CUSTOMER RETENTION STRATEGIES AND MARKETING PERFORMANCE OF HOTELS IN ABIA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of customer retention strategies on marketing performance of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria. The researchers employed a survey research design. The population of the study comprised clients from 15 selected Hotels in Abia State. A sample size of 385 was used in the study. The study utilized convenience sampling method. A simple regression model was latter employed in testing the stated hypotheses in the study. The presentation of data and testing of hypothesis were done with the SPSS software version 25.0. Findings show that attractive pricing is a positive and significant factor affecting customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria. Customer care is a positive and significant factor affecting customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria. It was also found that complaint handling is a positive and significant factor affecting customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria. The study based on the findings concludes that customer retention strategies have positive and significant effect on marketing performance (customer satisfaction) of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria. It was recommended that Hotel managers in Abia State of Nigeria should work towards value and price paid and the overall expectations of the customers. This will promote satisfaction to customers and increase overall marketing performance.

Keywords: Customer Retention, Attractive Pricing, Customer Care, Complaint Handling, Customer Satisfaction.

Introduction

Saturated markets and high levels of competition within industries have necessitated the practice of customer retention strategies among firms (Honts & Hanson, 2011). Customer retention is significant to organizations because the cost of acquiring a new customer is far greater than the cost of maintaining the existing ones. Companies in a variety of sectors have increasingly started managing customer churn proactively, generally by detecting customers at the highest risk of churning and targeting retention efforts towards them (Ascarza, 2018). Losing customers to a competitor tends to worry managers in the hospitality industry. Understanding the reasons why customers switch from one hotel to another helps these executives to plan their customer retention and customer acquisition strategies.

In an increasingly competitive hospitality environment as witnessed in Abia State of Nigeria, customer retention has emerged as a crucial factor in determining marketing performance. Retaining customers, as opposed to solely focusing on customer acquisition, has shown to offer significant marketing and strategic advantages. With the costs associated with acquiring new customers often much higher than those involved in maintain existing ones, many Hotels in Abia State appear to be starting to view customer retention and loyalty as a strategic asset. Customer retention not only drives consistent revenue but also reduces marketing and operational costs, thus enhancing overall marketing performance (Ishumael, Nyagadza, Charles, & Munjeri, 2019).

Previous studies have established a positive correlation between high customer retention rates and improved marketing performance, such as higher customer lifetime value (CLV), and greater profit margins (Tinashe & Eustina, 2016). Long-term customers appear to make frequent purchases, spend more over time, and are less sensitive to price changes. It also appears that satisfied and loyal customers are more likely to recommend a hotel's service to others, generating organic growth through word-of-mouth marketing. This makes customer retention a cornerstone of sustainable marketing performance.

However, despite the recognized benefits, many hotels in Abia State of Nigeria appear not to be involved in implementing effective retention strategies and understanding how retention directly impacts different aspects their performance. The factors contributing to customer retention – such as service quality, customer satisfaction, and engagement – vary across industries and are influenced by technological advancements, market trends, and consumer behaviour (Darley & Luethge, 2019). Consequently, there is a need for further research to better understand these dynamics and to provide hotels with actionable insights on how to foster customer retention for long-term marketing performance gains.

While the benefits of customer retention are well-documented (Sim, 2006; Jasinsken, 2016; Syaqwalo, 2014; Khan, 2013), there are still gaps in understanding how it specifically impacts different types of firms, particularly in the hospitality industry, market conditions, and customer demographics. Studies (Deng, Yeh, & Sung, 2013; Fazul, 2009; Sim, 2006; Jasinsken, 2016; Syaqwalo, 2014) continue to explore how digital transformation, customer relationship management (CRM) tools, and personalized marketing strategies impact retention and marketing performance. This study aims to explore the effect of customer retention strategies on marketing performance, analyzing how retention strategies by hotels operating in Abia State of Nigeria can drive financial success, operational efficiency, and customer loyalty. By examining these relationships, this research study seeks to offer hotels in Abia State of Nigeria a clearer understanding of the strategic importance of customer retention and how it can be leveraged tom achieve sustainable marketing performance in today's competitive marketplace.

