Service Quality Delivery and Consumers' Choice of Fast-food Outlets

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Article history:	**Abstract**
	This study examined the effect of service quality delivery on consumer's choice of fast foods outlets. Cross-sectional survey research design was adopted. Primary data was collected from respondents using structured questionnaire. Simple regression in the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was adopted to analyze the data collected. Consequently, it was found that service tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy had significant effects on consumer's choice of fast foods. Thus, it was recommended amongst others, that fast food outlets should be more responsive to consumers' service requirements by rapidly eliciting and resolving consumers' enquiries and complaints; consistently deliver fast, strong and reliable service; ensure their personnel treat consumers with politeness and consideration at every point of service encounter and constantly seek ways to offer freshness in order to remain relevant in the market place.

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1 Introduction

The opening of what can be referred to as the first modern fast food outlet in Nigeria in 1986, by Mr. Bigg's, a subsidiary of UAC Nigeria, could be regarded as a turning point in the social wellbeing of the citizens as well as a significant landmark in the economic history of the country. Since then, the Nigerian business environment has never remained the same again. It has witnessed continuous establishment of various fast food joints, fondly referred to as eateries in virtually every nooks and crannies of the country. A glance at any street corner in Nigeria, now, especially in the urban centres, may likely reveal at least two eateries with their front-lit menu boards jostling for customers' attention. At present, there are over 150 brand names in the country. Also, the South western Nigeria alone accommodates nothing less than 500 outlets of different sizes established by corporate individuals and organizations (Fakokunde, 2010). Customer's assessment of service quality is a critical information for service providers whose aim is to improve business performance, strengthen core competencies and position themselves more strategically in the market place (Cronin & Taylor 1992; Jain & Gupta 2004). Organizations that provide superior service quality do experience higher economic returns and also have a more satisfied customer base (Aaker & Jacobson, 1994; Gilbert & Veloutsou, 2006). Therefore, it has become ubiquitous for service providers to seek out competitive advantages by providing superior service (Lee & Hing, 1995). According to Zeithaml (1988), service quality is usually defined as the customer's judgement of the overall excellence or superiority of the service. Barrows & Power (2008), suggested that service is particularly a pivotal or fundamental element in the restaurant sector. In order to measure service quality, Parasuraman et al. (1988), have developed an instrument called SERVQUAL which consists of five dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance and tangibles. While Nikolich & Sparks (1995), have stated that perceived levels of service in restaurants are based on the relationship between customers and service providers (Hur et al., 2006; Styvén, 2010).

For Anyanwu (1993), every organization sets out to offer good quality goods and services. As the organizations offer these goods and services to the consumers, they expect reactions from the consumers to confirm or disconfirm the quality of their products. The good quality offerings of a firm bring about good service result, which is customer satisfaction and affects consumers' choice. Customer satisfaction is defined as the number of customers, or percentage of total customers, whose reported experience with a firm, its products, or its services (ratings) exceeds specified satisfaction goals. It is seen as a key performance indicator within business and is often part of a balanced scorecard. In a competitive market place, where business competes for customers, customer satisfaction is seen as a key differentiator and increasingly has become a key element of business strategy. The modern fast food industry is highly commercialized and characterized by various pre-formulated procedures and food preparation methods usually set up with the intention of minimizing production cost and delivery time. The concern here is, little or no attention is paid to the generation and analysis of information about customers encounter and possible ways of dislodging negative dissonance. Hence, this study on the effect of service quality delivery on consumers' choice of fast foods outlets was aimed at ascertaining how the various SERVQUAL dimensions which ranges from tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy in relation to the service offerings peculiar to the fast-food outlets enhances consumers' choice to buy again, become less price sensitive, use positive word of mouth about the offerings provided by fast food outlet (Rackwitz, 2001; Husted et al., 2000).

