Service Quality and Customer Patronage: A Moderating Role of Staff Remuneration

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ABSTRACT: *The study focused on service quality and customer patronage: a moderating role of staff remuneration. To achieve the objective of the study, survey research design was adopted. The researcher adopted primary data in getting the required information through the use of structured questionnaire. The population for this study is made up of all the customers of the selected hotels in Umahia, Abia state. Since the actual population of customers cannot be ascertained, the study will adopt infinite sampling. Therefore, sample size of the study is 196 after adopting infinite formula. The data generated from questionnaire administration were analyzed using frequencies, percentages and mean deviation while the hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis. The findings revealed that service reliability, service tangibility, service assurance, service responsiveness and service empathy have significant influence on customer patronage. The findings also revealed that staff remuneration has a moderating influence on the relationship between service quality and customer patronage in hotels. Based on the findings, the study recommends that employees of the hotels should give proper concentration to customers and should be willing to attend to them at every given time in order to gain their trust. That will guarantee repeat patronage. Also, hotel owners and managers should ensure that employee remunerations are provided as at when due. This would motivate employee to deliver quality service which will in turn affect customer patronage positively.*

KEYWORDS: Service quality, staff remuneration, customer patronage, reliability, tangibility, assurance, responsiveness and empathy.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays people live in an environment that is increasingly moving towards a service based economy. Other services are not small part of the economy, but are considered as the heart of value creation in economy. Due to the increasing role of service organizations in the areas of the economy and the importance of quality in the areas of competition, service organizations must look to service quality management with dynamic and strategic approach and have a clear understanding of the quality status of services, the expectations of the client (customer) and the general characteristics of their quality.

The premise of quality of service as the competitive edge in gaining market leadership has gained significant attention by both practitioners and scholars alike. In particular service firms recognized the need to not only attract customers but also to forge and maintain long-term relationship with them in order to create a competitive edge in an ever increasing competitive marketplace. Excellence in service quality is a key to achieving customer loyalty which is the primary goal of business organizations (Ehigie, 2016). Today, the increasing awareness among customers of their rights, changing demands, and intense competition requires constant progress in service quality from fast food organization for their customers to stay loyal. The present research examined the extent of service quality delivery in retail fast food organizations that eventually leads to customer loyalty.

Service quality can be used to differentiate between two service provider's services and to win strategic competitive advantage. The service quality delivered is a key determinant of overall satisfaction, which in turn leads to customer retention and loyalty (Ennew and Binks, 2019). Service quality is considered one of the most significant antecedent of customer loyalty in service industries (Fullerton, 2015). The quality of transactions between service provider and the customer may improve the fast food customer relationship into a long-term, closer and trustful relationship. Service quality has been important primary competitive tool for hotel operations to achieve success in the market place with commonly undifferentiated services. Delivering quality service to customers is a must for success and survival in today's competitive environment. Service quality has drawn attention of researchers and managers in recent decades (Zeithaml, 2010). It has become a significant subject because of its impact on customer loyalty and customer switching behavior. By satisfying customers through high quality service, business firms not only retain their current customers, but also increase their market share (Finn and Lamb, 2011).

Service quality is widely recognized as being a critical determinant for the success of an organization in today's competitive environment. Any decline in customer satisfaction due to poor service quality would be a matter of concern. Consumers being more aware of rising standards in service, prompted by competitive trends, have developed higher expectations" (Marshall *et al*.,

2018). Parasuraman (2018) provided factors of service quality including tangible, reliability, empathy, assurance and responsiveness and used a model labeled as SERVQUAL. The SERVQUAL model has been frequently modified overtime. For example, Yi (2010) exploited the SERVQUAL technique to identify a gap between the customers' expectation of service quality and the service provided. Yi (2010) used the modified SERVQUAL to realize whether the customers were more interested in the intangible service qualities or the tangible ones. Responsiveness, tangible, the location, reputation, a prompt courteous service, friendly hospitality, and meal service are the most central factors for which the customers would desire to revisit a fast food industry.

Employees provide good performance for the advancement of the company, while the company provides the motivation, the same opportunity every employee to grow, and the appropriate remuneration for the performance of which has been given to company employees. Remuneration is itself a reward or remuneration by the company to the workforce as a result of the achievements that have been given in order to achieve company goals. This notion suggests that the presence in a business organization cannot be ignored. Therefore, it will be directly related to the achievement of corporate goals. Remuneration which is also known as compensation is an important factor affecting how and why people choose to work at one organization over others. Employers must be reasonably competitive with several types of remuneration to attract and retain competent employees. Remuneration impacts an employer's ability to attract applicants, retain employees and ensure optimal levels of performance from employees in meeting the organization's strategic objectives. (Puwanenthiren, 2011).

The creative use of remuneration modes can work to maximize Human Resource productivity and contribute significantly to the achievement of Human Resource and organizational objectives. A Remuneration program can reinforce an overall corporate objective of increased productivity, focus on both individual and team effort and emphasize both short and long term strategies (Kubr, 2012).

