CUSTOMER PERCEIVED VALUE AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION OF HOTELS IN PORT HARCOURT, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between customer perceived value and customer satisfaction of hotels in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. This research adopted the descriptive survey research design. A sample population of 342 staff from Ten (10) hotels registered with the Rivers State Ministry of Culture and Tourism were purposefully selected for this study. The Taro Yamen's formula for finite population was adopted to determine the sample size of 184. Spearman's rank order (rho) correlation coefficient was utilized in testing the stated hypotheses with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The results of the study revealed a significant relationship between customer's perceived value and customer satisfaction and the study concluded that there is a strong relationship between customer perceived value and customer satisfaction of hotels in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The study therefore recommends that marketers should realize perceived value as an effective driver of customer satisfaction and patronage. The study also recommends that firms should realize the dimensions of perceived value that drives customer satisfaction and emphasize on them.

KEYWORDS: *Customer Perceived Value, Customer Satisfaction, Relationship Value, Core Product Value, Repeat Purchase, Referral*

INTRODUCTION

In marketing, the concept of "value" is a critical component. The handling of marketing techniques that are relevant to the value required by consumers is promoted in order to develop and increase long-term success. When considering the general model of consumption experiences, it has been suggested that perceived value is the most essential consequence. This is also one of the most important indicators of repurchase intentions, according to some researchers. (Morar, 2013).

Consumers have two options: either they can maintain the economic benefits of a purchasing procedure or they can receive a better service that is more tailored to their own requirements (Morar, 2013). Another set of benefits that consumers enjoy during their purchasing procedures are the social benefits that result from the formation of a special relationship with a vendor. As a

result, it is possible that keeping a customer delighted is 10 times less expensive than gaining a new one. As a result, businesses must make an effort to retain customers while also concentrating on regulating the perceived value of those customers. The value that companies supply to consumers should boost their purchase intentions by designing and providing positive shopping experiences (Hamilton-Ibama&Horsfall, 2022). According to Yang and Peterson (2004), a company's economic and competitive condition improves as a result of the company's excellent management of satisfied and loyal customers. As a result, providing greater value has become increasingly vital for businesses seeking to build long-term connections with their customers. (Ivanauskiene*et al.,* 2012).

Consumers' perceptions of services and goods that are tailored to their own requirements and circumstances are currently the primary focus of marketers. The rationale for this concentration is that the organizations that win in today's complex economy are those who are able to provide superior value from the standpoint of their customers and clients(Kotler & Keller, 2012). Considering that consumers' views of products and services can be used as direct input for service and product development, the findings of perceived value studies can be simply translated into marketing strategies and market segmentation. Consequently, determining what a client is worth in terms of specific goods or services has long been recognized and should be beneficial to any organization with a customer-centric business strategy (Pihlström, 2018).

Consumers are more informed and empowered than they have ever been, and customer value is a solution for marketers that must deal with a rapidly changing consumer market environment. In order to achieve this, putting the customer first and delivering outstanding customer value have become increasingly important (Kotler & Keller, 2012). In addition to influencing their evaluation of products/services, customers' perceptions of value have been shown to influence their behavioural intentions and repeat purchases, all of which have an impact on the success of an organization (Overby, Woodruff, & Gardial, 2015).Perceived value is used in the hospitality business to refer to the perceptions that customers have of a service provider before they reach the facility where the service is provided. The information offered to the client, the reservation system, and the guest interactions during service delivery are all examples of perceptions that could be considered (which might include the check-in procedure, guest assistance, physical facilities, and guest service). Several factors contribute to the perception of value, including the quality of the accommodation, the mood of the hotel, the quality of the meals, and the availability of recreational and sporting activities. As a result, value is a combination of tangibles and intangibles that vary from one location to the next, as described above. It is possible that some clients will perceive a service to be of high value, but others will not (Nasution & Mavodo, 2018). Furthermore, Nasution and Mavodo (2018) argue that the creation of customer-perceived value is critical in relation to hotels, due to the fact that the hotel subsector is highly competitive compared to other economic subsectors. In order to be successful, hoteliers (hotel management) must consistently deliver exceptional customer value from the perspective of the consumer. Furthermore, hotels must place a greater emphasis on providing superior-quality products and services, as well as on meeting the needs and expectations of their customers. This implies that the requirements and desires of both present and prospective clients must be determined (Cant & Van Heerden, 2010).

