Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction, and Loyalty in Nigerian Retail: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

The concept of corporate reputation has evolved from a peripheral concept to a critical intangible asset and a valuable source of competitive advantage. Its effective management is now considered a cornerstone function of every organization, essential for long-term sustainability and progress in a competitive business environment. This exploratory, small-scale study investigated the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty among customers of three selected retail businesses in Lagos State, Nigeria. Using a qualitative research design, the study conducted face-to-face interviews with six participants. The data, analyzed with NVivo software, revealed preliminary insights into how service quality may influence customer loyalty. The findings from the study's thematic analysis suggest a potential link between a firm's service quality and customer loyalty, based on the experiences shared by the four interviewees. The study's main takeaway is that prioritizing efficient and effective service delivery appears to be a factor in fostering customer satisfaction and loyalty. Based on these initial insights, we suggest that service providers consider focusing on customer service delivery programs to improve customer relationships and brand awareness. Future, larger-scale research would be beneficial to further explore and validate these preliminary findings.

Keywords: Customer Loyalty, Customer Service, Customer Satisfaction, Retail Atmosphere, Service Quality

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian retail landscape represents Africa's largest consumer market, with a population of nearly 255.8 million as of late 2022 while from United Nations data, Nigeria's estimated population was 232,679,478 in 2024 and is projected to be over 237.5 million in 2025, making it a key contributor to the nation's GDP (Oxford Business Group, 2024). This market is highly competitive and fragmented, with formal retail chains coexisting with a dominant informal sector. In this environment, the ability to acquire and, more importantly, retain customers is

critical for long-term survival and profitability. Research consistently indicates that retaining an existing customer is significantly more cost-effective than acquiring a new one, with acquisition costs potentially ranging from five to twenty-five times higher (Nkanu et al., 2025). This economic reality elevates customer loyalty from a simple business goal to a strategic imperative.

The dynamic and fiercely competitive landscape of the Nigerian service sector necessitates a profound understanding of the factors that drive consumer behavior. Service-based firms, ranging from telecommunications to banking, hospitality and retailing, recognize that a sustainable competitive advantage is not solely derived from product features but from the quality of the service experience they provide (Adeleke & Aminu, 2012; Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016). In this context, the interconnected relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty has emerged as a central theme in marketing research. While a wealth of quantitative studies has explored these relationships, often confirming a positive link between the variables, a significant gap remains in the literature, particularly concerning the deeper, more nuanced "why" and "how" behind these connections in the unique socio-cultural and economic context of Nigeria (Ojo, 2010; Iddrisu et al., 2015).

More so, because of the need of the service providers to build a loyal customer that will be consistently patronizing their stores, the store-based retail outlets managers have continuously involved in personalizing the customer experience. This is necessary since the large part of the store-based retail customers are more likely to purchase from outlets that offers some type expect personalized service. Customers expect personalized offers based on their preference. With this lofty loyalty program, the retail outlets would find it more convenient to keep track of their customers' buying habits, brand and product preference and offer them relevant rewards.

This research will adopt a mediating variable approach, positioning customer satisfaction as the critical link through which service quality influences customer loyalty. This is in line with the established theory that satisfaction is a cognitive and emotional assessment that precedes a customer's decision to remain loyal (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Shanka, 2012). By employing in-depth qualitative methods, this framework will seek to uncover the intricate motivations, emotions, and cultural factors that shape customer perceptions and behavioral intentions. This is a crucial undertaking, as a deeper, qualitative understanding can inform more effective and culturally resonant service marketing strategies for firms operating in Nigeria. This study's findings will not only contribute to the academic discourse on service marketing in a developing country context but will also provide practical insights for businesses aiming to build and maintain long-term, loyal customer relationships.

Building a sustainable customer loyalty through service quality and customer satisfaction can also be facilitated through positive customer experience and journey. The concept of customer experience is an important distinctive factor in today's competitive business world (Wereda & Grzybowska, 2016). Creating a strong customer experience is now regarded as a leading management objective in a consumer-centric firm. The increase in focus on customer experience arises because customers now interact with firms through several touch points in multiple channels and media, resulting in more complex customer journeys.

