

## Customer Service and Customer Commitment of Hospitality Firms in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State

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### **Abstract**

*The study investigates customer service and customer commitment of hotel firms in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. The dimensions customer service are communication quality, staff professional and transactional convenience, while customer commitment was used as the measure. The study is cross-sectional in nature looking at different hospitality firms in Yenagoa metropolis. Employee of ten (10) hotel firms were selected to form the study respondents, which amount to one hundred and fifty (150). Questionnaire was adopted as the main instrument for data collection and the data collected was coded and analyzed utilizing the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) descriptive statistics and inferential analysis was adopted and the Pearson Moment Correlational Coefficient (PMCC) to test the relationship between the studied variables. The findings of the study reveal that communication quality, staff professional, transactional convenience and marketing performance in hotel firms. Based on the findings. It was concluded that customer service has a significant relationship with customer commitment of hotels in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. It is recommended that management should Provide staff with adequate training and empowerment to resolve issues promptly and effectively and management should implement training programs focused on enhancing staff professionalism which include training in customer service skills, empathy and effective communication.*

**Keywords:** *Customer Service, Transactional convenience, staff professional, communication quality and customer commitment*

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### **Introduction**

Customer commitment to a company can be gauged by the anticipated success of new product launches, actual product sales, and the strength of customers' psychological attachment to the brand (Ogba & Tan, 2019). According to Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande (2019), customer commitment is a lasting attitude towards, and connection with, a specific firm, brand, or product. It reflects a sustained desire by a business partner to maintain a valued relationship (Morgan & Moorman, 2018). Commitment is categorized into two types: affective and continuance (Marshall, 2017). Affective commitment involves maintaining a relationship based on loyalty and affiliation (Gundlach, Achrol, & Mentzer, 2019). Customers with high affective commitment are inclined to purchase more services from suppliers (Marshall, 2017).

Customer service is a multifaceted concept essential for enhancing the consumer shopping experience, encapsulating various activities that retailers engage in to augment the value perceived by customers (Levy & Weitz, 2017). This encompasses identifiable but often intangible activities linked to the core goods and services sold (Berman & Evans, 2017). Intangibility, a defining characteristic of services, extends to customer service, emphasizing its nuanced role in retail. According to the Institute of Customer Service, customer service represents the entirety of efforts by an organization to fulfill customer expectations and generate satisfaction. This necessitates retailers to provide exemplary service to meet these expectations consistently. Customer service involves activities and benefits associated directly or additionally with the products sold.

However, customer service and customer commitment is integral to understanding consumer behavior and enhancing the shopping experience. Customer commitment, as outlined by Ogba and Tan (2019) and Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande (2019), involves both affective and continuance dimensions. Affective commitment is driven by loyalty and emotional attachment, while continuance commitment is influenced by the costs associated with switching or ending relationships (Marshall, 2017; Kumar, 2019). Customer service, as described by Levy and Weitz (2017) and Berman and Evans (2017), plays a crucial role in fostering both types of commitment. Exemplary customer service activities, whether tangible like product guarantees and delivery services or intangible like providing a welcoming shopping environment, enhance the perceived value of a retailer's offerings. These services not only fulfill customer expectations but also generate satisfaction, which is essential for nurturing affective commitment. When customers feel valued and supported through superior service, their emotional attachment to the brand strengthens, leading to increased loyalty and a greater likelihood of repeat purchases (Marshall, 2017).

### **Statement of the problem**

In the hospitality industry, service delivery failures are inevitable, posing significant challenges for service firms in achieving effective recovery and customer satisfaction. Although extensive research exists on customer service within the global hospitality sector, there is no consensus on the most crucial dimensions and strategies to satisfy and retain customers (Berman & Evan, 2021). In Nigeria, the customer service unit in hotels is more effective than in other sectors of the economy. However, hotels still struggle to meet the high standards expected by their global clientele.