Review of related literature
SERVQUAL model

Parasuraman et al. (1985), postulated the SERVQUAL model. SERVQUAL is presented as a multidimensional construct. In the original formulation, Parasuraman et al. (1985), identified ten components of SERVQUAL: reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding/knowing the customer and tangibles. In their 1988 work, these components were collapsed into five dimensions: reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness. Reliability is the dependability, accuracy and consistency of performance of fast foods outlets. Tangibility is the physical appearance of element like fast-food outlets. Responsiveness is promptness and helpfulness. Empathy means easy access, good communication, convenience and customer understanding. It involves the ease and convenience in assessing quality service delivery which will positively influence consumers' choice of fast food. Assurance involves credibility, security, competence and courtesy exhibited by fast-food outlets.

Expectation disconfirmation theory

The expectation disconfirmation theory was postulated (Oliver Richard, 1997; Oliver, 1981). This theory posits that expectations, coupled with perceived performance, lead to post-purchase satisfaction/choice. Expectation disconfirmation occurs in three (3) forms:

1. Positive disconfirmation: Occurs when perceived performance exceeds expectations.
2. Confirmation: Occurs when perceived performance meets expectations.
3. Negative disconfirmation: Occurs when perceived performance does not meet and is less than the expectations.

2   Materials and Methods

A survey research design was used in this study by collecting data through questionnaire from the population of interest. The design is appropriate for investigating phenomena as they exist in real life helps in collecting the views, opinions and perspectives of the respondents regarding this research. The administration of the questionnaire was done using a convenience sampling technique for one hundred (100) respondents. The copies of questionnaires were administered to respondents at different eateries in Calabar. The research instrument was divided into two sections: A and B. Section A included the bio-data (gender, age, marital status, educational qualification and income) of respondents. While the section B was made up of statements about in order to elicit individual opinions from respondents on how these variables of s service tangibility (items 6-9), service reliability (items 10-13), service responsiveness (items 14-17), service assurance (items 18-21) and service empathy (items 22-25) affect consumers' choice (26-29) of fast foods outlets. The opinions of the respondents were subjected to Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The data treatment was done using the simple regression analysis (Wright & Young, 1997; Huq et al., 2008).

3   Results and Discussions

H_1: Service tangibles do not have any significant effect on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets.

Table 1

Model summary showing the effect of service tangibility on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.725[a]	.526	.521	.79564
a. Predictors: (Constant), Tangibility				

Table 2

ANOVA[a] showing the effect of service tangibility on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	65.275	1	65.275	103.113	.000[b]
	Residual	58.873	93	.633		
	Total	124.147	94			
a. Dependent Variable: Consumers' choice						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Tangibility						

Table 3

Coefficients[a] showing the effect of service tangibility on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.057	.406		5.067	.000
Tangibility	.635	.063	.725	10.154	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Consumers' choice					

Tables 1, 2 and 3 above report the results of regression analysis carried out to test Hypothesis 1. The results show that Service tangibles do have significant effect on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets. (b = 2.057, p < 0.05). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is rejected. Tables 2 and 3 further report a significant F statistic, indicating the model's strong prediction strength (F = 103.113, R2 = 72.5%, p < 0.05). The R2 of 72.5 per cent implies that for every unit change in consumers' choice of fast food, 72.5 per cent of such variation is attributed to Service tangibles (Decety & Cowell, 2014; Singer & Klimecki, 2014).

H[2]: Service reliability does not have any significant effect on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets.

Table 4

Model summary showing the effect of service reliability on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.631[a]	.398	.392	.89613
a. Predictors: (Constant), Reliability				

Table 5

ANOVA[a] showing the effect of service reliability on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	49.463	1	49.463	61.594	.000[b]
Residual	74.684	93	.803		
Total	124.147	94			
a. Dependent Variable: Consumers' choice					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Reliability					

Table 6

Coefficients[a] showing the effect of service reliability on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.891	.418		6.908	.000
Reliability	.519	.066	.631	7.848	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Consumers' choice					

Tables 4, 5 and 6 above report the results of regression analysis carried out to test Hypothesis 2. The results show that Service reliability does have significant effect on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets. (b = 2.891, p < 0.05). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is rejected. Tables 5 and 6 further report a significant F statistic, indicating the model's strong prediction strength (F = 61.594, R2 = 63.1%, p < 0.05). The R2 of 63.1 per cent implies that for every unit change in consumers' choice of fast food, 63.1 per cent of such variation is attributed to Service reliability (Bartels & Johnson, 2015; Foxall, 2003).

