

E-RECORDS MANAGEMENT CAPACITY AND JOB PERFORMANCE OF CUSTOMER SERVICE AGENTS IN AIRLINES IN PORT HARCOURT

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between e- record management capability and Customer Service Agents job performance of Airlines in Port Harcourt. The explanatory cross-sectional survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of ninety-five (95) full-time Customer Service Agents of 8 Airline Operators in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Using census method, the entire population of 95 Customer Service Agents was used without sampling. Structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. After validation by the supervisors and two other experts in Management, Cronbach Alpha was used to test the reliability of the instrument. Out of 95 copies of the questionnaire administered, a total of 90 copies were retrieved. Mean and standard deviation were used for the univariate analysis; Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used for the bivariate analysis, while the multivariate analysis was done using Partial Correlation. The findings revealed that a significant positive relationship exists between e-records management capability and Customer Service Agents' job performance such as information tracking, good office relations, and effective information dissemination in Airlines in Port Harcourt. The study concluded that e-information management capability optimizes Customer Service Agents' job performance in Airlines in Port Harcourt. Amongst others, it was recommended that management of Airlines should provide regular hands-on digital upskilling opportunities for Customer Service Agents.

Keywords: E-Records Management, Customers Service Agent, Job Performance, Information Tracking

INTRODUCTION

There appears to be a significant drop in job performance of Customer Service Agents all across Airlines in Port Harcourt and Port Harcourt at large. This lapses in the hospitality industry in this region of the country has dealt drastically with the business such that guests have been lost after first dealing and at Customer Service Agents' tables, Airlines have run into clerical confusion, and other issues by reason of ineptitude showcased by Customer Service Agents. This is no good news for the Airlines in Port Harcourt as the job performances of Customer Service Agents have reduced significantly in information tracking, good office relations, and effective information dissemination.

Research effort has also shown that a lot has not been achieved on the job performance of Customer Service Agents in Airlines in Port Harcourt, in spite of the numerous attempts to improve it. This is in consonance with the position of Okolocha and Baba (2017) in their study on the assessment of skills possessed by secretaries for effective electronic records management in polytechnics in North-Central, Nigeria, that secretaries in the North-Central polytechnics and other higher institutions in most part of Nigeria are still lagging behind in terms of effective computer usage for record keeping, retrieval, and dissemination, being that only very few of them do not have well-equipped computer desks. Though the work was done in polytechnics, but can still be very relevant here, since the job definitions of a secretary/Customer Service Agent are clerical in both Airlines and academic institutions. A number of them have refused to accept the fact that they need electronic

data/information skills much more than the paper one. To them, paper-based records management is still in vogue, and have committed a whole lot of their effort to improving on what is already obsolete. As a result, majority of them have displayed diverse levels of ineptitude in their job positions.

Noticeably, only few Airlines here in Port Harcourt and the entire River State have not been able to provide very efficient computer systems and enabling environments for their Customer Service Agents to work effectively. These efforts have yielded frustrating results, possibly due to the fact that the main mechanism(s) that could have improved Customer Service Agents' job performance have not been dealt with and still unknown. Therefore, it is still mysterious and begs for thorough effort to ensure that Airlines in Port Harcourt and Rivers State at large provide adequate and effective computer systems, and also train their Customer Service Agents for maximum job performance. By and large, research on E-information management capability and Customer Service Agents' job performance is seriously begging for research effort. Much effort is therefore required to increase the research on E-information management capability and Customer Service Agents' job performance. This work therefore seeks to cement this knowledge gap as explained.

Research Hypotheses

In line with the objectives of the study, the following scientific guesses were tested in the course of the study.

- Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between E-records management skill and information tracking by Customer Service Agents in Airlines in Port Harcourt.
- Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between E-records management skill and good office relations by Customer Service Agents in Airlines in Port Harcourt.
- Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between E-records management skill and effective information dissemination by Customer Service Agents in Airlines in Port Harcourt.

E-Records Management Skill

E-document refers to a collection of data or information that is stored in computer (Strzalkowski et al., 2016). E-document can also be accessed virtually or in the cloud (i.e saved in Google drive through Google doc, Google sheet, or Google slide). E-documents, which are electronic documents, are what most organizations use in full or part in the running of their daily activities. These documents are handled at different levels of the organizational operations and decision-making. On the entrance of many organizations, the first set of persons encountered are the receptionists or Customer Service Agents, and in their capacity handle a set of documents. They manage storage, retrieval, recovery, loss, etc. in a way that aligns with the organizational requirements.

