

Influence of Transaction Convenience and Repeat Purchase of Independent Retail Petroleum Marketing firms in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between retail convenience and customer patronage of independent petroleum marketers in Port Harcourt. This research adopts the cross-sectional survey research design which offers a wide coverage and permits generalization of research findings. The population of this study consists of the four hundred and fifty (450) registered independent petroleum marketers in Rivers State (IPMAN Journal, 2014). The sample size of two hundred and twelve (212) was determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula. The analysis involved in the use of central tendencies and measures of dispersion in the assessment of the characteristics of each variable. Analysis on the relationship between variables was carried out at a 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance, with the Spearman's rank order correlation used in testing the hypotheses. The study concludes that a significant relationship exists between retail convenience and customer patronage of independent retail petroleum marketers in Port Harcourt. The study therefore recommends that independent petroleum marketers should be considering transaction convenience of their firm before choosing a location so as to have a competitive advantage over competitors in the industry. Also, it is further recommended that transaction convenience to products from retail independent petroleum marketers by customers should be made as seamless as possible in order to add value to the customer purchase experience.

Key words: Retail convenience, Access convenience Transaction convenience, customer patronage, independents retail petroleum marketing firms

Introduction

Every company's goal is to maintain a high level of customer satisfaction by providing clients with value-added transactions and by fostering positive connections with customers. This demonstrates how successful a service provider can be in terms of providing high-quality service and attracting new customers to their business. Consumer demand for convenience is increasing as a result of socio-economic developments, technical advancement, and increased rivalry in the corporate environment, as well as an increase in household income (Darlington, 2020). In today's competitive environment, the capacity of a service provider to provide high-quality service in the manner wanted by the customer is regarded a critical strategy for achieving success and long-term survival. It has been repeatedly emphasized in marketing literature, particularly with the recent advent of a new perspective, known as service-dominant logic, which highlights the role of customers in services (Das Nair, 2015). The fact that retail convenience is becoming increasingly important to customers is well acknowledged; nonetheless, there is little explicit discussion of this topic in the existing convenience literature. The concept of customer convenience when it comes to purchasing and using services is not well-understood by the majority of the population (Ezenta & Osagie, 2020). The capacity to reduce the amount of time, energy, and effort required by consumers while acquiring or utilizing goods and services is referred to as convenience in the context of non-monetary expenses. Convenience may provide a competitive advantage in homogeneous marketplaces when service offers are similar and hence do not serve as significant competitive differentiators. Service providers with more convenience may be able to gain a competitive advantage in homogeneous marketplaces when service offers are identical and therefore no important competitive differentiators. (Aung, Kanetkar, & Holden. 2017). Research has discovered several significant relationships between retail convenience and consumer satisfaction, all of which are important. For example, retail convenience can have a direct impact on consumer happiness and can help to increase customer loyalty when implemented properly.

The ability of independent retail petroleum marketers to provide high-quality products to their customers in a manner that is convenient for them provides numerous benefits, including increasing customer loyalty, reducing the need to compete solely on price, and expanding their customer base through word-of-mouth recommendations.

Customer happiness predicts future purchases, resulting in brand loyalty and the acquisition of new customers. Consumers' willingness to pay for the items offered by a certain petroleum marketer is, without a doubt, influenced by the level of happiness they receive from such products (Popal & Bedi, 2015).

Government had at various times tried to liberalize the activities of independent petroleum marketers. The goal of government in adopting the principles of liberalization of is influenced by the successes of other countries in doing same. However, at issue is the stiff resistance which the policy has encountered from the organized labour, thus making it sounds like a "hard sell" (Ogwo & Onuoha, 2013). This scenario has virtually made competition, especially based 5 on marketing's 4Ps – product, price, promotion and place – unfashionable for independent petroleum marketers, as their offers are "commodities" (not products) without clear brand identity and loyalty, sold at uniform prices which none of them can justify a unilateral change in the prices, physically or psychologically (Ezenta & Osagie, 2020), in promotion. Nevertheless, independent petroleum marketers still strive to attract customer patronage, especially as they concentrate their sales outlets, popularly known in

