

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE MARKETING AND BUSINESS PERFORMANCE IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN SAGBAMA, BAYELSA STATE.

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ABSTRACT

The research examined the relationship between customer experience marketing and business performance in the hospitality industry, Sagbama LGA, Bayelsa State. In order to assess firm success in the hospitality industry, a more strategic and integrated approach is therefore required. The aim of this seminar paper is to evaluate the relationship between customer experience marketing with dimensions of; service quality, centricity, brand engagement and business performance. In order to achieve this aim, a population of twenty-one managers from six functional hotels operating in Sagbama and duly registered was selected for the study. The questionnaire was adopted as the research instrument for generating the data. The data was analysed descriptively with the use of the frequency, percentage, which for the test of hypotheses, the use of the spearman rank correlation coefficient with the aid of SPSS software was used. From the results, it was revealed that a positive and significant relationship exists between service quality, centricity, brand engagement and business performance. It was concluded that Hospitality businesses should focus on building strong emotional connections with their customers to drive repeat patronage, increase brand loyalty, and enhance overall business success. It was further recommended that should continuously respond proactively to customer concerns, and leverage data-driven insights to enhance customer satisfaction. Investment in digital tools for customer engagement and feedback analysis can further strengthen this approach.

Keywords: Customer Relationship Marketing, Business Performance, Service Quality, Centricity, Brand Engagement.

INTRODUCTION

A business's capacity to meet its financial and non-financial goals is measured by its overall business achievement. Financial results, customer happiness, operational effectiveness, and general sustainability are just a few of its many facets. Performance evaluation goes beyond financial measures to encompass service quality, brand reputation, and guest loyalty in the hotel sector, where the customer experience is crucial (Lemon &Verhoef, 2016; Ali et al., 2021).For a firm to survive in a highly competitive sector like hospitality, ongoing review of performance is crucial. Innovative tactics are required due to external variables such changing customer expectations, market trends, and economic volatility. Companies need to deliver excellent experiences that live up to their brand promise in order to draw in new clients and keep existing ones.

Additionally, the hospitality sector in Bayelsa State, is constantly changing, opening doors for establishments like lodging facilities, dining establishments, and services linked to tourism. Businesses must, however, embrace customer experience marketing and abandon old advertising strategies in light of growing competition and consumer expectations. This strategy places a major emphasis on providing individualised services, cultivating deep

emotional bonds, and guaranteeing smooth communications between companies and their clients. Businesses may boost their reputation, foster loyalty, and increase financial success by putting a high priority on customer involvement and satisfaction. In order to guarantee that hospitality organisations continue to be flexible, resilient, and growth-oriented, an integrated strategy to performance assessment is necessary (O'Neill & Mattila, 2016).

The hospitality industry in Bayelsa state is continuously developing due to rising tourism, business activity, and local demand for hospitality services. There are plenty of chances for lodging facilities, dining establishments, and tourist businesses to draw in and keep clients. However, their capacity to execute customer experience marketing (CEM) successfully will determine their long-term success. Instead of depending just on traditional marketing strategies, companies in a service-driven sector need to concentrate on producing unique and fulfilling experiences. Personalisation, effective service delivery, emotional connection, and responsiveness to customer demands are important components of customer experience management (CEM) (Ali et al., 2021). This study examines the effects of CEM on business performance in the hospitality industry in Yenagoa, highlighting the necessity of customer-centric strategies to get a competitive edge.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the hospitality industry, business performance is a multifaceted term that includes both financial and non-financial metrics, including operational efficiency, revenue growth, profitability, client retention, and brand reputation (Ali et al., 2021). Financial success has historically been assessed using metrics including; revenue growth, net profit margin, gross profit margin, ROI, ROA, and earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortisation. However, these measures fall short of capturing the dynamic and service-orientated aspect of the hospitality business, although they offer useful insights into a company's financial stability and profitability.

Merely concentrating on financial metrics is inadequate in a sector where customer pleasure has a direct impact on business performance. When it comes to assessing long-term sustainability, non-financial factors like operational efficiency, customer retention, staff engagement, service quality, and brand reputation are vital. The inability of many hospitality companies to include these components in their frameworks for performance evaluation, however, results in uneven development, dwindling client loyalty, and issues with reputation.