E-document storage is the deployment of electronic devices to save documents for future usage (Salton, 2016). Storage can be done on a physical device, such as hard drive, flash drive, compact disk, memory card, or in the cloud such as Google drive. E-document storage is so important for short term and long term future usage, both on the organizational and individual levels. It therefore becomes a necessity for organizations to save their electronic documents in order to facilitate their job performance in the areas of operations and decision making. The Customer Service Agent in his/her duty post handles some electronic documents in their care, and storage is one of the actions they perform on these documents. Saving these documents skillfully helps the Customer Service Agent in his/her job performance, as well as the organization at large.

E-document retrieval is the computerized process of producing a list of files that are relevant to an inquirer's request by comparing the user's request to an automatically produced index of the textual content of files in the system (Liddy, 2017). This is done using an application called document retrieval system. These retrieved files can then be accessed for use within the same system. Nearly everyone today uses Document Retrieval systems, although they may not refer to them as such, but rather as Web-based search engines, e.g. Google, Yahoo, Alta Vista, etc. Document retrieval

systems find information to given criteria by matching text records (documents) against user queries, as opposed to expert systems that answer questions by inferring over a logical knowledge database. A document retrieval system consists of a database of documents, a classification algorithm to build a full text index, and a user interface to access the database. A document retrieval system has two main tasks: (i) find relevant documents to user queries, and (ii) evaluate the matching results and sort them according to relevance, using algorithms such as PageRank. Internet search engines are classical applications of document retrieval. The vast majority of retrieval systems currently in use range from simple Boolean systems through to systems using statistical or natural language processing techniques. Among other things, the Customer Service Agent is saddled with the responsibility of retrieving documents from an in-house storage system or the internet to facilitate job performance. The retrieval will have to be done painstakingly with a degree of skill to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in their job role.

Concept of Digital Resources

Technology is advancing at a faster pace than ever before, and this is changing both the expectations of customers as well as the way in which the hospitality industry conducts its business. Over the years, Airlines information management has evolved from paper-based systems to complex computerized technology, and it is continuing forward to help Airlines maximized profits while delivering a seamless guest experience. Some of the trends in industry are leading to great improvements and savings for hospitality industry organizations; while some are changing how Airlines developers plan their buildings, infrastructure, management structure and staffing requirements. By definition, digital resources are materials that have been conceived and created digitally or by converting analogue materials to a digital format (Attaran et al., 2021). Examples are computer storage devices/resource(s) (hard drive, CD-ROM, flash drive, DVD-ROM, Google drive, etc.), database, website, meta data, Internet facilities, digital audio and video, computer document, etc. These resources, which are used by individuals and organizations, help majorly in improving management, operations, and service delivery. Digital resources therefore include publications which are produced both on paper and in computer-readable form (e.g. so-called "parallel" editions of journals) and those which are unavailable in any other form (e.g. multimedia CD-ROMs, ROM cartridges) (Howard, 2017). By far the largest proportion of such resources is made up of publications available on the Internet and CD-ROMs.

In an Airline for instance, the Customer Service Agents are the first line of customer support in the hospitality industry. They greet customers, assign rooms, schedule meeting halls, accept payment, dole out room keys and ensure the guest has everything necessary for a comfortable stay. Functions such as creating guests' database, handling guests' accounts, coordinating guests' service, selling of services, ensuring guests' satisfaction, handling in-house communication through private branch exchange, etc., as carried out by a Customer Service Agent, all boil down to proper information management. And these can only happen when there is availability of digital resources such as Internet service, storage facilities (hard drive, flash drive, compact disk, Google drive, etc.), POS machine, digital images, videos, audio and video, etc. Their advantages range from improving guest experience to enhancing operational efficiency of the Customer Service Agent. Digital resources availability can manifest in terms of internet connection and laptop and printing machine.

E-Records Management Skill and Customer Service Agents' Job performance

Tactical storage of electronic documents and other digital organizational materials saves cost and time for organizations and its employees, as well as making their retrieval very simple (Stiroh, 2015). To store electronic documents, an individual or organization does not need to worry about physical space, as only physical devices like hard drive, flash drive, compact disk, memory card, etc. and the Cloud (Google drive, for instance) are needed. These modes of storage are less expensive and very much coordinated than the use of a physical space in the paper form of information management, as paying and maintaining a physical space is more expensive than purchasing a storage device and

saving in the Cloud. It also saves time and as well simplifies document retrieval, even as less time is required to save and retrieve document from either the physical storage device or the Google drive. A Customer Service Agent working in a digitized Airlines in Port Harcourt is advantaged amongst other things, in skillfully dealing with storage of electronic contents and retrieving them as well. This implies that their job performance is tremendously enhanced by having cost and time saved for them and the organization, as a result of competently storing and retrieving documents electronically.