H_3: Service responsiveness does not have any significant effect on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets.

Table 7

Model summary showing the effect of service responsiveness on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.764[a]	.584	.580	.74507
a. Predictors: (Constant), Responsiveness				

Table 8

ANOVA[a] showing the effect of service responsiveness on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	72.521	1	72.521	130.639	.000[b]
	Residual	51.627	93	.555		
	Total	124.147	94			
a. Dependent Variable: Consumers' choice						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Responsiveness						

Table 9

Coefficients[a] showing the effect of service responsiveness on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.311	.425		3.082	.003
Responsiveness	.786	.069	.764	11.430	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Consumers' choice					

Tables 7, 8 and 9 above report the results of regression analysis carried out to test Hypothesis 3. The results show that Service responsiveness have significant effect on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets (b = 1.311, p < 0.05). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is rejected. Tables 8 and 9 further report a significant F statistic, indicating the model's strong prediction strength (F = 130.639, R^2 = 76.4%, p < 0.05). The R^2 of 76.4 per cent implies that for every unit change in consumers' choice of fast food, 76.4 per cent of such variation is attributed to service responsiveness (Sipayung et al., 2021; Yulianti et al., 2020).

H_4: Service assurance does not have any significant effect on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets.

Table 10

Model summary showing the effect of service assurance on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.534[a]	.285	.278	.97671
a. Predictors: (Constant), Assurance				

Table 11

ANOVA[a] showing the effect of service assurance on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	35.429	1	35.429	37.139	.000[b]
	Residual	88.718	93	.954		
	Total	124.147	94			
a. Dependent Variable: Consumers' choice						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Assurance						

Table 12
Coefficients[a] showing the effect of service assurance on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	3.351	.461		7.263	.000
Assurance	.439	.072	.534	6.094	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Consumers' choice					

Tables 10, 11 and 12 above report the results of regression analysis carried out to test Hypothesis 4. The results show that service assurance have significant effect on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets. (b = 3.351, p < 0.05). Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is rejected. Tables 11 and 12 further report a significant F statistic, indicating the model's strong prediction strength (F = 37.139, R^2 = 53.4%, p < 0.05). The R^2 of 53.4 per cent implies that for every unit change in consumers' choice of fast food, 53.4 per cent of such variation is attributed to service assurance.

H_5: Service empathy does not have any significant effect on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets.

Table 13
Model summary showing the effect of service empathy on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.455[a]	.207	.199	1.02859
a. Predictors: (Constant), Empathy				

Table 14
ANOVAa showing the effect of service empathy on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	25.754	1	25.754	24.343	.000[b]
Residual	98.393	93	1.058		
Total	124.147	94			
a. Dependent Variable: Consumers' choice					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Empathy					

Table 15
Coefficientsa showing the effect of service empathy on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	3.780	.481		7.860	.000
Empathy	.395	.080	.455	4.934	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Consumers' choice					

Tables 13, 14 and 15 above report the results of regression analysis carried out to test Hypothesis 5. The results show that service empathy does have significant effect on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets. (b = 3.780, p < 0.05). Therefore, Hypothesis 5 is rejected. Tables 14 and 15 further report a significant F statistic, indicating the model's strong prediction strength (F = 24.343, R^2 = 45.5%, p < 0.05). The R^2 of 45.5 per cent implies that for every unit change in consumers' choice of fast food, 45.5 per cent of such variation is attributed to service empathy.