Therefore, this study seeks to address the following problem; how do attractive pricing, customer care and complaint handling affect marketing performance of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria? By exploring these questions, this study aims to fill critical gap in the existing literature and provide practical insights that can guide hotels in Abia State in prioritizing and optimizing their customer retention efforts.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of customer retention strategies on marketing performance of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives are to:

i. Ascertain the effect of attractive pricing on customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria;
ii. Examine the effect of customer care on customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria;
iii. Determine the effect of complaint handling on customer satisfation of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Framework

Customer Retention

Customer retention is the propensity of the customer to stay with their service provider (Ranaweera & Neely, 2003). Companies also need to be careful about the technological comfort of their customers, for example, innovations, which are smartphone app only, may end up alienating rural customers, where smartphone penetration is low, but on the other hand, prepaid card-based innovations will be a major success amongst rural customers (Tripathy & Jain, 2020). Strydom et al. (2020) identified non-linear and asymmetric effects which suggest that customers' evaluations of service performance are more sensitive to negative performance (dissatisfaction) than positive performance (satisfaction), accordingly, focusing on attributes for which customers are experiencing negative performance first, and then allocating resources to attributes for which customers are experiencing positive performance, can be far more consequential for improving customer satisfaction (Strydom et al., 2020).

Managers can make suitable service improvement plans even with limited resources and once the improvements are duly implemented, the service might get higher user retention in the near future (Hung et al., 2020). Vieira et al. (2019) found that salesperson assessment focus amplified locomotion's effect on acquisition (retention ambidexterity, and salespeople increased their performance by implementing an acquisition) retention ambidextrous orientation that balances prospecting for new customers and growing existing customers. The optimal acquisition and retention expenditure strategies depend on each firm's marginal customer equity, but not on the market share or the number of customers, and in response to the variation of the firm's parameters. If its acquisition effectiveness is greater than its retention effectiveness, the firm would take action by making the same investment decision as its rival's; instead, on the other hand, if its acquisition effectiveness is lower than its retention effectiveness, its rival would take action by making the different investment decision from the firm's (Chang et al., 2020). Customers are loyal because of their attitude or behaviour, and they can be affected through quality products, reputation in the market, location of the store and price levels (Xhema et al., 2018).

Dimensions of Customer Retention Strategies

The dimensions of customer retention strategies in this study are attractive pricing, customer care, and complaint handling (Igwe et al., 2012; Sharmeela-Banu et al., 2013; Rajaram & Sriram, 2014; Ode, 2013).

Attractive Pricing

Pricing is regarded as one of the key elements of the marketing mix. Price is the amount of money charged for a product or service (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). It is the most powerful tool available to raise business performance (Michan et al., 2011). According to Igwe et al (2012) price has been perceived as a significant variable influencing products or services acceptance, usage and future patronage. Price could be measured in terms of price cut, price discount, sales promotion and other price incentives (Ocloo & Tsetse, 2013). Whatever pricing measure adopted in acquiring customers and also influencing customer's retention and lifetime value with the firm sometimes might be counterproductive (Sharmeela-Banu et al., 2013; Ocloo & Tsetse, 2013). This is because many retail chain stores and companies in Nigeria do not manage pricing strategy effectively (Igwe et al., 2012).

Complaint Handling

Complaint handling refers to how organisations handle customer issues. Johnston (2021) defined it as receiving, investigating, resolving, and preventing customer complaints and recovering customers. Ateke and Ishmael (2013) described complaints management as a planned and regulated process of receiving, documenting, processing, responding to, and reporting complaints to enhance services and decision-making. It involves receiving, investigating, resolving, and preventing customer complaints and recovering customers (Sohail, 2012). Consumers can communicate their displeasure in several ways (Leninkumar, 2017), and multiple typologies have been proposed to distinguish complainers from non-complainers (Adejoke & Adekemi, 2020; lyadi & Obialor, 2019).