Perceived value and customer satisfaction are discussed and evaluated as stated by the previous research deepens the awareness of how perceived worth affects the decision-making processes and intentions of consumers. There is existing literature which suggests the simultaneous
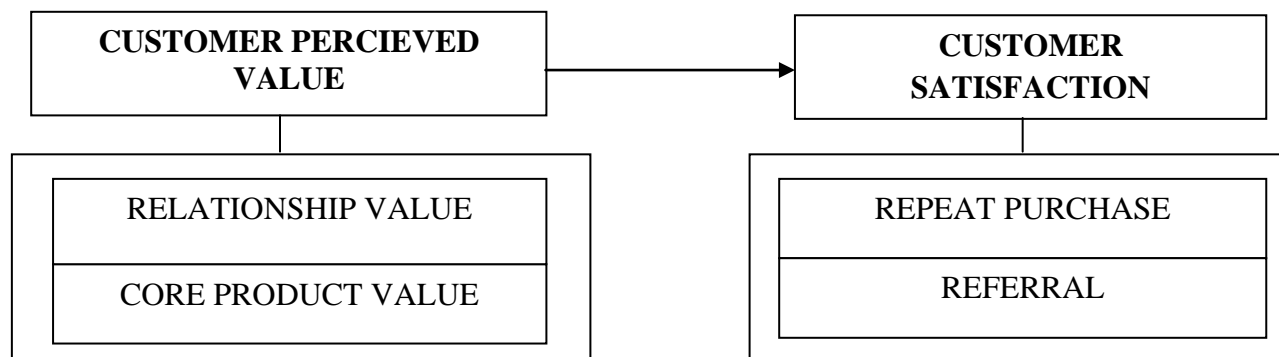
investigation of service assessment variables such as customer perceived value and customer satisfaction (Nyadzayo & Khajehzadeh, 2016; Seiders, Voss, Grewal, & Godfrey, 2015). These assessment variables are considered significant drivers for gaining loyalty from customers through satisfaction (Chen & Hu, 2013). Thus, various research suggests several key variables that can play a part as mediators among service assessment variables with constant customer satisfaction. However, the findings are still equivocal for different business sectors (Seiders *et al*, 2015).

In the field of hotel marketing research, there has been little investigation into the relationship between customer perceived value and customer satisfaction. According to this, there has been no scientific research conducted on the factors that contribute to consumer value and the outcomes of customer satisfaction in the leafy vegetable marketplaces in Africa. Furthermore, the relationship between the constructs, consumer perceived value and customer satisfaction has received very little emphasis to this point in time. Increasing customer satisfaction has become a critical concern for businesses and organizations as they strive to improve product and service quality while also maintaining customers' loyalty in today's highly competitive marketplace. In the previous decade, a number of national metrics have demonstrated that customer satisfaction has increased across a broad range of industries (Anderson & Fornell, 2010). A standardized satisfaction measure for customer perceived value will give the tools for precise regulatory objectives that reflect both consumer interests and the need to overcome the problem of ambiguity in the regulatory objectives.

It is widely acknowledged that adding value to a destination's competitive advantage is the key to gaining that advantage in the hotel industry. Currently, hotel consumers choose to stay at establishments that provide them with the greatest value for their money given their current financial restraints. A valid and effective assessment tool for developing perceived value would enable hospitality organizations to identify their existing positive value dimensions and features, as well as the areas in which they need to enhance their performance (Jamal, Othman, Maharen, & Muhamed, 2011). Because of this, hotel managers must identify the products and services that hotel customers prefer in order to prioritize the preferences that will provide the most value to the hotel's current service offerings (Olsen & Connoly, 2014).

The perceived value and quality of a product or service, according to Komppula (2015), are critical factors in hotels where there is a great deal of interaction between the client and the service provider. As a result, it is necessary to profile clients on a continuous basis in order to better understand their demand and consumption patterns. The study examined the relationship between customer perceived valueand customer satisfaction of hotels in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Customer Perceived Value and Customer Satisfaction of Hotels in Port Harcourt, Nigeria

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┌─────────────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────────────┐
│   CUSTOMER PERCIEVED     │─────────────▶│       CUSTOMER          │
│         VALUE            │              │     SATISFACTION        │
└─────────────────────────┘              └─────────────────────────┘
     │                                         │
┌─────────────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────────────┐
│   RELATIONSHIP VALUE     │              │    REPEAT PURCHASE      │
├─────────────────────────┤              ├─────────────────────────┤
│   CORE PRODUCT VALUE     │              │       REFERRAL          │
└─────────────────────────┘              └─────────────────────────┘
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Source: Desk Research, 2022

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between customer perceived value and customer satisfaction of hotels in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Based on the purpose of this study, the following research questions are posed:

1. To what extent does core product value relates with customer satisfaction of hotels in Port Harcourt, Nigeria?

2. To what extent does relationship value relate with customer satisfaction of hotels in Port Harcourt, Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Customer Perceived Value

Customer perceived value (CPV) is identified by terms of value or customer value. CPV is defined as the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given. CPV is a result from the consumers' pre-purchase perception (expectation), evaluation during the transaction (expectation vs. received), and post-purchase (after-use) assessment (expectation vs. received). Expectation is defined as predictions made by consumers about what is likely to happen during an approaching transaction or exchange. In the service literature, expectation is defined as desires or wants of consumers, i.e., what they feel a service provider should offer rather than would offer. From the post-purchase aspect, Butz and Goodstein (1997) define customer perceived value as the emotional bond established between a customer and a producer after the customer has used a salient product or service produced by that supplier and found the product or provide an added value. Moliner*et al*. (2007) define customer perceived value as a dynamic variable that is also experienced after consumption. It is necessary to include subjective or emotional reactions that are generated in the tourist. Woodruff (1997) defines customer perceived value from pre-purchase, transaction, and post purchase aspect that customer value is a customer's perceived preference for an evaluation of those product attributes, attribute performances, and consequences arising from use that facilitate (or block) achieving the customer's goals and purposes in use situations. In this context, perceived value is divided into two parts: perceived value prior to service delivery and perceived value during service delivery (Komppula, Pursuing customer value in tourism – a rural tourism case study, 2015).