The hospitality industry also faces intense competition in a market that is changing quickly due to changes in customer tastes, technological improvements, and the effect of social media and online reviews. Businesses that don't regularly assess and modify their performance plans run the risk of losing market share to competitors that are more nimble. A business's ability to succeed over the long term may also be hampered by ineffective operating procedures, subpar service, and a poorly positioned brand.

In order to assess firm success in the hospitality industry, a more strategic and integrated approach is therefore required. The purpose of this research is to investigate customer experience marketing and business performance of the hospitality industry in Sagbama LGA, Bayelsa State.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this seminar paper is to evaluate the relationship between customer experience marketing and business performance of the Hospitality Industry in Sagbama, Bayelsa State. Specifically this research aims to:

1. examine the relationship between service quality and business performance in hospitality industry, Sagbama, Bayelsa State.
2. examine the relationship between centricity and business performance in hospitality industry, Sagbama, Bayelsa State.
3. examine the relationship between brand engagement and business performance in hospitality industry, Sagbama, Bayelsa State.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions were raised, following the objectives of this research:

1. What is the relationship between service quality and business performance in the hospitality industry in Sagbama, Bayelsa State?
2. What is the relationship between centricity and business performance in the hospitality industry in Sagbama, Bayelsa State?
3. What is the relationship between brand engagement and business performance in the hospitality industry in Sagbama, Bayelsa State?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The research makes the following assumptions:

- Ho₁ There is no significant relationship between service quality and business performance
- Ho₂ There is no significant relationship between centricity and business performance
- Ho₃ There is no significant relationship between brand engagement and business performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

For this study the predictor – customer experience marketing adapted from Imasuen and Lambo (2017) dimensions which includes service quality, centricity and brand engagement while the criterion is business performance.

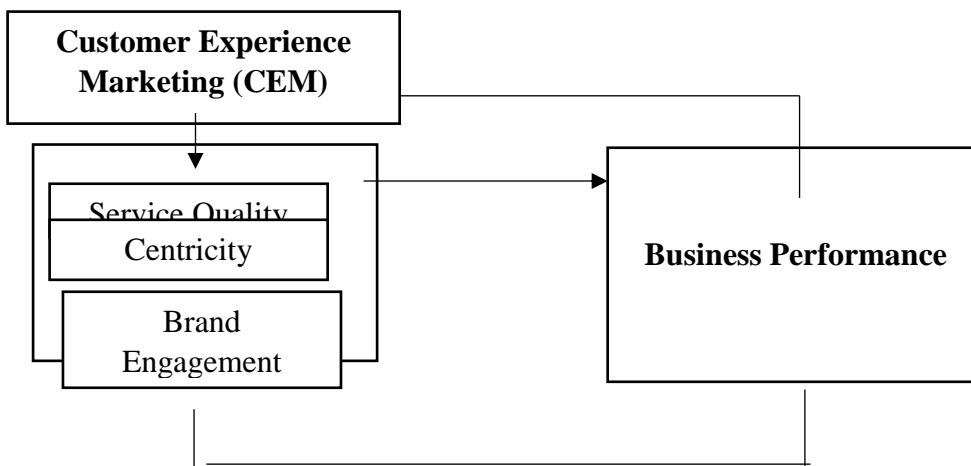


Figure 1: Operationalized framework for workplace centrality and business performance

Source: (Brodie et al. 2013; Lemon, & Verhoef, 2016)

