

THE INFLUENCE OF SERVICE CONVENIENCE AND CUSTOMER PATRONAGE OF AIRLINE FIRMS IN PORT HARCOURT.

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between service convenience and customer Patronage in Port Harcourt local Government Area of Rivers State. Two dimensions and two measures were used in this study, and they are waiting convenience, Access convenience and the measures are word of mouth and repeat purchase. The study employed quasi experimental design which involved cross sectional survey. The population of the study comprises of 10 Airline firms and 100 questionnaires were distributed to the 10 Airlines. The study adopted descriptive and inferential statistical tool with the aid of SPSS version 21.0 and spearman Rank order of correlation to analyze the relationship between predictor and the criterion. In conclusion, customer service convenience perceptions are influenced not only by the characteristics of service of individual but by form related factors. Marketers can do much to improve consumer's convenience. Based on the conclusion above, we therefore, recommend that Airline operators should pay more attention not only to the convenience outcomes of using online services but to involve customers in the service process. Managers of Airline providers should improve their Image, create repurchase intention and continuously implement creative and dynamic service delivery.

Keywords: Service Convenience and Customer Patronage

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Airline industry has always been famous for its continuous struggle: cutting costs, managing fluctuating demand, keeping up with tight quality requirements while trying to maintain superior services and satisfy needs of various customer groups. Customer satisfaction has been on very low levels for decades, and e.g. according to American Customer Satisfaction Index, airline industry scores lowest out of 47 other industries (CNN.com, Airlines score lowest in customer satisfaction, 2011). However, the demand for air transportation has been stable and despite current economic crisis and such events as September 11, the growth reached 7.8% in 2011 (Datamonitor, 2011). Airlines are compelled to refocus their efforts on providing high-quality, customer-oriented service in this difficult climate.(Chang &Yeh, 2002). It is extremely important for carriers not only to understand the perception of passengers of their service offerings, but as well find out what customers expect from the services (Chen & Chang, 2005) and what kind of services customers consider most important. Since airlines provide experiences and performances rather than actual goods, their services are made up of a complex mix of intangibles (Gursoy et al., 2005). Service excellence is therefore essential to draw in and retain devoted clients. (Liou&Tzang, 2007; Chang &Yeh, 2002).

Today, the competitive advantage that services bring to a company cannot be underestimated (Kandampully, 2002). Service convenience is capable to open new markets, especially when technology is developing fast and constantly providing new opportunities to develop new service. Service convenience also happens through networks and knowledge development (Kandampully, 2002). Customers are presumed to be one of the most important stakeholders in any organization because without them, organizations are not likely to succeed. Hence, marketers emphasize on research in the area of consumer behavior and particularly behavioral intention. Knowledge of

consumer behavior will go a long way in ensuring effective marketing policies towards the interest of customers which will eventually facilitates positive customer attitude towards the organizations. More especially, since customer behavioral intention is a strong indication of his actual behavior (Kotler, 2006).

In service industry such as Airlines, customers are always looking for convenience in transacting online due to time and budget constraints. Thus, some customers are no longer buying products in the brick-and-mortar stores as they can now transact online because of added values online shopping brings. It is more convenient and time saving for customers thus encouraging retailers to move to online virtual stores which helps to strengthen customer relationship (Seiders, Berry, & Gresham, 2000).

Service convenience is simply concerned with the provision of quality service to customers. Banks' ability to render a more quality services to their customers would definitely be evidenced in their customer base as every customers would want a quality service. Naturally, one of the things that sets rival banks apart from one another in the banking sector is the degree and caliber of services they provide, which includes non-monetary costs, transactional ease, benefit convenience, waiting convenience, and access convenience. This is due to the fact that customer satisfaction levels can impact the amount of business a bank receives and, in turn, the size of its clientele. Customers' reliance on a particular bank's services may undoubtedly have an impact on how satisfied they are with it. When it comes to bank service delivery, convenience is determined by how well the consumer felt the service fulfilled their expectations and needs. (Babatunde and Kemi, 2011).

Empirically, many studies have been carried out on the services convenience with how it can be on consumers and with other related construct and practices. For example, research was conducted in 2013 by Mahmood and in Nigeria by Balogun, Ajiboye and Dunsin, and in Pakistan by Mahmood on the factors influencing customer satisfaction with electronic banking. They found that the products that internet banks sell have a big influence on how happy their customers are. Agboola (2001) also looked at how computer automation affected banking services in Lagos and found that electronic banking significantly enhanced the services that certain banks provided to their clients in Lagos. Chang, Chen, Hsu, and Kuo (2010) investigated how post-purchasing behaviors were impacted by service convenience. Chen, Chan, Hsu, and Yang (2011) conducted research to determine how customer happiness and service convenience relate to one another. According to Robinson (2000), the provision of financial services directly to clients' homes or offices through online banking broadens the interaction between the two parties. Additionally, Ovia (2002) discovered that while using electronic banking negatively affects non-users, it has a significant positive influence on customer satisfaction among users. But very few studies have thoroughly examined how five factors related to service convenience relate to client patronage. The researcher needs to fill what seemed to be a vacuum in the literature. Therefore, our starting point is to determine a connection between client preference for airline companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, and the convenience of their services..

