

THE RELATIONSHIP OF SERVICE QUALITY, BRAND REPUTATION,
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION, AND CUSTOMER COMMITMENT:
A CASE STUDY OF A FAST-FOOD OUTLET IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The post-pandemic period of COVID-19 has driven the restaurant business to emphasize service quality and brand reputation to regain customer satisfaction and commitment. This study focuses on the fast-food sector in Nigeria, where the industry is experiencing growth. The study objectives are to: 1) explore the relationship between service quality, brand reputation, customer satisfaction, and customer commitment, 2) extend the concept of service quality, brand reputation, customer satisfaction, and customer commitment within the fast-food restaurant industry, and 3) provide managerial implications for improving service quality, brand reputation, customer satisfaction, and customer commitment. This study employed a quantitative approach using a self-administered questionnaire distributed to 271 customers who had experience with a selected fast-food outlet in Lagos, Nigeria. Multiple regression analysis showed that service quality and brand reputation positively impact customer satisfaction, while service quality, brand reputation, and customer satisfaction significantly affected customer commitment. Brand reputation had a stronger impact on both customer satisfaction and customer commitment than service quality. The study concluded that brand reputation significantly contributed to the performance of fast-food outlets

in achieving customer satisfaction and commitment. Therefore, fast-food outlets should focus on enhancing their brand reputation to increase customer satisfaction and commitment.

Keywords: Service Quality, Brand Reputation, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Commitment, Fast-food Restaurant

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, the focus of the socio-cultural environment is put on the fast-food industry, although the customers have other options offered by food vendors and traditional sellers (Fakokunde, 2014). Mr. Biggs was the first fast-food outlet to gain national acceptance because of its modernity and diversity in customer food offerings (Fakokunde, 2014). Furthermore, Nigeria's fast-food industry has emphasized improving the industry both within and outside the country (Mustapha et al., 2014).

The purpose of conducting this study was motivated by the current growth and popularity trend of patronizing fast-food restaurants within Nigeria. As stated above, due to the variety of fast-food outlets made available for customers in Nigeria, they are now becoming picky in terms of what the restaurants offer i.e. aesthetics, ambience, service quality and price amongst others (Tabassum, 2012). Although there is generally perceived acceptance of fast-food outlets and options

present within the Nigerian fast-food industry, customers are now becoming pickier with regard to brand reputation, service quality, and how well they are satisfied (Ahmad & Zhang, 2020).

Various researchers have indicated the relationship between service quality and brand reputation, i.e., depending on the service quality, the brand reputation is either decent or deemed awful (Qalati et al., 2019). When the reputation of the brand is decent, the fast-food restaurant is perceived as high-quality by the customers, which increases the commitment to the brand (Quoquab et al., 2020). Customer commitment is deemed of high importance to fast-food restaurants because when a customer is committed to a brand, the overall likelihood of repeat purchases and visits to the restaurant may increase (Singh et al., 2021). When customers are fully committed to a fast-food restaurant, they spend at least 69% more on the services than new customers (Wibisono & Lukito, 2020).

Therefore, service quality and brand reputation prone to be significant determinants in enhancing customer satisfaction and customer commitment. The investigation of these antecedents and their consequences should provide an insight of such effect in the fast-food industry.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the relationship between service quality, brand reputation, customer satisfaction, and customer commitment.

2. To extend the concept of service quality, brand reputation, customer satisfaction, and customer commitment in the fast-food restaurant industry.

3. To provide managerial implication to improve service quality, brand reputation, customer satisfaction, and customer commitment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Service Quality Concept

Various studies have investigated the factors that affect overall customer satisfaction and their commitment to a brand. Parahoo et al. (2018) stated that the overall influence of product and service quality affected the customer's satisfaction and commitment to the brand,

as well as revealing factors such as tangibles, convenience, and empathy influenced their satisfaction and commitment. There are several consequences that arise due to poor service quality, and they are all in tangible form; conversely, there are further considerations made with regard to the relationships between the brand and the customer involving several methods used to serve (Abdullah et al., 2021).

Prior literature purports that the components of service quality can be shortened due to the presence of relational aspects within functional quality, technical and service quality, or overall performance of facilities (Imbong & Imbong, 2021). However, the fast-food industry can easily alter the available intrinsic characteristics due to the presence of several extrinsic components which may include the physical environment, the reputation of the brand, and the extreme difficulty in altering the contingent investment of the customers.