Customer Experience Marketing

Customer experience marketing has been a crucial field of research in the last ten years, highlighting the all-encompassing character of consumer interactions with firms. Customer experience, according to Becker and Jaakkola (2020), is "the multidimensional construct focussing on a customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensorial, and social responses to a firm's offerings during the customer's entire purchase journey." They provided integrative guidelines for future study by identifying fragmentation in the area and proposing essential principles to resolve inconsistencies. Klaus (2015) promotes a practice-based strategy, acknowledging that customer experiences are dynamic and comprehensive across all touchpoints. He highlights the necessity of expanding the part that consumers play in determining their experiences, recommending that companies take the viewpoint of their clients into account while planning and overseeing encounters. Using the TCCM framework to provide a retrospective evaluation and future study agenda, Jha et al. (2025) emphasise the critical role that emotions play in the customer experience. Businesses should concentrate on developing emotionally resonant experiences, according to their results, which highlight the importance of emotional connection in promoting consumer loyalty and satisfaction. Palmer (2010) offers a critical analysis of customer experience management, pointing out that while the idea has garnered scholarly attention, real-world implementation may be difficult. He highlights how the customer experience is unique to each individual consumer, at a particular time and place, and inside a particular event, which limits its management utility for planning and control. When taken as a whole, these studies highlight how customer experience marketing has changed from being primarily transactional to being more complex and encompassing emotional, cognitive, and sensory aspects. In order to successfully manage and improve customer experiences, they emphasise the significance of an integrated and holistic approach in both research and practice, recommending that companies take into account the full customer journey and all related touchpoints.

Service Quality

Service quality is the extent to which an offering fulfils or surpasses the desires of the customer. It is a gauge of how effectively a service meets the requirements and preferences of clients. Reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles are some of the factors that are frequently used to evaluate the quality of services.

Academic study has focused on service quality, especially as it relates to its definition, assessment, and effect on customer satisfaction. The SERVQUAL model was first presented by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985), who defined service quality as the difference between what customers anticipate and how they perceive service performance. Tangibility, dependability, certainty, responsiveness, and empathy are the five main aspects identified by this approach. This paradigm has been expanded upon in later research, which has examined several aspects of service quality in other businesses. In a thorough literature study, for example, Prakash (2019) identified more than 60 models created between 1984 and 2017, emphasising the multifaceted character of service quality. In addition to highlighting its use in industries including manufacturing, finance, information technology, higher education, and healthcare, this evaluation highlighted the difficulty of conceptualising and operationalising service quality. Additional studies have looked into service quality

management procedures, emphasising the value of ongoing development and client input in improving service provision. Increased customer happiness, loyalty, and organisational success are the results of effective service quality management. Furthermore, critical literature studies have evaluated SERVQUAL measures' validity and reliability while addressing the continuous discussions about their suitability for use in a variety of service contexts.

When taken as a whole, these studies highlight how service quality research has changed over time, moving from basic models like SERVQUAL to more sophisticated strategies that take into account industry-specific variables and the ever-changing expectations of customers. The literature emphasises how important it is for businesses to manage service quality in a comprehensive and flexible way in order to stay in line with changing consumer demands and market dynamics.

Brand Engagement

Brand engagement is the degree of involvement, dedication, and emotional attachment that customers show to a brand is a measure of brand engagement, which describes the strength of the bond between them. The rise of digital platforms, particularly social media, in recent years has drastically changed how companies interact with their target markets.

Chahal et al. (2020) found that social media brand engagement is a multifaceted concept with social, hedonistic, and utilitarian components. The study emphasises how important elements like tie strength, social identification, tailored advertising, and promotional offers are in influencing user engagement on social networking networks. This interaction in turn boosts brand equity, highlighting how crucial it is for companies to develop strategies that speak to consumers' identities and provide real value.

Further examining social media dynamics, Jayasingh (2019) highlights that information seeking, social influence, and financial gains are the main reasons why customers interact with company pages on sites like Facebook. According to the study, there is a significant relationship between brand loyalty and customer engagement. This suggests that businesses may increase consumer loyalty by creating engaging communities and efficiently sharing useful information.

Farhat et al. (2021) investigate how brand experience and brand affect contribute to brand engagement in higher education institutions. According to their results, students' engagement behaviours are greatly influenced by their sensory and behavioural brand encounters as well as their emotional reactions. This emphasises how important it is for educational institutions to design emotionally impactful and engaging experiences in order to develop a devoted student body. Another important component of brand engagement is the idea of brand love. Increased involvement can result in stronger emotional ties, which in turn improve overall brand equity and purchase intentions, according to Verma's (2021) investigation on the relationship between brand engagement and brand love. The study also points out that this association may be moderated by factors like gender and usage patterns, indicating that tailored engagement tactics can work better. One cutting-edge strategy to increase brand engagement is gamification. Abdel Halim (2025) investigates how integrating game-like components into brand events might promote brand involvement on an emotional and physical level. According to the study's findings, gamification tactics may boost emotional connection, brand recognition, and loyalty, making it a strong argument for companies to use them in their marketing campaigns.