Statement of the problem

When deciding to travel by air to any destination, the average traveler is searching for the best value, and value in terms of air travel does not always mean cheap airfare. With air travel, value actually encompasses a lot more. While affordability is an important factor, a great value is also about the overall experience. Air travelers not only care about affordable prices, but they also care a great deal about comfort and convenience. They want to know they are getting the best bet for their money. In the service industry such as the Airline sector, emphasis is now on conveniences as more customers now complain on many factors such as the unlimited time they spend in the Airline for transactions booking (waiting time), and other network related issues, monetary cost they incurred in services rendered as well as the low value/benefit attached to their patronage.

In response to customers' expectation, Airline firms have to provide an excellent service to customers who are sophisticated and will not accept less than above average service. Thus, the

issue of service convenience in general, and Airline services in particular has become one of the most important and modern directions which have witnessed a substantial expansion during the last years in almost all societies (Agboola, 2000). Industry participants are increasingly using technology to generate insights about customers' behavioural patterns and preferences in response to the expectations for prompt, dependable, and efficient services. It is anticipated that advanced operations and technology support functions for outsourcing would offer online payment services and cost control. In light of this, the study's primary focus was on the connection between client preference for airline companies in Port Harcourt and the convenience of their services.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of service convenience and customer patronage of Airline firms in Port Harcourt. Specifically, the study seeks to;

1. To determine the relationship between waiting convenience and word of mouth of Airline firms in Port Harcourt.
2. To examine the relationship between waiting convenience and repeat purchase of Airline firms in Port Harcourt.
3. To investigate the relationship between access convenience and word of mouth of Airline firms in Port Harcourt.
4. To find out the relationship between access convenience and repeat purchase of Airline firms in Port Harcourt.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between waiting convenience and word of mouth of Airline firms in Port Harcourt?
2. What is the relationship between waiting convenience and repeat purchase of Airline firms in Port Harcourt?
3. What is the relationship between access convenience and word of mouth of Airline firms in Port Harcourt?
4. What is the relationship between access convenience and repeat purchase of Airline firms in Port Harcourt?

Hypotheses

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between waiting convenience and word of mouth

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between waiting convenience and repeat purchase

HO₃: There is no significant relationship between access convenience and word of mouth

HO₄: There is no significant relationship between access convenience and repeat purchase

Scope of the Study

The study will focus on examining the relationship between service convenience and customer patronage of Airline firms in Port Harcourt. Categorically, the scope of the study is of three main areas:

Geographical scope: The geographical scope of this study covers Port Harcourt, Rivers State in the south-south region of Nigeria.

Content Scope: The theoretical section to be covered in this study is unified to literature on service convenience and customer patronage which includes variables such as waiting convenience, access convenience, transaction convenience, repeat purchase and word of mouth, and customer loyalty

Level of analysis/study unit: The element that consists our study population as well as the subjects to be drawn from the sampling are the customers of the selected Airline firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

This study will be of great benefit to the following:

Airline Sector: The study may be significant to Airline managers. Knowing the personality characteristics of consumers is very important, so that they could, to some extent, predict and control the behaviour of consumers. It will enable them to inculcate services that would enhance customer patronage

Academics: Interested scholars in this area will also benefit from this research work as it will aid them in their research study by helping them to identify possible literature gap.

Customers: Corporate customers expect Airline firms to provide higher levels of reliable service and support their businesses throughout the entire value chain. This study will provide an insight on how to operate and have better knowledge of the service technology provided by the banks that would help exceed customer expectation and satisfaction

Society: The society at large will also benefit the present study. With the introduction of cashless policy, the inconveniences and the hassle of going to the bank for transaction will be limited.

LITERATURE REVIEW**Conceptual Clarifications****Concept of Service Convenience**

In early marketing literature, the concept of convenience proposed by Copeland (1923) classifies the consumer products into convenience goods, shopping goods, and specialty goods. Convenience goods are taken as the savings in time and effort that consumers spend in purchasing products, rather than as an attribute of product itself. A number of studies have investigated convenience as a motive in the areas of electronic banking, online shopping and product choice in retail (Woodside &Trappey, 2001). Convenience is generally viewed as one of the most important factor to consumer behavior (Chen et al., 2011). Because consumers are time-constrained, convenience has emerged as a key product value, and marketers are becoming more and more interested in offering it. (Farquhar & Rowley, 2009).

