

INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMER PATRONAGE IN DELTA STATE'S

Kingsley Chinedu Okwuosa and Maria Oluwaseun Adeyemi

Department of Marketing and Entrepreneurship, Faculty of Management Sciences, Delta State University,
Abraka, Nigeria

Abstract: The study focused on the influence of service quality on customer patronage of white petroleum products service stations in Delta State, Nigeria. The business of petroleum products retailing has become highly competitive and following the removal of fuel subsidies which drastically increased the pump prices of petroleum products, there is more consideration and demand for better service delivery from petroleum products retailers. Petroleum products service stations tend to differ from the usual filling stations that retail petroleum products by their capacity (numbers of dispensing pumps) and services they offer to customers such as lube services, vulcanizing services, minimarket, convenience services, customer care services, minor repairs, etc, these services are meant to compliment the sales of petroleum products. Thus, this study examined the impact of service quality on customer patronage of petroleum products service stations in Delta State, Nigeria. The servqual model dimension of service was adopted for this study as (service responsiveness, service assurance, service reliability, service tangibility, and service empathy) as the independent variables against customer patronage as the dependent variable. Petroleum products service stations were selected from Asaba, Ughelli, Sapele, and Warri areas of the State. Questionnaire were administered on customers of the selected service stations using a sample size of 400. Data gathered were analyzed using regression analysis (SPSS version 25). The result of the study showed that there is significant positive relationship between service quality and customer patronage of petroleum products service stations in the areas under review. It was concluded that service responsiveness, service assurance, service reliability, and service tangibility influence customer patronage of petroleum products service stations in Delta State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, we recommended that existing and potential petroleum products service stations to continually train their sale and service people to improve and enhance consistency in their service quality which has been identified as useful in attracting and retaining customers which is in line with the objective function of the firms.

Keyword: service quality delivery, petroleum products, service stations, customer patronage

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria as country depends largely on fossil fuel that is petroleum products (refined petroleum products) as fuel for power generator, fuel plant in factories, fuel for automobile cars and vehicles, feedstock for petrochemical and agro allied companies etc. Thus the market for refined petroleum products is an important one to the Nigerian economy. The activities in this market has great impacts on the socio-economic well being of the country. The players in this market include the depot operators (wholesalers), retail owlets (retailers), domestic, and industrial users. The market is highly competitive considering the numbers of depots and retail outlets in the country and

the products and services are almost exactly the same considering their performance qualities and characteristics (Iyadi, 2023)

The passing into law of the petroleum industry bill into law has led to different development in the industry most especially the removal of fuel subsidies. More so, investment in the marketing of petroleum products has increased tremendously which is fast becoming more competitive. There are different classifications of petroleum product retail outlet as well as depots operators (Kotler, Armstrong, Saunder, & Wong ,2008)

The increasing prices of petroleum products occasioned by the removal of fuel subsidies are biting hard on the consumers of petroleum product in the country. These consumers seem not to have alternative to fossil fuel due to high cost of renewable energy. Thus the consumers are left with one option, seeking more satisfaction and value

Statement of the Problem

Considering the numbers of petroleum products marketers in Nigeria today, we obviously agree that the market for refined petroleum products is highly competitive this mean that for petroleum products marketing firm to succeed, they must up their strategies aimed at attracting and securing sales which translate into revenue and profit. However the removal of fuel subsidies by the federal government of Nigeria has led to the pump prices of petroleum products increased significantly and this may affect demand slightly. Although petroleum products are essential commodities in Nigeria, the income effect will only allow the consumer buy lesser quantities

With the sky-rocketed prices of petroleum products, consumers will demand for better and higher satisfaction. All stated that product and service quality has impact on customer satisfaction. Thus this study examined the influence of service reliability, service assurance, service tangibility, service responsiveness, service empathy on customer patronage of petroleum product service station

Research questions

1. What is the relationship between service responsiveness and customer patronage of white petroleum products service station
2. What is the relationship between service assurance and customer patronage of white petroleum products service station
3. What is the relationship between service reliability and customer patronage of white petroleum products service station
4. What is the relationship between service tangibility and customer patronage of white petroleum products service station

Objectives of the study

1. To ascertain the impact of service responsiveness on customer patronage of white petroleum products service station
2. To examine the relationship between service assurance and customer patronage of white petroleum products service station
3. To determine the relationship between service reliability and customer patronage of white petroleum products service station
4. To ascertain the influence of service tangibility on customer patronage of white petroleum products service station