2. SERVQUAL in Restaurant

Stevens et al. (1995) developed an instrument called DINESERV to explore customers' impressions of eatery service quality. The instrument was adjusted from SERVQUAL and was proposed as a solid and generally basic apparatus for determining customers' perception of an eatery's quality

(Baber, 2018). DINESERV items fall into five service quality measurement dimensions, which are assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and tangibles (Bojyanic, 2007). The 29-item survey includes items that represent each dimension of the DINESERV, i.e., 10 items for tangibles, five items for reliability, four for responsiveness, five for assurance, and five for empathy.

3. The Paradigm of Expectation and Disconfirmation

The paradigm of expectation and disconfirmation was coined by Oliver (1980). It emanated from a subject matter to study the presiding antecedents of satisfaction (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993). In order to study satisfaction, the standard approach followed is to compare the prior experience with the observed performance of the customers. Thus, the two necessary variables that influence the measure of satisfaction are expectation and outcome performance. This is because customer satisfaction is a significant factor in the bid to predict the purchase tendency of customers (Anderson, 1994). It expresses that consumer satisfaction is reliant on the size and bearing of the disconfirmation experience where disconfirmation is identified with the individual's underlying assumptions (Genovate & Madrigal, 2021). The reason

why there is a growing focus on ensuring customers are satisfied is due to the benefits it brings i.e., an increase in competitive advantage, increase in market share, higher profits, reduction in the cost of goods and services, and an overall reduction in customer acquisition costs (Lu et al., 2015).

4. Signal theory and brand reputation

Signal theory explains the present behavior of two different entities when they are presented with diverse information (Nyagadza et al., 2021). The purpose of signals is to communicate information regarding the characteristics of the fast-food restaurant, whereas the customers examine them so as to grasp an understanding of the overall credibility of the product's qualities (Vesal et al., 2021). The relationship between the signal theory and brand reputation boils down to the overall quality of the product being offered when it is being selected. Brand reputation remains solid because it is the signal, and when the signal is sent, it is exactly what is being offered. Fast-food restaurants are also characterized by the time lag present between picking and ordering a meal and the time it takes to prepare if not already made. Signal theory, alongside service quality, leads to an increase in brand reputation and brand image (Cambier & Poncin, 2020).

5. Customer Commitment Concepts

Roy et al. (2022) highlighted that customer commitment has three distinct concepts: affective, continuance, and normative. With each style of commitment, there is a unique relationship created with the customers, which increases the level to which they are able to remain committed to the brand for various reasons (Rather et al., 2021). Additionally, customer satisfaction determines the level to which a customer is committed to the brand. Customers who are satisfied will remain committed to the brand by continually returning to make purchases (Khan et al., 2020). These committed customers

will only have positive experiences with the restaurant (Seric et al., 2020).

This study employed DINSERV to explore the role of service quality while examining the influence of brand reputation that the restaurant signaling to its customers. The study also investigates their impact on customer satisfaction in confirming customer expectation as well as customer commitment.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As shown in Figure 1, this study explores the relationship between service quality, brand reputation, customer satisfaction, and customer commitment.

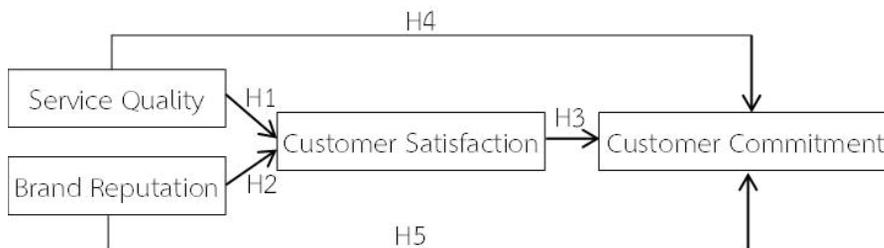


Figure 1 Research Framework

HYPOTHESES

The relationship that is present between customer satisfaction and service quality has been elaborated by Farooq et al. (2018), who state that they both have differences. He indicated that the dimensions present within service quality are connected specifically or directly with how the service is rendered. On the other hand, customer satisfaction has several factors that directly and indirectly relate to how the service is delivered (Farooq et al., 2018). Satisfaction is said to be fully achieved or ascertained when the customers have finished their meal and paying for it while the quality is achieved at a global level (Althaqafi et al., 2019).