Consumers with limited time are searching for services that offer value and are easy to search for, access, buy, and utilize (Seiders et al., 2000). Convenience is important because, according to a poll conducted by Seiders et al. (2000), 52% of consumers said they would prefer to buy less frequently. The definition of service convenience is: a decision made by customers based on their perception of control over the allocation, use, and conversion of their time and energy to accomplish objectives related to service access and use. (Thuy, 2011).

Intrinsic to consumers' perceptions of service convenience are the time and effort required to buy or use a service (Berry, Seiders, &Grewal, 2002). First, consumers assess the time expenditure from psychological cost and affective reactions (Taylor, 1994; Hui&Tse, 1996). 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 service convenience are. In addition, According to Kahneman (1973), two mental processes may take the same amount of time, but one may seem to require more effort than the other. Therefore, a consumer's commitment to the service outcome is stronger and their likelihood of becoming frustrated increases with the amount of work they put in. (Hui, Thakor, & Gill, 1998).

Customers estimate that each form of service convenience comes with time and effort expenses. The five forms of convenience that make up overall convenience are decision, access, transaction, benefit, and post-benefit convenience. Marketing researchers understand that overall convenience is a second-order construct. (Berry et al., 2002; Seiders, Voss, Grewal, & Godfrey, 2005; Aagja, Mammen, &Amit, 2011; Rahman, &Parisa, 2014). The concept of decision convenience describes how customers who want a specific performance spend time and energy determining how to get it. Consumers' perception of the time and effort required to initiate service delivery is known as access convenience. Consumers' perceptions of the time and effort required to complete a

transaction are characterized by transaction convenience. Benefit convenience is the term used to describe how much time and effort customers believe they must spend in order to get the main benefits of the service, like taking a cab or viewing a movie. Lastly, the consumer's perceived time and effort expenditures while reestablishing contact with a company following the completion of the benefit stage of the service constitute post-benefit convenience.

Waiting Convenience

Waiting is an almost inescapable part of a consumer's service encounter, whether in the queue, at the checkout point in a retail store, placing an order, or making an enquiry. Waiting begins when a consumer is prepared for the service encounter and ends when direct communication between the customer and the service provider occurs, according to Taylor (1994). The act of waiting is inherently subjective, and the annoyance that comes with it isn't always connected to a precise clock. Most of the time, consumers' perceptions of waiting times diverge from the time lapse that is measured objectively. When patrons are kept waiting longer than anticipated, they grow disinterested and eventually pinpoint a reason for the hold-up. (Van Riel *et al.*, 2012). When staff incompetence or slowness is blamed for the wait, or when outdated equipment is used, the negative feelings intensify.

Access Convenience

This dimension is defined as "the speed and ease with which consumers can reach a retailer," according to Berry *et al.* (Berry *et al.*, 2000). One of the most significant aspects of retail convenience is access convenience, as without it, the customer would never be able to get the goods that they want. By operating from a location that is convenient for most customers, easily accessible, and near other frequently visited establishments, traditional merchants can improve access convenience (Berry *et al.*, 2000). However, since customers may purchase online from anywhere, at any time of day, seven days a week, and store location becomes immaterial, online retailers can undoubtedly offer access convenience (Rohm & Swaminathan, 2004). (Hofacker, 2001).

Transaction Convenience

The "speed and ease with which consumers can effect or amend transactions" is the definition of transaction convenience (Beauchamp & Ponder, 2010). Because waiting to pay is an unpleasant experience, stores with quick checkout times and simple return procedures score highly for transaction convenience. (Berry *et al.*, 2000). Customers at traditional establishments frequently have to wait in line for extended periods of time in order to complete their transactions. This can be problematic for businesses as customers often perceive wait times to be greater than they actually are, which lowers their perception of overall service quality (Kumar *et al.*, 1997). Online shoppers never have to stand in line, which is one of the key advantages. (Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2001).