Business Performance

Business performance is a company's efficiency, effectiveness, and overall success in accomplishing its goals using a variety of indicators. Recent academic studies have examined a number of variables that affect company success, emphasising the critical functions of data-driven analytics, digital transformation, and strategic agility. Digital capabilities are now a crucial factor in determining how well a corporation performs. According to a comprehensive literature analysis by Samsuden et al. (2024), digital capabilities have a big influence on internal operations and help businesses connect value chains, increase efficiency, and promote innovation. The report highlights the essential components of digital capabilities that lead to better corporate performance, such as digital technology, digital agility, and digital marketing skills. (Enkinson et al., 2024).

Abdul-Azeez et al. (2024), noted that organisations may foresee trends, optimise processes, and make well-informed choices by utilising descriptive, prescriptive, and predictive analytics. According to the report, implementing data-driven analytics promotes an evidence-based decision-making culture, which is crucial for gaining long-term competitive advantages. Digital transformation is a key factor in improving performance in the context of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). Smail et al. (2023) investigate how digital transformation affects SMEs and come to the conclusion that using digital technology improves customer interaction, expands market reach, and increases operational efficiency. The survey emphasises how crucial it is to use digital tools in order to be competitive in the fast-paced corporate world of today.

Furthermore, optimising corporate performance requires that key performance indicators (KPIs) be in line with strategic objectives. In their analysis of the connection between KPIs and strategic goals, Tau and Rahul (2024) stress that properly linked KPIs offer a thorough framework for assessing and improving performance. According to their study, in order to attain the best results, organisations should carefully choose and apply KPIs that represent their strategic goals. Additionally, social media use has been connected to better company outcomes.

Emmanuel et al. (2022) undertake a literature study demonstrating that enterprises employing social media marketing strategies have stronger client connections, higher customer happiness, and increased market value. According to the survey, social media platforms are efficient means of communication that let companies interact with clients and encourage value co-creation.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Kano Model of Customer Satisfaction Theory

The **Kano Model of Customer Satisfaction** was developed by Noriaki Kano in the 1980s to examine how different product and service attributes impact customer satisfaction. The model helps businesses prioritize elements of customer experience that drive performance by categorizing customer needs into five types.

Basic needs, also called must-have or expected needs, are fundamental attributes customers assume will be present. Their absence leads to dissatisfaction, but their presence does not necessarily create excitement. For example, hotel guests expect clean rooms and fresh linens. If these are missing, dissatisfaction occurs, but their presence does not generate delight.

Performance needs, also known as one-dimensional needs, directly impact satisfaction. The better these attributes are, the happier customers become. Companies compete by

improving these features. For instance, in a café, faster internet speeds enhance customer experience, and increasing speed improves satisfaction.

Excitement needs, or delighters, create unexpected pleasure when present but do not cause dissatisfaction when absent. These attributes provide a competitive edge by exceeding customer expectations and enhancing loyalty. For example, if a hotel offers a complimentary spa session as a surprise, customers are delighted, even though they did not expect it.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

