to high-technology items but includes the development of ability to handle a nation's unique challenges. Innovation is crucial in fostering economic growth in sectors such as potable water, hunger alleviation, illness mitigation, healthcare, and literacy. This is mostly accomplished via international cooperation between business and governmental entities (OECD, 2012). Kuria and Muturi (2018) investigated the impact of client retention tactics on the performance of commercial banks in Kenya. The research specifically assessed the impact of customer attention on the performance of commercial banks in Kenya and evaluated the effect of good complaint management on their performance. The research used social exchange theory and customer bonding theory. The research used the descriptive survey approach to illustrate and clarify

the impact of customer retention tactics on the performance of commercial banks in Kenya. Data was produced with unstructured questionnaires. The research used a descriptive design.

The study's target population consisted of all licensed commercial banks in Kenya. Four respondents from each of the 41 operational commercial banks, resulting in a total of 164 respondents. The data was examined through descriptive statistics, while regression analysis was employed to determine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Multiple regression served as an analytical instrument to provide further insight into the impact of customer retention on the performance of commercial banks in Kenya. The research demonstrated that customer attention and complaint management positively and statistically significantly influenced bank performance. Naude, Szinnai, and Goedhuys (2015) examined the correlation between entrepreneurial innovation and performance. The study's findings indicate that entrepreneurship enhances company performance via the mediating effect of innovation, which includes new goods, services, market entrance, and business process improvement. Innovation-centricity is a crucial catalyst for entrepreneurial marketing orientation in the changing corporate landscape of the 21st century. Langat, Bonuke, and Kibet (2021) investigated the quality of mobile banking services and customer retention using a moderated mediation model including consumer perceived value and perceived company image. The research used an explanatory design, using multistage, simple random, and systematic sampling methods to gather data from a sample of 400 mobile banking service clients in Kenya via a self-administered questionnaire.

The research demonstrated a substantial mediating influence of customer perceived value on the correlation between mobile banking service quality and customer retention. Furthermore, the research showed that perceived corporate image moderates the association between mobile banking service quality and customer perceived value, as well as between mobile banking service quality and customer retention. Ultimately, the perceived corporate image moderates the indirect relationship between mobile banking service quality and customer retention via customer retention at all levels.

Agudze-Tordzro, Buame, and Narteh (2014) investigated client retention methods in the context of Ghanaian banking. The research specifically aims to assess the relative significance of retention strategies that impact consumers' ongoing patronage of banking services within the banking sector in Ghana. The matrix of customer retention methods include service quality in banking, customer relationship management, switching obstacles, and loyalty awards. The research used a survey methodology to gather data from 410 banking clients. Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis was used to examine tactics that affect consumers' recurring consumption of banking services.

The study indicated that, apart from Switching Barriers (SB), the other three constructs—Bank Service Quality (BSQ), Customer Relationship Management (CRM), and Loyalty Rewards (LR)—exhibit positive significant effects on customer retention in the Ghanaian banking sector. Walsh, Lynch, and Harrington (2018) re-evaluated innovation via the perspective of conceptual framework antecedents, its dimensions, and innovation-focused results. The study's findings indicate that a persistent emphasis on innovation inside companies results in unique new goods and services across both developing and mature markets in Europe. It was once again shown that entrepreneurial marketing innovation leads to

client pleasure and favourable financial results via inventive customer service. Tamuliene and Gabryte (2014) investigate the determinants of customer retention in the context of Lithuanian mobile carriers, whereas Kuria and Muturi (2018) analyse the impact of customer retention tactics on the performance of commercial banks in Kenya. This finding has been validated by researchers Fulasia and Otinga (2021), who examined the impact of customer retention methods on customer loyalty among commercial banks in Kenya.