There is also evidence in empirical studies that support the latter statement. When the service quality is enhanced, it yields significant customer satisfaction with several ripple effects, and as such, this study proposed the following Hypothesis: Hypothesis 1: Service quality positively has an impact on customer satisfaction.

Cuong (2020) indicated that overall brand reputation has a positive impact and influence on customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, and trust. In her research, the values obtained for brand reputation and consumer satisfaction are ($\beta = 0.377$)

and ($p < 0.01$), which, show positive. Hadi & Indradewa (2019) demonstrated the positive impact of corporate reputation on customer satisfaction in the retailing context. It can be assumed that this kind of positive influence will also hold in the energy market as reputation represents an essential anchor for the perception of satisfaction, particularly in markets in which surrogates are important. Thus, the study proposed the following:

Hypothesis 2: Brand reputation has a positive impact on customer satisfaction.

Ulabor & Bosede (2019) provided research whose results indicated that the present relationship existing between customer satisfaction and commitment to the brand is one that is sensitive. This is due to the fact that if a customer is dissatisfied with the products and services offered by a company, they are likely to tell bad stories about their experience to other people.

In the study by Dandis et al. (2023), it was found that customer satisfaction greatly influences customer commitment, especially the normative style of commitment. It demonstrated that once customers are satisfied with the attributes of a particular branded product, they are more likely to be committed to the said products. Therefore, this study proposed:

Hypothesis 3: Customer satisfaction has a positive impact on customer commitment.

Recently the quality of a service is said to be a determinant factor in improving the overall commitment of customers. Results from research conducted by Desiyanti et al. (2018) show that service quality has an effect on customer commitment as it also affects loyalty and satisfaction. Additionally, Hendrickson et al. (2020), in their research, quantified that when customers are served in a tangible manner, meaning a high quality of service and emotional attachment, the customers will remain committed to that service as long as it is continued. Thus, this study proposed:

Hypothesis 4: Service quality has a positive impact on customer commitment.

Malik (2020) highlights how customer commitment is related to various other variables and is constantly used to evaluate the performance of brands as well as the brand's reputation. In his research and results from 100 respondents, proves that brand reputation grows if the customer is committed to the brand. This is achieved when the customer is taken care of, and they, in turn, go out and do "word-of-mouth" marketing for the brand. Furthermore, Quoquab et al. (2020) concluded that brand

reputation is enhanced when the customers are satisfied through quality service. Thus, this study proposed:

Hypothesis 5: Brand reputation has a positive impact on customer commitment.

METHODOLOGY

This empirical research was conducted to address the influence of service quality and brand reputation on customer satisfaction and customer commitment, using the selected prominent fast-food establishment in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study's target population comprises Nigerian nationals aged 26 years and above, who are regular customers of this selected fast-food outlet in Lagos State, Nigeria. This demographic was chosen as it provides a better foundation for evaluating the company's service quality and brand reputation. A non-probability sampling technique was employed to select the sample. The study relied on Cochran (1963) formula for unknown populations to determine a minimum sample size $[(1.645^2)(0.5)(0.5)]/(0.05^2)$ of 270.6, thus, round up to a minimum of 271 respondents, ensuring a 90% level of precision for the analysis. The research gathered responses from self-administered questionnaires with a total of 271 participants

for the analysis in 2023. Among these respondents, 42% were male, while 58% were female. The majority of respondents fell within the age range of 20 to 35 years old.