Performance is a relationship between outputs and inputs. It rises when an increase in output occurs with a less than proportionate increase in inputs, or when the same output is produced with fewer inputs (ILO, 2015). Performance can also be considered in monetary terms. If the price received for an output rises with no increase in the cost of inputs, this is also seen as an increase in productivity. Performance improvements can also be understood at different levels. Performance of hotel, in addition to output per worker, may be measured in terms of customer patronage, market share and profitability. Therefore, organizational objectives can be met through the effort of individual employees. If employee performance is improved through quality service delivery, the organization will lift its performance. Unfortunately, employee quality service delivery will be hard to achieve without remuneration. It is on this ground that this study intends to examine the

relationship between service quality and customer patronage: a moderating role of staff remuneration.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to determine the relationship between service quality and customer patronage: a moderating role of staff remuneration. A study of selected hotels in Umuahia, Abia State

The specific objectives include:
(i)   To determine the influence of service reliability on customer patronage of hotels.
(ii)   To examine the influence of service tangibility on customer patronage of hotels.
(iii)   To ascertain the influence of service assurance on customer patronage of hotels.
(iv)   To assess the influence of service responsiveness on customer patronage of hotels
(v)   To determine the influence of service empathy on customer patronage of hotels.
(vi)   To determine the moderating role of staff remuneration on the relationship between service quality and customer patronage in hotels.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

Service Quality

Quality can be defined as satisfying or exceeding customer requirements and expectations, and consequently to some extent it is the customer who eventually judges the quality of a product (Shen, Tan and Xie, 2010). In the service, where production, delivery and consumption can occur simultaneously, the concept of quality refers to the matching between what customers expect and what they experience. Customers evaluate service quality by comparing what they want or expect to what they actually get or perceive they are getting (Berry, Zeithaml and Parasuraaman, 2018). Service Quality Service quality involves a comparison of expectations with performance. According to ZeithamanandBitner (2013) service quality is a measure of how well a delivered service matches the customers' expectations. Fast food organizationss have realized the significance of concentrating on quality of services as an approach to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty, and to develop their core competence and business performance (Kunst and Lemmink, 2010)

In this study, service quality has been defined as the difference between customers expectation for service performance prior to the service encounter and their perception of the service received. Customer's expectation serves as a foundation for evaluating service quality because, quality is high when performance exceeds expectation and quality is low when performance does not meet their expectation (AsubontengMcCleary and Swan, 2016). Expectation is viewed in service quality

literature as desires or wants of consumer i.e., what they feel a service provider should offer rather than would offer (Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml, 2018). Perceived service is the outcome of the consumer's view of the service dimensions, which are both technical and functional in nature. The customer's total perception of a service is based on his/her perception of the outcome and the process; the outcome is either value added or quality and the process is the role undertaken by the customer. Parasuraman *et al*, (2018) define perceived quality as a form of attitude, related but not equal to satisfaction, and results from a consumption of expectations with perceptions of performance. Therefore, having a better understanding of consumers' attitudes will help know how they perceive service quality in grocery stores.

Negi (2019) suggests that customer-perceived service quality has been given increased attention in recent years, due to its specific contribution to business competitiveness, developing satisfied and loyal customers. This makes service quality a very important construct to understand by firms by knowing how to measure it and making necessary improvements in its dimensions where appropriate especially in areas where gaps between expectations and perceptions are wide.

Douglas and Connor (2013), found that the consumer who has developed heightened perception of quality has become more demanding and less tolerant of assumed shortfalls in service quality and identify the intangible elements (inseparability, heterogeneity and perishability) of a service as the critical determinants of service quality perceived by a customer. It is very vital to note here that, service quality is not only assessed as the end results but also on how it is delivered during service process and its ultimate effect on consumer's perceptions (Douglas and Connor, 2013).

The ability to provide a quality service will, therefore, improve a commercial fast food organizations' ability to increase market share and profitability, whilst at the same time reducing their existing customer's switching propensity to another institution. Thus the ability to consistently provide a high quality service offering may well act as a key strategic differentiator. Furthermore, successful organizations perusing quality have realized that quality improvements must be focused where most productive (Keiningham, Zahorik and Rust, 2015). Improved quality has a three-fold pay-off; namely reduced costs, increased customer retention, and attracting new customers drawn to the quality service provider (Keiningham, Zahorik and Rust, 2015). In order to achieve service quality, it is important to identify key service expectations and focus efforts at the most beneficial point in the customer

Dimensions of Service Quality
According to Parasuraman (1985), Services Quality is described as SERVQUAL by five dimensions constructs namely reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles. Basically these dimensions represent the consumer's criteria of judging service quality. The service quality dimensions identified Parasuraman (1985) are explained below:

Reliability

The reliability construct in the SERVQUAL model represents the service provider's ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. This is achieved through keeping promises to do something, providing right service, consistency of performance and dependability, service is performed right at the first time, the company keeps its promises in accuracy in billing and keeping records correctly, available merchandise and error-free sales transactions and records. Reliability also consists of accurate order fulfillment; accurate record; accurate quote; accurate in billing; accurate calculation of commissions; keep services promise. He also mentioned that reliability is the most important factor in fast food organizationsing services (Yang *et al.,* 2013). The higher customers appreciate on reliability, the higher the overall evaluation of retail service quality is (Ndubisi, 2016).

Tangibility

Tangibility relates to the physical aspects or evidence of a service. Physical aspects of retailer include appearance of equipment and fixtures, physical facilities, materials associated with the service, appearance of personnel and communication materials, Convenience of physical facilities and layouts. In addition to the appearance of the facilities, it also takes into account the convenience offered the customer by the layout of physical facilities (Ananth *et al*, 2011). The higher customers appreciate on the physical aspects, the higher the overall evaluation of retail service quality is (Bellini *et al*., 2015).

Angur *et al* (2019) found that business premises should have a high standard of decoration and a nice environment to positively influence service quality which will consequently lead to customer loyalty. The physical service setting is a very important tangible factor that influences service quality perceptions. For instance, Bitner (2012) focused on the elements under the control of businesses at the point of interaction between customers and the firm, arguing that these controllable elements can affect perceptions of service quality and encourage repeat patronage Bitner (2012) proposed that the physical setting of the place of service, including not only visual aspects such as color and texture, but also noise, odors, and temperature is of particular importance and capable of altering customer expectations and strongly influencing consumer responses and satisfaction. Bitner (2012) called the combined physical and sensory elements of the place of service the servicescape.

