

## CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION OF FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS IN PORT HARCOURT

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**Abstract:** *This study examined the relationship between customer relationship and customer satisfaction of Fast Food Restaurants in Port Harcourt. The cross-sectional research design was adopted by the researcher. The population of this study are customers of registered fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt. According to the Association of Fast Food and Confectionary of Nigeria (AFCON) Rivers State Branch, enlisted by the Rivers State Ministry of Commerce & Industry (Yellow Pages, 2016/2017) there are total of Fifty Two (52) registered and functional fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt. For convenience precision, the study therefore distributed two (2) copies of questionnaire each to these selected fast food restaurants to arrive at a total of 104 copies of questionnaire while convenience sampling techniques was adopted for this study. Spearman Rank Order Correlation Co-efficient was used to analyse and test the formulated hypotheses. The findings of the study established that a positive and significant relationship exist between the variables established that a positive and significant relationship exist between the variables. The study therefore concludes that the dimensions of customer relationship to a large extent influence customer satisfaction. It is therefore recommended that fast food restaurants should improve on their customer value which in turn increases customer satisfaction.*

**Keywords:** *Customer Value, Customer Interaction, Customer Commitment, Referrals.*

### Introduction

Fast food restaurants business is one of the fastest emergent and most lucrative in terms of revenue and size of the market in Nigeria with a population of over 160 million (Census, 2006 cited in Amue & Asiegbu, 2014) and an addressable market size of 73 million (Market Survey of Fast Food, 2019). Fast food restaurants is a business that provides cooked foods, normally packaged and kept hot for customers who either eat in the restaurants or purchase in take-away packs. In most cases, these foods are mostly cooked from a central location and distributed to the various outlets to ensure conformity to standards (Mustapha, Fakokunde, & Awolusi, 2014). This industry attracts both local and foreign firms to explore the marketplace. The Nigeria fast food market is highly competitive with major players, such as Mr. Biggs, Genesis, Kilimanjaro, Sammies, De promise, Tantalizers, Taste Fried Chicken, Sweet Sensation and Chicken Republic, Pepperoni, etc, accounting for greater percentage of the market. Industry players have gone beyond serving quick food to venturing into African delicacies. This strategy of capturing more markets has expanded the customer base of the industry over the past few years.

Due to the high level of competition, it becomes imperative to maintain and increase customer loyalty. One of the efforts made by fast food restaurants, among others, is indulging its customers

with various kinds of service quality, and further optimizes product attributes and customer services offered. This is done as a form of orientation in order to keep customers satisfied, and the long term partnership continuously and is also expected to engender repeat business (Cronin, Michael, Brady & Hult, 2000). The industry evolved significantly between the years 2000-2020 where the industry witnessed the influx of many more players resulting in a huge impact on the financial position of companies. Due to this fierce market competition and reduced profit level, all the players are trying to create maximum value for their customers.

Various strategies have been used by organisations in the past such as supply-push strategy to produce products and services with specifications to match customer specifications. This strategy later became inefficient and thus another strategy evolved. This new evolution was called demand-pull strategy that was aimed at producing products and services based on customer preferences. This product strategy also became replaced by customer centric strategy called customer relationship initiation. Customer relationship started as a feedback reversible reaction approach by treating different customers in different ways to achieve mutual benefits for the organisation and the customer. Customer relationship is expected to help the organisation to provide products and services according to customers' preferences and to increase loyalty. In all, it is expected to lower operational costs and increased revenue (Zong, 2008). Customer relationship has been defined as a business philosophy, a business strategy, and a business technology and as a coordinating strategy mediated by a set of information technologies, which focuses on creating two way communication with customers so firms can have an intimate knowledge of their needs, wants and buying patterns (Pedron & Saccol, 2009).

Today in fast paced global environment more competition requires more performance which pinpoint need to develop strong relationship. Ndubuisi (2004) argued that now firms are striving for more firm-customer relationships to gain competitive advantage to serve and keep customers away from competitors. Customer relationship is the process of building and maintaining profitable relations with customers by providing products that are valuable to consumers and create satisfied customers.

Customer relationship is the way companies build relationships with customers with the aim of maintaining customer loyalty and commitment for continual usage of the company's products (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). Customer relationship is a philosophy and a business strategy, supported by a system and a technology, designed to improve human interactions in a business environment (Wongsansukcharoen, Trimetsoontorn & Fongsuwan, 2013). Customer relationship requires communication between the company and related parties that support the company in business. Communication that exists is not a monologue or one way, but necessary dialogue involving two or more parties in the process of giving and receiving information. In addition, companies today must do direct communication. This is necessary considering the increase complexity of needs, desires and standards of quality that consumers want from the products required.

