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CONTENTS

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   OBJECTIVES

   HYPOTHESES

   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

   RESULTS & DISCUSSION

   FINDINGS

   RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

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STRATEGIES IN MANAGING BARRIERS TO CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

Customer satisfaction is an essential marketing construct in modern literatures. The concept relevance and acceptability in developing economies are still very much in doubts. The study focused on barriers to customer satisfaction in developing countries, from the Nigerian perspective. Factors relating to product, promotion, price, distribution, salesmen, social and psychological were identified as barriers to customer satisfaction. Strategies such as: enhancing product/service quality, building trust, efficient service recovering, internal marketing, timeliness in service delivery and fair-pricing were espoused as management measures for overcoming barriers and guaranteeing customer satisfaction.

KEYWORDS

Barriers, Trust, Internal Marketing, Service Recovery and Customer Satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

The goal of every business organization is to make profit and survive. History has shown that many business organizations seek to achieve these goals through different means. During the industrial revolution emphasis was on how to achieve mass production at reduced cost without due consideration being given to customer satisfaction. At that time, manufacturers as the kings, produced products that they had the resources to produce. By so doing, they dominated the market without any breathing space for the customers. The production orientation stage gave the producers a strong edge to grow at the devastating expense of the consumers. During this era, the customers were denied the right to quality products, satisfaction and opportunity of maximizing choices (Adetayo, 2004). In the second half of the 1950s, modern marketing concept emerged and this philosophy was the first to espouse the fundamental importance of the consumer. It suggests that the best way to make profit, and to stay in business in the short and long term, is to define properly what customers require, and then to deliver it rather than persuading customers to buy what firms can make (Gordon, 1980).

The enthralling business philosophy drew inspiration from Adams Smith's eighteenth century doctrine of consumer sovereignty. Customer satisfaction is the means to the corporate ends of profits and survival (Buzzell and Gale, 1987). The implication of this is that, no firm can survive without customers' loyalty (Richheld, 2003). Customer satisfaction is a concept that cannot be swept under the carpet because the survival of any organization hinges on it (Adetayo, 2004). Consumerism as the sole ingredient of customer satisfaction should be embraced by all resourceful managers rather than brood over its restraints (Bloom and Greyer, 1981).

The contemporary business world has brought more pressure to bear on business as today's customers are harder and smarter to please. Striving to satisfy customer is not enough; the challenge is to produce loyal customer (Gitomer, 1998). Unfortunately, much of the business efforts especially in developing countries, are centred on the art of attracting new customers rather than on retaining existing ones. The emphasis traditionally has been on making sales rather than building relationships and caring for the customer afterward.

The acceptance of consumer orientation spurred great change in the outlook of companies especially in the developed economies. But the relevance and/or applicability of the marketing concept in the developing world is still very much in doubts. Studies conducted in Egypt and Nigeria, revealed that although managers in these countries understood the tenets of marketing concept and indeed accepted its logic; but were yet to implemented it (Agbonifoh, 1982). For example, Baker and El-Haddad (1982) measuring the customer orientation of Egyptian firms found that only 11 out of 30 firms surveyed had marketing research departments. A further investigation on the usage of marketing research to determine the appropriate marketing mix revealed that only 7 out of 30 firms reported using marketing research to identify consumer needs prior to new product development; 14 out of 30 firms reported using the strategy; 6 out of 30 firms applied marketing research in selection of appropriate promotion strategy and 12 out of 30 firm used marketing research in determining their distribution strategy.

In a similar study, Ogwo (1986) found that many Nigerian Business Executives acknowledged acute awareness of the theoretical underpinnings of the marketing concept but asserted that their companies were yet to be faithful to the tenets of the concept. Yet, in another study, Mitchell and Agenmonmen (1984) examined the attitudes of 65 Nigerian firms toward marketing concept in terms of its impact on consumer benefits and consumerism among others factors. Research results showed that Nigerian marketers believe in the application and relevance of the concept but reported problems in its implementation. Recent studies in the area of customer satisfaction indicated that most organisations in Enugu and Onitsha do not have a department designated to handle consumers' complaints or measure the level of consumer satisfaction except few Telecommunication operators (Idoko and Nkamnebe, 2007). According to them, the poor adoption of marketing orientation in Nigeria appears to have accounted for the high incidence of customer dissatisfaction in Nigeria. In another recent survey conducted by Abdullahi (2007), 87% of the respondents opined that profit was more important to top level business managers than product safety and other societal cherished values.

Adebayo (2008) noted poor complaint resolution in the Nigerian telecommunication industry, and that the only reason consumers even consider making a change was when they had repeatedly had bad customer service experience. He observes that this accounts in part for why many Nigerians carry multiple handsets for different network. According to Adebayo (2008), operators solely focused on the bottom line of revenues beyond customer satisfaction and not doing the right investment in empowering contact centre agents with the authority to make on-the-spot customer complaint resolution will continue to see an erosion of their client base.