Research hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant relationship between service responsiveness and customer patronage of white petroleum products service station

Ho: There is no significant relationship between service assurance and customer patronage of white petroleum products service station

Ho: There is no significant relationship between service reliability and customer patronage of white petroleum products service station

Ho: There is no significant relationship between service tangibility and customer patronage of white petroleum products service station

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Review

Petroleum Products Marketing in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the marketing and distribution of refined petroleum products is a broad set of activities carried out by different categories of business organizations which include depots (tank farm) owners and retail outlet owners (Iyadi & Sado, 2023). The depot owners are simply wholesaler who sells in bulk (thousands of liters) to the retail outlets. The retail outlets in turn sell to customers/consumer at smaller quantities. A petroleum product retail outlet popularly called filling station is any existing retail facility engaged in the activities of petroleum product retailing business, that is selling refined petroleum products directly to consumers/customers-(Akpofure, 2016). Petroleum products retail outlets or petrol stations sells fuel products, lubricants, engine oils, transmission oil, break fluids, etc. They also offer services such as lube bay services, vulcanizing, mini mart and car wash services (Onoruese 2018). Many petroleum products retail outlets provide convenience for customers. In Nigeria, we have the major marketer and independent marketers of petroleum products Famous major oil marketers are NNPC, Mobil, Total, Oando, MRS, Forte, Conoil, among others. The major marketers are majorly multinational oil companies which are also involve in the exploration and exploitation of petroleum. According to the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited, the numbers of major oil marketers in Nigeria rose in number to 27 in 2022 with over 7000 retail outlets. The independent marketers are mainly into retailing of petroleum products. Petroleum products are sold by retail outlets in liters through the dispensing pumps or packaged in different volume (especially lubricants) at different prices to individuals and organizations.

There are different classifications of petroleum products retail outlets. These include peddlers, filling stations, service stations, mega stations, and floating stations. This classification is mainly based on capacity and services rendered. Peddlers are retail outlets that sell petroleum products (usually kerosene) from surface tanks. In recent time, some of them now use dispensing pumps (usually one dispensing pump). They are mostly found in rural areas. Their storage or holding capacity is very small compared to other retail outlets. The filling station is a retail outlet that has between two and four (not more than four) dispensing pump for selling products to customers. They retail only white petroleum products (PMS, DPK, AGO). The service stations are bigger than the filling stations in terms of the service capacity, storage capacity, products/service lines etc (Iyadi, 2023). The service stations has minimum of six dispensing pumps for selling white petroleum products. They also sell other petroleum products such as lubricants, engine oils, break fluids, transmission oils, oil treatments, injector cleaners etc. They also render some service such as car wash, vulcanizing, lube bay, and mini-mart for confessionary and groceries. As of today, they are the most common petroleum products retail outlets in Nigeria. ity. The mega stations have minimum of eight dispensing pumps for selling fuel products to customers. However, they are the same in other areas. The floating stations are retail outlet floating on top of water. They are basically filling points along the coastal regions that serve mainly marine transportation service providers and domestic consumers in the coastal communities. They are highly mobile and flexible in terms of the service location (Iyadi & Oruakpor, 2023).

Dimensions of Service Quality

Anything that is essentially intangible and does not lead to the ownership of anything is considered a service and can be provided by one party to another. According to Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders, and Wong (2008), its production may or may not be connected to a tangible good. In order to bring about a desired change in – or on behalf of – the user of the service, services are economic activities that produce value and offer benefits for clients at particular times and places (Christopher

1991 cited in Esiti and Panama 2016). Service providers offer services, which are non-physical in nature, either directly or in conjunction with other offerings (Esiti & Panama 2016). Most, if not all, services are physical. In certain instances, substantial effort will have been done to carry out the transaction, but there may still be physical proof of the transaction. Often times, when creating and delivering services, the buyer and service provider are inseparable. According to Esiti & Panama (2016), this is known as the inseparability of services. During periods of high demand, the services cannot be held in storage, warehouses, or any other kind of availability. Due to the fact that they cannot be back ordered, the services are likewise time-sensitive. According to Esiti and Panama (2016), this is known as service perish ability. A substantial portion of the services are need-based and require prompt delivery to the customer. When it comes to services, the customer's prescription is followed to a considerable extent, in contrast to standardised items. Individualised services are provided by interior designers, tailors, eateries, and the like. Certain services, such as bank ATM services, do, nevertheless, have standard delivery methods. According to Anyanwu, Ibekwe, and Okerea (2021), many services are processes rather than discrete transactions, and the skills and dispositions of the individual or group offering the service can significantly change the result and the degree of client satisfaction.