Customer complaints are documented reports of product or service issues or expressions of displeasure by customers or potential customers with company or agent delivery or products. Complaint handling resolves consumer issues (Dee, 2014). Johnston (2021) says it has multiple sub-processes for receiving, investigating, settling, preventing, and recovering complaints. Handling complaints affects client retention and revenue. A satisfied consumer will tell five of their closest friends about an issue fixed, compared to three if the service was initially good (Eccles & Durand, 2017). If the first service was bad and not remedied, the unsatisfied client will notify 10–20 individuals (Edvardsson, Tronvoll & Höykinpuro, 2021; lyadi & Christopher, 2022). Unreliable service, poor employee attitude, and complicated information design might cause dissatisfaction. Customers always complain to their service providers whenever there is a service failure which is below their expectations. When service falls short of customers' expectations, customers grumble and become dissatisfied. Therefore, unsatisfied customers complain more than satisfied ones (Keiningham, Frennea, Aksoy, Buoye & Mittal, 2015).

Customer Service Care

Customer service care as a dimension of customer retention strategy in this study cannot be best explain without defining the underlying concept that paved way for the construct, which is customer service. Customer service could be referred to as the provision of service rendered to customers before, during and after the purchase (Igwe et al., 2012). Customer service is perceived as the provision of value-added services for firm's merchandises irrespective of the nature of its offerings (Sharmeela-Banu, et al. 2013). We can say that customer service is a routine managerial activity tailored to enrich the customer feelings of satisfaction in line with the customer expectations.

From the above conceptualizations it is clear that customer service entails series of activities that makes the customer have a sense of happiness or satisfaction in respect of the value paid. Customer service care is always experienced whenever there is an interface between the customer and the organization (Igwe et al., 2012). Customer service care as a variant of customer service entails an embodiment of activities built on customer service which may often include answering questions, taking orders, dealing with billing issues, handling complaints, attending to enquiries, response to service delivery, response to problem customers (Igwe et al., 2012) and helping customers to carry items bought on the shelves to the point of payment or to the point of loading and rendering apology for service failure.

Marketing Performance

Marketing performance is the operational capability of the management of organization tailored towards achieving pre-determined goals and objectives of major shareholders and it is used as a measure of organizational success (Igwe, Coker & Chukwu, 2016). Marketing performance can be sub-divided into two distinct areas such as financial and non-financial performance (Kaplan and Norton, 2001). Financial performance is more of monetary or quantitative measures, while non-financial performance is non-monetary or qualitative measures. In this study, the focus is on customer satisfaction which is basically a non-financial performance measure.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction may represent a unique and important notion for research in marketing, retailing, and e-commerce. Customer satisfaction, according to Ozor (2018), is the consumer's or customer's impulse desire and consideration that prompts them to remain loyal to products from a particular store or business. Reciprocity between the parties in this relationship is what defines the concept of customer satisfaction in general and in the context of retailing in particular (Blut et al., 2018). In this relationship, the retailer provides services to its client, who in turn acts favourably toward the retailer. Customer satisfaction provides the groundwork for a market share that is both established and expanding (Ulaikere et al., 2020). Paswan (2016) stated that there are various methods to describe satisfaction behaviour, including the intention to be loyal, the amount of money spent, the frequency of repeat purchases, the number of visits, the degree of satisfaction, the amount of time spent, and the quantity of items purchased. Understanding the numerous aspects that affect consumer purchasing behaviour helps retailers increase sales, encourage repeat business, and build customer loyalty.

Theoretical Literature Review

The study was guided by the dynamic capability theory, the equity theory and the market-based view.

Dynamic Capability Theory

The degree to which a company is able to integrate, build, and reconfigure both internal and external competences in response to the changing environment is referred to as dynamic capability, (Teece & Pisano, 1994). The dynamic capability theory was born out of the resource-based view's (RBV) constraints. In essence, the RBV overlooked the important concerns relating to resources, such as their development, integration, and reconfiguration. Dynamic skills enable the company to adapt to environmental changes and so become resilient. According to Pham, Tran, Thipwong, and Huang (2019), the theory emphasizes how the firm should develop and renew its internal and external resources in line with the changing environments.