As rightly observed by Kotler (2000), today's companies are facing their toughest competition ever. Only companies who have transcended beyond the product and sales philosophies to adopt marketing philosophy can out-performed the competition. Kotler (2000), posited that consumer-centered companies are adept at building customers; not just products; they are skilled in market engineering, not just product engineering. With the emergence of globalization, the world has been reduced to one market. The area of customer satisfaction has become a big intellectual, moral and philosophical challenge both in the developing and developed economies. Companies' survival in the global market is predicated mainly on their abilities to determine consumer needs effectively and efficiently and eliminate barriers to consumer satisfaction. The studies of Idoko and Nkamnebe (2007) and Odia (2009) shed some lights on the increasing level of dissatisfaction among Nigerian consumers as the cases of unethical business practices continue to escalate. This dreadful situation is inimical to the survival of a nation. The burning question is, are the business firms aware of the gulf between their brand value and customer value? For a problem well diagnosed is half solved. Secondly, how can barriers to customer satisfaction be reduced or eliminated? The focus of this paper is to proffer solutions to the above pertinent questions in a systematic approach.

THE CONCEPT OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

The definition of consumer satisfaction has been widely debated as it is a highly personal assessment that is greatly affected by individual customer expectations. The state of satisfaction which depends both on psychological and physical variables correlates with satisfaction behaviours such as repeat purchase and word-of-mouth. In the view of Kotler (2000), satisfaction is a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his or her expectations. Satisfaction is based on the customer's experience of both contacts with the organisation and personal outcomes. Satisfaction is a function of perceived performance and expectations. If the performance matches the expectations, the customer is satisfied. But if the performance exceeds expectations, the customer is highly satisfied or delighted (Kotler, 2000; Jobber, 2007).

National Business Research Institute (NBRI) defined customer satisfaction as the state of mind that customers have about a company when their expectations have been met or exceeded over the lifetime of the product or service. A satisfied customer is "one who receives significant added value" to his or her bottom line (Hanan and Karp, 1989). Customer satisfaction differs depending on the situation and the product or service. A customer may be satisfied with a product or service, an experience, a purchase decision, a sales person, store, service provider, or an attribute or any of these (Wreden, 2004). Because customer satisfaction is a highly variable assessment that every individual make based on his/her own information, expectations, direct contact and interaction and impact, it is therefore imperative to involve and consult consumers when designing customer satisfaction programmes. The level of customer satisfaction depends on the company's ability to manage its value delivery system. Too many companies create a value gap by failing to align brand value with customer value (Kotler, 2000).

A barrier is a problem, rule or situation that prevents somebody from doing something or that makes something impossible (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary). Barriers to customer satisfaction can be likened to the perceived risk involved in buying situations. The objective in this paper is to find ways of raising customer satisfaction by elimination barriers.

SIGNIFICANCE OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

There are enormous business pay-offs that ensures that customers are not only satisfied but delighted. The tendency of satisfied and loyal customers to bring in new customers at no charge to the company is particularly beneficial as a company grows. Studies by National Business Research Institute (NBRI) indicated that it is at least 5 (five) times more profitable to sell to an existing customer than to find a new customer. It is also acknowledged that it costs five to eight times as much to secure new customers than to hold on to old ones. Kotler (2000) argued that a highly satisfied customer:

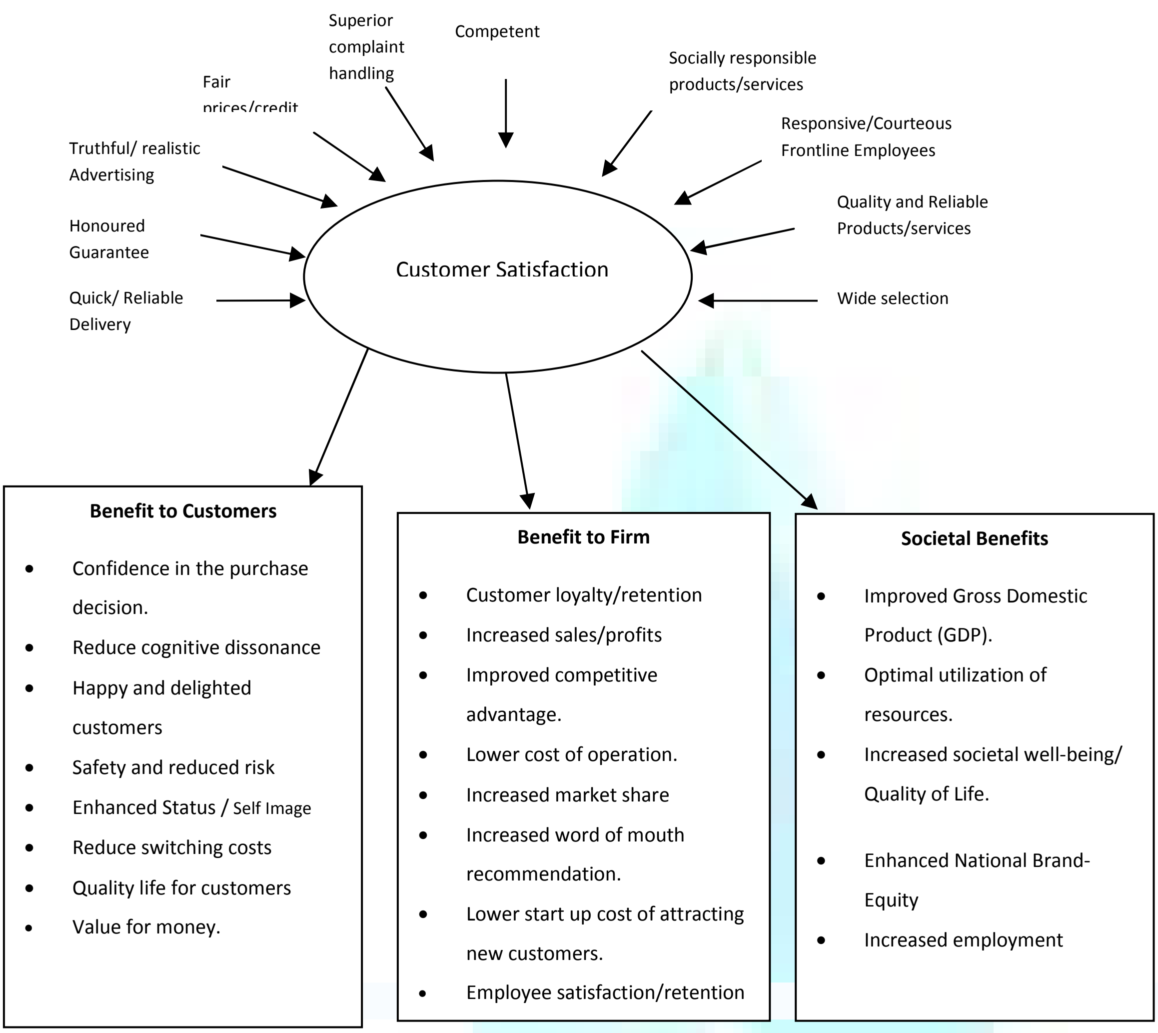
- Stays loyal longer.
- Buys more as the company introduces new products and upgrades existing products.
- Promotes the company and its products.
- Pays less attention to competing brands and advertising and is less sensitive to price.
- Offers product or service ideas to the company.
- Cost less to serve than new customers because transactions follow routine.

In a competitive marketplace where businesses compete for customers, customer satisfaction is seen as a key differentiator and increasingly has become a key element of business strategy. Clearly defining and understanding customer satisfaction can help any company to identify opportunities for product and service innovation and serve as the basis for performance appraisal and reward systems. According to National Business Research Institute (NBRI), companies that are prospering in this new era recognize that measuring customer satisfaction is the key to:

- Understanding the expectations and requirements of all your customers.
- Determining how well your company and its competitors are satisfying these expectations and requirements.
- Developing service and/or product standards based on your findings.
- Identifying trends overtime in order to ensure prompt service recovery.
- Establishing priorities and standards to judge how well you have met the set goals.

Companies who will be able to play at the global game recognize that customer satisfaction is a critical, strategic weapon that can bring about increased market share and profits. Figure 1 examines critically the elements that guarantee customer satisfaction and the benefits thereof.

FIGURE 1: ELEMENTS OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION



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Effective customer satisfaction survey is significant not only in terms of its potential positive effects on the individual company, but also in terms of its possible implications on the welfare of the consumer and the society. A growing percentage of unsatisfied customers impacts negatively on the company's profits, survival and its competitive ability. Enhancing customer satisfaction is the hallmark of every economy that is surviving in the global market. A country whose domestic industries are unable to compete globally will definitely suffer a loss in aggregate demand for her products. This in essence will calumniate in an increase in the rate of labour unemployment.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CUSTOMER FOCUSED ORGANISATIONS

Many researchers have identified a number of characteristics associated with customer-focused companies who are committed to hearing the voice of the customer (Cacioppo, 2000; National Business Research Institute (NBRI)). According to them, these companies are characterized by the following features: marketing and sales employees are primarily responsible for designing (with customer input) customer satisfaction surveying programs, questionnaires, and focus groups; top management and marketing divisions often champion the programs; corporate evaluations include not only their own customer satisfaction ratings but also those of their competitors; satisfaction results are made available to all employees; customers are informed about changes brought about as the direct result of listening to their needs; internal and external quality measures are often tied together; customer satisfaction is incorporated into the strategic focus of the company via the mission statement; stakeholder compensation is tied directly to the customer satisfaction surveying program; a concerted effort is made to relate the customer satisfaction measurement results to internal process metrics; organisation charts are designed in the form of inverted pyramid where customers are placed at the top; competitive advantage is seen as a customer advantage; and people are carefully hired, trained extensively to achieve the service standards, and then empowered to work on behalf of customers, whether inside or outside the organization.