The essence of using qualitative method for data analysis on a behavioral study like this have not been well considered through the review empirical evidences of which this research study wants to fully apply. The empirical evidence shows that majority of studies that are related to this work are analysed quantitatively (Subiyantoro, 2021; Hadi & Indarewa, 2019; Diputra, & Yasa, 2021; Sharma & Ahmad, 2015; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Rasaq & Nirwanto, 2016; Raji & Zainal, 2016; Hasfar, et al, 2020; Putra, et al., 2021; Muhammed & Deddy, 2018). This study sought to bridge these gaps by adding to the few existing ones.

It is against this backdrop that the study proposes to examine the effect of service quality on customer loyalty of selected retail businesses in Lagos, while the specific objectives are to determine the relationship between customer service delivery and customer relations, and determine the extent at which retail store atmosphere affect customers' experience in selected retail businesses in Nigeria.

Statement of the Research Problem

The Nigerian retail sector, a significant economic driver, continues to face persistent challenges in service delivery, leading to a noticeable gap between business efforts and customer perceptions. While a strong link between service quality and customer loyalty is widely acknowledged in marketing literature, existing research in Nigeria is predominantly quantitative, often yielding inconsistent results. These studies have largely focused on generic service quality models, overlooking the nuances of customer expectations and the experiential aspects of service that are critical in the modern, competitive retail landscape.

Specifically, there is a lack of qualitative, in-depth research that explores the specific, lived experiences of customers and the factors that influence their loyalty to retail stores in Lagos. Prior studies have not adequately captured the impact of elements such as service personalization, staff conduct, and the overall in-store experience from the customer's perspective. This gap is critical because it leaves managers with an incomplete understanding of how to tailor their service strategies to meet evolving customer demands, ultimately hindering their ability to build and sustain a loyal customer base.

This research addresses this gap by proposing a qualitative framework. The problem, therefore, is not merely that there is a link between service quality and loyalty, but that the mechanisms and nuances of this relationship, particularly with customer satisfaction as a mediator, are not well-understood from the consumer's perspective in the Nigerian context. This lack of in-depth qualitative data hinders the ability of Nigerian service organizations to move from a transaction-based to a relationship-based business model, ultimately impacting their profitability and long-term viability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Service Quality

For many decades, researchers have tried to develop a perspective of service (Zeithaml, 2009, Ramsaran-Fowdar, 2007). Chang (2008) posits that the concept of service quality should be approached from the customer's point of view because of different values, ground of

assessment, and circumstances. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1994) mention that service quality is an extrinsically perceived attribution based on the customer's experience about the service that the customer perceived through the service encounter. Also, from the work of Kumra (2008), service quality cannot be only ascertained in the final product and service, but also from point of production and delivery process, including employee involvement and commitment in process redesign.

From the perspective of viewing service quality as a way of comparing delivered service results to expected service results, Grönroos (2007) also view service quality from the belief of Crosby (1979) who described service quality as conformance to specifications. This is also in the same direction with Agyapong (2011) that conceptualizes service quality as customer perception of how well services meet or exceeds their expectation. Grönroos (2007) further made assertions to conceptualize service quality as comparison of customer perception and expectation. Number one of the assertions is that service quality is determined by the customer's perceptions which result from comparing expectations that the customer have before receiving the service and the actual experience that the customer get from the service delivery. If the expectations are met the service quality is described as satisfactory. They can also be exceeded and then they are considered as more than satisfactory. The second assertion is that the evaluation depends on the service process and also the service outcome. As the third assertion described service quality exist in two types: quality at the level where the regular service is delivered and the quality level where expectations or problems are handled (Lai, Hitchcock, Yang & Lu, 2018).

Customer Service

Consumers are very important asset because no institution or company will be able to survive when ignored by their customer. Customer Service is one of the important activities carried out by the retail firm because it involves the future course of the company (Tax, McCutcheon, & Wilkinson, 2013). Kotler (2006) postulates customer service as different things to different people and according to different circumstances. Lalonde and Zinser (1976) cited in Kaňovská & Tomášková, 2015) conceptualize customer service as the kind of activities between the organisation and customers to improve or simplify sales and using of products and services. It also involves the operations of service providers for customers during the whole transactions. From this assertion, it is clearly noted that customer service is not only limited to the effort of service providers in exchange process with the consumers but extend to giving of information to the customer on how the products will be consumed and other things thereafter which is known as post sales services in marketing.