The measurement items in the study were measured on a five-point Likert-scale (1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree). The Service quality was measured in five dimensions with 29 items adopted from of DINSERV scale of Keith & Simmers (2011). The dimensions are tangibility, reliability, assurance, empathy, and responsiveness. The brand reputation was measured in seven measurement items adopted from Weiss et al. (1999). Examples are “I think, the restaurant has reliable promises for future.” and “Based on my experience, I trust this restaurant.” The customer satisfaction was measured in four measurement items adopted from Saad Andaleeb & Conway (2006). Examples of items are “Overall, you were satisfied with your dining experience.” and “Considering the type of restaurant, the quality of service was excellent.” Customer commitment was measured using twenty measurement items adopted from Harrison-Walker (2019). Examples of items are: “The longer I stay with this restaurant, the harder it is to leave,” and “It would be difficult for me to adapt to a new restaurant,”

Validity and Reliability Test

The study found that the loading of measurement items of each construct is above 0.5, confirming validity (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), while certain measurement items with loading values less than 0.5 were all deleted from the confirmatory factor analysis measurement model. Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.8 reflected that these variables have high internal consistency (customer commitment = 0.917, service quality = 0.954, and brand reputation = 0.817 except for customer satisfaction (0.673) that has Cronbach's Alpha value less than 0.8 according to Hair et al. (2010). However, the composite reliability of mostly all variables above 0.7 demonstrates internal consistency in terms of reliability.

This study employed regressions analysis in testing hypotheses. The study also employs descriptive analysis to explore the respondent profile and respondent evaluation of variables in the study.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Model 1 of this study found a multiple regression model indicating that service quality ($\beta = .371$) and brand reputation ($\beta = .491$) statistically significantly impact on customer satisfaction at 95%

confidence level ($F(2,270) = 274.120$, $p\text{-value} = .000$) as $p\text{-value}$ of the model is less than .05. Thus, hypothesis 1 and 2 are supported.

Model 2 of this study found a multiple regression model indicating that customer satisfaction ($\beta = .396$), service quality ($\beta = .326$), and brand reputation ($\beta = .312$) statistically significantly impacted on customer commitment at 95% confidence level as $p\text{-value}$ of the model is less than .05

($F(3,270) = 686.537$, $p\text{-value} = .000$). Hence, hypothesis 3, 4, and 5 are supported.

In conclusion, this study found that all five hypotheses are supported. Both service quality and brand reputation are statistically significantly impact on customer satisfaction while service quality, customer satisfaction and brand reputation are statistically significantly impact on customer commitment.

Table 1 Result of Regression Analysis

Variable	Model 1		Model 2	
	<i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>
Service quality	.371	.348	.326	.302
Brand reputation	.491	.502	.312	.315
Customer satisfaction			.396	.391
R^2	.672		.885	
Adj. R^2	.669		.884	
F	(2,268)		(3,267)	
	274.120***		686.537***	
p	.000		.000	

Note: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

RESULTS CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Results Conclusion

The hypothesis 1 of this study indicated that service quality has a positive statistically significant impact on customer satisfaction. According to Tran & Le (2020), every organisation must be aware that outstanding service quality is required from them if they want to see a high degree of customer satisfaction in their business environment. This is because service efficiency is usually regarded as a precursor to customer retention. Hence, customer satisfaction and service quality have a favorable link.

Hypothesis 2 of this study indicated that brand reputation has a positive statistically significant impact on customer satisfaction. This statement is confirmed by Ali et al. (2020), who revealed a consistent and positive statistically significant impact of brand reputation on customer satisfaction across various industries and geographical locations. A strong brand reputation builds trust and credibility with customers. When a brand consistently delivers on its promises, maintains ethical business practices, and provides high-quality products or services, customers feel confident and satisfied in their decision to choose

that brand. The results suggest that a strong brand reputation enhances customer satisfaction.

The hypothesis 3 of this study indicated that customer satisfaction has positive statistically significant impact on customer commitment. This statement is confirmed by Dandis et al. (2023), who explore the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer commitment within fast-food restaurants. When customers receive high-quality service that meets or exceeds their expectations, they are more likely to feel satisfied with their overall experience. Satisfied customers are more committed to a business and tend to remain loyal over time. It highlights the importance of meeting customer expectations in terms of customer satisfaction to enhance customer commitment and loyalty.

The hypothesis 4 of this study indicated that service quality has positive impact on customer commitment. This assertion is supported by the study of Jaja (2019), who explores the relationship between service quality and customer commitment in fast-food restaurants. Satisfied customers tend to develop a positive emotional attachment to

the brand, leading to an increased commitment. This commitment leads to an increase in customer loyalty, repeat purchases, and positive word-of-mouth.