Parvatiyar and Sheth (2001) called out the need for a customer relationship definition that articulates customer relationship unique characteristics for example: one-on-one relationships, interactive processes not transactions, value-added activity through mutual interdependence, and collaboration between suppliers and customers. For the purpose of this research, Customer relationship will be defined as a set of business activities supported by both technology and processes that is directed by strategy and is designed to improve business performance in an area of customer management. This definition is consistent with our desire to shape the decision to invest in customer relationship in terms of a return on investment. To be specific, Customer relationship will not be conceptualized as a strategy, but rather as a means to achieve desired strategic goals. Customer relationship strategy, therefore, is not an overarching business salvo, but it is an enabler to help companies achieve improved customer relationships. It is based on this

background, that the study investigated the relationship between customer relationship and customer satisfaction of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt.

### Research Problem

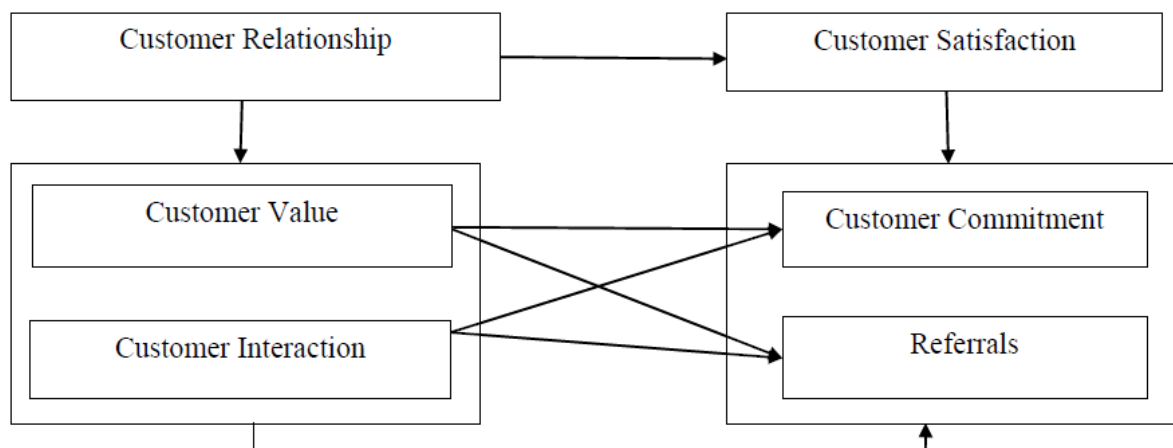
The growth of the fast-food sub-sector of the economy has grown reasonably to a whopping worth of over two hundred and fifty billion Naira with a forecasted growth, which was analysed to be next to the petroleum industry (Mathias & David, 2015). This industry has to its credit, the employment of over 6000 employees at all levels of production as well as sales. This is because Nigeria is an emerging market, which is also a fertile ground for economic and welfare development. Port Harcourt metropolis has been one of the major cities in Nigeria that have benefited from this growth in the fast-food sub-sector. In Port Harcourt, there are almost quarterly emergences of new fast food outlets within major areas of the town. The big players often attract the employees from smaller outlets and the rate of competition is getting very high and every outlet want to outshine the other. This has also been a factor affecting the retention of employees. The influx of new players in the sector has increased competition immensely thus, reducing profitability and other financial performance matrix. This is caused by low turn up in customer patronage through dissatisfaction experienced by the customers. This problem has lingered over the time causing poor customer commitment, negative referrals, poor retention and repeat purchase. It is based on the foregoing that the researcher investigated if there is relationship between customer relationship and customer satisfaction in fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt.

### Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between customer relationship and customer satisfaction of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt. The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the relationship between customer value and customer commitment.
2. Examine the relationship between customer value and referrals.
3. Examine the relationship between customer interaction and customer commitment.
4. Determine the relationship between customer interaction and referrals.

### Operational framework



**Figure. 1** Operational framework of customer relationship and customer satisfaction  
**Source:** Research Desk; as adapted from Antoine, (2016), Keiningham et al., (2015) and Wanjau (2011).

## Review of Literature

### Conceptual Review

#### Customer Relationship

Durvasula, Lysonski, and Mehta, (2004) define customer relationship as a business strategy which uses Information Communication Technology (ICT) to provide a comprehensive, reliable and integrated view of the customer base so that all processes and interactions can help maintain and expand mutually beneficial relationships. Customer relationship is defined by Chen and Popovich (2003) as an integrated approach for managing relationships by focusing on customer retention and relationship development and points out that customer loyalty and long profitability are the benefits of customer relationship to an organization. Moreover, Payne and Frow (2006) define customer relationship as a business approach which seeks to create, develop and enhance relationships with carefully targeted customers with an aim of improving customer value and corporate profitability thereby maximizing shareholders value.

From the outlined definitions and other available definitions, it is observed that providing value to the organization's customers is fundamental to achieving mutual beneficial relationships, customer loyalty and long corporate profitability while improving customer value. To this effect, this study will adopt Catalán-Matamoros (2012) definition of customer relationship as a combination of people, process and technology seeking to understand company customers. Matamoros additionally states that customer relationship is an integrated approach which manages relationships by focusing on customer retention and relationship development. This implies that a customer relationship oriented organization makes effort to efficiently and effectively create a synergy between people (internal and external customers), process and technology so as to create positive relationships with both its existing and potential customers.