A competitive advantage of a firm comes from its capability to create value for its customers that exceeds the company's costs of creating it. This perception has not changed up to now as

superior customer value delivery is still seen as a key to achieve and maintain competitive advantage (Landroguez, Castro, & Cepeda-Carrión, 2011). This had led to an increased interest of researchers to analyze customer value creation process and how customers perceive value.

Kotler and Keller (2012) define customer perceived value as the difference between customer's evaluation of all the benefits and all the costs of an offering and the perceived alternatives. They extend the concept by describing customer perceived value as the proportion between total customer value (a bundle of economic, functional and psychological benefits such as product, services, personnel, image value) and total customer costs (monetary, time, energy, psychic costs) (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Customer value is the customer's perception and evaluation of how useful the relationship with a supplier is in terms of benefits received and sacrifices made. Two types of benefits are distinguishing: "core benefits" that are core requirements for a customer-supplier relationship and "add-on benefits" reflecting attributes that are typically not required but create added value in a customer-supplier relationship. In line with previous definitions, other authors define customer value as a comparison of weighted "get" and "give" attributes or as a ratio of perceived benefits received and perceived sacrifices. Authors highlight the word "perceived" because both benefits and sacrifices are subjective to a certain level (Christopher, Ballantyne, & Payne, 2018). According to all the definitions above, it is obvious that customer perceived value can be described as the difference between customers' perception of the benefits they believe they will derive from a purchase compared to the costs they will have to pay. Despite the homogeneity of customer perceived value definitions, the dimensions of customer perceived value offered by authors are very diverse.

Dimensions of Customer Perceived Value

The perceived value creation has long been considered as a central marketing concept and the source of competitive advantage (Smith & Colgate, 2017). Nevertheless, customer value and its creation differ substantially in each industry. Therefore, Kotler and Keller (2012) suggest firstly starting with the value exploration process to gain understanding what customer thinks about, wants, does, and worries about. Only then they propose to proceed with value creation process utilizing all the resources and competencies available.

The company's resources or assets used to create customer value are usually divided by authors to tangible (physical) and intangible (intellectual) dimensions. Vargo and Lusch (2014) have introduced the operand and operant concepts to describe company's resources. They define operand resources as tangible and static goods offered to customer that the goods-centered model of exchange is based on. Whereas service-centered model of exchange is based on operant resources that are invisible and intangible assets such as core competences or organizational processes. Operant resources are seen as dynamic and infinite, opposite to operand resources that are usually static and limited (Vargo & Lusch, 2014). The dimensions were adapted from Kotler and Keller (2012).

Core Product Value

As it was mentioned above, operand resources are tangible or physical goods delivered by a company to create customer value (Vargo & Lusch, 2014). Usually authors use the term core product to describe the value created for the customer by delivering the physical or tangible goods. Core product can be viewed as the product in its most basic form. The concept of core product has already been defined by Levitt in 1983 who suggested four levels of product offer: core or generic product, expected product, augmented product and potential product.

Accordingly, the generic or core product is a material or physical product. The expected product is the core or generic product but supplemented with minimal purchase conditions. At the augmented product level, a company has an opportunity to gain its competitive advantage by offering additional services and benefits that are preferred and perceived as valuable by target customers. Finally, the potential product refers to the development that the product is likely to go through in the future over time. Kotler and Keller (2012) describe the five different levels of a product. The only difference is that Kotler and Keller (2012) emphasizes the difference between the core benefit which is explained as the advantage the buyer actually wants and the generic product which represents the actual physical product. Core product is seen as the essence of a product, the main reason it exists and is purchased. Consistently with others, physical good is a basic element in the offering since it is an essential condition for a customer to perceive the offered value successfully.

The core product and its created value are very industry specific. Therefore, the dimensions of core product also differ greatly from one industry to another, for instance in specific banking sector, core product dimensions would also be specific such as speed in delivery, accuracy of transactions, bank facilities and honesty of staff (Alfansi & Sargeant, 2017). Despite the industry differences, some authors distinguish the most basic and general dimensions of a core or physical product in general. Alfansi and Sargeant (2017) distinguish quality, on time delivery and price as the main dimensions of the base level of product. Consistently, core product features, quality, design and packaging can be described as the main aspects of physical or tangible product.