Frequent issues arise when hotel guests lodge complaints, often met with delays and unprofessional attitudes from receptionists. Additionally, financial transactions are problematic, with guests being debited without timely credits reflecting on the recipient's end. Furthermore, staff often lack effective communication skills, particularly during network outages, resulting in immediate service unavailability. These challenges contribute to customer dissatisfaction, potentially undermining customer commitment and loyalty. Given these persistent issues, this study aims to explore the relationship between customer service and customer commitment of hotel firms in Yenagoa, Bayelsa.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The main objective of the study is to examine the relationship between customer service and customer commitment of hotel firms in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

Specifically, the objectives aimed are

1. To determine the extent to which communication quality relates customer commitment of hotel firms in Yenagoa
2. To determine the extent to which staff professionalism relates with customer commitment of hotel firms in Yenagoa
3. To determine the extent to which transactional convenience and customer commitment of hotel firms in Yenagoa

### **Research Questions**

To achieve the above objectives the following question were posed

1. To what extent does communication quality affect customer commitment of Hotel firms in Yenagoa.
2. To what extent does staff professionalism affect customer commitment of Hotel firms in Yenagoa.
3. To what extent does transactional convenience affect customer commitment of Hotel firms in Yenagoa.

### **Hypotheses**

1. H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between communication quality and customer commitment of hotel firms in Yenagoa.
2. H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between staff professionalism and customer commitment of hotel firms in Yenagoa.
3. H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant relationship between transactional convenience and customer commitment of hotel firms in Yenagoa

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **Conceptual Review**

Customer service involves providing assistance to customers before, during, and after a purchase (Enoglobal, 2018). It encompasses all forms of customer interaction, whether face-to-face or indirect, such as handling correspondence. Customer service consists of activities aimed at enhancing customer satisfaction, meaning ensuring that a product or service meets customer expectations (Jamier, 2002). It includes personal and interpersonal skills like communication, listening, body language, gestures, posture, and telephone techniques. According to Turban, Lee, King, and Chung (2002), customer service can be delivered by a person, such as a sales and service representative, or through automated self-service methods.

McKinney (2018) defines customer service as the act of meeting customer needs by delivering professional, helpful, high-quality service and assistance before, during, and after a customer's requirements are fulfilled. Therefore, customer service encompasses the activities undertaken by an organization to ensure customer satisfaction, including the service itself and the resulting customer satisfaction.

### **Staff Professionalism**

Professionalism is a fundamental aspect of bureaucracy, requiring a dedicated, full-time corps of officials focused solely on managerial responsibilities. In the public sector, professionalism is embodied in civil servants who typically earn their positions through merit (Rockman, 2014). The type of bureaucracy and political system, whether democratic or autocratic, influence employee professionalism and thus the level of bureaucratic efficiency. Adler and Bor (2019) identified two types of bureaucracies: enabling and coercive. In coercive bureaucracies, managers distrust professionals and closely monitor them, leaving no room for innovative decision-making, as actions are driven by penalties. Conversely, in enabling bureaucracies, professionals have more freedom to take on responsibilities and engage in creative decision-making (Adler & Borys, 2016). Professionalism is challenging, but there is a general consensus that professionals possess certain characteristics indicative of their status. First, expertise involves prolonged specialized training in a body of abstract knowledge. Second, ethics involves rendering services impartially and without personal or emotional involvement with clients (Clark, 2018). Additionally, professionals are expected to act predictably in uncertain and complex situations (Beneviste, 2018). The culture of professionalism is characterized by performance, efficiency, formality, and competitiveness. Consequently, professionalism enhances efficiency by reducing nepotism and increasing individual skills (Raelin, 2018). Maintaining high levels of professionalism also helps employees adhere to work standards.