Wang Po Lo, Chi, and Yang, (2010) affirm that successful customer relationship implementation focuses on keeping and maintaining long term relationship with customers which yields customer satisfaction and loyal customers. Loyal customers in turn contribute to the organization long run profitability. This is achieved as customers develop a sense of familiarity and social relationship with the organization thus making it difficult to switch to competitors.

Customer relationship is the process of building and maintaining profitable relations with customers by providing products that are valuable to consumers and create satisfied customers. Customer relationship is the way companies build relationships with customers with the aim of maintaining customer loyalty and commitment to continue to use the company's products is concerned (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). CRM is a philosophy and a business strategy, supported by a system and a technology, designed to improve human interactions in a business environment (Wongsansukcharoen et al., 2013). CRM is generally defined as the "management of mutually beneficial relationship(s) from the seller's perspective" (LaPlaca, 2004).

**Customer Value:** Value is all what a service is worth to a customer. According to Wang et al. (2004) customers evaluate service worth based on price and quality and only purchase that which gives the best value. Successful firms measure customer perceived value and use the results to design a suitable marketing mix which creates value to both the firm and its customers.

To determine what customers' values most, information about the customer is needed and that's where customer relationship comes in as it provides customers database. The database shows the customers consumption patterns which provides the organization with a guideline on how to create a value proposition which meets the target market needs.

To create superior customer value, the firm needs to provide the customer with the ability to directly communicate with the firm; meet their expectations, build good knowledge about a customer, improve experiences with the company develop an emotional bond with the customer (Wang et al., 2004). This study will measure customer value through customers perceived value and desired value. Customer value is also when firms try to identify which customers are valuable

and which customers are not. This is believed to benefit firms because once the firm knows which customers are valuable they are able to maximize their efforts in ensuring that their valuable customers remain happy at all times. This means that customers have to be divided into groups in order to fit them in their various segments (Wanjau, 2011). This however does not mean that other customers are neglected. According to Buttle (2009) a value chain model is used by organizations as a guideline to create customer value. This model consists of two levels the primary level and the secondary level. The primary level consists of 5 stages whereby at the first stage the firm carries out a customer portfolio analysis. This is a stage where company identifies the customers that are more desirable; Buttle (2009) argued that some customers are more desirable than others.

**Customer Interaction:** Customer interaction is a crucial and vital weapon for the success of any organization. Relationship brings about interaction between customers-employees, customer-customer, and these interactions are important areas of doing business, and without it, no business organization will survive in the business arena. Some customers could be complex to handle, but it is these interactions system that gets the organization to win that which brings about loyalty. According to Antoine (2016), customer interaction appears to become widespread through the mobile phones and the internet. He further stressed that customer interaction is complex and diverse in nature, which brings about a growing number of computerized and automated system. It has become complex as employees deals with non-automated situations.

Customer interaction is said to be a feeling of care, friendliness and communication between the customer and the organizational service provider. Schutz (1966), pointed out that customers from all works of life, has this need for interaction and relating with the service-provider (employees). He further claimed that, a relationship between an organization and its customers either at the initial stage, in establishing and maintenance phase depends largely on how the organization and its customers compliance with their interpersonal level of interaction. Schutz further posited that customer interaction demands acceptance, control and emotion by the customers. He further stressed that, the above three requirements are what customers look out for during interaction.

According to Brown and Gulycz (2002), if an organization willing to make a stable relationship with its customers, there are different ways to have an interaction with them including interaction along touch points and distribution channels. The interaction activities should be well customized and organized through the available touch points provide in relation to the customer profiles developed by data gathered from the former records of the customers. Peppers and Rogers (1997) stressed that the touch points must be used for distribution of different products, service, and communication with the customers. According to the works of Lindgreen, Palmer, and Vanhamme, (2006) and Peppers et al., (1999) interaction management is implemented by a few methods such as getting customers feedback and interaction with customers by attractive ways such as using social network. The most important activity to achieve relationship development is known as monitoring of the relationship management process such as service or complaint management (Brown & Gulycz, 2002).

Customer interaction is considered as a point of contact between the customer and company employees (Bitner, 1990). Several researchers evaluated the quality of customer interaction by the service employee competence, listening skills and levels of dedication (Keng, Huang, Zheng, & Hsu, 2007). Interactions during service delivery have been shown to have a significant impact on customer experience.

### **Customer Satisfaction**

Customer satisfaction as a conscious evaluation or cognitive assessment is to whether the performance of the product / service is relatively good or bad or whether the products / services are appropriate or not for their intended purpose. Satisfaction or dissatisfaction of customers is customer response to the discrepancy / disconfirmation perceived with previous expectations. Basically, the purpose of a business is to create satisfied customers. Customer satisfaction is a



function of expectations of the buyers of the products or services to the perceived performance (Goncalves, Renata & Alexandre, 2004).