Relationship Value

The marketing shift from goods-dominant to service-dominant and thereby from tangible to intangible resources made the relationships, interactivity and connectivity with customers' central processes of a company. According to Vargo and Lusch (2014), companies should develop and cultivate relationships with customers by involving them in developing personalized, competitively compelling value propositions to meet their particular needs. One of the tools that is most often used to create relationship value for customers particularly in business-to-business marketing is customer relationship management (Christopher, Ballantyne, & Payne, 2018). The relationship value concept is being used to reflect a number of different perspectives. From the marketing and management perspective relationship value can be viewed as a tool helping in identification, selection, acquisition, development and retention of increasingly loyal and profitable customers. From the informational industry perspective relationship value is seen as a software or customer database that helps a company to administer customer relationships in an organized way (Cuthberston & Laine, 2015).

Hutt and Speh (2017) define relationship value as a cross-functional process helping to achieve a continuous communication with customers via all the contact and access points available including the customized treatment of the most valuable customers ensuring the marketing efforts success and customer retention. Relationship value is a strategic plan to improve shareholder value through long-term profitable relationships delivery for customers by uniting IT and relationship marketing strategies. Relationship value gives the unique opportunity to better understand customers and implement relationship marketing strategies by using gathered information and data. Martelo-Landroguez,Barroso and Cepeda-Carrion (2011) perceive relationship value as the company's actions that are focused on creation and maintenance of long-term relationship with customers in order to gain their satisfaction and loyalty. Consistently with other authors, this study believes that relationship value is about creating and maintaining

long-lasting relationships with customers in order to evolve continuous improvement in customer value delivery.

Authors have characterized a great deal of relationship value capabilities and dimensions. Cuthberston and Laine (2015) have emphasized customer knowledge reflecting individual customer requirements, the data collection process and customer contact as the most important relationship value capabilities. Interaction with customer and customer insight are the most valuable outcomes of relationship value. One of the CRM components is key customer focus which allows customer-centered marketing, identification of customer lifetime value, personalization and interactive co-creation marketing. Zinnbauer and Eberl (2015) state that relationship value enables interaction between the company and customer, creation of personalized customer offers and customer perceived consistency of the interaction with a company. According to Frederick, Rolph and Swaminathan (2014), companies using relationship value are focusing on key customers, organizing entire company around relationship value, managing customer knowledge throughout organization and implementing technology based on relationship value.

Despite its wide capabilities and described dimensions, relationship value has to be adjusted to industry and its specifics in every case. Therefore, it is important to discuss the most applicable relationship value dimensions that enable suppliers creating relationship value in B2B bakery and confectionery market. One of the most crucial capabilities of relationship value in this specific market is the knowledge and insight of customers and their profiles that enables a better understanding of customers and their requirements (Cuthberston & Laine, 2015; BAIN, 2015). Moreover, the knowledge of customers' requirements allows a supplier to create customer-specific tailored solutions according to their needs (Grigoroudis & Siskos, 2014; Zinnbauer & Eberl, 2015).

Concept of Customer Satisfaction

Kotler and Keller (2012) defined satisfaction as a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his or her expectations. Satisfaction can be associated with feelings of acceptance, happiness, relief, excitement, and delight. Customer satisfaction has been extensively studied by marketing scholars (Christopher, Payne, & Ballantyne, 2012; Heskett, Lones, Loveman, & Sasser, 2014). Kotler and Keller (2012) define satisfaction as a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his/her expectations. Others define customer satisfaction as the feeling or attitude of customers toward a product/service after it has been used.

Satisfied customers will repeat the purchase, be brand loyal, convey positive word-of-mouth advertising, and all these will enhance patronage. Dissatisfied customers may stop buying the product, spread unfavorable word-of-mouth advertising, and may avoid the product. An importance of customer satisfaction stems from its role in customer retention (Landroguez, Castro, & Cepeda-Carrión, 2011) but it is uncertain whether such satisfaction may also result in customer loyalty. Customer satisfaction occurs when the customer is deeply held commitment to rebuy or patronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior. This means that a loyal customer desires to repeat the purchase of the product or service and will have no other. Loyalty is a concept that is easy to discuss but becomes more obtuse when it is analyzed for measuring (Hutt & Speh, 2017).

Customer satisfaction is the primary mental state of customer which comprises two things: (1) Expectation before purchase, and (2) Perception about performance after purchase (Satendra & Singh, 2011). Customer satisfaction can be defined using the transaction-specific perspective or cumulative perspective. The transaction perspective indicates that customer satisfaction is the evaluation based on the recent purchase experiences. Compared with the transaction-specific perspective, the cumulative perspective stresses overall evaluation, indicating that evaluation of customer satisfaction should be based on all the purchase experiences of the customer disregarding any specific purchase experience (Grewal & Levy, 2010). The cumulative perspective is more capable of evaluating the service performance of firms more effectively in predicting consumers' post-purchase behaviors (Wang & Hui, 2017). Furthermore, customer satisfaction is a personal feeling of either pleasure or disappointment resulting from the evaluation of services provided by an organization to an individual in relation to expectations. Customer satisfaction can be seen as the degree to which a business's product or service performance matches up to the expectation of the customer. Customer satisfaction is influenced by expectations, perceived service and perceived quality. Service providers frequently place a higher priority on customer satisfaction because it has been seen as a prerequisite to customer retention. Among the studies of customer satisfaction in the telecommunication and information technology industry revealed that customer satisfaction of mobile commerce is consumer's total response to the purchase experiences in a mobile commerce environment (Yim, Anderson, & Swaminathan, 2014). Therefore, in this study, customer satisfaction is defined as the total consumption perception of consumers when using mobile value-added services.