The role of Customer Service in order to create customer loyalty by providing quality service to its customers is to implement a CRM (Sam, 2019). In retailing business, the implementation of CRM in establishing effective communication with the customer is deemed very important in delivering quality services to its customers as this can be the basis of acquiring new customers, maintaining and developing existing customers (Wirtz, Lovelock, Moon & Quelch, 2016). Customer service is also viewed by Buchanan (2011) as the provision of service to customers before, during and after a purchase while the perception of its success and accomplishment is depending on the staff who can adjust themselves to the personality of the customers.

Store Atmosphere

In marketing terminology, atmospheric is used to describe the aspect of designing store or commercial spaces where customers patronize for the purchase of goods and services. The term atmospheric was first coined by Kotler (1973) cited in Adebayo (2023). He further posits that customers are not only interested in tangibility of the products as it forms a small part of the total consumption package but arguably believes that buyer respond to what he termed as total consumption package which includes services, warranties, packaging and store ambience. In retailing marketing management where store design is one of the major tasks, architectural aspect which includes and not limited to; interior design, exterior structure and design of window display performs three functions of creating attention, message communication and effect.

Sezgin and Küçükköylü (2014) conceptualizes store atmosphere as the general atmosphere in which all kinds of stimulants are involved such as store decoration, product shapes, packages, the presentation of products within the store, colors, illumination, ventilation, scent, underground music, the appearances of sales representatives and their attitudes, other customers and any other stimuli affecting the customers in some way. Furthermore, a store image is about how customers perceive the store, a store atmosphere is about what kind of a message retailing stores aim to give to the target customers. The term store image' was first used at the end of the 1950s. A retail store image is to show what a store means to customers in terms of both functional characteristics and their visual and auditoria psychological attitudes (Burt & Carralero, 2000).

Customer Loyalty

For past two decades, many companies have moved sequentially from focusing on service quality to focusing on customers satisfaction and then on loyalty as panacea for building competitive advantage. In response to this argument, companies satisfy and retain their customers to survive or prospects in today's volatile competitive business environment. As most people agree that loyalty matters much more for business.

From the perspective of Ganiyu et al., (2012), customer loyalty can seem elusive and magical to those trying to obtain it. However, they believe that there are a lot of good reasons for a business to pursue customer loyalty as a strategic objective since customers are expensive to acquire, keeping them loyal allows you to amortize acquisition costs. Loyal customers are often willing to pay premium prices and the likelihood of providing the company with opportunities to correct problems and not using these as a basis for compromising the relationship.

Furthermore, customer loyalty has been conceptualized to be a behavioral concept entailing repeat buying of products or services measured as the series or share of purchases, referrals magnitude of relationship or all of the above mingled together (Rai &Medha, 2013). Blut, Evanschitzky, Vogel, and Ahlert (2007) view customer loyalty in three ways: loyalty as an attitude that leads to a relationship with the brand; loyalty expressed mainly in terms of revealed behavior; and buying moderated by the individual's characteristics, circumstances and/or the purchase situation. Haghkhah et al., (2013) viewed customer loyalty as an essential

or indispensable action or element, condition, or ingredient (sine qua non) of an effective business strategy. The study believes loyalty is a strategy that creates mutual rewards to benefit firms and customers. They further considered loyalty to be a source of competitive advantage as it has proven to have a relevant impact on company performance in term of customer satisfaction.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a post-purchase cognitive and emotional evaluation of a product or service. It's the overall feeling of happiness or contentment that results from a comparison between a customer's pre-purchase expectations and their actual experience. Satisfied customers are more likely to exhibit positive behaviors such as repeat purchases, brand loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Agarwal & Dhingra, 2023; Utami et al., 2023).

According to Singh, et al., (2023), customer satisfaction is defined as the insight of the customer's prospect being met as a result of the goods or services received. It examines the magnitude of satisfaction or pleasure a customer goes through after relating to a business. Fulfilled customers feel that their needs and wishes have been met or exceeded, and they recognize value in the products or services purchased. Juni, et al., (2023) posit fulfilled customers will have a high magnitude and velocity of loyalty to the products and services provided compared to discontented customers. A happy consumer is more likely to become a devoted customer, repurchase goods, favorably participate in recommending items to other customers, and be less price sensitive (Adebayo, 2021). Customers are more inclined to stick with a brand or product if they are happy with it and are also more likely to tell others about it or buy it again rather than trying other brands.