Based on the disconfirmation paradigm, customer satisfaction is a post purchase evaluation in which the perception of the performance of the products or services that meet or exceed expectations selected. Satisfaction is the psychological state of a person's emotional state indicating disconfirmation or confirmation of the service delivered to the expectations and make the experience after consuming.

**Customer Commitment:** Commitment implies unwillingness to consider other partners other than those in the current relationship as well as the enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship (Moorman et al., 1992). Commitment has been defined as the parties' intentions to act and their attitudes towards interacting with each other (Storbacka et al., 1994; Liljander & Strandvik, 1995). Morgan & Hunt (1994) share the same opinion with Moorman et al., (1992) by characterizing commitment as follows: an exchange partner believing that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it; that is the committed party believes the relationship is worth working that it endures infinitely.

However, there is a gap between the definitions of customer commitment, the definition which brings out a clear explanation is the one by Moorman et al., (1992) which shows that there is an enduring desire to consider maintain a valued relationship between the parties involved. According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), commitment stems from trust, shared values, and the belief that it will be difficult to find partners that can offer the same value. Customer commitment encourages partners to collaborate in order to preserve investments in the relationship (Morgan & Hunt 1994). Rauyruen and Miller (2007) further define member commitment as "a psychological sentiment of the mind through which an attitude concerning continuation of a relationship with a business partner is formed".

Relationships are built on the foundation of mutual commitment, and the commitment level has been found to be the strongest predictor of the voluntary decision to pursue a relationship (Ibrahim & Najjar 2008). Members in the relationship identify commitment as the key endeavour to develop and maintain their relationship. A high level of commitment provides the context in which both parties can achieve individual and joint goals without fear of opportunistic behaviour. This is because more committed partners will exert effort and balance short-term problems with long-term goal achievement. Higher levels of commitment are expected with relationship success (Cai & Wheale, 2004).

**Referrals:** When an individual customer contributes to a service provider goal as a result of satisfaction derived from a product or service it is said to be referrals (Watlins & Liu, 1996). Referral or word of mouth constitutes an exchange of ephemeral oral or spoken message between a contagious source and recipient communicating directly in real life and a positive word of mouth may appear to have more impact than a well-researched printed source of product formation (Stern, 1994). Similarly researchers has accepted the fact that positive word of mouth has a tremendous influence on behaviour than other marketing communication source (Headley & Millier, 1993) and referral has help member obtain relevant and accurate information to meet specific needs through the help of market orientation. Gelb and Johnson (1995) said that word of mouth helps in creating awareness of an innovation and also help in securing a decision for customer to try the product.

A referral from existing customers permits the sales force of the organization to penetrate into markets which are untouchable (Ama, 2019). The author further suggested that, this strategic business potential of referrals is disregarded by organizations and very little attention has been given to it academically. She further highlighted that keeping high quality relationship with clients seems to boost their readiness to offer referrals. This leads to achievement of retained relationship.

As soon as clients expect continued dealings, the clients will be willing to respond by referring colleagues, family and friends to their organizations.

Also Ama (2019), advocate that when an organizations expects a customer relationship to transcend, then the current interaction should be fostered. Continuous communication with the same organization boosts customer willingness to refer others to their service providers. Based on the above academic literature reviewed, it is suggested that, when quality relationship exist between customers and their organizations, the relationship is sustained mainly by the distribution or sharing of information. Members then feel close and part of the organizations which boost their moral to provide referrals to their service providers. This happens mainly because members anticipate future interaction with their service providers.

### **Empirical Review and Hypotheses Development**

#### **Customer Relationship and Customer Satisfaction**

Feliks, and Panjaitan (2012), states companies that implement customer relationship properly will result increasing customer satisfaction. Kusnadi (2008) research results also showed that the customer relationship application helps companies to gain customer knowledge that helps companies improve customer satisfaction and this is supported also by studies Wetsch, (2006) that by using the theory of justice to investigate the potential impacts that could cause by the involvement of the customer in the customer relationship implementation to trust, satisfaction and customer loyalty (Kusnadi, 2008).

Munandar, (2011) state that customer relationship has positive and significant effects on customer loyalty, changes in the company's customer loyalty is directly caused by changes in the implementation of customer relationship (Munandar, 2011). This means that to increase customer loyalty needs to first implement CRM. The findings also indicate that the better customer relationship implemented by the company will increase the loyalty of the customers company business. This indicates customer loyalty need more companies' attention, because loyalty will ultimately affect the performance of the company.

Irrespective of wide contributions on customer relationship benefits, its successful implementation remains elusive to many organizations. Chen and Popovich (2003) point out that this has been caused by firms lack of understanding that customer relationship involves company-wide, cross-functional, customer-focused business process re-engineering than an undertaking in isolation. Moreover, Appiah-Kubi (2010) stresses that most organizations have failed to mainstream customer relationship benefits into their activities to enable them develop closer relationship with their customers thus failing in their customer relationship initiatives. There is some relevant literature focusing on service quality and customer satisfaction in ports (Ugboma, Ogwude, Ugboma, & Nnadi., 2007; Yeo, Thai, & Roh., 2015). Chi and Gursay (2009) study found a positive impact of customer satisfaction in firm's financial performance. Yüksel and Rimmington (1998) state that determining customer satisfaction is fundamental for effective delivery of services since it provides a firm with advantage over competitors.