Nigeria as “Filling Stations”, at major roads of a particular town. They do this by resorting to service-based competition. Thus, independent petroleum marketers use product accompanying services as means of attracting customers to their fuel stations. The outward appearance of these services, referred to as service scape, plays essential role in influencing the nature of customer experiences as well as in forming initial impression on customer expectations (Ogwo & Onuoha, 2013). Since independent petroleum marketers offer uniform products, at uniform prices, any perceived evidence of an eventual “quality” of the accompanying intangible service, that is service scape, would be an added advantage for independent petroleum marketers concerned, and thus improve customer patronage. In the light of issue aforementioned this study seeks to investigate the nexus between transaction convenience and repeat purchase among the retail independent petroleum marketing firms in Port Harcourt.

Study Variables and Research Framework

Study variables unveil the direction of the research work. They serve as the skeletal structure upon which the entire work is built upon. This study has two major variables retail convenience (the predictor variable with access convenience and transaction convenience as its dimensions. While, customer patronage is the criterion variable which is treated as a one measure variable as depicted below in figure 1

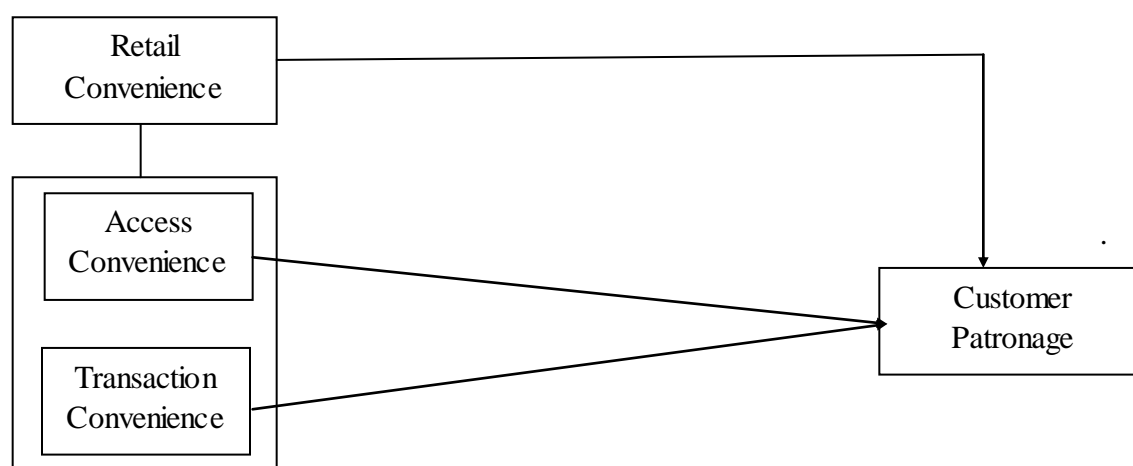


Fig.1: Conceptual Framework of Retail Convenience and Customer Patronage of Independent Retail Petroleum Marketers in Port Harcourt

Source: Desk Researcher, 2021 (Dimensions adapted from Beauchamp, 2010: Measures adapted from Adiele and Opara, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine the influence of retail convenience and customer patronage of independent retail petroleum marketers in Port Harcourt. Other sub-objectives include:

- i. To examine the relationship between access convenience and customer patronage of independent petroleum marketers in Port Harcourt
- ii. To examine the relationship between transaction convenience and customer patronage of independent petroleum marketers in Port Harcourt.

Research Questions

The following research question was asked to guide the direction of the study

- i. What is the relationship between access convenience and customer patronage of independent petroleum marketers in Port Harcourt?
- ii. What is the relationship between transaction convenience and customer patronage of independent retail petroleum marketers in Port Harcourt?

Research Hypothesis

A hypothesis was formulated based on the research objectives and question:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between transaction convenience and repeat purchase of independent retail petroleum marketers in Port Harcourt.