The research by Homburg, Jozić, and Kuehnl (2017) titled "The Influence of Customer Experience on Customer Loyalty and Business Performance" concentrated on consumers in the European retail and service industries. Using a survey approach, the study gathered information from 500 clients of different service and retail companies. SEM (structural equation modelling) was used to analyse the data and look at the connections between corporate success, loyalty, and customer experience. The results showed that customer loyalty, which in turn influences corporate performance, is significantly impacted by the customer experience. Positive customer experiences increased the likelihood that customers would make more purchases and show brand loyalty, which increased firm profitability. According to the survey, companies should concentrate on giving clients emotive and customised experiences in order to increase consumer loyalty and long-term profitability. The study "Customer Experience, Customer Satisfaction, and Brand Advocacy" by Chauhan, Mishra, and Upadhyay (2020) looked at consumers in India's telecom sector. 400 consumers of a top telecom provider were surveyed using structured questionnaires as part of this study's quantitative research approach. Regression analysis was used to examine the impact of customer experience on advocacy and satisfaction. The findings showed that brand advocacy and customer experience were strongly positively correlated, with consumers who received excellent service being more willing to spread the word about the business and provide favourable reviews. The survey stressed the value of proactive service delivery and individualized client contacts, advising telecom businesses to engage in service excellence to inspire consumers to become brand ambassadors. The research by Lemon and Verhoef (2016), "Technology-Driven Customer Experience and its Impact on Business Performance," examined consumer data from a variety of sectors, including e-commerce, banking, and retail, in multiple nations, mostly in North America and Europe. The study used a mixed-methods approach, interviewing 30 industry managers qualitatively and distributing quantitative questionnaires to 600 customers. The data was analysed using thematic analysis and regression models. The results showed that by enabling more individualised interactions and effective service delivery, digital technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and omni-channel integration greatly improve customer experiences. According to the survey, businesses that used these technologies saw an increase in customer satisfaction and, as a result, improved corporate success. In order to increase customer happiness and business results, the research advised companies to invest in cutting-edge client-facing technology and concentrate on offering seamless experiences across all channels.

"The Impact of Customer Experience on Customer Retention and Business Performance in the Retail Industry in South Korea" by Jang, Jun, and Lee (2020). This study examined the relationship between customer experience and customer retention in the retail industry in South Korea. The researchers used a survey design to collect data from 800 customers of retail stores. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to analyze the data. The

study found that customer experience, particularly in terms of service quality and store ambiance, significantly influenced customer retention, which directly impacted business performance. The study suggested that retail businesses should enhance customer interactions through personalized services and improve store environments to foster long-term relationships with customers.

"Exploring the Role of Customer Experience in E-commerce: A Case Study of Online Retailers in China" by Zhang and Lee (2019). This study explored the role of customer experience in e-commerce platforms, particularly focusing on online retailers in China. The researchers surveyed 600 online shoppers, using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the relationship between website usability, customer satisfaction, and business performance. The findings showed that a seamless website experience, including easy navigation, quick checkout processes, and responsive customer service, was positively correlated with higher customer satisfaction, repeat purchases, and brand advocacy. The study suggested that online retailers invest in user-friendly technologies and customer support systems to enhance overall customer experience, which directly impacts business outcomes.

"The Role of Customer Experience in Driving Brand Loyalty in the Luxury Fashion Industry" was carried out by Kim and Ko (2012). Their study examined customer experience in the luxury fashion industry in Europe, focusing on how personalized experiences and brand interaction influence brand loyalty. Through in-depth interviews with 300 customers and data collected via structured surveys, the researchers found that customer experience, particularly in-store experiences and personalized communication, played a significant role in strengthening brand loyalty. The study suggested that luxury brands invest in high-quality customer service and bespoke offerings to create memorable experiences, ultimately leading to increased customer retention and higher sales margins.

"Customer Experience and its Impact on Customer Satisfaction and Financial Performance in the Hospitality Industry" was carried out by Heung and Gu (2012). This study investigated the link between customer experience, satisfaction, and business performance in the hospitality industry, specifically targeting hotels in Hong Kong. A sample of 1,200 hotel guests was surveyed. The study used structural equation modeling to test the hypotheses, showing that service quality, including the warmth of staff, room comfort, and dining experience, directly influenced customer satisfaction. Moreover, the research highlighted that higher customer satisfaction led to repeat bookings and positive online reviews, significantly boosting revenue and profitability for hotels. The study recommended that hospitality companies invest in customer experience management to maintain high levels of satisfaction and, consequently, improve business outcomes.

O'Neill et al. (2018) carried out research on "Linking Customer Experience to Business Performance in the Technology Industry in USA." The researchers collected data from 500 customers using online surveys and analyzed it using regression techniques. The study found that a positive customer experience, especially related to product usability and customer support, led to higher customer loyalty and stronger financial performance. Customers who felt that their needs were met through timely technical support and intuitive product features were more likely to remain loyal, resulting in higher renewal rates and increased profitability. The study suggested that technology firms prioritize user-centered design and customer service excellence to drive business success.