#### **Customer Value and Customer Satisfaction**

It is conceptualized that customer relationship through quality services and customer value yields satisfied and loyal customers who in turn add to profits of the organization (Heskett et al., 2008). This is achieved as customers continually patronize port services and recommend good services to others. This is assumed to add to ports market share through good customers perceived value of service. This implies that port performance is determined by port management ability to build and maintain profitable customer relationship through delivering superior customer value and satisfaction to the customers. Therefore, customer relationship strategies are developed to provide port managers with sufficient knowledge regarding their customers' needs and facilitate quick response in terms of their continuous value creation and delivery. These propositions are

platforms of customer satisfaction. On basis of this review, this justifies the relationship provided for in the framework. Therefore, the study hypotheses are developed and tested as shown in table. According to Day (2003) an organization has to have the ability to retain and develop close relationships with customers. This helps the organization to know their customers and therefore create value once they know what their customers' preferences are. It enables organizations to provide specific products and services tailored to a specific customer. Study carried out by Wanjau (2011) showed that most organizations did not invest enough into research to understand how the customers should be recognized and uplifted.

Shy and Stenbacka (2011) pointed out that firms benefit from recognizing their customers' preferences regardless of whether the information is shared or not, but the exchange of information reduces gains from customers and customers prefer that they do not share information. Their study focused on how customer recognition contributes to profitability of the firm. Esteves (2008) carried out a study to show the competitive effects of price discrimination based on customer recognition, and concluded that the more the information the more intense competition becomes. Also Perreault and McCarthy (2002) believed that customer value involves a firm improving their marketing efforts by gathering detailed information and using this information to create value, establish a good relationship with customers and therefore increase profits. An insight on who is buying from you helps determine customers' tastes and preferences (Vyas & Sina, 2008).

Agbaje (2014) evaluated customer relationship management in the telecommunication sector in Nigeria and its consequential effect on customer loyalty. Primary data were generated with the aid of structured questionnaire. A random sample size of 50 respondents was selected from each from 4 telecom firms to represent the entire population of study. Thus a sample size of 200 respondents was used. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and variance estimation technique. Findings show that customer retention, and competitive advantages are major benefits that are accruable to the industry. These are achieved through better understanding and addressing the customer needs and issues.

Zakaria (2014) studied the impact of CRM on customer satisfaction in banking industry of Jordan. The population of the present study is customers of Jordanian banks operating in Amman city, the capital of Jordan. 528 respondents were selected through convenient sampling and data has been collected through questionnaires which were self-administered by researcher. The statistical analysis revealed that there is a significant relationship between the independent variables (i.e. CRM elements represented by service quality, employee's behavior, customer data base, solving customer problems physical environment; and social network interaction) and customer satisfaction as a dependent variable in the services banking industry.

Based on this, the following hypotheses are formed:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between customer value and customer commitment of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between customer value and referrals of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt.

### **Customers Interaction and Customer Satisfaction**

To provide better customer experiences, organizations try to incorporate such elements in the service design. The application to a multimedia service emphasizes how customer interaction can enhance the work of multidisciplinary design teams by providing insights to service design and by shifting focus from single experience elements to their orchestration (Teixeira et al., 2012). Customer interaction has a major effect on experience which leads to brand experience recall resulting in perceptions which ultimately shape attitudes of the customer to the brand.

Customer interaction is a perception link generated by two or more people who interact with others to achieve a common goal through their reactions (e.g., language or emotion). Schutz



(1966) pointed out that customer interaction is demanded by customers and has three types of requirements: acceptance, control, and emotion. Reichheld & Sasser (1990) stated that the most important intangible asset of a business is the customer relationship. In addition, they argued that business managers must face numerous important issues, including providing high-quality enterprise products and services, retaining existing customers and generating profits, and maintaining profitability through customer relations and operational growth. Schutz (1966) claimed that all customers have a need for interaction and that the relationship between a business and its customer, which may be at the initiation, establishment, or maintenance phase, depends on both the business and its customers' compliance with the interpersonal level of demand.

Khaligh et al. (2012) investigate the impact of CRM on customer loyalty and retention in the telecom industry in Iran. The data are collected from 200 Iranian telecom services users. Finding shows that commitment and vision of the management system is highly required for a successful CRM implementation, the structure of the strategy should be based on flexibility and explicitly of the policies especially pricing policies.

Wu and Luwu (2012) investigated the relationship between customer's relationship management and marketing and commercial performance. The population was hotel industries in Taiwan. The result showed that customers relationship management had a significant and positive effect on marketing and commercial performance in hotel industries in Taiwan.