Wakefield and Blodgett (2016) also found that servicescape in terms of layout, aesthetics, electronic displays, seating, and cleanliness on consumers' perceptions of service quality has a relatively consistent and strong effect on customer retention and their repatronage intentions.

Assurance

The assurance construct consists of competence (possession of the required skills and knowledge to perform the service), courtesy (consideration for the customer's property, clean and neat appearance of public contact personnel), credibility and security of the employees and their ability

to inspire trust and confidence. According to Sadek *et al.* (2010), in British fast food organizationss assurance means the polite and friendly staff, provision of financial advice, interior comfort, eases of access to account information and knowledgeable and experienced management team. This includes employees having knowledge to answer questions, inspiring confidence, providing prompt service, willing to respond to customer's requests, giving customers individual attention, showing consistent courtesy with customers and even treat customers properly on the phone. Several studies suggest that the exchange of information is an important part of both traditional selling and relationship marketing which may lead to a shared understanding (Ndubisi, 2016; Lymperopoulos *et al.*, 2016). The higher customers appreciate personal interaction, the higher the overall evaluation of retail service quality is.

This dimension concerns how knowledgeable and courteous employees are to inspire confidence and trust from their customers. The assurance attributes are all very much about the extent to which a consumer trusts a provider and whether or not they have the confidence in an organization to provide a service securely and competently.

There is a substantial level of trust in the fast food organizations and its abilities were necessary to make the consumer comfortable enough to establish a fast food organizationsing relationship. Parasuraman, *et al* (2011) included actions by employees such as always courteous, behavior instills confidence, and knowledge as prime elements of assurance.

Responsiveness
Responsiveness is the determinant that defines the willingness to help customers and to provide prompt services. It is the desire and willingness to assist customers and deliver prompt service. It involves features such as the opening hours of the service provider, the politeness of the employees and the time the customer has to wait in order to get the service. In other words, it describes how quickly and affective the response to the customer is. Willingness to help customers is likely to have an important and positive effect on customer' perceived service quality and customer satisfaction in retail fast food organizationsing. Mengi (2019) also found that responsiveness is positively related to service quality and customer satisfaction.). It is also involves understanding needs and wants of the customers, convenient operating hours, individual attention given by the staff, attention to problems and customers" safety in their transaction (Kumar *et al.*, 2019).

Mohammed and Shirley (2019) found that fast food organizations services such as prompt communication to the customer are vital. Customers are concerned whether their fast food organizations will provide the right information to the right customers promptly .This creates public confidence, and thus helps customers to make the right decisions at the right time. Responsiveness is likely to have an important and positive effect on customer satisfaction (Glaveli *et al.*, 2016). The higher customers appreciate problem solving, the higher overall evaluation of retail service quality is.

Empathy

The last dimension of the SERVQUAL model is empathy. Empathy is the caring and personalized attention the organization provides its customers. It is reflected in the service provider's provision of access, communication and understanding the customer. Individual attention, convenient operating hours, understanding of the staff when a problem occurs and the knowledge the employees have of the customers' needs were the primary elements included in the evaluation of empathy. This dimension captures aspects of service quality that are directly influenced by service provider's policy such as good customer service, convenience of parking and operating hours (Butcher, 2011; Ndubisi, 2016; Ehigie, 2016). The degree to which the customer feels the empathy will cause the customer to either accept or reject the service encounter. The higher the level of empathy, the higher the overall evaluation of retail service quality is.

The aspects that are critical in empathy include employees' knowledge to respond to customer requests or needs. Fast food organizations invest on staff training so as to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to deal with their customers. On the employees' personal attention to their customers, marketing literature indicates that service providers that provide individualized attention to their customers increase their level of perceived service quality. This is due to the high intangibility of the service and the heterogeneity of it results in an increased focus on the interaction process. This means that employees must be skilled enough to be able to immediately recognize the needs of the customers are critical in order to improve service quality

The effects of service quality

For the majority of customers having a memorable experience especially for dining, not just eating out of home, seems to be very prominent. It is asserted that they seek quality food and services to have an unforgettable experience at restaurants (Ryu and Han, 2011). Service quality is defined as the result of a comparison established between the customers' expectation about the service and their perception of the actual services or the way such services are being provided (Akbaba, 2016). By taking into account the above mentioned definition, it is realized that service quality without regarding the customers' perspective could not be even defined appropriately. Parasuraman *et al*., (2018) hypothesized that services entails three essential aspects, namely the intangibility, heterogeneity, and inseparability. Therefore, it is difficult to evaluate the service production in comparison with goods. In this context, consumers' expectation along with process and outcome is important in evaluating the service quality. Parasuraman *et al*. (2018) provided factors of service quality including tangible, reliability, empathy, assurance and responsiveness and used a model labeled as SERVQUAL. The SERVQUAL model has been frequently modified overtime. For example, Ting (2013) exploited the SERVQUAL technique to identify a gap between the customers' expectation of service quality and the service provided. Ekinci *et al*. (2013) used the modified SERVQUAL to realize whether the customers were more interested in the intangible service qualities or the tangible ones. Tsaur *et al*. (2012) indicated that responsiveness, tangible,

the location, reputation, a prompt courteous service, friendly hospitality, and meal service are the most central factors for which the customers would desire to revisit a restaurant.

Satisfaction is defined as ''the consumer's fulfillment response. In fact satisfaction is a judgment that a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provided (or is providing); a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment, including levels of under- or overfulfillment''(Oliver, 2017). From the definition it is clear that the concept of satisfaction is a feeling of a person regarding the product or service after he or she buys or uses it (Vesel and Zabkar, 2019). In other words, satisfaction is the change in attitude which is affected by the consumption experience (Wu and Liang, 2019). As stated by Getty and Thompson (2015), the customer's satisfaction is measured as the values, by which managers can assist and develop the satisfaction. According to Chen and Myagmarsuren (2013) satisfaction happened by developing the expectations about a product or service, before any real interaction takes place between the firm and the customer.