Customer Patronage

Patronage is defined as "the material help and encouragement given by a patron, in this instance the patron is seen to be a customer in an exchange transaction" by the New Webster Dictionary (1994)..It might also refer to "the practice of frequently visiting a store." Businesses hoping to maintain client loyalty in a highly competitive sector like banking should prioritize meeting the needs of their clients (Johns and Tyas, 1996; Kivela, Inbakaran, and Reece, 1999; Sulek and Hensley, 2004). This theory suggests that we can characterize attitudinal influence by distinguishing between behavioral intention and other behaviors. (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). According to Householder and Green (2002), the theory of reasoned action was as a result of previous studies on attitude and behavior. The theory of reasoned action came as result of frustration with traditional attitude-behavior research, much of which found weak correlations

between attitude measures and performance of volitional behaviors”(Hale, Householder & Green, 2002). Derived largely from the social psychology setting, the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) as proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1975, 1980) has three (3) components: behavioral Intention (BI), Attitude (A), and Subjective Norms (SN). According to TRA, a person's attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms determine their intention to behave ($BI=A+SN$). Thus, it is likely that a person will act out a particular action if they choose to do so. It is important to note that purchase action by a customer entails psychological principles that has been developed to harness an understanding of consumers’ needs so that products can developed designed, and communicated in a rightful manner that can reflect the relevant and important needs of consumers. Consumer decision making is a process consisting of five stages that people go through when deciding on what products or services to buy or patronize a firm, practitioners have traditionally described consumer decision making as a series of five progressive stages namely: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post purchase processes (Grewal& Levy, 2010). However, the following measures of customer patronage such as word of mouth, repeat purchase are hereby discussed below;

Measures of Customer Patronage

Word of mouth

Consumers often share opinions, news, and information with others. They gossip about trips, voice grievances about films, or extol the virtues of local eateries. They argue over the newest sports rumors, talk about significant political problems, and engage in gossip about coworkers. The ease and speed of communication has only risen thanks to technologies like texting, Facebook, and Twitter. Every day, billions of emails, millions of tweets, and thousands of blogs are written.

Informal interactions aimed at other customers regarding the ownership, use, or features of specific goods and services or their sellers might be characterized as interpersonal communication, or word-of-mouth (Westbrook, 1987). Talk about products is included in word-of-mouth. (e.g., the Nikes were really comfortable) and sharing product related content (e.g., Nike ads on YouTube). It contains both explicit suggestions (like "you'd love this restaurant") and oblique references (like "we went to this restaurant"). Both "word of mouse," or internet mentions and reviews, and actual word of mouth—that is, in-person conversations—are included. The impact of word-of-mouth on consumer behavior is significant. According to Keller and Libai (2009), social discourse influences everything from the movies that customers watch to the websites that they visit, producing approximately 3.3 billion brand impressions every day.

In the past, consumers sought feedback from others when they had questions about a specific brand, item, or business. Word-of-mouth (WOM) became the term for this in marketing literature. WOM is probably the oldest mechanism by which opinions on products, brands, and services are developed, expressed, and spread. A spate of recent articles and books in popular press already notes an increasing interest in word of mouth. WOM has been defined in a number of ways. It was first described by early academics as an oral, person-to-person exchange about a brand, a good, or a service between a recipient and a communicator that the recipient considers to be non-commercial. Westbrook (1987) described WOM as all informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services or their sellers (Chan &Ngai, 2011, 490). File et al (1992) define WOM as recommending the firm and the service to others (Cengiz&Yayla, 2007). WOM offers consumers the ability to make more informed choices. As a result, they can benefit from reduced perceived risk of a certain buying behavior, act as goodwill or image which is an assets. More risk-averse consumers regarded word-of-mouth (WOM) to be a very helpful approach in minimizing most sorts of risk, according to Roselius (1971). Some consumers were shown to evaluate WOM particularly highly in buying.

Repeat Purchase

Repeat purchase can be described as the placing of order after order by a consumer from the same organization, it can also be seen as the buying of a product or services by a consumer of the same brand. Repeat purchase customers are customers who are satisfied emotionally, intellectually, physically by an organization offering which could be in form of a product which exceeds their expectations. In a different context, a repeat purchase may be referred to as "re-patronage intentions," which, according to Wirtz and Lwin (2009), is a person's readiness to support a service provider again. In a relationship built on trust commitment is engendered and then becomes a major predictor of future purchases. Customers regularly visit a particular firm based on their perception of trust-that is, they believe that the company has their best interest at heart when providing a service (Caudill and Murphy 2000). A repeat purchase is often a measure of loyalty to a brand by consumers, higher repeat purchase value means a well retained, satisfied customer, also higher repeat purchase value drives higher customer value, which means a better top line in the loyalty ladder. Higher repeat purchase value can mean higher profitability as it does not include new customer acquisition costs; organization can take some actions to ensure repeat purchase of either their products or services by listening to customer comments, suggestion, feedback, complaints, about the product or services they are offering, by also providing value adding services to the customer experience. Repeat purchase is the prime goal a company can set for its products since it is consumer reference to purchase a given brand in a product category. Customer repeat purchase is a good indicator of a long term business sustainability and profitability of an organization; this is because it points to customer satisfaction and retention. (Nwulu&Asiegbu, 2015)