You may boost your company's revenue and standing by monitoring and enhancing service quality. Whichever field you work in, providing high-quality service can directly affect how competitively your business can meet customer expectations. Although it takes knowledge and experience, knowing how to assess and enhance service quality is a useful talent. Service quality is a gauge of how well a company meets the needs and expectations of its clients, according to Kotler and Keller (2018). Responding to particular needs, customers use a company or its goods and services. Because of this, a customer's evaluation of an organization's service quality may be significant. Their expectations and criteria for how a company's service delivery meets their wants are either consciously or unconsciously held by them. Services that meet or beyond the expectations of their clients are provided by a business with high service quality.

Service Reliability

According to Kotler and Keller (2018), this speaks to a company's capacity and reliability in delivering a certain service in a way that meets the needs of its clients. Each step of the customer engagement process is involved in this process, including the delivery or execution of the commodity or service, quick and accurate problem solving, and competitive pricing (Kotler and Keller 2018). When purchasing a certain product, customers have certain expectations about its dependability, and a company's success typically rests on its capacity to satisfy these expectations. Product availability, dispensing pump accuracy or assurance, salespeople's responsiveness, and pump costs are all assessed as components of service reliability in the retailing of petroleum products and related services.

Service Tangibility

The capacity of a business to present high-quality customer service to its clientele. Many elements, like the way a firm presents its headquarters, how its staff dresses and behaves, the materials it uses for marketing, and the quality of its customer care department, can give it a highly palpable aspect (Kotler and Keller 2018). Petroleum

product service stations' atmosphere and design, the demeanour and demeanour of their sales staff, the breadth and length of their product and service offerings, etc., all play a significant effect in how tangibly they provide their services.

Service Empathy

The ability of a business to provide its services in a way that conveys empathy for the needs and wants of its clients is known as empathy (Kotler and Keller 2018). A client is more likely to remain faithful to a business if they feel the company genuinely cares about their welfare. One of the components of service empathy in the marketing of petroleum products, particularly among service stations, will be the price of its goods and services, particularly following the deregulation of the petroleum industry's downstream sector.

Service Responsiveness

The commitment and capacity of an organisation to offer clients timely services is demonstrated here (Esiti and Panama 2016). It means being receptive to requests, feedback, queries, and problems from customers and quickly addressing them. When a business prioritises customer happiness, it can be inferred that it values consumer communication when it reacts to it promptly. For consumers of petroleum product service stations, the promptness of sales representatives, convenience, and accessibility to the station may be crucial factors.

Service Assurance

Customer trust and confidence in a certain organisation is known as assurance. A certain level of trust in the servicing organization's ability to provide is necessary, especially when it comes to services that a customer may feel are beyond their comprehension and correct assessment. Service stations selling petroleum products need to constantly gain the trust of their patrons in order to continue in business and be successful in doing so.

Theoretical review

This study examine different theories relating to customer patronage customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty which include Social Exchange Theory, The Planned Behaviour Theory, Equity Theory, Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory, Attribute theory, Dissonance Theory, Contrast Theory, Comparison Level Theory, Value Percept Theory, Attribution Theory, Equity Theory, and Evaluative Congruity Theory the study adopted the Dissonance Theory for this study

Dissonance Theory

The psychological term for the mental strain that results from holding two or more contradictory beliefs, concepts, or values at the same time is called dissonance theory, also known as dissonance reduction theory. They find themselves, to put it another way, at odds.

It implies that an individual would perceive the discrepancy and feel cognitive dissonance if they anticipated a high-value product and instead received a low-value product. I.e., a psychologically uncomfortable or dissonant state is produced by the unfulfilled expectations.

Cognitive dissonance, which occurs when a customer observes the physical manifestation of a company's brand promise but does not receive the degree of customer service that they expected, can be explained by the Dissonance Theory.

Your call is transferred to a voice mailbox when you phone the customer care department regarding this issue; you are instructed to leave a message and will be contacted later that day. You phone again multiple times over the course of the following few days, but you never get a response.

Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory

The expectancy disconfirmation theory refers to the process of juxtaposing the total product/service experience undertaken by a consumer based on the customers perception and expectation of the product after

consumption.(Eshiett, Abubakar & Eshiett, 2019; in Ekinici & Sirakaya, 2004; Mattila & O'Neill 2003). The theory of expectancy disconfirmation has its foundation in whatever the wishes of the customers is as regards any product/service offering, here, the end user evaluates the satisfaction based on perception and expectation. The result of this assessment is what determines the customer's level of satisfaction based on product offering consumption. Eshiett, Abubakar & Eshiett, 2019; Oliver, 1980).