Interaction between customers has gained the attention from researchers because people tend to shop more based on social reasons (Moore, Moore & Capella, 2005). Researcher suggested that customer interaction could enhance more shopping because it could enhance more chance for customers to meet other people who might have similar interest (Dhalakia, 1999). Interaction is a relationship-based construct, which helps in evaluating interpersonal interaction between customers and employees. Interacting with customers is seen in the functional quality (The way it is being delivered); customer-employee interaction has the element of functional quality and it also comprises the following interpersonal interaction attributes (such as non-verbal gestures, eye-contact, facial gestures, language, body language) (Gremier & Gwinner, 2000).

Based on this, the following hypotheses are formed:

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between customer interaction and customer commitment of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between customer interaction and referrals of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt.

### Methodology

This study aims to investigate the relationship between customer relationship and customer satisfaction of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt. Therefore, the cross-sectional research design was adopted by the researcher. Cross-sectional surveys permit researchers to collect data at a point in time from test units. The population of this study are customers of registered fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt. According to the Association of Fast Food and Confectionary of Nigeria (AFCON) Rivers State Branch, enlisted by the Rivers State Ministry of Commerce & Industry (Yellow Pages, 2016/2017) there are total of Fifty Two (52) registered and functional fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt. For convenience precision, the study therefore distributes two (2) copies of questionnaire each to these selected universities. We therefore have 104 copies of questionnaire and convenience sampling techniques was adopted for this study. Well-constructed questionnaires were used to administer the questionnaires to the respondents. Spearman Rank Order Correlation Co-efficient was used to analyze and test the formulated hypotheses.

### Data Analysis and Results

In this section, we present and analyse empirical data which has been collected through questionnaire survey. We also look at the reliability of measures. After that, the calculation of the correlation between measures of ease-of retrieval and automatic input in judgment are presented and analysed. This followed the presentation and analysis of hypotheses testing which determined whether the hypotheses for this study are accepted or rejected.

**Table 1: Reliability Test**

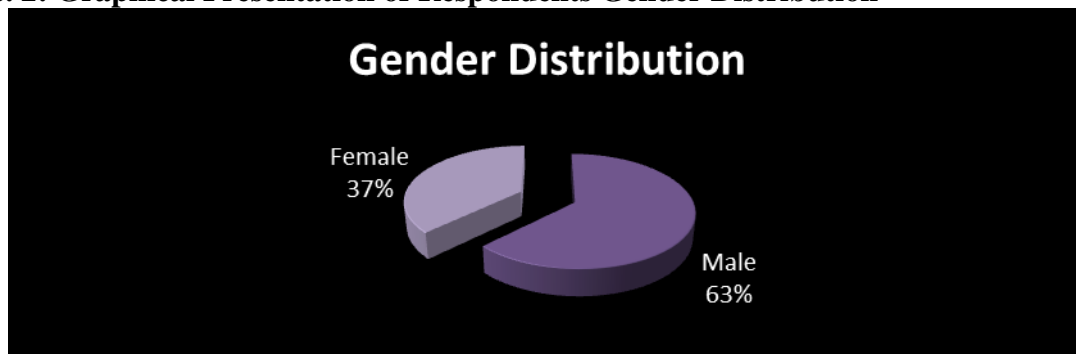
Instruments	Cronbach Alpha	No. of item
Customer value	0.831	4
Customer interaction	0.829	4
Customer commitment	0.888	4
Referrals	0.749	4

**Source: Cronbach Alpha Report, 2021 (SPSS version, 23.0)**

Four reliability tests were done in this study, one for each measure variable. The result above shown on table 1 indicate that the entire Cronbach alpha is greater than .7  $\alpha > 0.7$ , according to Hair et al (2007), the acceptable number for ( $\alpha$ ) is  $> 0.7$ . This means that, the scale are therefore considered reliable and the results of data extracted therefore are valid.

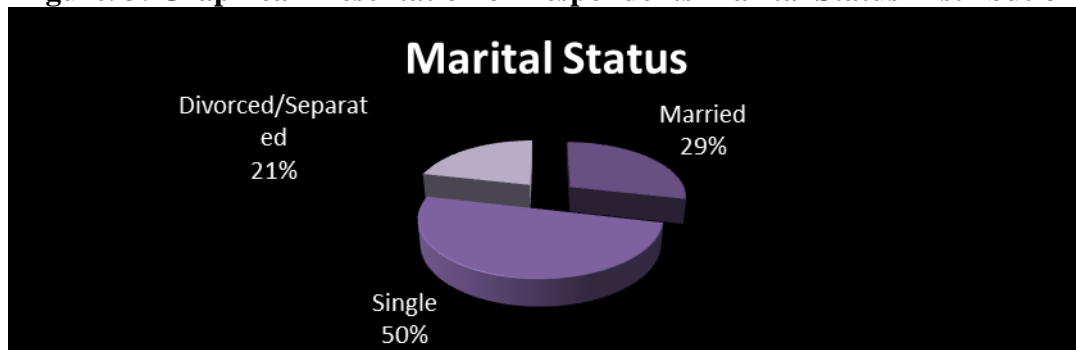
One hundred and four (104) copies of questionnaire were distributed amongst the 52 registered fast food firms in Rivers State. 98(94.2%) copies were accurately filled while the remaining 6(5.8%) contained certain inconsistencies, and thus not valid for analysis. Therefore, the analysis was based on 98 copies accurately filled.