Fig 2.1 Conceptual Framework

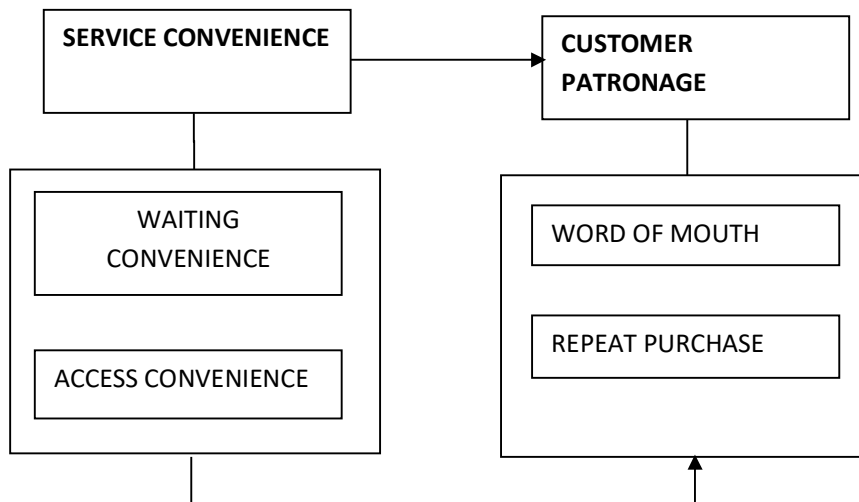


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework of the Relationship between service convenience and customer patronage of Airline firms in Port Harcourt

Source: Conceptualized from review of related literature, 2023

Related Theories

Adaptation Level Theory

This theory was originated by Helson in 1964 and applied to customer patronage and satisfaction by Oliver. In layman's terms, Helson's hypothesis (1964) states that stimuli are only perceived in reference to an adapted standard. The standard depends on how the stimulus is perceived, the environment, and the organism's physiological and psychological traits. Once established, the "adaptation level" maintains the validity of further assessments by keeping both positive and negative deviations roughly within the bounds of one's initial position. The ultimate tone of the subject's evaluation will only be altered by significant affects on the adaption level.

According to adaptation level theory, exposure to earlier stimuli serves as a frame of reference by which later stimuli are judged. One's individual adaptation level is formed by the mathematical combination of these prior stimuli. Stimuli that considerably deviate from the adaptation level can elicit either positive or negative reactions, while later stimuli that are similar to the adaptation level elicit a different response. The integration of novel experiences might lead to a shift in an individual's adaptability level. As a result of these mechanisms, stimuli only produce transient effects. The method by which emotional reactions to stimuli are controlled by an underlying physiological system involving feedback loops that sense and react to affective and physiological changes is explained by Solomon and Corbit (1973, 1974). According to Solomon and Corbit, when emotionally stimulating stimuli are absent, humans experience hedonic neutrality, which means that most of the time, people are not in a pleasant or negative emotional state, but rather, they are in a neutral condition. This theory is quite applicable to the present study on service convenience and customer patronage. Every consumer is a psychological being and are influenced by what they perceive to positively their buying behavior. This theory gave us an understanding of consumers respond to service in terms of what they can benefit and how convenient they perceive it.

Strategic Constituencies Approach

Determining the relevant stakeholders' perspectives on efficacy is deemed critical. Put differently, Connolly et al. state that the multiple-constituency model is predicated on an effectiveness view that allows for the formulation of multiple effectiveness statements about the focal organization, each reflecting a different set of criteria from various people and groups that we will refer to as constituencies. (Connolly et al.1980). A few scholars emphasize the need to pay attention to political perspectives on effectiveness and suggest the multiple-constituency method as a workable substitute for examining effectiveness in the context of both commercial and non-profit organizations. (Connolly et al.1980; Kanter and Summers,1987; Goodman and Pinning's, 1980;and Mendelow,1983).In this sense, a more representative image of the efficacy of these kinds of organizations can be obtained through the use of multiple constituency models. This is due to the fact that, in actuality, key constituent groups define how companies operate and what constitutes effective and ineffective behavior. (Connolly et al.1980). Additionally, he contended that the objective approach and the many systems approaches—the earlier models—were insufficient as they exclusively employed one set of evaluation standards. The many constituency models acknowledge that organizations have various stakeholders or constituencies who assess effectiveness differently, rather than viewing effectiveness as a singular concept.