Customer satisfaction is the consequence of customer expectation and customer perception of service quality (Ariffin and Maghzi, 2012; Chen and Myagmarsuren, 2013; Keshavarz and Ali, 2015). Mola and Jusoh (2011) argued that quality gap is the main cause of customer dissatisfaction. Customer overall satisfaction levels were associated with a possibility of repurchase restaurant (Choi and Chu (2011) and a high level of customer satisfaction caused in a higher share of purchases and better relationship continuity in the restaurant industry (Kim and Cha, 2012). Brunner-Sperdin *et al*. (2012) stated that the emotional experience during service consumption is a central factor which affects the customer's satisfaction. Yet, recognizing the dissatisfaction in a study of the customer's behavior is as important as the satisfaction (Lin, 2008). According to Zairi (2000), most customers do not complaint about the product or service provider although they are dissatisfied. As a result, it is posed that the satisfied customers will tell to 5-6 other peoples, whereas the dissatisfied ones share their unfortunate experience with at least ten people.

The effect of service quality on customer satisfaction has investigated in several studies (Ariffin and Maghzi, 2012; Brady and Cronin Jr, 2011; Keshavarz and Ali, 2015; Kim *et al*., 2006; Parasuraman *et al*., 2018; Poon and Low, 2015; Riscinto-Kozub, 2018). As announced by Oliver (1980), the customers' satisfaction is the consequence of the customers' expectation as well as their perceptions of service quality. Fornell *et al*. (2016) found that the customer satisfaction is a consequence of the customer's expectation and perception of service quality.

Based on Kim *et al*. (2017) customer loyalty is defined as the customer attitude toward the service formed by customer`s past experience. The effect of service quality on customer loyalty has investigated in several studies (Kandampully and Hu, 2017; Kayaman and Arasli, 2017; Kim *et al*., 2008; Chitty *et al*., 2007). Some studies found that service quality affects customer loyalty through customer satisfaction (Ekinci *et al*., 2013; Mola and Jusoh, 2011; Poon and Low, 2015;

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Razalli, 2018; Rizal, 2018). Chen and Myagmarsuren (2013) stated thatif the tourism companies such as restaurants are able to provide high qualified services and the consumers identify this, it leads to latter's assessment of the quality and generate satisfaction, finally, contribute to positive and favoring customer loyalty and decrease the customers' inspiration to select a competing company.

Concept of Remuneration

Remuneration is employee benefits that can be salary, honoraria, allowances fixed, incentives, bonuses for achievement, termination, or retirement. Whereas the notion of remuneration according to major Indonesian dictionary is "Purchasing a gift, (or other services), rewards. For the Civil Service, remuneration means employment benefits beyond the salary associated with the performance appraisal system. Existing remuneration body Ministry of Finance is the realignment of the provision for employee benefits in the form of allowances, known as Special Benefit Financial Guidance Nagara (TKPKN) to be based on the level of responsibility and risk positions /jobs in the waistband (Effendi, 2019).

Maicibi (2015) defined remuneration as pay or reward given to individuals for work done. He further identified the indicators of remuneration include: basic salary, wages, health schemes, pension schemes, transport allowances overtime allowances and responsibility allowances.

Remuneration can also be referred to as monetary or financial benefits in form of salaries, wages, bonuses, incentives, allowances and benefits that is accrued or given to an employee or group of employees by the employer (firm) as a result services rendered by the employee(s),commitment to the organization or reward for employment.

Remuneration governance is an integral part of Policy Reforms. In the background, the awareness of the government's commitment to achieve at the same time *clean and good governance.* But at the level of implementation, changes and updates are carried out in order to realize good governance and the authority may not be able to be performed well (effective) without proper welfare of employees. Changes and updates are carried out to remove the impression that the Government has been considered bad.

Customer patronage

The concept of customer loyalty has attracted a lot of interest from practitioners and scholars its intricate relationship with a firm's performance. Customer patronage is now accepted as indispensable in strategic decision making because it costs more to attract new customers than to retain old ones. Patronage conceptualisation has two dimensions- attitudinal and behavioural. Attitudinal loyalty reflects a situation whereby different feelings create an individual's overall attachment to a product, service or organisation (Fornier, 2014). These feelings define the individual's cognitive degree of loyalty (Hallowell, 2016). The other dimension is behavioural.

This reflects the degree to which attitudinal feelings are translated into loyalty behaviour. In other words it reflects intentions being translated into actions. Examples of loyalty behaviours given in the literature include continuing to purchase services from the same supplier, increasing the scale and scope of a relationship, or the act of recommending a product or service (Yi, 2010; Best, 2019) and increased purchase frequency and Word of Mouth (WOM) recommendation (De Ruyter *et al*., 2018).

The attitudinal aspect of customer patronage encompasses long-term emotional commitment and trust to the organisation, its services, products and prices. Attitudinal patronage is important to the conceptualisation because it denotes the customers' probability of future commitment to the organisation and the propensity to recommend the company to friends or colleagues (Reichheld, 2013). "Attitudinal" here refers to "the psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour" (Eagly and Chaiken, 2013). The attitudinal components of customer patronage are identified as price sensitivity, brand allegiance, and the frequency of purchasing a particular brand (Rundle-Thiele and Mackay, 2001). Finally, the cognitive component includes attributes such as preference to a service organisation and belief that the organisation proffers the best offer and also attends to customer needs (Harris and Goode, 2014). Thus, as mentioned, customer patronage reflects customer satisfaction. It however goes way beyond that.