According to Yim, Anderson and Swaminathan (2014), it was found that promotional value, quality of customer service at shops and corporate image play the most important role in determining customer satisfaction. An important consequence of customer satisfaction might be customer retention. Firms will not be able to retain their customers without satisfying them. In telecom industry, customer retention determines the success and survival of mobile service providers (Woodruff, 2017; Yim, Anderson, & Swaminathan, 2014). This might be due to fierce competition, the high cost of attracting new customers, and the similarity of services offered by the operators. Customer satisfaction is conceptualized as either transaction-specific satisfaction or cumulative satisfaction. Transaction-specific satisfaction is a customer's evaluation of her or his experience and reactions to a specific company encounter. Cumulative satisfaction refers to customer's overall evaluation of patronage experience from inception to date.

Measures of Customer Satisfaction

Various major aspects inducing customer satisfaction embracing variety of services, tariffs, levies and prices charged (Brassington & Pettitt, 2016). It is apparent that greater service only is not satisfactory in appeasing customers. Satisfaction is vital. Besides, service fineness attaining customer necessities are indispensable to flourish in any industry. Several service providers assert that generating and sustaining customer satisfaction is significant and they are cognizant of the constructive tenets that relationships offer. Though there have been numerous scholarly works emphasizing the importance of retaining customers in the telecommunication industry, there is pint-sized pragmatic research probing the paradigms that could bring about customer retention. Measures were adapted from Biyani and Gupta (2018).

Repeat Purchase

Repeat purchase is the patronage of a service provider by a consumer of the same brand name previously bought on another occasion. A repeat purchase is often a measure of retention of a

brand by consumers and is often taken into account by marketing research professionals to evaluate a business. Consumer gets brand preference only when that brand lives up to his expectation. This brand preference naturally repeats sales. A satisfied buyer is a silent advertisement. But, if the used brand does not yield desired satisfaction, negative feeling will occur and that will lead to the formation of negative attitude towards brand. This phenomenon is called cognitive dissonance. Marketers try to use this phenomenon to attract user of other brands to their brands.

Significantly, purchase action by a customer subsumes psychological principles that have been evolved to exploit an understanding of consumers' needs so that products can be developed, designed, and communicated in a justified manner that can mirror the applicable and substantial requirements of consumers. Consumer decision making is a process comprised of five stages that people experience when deciding on what products or services to buy. Grewal and Levy(2010) editorialize that conventionally, consumer decision making has been delineated as an analogous of five refined stages known as: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post purchase processes. All decision-making is channeled towards a determination of a purchase action. Consumers' choice impact shoppers' discernments of commodity value and consequently their aspiration to constitute a purchase act.

Referral

Referral is a type of communication from person to person that tends to rely heavily upon the credibility of the source information or reference to the product, service, or company being referred. Referral is a form of interpersonal communication among consumers concerning their personal experiences with a firm or a product, has undoubtedly always been a powerful marketing force. Referral is the act of telling others about a satisfactory or unsatisfactory experience with a service provider. It is an informal and non-commercial form of interpersonal communication between individuals (Gremler, Gwinner, & Brown, 2011) or between actual and potential consumers concerning a brand or product; but is neither initiated nor directly influenced by the brand. It is brand evangelism carried out by satisfied customers; and is avowed to be a potent medium of communication for influencing consumers' attitude toward a brand (Hanaysha, 2016; Quy, 2014). In most contexts, referral is perceived to be more effective in influencing consumers' purchase behavior because customers tend to rely more on it in their purchase decisions making, and is preferred by marketers because it is cost-effective (Hogan, Lemon, & Libai, 2014).

Referral has acquired significance because of its high incidence rate in the marketplace as well as the persuasive role it plays in influencing consumers' attitudes and purchase decisions. Both positive and negative referral communications can have a strong influence on consumers' behavior and on ensuing business performance. Studies show that positive referrals are likely to increase consumers' purchase intentions for innovative products by reducing risks, helps create favorable image toward the brand and the firm, and subsequently decrease a firm's overall promotional expenditures. Conversely, negative referral is likely to dissuade potential buyers from considering a particular product or brand, thus damaging the company's reputation and financial position (Holmes &Lett 1977).

Customer Perceived Value and Customer Satisfaction

There is a significant literature gap regarding the core product relationship with customer satisfaction and loyalty. Even though it was noted by authors that physical or core product

quality has the same importance to customer satisfaction as the service quality (Frederick, Rolph, & Swaminathan, 2014).Previous empirical researches tend to focus more on service rather than on the core product itself (Heskett, Lones, Loveman, & Sasser, 2014). Nevertheless, several studies have examined this relationship.