In market-oriented companies, success requires "a multi-dimensional program, including management consulting, customer satisfaction measurements, employee feedback, motivation programs, training and ongoing reinforcement" (http://www.tdmktg.com). These firms establish concrete standards of service quality and regularly measure themselves against those standards. They guard against the common mindset that some margin of error is acceptable by establishing as their goal 100 percent performance. The following two cases are examples of how organisations use different approaches to identify customer service standards and they vary in detail. Emanuel Medical Center uses "CARING" as an acronym for its six customer service standards, which are printed on the back of ID badges, flashed across computers as screen savers, printed on T-shirts, and posted prominently throughout the hospital (Truax and Rorex, 2001):

- **C**ustomers first
- **A**ccept responsibility
- **R**each out and help
- **I**nitiate contact
- **N**urture others
- **G**ive attention to detail.

Another good example of market-oriented company is, Exxon Mobil Company, it grew to become an industry leader through the use of a tool called "GUEST". The GUEST program though a potent tool, became more effective after a training exercise was organized for all the company employees. The full meaning of "GUEST" is given below:

- **G - G**REET customers with a hello and offer to help.
- **U - U**NDERSTAND if customers voice a concern or need
- **E - E**YE CONTACT when listening or speaking to customers
- **S - S**MILE whenever customers see you
- **T- T**HANK customers for their business

BARRIERS TO CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Though it has been widely acknowledged that customer satisfaction relates to market share growth/profitability, yet, for many companies, high standards products/service qualities still remain elusive. Seven barriers to customer satisfaction will be examined here.

Product-Related Barriers: Lack of effective marketing research may lead to product/service attributes misconception. Sometimes, managers may understand customer expectations but lack or unwilling to provide the resources necessary to meet them. This sort of behaviour may arise due to a cost-reduction or productivity-focus policies of the management.

According to Majaro (1986), the rising capacity utilization by local manufacturers has resulted into many fake and substandard products in the Nigerian markets. The problem of product proliferations, fake and substandard product delivery permeate all the sectors of the Nigerian economy with services delivery inclusive (Monye, 2003). The heightened presence of fake and substandard products in the market has been ascribed to the fact that most consumers find difficulty in distinguishing between the original and fake products (Idoko and Nkamnebe, 2007). In the same study, Idoko and Nkamnebe (2007) noted that 155 percent of 93 respondents from Enugu and Onitsha would stop buying a particular brand of products when found to be fake or adulterated. Product deficiency is the major barrier why many customers are often dissatisfied. Poor quality products will definitely not attract a repeat-purchase. In a study, Aire (1974:17) found that "58.3 percent of the 226 consumers surveyed felt that made-in-Nigeria goods which they had purchased in the preceding fifteen months were of lower quality they expected".

The practice of planned obsolescence by some manufacturers reduces consumers' right to choose as many products are not designed to last long. Another source of dissatisfaction is packaging which may occur in the form of sin of omission or commission. In Nigeria, for example, it has been noted that producers purportedly deceive buyers with foreign labels on made-in-Nigeria products (Agbonifoh, 1986). Additionally, deceptive packaging (slack packaging) has the potential to deceive when the packaging is opaque (Smith, 1995). For example, products such as soap powders and breakfast cereals have the potential to suffer from 'slack' packaging.

Promotion-Related Barriers: Some customer's expectations are formed through suppliers' marketing activities. Companies need to guide against the mistake of setting customers' expectations too high through exaggerated promotional claims or concealed facts, as it can lead to dissatisfaction if performance falls short of expectations (Jobber, 2007). For example, it would be deceptive and unethical to claim that a car achieved 50 miles to the gallon when in reality it was only 30 miles. A case in point in Nigeria, is that of Dangote Floor Factory, Kano, which was shut up in May 2007 by the National Agency for Foods and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) for unethical practice of promoting its product by inscribing vitamin A and eye logo on the product's (Danvita) pack whereas it lacked the critical food elements (Isibor, 2007).