Review of related literature

The study is anchored on the adaptation-level theory. The theory was developed by Helson (1964) simply posits that "one perceives stimuli only in relation to an adapted standard. The standard is a function of perceptions of the stimuli itself, the context, and psychological and physiological characteristics of the organism. Once created, the adaptation-level serves to sustain subsequent evaluations in that positive and negative deviations will remain in the general vicinity of one's original position. Only large impact on the adaptation-level will change the final tone of the subject's evaluation". According to the adaptation-level theory, exposure to earlier stimuli serves as a frame of reference by which later stimuli are judged. In other words, an individual's basis of judgement of a stimulus is based on their prior experiences as well as their recollection of how they perceived similar stimuli in the past. This theory is quite applicable to the present study on retail convenience and customer patronage. Every consumer is a psychological being and is influenced by what they perceive to positively impact their buying behaviour. This theory gave us an understanding of how customers respond to services being provided by a service provider.

Concept of Retail Convenience

Retail convenience is explained by Seiders, Berry and Gresham (2017) as customer's time and efforts cost associated with shopping in a retail environment. They suggested four dimensions of retail convenience as – access, search, possession and transaction. Consumers desire convenience and value for their time. In other words, the greater the time costs associated with a service are, the lower consumers' perceptions of retail convenience are. In addition, retailing is a customercentric activity, aimed at enhancing place, time, and possession utilities along with the joy of shopping. It creates a total customer experience by providing solutions, respectfulness, connecting with customers' emotions, and convenience (Berry, Seiders, & Grewal, 2016). The shopping process involves customer interactions with people, merchandise, process, systems, technology and the entire physical environment. Experience occurs as a result of encountering, undergoing or living through things, which provide sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural and relational values. Hang and Polonsky (2016), in an empirical investigation, identified three dimensions of total retail experience – personal interaction (12 elements such as willingness to help, personal attention, prompt services, courtesy, interest etc.), physical cues (7 elements such as good quality products, good looking materials, good physical facilities etc.), and product variety and assortment (5 elements such as choice, variety, range, sizes of products etc.).

Seiders et al. (2017) found that shopping experience is four dimensional: a) Accessibility

dimension referred to location, parking, pedestrianization, and travel; b) Atmosphere dimension referred to appearance, atmosphere, food stops, variety, fashion/ style; c) Environment dimension referred to cleanliness, opening hours, and safety; and d) Personnel dimension referred to customer service and staff attitudes.

Dimensions of Retail Convenience

Retail convenience has been acknowledged as a multidimensional construct in marketing and customer research literature (Berry, et al., 2016; Seiders, et al., 2017). Prior research described SERVCON is used to measure customer's time and effort cost. Customer's time and effort include time savings, time flexibility, pertaining to time use, energy, location, ease of access, and task allocation. It will be measured from customer's time spending when in interaction with the services and customer's efforts to get information from the system. This study used access convenience and transaction convenience as dimensions for retail convenience.

Access Convenience

Grewal and Levy (2018) defined access convenience as "consumers' perceived time and effort expenditures to initiate service delivery." As per Seider, Berry and Grewal (2017), once the consumer has decided on a service provider and a particular product, initiating access to that service requires personal or technological interaction. Physical location, operating hours, and availability in person, on telephone or online determine access convenience. Access convenience measures the way users get services (Hang & Polonsky, 2016; Seiders, et al., 2017). To access services with minimum assistance, users will depend on information availability and accessibility of the system. Insufficient information or difficult accessibility may lead users perceive inconvenience. Users will evaluate from system access speed, user interface, and developed media. Benefit convenience relates to time and effort expenditure to obtain core benefits of the system. Regularly can be a user's favorable return of investment such as time, effort, or other source. More effort and time spending will cause users perceive inconvenience. Access convenience typically plays a more complex role for inseparable services. Services performed directly for the consumer (such as a taxi service) rather than for the consumer's property (such as product repair) are usually inseparable.