Also, perceived value has also been discovered to have a strong positive effect on customer relationship growth (Awara & Anyadighibe, 2014). Some other findings reveal that perceived quality significantly influences perceived value and customer satisfaction (Nyadzayo & Khajehzadeh, 2016). Furthermore, other research findings support the meditational roles of customer satisfaction and perceived customer value in the relationship between brand image, brand awareness, and brand loyalty (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996).

Core Product Value and Customer Satisfaction

Quality is clearly an important aspect of satisfaction that helps to reduce business failure and fulfill society's demands. If the quality needs to be improved, this requires human resources and tools to support, and the vehicle for improvement is quality management. According to marketing theory, every customer has a customer-value. Product quality, service quality, and the price of products are three elements in building core product value; and core product value has a relationship with customer satisfaction. This theory relates to tangible products that are sold in the market, and product quality can be measured by, for example, endurance and the number of product failure. Quality is a construct/latent variable and, therefore, service quality is measured from customers' perceptions (Cuthberston & Laine, 2015). The price of a product is the cost when it is sold. In this setting, product quality is shown in results; service quality is the product performance; and the price of the product is the cost of the product.

Cuison*et al* (2021) conducted a study to assess the effects of perceived value and customer satisfaction on online businesses. To achieve this aim, the researchers used a sample size of 50 customers whom are regularly shopping from online platforms. The primary data gathering tools used in the study was a standardized questionnaire survey. The data collected were analyzed and treated statistically. Results revealed that the perceived value of customers significantly affect their satisfaction. Shao, Guo and Ge (2019) conducted an empirical study and 293 valid data was collected from users of two leading bicycle-sharing platforms in China. Structural equation modeling technique was used to examine the research model. The empirical results suggest that emotional value is the most significant antecedent of customer satisfaction and continuance intention, followed by functional value and economic value. While environmental value has a positive but weaker influence on customer satisfaction.

The study by Shao, Guo and Ge (2019) has researched the relationship between the customer perceived value and customer satisfaction and loyalty. The most important dimensions of core product - quality and price - were measured. Authors have found that perceived product quality and perceived price fairness are both positively related to customer satisfaction which they explain by product quality and price being the essential concerns to customers and therefore effecting their satisfaction (Shao, Guo, & Ge, 2019). Perceived core product quality and perceived price fairness have both direct and indirect (through satisfaction) effects on customer satisfaction. Ali, Leifu, YasirRafiq and Hassan (2015) set out to investigate the influence of perceived value, customer expectation, corporate image and perceived service quality on customer satisfaction particularly in Pakistan telecommunication industry. To test the conceptual framework, multiple regression has been used to analyze the data collected from 450 respondents of Pakistan telecommunication companies operating in the Pakistan. This study reveals number

of notable findings including the empirical verification that core product value, customer expectation and corporate image significantly enhances customer satisfaction. We also observed that perceived service quality is negatively related to customer satisfaction but insignificant.

Relationship Value and Customer Satisfaction

Relationship development, cultivation, interactivity and connectivity with customers are central concepts in today's service-dominant marketing (Vargo & Lusch, 2014). As discussed above, the relationship value for customers is usually created using customer relationship management (CRM) which gives the unique opportunity to better understand customers and implement relationship marketing strategies by gathering information and data (Christopher, Ballantyne, & Payne, 2018).

The existing literature on the relationship value application effect on customer satisfaction is quite controversial. Many authors have found a positive relationship value effect on customer satisfaction. The effects of relationship value initiatives were investigated by Mukherjee, Nath and Pal (2013) who have found that relationship value efforts increase customer satisfaction and loyalty due to improved company's knowledge of their customers and more effective management of customer relationship. The study by Vargo and Lusch (2014) which explored the level of customer satisfaction with relationship value found that CRM system helps to develop service and products for customer satisfaction and create loyal customers. Appropriately relationship value strategy result in increased customer satisfaction, loyalty, and trust(Mukherjee, Nath, & Pal, 2013). Pride and Ferrell (2010) claim that the level of customer service provided by a company can greatly affect customer satisfaction. The study by Oliva, Oliver and MacMillan (1992) has also confirmed that the level of customer service directly effects customer satisfaction. According to Bitner (1995), the most important factor determining customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is the experience of customers during the service encounters. In line with other authors, Pitt, Watson and Kavan (1995) agree that customer satisfaction is influenced by service in general and particularly by the quality of service. All the authors reviewed agree that basic customer service influences customer satisfaction.