Non-profit companies, like for-profit businesses and government agencies, are constantly under pressure to create plans and implement management techniques that guarantee the efficacy of their operations..This is due to the fact that, although being autonomous businesses, a large number of non-profit organizations rely significantly on public money to remain in operation and continue to offer social services. (Herman and Renz, 2004). Effectiveness is an objective reality, according to Kushner and Poole's (1996) study on the subject in non-profit arts groups. They offer an efficacious paradigm that integrates goal achievement, internal procedures, resource acquisition, and constituent satisfaction..Kushner and Poole employ a number of effectiveness metrics, but their model views constituent satisfaction as a precursor to resource acquisition effectiveness, internal process effectiveness, goal fulfillment, and ultimately total effectiveness..As a result, we understand their methodology to assume that these elements are cumulative dimensions rather than independent, non-cumulative ones.

Review of Empirical Literature

Several authors have examined how satisfaction and convenience are related, although not using the five convenience types proposed by Berry et al (2002). Yuksel (2001) identifies that first-time and repeat visitors both regard service convenience (i.e. efficiency of check-in and check-out at a

hotel) as a predictor of their satisfaction. Dhurup et al (2006) found that convenience (i.e. space availability and information dissemination) influence satisfaction for leisure and recreation consumers which, in turn, influence their loyalty. Moutinho and Smith (2000) examined the association between access (i.e. ease of banking), consumer satisfaction, consumer loyalty, and switching behavior. Their results indicate that there was a direct, positive association between the ease of banking and perceived satisfaction. Increased levels of satisfaction also reduce switching intentions and increase loyalty (Chang & Polonsky, 2012). Colwell et al (2008) found that all five types of convenience influence satisfaction in the Canadian Internet context.

According to Chang et al. (2010), convenience affects satisfaction in the context of Taiwanese fast food, and contentment in turn affects loyalty. According to Dai et al. (2001), convenience affects Chinese online shoppers' satisfaction levels, which in turn affects their intents to recommend the site to others and stay loyal. These findings support the notion that behavioral intentions are significant results of customer satisfaction and that convenience is a crucial service attribute that affects consumers' assessments of service encounters. (Chang & Polonsky, 2012).

Sheu et al., (2003) investigated the waiting time performance of alternative service process designs, namely using a single lane that is served by multiple check-out operators, or using multiple queues that are served individually. They pertinently proposed the use of alternative queuing strategies in accordance with the traffic in the store at a specific point in time because theoretically, none of the service process designs provide the single best solution for all operating conditions. The recommended flexible approach requires a rotation of design strategies in response to on-going changes in service system input parameters, acknowledging peak hours and peak traffic to reduce waiting times (Sheu & Babbar, 1996). Mathematical break-even models that reflect the contingent nature of the performance of alternative designs confirm the value of such flexibility. Unfortunately many service providers choose a specific design strategy in their business and seldom consider alternative strategies for different periods of the day or month.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on adaptation-level theory. Oliver used Helson's 1964 theory of consumer satisfaction and patronage to the topic of customer satisfaction. In layman's terms, Helson's hypothesis (1964) states that stimuli are only perceived in reference to an adapted standard. The standard depends on how the stimulus is perceived, the environment, and the organism's physiological and psychological characteristics. Once established, the "adaptation level" maintains the validity of further assessments by keeping both positive and negative deviations roughly within the bounds of one's initial position. The ultimate tone of the subject's evaluation will only be altered by significant affects on the adaption level. The adaption level theory states that one's evaluation of subsequent stimuli is based on their exposure to earlier stimuli. One's individual adaption level is formed by the mathematical combination of these prior stimuli. Stimuli that considerably deviate from the adaptation level can elicit either positive or negative reactions, while later stimuli that are similar to the adaptation level elicit a different response. The integration of novel experiences might lead to a shift in an individual's adaptability level. As a result of these mechanisms, stimuli only produce transient effects.

The method by which emotional reactions to stimuli are controlled by an underlying physiological system involving feedback loops that sense and react to affective and physiological changes is explained by Solomon and Corbit (1973, 1974). According to Solomon and Corbit, when emotionally stimulating stimuli are absent, humans experience hedonic neutrality, which means that most of the time, people are not in a pleasant or negative emotional state, but rather in a neutral one.

The current study on consumer patronage and service convenience finds great application in this hypothesis. Since each customer is a psychological entity, their purchasing behavior is impacted by things they believe will benefit them. This idea helped us understand how customers react to services based on their perceived convenience and benefits.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Our study adopted quasi-experimental research design which employed cross sectional survey approach. Sullivan (2019) asserts that a survey "It is a data collection technique in which information is gathered from individuals by having them respond to questions or statements". Survey method is also useful because it supports our triangulations of methodology as Sullivan (2019) believes that some survey methods allow for the use of both questionnaire and other data collection techniques like informal discussion, documented evidence. Besides, the quasi-experimental research design was adopted due to the complex relationship that exists between the study variables. From the submission of Nachmias and Nachmias (1996), this choice is informed by the fact that the researcher does not have perfect control of the variables that could affect the study. Therefore a non-contrived research setting was adopted.