Customer patronage is a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive purchasing of the same brand, despite situational influences and marketing efforts. Gremler and Brown (2016) define it as "the degree to which a customer exhibits repeat purchasing behavior from a service provider, possesses a positive attitudinal disposition toward the provider, and considers using this provider when a need for this service arises. Loyalty is therefore an attitude or behavior that customers explicitly vocalize or exhibit.

Service quality and customer repeat patronage
According to Lai, Griffin & Babin (2019) loyalty is one of the main determinants of long term financial growth in an organization. Service quality is also linked with customer repeat patronage. While some researchers are in the view that customer, satisfaction rather than service quality exerts stronger influences on buying intentions of the customers (Cronin and Taylor, 2012). Some other researchers also provided the strong empirical evidences supporting the fact that service quality increases the customer intentions to remain with any company. For example, Buzzell and Gale (2017) found out that service quality results in increased market share and repeated sales that ultimately leads to customer loyalty. Zeithaml *et al*. (2018) also concluded in their research that when organizations improve the quality of their services, customers' unfavorable intentions are decreased while favorable behavioral intentions are increased. Traditional service systems are still demanded by the customers along with the internet-based hospitality (Yang and Fang, 2014).

Service quality might is been found to have a direct impact on customer loyalty (Boulding *et al*., 2013; Parasuraman *et al*., 2018) .Cronin and Taylor (2012) hypothesize that perceived service quality positively affects consumers' loyalty . Reichheld and Sasser (2010), Cronin *et al*. (2010) and Kang and James (2014) found that good service quality leads to the retention of existing customers and the attraction of new ones, reduced costs, an enhanced corporate image, positive word-of-mouth recommendation and, ultimately, enhanced profitability. A research by Zeithaml *et al*. (2019) concluded that when organizations enhance the quality of their services, customers' favorable behavioral intentions are increased while unfavorable intentions are decreased simultaneously.

Service quality has been found to have considerable impact in determining repeat purchase and customer loyalty (Jones and Farquhar, 2013). As pointed out by Bolton (2018), service quality influences a customer's subsequent behavior, intentions and preferences. When a customer chooses a provider that delivers service quality that meets or exceeds his or her expectations, he or she is more than likely choose the same provider again. Besides, Cronin and Taylor (2014) also found that service quality has a significant effect on repurchase intentions. Other studies which support that repurchase intentions are positively influenced by service quality include Zeithaml *et al* (2019).

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Planned Behaviour
Consumers always consider the implications of their actions before they decide to engage in doing whatever action they feel better to be engaged or not engaged in (Ajzen, 1989). The theory of planned behaviour states that the behavioural intention is the antecedent of any behaviour. This intention is determined by three considerations; behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs and control beliefs (Ajzen, 1989). The behavioural belief is an individual's positive or negative belief about performing a specific behaviour and the subjective values or evaluations of these consequences. An individual's intention to perform certain behaviour will be determined by how he or she evaluates it positively. Attitudes are determined by the individual's beliefs about the consequences of performing the behaviour (behavioural beliefs), weighted by his or her evaluation of those consequences (outcome evaluations). The attitude toward the behavior refers to the degree at which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question.

The theory of reasoned action states that the immediate antecedent of behaviour is the behavioural intention to perform the behaviour. The intention to perform the specific behaviour is affected by the belief that performing the specific behaviour will lead to a certain outcome. The beliefs are affected by the attitude towards the behaviour and subjective norms. While attitude is considered as a function of the sum of the perceived values of expected outcomes of the behaviour; Subjective

Norms (SN) are a function of the sum of perceived social pressures or beliefs of others and perceived behavioural control (PBC) represents the collective effects of individuals' perceptions of both internal and external enabling factors (time, money, knowledge and others) that determine the ability to actually perform the behaviour. The theory of reasoned action loses application when the theory is applied to behaviors' that are not fully under volitional control. The Theory of Planned Behaviour took into account all behaviour that are not under volitional control and that behaviours are located at some point along a continuum that extends from total control to a complete lack of control. Control belief refers to perceived presence of factors that can influence a person's ability to perform the behaviour. People are not likely to form a strong intention to perform an action if they believe that they do not have the resources or opportunities to do so.

TPB further provides a framework to examine the influence of attitudes on behaviours. For example, if an individual believes that the outcome of the behaviour is positive, she/he will possess a positive attitude toward performing it. That is when the customer believes that the final result of the switching action is positive, he/she will have a positive attitude towards switching. The central factor in the TPB model is the individual's intention to perform a given behaviour. Ajzen (1989), ascertained that, attitude is the most important determinant of a customer's switching intention, attitude was influence by subjective norms, and switching intention was influenced by satisfaction which in turn influences significantly the switching behaviour of customers. The more an individual believes he/she possesses the necessary resources, abilities and opportunities necessary to influence behaviour, the more likely he/she will intend to and actually perform the behaviour. Consumers are susceptible to interpersonal influences which had been accommodated in the theory of planned behaviour.

Empirical Review
Al Bassam (2013), examined the determinants of service quality in hospitality services, the Case Study of Internet Hospitality Services in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia". The research study proposes a revised and modified SERVQUAL model which incorporates several variables that reflects the industry-specific attributes of Internet hospitality services. A survey based research is used to collect primary data on the basis of Internet hospitality services in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A multiple regression analysis is employed to examine the influence of the adapted determinants on service quality. .Focus-group interviews are also conducted as a follow-up to the questionnaire study. The findings of both fieldworks indicate that reliability, responsiveness, website design, and personalization determine service quality in the Internet hospitality context. The study presents the main findings derived from the research model which can be used by a wide range of financial institutions, which make use of the Internet in their business dealings, to support each organization's decision-making processes. Also, the model can be used as a blueprint for an organization's strategic planning.