Transaction Convenience

Transaction convenience was defined as "consumers' perceived time and effort expenditures to effect a transaction." For experiencing the service, an exchange has to happen, i.e., for the promise of service performance by the company, the consumer needs to give something, usually money (Grewal & Levy, 2018). Thus, transaction convenience focuses on the actions needed to be taken by the consumers to secure the right to use or consume the service. Colwell, Aung, Kanetkar and Holden (2017) stated that more investment in terms of time and energy is required for consumers to complete the transaction of the service. Transaction convenience relates to users' time and effort to execute or fulfil the transaction. Awaiting of system execution causes negative effects of users perceive convenience. When users have decided to select some courses in SIS, they still need to perform the execution phase. Transaction convenience involves consumers' perceived expenditures of time and effort to effect a transaction. Transaction convenience focuses strictly on the actions consumers must take to secure the right to use the service. When consumers have decided to buy a service and have reached the service site, they still must participate in a transaction. An exchange must occur usually money for the promise of service performance. Transaction convenience inherently falls within the domain of service convenience.

Concepts of Customer Patronage

Patronage is defined as the level to which a customer displays repeat purchase behaviour from a service provider, possesses an affirmative, enduring outlook and temperament concerning a service provider (Grewal & Levy, 2018). From the observation of Oliver in 1999, customer patronage is defined as a profoundly held dedication to repurchase a firm's products at the cost of a competitor's offering. Customer patronage is an amalgamation of psychological factors that impacts on purchase behaviour; and these factors are well thought-out important by consumers; and used as a criteria in influencing which firm to patronize (Ogwo & Onuoha, 2013). Consumer patronage is the approval or support provided by customers with respect to a particular brand. Patronage delivers the foundation for an established and growing market share. Kotler and Keller (2012) advocates that consumers have unpredictable degree of patronage to particular services, stores and other entities. In this study consumers can be categorized into four groups which consist of hard core patrons who are consumers of one particular product always; split patrons usually become loyal to either two or three products within a specified period of time; shifting patrons move from one product to another and finally switchers are consumers who are not loyal to any brand at all.

According to the New Webster Dictionary, Patronage can be said to mean "the material helps and encouragement given by a patron, in this instance the patron is seen to be a customer in an exchange transaction. It could also mean "the act of being a regular customer to a shop. In a highly competitive industry, such as banking, satisfying the customers should be the primary focus of firms that wish to sustain patronage. According to this theory, the distinguishing between behavioural intention and other behaviours enables us to understand factors that define attitudinal influence

According to Householder and Green (2020), the theory of reasoned action was as a result of previous studies on attitude and behaviour. The theory of reasoned action came as result of frustration with traditional attitude-behaviour research, much of which found weak correlations between attitude measures and performance of volitional behaviours" (Householder & Greene, 2020).

Empirical Review

Access Convenience and Customer Patronage

Najmi and Mehmood (2017) conducted a study to find out the impact of five types of service convenience namely decision, access, transaction, benefit and post-benefit on customer satisfaction in home delivery service of online retailing. Service convenience model is applied to identify the consumer's experience regarding different conveniences encountered at different stages of home delivery. For that purpose, the data was collected from 230 consumers who had experienced the home delivery service during online shopping. After applying EFA, regression analysis has been performed as a statistical technique to test the hypotheses. The result of the study shows that all the independent variables are having a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction except the one which is access convenience. This shows that accessibility to service provider does not affect customer satisfaction as they are considering online shopping as an efficient virtual store, where they can complete the purchasing process by themselves. It is recommended that online retailers should have to focus in providing convenience services in order to increase customer satisfaction. The convenience required for initiating a service where customers are settling their perceived time and effort to request for the service is called access convenience. It

basically involves the accessibility of the consumer to the product or service or organization. Seiders et al. (2017) later showed that the accessibility of service providers through various ways and availability of service provider at convenient hours are powerfully influencing customer satisfaction (Dai & Salam, 2014).