Permana, et al., (2020) asserts that the main solution to please the hearts of customers is by providing most favorable impact and satisfaction to customers so that the effect will build loyalty emphasizing that these expectations are crucial and extend beyond mere enjoyment. According to Kotler (2024), customer satisfaction is assessed based on how well a product's perceived performance aligns with a customer's expectations. They further explain that if the product performance falls short of expectations, customers will be dissatisfied, whereas meeting or surpassing expectations leads to satisfaction. Jobber and Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick (2024) corroborate this by noting that customers experience happiness when the perceived performance meets or exceeds their expectations.

It is cautioned by businesses not to overstate advertising claims to create unrealistic customer expectations, as highlighted by Adebayo (2023), as this can result in dissatisfaction when performance fails to meet these expectations. Expectations are shaped by various factors, including discussions with others, post-purchase experiences, and marketing efforts from the supplier.

Underpinning Theory: Assimilation-Contrast Theory

This study was underpinned by the Assimilation-Contrast Theory of customer satisfaction and supported by the theories of cognitive dissonance and Expectancy Disconfirmation. The suitability of the underpinning theory is anchored on the fact that the theory asserts that

satisfaction is a function of the magnitude of the discrepancy between expected and perceived performance. As with assimilation theory, the consumers will tend to assimilate or adjust the differences in perceptions about product performance to bring it in line with prior expectations and that is only when the discrepancy is relatively small (Reginald et al., 2003).

Empirical Review

Komang and Gusti (2022) demonstrated through their research work titled the role of positive emotion to increase the effect of store atmosphere and discount on impulse buying that the store atmosphere has a positive and significant effect on impulse buying. The study provides an insight into the effect of store atmosphere and price discounts on impulse buying with positive emotions as a mediator for consumers at Coco martsin Denpasar. The research work sampled 85 respondents. The data gathered for the research work was collected through distribution of questionnaires. The data was then analysed through the using of path analysis with the help of SPSS software. From the finding, it was revealed that the store atmosphere has a positive and significant effect on impulse buying. In addition, store atmosphere has a positive and significant effect on positive emotions as well. Price discount also has a positive and significant effect on impulse buying. Price discount has a positive and significant effect on positive emotions. Positive emotions have a positive and significant impact on impulse buying. Positive emotions can mediate the effect of store atmosphere and price discounts on impulse buying.

Urdea, Constantin and Purcaru (2021) reviewed 58 empirical journal articles from the last two decades on experiential marketing in the e-commerce paradigm as a literature to seek and shed light into the fields of experiential and digital marketing to address the gaps in experiential aspects that appear during an online shopping session. The findings of the study reveal that the most emphasised advantage of the total digital experience is that it leads to enhanced customer satisfaction. The study further reveals several other superiority and exceptions of online consumer experience and also discusses a theoretical framework of digital marketing that is relevant for both academics and practitioners.

Tjahjaningsih et al., (2020) conducted a study to investigate whether customer experience and service quality influence satisfaction and impact loyalty or not. The sample of this study was 104 customers of PT Indonesia Comnets plus SPBU Semarang using a purposive sampling technique. The collected data for the study were analyzed using multiple regression tests. The results of this study prove that customer experience affects satisfaction; service quality affects satisfaction; and satisfaction affects loyalty. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that customer experience and service quality effectively increase customer satisfaction to build customer loyalty.

Adebayo (2024) examined a study to investigate the impact of marketing communication on customer relationships within selected airline companies in Lagos state, Nigeria. The study used quantitative research design and survey method with questionnaires to collect primary data from domestic customers of the chosen airlines. The sample size of 246 was determined using Godden model, employing multistage sampling techniques. A total of 150 questionnaires were gathered for data analysis. Standard multiple regression was employed to analyze the data. The findings indicated that advertising showed a significant relationship with customer

relationships (β = .227, t = 2.015, p < .011), and sales promotion also exhibited a positive and significant relationship with customer relationships (β = 0.412, t = 1.925, p = .005). The study concluded that implementing effective marketing communication elements such as advertising and sales promotion by airline management enhances the relationship between the firm and its customers by facilitating interaction between customers and airline service providers. The study recommends that airline service providers should formulate their communication strategies to raise awareness, stimulate interest and desire, and prompt actions among customers toward their services.