The hypothesis 5 of this study indicated that brand reputation has positive impact on customer commitment. This assertion is supported by the study of Ha et al. (2023), who investigated the relationship between brand reputation and customer commitment in the fast-food industry. When a brand consistently delivers high-quality products or services, meets customer expectations, and fulfills its promises, customers develop a sense of trust (Khan et al., 2022). The findings suggest that building and maintaining a positive brand reputation is crucial

for fast-food restaurants to foster customer commitment.

The findings of the current study are consistent with prior research on the influence of service quality and brand reputation on customer satisfaction and customer commitment, as well as the impact of customer satisfaction on customer commitment, as shown in Figure 2. This study has highlighted the significant role of brand reputation over service quality in the restaurant business.

Discussion

This study contributes to the concept of service quality in the dining industry by confirming the DINSERV scale, its dimensions, and items that were customized for the business.

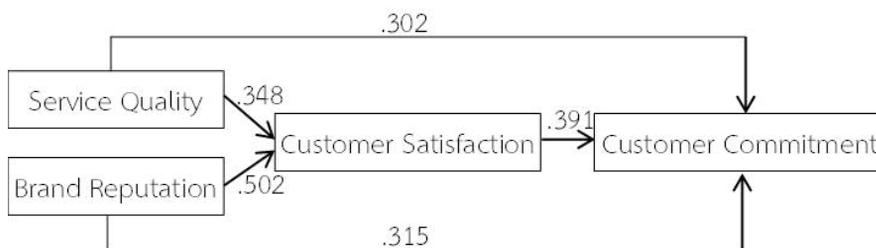


Figure 2 Research Findings

This study found that brand reputation ($\beta = .502$) has a stronger impact on customer satisfaction than service quality ($\beta = .348$). Hence, the company should focus on improving its brand reputation in order to increase customer satisfaction. To improve brand reputation in fast-food restaurants, the company first needs to comprehend the meaning of brand reputation and apply a combination of strategic planning, consistent execution, and a customer-centric strategy that allows the businesses to grow. The company's management must show dedication and responsibility.

The multiple regression of this study also found that customer satisfaction ($\beta = .391$) has a stronger impact on customer commitment than brand reputation ($\beta = .315$) and service quality ($\beta = .302$). Hence, the company should focus on improving customer satisfaction in order to increase customer commitment. To improve customer satisfaction in fast-food restaurants, the company must emphasize the importance of friendliness, attentiveness, and promptness, as well as ensure that employees are well-versed in the menu and can assist customers with any questions or special requests. Streamline the order-taking and food preparation processes to minimize waiting

times. Maintain high standards for food preparation and presentation. Regularly inspect and taste dishes to ensure they consistently meet customer expectations. Most importantly, encourage customers to provide feedback and pay attention to them to address issues promptly.

Ensuring a persistent brand reputation in a fast-food restaurant is crucial for long-term success and customer loyalty. A fast-food restaurant must insist on delivering consistent, top-notch food and service, which is the cornerstone of a strong brand reputation. Ensure that all aspects of the restaurant, from ingredients to preparation and presentation, meet the same high standards every time. Staff training should be a priority to provide excellent customer support. Friendly, attentive, and helpful employees can leave a lasting positive impression on customers. A clean and well-maintained restaurant is essential for creating a positive dining experience. Fast-food restaurants must insist on delivering high levels of transparency to customers regarding the sourcing of ingredients, cooking methods, and nutritional information.

Maintaining a cohesive brand image across all touchpoints, including the physical appearance of the restaurant, its online

presence, and marketing materials would consistently help building recognition and trust. In conclusion, the fast-food restaurant should actively seek and listen to customer feedback, both positive and negative while address the concerns promptly and use feedback to make improvements.

Future research should investigate the role of technology in enhancing service quality and its impact on consumer satisfaction and customer commitment at fast-food restaurants. In addition, it should explore how the integration

of self-service kiosks, mobile ordering Applications, or other digital solutions can affect customers' perceptions and loyalty. It should also further examine the potential moderating effects of cultural differences on the relationship between service quality, brand reputation, consumer satisfaction, and customer commitment in fast-food restaurant settings. Future research should investigate the impact of service recovery strategies on consumer satisfaction and customer commitment in fast-food restaurants.

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