Empirical review

Verifying the validity of any research done in this area of study as a means by which the author or authors may have noticed an empirical gap in the literature. In a study published in 2018, Ugbomhe, Osagie, and Udu investigated how service quality affected mobile telecom providers in Edo State, Nigeria, spanning 18 local governments. There is a relationship between service delivery and customer satisfaction in Nigerian mobile telecommunications, according to the study's findings, which were obtained through the distribution of questionnaires to respondents using a descriptive survey design research technique. The study also suggested that service providers should assess the effectiveness of the quality of service provided by their businesses at various points during their operations to guarantee customer satisfaction.

The authors of a related study, Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in Nigerian Telephony, Alabar, Ode, and Gbande (2017), recognise that providing high-quality service is essential to keeping customers happy in Nigeria's mobile telecommunications industry. By giving respondents questionnaires, the descriptive research approach was used in the study, which embraced the SERVQUAL dimension's idea of service quality as it relates to customer satisfaction. The study suggested that the SERVQUAL dimension be implemented to improve customer satisfaction in the Nigerian mobile communications industry. The data were analysed using the Pearson Correlations Coefficient.

Customers' opinions of the NNPC retail store in Enugu State's level of service were examined by Joy and Abiola (2021). Through the interaction of five parameters and the demographics of the clients, the study determined how the Petroleum Services Firm (NNPC) customers saw the company. For the convenience sample approach and study, 304 retail consumers who frequent petrol stations have been included. It was utilised in order to gather a specimen. ANOVA results showed that, while age, gender, and occupation had no significant impact on customers' perceptions of service quality, income and qualification on the other hand varied significantly.

Factor analysis identified five components. That being said, the paper makes several recommendations, including that the ideas and tenets of total quality management (TQM) be studied holistically in addition to current marketing management concerns like relationship marketing, value analysis, and permission marketing, among others. In order to know the best course of action for handling such behaviours, petroleum marketers need also make an effort to comprehend the Relevant elements that influence the behaviours of both clientele.

An empirical investigation was conducted in 2019 by Anli and Keerthika in the Channai Arena of India to determine the effect that retail chains that sell petroleum had on consumer loyalty. A sample size of 130 was used for the investigation using a straightforward random sampling procedure. The study employed regression analysis. The investigation came to the conclusion that a person's preference for a specific gasoline station outlet can be influenced by the services and quality offered at the retail outlets, such as the groceries, auto accessories, ATM, lavatory and refreshment.

The impact that customer happiness and intent to return to a convenience shop have on service quality was studied by Dheeraj (2015). Examining the effect of perceived service quality on customer satisfaction and patronage intention was the aim of the study, which employed regression analysis with a sample size of 250. The study's conclusions imply that customer pleasure and patronage are positively impacted by perceived service quality.

RESEARCH METHODS

Multiple regression analysis was employed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 to analyze the data generated from the field through structured questionnaire administration on two hundred (400) customers of twenty (20) petroleum products service stations selected from Asaba, Warri, Sapele, and Ughelli areas of Delta State. Twenty (20) customers were selected from each service station and five (5) service stations were selected from each area under study. All questionnaires were returned which implies 100% of sets of questionnaires were returned and used for the study. This aligns with the proposition of Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) that a response rate of 50% or more is adequate for data analysis.

Table 2 selected petroleum products service stations in the area under study

PETROLEUM PRODUCT SERVICE STATIONS	LOCATION	NUMBER OF QUESTIONNAIRES CUSTOMERS
Fomas	Warri/Effurun	20
AYM Shafa	"	20
AA Rano	"	20
A&E Petroleum	"	20
Matrix	"	20
Total Energy	Ughelli	20
MRS	"	20
SOBAZ	"	20
Mobil	"	20
Mimikay	"	20
North-West	Asaba	20
Anioma	"	20
Conoil	"	20
NNPC Retail	"	20
Rain Oil	"	20
Nipcon	Sapele	20
Bakpor	"	20
Obarayo	"	20
Ighobunor	"	20
Duke	"	20

Source Authors conceptualization (2024)

Regression Model

Dependent variable

CUSPATRO

=

Independent variables

f(SRSP, SASS, SRAL, STAN)

$$\text{CUSPATRO} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{SRSP} + \beta_2 \text{SASS} + \beta_3 \text{SRAL} + \beta_4 \text{STAN} + \varepsilon_i \text{ Where;}$$

CUSPATRO = Customer patronage of petroleum product service station.