**Figure. 2: Graphical Presentation of Respondents Gender Distribution**



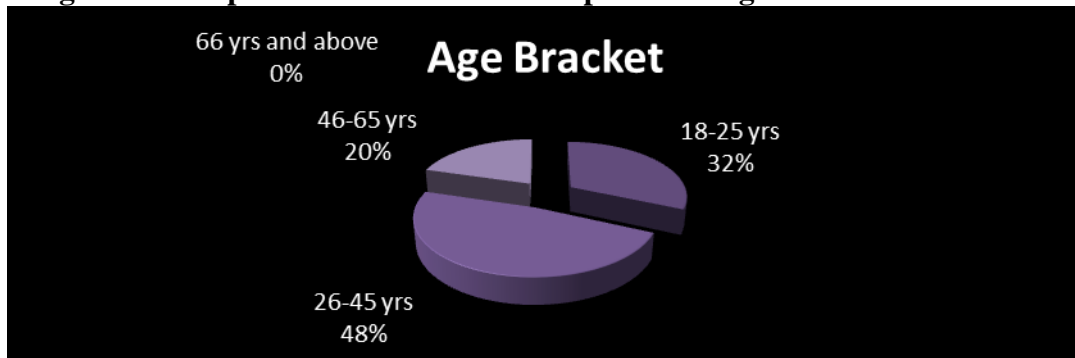
Based on the figure above, majority of the survey's respondent were males with 62(63.3%) while the remaining with 36(36.7%) were females.

**Figure. 3: Graphical Presentation of Respondents Marital Status Distribution**



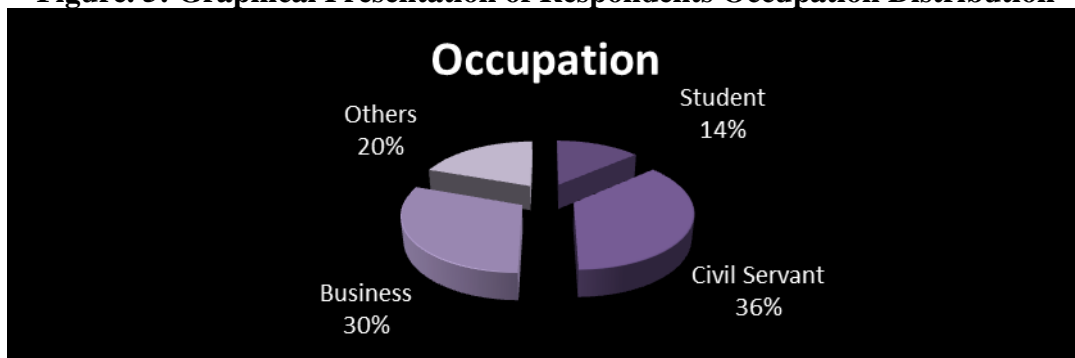
Based on the figure above, majority of the respondent were married with 28(28.6%), next were single respondents with 49(50%) while the remaining with 21(21.4%) were divorced/separated.

**Figure. 4: Graphical Presentation of Respondents Age Bracket Distribution**



Based on the figure above, 31(31.6%) respondents fell within the age bracket of 18-25 years, 47(48%) respondents fell within the age group of 26-45 years, 20(20.4%) respondents fell within age bracket of 46-65 years while none was recorded within 66 years and above.

**Figure. 5: Graphical Presentation of Respondents Occupation Distribution**



Based on the figure above, 13(13.3%) respondents were students, 36(36.7%) respondents were civil servants, and 30(30.6%) respondents were businessmen and women while 19(19.4%) respondents had other occupations not aforementioned therein.

**Table 2: Conditions for Decision Rule**

Decision	Relationship	Remark
$P < 0.05$	$H_0$	Reject
$P > 0.05$	$H_0$	Accept
$+(-) 0.1$ to $0.39$	Positive/Negative	Weak
$+(-) 0.4$ to $0.59$	Positive/Negative	Moderate
$+(-) 0.6$ to $0.79$	Positive/Negative	Strong
$+(-) 0.8$ to $1.0$	Positive/Negative	Very Strong

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between customer value and customer commitment of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt.