Access convenience is important to customers because if they have issue regarding the product, brand or delivery date then they need a service provider to facilitate them in resolving their problem. Access convenience involves consumers' perceived time and effort expenditures to initiate service delivery. It involves consumers' required actions to request service and, if necessary, be available to receive it. Consumers may initiate service in person (going to a restaurant), remotely (telephoning a take-out order), or through both means (telephoning for a reservation and then going to the restaurant). Service facility location, operating hours, parking availability, and remote contact options figure prominently in the access convenience of firms that rely on consumers' physical presence (Seiders, Berry, & Gresham 2000). Receiving the service, which may be separated by space and time from requesting it, can be affected by service delivery capacity and flexibility and the option to make appointments or reservations (Beauchamp 2010). Regarding, access convenience in buying a good falls in the realm of service convenience, such as the convenience of a store's location or a product's location in the store. Nothing happens until consumers gain access to the service. Ultimately, services marketing success may rest on whether a convenience-minded consumer is willing to make a left turn into traffic to reach the service facility. The speed and ease with which consumers can access the service may powerfully influence the choices they make in purchases, which in turn increases sales performance and growth of a firm.

Transaction Convenience and Customer Patronage

Darlington (2020) conducted a study on transaction convenience and customer patronage of deposit money banks in Port Harcourt. Data were collected through questionnaire from 91 sampled respondents. The hypotheses were tested with Spearman's rank correlation coefficient with the aid of SPSS, statistical software. It was found that there is a significant relationship between perceived time, repeat purchase and word of mouth. Also, there is a significant relationship between perceived effort, repeat purchase and word of mouth. Based on the findings, the study concludes that there is a significant relationship between transaction convenience and customer patronage of deposit money banks in Port Harcourt. Therefore, the study recommends that; deposit money banks in Port Harcourt should improve on their transaction convenience to increase customer patronage. Deposit money banks should try to exceed customer expectations in terms of perceived time and effort on transaction to earn their repeat purchase and word of mouth.

Transaction convenience involves consumers' perceived expenditures of time and effort to effect a transaction. Transaction convenience focuses strictly on the actions consumers must take to secure the right to use the service. When consumers have decided to buy a service and have reached the service site, they still must participate in a transaction. An exchange must occur^¾ usually money for the promise of service performance. Transaction convenience inherently falls within the domain of service convenience. Completing transactions requires firms to render performances (services) such as the checkout service. The waiting time literature reveals the negative consequences for companies that make consumer's wait too long to pay. Waiting to pay can be the least rewarding act required of consumers. Consumers normally pay for (or agree to pay for) services before they experience them. The implication of transaction inconvenience is converging nonmonetary cost (time and effort) and monetary

cost before consumers experience any benefits.

Methodology

The study adopted the cross sectional –survey research design. This research design would enable the investigator to collect unbiased data from the study target population which would be used to describe the nexus between the variables (Bhattacharjee, 2012). The population of the study consist of the four hundred and fifty (450) independent retail petroleum marketers who are registered with the Independent petroleum marketers association (IPMAN)

The sample size of this study was determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula. This method is adopted to generate an appropriate sample size for the study from which generalization can be made on the entire population because the population is large. Thus, two hundred and twelve (212) independents marketers or their managers constitute the respondents for the study. The respondents include general manager, station managers, station supervisor, deport representative. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation

Data Presentation

Table 1 Questionnaire Analysis

Numbers	Questionnaire	Percentage (%)
N0. Sent	212	100%
N0 Returned	193	91%
N0. Not Returned	19	9%

Source: Field Survey Data 2022

Table 1 shows that a total of 212 copies of questionnaire were distributed, out of which 193 (91%) were retrieved while 19 (9%) were not retrieved. However, 193 (91%) of the retrieved questionnaire were useful. The 19 (9%) of the not retrieved questionnaire were not correctly or completely filled and were consequently discarded.