There exist differences between dynamic and operational capabilities of the firm. While operational capabilities relate to the current operations of the business, dynamic capabilities are reflected in the capacity of the firm to develop extent and modify the existing resources (Gupta & Gupta, 2019). This theory's central tenet is that companies can use their core capabilities to change their short-term competitive advantage, which can then help them develop a long-term competitive edge. Three competencies are necessary for the company to face operating environment challenges: learning capability, strategic assets, and reconfiguration of these strategic assets (Muithya & Muathe, 2020).

Equity Theory

This theory was developed by Adams (1963) and it argues that distributive justice is achieved when rewards less costs divided by investments of a given party are similar to those of another party. This theory argues that price perceptions of the buyers is influenced by perceived input to output ratio compared to all the involved points of reference like previous purchases and other buyers. The theory provides an explanation of the processes that staff utilize in determining fairness in the price of the goods and products (Bauwens, 2019). According to this theory, consumers evaluate price fairness based on how other people view the prices. As a result, consumers socially compare prices with those of other businesses in the sector to form opinions about current prices (Guoliang & Huichuan, 2018).

Similarly, the theory advances that price disparities whether actual or perceived will have a negative impact on a company's ability to keep clients. Customers who believe they are paying unfair prices will be emotionally driven to achieve equity. In the event that unfair pricing practices continue, clients may switch to other businesses that charge reasonable costs. This could have a negative effect on the company's bottom line operations (Kilbourne & O'Leary-Kelly, 2020). This theory therefore indicates that the perceptions of the customers with regard to fairness of the price play a key role in retention of the customers. Customers who perceive the price charged to be unfair may grow distrust in the firm. When marketing professionals decide to ignore this distrust, customer loyalty will be at risk (Gates & Reinsch, 2018). This theory is relevant to the present study that seeks to evaluate the role played by attractive pricing in customer patronage in hotels in Abia State of Nigeria.

Empirical Review

The relationship between service quality and sustained competitive positioning was explained by Psyapsan (2019) using a case study of small and medium-sized businesses in Indonesia. The investigation spanned the years 2010 through 2016, with quantitative analysis using structural equation modeling (SEM). It was highlighted that the firm's marketing mix techniques were related to service excellence. This suggests that offering high-quality services improves end users' happiness with the clients they serve. There is a gap because the study was conducted in Indonesia rather than Nigeria.

A case study of Oman was used by Fida, Ahmed, Al-Balushi, and Singh (2020) to illustrate the connection between customer loyalty and service excellence. Four Islamic banks operating in Oman were the subject of the investigation, which used quantitative techniques as tools of analysis. A convenient sample of 120 consumers from these banks were taken. Empathy, assurance, dependability, responsiveness, and tangibles were among the indicators of service quality. Only empathy and responsiveness were found to significantly increase customer satisfaction in the regression results.

A study in Bangladesh by Rahaman, Ali, Kejing, Taru and Mamoon (2020) focused on service quality and satisfaction of the customers. The study placed emphasis on commercial banks. The inquiry covered 212 customers that were captured coming into the bank. It was noted that except employee competency, other indicators like access to services, responsiveness, empathy, tangibles, assurance and reliability significantly contributed towards customer satisfaction. This study creates gap as it was done in Bangladesh and not in Nigeria. Sutrisno, Andajani and Widjaja (2019) examined service quality and satisfaction of the customers. The study conveniently sampled 150 respondents with data being gathered supported by the questionnaire. SEM technique helped in analysis of the findings. It was shown that service quality has a significant connection with satisfaction and loyalty of the customers. However, this study was done among logistic firms and not Hotels thus creating gap. SEM was used as a methodology for analysis; the present study utilized simple regression analysis.

A study on service quality and its impact on customer satisfaction was undertaken by Mutinda (2020). Four- and five-star hotels in Nairobi, Kenya were included in the study. The investigation used a cross-sectional survey that specifically targeted Nairobi hotel guests. Convenience sampling was used to choose the sample. It was discovered that the degree of customer satisfaction was significantly correlated with tangibleness, dependability, responsiveness, and empathy. Convenience sampling was used in the study; the current study used a purposive, creating a methodological gap. Odeny (2016) examined the relationship between service quality and performance using the example of Kenya's Absa Bank. The investigation used a case study methodology, and content analysis assisted in processing participant opinions. It was discovered that the bank viewed responsiveness and dependability to be the most significant aspects of service quality, whilst tangibles were given the least weight. This case study used data from Kenya's Absa Bank as its source of support. The current investigation was conducted among Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria.