**Table 3: Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between of customer value and customer commitment**

Correlations			Customer Value	Customer Commitment
Spearman's rho	Customer Value	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.674
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	98	98
	Customer Commitment	Correlation Coefficient	.674	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	98	98

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Source: Field Survey Data, 2021, SPSS 23 Output**

**Decision:** Table 3 above reveals a Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient of 0.674 and probability value of 0.000 on the relationship between customer value and customer commitment of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt. This result indicates that there is a strong but positive significant relationship between customer value and customer commitment of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypotheses, because the PV (0.001) < 0.05 level of significance.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between customer value and referrals of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt

**Table 4: Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between of customer value and referrals**

Correlations			Customer Value	Referrals
Spearman's rho	Customer Value	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.782
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	98	98
	Referrals	Correlation Coefficient	.782	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	98	98

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Source: Field Survey Data, 2021, SPSS 23 Output**

**Decision:** Table 4 above reveals a Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient of 0.782 and probability value of 0.000 on the relationship between customer value and referrals of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt. This result indicates that there is a strong but positive significant relationship between customer value and referrals of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypotheses, because the PV (0.001) < 0.05 level of significance.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between customer interaction and customer commitment of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt.

**Table 5: Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between of customer interaction and customer commitment**

Correlations			Customer Interaction	Customer Commitment
Spearman's rho	Customer Interaction	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.821
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	98	98
	Customer Commitment	Correlation Coefficient	.821	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	98	98

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Source: Field Survey Data, 2020, SPSS 23 Output**

**Decision:** Table 5 above reveals a Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient of 0.821 and probability value of 0.000 on the relationship between customer interaction and customer commitment of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt. This result indicates that there is a very strong and positive significant relationship between customer interaction and customer commitment of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypotheses, because the PV (0.001) < 0.05 level of significance.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between customer interaction and referrals of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt.

**Table 6: Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between of customer interaction and referrals**

Correlations			Customer Interaction	Referrals
Spearman's rho	Customer Interaction	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.888
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	98	98
	Referrals	Correlation Coefficient	.888	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	98	98

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Source: Field Survey Data, 2020, SPSS 23 Output**

**Decision:** Table 5 above reveals a Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient of 0.888 and probability value of 0.000 on the relationship between customer interaction and referrals of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt. This result indicates that there is a very strong and positive significant relationship between customer interaction and referrals of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypotheses, because the PV (0.001) < 0.05 level of significance.



### Discussion of Findings

1. Hypotheses ( $H_{01}$ ) and ( $H_{02}$ ) aimed at examining the significant relationship between customer value and customer satisfaction of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt. The hypothesis was tested using Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient analysis. Our analysis revealed a strong positive and significant relationship between customer value and customer commitment of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt ( $Rho = 0.674$ ). Hypothesis two also revealed a positive but strong significant relationship between customer value and referrals of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt ( $Rho = 0.782$ ). That is to say, customer value has a positive but moderate relationship with referrals. This result supported the work Wanjau (2011).

2. Hypotheses ( $H_{03}$ ) and ( $H_{04}$ ) aimed at examining the significant relationship between customer interaction and customer commitment of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt. The hypothesis one was tested using Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient analysis. Our analysis revealed a positive and very strong significant relationship between customer interaction and customer commitment of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt ( $Rho = 0.821$ ). That is to say, customer interaction has a positive and strong relationship with customer commitment. Hypothesis four also revealed a positive and very strong significant relationship between customer interaction and referrals of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt ( $Rho = 0.888$ ). This implies that, customer interaction has a positive and strong relationship with referrals. This result supported the work Khaligh et al. (2012).

### Conclusion

This study examined the effects of customer relationship and customer satisfaction of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt. The study therefore, concludes that the dimensions of customer relationship to a large extent influence customer satisfaction, thus, it was established that a positive and significant relationship exist between the variables. We add to the evidence that customer value are amenable to biases, in much the same way as are self-perceptions and attitudes, and shed light on the process by which customer relationship affects customer satisfaction.

### Recommendations

The researcher therefore recommends that:-

- i. Fast food restaurants should improve on their customer value which in turn increases customer satisfaction. This is because, customers not only consider the quality of service offered but other services such as customer value.
- ii. Fast food restaurants should train their frontline service staff to recognize when a service delivery process has failed and necessary procedures to ensure efficient recovery in order to avoid complaints.
- iii. Managers of fast food restaurants should be aligned to deliver an overall compelling customer experience through interactions with customers in order to properly understand their feels about their service.
- iv. Managers of fast food restaurants should identify several capabilities, their relative importance, and the processes for achieving customer relationship management which when properly executed increase profitability through customer satisfaction.
- v. In a competitive business environment, management needs to implement the customer care management process in order to proactively respond to situations before they negatively impact the customer. Therefore, fast food restaurants should always strive to ensure that their customers are very satisfied; customer care management is potentially one of the most powerful weapons that fast food restaurants can employ in their fight to gain a strategic advantage and survive in today's ever-increasing competitiveness.

### Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the body of knowledge in the following ways:

- i. The study contributes to the body of knowledge, and gives its identification of the unique effects of customer relationship such as customer value and customer interaction on customer satisfaction measures like customer commitment and referrals.
- ii. The findings of this study further reiterate the position of existing models on the imperatives of customer relationship in the achievement of satisfaction. In this way, the study through its findings validate the theoretical positions and models which present customer relationship as being substantial and imperative in capturing significant satisfaction and in enhancing customer commitment and referrals.

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