Furthermore, Robek et al. (2018) wrote that organizations achieve customer satisfaction and speedy service delivery as they choose to have their documents manipulated and stored in the computer for immediate and future use. It easy and fast for an organization that is business-minded to save and retrieve electronic documents, thereby leading to a host of satisfied customers who are ready to continue patronage even in the long future. The best way to have customers knitted to an organization is to give them good services that are pleasing to them. Employing this means of storage and retrieval of data and information by an organization truly saves ample time for the organization. This time saved, which can be interpreted as money, is used to handle other organizational functions, giving rise to additional service delivery. This is applicable even in the Airlines, as Customer Service Agents can save lots of time and also satisfy guests in their skillful utilization of electronic storage and retrieval of documents within their work space.

Divergently, when an organization decides to store their paper-based data electronically, there are usually vast amounts of data that need to be scanned and converted to a digital format (Rasheed, 2017). The hardware and software needed for this exercise does not come cheap, particularly when a company prefers to do everything in-house. Initial costs aside, a significant disadvantage with electronic systems is the relatively short shelf-life of both hardware and software. Hardware could require substitution in as little as 18 months while software changes every 2-3 years. Also, the increased information-sharing ability of an electronic records management system carries a substantial security risk. So, unless adequate measures are put in place to protect against hacks, confidential company information stored electronically may end up in the wrong hands.

Theoretical Review

This work is based on Person-Environment Fit Theory and Diffusion of Innovation Theory.

Person-Environment Fit Theory

This work is anchored on the Person-Environment Fit Theory of Lewin and Edwards, popularized in 1962 (Okolocha & Baba, 2017). Person-Environment Fit Theory of psychology describes the interaction between the person and environment ($P \times E$) as the key to comprehending people's cognitive and behavioural reactions such as job performance and productivity. The theory posits that a mismatch between a person and his work environment will lead to tension and uneasiness capable of hampering his level of job performance. The second tenet of this theory is that worker's capabilities (skill sets) will determine the level of work pressure and how environmental press affects their output. The theorist explained that the level of match between job demands and workers' capabilities (skills) to meet those demands is referred to as demands-ability fit (Cummings & Worley, 2008).

Information management facilities and applications require high level of skills to operate and where Customer Service Agents lack the required skill sets to operate and use the information management facilities and software applications, the job performance level of the Customer Service Agents tend to be low. Also, for Customer Service Agents to effectively operate and use information management facilities and applications, tasks given to them should be properly designed as software applications in the office understands and work with only clear instruction to perform a task.

The proponents of person-environment fit theory also argued that when there is a match or equilibrium between an employee's (a Customer Service Agent in this study) personality, skills and

the software applications used (e-mailing application, data processing software and e-document storage and retrieval software), it leads to optimal job performance. This aspect of the theory amplifies the fact that the individual digital skill level of an average Customer Service Agent can moderate the level of collaboration between him and the digital facilities and software applications in his job post which can lead to his effectiveness in the discharge of his diverse functions and overall productivity of the organization.

The adoption of person-environment fit theory as the major theoretical framework for this study is predicated on the fact that the theory describes the interactions and relationship between a worker and his working environment (digital resources and software applications) and how it affects the level of strain he/she experiences on the job. It also recognizes individual digital skill can moderate the collaboration between Customer Service Agent and the office applications (technology) in his office environment. Thus, the need for the Customer Service Agent to acquire the necessary skills so as to be able to perform effectively and efficiently to the enhancement of his job role, as well as the growth of the entire organization.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The explanatory cross-sectional survey research design was adopted for the study. The research design was deemed suitable and most appropriate for this study because of two reasons: (i) the study was conducted across different Airlines in Port Harcourt at the same time (which makes it a survey study) (ii) it involved the test of hypotheses which is exploratory in nature.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of ninety-five (95) full-time Customer Service Agents (Receptionists and Administrative Officers) of 8 Airlines in Port Harcourt. Information regarding the population was obtained through personal inquiry at the Human Resource Office of the Airlines. Details of the population are provided in table 3.1 overleaf.

Sample/Sampling Techniques

No further sampling was done, since the population appears to be small. Thus, the study was a census research which entails using the entire population. Therefore, the population of 95 Customer Service Agents remained the study's sample.

Method of Data Analysis

The data presentation and analysis of the work was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20.0. Descriptive statistical tools such as arithmetic mean, charts, and frequency tables were used to conduct the univariate analysis (analysis of each of the sub-variables) while bivariate analyses (test of hypotheses) were done using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC). In testing the hypotheses, the following rules held in accepting or rejecting our null hypotheses. All the coefficient (r) values that indicate levels of significance (* or **) as calculated using SPSS will be accepted and when no significance is indicated in the coefficient (r) value we will reject the null hypotheses. We set out confidence interval at 0.05 level of significance to test the statistical significance of this study. We will use both the significance values and the coefficient values. For the coefficient values, the following interpretation scheme will be applied: (a) No Relationship = 0, (b) Low/Weak Relationship = 0.1-0.2, (c) Moderate or Relatively Strong Relationship = 0.3-0.5, (d) High/Strong Relationship = 0.6-0.7, (e) Very High/Very Strong Relationship = 0.8-0.9, (f) Perfect Relationship = 1.