Price-Related Barriers: Many customers use price as an indicator of perceived quality. This is particularly the case for products where objective measurement of quality is not possible. A study of price and quality perceptions of cars, for example, revealed that higher priced cars were perceived to possess (unjustified) high quality (Erickson and Johansson, 1985). Also sales of a branded agricultural fertilizer rose after the price was raised above that of its generic competitors despite the fact that it was made of the same compound (Jobber, 2007). Capitalizing on the notion that price influence consumer quality perception, some suppliers tend to over-price their products to confuse the customer of the perceived quality. Some create artificial scarcity in order to unduly reap off customers. This sort of practice is very predominant in Nigeria with regards to essential commodity like fuel. For example, the aggrieved consumer of MTN Telecommunication service adopted the mass messaging strategy to send text messages to all MTN subscribers to switch off their handsets on the 31st August, 2003 to protest the exploitative billing method of N50 per minute irrespective of drop calls adopted by MTN. Shortly, after this demonstration, MTN allowed all interested subscribers to convert to per second billing (Idoko and Nkamnebe, 2007).

Distribution-Related Barriers: The creation of artificial scarcity through hoarding by middlemen is a major source of customer satisfaction (Odia, 2009). In Nigeria, essential commodities like fuel, kerosene, and gas are deliberately hoarded to inflate prices and to make unlawful gains. Siollun (2007) observed that many petrol station proprietors often take advantage of workers' strike in the petroleum industry to deliberately amplify shortages and drive prices higher to exploit and accentuate the misery of the fuel consumer. Corroborating this, chief Sylvernus Okoli, the president of the Depot and Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria (DAPPMA) said that recent survey by the association showed that kerosene was being sold for N100 at most retail outlets except Techno Oil and NIPCO depots who sold at N60 and N56 per litre respectively (The Tide, August 27, 2008).

Customer dissatisfaction can also result depending on the type of distribution channel adopted. For example, exclusive distribution channel can reduce competition in ways that may be considered contrary to consumers' interests. Purchaser's power to negotiate prices for the same model between competitors is reduced.

Sales Force-Related Barriers: Managers may understand customer expectations and supply adequate resources but fail to select, train and reward staff adequately, resulting in poor or in consistent service. This type of barrier may manifest itself in poor communication skills, inappropriate dresses and insensitivity and unwillingness on the part of salesmen to solve customers' problems. Some disgruntled salesmen can inflate prices of products without the knowledge of their company to make quick profits for themselves. Disloyal middlemen sometimes stock both fake and unadulterated products with the genuine products to confuse the unwary customers. The heightened presence of fake and substandard products in the market has been ascribed to the fact that most consumers find difficulty in distinguishing between the original and fake products with particular reference to pharmaceutical products (Idoko and Nkamnebe, 2007). The role of the salesperson acting as a problem-solver for the customer rather than simply pushing the highest profit-margin product can help create customer satisfaction, and thereby reduce cognitive dissonance.