METHODOLOGY

This research work adopted qualitative method to assess the effect of service quality on customer loyalty. The qualitative (text) data was collected and analyzed to reflect the interpretation of human behavior in the study. Survey method was also adopted through a semi-structured interview guide to enable the researcher to determine the opinions, attitude, and features of target beneficiaries. The number of 6 respondents (customers) was interviewed from selected retail stores in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Specifically, the study adopts a multi-stage sampling technique which involves using different sample techniques at different stages in selecting sample respondents. Purposive sampling was adopted to focus on the three major store-based retail outlets (Shoprites, Spar and Buyrites) while availability sampling was used to determine customers that were available on weekend days when the research was conducted at all outlets of the selected retail stores in Lagos state. The final stage of the sampling was the stage of using the random sampling through mall intercept to select the respondents for the study and administer the questionnaire to the customers of the selected retail stores in Lagos state.

Primary and secondary sources were used. Primary data was obtained with the aids of semi-structured interview. The use of semi-structured interview was employed to gather necessary information from the respondents. The questions posed for the respondents ranges from how has effective communication between you and the service providers enhanced building of trust and positive corporate reputation with the retail firm, how do respondents think good customer service delivery initiated by the retail store helps in building good customer relationship with the service providers, how would respondents relate the merchandising of quality products by the retail outlet to the firm's corporate branding and in what ways do respondents think the atmospheric ambience in retail store build positive customer experience. The research ethics was duly observed during and after the interview exercise as the interview period for each of the participant lasted for thirty minutes. The secondary source was obtained from related journals and articles. The study employed the use of semi-structured interview as an instrument for data collection. The face-to-face interview for the four respondents was conducted in the office of the sales intern of the retail outlets as the transcriptions of the interviews were used for the qualitative analysis of the study. The studies equally use NVivo software for qualitative analysis. NVivo is preferred over other software as it permits the use of a large quantity of data and also allows visual coding in the text editing and contextual comment, hence, it is

comparatively simple to use. The study was broadly coded into two major nodes which make up the themes and sub-themes.

Data Analysis, Results and Discussion

Table 1: Participants' Background Information

S/N	Participants' Codes	Location of retail store	Years of Patronage	Date of Interview
1.	Info 1	Ikorodu	3 years	10th July, 2025
2.	Info 2	Ikeja	2 years	18th July, 2025
3.	Info 3	Victoria Island	2 years	9th September, 2025
4.	Info 4	Festac	3 years	10th October, 2025
5.	Info 4	Surulere	2 years	13th June 2025
6.	Info 4	Festac	3 years	11th May, 2025

Source: Researchers field survey, 2025

Thematic Analysis of the Study

Objective one: How has customer service delivery helped in building customer relations?

Based on the interview discussions with the participants, relevant customer service delivery themes and sub-themes that relates to customer relations emerged in (figure 1) as a way through which the service quality can enhance customer loyalty.