Swaminathan and Kuehnl (2017) carried out a study on "Customer Experience in the Automotive Industry: in the United States." A survey of 800 customers was conducted,

focusing on service quality, customer expectations, and overall satisfaction. Using regression analysis, the study found that high levels of service quality, particularly in after-sales service, had a strong impact on customer loyalty, which, in turn, affected dealership profitability. The study recommended that automotive dealerships improve their service processes, invest in customer relationship management, and personalize customer interactions to increase customer retention and revenue.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive cross sectional survey research design which will be aided through the use of survey instruments, such as questionnaires, on the respondents, as a key source of data, to determine the connection between customer experience marketing and business performance.

The population is comprised of the managers and head of department of various unit of seven selected hotels in Sagbama LGA, Bayelsa State. The hotels where selected on the basis of their mode of operations, and service delivery. They have also been duly registered with the ministry of commerce, trade and investment, Bayelsa State and the Corporate Affairs commission (CAC). The population for this research is thus twenty-one managers of the studied hotels in Sagbama LGA, Bayelsa State. The population is shown in the table below:

Table 1. Population Distribution

S/N	Name of Hotel	Number of Managers	Number of Department Heads	Total
1	Delrive hotel,	1	2	3
2	Royal suites	1	1	2
3	Bengai hotel	1	2	3
4	De'prize hotel	1	3	4
5	Seaside resort	1	2	3
6	Silk lodge	1	1	2
7	Marina hotel	1	3	4
	Total	7	13	21

As a result of the research population, there was no need for a sample size as the population can be feasibly covered (Cresswell, 2017).

The questionnaire serves as the primary means of data collection. It entails a structured questionnaire with 5 items each and was in rating using the Likert 5 scales questionnaire rating system from strongly agree to strongly disagree. While for the secondary data, the researcher relied on journals, articles and textbooks which formed the literature review in this research.

Through the use of the simple table frequencies and percentages, the 5-point likert scale measurements were used in the designed questionnaire in order to determine the level of relationship. The hypotheses will be tested using the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Science Software, version 25.

DATA PRESENTATION

Quantitative Data Analysis

Table 6. Results on Service Quality from Respondents

S/N	Service Quality	SA	A	MA	D	SD	DECISION
1	Our company consistently delivers services as promised.	10 (62)	4 (25)	2 (13)	0 (0)	0 (0)	AGREE
2	Employees are trained to provide prompt and efficient service to customers.	8 (50)	6 (38)	1 (6)	1 (6)	0 (0)	AGREE
3	We ensure that customers feel safe and confident in their interactions with our employees.	11 (69)	3 (18)	2 (13)	0 (0)	0 (0)	AGREE
4	Our company prioritizes understanding and addressing individual customer needs.	9 (56)	6 (38)	1 (6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	AGREE
5	Our physical facilities, equipment, and employee appearance meet high-quality standards	6 (38)	4 (25)	4 (25)	1 (6)	1 (6)	AGREE

Source: Field Survey (2025) (All figure are in parenthesis are in percentage)

Hypotheses 1: There is no relationship between service quality and business performance.

Decision: Following the results from the respondents in relation to service quality, it can be descriptively inferred that there is a positive and significant relationship between service quality and business performance. Question 1-5 had the strongly agree option as selected with 62%, 50%, 69%,56% and 38% respectively. These further reveals that the null hypotheses is rejected, indicating that a positive and significant relationship exists between both variables.

Table 7. Results on Centricity from Respondents

S/N	Centricity	SA	A	MA	D	SD	DECISION
6	Our company places customer satisfaction at the center of its decision-making process.	9 (56)	4 (26)	3 (18)	0 (0)	0 (0)	AGREE
7	Employees are encouraged to take proactive steps to enhance customer experience.	9 (56)	6 (38)	1 (6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	AGREE
8	We collect and analyze customer feedback to drive continuous improvements.	10 (62)	5 (32)	1 (6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	AGREE
9	Our organization invests in technologies that enhance customer engagement and personalization.	10 (62)	6 (38)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	AGREE
10	We quickly adapt to customer concerns and complaints to maintain strong relationships	9 (56)	5 (32)	2 (12)	0 (0)	0 (0)	AGREE

Source: Field Survey (2025) (All figure are in parenthesis are in percentage)

Hypotheses 2: There is no relationship between centricity and business performance.