Table 2 Description of the degree of Association between Variables

Correlation Coefficient (r)	Description/interpretation
± 0.80 – 1.0	Very Strong
± 0.60 – 0.79	Strong
± 0.40 – 0.59	Moderate
± 0.20 – 0.39	Weak
± 0.00 – 0.19	Very Weak

The positive (+) sign in the value of r indicates a direct/positive relationship while negative (-) sign in value of r indicates an indirect/negative or inverse relationship. Therefore, the sign of the r value explains the direction of association or nature of relationship between the variables.

Decision Rule

Reject the null hypothesis (H0) if $PV < 0.05$ for 2-tailed test and conclude that significant relationship exists.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis on access convenience and customer patronage

		Correlation		
			Access Convenience	Customer patronage
Spearman's rho	Access Convenience	Correlation	1.000	.971**
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	193	193
	Customer Patronage	Correlation	.971**	1.000
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	193	193

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

Source: (SPSS Output)

Table 3 above shows that the Spearman's correlation coefficient (r) = 0.971**, this value is high, implying that a strong relationship exists between access convenience and customer patronage. The positive sign of the correlation coefficient indicates a positive relationship. That is to say that an increased in customer patronage is associated with the adoption of access convenience in the study of independent retail petroleum marketers in Rivers State. As shown in Table 3, the probability value is (0.000) < (0.05) level of significance; hence the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that there is a significant relationship between access convenience and customer patronage.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis on transaction convenience and customer patronage

		Correlation		
			Transaction Convenience	Customer patronage
Spearman's rho	Transaction Convenience	Correlation	1.000	.977**
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	193	193
	Customer Patronage	Correlation	.977**	1.000
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	193	193

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

Source: (SPSS Output)

Table 4 above shows that the Spearman's correlation coefficient (r) = 0.977**, this value is high, implying that a strong relationship exists between transaction convenience and customer patronage. The positive sign of the correlation coefficient indicates a positive relationship. That is to say that an increased in customer patronage is associated with the adoption of transaction convenience in the study of independent petroleum marketers. As shown in Table 4 the probability value is (0.000) < (0.05) level of significance; hence the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that there is a significant relationship between transaction convenience and customer patronage.

Discussion

The revelation from the study shows that retail convenience has a strong link with customer patronage. This is indicated by the Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient of .971, at a significant level of probability value (PV) = $0.000 < 0.05$ (2-tailed). This implies that a strong relationship exist between access convenience and customer patronage. This position is akin to that of Seiders et al. (2017) they reported that accessibility of service providers at convenient hours is a powerful precursor to customer satisfaction. Other scholars like Dai and Salaman (2014) holds similar position when they reported that access convenient is important to customer satisfaction. Furthermore, table 5 above revealed that the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (r) = 0.977^{**} , this value is high indicating that a strong nexus exist between transaction convenience and customer patronage. The positive sign of the correlation implies that the relationship is positive. Suggesting that, an increase in customer patronage is linked to an increase in transaction convenience. These findings are in line with Mylonakis (2019) who stated that retail convenience is the ability to accomplish a task in the shortest amount of time with the least expenditure of human energy; in other words, he agreed that saving time and effort is the benefit of a convenient service and the reason the customer is interested in the service; he also said that by understanding the forms of convenience, businesses can formulate convenience strategies that support lasting customer relationships and raise their competitiveness to new levels.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and its consistency with results of similar studies, we conclude that retail convenience is a critical factor for customer patronage of Independent retail Petroleum Marketers in River State. Scholars are in consensus that retail convenience allows people to accomplish a task in the shortest amount of time with the least expenditure of human energy; in other words, experts are of the view that saving time and effort is the benefit of a convenient service and the reason the customer is interested in the service, independent retail petroleum marketers. The study recommends that Independent retail Petroleum Marketers in Rivers State should make their transaction as convenient to the customer as possible. Also, that, independent retail petroleum marketers should ensure that site their retail stations at the location that would afford customers the best possible access in order to achieve customer patronage.

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