Despite the vast literature on customer service and satisfaction relationship, very few authors have explored the relationship between customer service and loyalty. Usually, the ones who did researched the indirect relationship via satisfaction because satisfaction is thought to be an immediate antecedent to loyalty (Oliva*et al.,* 1992). For instance, Bitner (1995) believes that the service encounter occurring each time a customer interacts with an organization influences the overall satisfaction of a customer and, in turn, to loyalty. The study of Vargo and Lusch (2014) showed that service sector companies with implemented CRM in India are still missing desired customer satisfaction level. The notion that customer loyalty can be increased by CRM relies on the research conducted by Heskett, Lones, Loveman and Sasser (2014). Moreover, Hutt and Speh (2007) believe that relationship value aligns customer strategy with business processes in order to improve customer loyalty. In line with other authors, Zineldin (2006) argues that CRM is one of the ways to create and deliver added value to the customers which consequentially leads to customer satisfaction. Setiowati and Putri (2021) investigated the impact of five dimensions of perceived value that affect customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in Indonesia. The research focuses on spas located in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia. To measure customer perceived value, a multi-dimensional constructs from previous research was employed, we also examine the behavioral loyalty by measuring the willingness of spa customers to recommend and repurchase spa services. We hypothesize and find that there is a positive relationship between

five dimensions of perceived value and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, perceived value is also identified as one of the indicators of customer loyalty that leads to customer recommendation and repurchase.

Methodology

This research adopts the descriptive survey research design and it was designed based on the cross-sectional survey method which offers a wide coverage and permits generalization of research findings. As a descriptive survey research design, the researcher did not exhibit a manipulative power over any of the study variables.342 respondents were purposefully selected from the population of Ten (10) hotels registered with the Rivers State Ministry of Culture and Tourism(See Table 1). The sampling technique applied in selecting a sample of 184 from a population of 342 was the simple random technique in which every member has an equal chance of being selected. From the total sample size above, the individual hotels sample size was calculated using the Bowley's proportionate population allocation formula.

TABLE 1: SAMPLE SIZE PER SELECTED HOTEL

S/No	Name of Hotels	No. of Staff	Sample Size
1	Presidential Hotel	58	32
2	Habitat Hotel & Suits	30	16
3	Helena Haven Hotel	28	15
4	Larritel Hotels Limited	20	11
5	Le Meridien Hotel	55	30
6	Lotus Hotel	23	12
7	Marriot Garden City Hotel	25	13
8	Mass Central Hotel	20	11
9	Swiss Spirit Hotel	38	20
10	Voyage Ranch Hotel	45	24
	Total	342	184

The questionnaire administration and retrieval recorded a success rate of 76.34% wherein a total of 184 (100%) copies were successfully distributed and successfully retrieved. However, after the error check and cleaning process, only 142 (76.34%) copies were considered as adequate and suitable for inclusion in the study. Spearman's rank order (rho) correlation coefficient was utilized in testing the stated hypotheses with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.

Analysis and Results

Analysis on the association between the variables is carried out at a 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance. The Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient is adopted in the assessment of the significance of the relationship between the dimensions of perceived value (core-product value and relationship value) and measures of customer satisfaction (repeat purchase and referral). The decision rule for the acceptance or rejection of the null hypothetical statement is based on the adoption of the significance of the probability value relative to error precision as criterion; hence where $P<0.05$, the null hypotheses is rejected given the evidence of significant associations and where $P>0.05$, the null hypotheses is accepted given the evidence of insignificant associations.

Test of Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between Core Product Value and Repeat Purchase of hotels in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

TABLE 2: CORRELATION FOR CORE PRODUCT VALUE AND REPEAT PURCHASE

			CPV	RP
Spearman's rho	CPV	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.925[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	142	142
	RP	Correlation Coefficient	.925[**]	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	142	142

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: Research Data, 2022 (SPSS output version 22.0)

From the result in Table 2, it is shown that a very strong and positive relationship exist between core product value and repeat purchase. The *rho* value 0.925 indicates this relationship and it is significant at p $0.000<0.05$. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected. Thus, there is a significant relationship between core product value and repeat purchase of hotels in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Test of Hypothesis Two

There is no significant relationship between Core Product Value and Referral of hotels in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

TABLE 3: CORRELATION FOR CORE PRODUCT VALUE AND REFERRAL

			CPV	R
Spearman's rho	CPV	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.840[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	142	142
	R	Correlation Coefficient	.840[**]	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	142	142

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: Research Data, 2022 (SPSS output version 22.0)

From the result in Table 3, it is shown that a very strong and positive relationship exist between core product value and referral. The *rho* value 0.840 indicates this relationship and it is significant at p $0.000<0.05$. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected. Thus, there is a significant relationship between core product value and referral of hotels in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Test of Hypothesis Three

There is no significant relationship between Relationship Value and Repeat Purchase of hotels in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

TABLE 4: CORRELATION FOR RELATIONSHIP VALUE AND REPEAT PURCHASE

			RV	RP
Spearman's rho	RV	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.920[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	142	142
	RP	Correlation Coefficient	.920[**]	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	142	142

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: Research Data, 2022, (SPSS output version 22.0)

From the result in Table 4, it is shown that a very strong and positive relationship exist between relationship value and repeat purchase. The *rho* value 0.920 indicates the strength and magnitude of this relationship and it is significant at p 0.000<0.05. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected. Thus, there is a significant relationship between relationship value and repeat purchase of hotels in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Test of Hypothesis Four

There is no significant relationship between Relationship Value and Referral of hotels in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