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprised of all the customers of Airline Firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. This is referred to as the target population of the study. A total of 10 Airline will be selected as obtained from the Nigerian Civil Aviation Agency, as at June, 2013.

The researcher purposively administered ten (10) copies of questionnaire to the customers in each of the ten (10) Airline Firms Port Harcourt in Rivers State. This gave a total of one hundred (100) copies.

Table 3.1: List of 10 Aviation Firms in Port Harcourt in Rivers State

S/N	NAME OF AIRLINE	NO OF RESPONDENTS (Customers)
1.	ARIK AIR	10
2.	AIR PEACE	10
3.	ALLIED AIR	10
4.	ASSOCIATED AIR	10
5.	UNITED NIGERIA AIRLINE	10
6.	KLM AIRLINE	10
7.	EMIRATE AIRLINE	10
8.	VIRGIN ATLANTIC AIRLINE	10
9.	MEDVIEW AIRLINE	10
10.	MAX AIRLINE	10
	Total	100

Source: Nigerian Civil Aviation Agency, 2023

Sample and Sampling Technique

As explained in section 3.3, a sample size (100) was conveniently drawn from our population of interest (Customers of the Airline Firms in Port Harcourt). However, all elements that constituted the sample size shall be customers who will be available in the Airline firms when the questionnaire will be distributed in the respective Airline. This method of non-probability sampling is referred to as convenience sampling (Ezejelue et al, 2019).

Method of Data Collection

The instruments that will be used for data collection is the questionnaire method. For the purpose of this study, a self-administered, questionnaire will be employed. Besides, existing related literature in (textbook, journals and bulletin) was also be used as secondary data to complement data obtained through the questionnaire. The questionnaire will be structured into sections A and

B. Section A deals with the demographics of the respondents, while section B involves the study variables. The questions was designed in a simple format to ease administration. Multiple choice methods was adopted in framing the questions and the questions will be structured using five-point type likert scale which solicited information from the customers of the Airline chosen for the study. Section A which elicited information on the demographics of the participating Airline and respondents contained 5-item questionnaire (i.e. items 1-5). Section B which elicit information about the study variables will be sub-divided into three (I, II and III) capturing independent, dependent variables respectively. A total of 20 items elicits data about service convenience and customer patronage.

Measurement of Variables

The study is made up of two variables: the independent variable and the dependent variable. The independent Variable is Service Convenience while the dependent variable is Customer Patronage. The dimensions of independent variable is waiting convenience and access convenience. All the variables were measured in ordinal scale along a five point likert scale type ranging from strongly agreed to strongly disagree.

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

Validity relates to the ability of an instrument to measure what it is supposed to measure. It could be seen as the extent to which a research instrument measures what it is supposed to measure (Nwankwo, 2021). Reliability on the other hand refers to the degree of consistency between two or among more measures of the same thing. A reliable instrument relates to that which is consistent in measuring a particular variable it is designed for (Nwankwo, 2021). Reliability is concerned with estimates of the degree to which a measurement is free of random or unstable error (Cooper and Schindler, 2018).

In this study, the questionnaire will be evaluated through expert checking for content. Thereafter, a pilot study was conducted to pre-test the questionnaire. The aim of the pilot testing is to detect reliability in the design of the instrument and address issue of ambiguity as to restructure the instrument in line with observations before executing full study. A Cronbach's Alpha test will be conducted on the measurement items to determine the reliability of the study instrument.

Methods of Data Analysis

In this study, we adopted a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical tools with statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 facilitating the analysis. Charts, frequency tables, means, as well as percentages constituted the descriptive statistical tools used to conduct the necessary demographic and univariate analysis. Bivariate and multivariate analyses will be carried out through parametric inferential statistical tools. The Spearman's (rho) correlation will be used to analyze the relationship between independent and dependent variables at $P > 0.01$ (two - tailed test).

Limitations of the Study

In the course of any research endeavor, several limitations are envisaged, this study is not an exception. Firstly, this study is considering only waiting convenience and access convenience as dimensions of Service Convenience. This is seen as limitation because several other dimensions are left for future research. Sample element is another constraint that is capable of affecting the result of this study because human can always behave differently when they are aware of the reason of the research.