Results

E-records management skill and Customer Service Agents' Job Performance

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between E-records management skill and information tracking by Customer Service Agents in Airlines in Port Harcourt.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between E-records management skill and good office relations by Customer Service Agents in Airlines in Port Harcourt.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between E-records management skill and effective information dissemination by Customer Service Agents in Airlines in Port Harcourt.

Correlations between E-records management skill and Customer Service Agents' Job Performance

			E-records management skill	Information Tracking	Good Office Relations	Effective Information Dissemination
Pearson	E-records management skill	Correlation	1.000	.956**	.579**	.758**
		Coefficient				
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	Information Tracking	N	90	90	90	90
		Correlation	.956**	1.000	.850**	.509**
		Coefficient				
	Good Office Relations	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	90	90	90	90
		Correlation	.579**	.850**	1.000	.730**
	Effective Information Dissemination	Coefficient				
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	90	90	90	90

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

Source: SPSS Output, 2024

Column two of table above shows r value of 0.956 at a significance level of 0.000 which is greater than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating E-records management skill and information tracking. Since the significant value is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho₁) which states that there is no significant relationship between E-records management skill and information tracking by Customer Service Agents in Airlines in Port Harcourt is rejected. This implies that there is a very strong positive relationship between E-records management skill and information tracking by Customer Service Agents in Airlines in Port Harcourt. The correlation value of 0.956 indicates that the correlation is a very strong one.

Column three of table above shows r value of 0.579 at a significance level of 0.000 which is greater than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating -document storage/retrieval skill and good office relations. Since the significance value is greater than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho₂) which states that there is no significant relationship between E-records management skill and good office relations by Customer Service Agents in Airlines in Port Harcourt is rejected. This implies that E-records management skill has moderate positive relationship with good office relations by Customer Service Agents in Airlines in Port Harcourt.

Column four of table above shows r value of 0.758 at significance value of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating E-records management skill and effective information dissemination. Since the significant value is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) which states that there is no significant relationship between E-records management skill and effective information dissemination by Customer Service Agents in Airlines in Port Harcourt is rejected. This implies that there is a strong positive relationship between E-records management skill and effective information dissemination by Customer Service Agents in Airlines in Port Harcourt. Thus, the correlation value of 0.758 indicates that the correlation is a strong/high one.

These results show that being skillful in E-records management skill as a Customer Service Agent enhances one's job performance, especially in terms of information tracking, good office relations, and effective information dissemination.

E-Records Management Skill and Customer Service Agents' Job Performance

The test of hypotheses seven, eight and nine revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between E-Records Management Skill and Customer Service Agents' job performance in Port Harcourt. This simply means that effective information dissemination, information tracking, and healthy interpersonal interactions all benefit from the skillful preservation and recovery of electronic data. Office assistants who are skilled in the use of Word programs have demonstrated to be effective in providing and locating data and information whenever necessary, according to Robek *et al.* (2018), who support this claim. This suggests that utilizing a computer to save and retrieve documents makes it easier to find the information you're looking for, fosters good relationships with coworkers because it's easier to take care of them all using your job responsibilities, and speeds up information transmission. An individual or organization does not need to be concerned about physical space for storing electronic documents because only physical devices, such as hard drives, flash drives, compact disks, memory cards, etc., and the cloud (such as Google Drive), are required. These methods of storage are more cost-effective and well-coordinated than using a physical location for paper information management since buying a storage device and storing data in the cloud is less expensive than renting or buying a physical location. And because these electronic documents are stored and retrieved with expertise, it is no longer difficult to keep an eye on them at all times. For instance, even if one cannot recall the precise location where a document is saved, one can easily track it down by knowing the document's name or a handful of its keywords. If a simple search utilizing a document's file name or a few words from it can aid in document tracking, it follows that effective storage and retrieval will perform better.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the analysis, the study came to the conclusion that E-record management improves their job performance within Airlines and sister organizations, as these organizations benefit from efficient information dissemination, positive office relationships, and improved information tracking.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Customer Service Agents should make keen effort in properly editing and formatting information to ensure they promptly circulate accurate information.
2. Management should equip offices with modern modems, laptops, desktops, printers, scanners, etc., and as well train front desk staff to maximize the speed at which information is processed and circulated.
3. To continually improve their job performance, especially in the area of efficient information dissemination, front desk agents should make personal development efforts to learn and update their information management abilities.

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