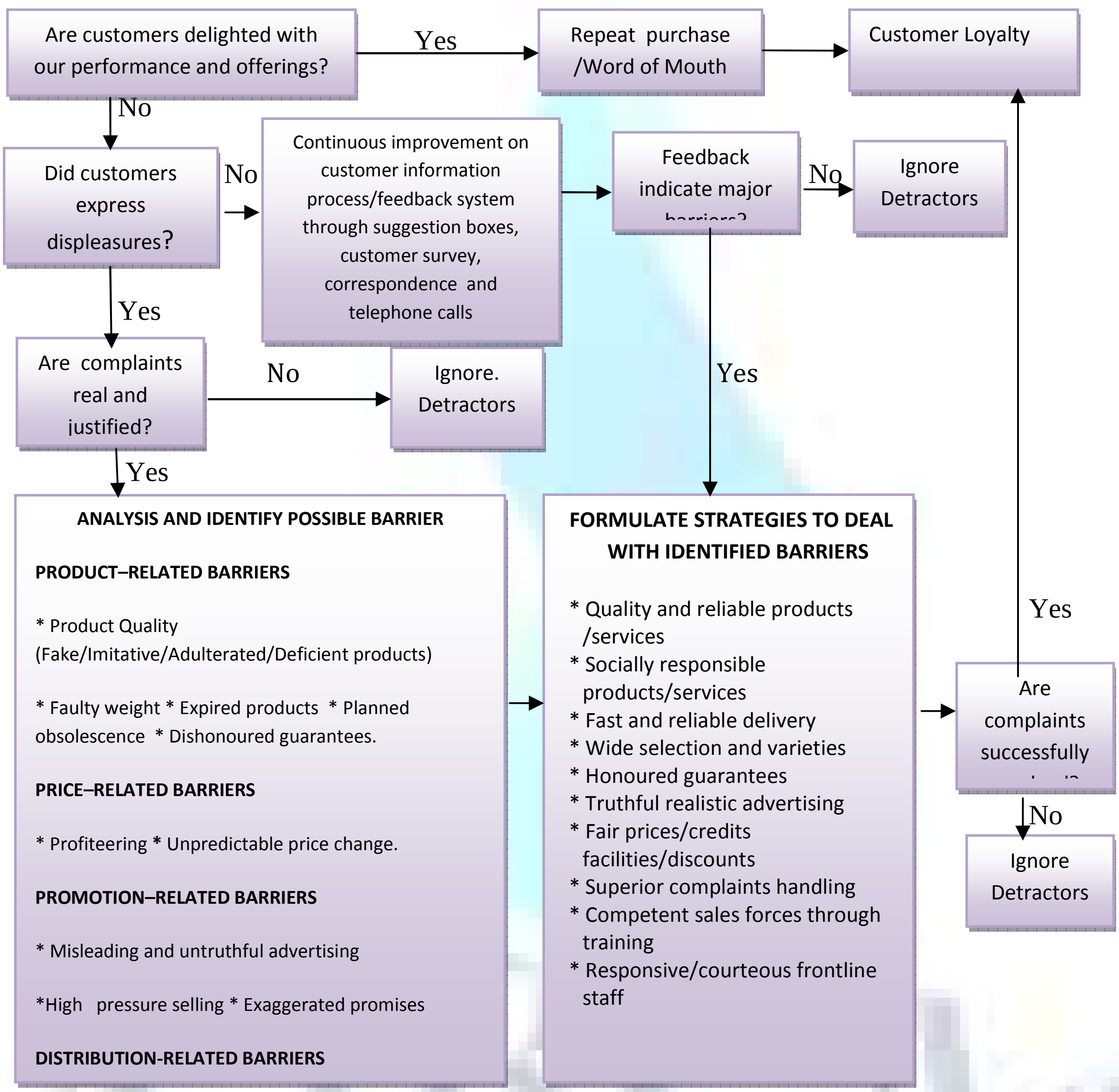
Adetayo (2008) in his paper quoted a reliable survey carried out recently on the industry as saying that almost 25 per cent of all customer callers complained having abandoned services of a company solely based on their experience with the company's customer care representatives. Further information from the survey indicated that 76 per cent of customers who had bad service experiences shared it with others. "In today's information-driven society, these unhappy customers can use mass messaging to broadcast their opinions to millions of potential customers in just a few seconds. On the other hand, 94 per cent of callers who had positive customer service interactions said they would retain their service business with the company.

Psychological-Related Barriers: The early marketers failed to take adequate cognizance of the psychological views and behaviours of customers as strong barriers to successful marketing. Some people naturally have negative attitudes and perceptions about various products and marketing techniques designed by companies. These attitudes and reactions are independent of the marketing situations, they preceded any contact and only come to fore when a prospect is confronted with the possibility of making a final purchase decisions (Adetayo, 2004).

In his study, Adetayo (2004) identified fear, anxiety, confusion, perception, culture, and attitudes of Nigerian customers as constituting obstacles to the growth of service marketing. He observed that these negative attitudes to services and service providers had become a 'cancer' that is being passed from generation to generation. Majority of the consumers in the developing countries are known to resent new products or services because of these psychological barriers such as confusion, not knowing the significant differences between the old and new services. Fear and beliefs are other common hindrances to successful marketing of new products. For example, the fear that wearing of contact lenses could lead to blindness and the perception that oral contraceptive pills could lead to a permanent sterility often reduce customer's level of trust. The following observation by Adetayo (2004) reflects the degree to which these negative feelings are buried in the minds of the consumers. Furthermore, many consumers also feel that the service provider will discharge his service unscrupulously and dubiously by changing good 'parts' and replacing them with defective ones from his 'Junk shop' to deceive and make money at customer's expense. According to Adetayo (2004), the fundamental factor in the aforementioned examples, is the fact that, prospective buyers are put off even before they actually evaluate the product or encounter the service provider. To guarantee customer satisfaction and minimize possible latent negative forces, communication with high credibility, reputation for impartial, unbiased and honesty with augmented services should be put in place.

Social Barriers: The choice to buy a product and the amount of satisfaction derived from that decision are often subject to the approval of the significant-others. A customer who relies mainly on outside influences of the important-others is most likely to be dissatisfied with a purchase decision when the product performance is short of the expectations of these important others. Social choice criteria concern the impact that the person's perceived relationship with other people and influence of social norms have on the person purchase decision (Jobber, 2007). For example, the purchase of BMW car may be due to status and social belonging considerations; dissatisfaction can result when the perceived social needs are not met. If a customer's purchase decision align or correspond to a reference group's (family members, a group of friends, work colleagues) expectations then the customer is most likely to be satisfied. Non-membership of a group in a collectivist culture would be seen as a deviant and anti-social behaviour. The work of Iriah (2011) indicated that only 20 percent of the Nigerian respondents used said they never consult others before making purchase decisions. In the same study, about 60 percent acknowledged that they belong to at least one social club or the other. This result of study exemplifies the degree to which non-approval of the significant others can influence customer satisfaction.