Wambugu (2018) analyzed service quality and customer satisfaction. The study used a case of Huduma centers by the government. The equity theory and service quality theory provided anchorage to the inquiry. The design embraced descriptive survey and the participants were daily customers of the bank. The inquiry showed that service reliability, customer responsiveness, service accessibility and service efficiency significantly shape satisfaction of the customers. This study created a gap since it focused on Huduma centers by the Kenyan government and not Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria. Solimun and Fernandes (2018) did a study on customer satisfaction, service quality, marketing mix and loyalty of the customers. This inquiry was conducted in Indonesia focusing on telecommunication firms. The respondents were the customers, where 200 of them were included. SEM helped during the analysis of the findings. The inquiry showed that customer satisfaction moderates the link between service quality, marketing mix and satisfaction of the customers. However, this study was done in Indonesia and not in Nigeria; it used customer satisfaction as the moderating variable.

Lim, Tuli and Grewal (2020) did an analysis of customer satisfaction and its link with the future selling costs. An analysis was done on data from 128 firms over two decades, where it was demonstrated that customer satisfaction is negatively linked with future cost of sales. The conceptual gap created by this study is that customer retention was used as the dependent variable and not patronage. Tarigan and Hatane (2019) focused on Indonesia to analyze the link between customer satisfaction and financial performance. The study gathered information from listed firms where 13 of them were covered covering 4 years. The inquiry showed that customer satisfaction has a direct link with loyalty of the customers. The study was done in Indonesia and not in Nigeria thus creating a gap.

Research Methodology

The researchers employed a survey research design, chosen for its efficacy in collecting information and insights from staff of selected Hotels in Abia State regarding their customer retention practices. The population of the study comprised clients from 15 selected Hotels in Abia State. A sample size of 385 was used in the study. The study utilized convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling offered the researcher the flexibility to select only those customers who were readily available and willing to contribute relevant information to the study. In this context, the researcher approached the customers of the studied Hotels and administered the copies of the questionnaire on-site. Using this method, a total of 385 clients of the selected hotels in Abia State were studied. The primary research instrument for this study was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to elicit comprehensive responses related to customer experiences within the studied Hotels. For the purpose of this study, the Likert scale served as the preferred method for gathering opinions, measuring responses on a spectrum of degrees or levels. The Likert scale consisted of five points: Strongly Agree (SA): assigned 5 points; Agree (A): assigned 4 points; Neutral (N): assigned 3 points; Disagree (D): assigned 2 points; Strongly Disagree (SD): assigned 1 point. Data collected in the study were first presented using simple descriptive statistics (SDS) such as tables, percentages and frequencies. A simple regression model was latter employed in testing the stated hypotheses in the study. The presentation of data and testing of hypothesis were done with the SPSS software version 25.0.

Results and Discussion

Questionnaire Distribution and Return

Table 1: Distribution and return of questionnaire

Copies of Questionnaire	Copies of Questionnaire	Copies of Questionnaire
Distributed	**Returned**	**Not returned**
385	**365**	**20**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

For this study, a total number of three hundred and eighty-five (385) copies of questionnaire were distributed to the customers of 15 selected Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria. Out of this number, three hundred and sixty-five (365) copies were returned, while twenty (20) copies were neither filled nor incorrectly filled. Thus, the presentation and analyses of data were based on the correctly completed copies of the questionnaire and are as follows;

Attractive Pricing

Table 2: Frequency distribution showing mean scores of attractive pricing statement items

Item Statistics (N= 365)	Mean	Std.D	N	Remark
The pricing of services by the hotel is fair and reasonable	4.25	.655	365	**Accepted**
I feel like I am getting good value for the price of their services	4.29	.667	365	**Accepted**
The pricing of their service is competitive compared to similar services by other hotels	4.38	.741	365	**Accepted**
I consider the pricing of their services to be a major factor in my decision to patronize the hotel	3.86	.968	365	**Accepted**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 shows the frequency and mean scores of the responses of the studied respondents on attractive pricing. The criterion for mean score acceptance is 3.0. The table above showed that "The pricing of services by the hotel is fair and reasonable" had a mean score of 4.25, "I feel like I am getting good value for the price of their services" had a mean score of 4.29. Also, "The pricing of their service is competitive compared to similar services by other hotels" had a mean score of 4.38, and "I consider the pricing of their services to be a major factor in my decision to patronize the hotel" had a mean score of 3.86.