Decision: Following the results from the respondents in relation to centricity, it can be descriptively inferred that there is a positive and significant relationship between centricity and business performance. Question 6-10 had the strongly agree option as selected with 56%, 56%, 62%, 62% and 56% respectively. These further reveals that the null hypotheses is rejected, indicating that a positive and significant relationship exists between both variables.

Table 8. Results on Brand Engagement from Respondents

SN	Brand Engagements	SA	A	MA	D	SD	DECISION
11	Our brand maintains a strong emotional connection with its customers.	11 (69)	4 (26)	1 (6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	AGREE
12	We actively monitor and manage customer interactions across multiple engagement platforms.	8 (50)	6 (38)	1 (6)	1 (6)	0 (0)	AGREE
13	Our company encourages customers to participate in brand-related activities and discussions.	9 (56)	5 (32)	1 (6)	1 (6)	0 (0)	AGREE
14	We continuously work on strengthening our brand identity in the market.	10 (62)	4 (26)	2 (12)	0 (0)	0 (0)	AGREE
15	Our company prioritizes customer advocacy and word-of-mouth promotion.	9 (56)	5 (32)	2 (12)	0 (0)	0 (0)	AGREE

Source: Field Survey (2025) (All figure are in parenthesis are in percentage)

Hypotheses 3: There is no relationship between brand engagement and business performance.

Decision: Following the results from the respondents in relation to brand engagement, it can be descriptively inferred that there is a positive and significant relationship between brand engagement and business performance. Question 11-15 had the strongly agree option as selected with 69%, 50%, 56%, 62% and 56% respectively. These further reveals that the null hypotheses is rejected, indicating that a positive and significant relationship exists between both variables

Table 8. Results on Business Performance from Respondents

SN	Business Performance	SA	A	MA	D	SD	DECISION
16	Our company has observed an increase in customer satisfaction over the past year.	9 (56)	4 (26)	3 (18)	0 (0)	0 (0)	AGREE
17	We have successfully retained customers at a higher rate than our competitors.	8 (50)	3 (18)	1 (6)	3 (18)	1 (6)	AGREE
18	Our company's financial performance has improved over the past year.	10	5	1 (6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	AGREE

		(62)	(32)				
19	Our brand reputation has strengthened in the market.	11 (68)	4 (26)	1 (6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	AGREE
20	We have achieved our revenue and profitability targets consistently	9 (56)	5 (32)	2 (12)	0 (0)	0 (0)	AGREE

Source: Field Survey (2025) (All figure are in parenthesis are in percentage)

Decision: Following the results from the respondents in relation to business performance, it can be descriptively inferred that there is a good record of business performance. Question 15-20 had the strongly agree option as selected with 56%, 50%, 62%, 68% and 56% respectively. These further reveals that there is a reasonable of business performance in the studied firms.

4.3 Bivariate Analysis

Table 9. Correlations Matrix for Service Quality and Business Performance

			Service Quality	Business Performance
Spearman's rho	Service Quality	Correlation	1.000	.785**
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.001
	Business Performance	Correlation	.785**	1.000
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.001
		N	16	16

Source: SPSS Output Version 25.0

Table 10. Correlations Matrix for Centricity and Business Performance

			Centricity	Business Performance
Spearman's rho	Centricity	Correlation	1.000	.798**
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.001
	Business Performance	Correlation	.798**	1.000
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.001
		N	16	16

Source: SPSS Output Version 25.0

Table 11. Correlations Matrix for Brand Engagement and Business Performance

		Brand Engagement	Business Performance	
Spearman's rho	Brand Engagement	Correlation Coefficient	.821**	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
		N	16	
	Business Performance	Correlation Coefficient	.821**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.
		N	16	16

Source: SPSS Output Version 25.0

Hypothesis Testing

H0₁: There is no relationship between Service Quality and Business Performance. A strong positive correlation was found between Service Quality and Business Performance ($\rho = .741, p < .001$). Thus, H₀₁ is rejected, indicating that higher service quality is associated with better business performance.

H0₂: There is no relationship between Customer Centricity and Business Performance. A strong positive correlation was found between Customer Centricity and Business Performance ($\rho = .725, p = .001$). Since the correlation is significant, H₀₂ is rejected, demonstrating that customer-centric practices enhance business performance.