Numerous analogous studies exist; nevertheless, there is a deficiency of understanding about the components of product innovation and customer retention, namely customer participation, service quality, and customer loyalty among private media organisations in Rivers State. Against this background, the researcher chose to investigate the correlation between product innovation and customer retention in private media institutions in Rivers State, with the expectation that the findings would address the identified gaps. We hereby propose these hypotheses:

- H₀₁:** Innovation Focused does not significantly relate with customer involvement private media establishments in Rivers State
- H₀₂:** Innovation Focused does not significantly relate with service quality of private media establishments in Rivers State
- H₀₃:** Innovation Focused does not significantly relate with Customer Loyalty of private media establishments in Rivers State

Methodology

Research design is the plan or framework which guides the collection and analysis of data in a study. It specifies methods and procedures for obtaining the necessary data to be used to structure and solve problems; as well as a plan, structure and strategy of investigation, conceived to obtain answers to research questions and to control variance. These hypotheses testing study adopts a correlational investigation to determine the relationship between innovation focused and customer retention of private media establishments in Rivers State. The population of the study consisted of fifty (50) private media establishments in Rivers State. One manager from each of the fifty (50) private media establishments in Rivers State was selected as respondents, based on their intellectual and official capacity to provide accurate and relevant data for the study. Primary data were gathered through a self-administered questionnaire, which was structured in a multiple-choice format and included a 5-point Likert scale. Two hypotheses were tested using Spearman's rank order, and revealed there was a significant and positive correlation between innovation focused and customer retention of private media establishments in Rivers State.

This study used the probability sampling technique and It is the sampling technique that enables the researcher to determine the probability of drawing each member of the population. However, there will be no sampling procedure because the population is small therefore the research will be based on census. Primary data shall be collected from the respondents via a structured questionnaire, in five (5) Likert scale point ranging from Very high extent (VHE)”, “high extent (HE)”, “moderate extent (ME)”, “small extent (SE)”, and “no extent (NE)” and a cross-sectional survey was adopted. .The reliability of an

instrument is usually expressed in numerical terms and as a co-efficient of correlation. Validity can be face validity and content validity. Face validity is the act of merrily reading the content of a research instrument without using a measuring devices and making a judgment on the suitability or not of the instrument. Consequently, content validity is the degree to which an instrument samples cover the content area was measured. The inferential statistics Spearman's rank order coefficient was used to test the hypotheses at the secondary level of analyses, univariate analysis was used to respond to research questions.

Table 1: Correlation Matrix for innovation focused and Measures of Customer Retention

		Innovation Focused	Customer_Involvement	Service_Quality	Customer_Loyalty
Spearman's rho	Innovation Focused	Correlation	1.000	.764**	.817**
		Coefficient			
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
	Customer_Involvement	N	50	50	50
		Correlation	.764**	1.000	.752**
		Coefficient			
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
	Service_Quality	N	50	50	50
		Correlation	.817**	.752**	1.000
		Coefficient			
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
	Customer_Loyalty	N	50	50	50
		Correlation	.717**	.754**	.923**
		Coefficient			
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
		N	50	50	50

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 25.0 (2024)

Data Analysis

The result shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho) of .764 for the relationship between innovation focused and customer involvement. This value indicates a strong relationship between these variables. The positive direction of the relationship implies that an increase in customer involvement is associated with innovation focused. Therefore, there is a strong positive relationship between innovation focused and customer involvement in private media firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. The result also shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho) of .817 for the relationship between innovation focused and service quality. This value indicates a very strong relationship between these variables. The positive direction of the relationship suggests that an increase in service quality is associated with innovation focused. Therefore, there is a very strong positive relationship between

innovation focused and service quality in private media firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. The result also shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (ρ) of .717 for the relationship between innovation focused and customer loyalty. This value indicates a strong relationship between these variables. The positive direction of the relationship suggests that an increase in customer loyalty is associated with product differentiation. Therefore, there is a strong positive relationship between innovation focused and customer loyalty in private media firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

The results in Table 1 show that the relationship between innovation focused and customer involvement in private media firms in Rivers State, Nigeria is significant ($p=0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, based on these findings, there is a significant relationship between innovation focused and customer involvement in private media firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. Also, the results in Table 1 show that the relationship between innovation focused and service quality in private media firms in Rivers State, Nigeria is significant ($p=0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, based on these findings, there is a significant relationship between innovation focused and service quality in private media firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. Again, the results in Table 1 show that the relationship between innovation focused and customer loyalty in private media firms in Rivers State, Nigeria is significant ($p=0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, based on these findings, there is a significant relationship between innovation focused and customer loyalty in private media firms in Rivers State, Nigeria