FIGURE 2: A MODEL FOR HANDLING BARRIERS TO CUSTOMER SATISFACTION



Source: Authors' Construction.

In today's competitive business climate, there is need to know why customers are satisfied or dissatisfied. The above model is an attempt to conceptualise factors leading to customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a view to enhancing customer satisfaction. For companies to continue to meet the needs of their customers, they must continue to evaluate their marketing activities to ensure customer satisfaction and profitability. To effectively monitor customers' feelings and attitudes toward their product/service, companies must start by asking the following question: Are customers delighted with our performance and offerings? If response is 'No', then a further analysis would be required to ascertain if there are overt expressions of displeasure. Again, if the answer is yes, are customers' complaints real or justified? The outcome of this stage will determine if the management will ignore detractors for their flimsy and artificial complaints. But if complaints are real, a systematic diagnosis to detect possible barriers or root causes of the problem will be made as a matter of urgency with a view to formulating strategies for managing the identified barriers. If complaints are successfully resolved, this will result in repeat purchase and customer loyalty. Otherwise, ignore and monitor the activities of the detractors.

Previous researches have shown that some dissatisfied customers do not complain instead seek alternative service provider. If customers are passive about poor service, management should embark on a continuous information and feedback system through suggestion boxes, customer survey, correspondence (email and SMS) and telephone calls to elicit vital information from customers. If the feedback process indicates major barriers, specify measures such as (quality and reliable products/ services, socially responsible products/services, fast and reliable delivery, wide selection and varieties, honoured guarantees, truthful realistic advertising, fair prices/credits facilities/discounts, superior complaints handling, competent sales forces through training, and responsive/courteous frontline staff) to appropriately manage the problem. Otherwise, ignore detractors. Detractors in this model, are defined as habitual brand switchers who are not worthy of relationship.

TECHNIQUES FOR ENHANCING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

The following may be taken as measures to enhance customer satisfaction.

Enhancing Product/Service Quality: Total quality is the key to value creation and customer satisfaction. Research findings showed that, around the world, consumers expect better service quality and that, consumers are more likely to leave a provider because of poor service than for any other reason. Additionally, it has been proven that service quality outweighs price by 20 percent as a reason for brand switching. Service quality has been acclaimed as the most powerful factor—more influential than price—in choosing providers (www.accenture.com). Satisfying a customer is not one department's affairs but organization-wide approach to continuously improve the quality of all the organization's process, products and services. Berry and Parasuraman (1991) has identified ten 'Quality Values' which influence satisfaction behaviour. These ten domains of satisfaction include: Quality, Value, Timeliness, Efficiency, Ease of Access, Environment, Inter-departmental Teamwork, Frontline Service Behaviours, Commitment to the Customer and Innovation. These factors should be emphasized for continuous improvement and organizational change measurement.

To assuage the problem of innate fear of product/service quality, 'offer on trial basis or money-back guarantee' can be helpful but the most effective strategy is the interactive marketing which can help to play a vital role in rekindling the lost image in the minds of customers. In the advice of Idoko and Nkamnebe (2007), manufacturers should endeavour to identify sources of fake brand of their products through the sellers of the products and appropriate action taken. In addition, the incidence of fake products can also be reduced through the adoption of tamper proof devices.

Building Trust and confidence: Customer satisfaction and retention rely heavily on established trust. This is essentially so for service firms since the intangibility of services creates difficulty in pre-purchase evaluation. If an organisation is credible, then it can enhance customer's trust and subsequent satisfaction. Psychological factors such as fear, confusion, negative attitudes, wrong beliefs, stereotyping etc exhibited by consumers play vital roles in the success of any marketing intentions. Since people generally develop negative attitudes about different products and marketing techniques, it is then imperative for marketers to understand the ranges and depth of these negative attitudes before designing and implementing marketing campaigns (Leon, 1997). Adetayo (2004) again in his work, pointed out that honesty on the part of the servicemen can help correct the bad impressions or negative feelings already created in the mind of would-be customer. He further suggests that there should be an agreement before the commencement of any repair and that the defective parts be returned to the owners.

Care should be taken not to exaggerate promises in promotional materials since this may build up unachievable expectations. Successful companies who aim for Total Customer Satisfaction (TCS) are known to be raising expectations and delivering values to match (Kotler, 2000). Companies who wish to be known for trustworthiness should be in touch with their customers through a regular, two-way communication to develop feelings of closeness, openness, provide guarantees to symbolize the confidence, reduce customer's perceived risk of purchase and to operate a policy of fairness and high standards of conduct with their customers (Berry, 1995). On the issue of the significant-others, producers and marketers alike should continuously analyse product/service values or attributes that appeal to these groups to enable them tailor their promotional campaigns effectively.