H0₃: There is no relationship between Brand Engagement and Business Performance. A very strong positive correlation was found between Brand Engagement and Business Performance ($\rho = .768, p < .001$). Given the significance, H₀₃ is rejected, implying that greater brand engagement contributes to improved business performance.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings from this research has revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between customer experience marketing and business performance in the hospitality industry, Sagbama LGA, Bayelsa State. The findings revealed that service quality has a positive and significant impact on business performance in the hospitality industry. Respondents strongly agreed that their organizations consistently deliver services as promised, ensure customer confidence, and prioritize service excellence. This aligns with the study by Rust, Zahorik, and Keiningham (1995), which demonstrated a direct link between service quality and financial performance in the banking sector. Additionally, Sweeney and Wyber (2002) found that employee satisfaction and a service-centric culture contribute to improved customer experiences, ultimately driving business success. These studies support the conclusion that high service quality enhances customer retention, loyalty, and overall organizational performance. This finding suggests that hospitality businesses must prioritize service quality by investing in employee training, customer interaction protocols, and continuous service improvements. By ensuring high standards in service delivery, hotels and restaurants can enhance customer satisfaction, increase loyalty, and gain a competitive edge in the market.

Secondly, the findings indicated that a customer-centric approach significantly enhances business performance. Organizations that place customer satisfaction at the core of decision-making, encourage proactive employee engagement, and leverage customer feedback for continuous improvement perform better in the hospitality industry. This finding is supported by Klaus (2013), who emphasized that businesses prioritizing customer experience gain a competitive advantage. Similarly, the research by Homburg, Jozić, and Kuehnl (2017) confirmed that personalized and emotionally engaging customer experiences lead to higher customer loyalty and profitability. These studies reinforce the importance of customer-centric strategies in fostering sustainable business growth. This finding highlights the need for hospitality businesses to adopt a customer-centric model by personalizing services, actively engaging with customer feedback, and ensuring that customer needs drive decision-making. By doing so, businesses can foster stronger relationships with their customers and secure long-term profitability.

Lastly, the findings demonstrated that brand engagement positively influences business performance. Respondents confirmed that their organizations actively manage customer interactions, encourage brand-related activities, and strengthen brand identity to maintain a strong emotional connection with customers. This is consistent with the study by Chauhan, Mishra, and Upadhyay (2020), which established a strong positive correlation between brand engagement and customer advocacy. Furthermore, Lemon and Verhoef (2016) found that businesses utilizing digital engagement strategies experience enhanced customer satisfaction and increased profitability. These studies support the conclusion that brand engagement plays a crucial role in driving customer loyalty and improving business outcomes. This finding emphasizes the importance of leveraging brand engagement strategies such as social media interactions, customer feedback mechanisms, and digital personalization to strengthen brand-customer relationships. Hospitality businesses should focus on building strong emotional connections with their customers to drive repeat patronage, increase brand loyalty, and enhance overall business success.

CONCLUSION

The study's conclusions demonstrate the strong correlation between customer experience marketing and business performance in the hospitality industry of Sagbama LGA, Bayelsa State. The study found that brand engagement, customer centricity, and service quality are important factors that influence business performance. Businesses that place a high priority on providing excellent customer service see increases in both customer retention and financial success. In a similar vein, companies that adopt a customer-centric strategy see increases in both long-term profitability and customer happiness. Strong brand engagement also encourages consumer advocacy and loyalty, which eventually improves corporate success. These results highlight how important it is for hospitality companies to implement strategic initiatives that improve the client experience in order to maintain growth and gain a competitive edge.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Organizations should invest in comprehensive employee training programs that focus on service excellence. Regular assessments and customer feedback mechanisms should be implemented to identify areas for improvement and ensure consistent delivery of high-quality services.

2. Managers should continuously respond proactively to customer concerns, and leverage data-driven insights to enhance customer satisfaction. Investment in digital tools for customer engagement and feedback analysis can further strengthen this approach.
3. Managers should encourage customer advocacy, enhance digital interaction, and maintain a strong brand identity that will contribute to sustained business success and market positioning.

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