### **Complaint Handling**

Complaints serve as a crucial mechanism for an agency's management to remain accountable to the public while offering valuable insights for reviewing the agency's performance and the conduct of its employees (Ombudsman, 2018). A complaint arises when a customer brings a problem to the organization's attention and expects some form of redress, potentially beyond merely providing the original product or service that caused the issue (Institute of Customer Service, 2015). Therefore, complaint handling refers to the methods an organization employs to resolve customer complaints.

Complaints offer firms an opportunity to improve and provide better services to customers (Michel, Bowen & Johnston, 2018). The primary goal of complaint handling is to mitigate the negative impacts of service or product failures and ultimately retain customers (Nwankwo & Ajemunigbohun, 2018). Complaint handling, or service recovery, is conceptualized as a process where marketing activities are initiated to regain customer trust lost due to a service failure and to meet customer expectations (Baksi & Parida, 2018). Research shows that customers who lodge complaints with firms have a higher level of purchase intention than those who do not (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2020). However, if customer complaints are not effectively addressed, it can lead customers to switch to competitors, posing a long-term threat to customer retention (Nikbin & Ishak, 2021).

### **COMMUNICATION QUALITY**

Marketing communication is primarily initiated by the supplier, but to be effective, it must align with customer expectations regarding their interactions within the relationship. In this study, the supplier's ability to meet customer expectations is defined as communication quality. The factors influencing communication quality differ across various studies. High-quality communication is

characterized by relevance, timeliness, and reliability (Mohr & Spekman, 2018). Communication quality combines information quality and source preference (Harcourt & Wattier, 2020), or the provision of adequate, timely, accurate, complete, and credible communication (Mohr & Sohi, 2019). According to Ball, Coelho, and Machas (2021), effective communication is delivering information in a way that the customer can easily understand and find beneficial with minimal effort to interpret. The buyer's willingness to engage in a mutual relationship with the supplier affects their preferences regarding interactions, suggesting that the criteria for good communication can vary between customers.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is based on justice theory proposed by John Rawls in 1971. Rawls argued for a principled reconciliation of liberty and equality that is meant to apply to the basic structure of a well-ordered society (Andreas, 2017). Central to this effort is an account of the circumstances of justice, inspired by David Hume, and a fair choice situation for parties facing such circumstances, similar to some of Immanuel Kant's views. Principles of justice are sought to guide the conduct of the parties.

According to the existing service-related literature, consumers' perception of justice significantly influences their post-purchase behavior. Ha and Jang (2009) found that perception of justice positively influences consumers' purchase intentions.

Maxham and Netemeyer (2003) suggested that the perception of procedural justice motive positive WOM intentions and higher interactional justice induces consumers to repurchase. In addition, interactional justice is a determinant of consumer trust for the service provider and consumer satisfaction.

### **Empirical Studies**

Adeyemi and Ojo (2022), examine the relationship between staff professionalism and customer commitment in the hotel business in Nigeria was examined using a cross-sectional research design. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and interviews. The study focused on a population of 1,000 hotel guests and staff from luxury hotels in Lagos, with a sample size of 300 respondents. The researchers utilized both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between staff professionalism and customer commitment, concluding that professional conduct among hotel staff greatly enhances customer loyalty and satisfaction. The study recommended that hotel management in Nigeria should prioritize professional training and development programs for their staff to ensure consistent high-quality service and strengthen customer commitment.

Okafor and Mensah (2023), investigate the relationship between complaints handling and customer commitment in the hotel business in Ghana was examined using a descriptive research design. The study focused on a small population of 200 hotel guests and staff from boutique hotels in Accra, Ghana, with a sample size of 100 respondents selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, employing SPSS software for the data analysis. The findings indicated that effective complaints handling significantly enhances customer commitment, as customers who felt their complaints were addressed satisfactorily showed higher levels of loyalty and repeat

patronage. The study concluded that efficient complaints handling is crucial for fostering customer commitment in the hotel industry. It recommended that hotel management should implement comprehensive complaints management systems and provide training for staff on effective complaints resolution to improve customer satisfaction and retention.