Discussion of Findings

4.4.1 Relationship between waiting convenience and word of mouth

From the result of the above table, the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.891$) between waiting convenience and word of mouth is very strong and positive. The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.89$) indicates that 89% of word of mouth can be explained by waiting convenience. The significant value of 0.044 ($p < 0.05$) reveals a significant relationship. Based on that, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between waiting convenience and word of mouth. In submission of the findings, Waiting begins when a consumer is prepared for the service encounter and ends when direct communication between the customer and the service provider occurs, according to Taylor (1994). Waiting *per se* is a subjective experience and the associated frustration is not necessarily related to an objective measurement of time. Most of the time, consumers' perceptions of waiting times diverge from the time lapse that is measured objectively. When patrons are kept waiting longer than anticipated, they grow disinterested and eventually pinpoint a reason for the hold-up. (Van Riel *et al.*, 2012).

Relationship between Waiting convenience and Repeat purchase

From the result of the above table, the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.962$) between waiting convenience and repeat purchase is very strong and positive. The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.962$) indicated that 96% of repeat purchase can be explained by waiting convenience. The significant value of 0.038 ($p < 0.05$) reveals a significant relationship. Based on that, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between waiting convenience and repeat purchase. The accessibility of web sites is considered as the most important factor in determining consumer perceived online shopping convenience. Compared to traditional shopping, shopping online relieves the consumer of travel time/effort to the location, time/effort spent parking, and time/effort spent walking from the parking to the store (Bhatnagar, Misra and Rao 2000). Waiting convenience gets retailers off to a good start with busy consumers (Seiders *et al.*, 2000).

Relationship between Access Convenience and Word of mouth

From the result of the above table, the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.965$) between access Convenience and word of mouth is very strong and positive. The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.97$) indicated that 93% of word of mouth can be explained by access Convenience. The significant value of 0.041 ($p < 0.05$) reveals a significant relationship. Based on that, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between access Convenience and word of mouth. Transaction annoyance can also cause emotional harm to customers who misjudge which of multiple queues to join, becoming stuck in the slower line, or who doubt the impartiality of the service delivery system. (Larson, 1987).

Relationship between Access Convenience and Repeat purchase

From the result of the above table, the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.981$) between access Convenience and repeat purchase is very strong and positive. The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.97$) indicated that 93% of repeat purchase can be explained by access Convenience. The significant value of 0.020 ($p < 0.05$) reveals a significant relationship. Based on that, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between access Convenience and repeat purchase.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Summary

Chapter one of this study focused on the background of the study, the statement of problem and a conceptual framework for the study. Besides, the chapter considered the purpose of the study, the research questions and hypotheses that guided the work. Also addressed in chapter one were the significance of the study, scope of the study, definitions of terms and organization of the study.

In chapter two, we reviewed the relevant literature on service convenience and customer patronage. Also, the dimensions of the independent and dependent variables were emphasized as shown in the operational conceptual framework. This study is anchored on adaptation-level theory. Oliver used Helsen's 1964 theory of consumer satisfaction and patronage to the topic of customer satisfaction. In layman's words, Helsen's idea from 1964 is that "one perceives stimuli only in relation to an adapted standard."

Chapter three provided details of the methodology used for the study. Combinations of descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used to analyze data collected and test the hypotheses of the study. Chapter four focused on presentation, analysis and discussion of findings. Thereafter, chapter five summarized the work, drew conclusions, made necessary recommendations based on the findings and pointed out the contributions to knowledge and possible suggestions for further studies.

Conclusions

In addition to individual consumer variations and service attributes, firm-related factors also impact consumers' views of service convenience. Marketers have a lot they can do to change consumers' opinions about convenience. In many situations, they can reduce the actual time and effort expenses for customers and enhance the quality of their wait times for services. The perceived overall convenience is significantly influenced by transactions as well. It has been demonstrated that simplicity in completing or modifying a purchase makes a significant impact. Because the customer conducts the work and it doesn't take too long to complete, service convenience makes the check-out procedure easier. Customers can save time and effort by doing the full transaction from home, as intended. In addition, flexible payment options encourage and inspire customers to interact.

Recommendations

In view of the above conclusions, the following recommendations are considered relevant;

- i. Airline operators should pay more attention not only to the convenient outcomes of using online services, but also to the fact that there is an evident fun factor that can be used to involve customers in the whole service process.
- ii. In addition to trying to retain current customers, airline marketers should foster empathy and increase the likelihood that those customers will refer friends and family.
- iii. Not only should they draw customers from other airlines, but they should also enhance their reputation and encourage repeat business.
- iv. Since clients choose competitive airline providers that offer better value, fulfill or even exceed their expectations, managers of airline providers should consistently develop creative and dynamic service delivery.

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