Customer Care

Table 3: Frequency distribution showing mean scores of customer care statement items

Item Statistics (N= 365)	Mean	Std.D	N	Remark
The hotel staff are knowledgeable and helpful	4.62	.622	365	Accepted
The hotel staff show customers empathy	4.26	.671	365	Accepted
The hotel staff always go above and beyond to assist customers in their needs	4.33	.579	365	Accepted
I am satisfied with the customer care experience provided by the hotel	4.66	.618	365	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 shows the mean scores and standard deviation of the responses of the studied respondents on customer care statement items. The criterion for mean score acceptance is 3.0. The table above showed that "The hotel staff are knowledgeable and helpful" had a mean score of 4.62, "The hotel staff show customers empathy" had a mean score of 4.26. Also, "The hotel staff always go above and beyond to assist customers in their needs' concerns" had a mean score of 4.33, and "I am satisfied with the customer care experience provided by the hotel" had a mean score of 4.66.

Complaint Handling

Table 4: Frequency distribution showing mean scores of complaint handling statement items

Item Statistics (N= 365)	Mean	Std.D	N	Remark
The hotel staff pay rapt attention to customers' complaints	4.22	.615	365	**Accepted**
The hotel staff are always quick in resolving customer's complaints	4.48	.562	365	**Accepted**
I patronize the hotel because of their speedy complaint handling	4.19	.631	365	**Accepted**
I recommend the hotel to others because of their complaint handling process	4.56	.624	365	**Accepted**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 shows the frequency and mean scores of the responses of the studied respondents on complaint handling. The criterion for mean score acceptance is 3.0. The table above showed that "The hotel staff pay rapt attention to customers' complaints" had a mean score of 4.22, "The hotel staff are always quick in resolving customer's complaints" had a mean score of 4.48. Also, "I patronize the hotel because of their speedy complaint handling" had a mean score of 4.19, and "I recommend the hotel to others because of their complaint handling process" had a mean score of 4.56.

Customer Satisfaction

Table 5: Frequency distribution showing mean scores of customer satisfaction statement items

Item Statistics (N= 365)	Mean	Std.D	N	Remark
The quality of the Hotel's services makes you make quick patronage	3.81	1.122	365	**Accepted**
You have confidence in your decisions concerning the services of the hotel	4.41	.581	365	**Accepted**
You are satisfied with the pricing strategy of the Hotel	4.48	.611	365	**Accepted**
Service quality is important to create customer satisfaction	4.26	.702	365	**Accepted**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 5 shows the mean scores and standard deviation of the responses of the studied respondents on customer satisfaction statement items. The criterion for mean score acceptance is 3.0. The table above showed that "The quality of the Hotel's services makes you make quick patronage" had a mean score of 3.81, "You have confidence in your decisions concerning the services of the hotel" had a mean score of 4.41. Also, "You are satisfied with the pricing strategy of the Hotel" had a mean score of 4.48, and "Service quality is important to create customer satisfaction" had a mean score of 4.26.

Test of Hypotheses

Effect of attractive pricing on customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria

Table 6: Regression analysis showing the effect of attractive pricing on customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-value
Constant	0.823	0.207	3.972
Attractive pricing	0.336	0.057	5.868***
R	0.842		
R^2	0.709		
F-statistic	142.870		
N	365		

Source: Survey data, 2024
Note: ***= Significant at 1% level

From Table 6, simple regression result shows that attractive pricing is a positive and significant factor affecting customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria. Attractive pricing was significant at 1% probability level and positively related to customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria. This result implies that the more the increase in attractive pricing, the more there is an increase in customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria.