Al-Aali *et al* (2011), carried out a study on "Measuring the Service Quality of Mobile Phone Companies in Saudi Arabia". The purpose of the study is to measure the service quality of mobile phone companies operating in a developing country, Saudi Arabia by using the SERVQUAL instrument. Confirmatory factor analysis and MANOVA were applied to test the results. The adapted SERVQUAL instrument is a helpful tool in measuring service quality. Results based upon factor analysis exhibited significant differences in customers' perceptions of the overall service quality of various companies. Two added dimensions of network quality and competitive advantage also showed significant results. There was a difference of perception between male and female subscribers concerning quality dimensions. This research is a valuable contribution to existing literature on service quality in Saudi Arabia with special reference to mobile phone companies. It also reveals clear differentiation in customers' preferences in almost all dimensions.

Khalifa, *et al* (2011), examined the effect of the quality of service on customer loyalty: An Empirical Study on hotel services in Aden". The study aimed to identify the effect of service quality on customer loyalty for hotels in the city of Aden, Yemen , after reviewing the search literature the model and the hypotheses was building based on the theory of social exchange (Theory of Social Exchange). questionnaire was designed to collect data, it was developed based on previous studies , , several statistical methods used such as Cronbach's alpha and factor analysis to make sure of the reliability and stability, and to identify the impact of the dimensions of service quality on customer loyalty has been the use of regression analysis, which showed the results of a relationship positive between them , and based on the results of the study were presented a number of recommendations related to quality of service and to build a strong loyalty among customers have also been proposals for future studies .

Kheng *et al* (2010), examined the impact of service quality on customer loyalty: A study of hospitality s in Penang, Malaysia. The emergence of new forms of hospitality channels such as Internet hospitality , Automated Teller Machines (ATM), phone hospitality and also maturing financial market and global competition have forced hospitality ers to explore the importance of customer loyalty. Therefore, studies need to focus on the changing role of the hospitality system and its dynamic financial market. The underlying model of SERVQUAL (Parasuraman *et al*., 1988) with five dimensions was used by this research to evaluate the impact of service quality on customer loyalty among hospitality customers in Penang, Malaysia with customer satisfaction mediating these variables. The findings show that improvement in service quality can enhance customer loyalty. The service quality dimensions that play a significant role in this equation are reliability, empathy, and assurance. The findings indicate that the overall respondents evaluate the hospitality positively, but still there are rooms for improvements.

Azzawi, *et al*(2010), entitled: carried out a study on"Measuring recognize quality hotel services from the viewpoint of customers, An Empirical Study of the hotels five star in Amman". This research aims to measure client's sense of services quality presented by five _stars hotels in Amman, and the demographic factors effect on realization. The researcher has concluded that most

opinions show satisfaction about service quality. A number of suggestions and recommendation were presented, they asked for more follow up of modern development in the technology of hotel service and facilities, and more studies of the subject. All of this will make hotel service quality better and better.

Almutairi (2010), examined the impact of service quality and relationship marketing on customer loyalty: An Analytical study on a sample of passengers on AL-Jazeera Airways in Kuwait state". The study aimed at detecting The impact of service quality and relationship marketing on customer loyalty, the study showed the following results: the quality dimensions of a provided service (tangibility, reliability, response, security and sympathy) has a positive and direct impact on the customer loyalty, and the quality.

METHODOLOGY

Philosophical Assumption
This research aims to explain the relationship between two variables (service quality and customer patronage relating to staff remuneration), evaluate the variables, and draw conclusions based on the findings. The positivist paradigm is used. During this research work, a deductive approach was adopted. The quantitative research method was used to gather and analyze data in this study. Because this research involved testing hypotheses and the data acquired was tested using statistical techniques, quantitative research was used.

Research Approach and Strategy.
A positivistic method to quantitative research typically posits that hypotheses/assumptions are derived from some theoretical or imaginary concept, making it deductive in nature, which is occasionally referred to as theory testing. Because the goal is to see if current theoretical frameworks can be applied to our empirical study data, deductive research approach was adopted on this article titled "service quality and customer patronage.

Research Hypotheses
The following null hypotheses were be tested in the course of this study
H0$_1$: Service reliability has no significant influence on customer patronage of hotels.
H0$_2$: Service tangibility has no significant influence on customer patronage of hotels.
H0$_3$: Service assurance has no significant influence on customer patronage of hotels.
H0$_4$: Service responsiveness has no significant influence on customer patronage of hotels.
H0$_5$: Service empathy has no significant influence on customer patronage of hotels.
H0$_6$: Staff remuneration has no moderating influence on the relationship between service quality and customer patronage in hotels.

Data Collection

The survey research design was used in this study. This is a quantitative approach of data collection from a group of people by asking them question relating to service quality and customer patronage relating to staff remuneration. The usage of a survey in data gathering is focused toward answering the research questions inherent in the project in order to meet the research's goals and objectives. This helped in the development of remedies to the identified issue. To generate data from respondents, questionnaire instrument was used. Closed ended questions on a four -point scale were used to create the questionnaire. In addition, the questions are well-structured. The close ended includes; Strongly Agreed (SA) = 4, Agreed (A) = 3, Disagreed (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagreed (SD) =1.

Sample Size
The sample size of the study are 196 selected staff of selected hotels in Umuahia, Abia State, Nigeria. Only available staff were evaluated, and convenient sampling method were used.

Data Analysis Techniques and Procedures
Descriptive statistics was used to summarize the gathered data in a clear and understandable manner using a numerical technique. To test hypotheses, multiple regression analysis was used.