Adamu and Ndlovu (2023), examines the relationship between communication quality and customer commitment in the hotel business in Kenya was examined using a descriptive research design. The study targeted a small population of 150 hotel guests and staff from boutique hotels in Nairobi, with a sample size of 75 respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, employing SPSS software for data analysis. The findings revealed a strong positive relationship between communication quality and customer commitment, indicating that clear, timely, and reliable communication significantly enhances customer loyalty and engagement. The study concluded that high-quality communication is essential for maintaining customer commitment in the hotel industry. It recommended that hotel management invest in training staff on effective communication strategies and regularly evaluate their communication practices to ensure they meet customer expectations.

### Methodology

This research work will employ a descriptive research design to investigate customer service and customer commitment of hotels in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. The population consist of 15 hotels operating within the city limits of Yenagoa with a ten (10) customer each. A sample size of one hundred and nine (109) customer will be selected using stratified random sampling techniques to ensure representation from different hotel categories. Data will be collected through structured questionnaires administered to guests. A regression analysis will be utilized for data analysis to identify correlations of the responses. Primary data will be sourced from guests, while secondary data will be obtained from industry reports and academic literature. Statistical software such as SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) will be employed for rigorous data analysis, ensuring the reliability and validity of findings.

### Descriptive Result of Staff professionalism, complaints handling and communication quality

A	Question Items	SA 4	A 3	SD 2	D 1	Mean X
	<b>Staff professionalism</b>					
1	The staffs of hotels treat customers with friendliness and courtesy	60	30	9	10	3.0
2	The staffs of hotels attend to customers in a very responsive and smart manner	62	38	4	5	3.1
3	The staffs of hotels are always willing to help customers	38	60	10	11	3.1
4	The staffs of hotels are knowledgeable about their hotels products and service	60	30	10	9	2.9
	<b>Complaint Handling</b>					
5	Hotels resolves issues quickly anything I lodge a complaint	70	30	2	6	3.3

6.	Overall, hotels procedure for handling customers' complaints is fair	30	67	3	9	3.2
7.	Each time I have issues, the staffs of this hotels are always very keen to solve my problem	80	20	3	6	
8.	The behaviours of hotel staffs towards compliant handling is fair	90	10	2	7	3.0
9.	In solving customers' problems, hotels gives customers exactly what they want	80	20	1	8	3.3
10.	The way hotels treat customers' complaints is fair	70	30	1	8	3.5
	<b>Communication quality</b>					
11	Hotels communicates important information to their customer on time	80	20	2	7	3.1
12	Hotels pass on accurate messages/communications to their customer	90	10	2	7	3.3
13.	Hotels communicates adequately with their customer	30	70	7	2	3.2
14	The messages/communications that hotels pass onto their customers is always compete	70	31	1	7	
15	Hotels communicates credible information to their customer	90	10	1	8	3.2

Source: Survey Data, 2024

The table show that staff professionalism, customers generally perceive hotel staff as friendly and courteous (mean rating of 3.0), although there is room for improvement in staff knowledge about hotel products and services (mean rating of 2.9). While complaint handling, hotels are perceived positively in resolving issues quickly (mean rating of 3.3) and fairly (mean rating of 3.2), with staff showing a keen interest in problem-solving (mean rating of 3.0). In communication quality, hotels are seen as adequately communicating important and accurate information (mean ratings of 3.1 and 3.3, respectively), although there are some concerns about the completeness and credibility of the messages passed to customers (mean ratings varying between 3.1 to 3.5).

**Table 2: Correlations between Staff professionalism and customer commitment**

		STAFF PROFESSIONALISM	CUSTOMER COMMITMENT
STAFF PROFESSIONALISM	Pearson Correlation	1	.625**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000

CUSTOMER COMMITMENT	N	109	109
	Pearson Correlation	.625**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	109	109

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

SPSS 2024

The table presents the correlation between staff professionalism and customer commitment, based on data from 109 observations. The Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.625, which signifies a strong positive relationship between the two variables. This indicates that higher levels of staff professionalism are related with customer commitment. The significance level (Sig. 2-tailed) is 0.000, which is less than the 0.01 threshold, demonstrating that this correlation is statistically significant at the 1% level. Therefore, we can conclude that there is a significant positive relationship between staff professionalism and customer commitment.