Discussion of findings

The finding of this study is in congruence with other related studies. The study shows that service tangibles do have significant effect on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets. This finding is in line with the work of Bougoure & Neu (2010) in their study on the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in the Malaysian fast food industry. 300 students from a large Malaysian University in the Blang Valley were used. The 29-item DINESERV scale proposed by Stevens et al. (1995) was used in the study. The findings indicated that service quality positively influences customer satisfaction among Malaysian fast food consumers. Thus, it was concluded that when consumers' perceptions towards service quality is positive, customer satisfaction will be more favourable.

The finding of this study shows that Service reliability has significant effect on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets. This finding is in line with Alabar et al. (2014) who carried out a study on service quality and customer satisfaction in Nigerian mobile telephony. A sample of 532 mobile subscribers in Nigeria was used for the study. Pearson Product Correlation Coefficient was used. Data obtained were analysed using SPSS, version 20. The study revealed that SERVQUAL reliability dimension has significant effect on customer satisfaction. It was thus recommended that with ever-increasing influence of Nigeria communications commission (NCC), and the continuous complying which is one major strategy that the companies must adopt to remain cost effective.

The study finding also shows that service responsiveness have significant effect on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets. The finding affirmed other similar findings such as Mhlanga & Tichaawa (2016), who carried out a study to determine the factors that affect consumer selection criteria in formal full-service restaurants. Primary data was collected with the help of a structured questionnaire administered to 400 respondents at selected formal full-service restaurants in Port Elizabeth. SPSS software was used to analyse the data. Findings revealed that compared with food quality/reliability, physical design and price, service responsiveness was the most important contributor to consumer choice. Thus, it was recommended service responsiveness should not be undermined by fast-food outlets

The finding of this study also reveals that service assurance has significant effect on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets. This finding is in tandem with Omar et al. (2016), in a quantitative study aimed at providing additional insight into the relationship between service quality and consumer choice using Malaysian customers of fast foods outlets. Questionnaire was developed to collect data from 411 respondents. Correlation analysis and hierarchical regressions were employed to analyse the data. Findings of the correlation analysis showed that all the five service quality attributes – tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy have positive relationship with consumer choice.

The study further indicated that service empathy have significant effect on consumers' choice of fast-food outlets. The finding of this study is in line with Omar et al. (2016), in a qualitative study on Service Quality, Customers' Satisfaction and the Moderating Effects of Gender: A Study of Arabic Restaurants. The data was collected through questionnaire survey completed by 411 respondents. Correlation analysis and hierarchical regressions were employed to analyse the data. Findings of the correlation analysis shows that all the five service quality attributes – tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy have positive relationship with customer satisfaction. It was concluded according to the findings that empathy has a strong positive correlation with customers' satisfaction while responsiveness has a weak positive relation with customers' satisfaction.

4 Conclusion

This study examined the effect of service quality delivery on consumers' choice of fast foods outlets in. The results obtained from the study indicate that service quality delivery in terms of tangibles, reliability, assurance, responsiveness as well as empathy significantly influenced consumers' choice of fast foods outlets in. Hence, in order to improve and ultimately maintain consumers' choice/preference, fast-food outlets must consistently deliver fast, strong and reliable service. Fast-food outlets should be more responsive to consumers' service requirements by rapidly eliciting and resolving consumers' enquiries and complaints. Fast-food outlets should ensure their personnel treat consumers with politeness and consideration at every point of service encounter. Fast-food outlets should ensure the appearance of physical facilities at their outlets is appropriate in order to provide confidence to consumers in their ability to provide the service required. The consumer's tastes and needs are dynamic, thus, every brand should constantly seek ways to offer freshness in order to remain relevant in the market place.

Conflict of interest statement
The authors are in complete accord about the publication of this research. We hereby declare no conflict of interest.

Statement of authorship
The authors have a responsibility for the conception and design of the study. The authors have approved the final article.

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