Regression model
$$CP_{it}= \beta_0+ \beta_1 REL_{it}+ \beta_1 TAN_{it} + \beta_1 ASS_{it} + \beta_1 RESP_{it} + \beta_1 EMP_{it} +u_{it} \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots(i)$$
Where:
CP= Customer patronage
REL = Reliability
TAN = Tangibility
ASS = Assurance
RES = Responsiveness
EMPTHY = Empathy

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the results of the field work were analyzed and discussed.

Analysis of Research Questions
Question 1: What is the influence of service reliability on customer patronage of hotels?
Table 4.1 Mean responses of respondents on the influence of service reliability on customer patronage of hotels

S/N		SA	A	D	SD	Total no	Total score	Mean	Remark
1	Service reliability affect customer patronage of hotels	110 (64%)	50 (29%)	12 (7%)	0	172	614	3.57	Accept

S/N		SA	A	D	SD	Total no	Total score	M	Remark
2	Service tangibility affect customer patronage of hotels	100 (58%)	52 (30%)	20 (12%)	0	172	596	3.47	Accept
3	Service reliability affect customer patronage of hotels	90 (52%)	70 (41%)	12 (7%)	0	172	594	3.45	Accept
4	Service assurance affect customer patronage of hotels	120 (70%)	42 (24%)	10(6%)	0	172	626	3.64	Accept
5	Service responsiveness affect customer patronage of hotels	120 (70%)	42 (24%)	10(6%)	0	172	626	3.64	Accept
6	Empathy affect customer patronage of hotels	120 (70%)	42 (24%)	10(6%)	0	172	626	3.64	Accept

Note: SA=strongly agreed, A= agreed, D=disagreed, SD= strongly disagreed

The results from table 4.1 above shows that service reliability affect customer patronage of hotels, Service tangibility affect customer patronage of hotels, Service reliability affect customer patronage of hotels, Service assurance affect customer patronage of hotels, Service responsiveness affect customer patronage of hotels and Empathy affect customer patronage of hotels. This is evidenced to the fact that all the items have mean values greater than 2.5 which is the criterion mean.

Objective 2: What is the moderating role of staff remuneration on the relationship between service quality and customer patronage?

Table 4.2 Mean responses of the respondents on the moderating role of staff remuneration on the relationship between service quality and customer patronage.

S/N		SA	A	D	SD	Total no	Total score	M	Remark
1	Employee Salaries affect service quality and customer patronage of hotels	88 (51%)	58(34%)	26(15%)	0	172	578	3.36	Accept

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2	Employee bonuses affect service quality and customer patronage of hotels.	80 (46.5%)	80 (46.5%)	12(7%)	0	172	584	3.40	Accept
3	Employee allowances affect service quality and customer patronage of hotels	96 (54.5%)	60(35%)	18 (10.5%)	0	172	592	3.44	Accept
4	Employee incentives affect service quality and customer patronage of hotels.	100 (58%)	40(23%)	20(12%)	12 (7%)	172	572	3.33	Accept
						Grand	**Mean**	**3.38**	

Note: SA=strongly agreed, A= agreed, D=disagreed, SD= strongly disagreed.

The result from table 4.2 above shows that Employee Salaries affect service quality and customer patronage of hotels, Employee bonuses affect service quality and customer patronage of hotels, Employee allowances affect service quality and customer patronage of hotels and Employee incentives affect service quality and customer patronage of hotels. This is evidenced to the fact that all the items have mean values greater than 2.5 which is the criterion mean. The grand mean of 3.38 is an indication that service tangibility influences customer patronage of hotels.

4.2 Test of Hypotheses
EFFECT OF SERVICE QUALITY ON CUSTOMER PATRONAGE

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.941[a]	.886	.882	.31306

a. Predictors: (Constant), SERVICE EMPATHY, SERVICE ASSURANCE, SERVICE RESPONSIVENESS, SERVICE TANGIBILITY, SERVICE RELIABILITY

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	125.887	5	25.177	256.888	.000[b]
	Residual	16.270	166	.098		
	Total	142.157	171			

a. Dependent Variable: CUSTOMER PATRONAGE
b. Predictors: (Constant), SERVICE EMPATHY, SERVICE ASSURANCE, SERVICE RESPONSIVENESS, SERVICE TANGIBILITY, SERVICE RELIABILITY

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-1.079	.136		-7.927	.000

SERVICE RELIABILITY	.015	.148	-.011	2.103	.018
SERVICE TANGIBILITY	.673	.135	.537	4.979	.000
SERVICE ASSURANCE	.321	.090	.238	3.560	.000
SERVICE RESPONSIVENESS	.213	.140	.162	3.519	.031
SERVICE EMPATHY	.061	.128	.050	3.479	.033

a. Dependent Variable: CUSTOMER PATRONAGE

The results showed the influence of service quality on customer patronage of hotels. The coefficient of determination R-square of 0.886 implied that 88.6% of the sample variation in the dependent variable (customer patronage) is explained or caused by the explanatory variable (service reliability, service tangibility, service assurance, service responsiveness and service empathy) while 11.4% is unexplained. This remaining 11.4% could be caused by other factors or variables not built into the model. The value of R-square is an indication of positive and very high influence of service quality on customer patronage in hotels. The F-statistic was also used to test the overall significant of the model. The F-value of 256.888 with p-value of 0.000 is an indication that the model is not statistically significant at 5 percent level of significant.

Hypothesis one
$H0_1$: Service reliability has no significant influence on customer patronage of hotels.
The T-statistic with 2.103 has probability of 0.018% level of significance. Since the probability of the T-statistics is less than 5% level of significance, we would reject the null hypothesis, H_0 and therefore conclude that service reliability has a significant influence on customer patronage of hotels.

Hypothesis two
$H0_2$: Service tangibility has no significant influence on customer patronage of hotels.
The T-statistic with 4.979 has probability of 0.000% level of significance. Since the probability of the T-statistics is less than 5% level of significance, we would reject the null hypothesis, H_0 and therefore conclude that service tangibility has a significant influence on customer patronage of hotels.