TABLE 5: CORRELATION FOR RELATIONSHIP VALUE AND REFERRAL

			RV	R
Spearman's rho	RV	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.966[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	142	142
	R	Correlation Coefficient	.966[**]	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	142	142

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: Research Data, 2022, (SPSS output version 22.0)

From the result in Table 5, it is shown that a very strong positive relationship exist between relationship value and referral. The *rho* value 0.966 indicates the strength and magnitude of this relationship and it is significant at p 0.000<0.05. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected. Thus, there is a significant relationship between relationship value and referral of hotels in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed a very strong and positive significant relationship between perceived value and customer satisfaction using the Spearman's rank order correlation tool and at a 95% confidence interval. The findings of this study confirmed that perceived value has a significant positive relationship with customer satisfaction.

Core-Product Value and Customer Satisfaction

The result of the tested hypotheses one and two ($H_{01 and} H_{02}$) revealed the existence of a significant relationship (i.e. rho = .925**, p = .000 < 0.05; rho = .840**, p = .000 < 0.05) between Core Product Value and the measures (repeat purchase and referral) of Customer Satisfaction of hotels in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. This study findings agrees with the assertions of Cuthberston and Laine(2015) who posited that the quality is a construct/latent variable and, therefore, quality is measured from customers' perceptions. This study finding corroborates the findings of Cuison *et al* (2021) who conducted a study to assess the effects of perceived value and customer satisfaction on online businesses. Results revealed that the perceived value of customers significantly affect their satisfaction.

Also, this is in line with the study by Shao, Guo and Ge (2019). They researched the relationship between the customer perceived value and customer satisfaction and loyalty. The most important dimensions of core product - quality and price - were measured. Authors have found that perceived product quality and perceived price fairness are both positively related to customer satisfaction which they explain by product quality and price being the essential concerns to customers and therefore effecting their satisfaction. Furthermore, Ali, Leifu, YasirRafiq and Hassan (2015) findings also is in line with this study finding. They set out to investigate the influence of perceived value, customer expectation, corporate image and perceived service quality on customer satisfaction particularly in Pakistan telecommunication industry. This study reveals number of notable findings including the empirical verification that core product value, customer expectation and corporate image significantly enhances customer satisfaction.

Relationship Value and Customer Satisfaction

The result of the tested hypotheses three and four ($H_{03 and} H_{04}$) revealed the existence of a significant relationship (i.e. rho = .920**, p = .000 < 0.05; rho = .966**, p = .000 < 0.05) between Relationship Value and the measures (repeat purchase and referral) of Customer Satisfaction of hotels in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. This correlates with the conclusions of Mukherjee, Nath and Pal (2013) who have found that relationship value efforts increase customer satisfaction and loyalty due to improved company's knowledge of their customers and more effective management of customer relationship. Also, this result agree with the study by Vargo and Lusch (2014) which explored the level of customer satisfaction with relationship value and found that CRM system helps to develop service and products for customer satisfaction and create loyal customers.

This study finding is in line with Mukherjee, Nath and Pal (2013), Vargo and Lusch (2014), Pride and Ferrell (2010), Oliva, Oliver and MacMillan (1992), Bitner (1995), Pitt, Watson and Kavan (1995), Zineldin (2006), Setiowati and Putri (2021). The effects of relationship value initiatives were investigated by Mukherjee, Nath and Pal (2013) who have found that relationship value efforts increase customer satisfaction due to improved company's knowledge of their customers and more effective management of customer relationship. The study by Vargo and Lusch (2014) explored the level of customer satisfaction with relationship value and found

that CRM system helps to develop service and products for customer satisfaction and create loyal customers. Pride and Ferrell (2010) claim that the level of customer service provided by a company can greatly affect customer satisfaction. The study by Oliva, Oliver and MacMillan (1992) has also confirmed that the level of customer service directly effects customer satisfaction. According to Bitner (1995), the most important factor determining customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is the experience of customers during the service encounters. In line with other authors, Pitt, Watson and Kavan (1995) agree that customer satisfaction is influenced by service in general and particularly by the quality of service. All the authors reviewed agree that basic customer service influences customer satisfaction.

Furthermore, in line with other authors, Zineldin (2006) argues that CRM is one of the ways to create and deliver added value to the customers which consequentially leads to customer satisfaction. Setiowati and Putri (2021) investigated the impact of five dimensions of perceived value that affect customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in Indonesia. The research focuses on spas located in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia. They hypothesize and found that there is a positive relationship between five dimensions of perceived value and customer satisfaction.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study asserts to the significance of the relationship between perceived value and customer satisfaction. From the findings obtained from empirical literature and results from our tested hypotheses, we conclude that perceived value significantly influences customer satisfaction of hotels in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. Marketers should realize perceived value as an effective driver of customer satisfaction and patronage.

2. Firms should realize the dimensions of perceived value that drives customer satisfaction and emphasize on them.

3. Perceived value must be positively influenced by firms through core-product value and relationship value and aimed at improving customer satisfaction.

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