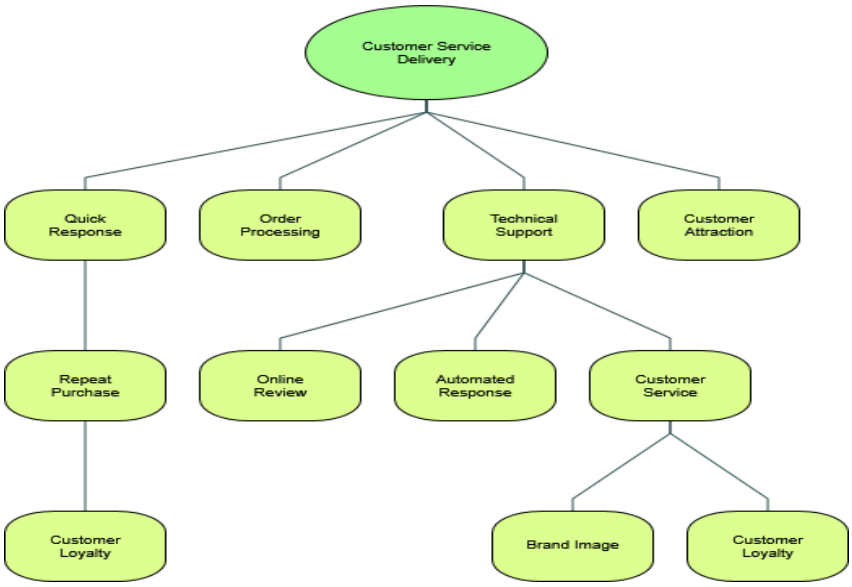


Figure 1: Thematic output of Customer Service Delivery

Source: *Author's Field Survey, 2025*

From interviewed informant "1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6", basic customer service delivery elements are harnessed to build customer relations. Therefore, quick response to customer needs and complaint, effective and efficient order processing and provision of technical support are an essential constituent which supports Service quality and Customer loyalty. However, the ascendancy of provision of technical support service and quick response to customer needs and complaint was supported by Info2, Info3 and Info1. This eventually shows that effective and efficient customer service delivery is one the major considerations in achieving customer loyalty through customer relationship management. More so, Info2 and info 5 were of the opinion that well trained technical support representative of the retail store which are set up to predominantly resolve technical issues as quickly as possible enhances customer satisfaction which also leads to customer loyalty. Meanwhile, Info1, Info3, Info4 and info6 emphasized the relevance of effective and efficient order processing in an attempt build customer relationship that will generate customer loyalty.

For example, participant **INFO2** expressed thus:

> "*The service provider has been able to retain me due to their unsurpassed customer service programs. The firm have realized through their customer service program that satisfied customers are loyal, and loyal customers tell other customers and advertise the benefits of patronizing the retail outlet or firm. Then the quick response to customer complaint most especially when it involves technical issues or when there is incongruence with the service received by the customer have been so exemplary*."

The position of **INFO2** is in congruence with **INFO1** who affirms that;

> "*The retail firm management has been able to establish some successful customer service program by processing the customer orders in time and that of the other staff in ensuring that there is a good customer relationship between them and their customer*."

While supporting the statement of **INFO2**, **INFO3** reveals that;

> "*The effective training being enjoyed by the employees in the modern art and science of customer service have also contributed immensely in handling customer complain by actively listening and reply with courteous and positive language which has contributed immensely in attracting more customers*."

These views as expressed by the participants suggest that customer service delivery programs have positive and significant relationship with customer relationship management.

Research objective two: What is the relationship between Retail Store Atmosphere and Customers Experience?

Based on the interview discussions with the participants, relevant retail atmosphere themes and sub-themes that relates to customer experience emerged in (figure 2) as a way through which the service quality can enhance customer loyalty.

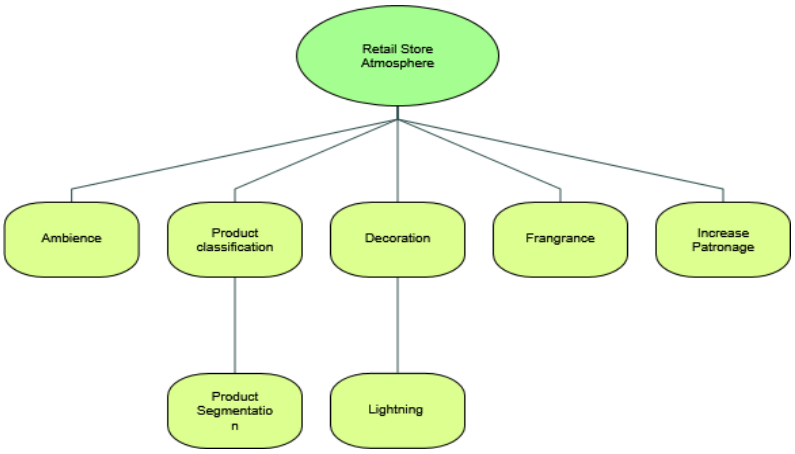


Figure 2: Thematic output of Retail Store Atmosphere

Source: *Author's Field Survey, 2025*

From interviewed informant "1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6", basic retail store atmosphere elements are harnessed to positive customer experience. Therefore, creation of appealing store ambient through using of mood, lighting, clean environment, using of color psychology is an essential constituent which supports retail store atmosphere and Customer loyalty. However, the supremacy of store ambience, decoration and fragrance was supported by Info2, Info3 and

Info4. This eventually shows beautifully design of store atmosphere in a way that would arouse all the five sensory organs is a consideration in achieving customer loyalty. Moreover, Info2 was of the opinion that the proper arrangements of goods in a gondola do increases his continuous patronage and build customer loyalty. Meanwhile, Info3 and Info4 emphasized the relevance of beautiful scent and fragrances with melodious background music would enhance repeat patronage that would lead to customer loyalty.