**Table 3: Correlations between Complaints handling and customer commitment**

		COMPLAINTS HANDLING	CUSTOMER COMMITMENT
COMPLAINTS HANDLING	Pearson Correlation	1	.600**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	109	109
CUSTOMER COMMITMENT	Pearson Correlation	.600**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	109	109

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

SPSS 2024

The table illustrates the correlation between complaints handling and customer commitment, utilizing data from 109 observations. The Pearson correlation coefficient between complaints handling and customer commitment is 0.600, indicating a strong positive correlation. This means that effective handling of customer complaints is connected with customer commitment. The significance level (Sig. 2-tailed) is 0.000, which is well below the 0.01 threshold, signifying that this correlation is statistically significant at the 1% level. Therefore, the study concludes that there is a positive significant relationship between complaints handled and the level of customer commitment.



**Table 4: Correlations between Complaints handling and customer commitment**

		COMMUNICATION QUALITY	CUSTOMER COMMITMENT
COMMUNICATION QUALITY	Pearson Correlation	1	.675**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	109	109
CUSTOMER COMMITMENT	Pearson Correlation	.675**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	109	109

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

SPSS 2024

The table examines the correlation between communication quality and customer commitment, using data from 109 observations. The Pearson correlation coefficient between communication quality and customer commitment is 0.675, indicating a strong positive relationship. This suggests that higher communication quality is associated with greater customer commitment. The significance level (Sig. 2-tailed) is 0.000, which is significantly below the 0.01 threshold, indicating that this correlation is statistically significant at the 1% level. Therefore, we can conclude that there is a positive significant relationship between communication quality and customer commitment.

### Discussion of Findings

Table 2 presents the correlation analysis between staff professionalism and customer commitment in hotels. The Pearson correlation coefficient between staff professionalism and customer commitment is strong and positive, with a value of 0.625 ( $p < 0.01$ ). This shows a significant relationship between these two variables. These findings align with those reported by Adeyemi & Ojo (2022), revealed a significant positive relationship between staff professionalism and customer commitment, concluding that professional conduct among hotel staff greatly enhances customer loyalty and satisfaction.

Table 3 presents the correlation analysis between complaints handling and customer commitment in hotels. The Pearson correlation coefficient between complaints handling and customer commitment is strong and positive, with a value of 0.600 ( $p < 0.01$ ). This shows a significant relationship between these two variables. It aligns with the finding of Okofar & Mensah (2023), that effective complaints handling significantly enhances customer commitment, as customers who felt their complaints were addressed satisfactorily showed higher levels of loyalty and repeat patronage.

Table 4 displays the correlation analysis between communication quality and customer commitment in hotels. The Pearson correlation coefficient between communication quality and customer commitment is notably strong and positive, with a coefficient of 0.675 ( $p < 0.01$ ). This indicates a statistically significant relationship between these variables. This finding support Adamu & Ndlovu (2023) a strong positive relationship between communication quality and customer commitment, indicating that clear, timely, and reliable communication significantly enhances customer loyalty and engagement

### **Conclusion**

The findings from the analysis generated data revealed clear positive significant relationship between communication quality, staff professional, transactional convenience and marketing performance in hotel firms. Based on the findings, it was concluded that customer service has a significant relationship with customer commitment of hotels in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

### **Recommendations**

1. Management should Provide staff with adequate training and empowerment to resolve issues promptly and effectively.
2. Management should implement training programs focused on enhancing staff professionalism which include training in customer service skills, empathy and effective communication.
3. Hotels management should invest in improving communication channels and practices both internally among staff and externally with customers

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