Service Recovery: Studies of customer satisfaction show that customers are dissatisfied with their purchases about 25 percent of the time. Generally, only five percent of dissatisfied customers formally complain to a company about an unsatisfactory product, service or experience. The other 95 percent either feel that complaining is not worth the effort, or that they do not know how or to whom to complaint. Of the 5 percent who complain, only about 50 percent report a satisfactory problem resolution. On average a satisfied customer tells three people about a good product experience, but the average dissatisfied customer gripes to 11 people if each of them tells still other people, the number of people exposed to bad word of mouth may grow exponentially (Kotler, 2004).

Nonetheless, customers whose complaints are satisfactorily resolved often become more company-loyal than customers who were never dissatisfied. About 34 percent of customers who register major complaints will buy again from the company if their complaint is resolved, and this number rises to 52 percent for minor complaints. If the complaints is resolved quickly, between 52 percent (major complaints) and 95 percent (minor complaints) will buy again from the company (TARP, 1986).

Service recovery strategies should be designed to solve problems and restore the customers' trust in the firm and to improve the entire service system so that the problem does not recur in the future. This strategy is essentially important because inability to recover service failures and mistakes can lead to loss of customers both directly and through their tendency to tell other actual and potential customers about their negative experiences (Jobber, 2007). A tracking system is required to identify system failures, to monitor complaints, follow up on service experiences by telephone calling or use suggestion boxes for both service staff and customers.

Frontline staff should be trained and empowered to respond to service complaints. In addition, service staff should be motivated to report problems and solutions so that recurrent failures are identified and fixed. In this way, an effective service recovery system can lead to improved customer service, satisfaction and higher customer retention levels.

Internal Marketing: Internal marketing concerns training, communicating to and motivating employees especially the frontline staff. Service staff needs to be technically competent at their job as well as to be able to handle service encounters with customers. Service staff is sometimes referred to as 'part-time marketers' since their actions can directly affect customer satisfaction and retention. Research has consistently shown that the way employees are treated by management has a direct impact on the way the employees treat the company's customers (Rosenbuth and Peters, 1992). Training is crucial in assisting employees in understanding appropriate behaviours. The frontline staff needs to be trained to adopt warm and caring attitudes to customers. This has been shown to be linked to customers' perceptions of likeability and service perception as well as loyalty to the service provider (Remmink and Mattsson, 1998).

Timeliness: Waiting for service provision especially in the service industry is a common experience for customers and is a strong determinant of overall satisfaction with the service and customer loyalty. Research has shown that an attractive waiting environment can prevent customers becoming irritated or bored very quickly (Jobber, 2007). Providing a more effective service (shorter queues) is an opportunity to create a differential advantage which would help in enhancing customer satisfaction. For the manufacturing industry, on-time delivery and adherence to specifications are typically desired. Products need to be made available in adequate quantities, at convenient locations and at the right times when customers want them. Consistence in delivery time in some cases might be valued over speed. By examining ways of improving product availability and order cycle time, and raising information levels and flexibility, considerable goodwill, customer loyalty and satisfaction can be achieved. The problem of hoarding and artificial scarcity should be properly managed among the middlemen. Reduction in the used of exclusive distribution, intensive or selective distribution can be emphasized depending on the nature of the product to be distributed. Additionally, firms can set up private outlets where consumers can go to buy at controlled price.

Fair Pricing: Pricing is a major determinant of customer satisfaction. Hence marketers should be able to balance price-performance ratio. Dissatisfaction usually occur when a customer realize that the product quality or performance does not match or exceed price. Agbonifoh, Ogwo and Nnolin (2007) in their work, observed that profiteering is the major grievance which Nigerian consumers have against manufacturers and middlemen. Prices are unpredictable as every bottleneck in the production or distribution system becomes an excuse for hoarding and price-hikes. Marketers must employ new technology to provide better services at lower cost.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We have attempted to discuss the barriers to customer satisfaction in this paper. These barriers are: product/service, price, promotion, distribution, salesmen, psychological and social related barriers. A model for handling barriers to customer satisfaction was developed to handle and manage common barriers. The techniques for enhancing customer satisfaction identified in the model are: Product/service quality, building trust, efficient service recovering, internal marketing, timeliness in service delivery and fair-pricing. This research suggests that customer satisfaction research should be a standard practice for all organizations that provide goods or services. Customers themselves should be involved in identifying performance standards in business organizations. Government monitoring agencies should ensure that established performance standards are maintained by firms. It is our candid belief that organizations that can build these recommended strategies into their marketing operations are most likely to have competitive edge over their competitors in the market place in terms of customer retention and satisfaction.

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