As evident from **INFO1**;

> "*Having good ambience in a store is an important key in getting the customers coming back for positive experience. For a customer like me, store ambience such as good temperature, store location, beautiful scent or fragrance and orderly arrangement of products according to their categories really defines my perception of the retail store as this will shape my fantastic experience with the store endeavor."*

Supporting **INFO1** expression, **INFO2** assert that;

> "*Experiencing good and memorable ambience in the store is another factor that attracts me to the outlet and keeps me coming all the time that I need to shop. Their background music I normally listen to have seriously work on my mood and my emotion. The odor in terms of fragrance also triggers my childhood experience and memories. The combination of all these and other ambience in terms of visual and lighting display with their neat restroom has positively contributed to my experience with the retail outlet.* "

INFO3 has this to say as well;

> "*The physical characteristics of the retail outlet have created an image that really attracted me to the store as this contributed in no small measure to my experience with the retail store. Furthermore, the neat and serene environment, good fragrance, lighting display and store layout with good parking space have really impacted my purchase intention and also create positive customer experience with the retail store."*

From the above responses of the informants', it clearly shows that ambience elements like store fragrance, lighting has significant relationship with customer loyalty, this is because good store ambience acts as a promotion tool used to communicate the store's image.

Discussion of Findings

From interview conducted on objective one, informants that were interviewed expresses that customer service delivery programs suggest a connection with customer relationship management and that customer service delivery elements are good factors to harness and build customer relations. Therefore, quick response to customer needs and complaint, effective and efficient order processing and provision of technical support are essential constituents which support service quality and customer loyalty. However, the ascendancy of provision of technical support service and quick response to customer needs and complaint was seen as a

good paradigm shift in building customer loyalty. This eventually shows that effective and efficient customer service delivery is one the major considerations in achieving customer loyalty through customer relationship management.

From the interview conducted on objective two of the study, informant reveals that basic retail store atmosphere elements suggest a connection with customer experience. Therefore, creation of appealing store ambient through using of mood, lighting, clean environment, using of color psychology are essential constituents which supports retail store atmosphere and customer loyalty. However, the supremacy of store ambience, decoration and fragrance was supported by some informants; this eventually shows that beautifully design of store atmosphere in a way that would arouse all the five sensory organs is a consideration in achieving customer loyalty. Moreover, another informant was of the opinion that the proper arrangements of goods in a gondola shelf do increases customer continuous patronage and build customer loyalty. Meanwhile, other informants emphasize the relevance of beautiful scent and fragrances with melodious background music would enhance repeat patronage that would lead to customer loyalty. Assimilation-Contrast Theory Model is highly relevant frameworks for discussing the findings of this study as it provides a theoretical lens through which to interpret the qualitative data on customer perceptions of service quality and loyalty.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study is concluded through observation during the interview that not all customers who got satisfied through good quality services provided by stores, in turn develop loyalty towards the store. This invariably means that not all customer satisfaction leads to customer loyalty.

The study further recommended that service providers as a matter of necessity need to work on customer service delivery program that will have the intention of generating enduring customer relations with the objectives of attracting new customers, maintaining the existing ones, create brand awareness and enhance customer and employee retention.

Managerial Implications of the study

Qualitative framework for analyzing service quality, customer satisfaction, and loyalty in Nigerian service marketing most especially in retail business has significant managerial implications. It provides a roadmap for managers to move beyond simple data points and build genuine, long-lasting customer relationships. Unlike quantitative studies that tell you “What" is happening, a qualitative approach helps you understand "why" it's happening**,** which is essential for developing effective, localized strategies in the Nigerian context. The findings from this qualitative framework compel service providers to shift their focus from single transactions to the overall relationship with the customer. Instead of just measuring sales figures, managers should prioritize understanding the emotional and psychological journey of the customer.

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