β_0 = Intercept of regression line

$\beta_1 - \beta_4$ = Partial regression coefficient of the independent variable

SRSP = Service responsiveness

SASS = service assurance

SRAL = service reliability

STAN = service tangibility

ε_i = error term or stochastic variable

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

Table 3 profile of respondents

GENDER	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
Male	300	75
Female	100	25
Total	400	100
AGE		
20-30	50	12.5
31-40	140	35
41-50	160	40
51-60	40	10
Above 60	10	2.5
Total	40	100
Marital Status		
Single	160	40
Married	210	52.5
Others	30	7.5
Total	400s	100
Educational qualification		
SSCE	60	15
OND/NCE	120	30
HND/BSC	180	45
Others	40	10
Total	400	100

Source: Questionnaire (2024)

Data gathered as shown in table 3 above, revealed that 75% of the respondents are male while only 25% are female. About 75% are in the age range of 31-50years, about 35% is above 51years while 12.5% are below 31years. 40% of the respondents are single, 52.5% are married while 7.5% are either divorced, separated or they are widowers and widow. About 75% had tertiary education, 15% are senior school certificate holders while about 10% had other forms of educations or higher degrees.

Multiple regressions was adopted in testing the hypotheses formulated in the study, which are in line with the research questions, research objectives, and model specification of the study. The critical value of the study used in deciding the test of significance is 5% (0.005). This decision rule suggests that the null hypotheses stated in the study will be rejected if the calculated p-Values (sig) are less than 0.05(5%) level of significance otherwise we do not reject them. The summary result of the test is presented in Tables below.

Tables 4 Petroleum Products service quality and Customers' Patronage Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.852 ^a	.798	.785		.19781	1.878

a. Predictors: (Constant), SRSP, SASS, SRAL, STANb. Dependent Variable: CUSTPATRO Sources: SPSS version 25 Output

Table 5: Petroleum Products service quality and Customers' Patronage ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	68.953	4	16.888	405.156	.000 ^b
	Residual	8.789	396	.022		
	Total	77.742	400			

a. Predictors: (Constant), SRSP, SASS, SRAL, STANb. Dependent Variable: CUSTPATRO Sources: SPSS version 25 Output

Table 6 : Petroleum Products service quality and Customers' Patronage Coefficient

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.781	.055		14.200	.000
SRSP	.394	.020	.404	19.700	.000
SASS	.097	.022	.138	4.409	.000

SRAL	.190	.026	.223	7.307	.000
STAN	.154	.028	.320	5.500	.000

Sources: SPSS version 25 Output

The regression equation earlier stated is expressed as follows in line with coefficients:

$$\text{CUSPATRO} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{SRSP} + \beta_2 \text{SASS} + \beta_3 \text{SRAL} + \beta_4 \text{STAN} + \epsilon_i$$

$$\text{CUSPATRO} = .781 + .404\text{SRSP} + .138\text{SASS} + .223\text{SRAL} + .320\text{STAN} + .055$$

R-squared value of 0.798 as shown in the table above is the strength of the regression model. It indicates the goodness of fit of the model. It implies that the combined elements, service responsiveness (SRSP), service assurance (SASS), service reliability (SRAL), and service tangibility (STAN) contained in the regression model predict and explained 79% of the systematic variations in the customer patronage of petroleum products service station. Even after the model has been adjusted for the degree of freedom, yet all the elements in the regression model jointly explained approximately 78% of the systematic variations in the customer patronage of petroleum products service station. This result shows that the model has a large measure of goodness-of-fit

The table above also indicates that the F-statistic is 404.476 with a p-Value of .000, which is less than 5% critical value, was observed. This means that there is existence of a significant linear relationship between the petroleum products service station and customer patronage in the area under study. However, a p-Value of 0.000 which is less than 5% level of significance (critical value) was observed for each of the dimensions (SRSP, SASS, SRAL, STAN) of the petroleum product service station in the regression model as shown in the table. This implies that service responsiveness (SRSP), service assurance (SASS), service reliability (SRAL), and service tangibility (STAN) individually have positive and significant relationship with and influences the customers' patronage of petroleum product service stations. Hence, we reject all the null hypotheses and conclude on the alternative hypotheses that there is significant relationship between the different determinants of service quality and customers' patronage of petroleum products service stations. By this, it means that customers' of petroleum product service stations are more likely to consider and be influenced by the dimensions of service quality which include responsiveness, assurance, reliability, and tangibility of services offered by petroleum products service stations.