Hypothesis three
$H0_3$: Service assurance has no significant influence on customer patronage of hotels.
The T-statistic with 3.560 has probability of 0.000% level of significance. Since the probability of the T-statistics is less than 5% level of significance, we would reject the null hypothesis, H_0 and therefore conclude that service assurance has a significant influence on customer patronage of hotels.

Hypothesis four
$H0_4$: Service responsiveness has no significant influence on customer patronage of hotels.
The T-statistic with 3.519 has probability of 0.031% level of significance. Since the probability of the T-statistics is less than 5% level of significance, we would reject the null hypothesis, H_0 and

therefore conclude that service responsiveness has a significant influence on customer patronage of hotels.

Hypothesis five

H0₅: Service empathy has no significant influence on customer patronage of hotels.

The T-statistic with 3.479 has probability of 0.033% level of significance. Since the probability of the T-statistics is less than 5% level of significance, we would reject the null hypothesis, H_0 and therefore conclude that service reliability has a significant influence on customer patronage of hotels.

MODERATING ROLE OF STAFF REMUNERATION ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMER PATRONAGE

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.924ᵃ	.854	.852	.35085

a. Predictors: (Constant), REMUNERATION, SERVICE QUALITY

ANOVAᵃ

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	121.354	2	60.677	492.922	.000ᵇ
	Residual	20.803	169	.123		
	Total	142.157	171			

a. Dependent Variable: CUSTOMER PATRONAGE
b. Predictors: (Constant), REMUNERATION, SERVICE QUALITY

Coefficientsᵃ

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.919	.141		-6.539	.000
	SERVICE QUALITY	.371	.098	.276	3.780	.000
	REMUNERATION	.838	.092	.664	9.079	.000

a. Dependent Variable: CUSTOMER PATRONAGE

The results showed the moderating role of staff remuneration on the relationship between service quality and customer patronage. The coefficient of determination R-square of 0.854 implied that 85.4% of the sample variation in the dependent variable (customer patronage) is explained or

caused by the explanatory variable (remuneration and service quality) while 14.6% is unexplained. This remaining 14.6% could be caused by other factors or variables not built into the model. The value of R-square is an indication that remuneration can moderate the relationship between service quality and customer patronage. This simply implies that if employees are paid well, they render quality service which in turn influence customer patronage. The F-statistic was also used to test the overall significant of the model. The F-value of 492.922 with p-value of 0.000 is an indication that the model is not statistically significant at 5 percent level of significant.

H0$_6$: Staff remuneration has no moderating influence on the relationship between service quality and customer patronage in hotels.

The T-statistic with 9.079 has probability of 0000% level of significance. Since the probability of the T-statistics is less than 5% level of significance, we would reject the null hypothesis, H$_0$ and therefore conclude that staff remuneration has a moderating influence on the relationship between service quality and customer patronage in hotels.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of hypothesis one showed that service quality has a significant influence on customer patronage of hotels. The findings of this study is consistent to the findings of Khalifa, *et al* (2011), who examined the effect of the quality of service on customer loyalty. The use of regression analysis, which showed the results of a relationship positive between them , and based on the results of the study were presented a number of recommendations related to quality of service and to build a strong loyalty among customers have also been proposals for future studies. Kheng *et al* (2010), examined the impact of service quality on customer loyalty. The underlying model of SERVQUAL (Parasuraman *et al*., 1988) with five dimensions was used by this research to evaluate the impact of service quality on customer loyalty among hospitality customers in Penang, Malaysia with customer satisfaction mediating these variables. The findings show that improvement in service quality can enhance customer loyalty. The service quality dimensions that play a significant role in this equation are reliability, empathy, and assurance. Almutairi (2010), examined the impact of service quality and relationship marketing on customer loyalty. The study aimed at detecting The impact of service quality and relationship marketing on customer loyalty, the study showed the following results: the quality dimensions of a provided service (tangibility, reliability, response, security and sympathy) has a positive and direct impact on the customer loyalty, and the quality Dimensions a provided service has a positive and direct impact on the relationship marketing, and there is a positive and direct impact of the relationship marketing on customer loyalty.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The study examined the service quality and customer patronage: a moderating role of staff remuneration. The objectives of the study includes; to determine the influence of service reliability on customer patronage of hotels, to examine the influence of service tangibility on customer patronage of hotels, to ascertain the influence of service assurance on customer patronage of hotels, to assess the influence of service responsiveness on customer patronage of hotels, to determine the influence of service empathy on customer patronage of hotels and to determine the moderating role of staff remuneration on the relationship between service quality and customer patronage in hotels. The chapter two is grouped into four subheadings; conceptual framework, theoretical framework, empirical review and summary of literature review. Data were collected through the use of structured questionnaire from the selected hotels in Umuahia, Abia State. Data collected were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, and mean and multiple regression analysis. The result revealed that service quality has a significant influence on customer patronage of hotels. Also, staff remuneration moderates the relationship between service quality and customer patronage of hotels.

Recommendations

Based on the summary and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made
(i)   There are dimensions of service quality that enhances customer patronage which includes reliability, responsiveness, empathy, attractiveness. Therefore, hotel managers must consider these elements to attract more loyal customers.
(ii)   Hotel managers can affect their current and potential customers by adopting new strategies to keep them more satisfied and loyal to their restaurants.
(iii)   Employees of the hotels should give proper concentration to customers and should be willing to attend to them at every given time in order to gain their trust. That will guarantee repeat patronage.
(iv)   Hotel owners and managers should ensure that employee remunerations are provided as at when due. This would motivate employee to deliver quality service which will in turn affect customer patronage positively.

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