This study explored the relationship between innovation focused and measures of customer. The study examined the relationship between innovation focus and customer retention—measured by customer involvement, service quality, and customer loyalty—within private media firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that innovation focus has a significant positive impact on all three variables. Firstly, the strong positive correlation between innovation focus and customer involvement suggests that as media firms improve their innovation focused strategies, they are likely to experience higher customer engagement. This highlights the value of offering unique, tailored products that resonate with the target audience, fostering deeper customer involvement. These findings align with prior research by Akani, Ogan, and Simeon (2024) investigation on the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing strategies and marketing performance of soft drink distributors in Port Harcourt. McNally, Cavusgil, and Calantone (2010), who explored the product innovation dimension and its relationship with product advantage, financial performance, and project protocol. Dogari, Shem, and Apuke (2018) who analysed the implications of media ownership, financing, and problems for the survival of state-owned media in Nigeria. Tamuliene and Gabryte (2014) who investigated the determinants of customer retention in the context of Lithuanian mobile carriers, whereas Kuria and Muturi (2018) analyse the impact of customer retention tactics on the performance of commercial banks in Kenya. This outcome has been validated by academics. Fulasia and Otinga (2021) examined the impact of customer retention tactics on customer loyalty among commercial banks in Kenya. Numerous analogous studies exist; nevertheless, there is a deficiency of understanding about the components of product innovation and customer retention, namely customer participation, service quality, and customer loyalty among private media organisations in Rivers State. Against this background, the researcher resolved to investigate the correlation between product innovation and customer retention in private media enterprises in Rivers State, with the intention of addressing the identified gaps via the findings of this study.

Secondly, the very strong positive relationship between innovation focus and service quality underscores that differentiation not only distinguishes a product but also elevates the perceived quality of services provided. Media firms that prioritize unique and innovative offerings are more likely to deliver superior service quality. This, in turn, enhances customer satisfaction and helps attract and retain a loyal customer base. By focusing on innovation, these firms can consistently improve the quality of their services, creating a competitive advantage and fostering long-term customer loyalty. The research aligns with prior investigations conducted by Hamilton-Ibama, and Ihunwo (2022) that analysed service quality and customer retention at deposit money banks located in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. Kim, Garrett, and Jung (2015) examined the impact of organisational innovation and product innovation on customer value, mediated by instrumental and symbolic brand advantages. Tamuliene and Gabryte (2014) investigate the determinants of client retention in the context of Lithuanian mobile providers. Rubera and Kirca (2012) examined the relationship between organisational innovation focus and business performance utilising the Pearson product-moment correlation.

Lastly, the strong positive correlation between innovation focused and customer loyalty suggests that differentiated products play a crucial role in building long-term customer relationships. Loyal customers are more likely to return and advocate for the brand, contributing to sustained business success. The study aligns with prior research by Akani, Nadube and Harcourt (2022) investigated entrepreneurial proactiveness and organizational resilience of domestic airlines in Nigeria. Kuria and Muturi (2018), which investigated the impact of client retention tactics on the performance of commercial banks in Kenya. Naude, Szinnai, and Goedhuys (2015) examined the correlation between entrepreneurial innovation and performance. Langat, Bonuke, and Kibet (2021) investigated the quality of mobile banking services and customer retention using a moderated mediation model including consumer perceived value and perceived company image. Agudze-Tordzro, Buame, and Narteh (2014) investigated client retention tactics once more: An analysis of a Ghanaian financial institution., and Harrington (2018) investigated innovation via the perspective of conceptual framework antecedents, its dimensions, and innovation-focused results

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study investigated the relationship between innovation focus and customer retention in private media establishments in Rivers State. Based on the finding of this study, the study revealed a positive and significant relationship between innovation focused and customer retention of private media establishments in Rivers State. The study concludes that innovation focused relate with customer retention of private media establishments in Rivers State. We therefore make the following recommendations;

1. Private media firms in Rivers State should work towards promoting innovation focused in order to improve their customer retention.
2. Managers of Private media firms should integrate high standards of innovation focused. That can foster long-term of customer retention.

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