The coefficients of regression shown in the above table showed the directions and strength of the relationship between the determinants of petroleum products service stations' (service responsiveness, service assurance, service reliability, and service tangibility) and customers' patronage of petroleum service station in Delta State, Nigeria. These coefficient values indicate the degree of impact the different determinants of petroleum products service stations have on customers' patronage of petroleum products service stations. The coefficient values of 0.404, 0.138, 0.223 and 0.320 for service responsiveness, service assurance, service reliability, and service tangibility respectively. This implies that one percent increase or decrease in the service responsiveness, service assurance, service reliability, and service tangibility by a service station tend to increase or decrease customer patronage of petroleum products service station by 40.4%, 13.8%, 22.3%, and 32% respectively. The regression model also showed the Durbin Watson statistic value of 1.838. This indicates no presence of serial correlation (autocorrelation) in the model that is there is no autocorrelation. Hence, the results in the model are authentic, valid, and reliable for decision makings in the context of petroleum products service stations and the marketing and retailing of petroleum products.

Discussion of findings

Customers of petroleum products service stations

The customers of petroleum products service station are majorly male gender. 75% of the customers are male while only 25% are female. The means that for every four customers of a petroleum product service station, three are male and only one is a female. Data gathered in this study also show that majority of these customers are within the ages of 21-50years. The implication of this is that most of the consumers or users of petroleum products are in the youthful age bracket. The average customer of petroleum products service stations are married and had tertiary education.

Petroleum products service station's service quality and customer patronage

Data gathered in this study revealed that service quality of petroleum products service stations influences customer patronage. The petroleum products and service offered by service stations (petroleum products retail outlet) tends to influence customer patronage in Delta State Nigeria. The services offered by service stations complement and add value that enhances customer satisfactions which induces repeat purchase. How quick and readily these services are provided is highly considered by customers of petroleum products service station. The time and how sales people (service providers) respond will surely influence customer patronage. Also, it was found that the customer's perceived service assurance influences customer patronage of a particular petroleum product service station. The assurance, believe, conviction, or confidence that the service station will offer certain service regularly will also influence customer patronage of petroleum product station. This goodwill of the service station makes customers put them first in their choice of petroleum products retail outlet. More so, the finding made in this study revealed that petroleum products service stations' service reliability influences customer patronage. How well the services provided by the service station satisfy the customer may influence his purchase decision. The data gathered in this study also reveal that the service tangibility of petroleum product service stations influences customer patronage. The physical evidences that the service station can and will offer such services may also influence the customer buying decision.. the service station's layout, ambient, equipment, tools, orderliness, etc are some of the physical evidences that the customer may look out for of convince them. The presence and appearance of sales people (service provider) as well as the process or procedure associated with the services may also be responsible for these action of the customer.

Conclusion

Based on the findings made in this study we can conclude that young people consume or use petroleum products more the older once in the area under study. Services such as lube bay, vulcanizing, car wash, mini market rest room, and customer care services which are offered in petroleum product service station compliment the sales of petroleum products Also we can conclude that different consumers or users of petroleum products and related services tend to prefer or patronizes a particular petroleum product service station. Data gathered and analyzed revealed that petroleum product service station's service responsiveness, service assurance, service reliability, and service tangibility all have positive influence on customer patronage. Theoretically this is in line with the SERVQUAL Model and other related theories which hold that the dimensions of service quality include service responsiveness, service assurance, service reliability, service tangibility, and service empathy. The model also postulated that this dimensions of service quality can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Recommendations

In line with above findings and conclusions we recommended:

1. that petroleum products service stations should ensure that they maintain high service quality in terms of prompt and timely response to customers by sales people (service providers) as consistency in service availability,

improve service offerings, accessible, secured, and well planned service stations with beautiful and attractive ambient, good looking and receptive sales people.

2. petroleum product service stations should regularly and adequately train their sales people to enhance consistency in service quality delivery.

3. they should also be consistent with technological advancement by use modern technologies that are comfortable and convenient with existing and potential customers.

4. that petroleum product service stations and petroleum products retail outlets in general should improve on their service line by adding more services that compliment the consumption and purchase of petroleum products provided they are deemed safe in the petroleum products service station considering the volatile nature of petroleum products.

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