The F-statistic in the regression above was 142.870 and significant at the 1% probability level indicating that the model specification was correct. The estimated regression equation shows that customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria is a linear function of the explanatory variable (attractive pricing). The r^2 was 0.709 showing that 71% of the variation in customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria was explained by attractive pricing. With this result, it is concluded that there is significant effect of attractive pricing on customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria.

Effect of service quality on customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria

Table 4.7: Regression analysis showing the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria

Variable	Coefficient	Std. error	t-value
Constant	1.580	0.280	5.644
Customer care	0.530	0.084	6.301***
R	0.652		
R^2	0.425		
F-statistic	43.288		
N	365		

Source: Survey data, 2024
Note: *** = Significant at 1% level

From Table 7 above, simple regression result shows that customer care is a positive and significant factor affecting customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria. Customer care was statistically found to be significant at the 1% level and positively affects customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria. This indicates that the more the studied Hotels in

Abia State of Nigeria increase customer care, the more they achieve increased customer satisfaction and vice versa. This assertion is at the 99% confidence level.

The F-statistic in the simple regression above was 43.288 and significant at the 1% probability level indicating that the model specification was correct. The estimated regression equation shows that customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria is a linear function of customer care. The r^2 was 0.425 implying that 43% of the variations observed in customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria are explained by customer care. With this result, it is concluded that there is significant effect of customer care on customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria.

Effect of complaint handling on customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria

Table 8: Regression analysis showing the effect of complaint handling on customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria

Variable	Coefficient	Std. error	t-value
Constant	1.093	0.209	5.238
Complaint handling	0.337	0.053	6.387***
R	0.804		
R^2	0.647		
F-statistic	162.095		
N	365		

Source: Survey data, 2024

Note: *** = Significant at 1% level

From Table 8 above, simple regression result shows that complaint handling is a positive and significant factor affecting customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria. Complaint handling was significant at 1% probability level and positively affects customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria. Thus, as the studied Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria increase complaint handling, customer loyalty also increases. There is more customer satisfaction that can be achieved as a result of complaint handling.

The F-statistic in the simple regression above was 162.095 and significant at the 1% probability level indicating that the model specification was correct. The estimated regression equation shows that customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria is a linear function of complaint handling. The r^2 was 0.647 showing that 65% of the variation observed in customer satisfaction of the studied Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria were explained by complaint handling. This assertion is at the 99% confidence level. With this result, it can be concluded that there is significant effect of complaint handling on customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria.

Discussion of Results

The analysis from the study revealed that attractive pricing is a positive and significant factor affecting customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria. This implies that the more the increase in attractive pricing, the more there is an increase in customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria. This finding is in agreement with previous findings. Ferguson and Ellen (2013) have shown that attractive price has a positive effect on customer satisfaction. Friesen (2020) also found a positive effect of attractive price on customer satisfaction. Also, Malc, Mumel and Pisnik (2016) revealed that price fairness has an influence on customer satisfaction. Thus, hotels need to be careful regarding variation in prices and advertised prices.

The study result has also shown that customer care is a positive and significant factor affecting customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria, indicating that the more the studied Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria increase customer care, the more they achieve increased customer satisfaction and vice versa. Previous studies have presented a similarly result. For instance, Pakurár (2019) demonstrated that high customer care greatly increases client satisfaction and patronage. Fida et al. (2020) found that show of staff show of empathy significantly increases customer satisfaction. Same positive results were found by Rahaman et al. (2020), Nsiah and Mensah (2014), and Psyapsan (2019. Offering customer care services are the greatest approach to keeping customers happy, which results in stronger client commitment and satisfaction. Hotels that offer high-quality customer care services improve end users' happiness.

Simple regression result further showed that complaint handling is a positive and significant factor affecting customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria. This is also in tandem with previous studies. Gelbrich and Roschk (2010) showed that listening to customer complaints, being understanding, and jotting down salient points to gather relevant facts, discussing the complaint and following up with effective solutions was a very effective in increasing customer satisfaction. Ateke, Ogonu and Ishmael (2015) found that effective and efficient service recovery programs anchored on sound grasp of customers' expectation will enhance post-complaint customer satisfaction.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The main objective of this study was to examine the effect of customer retention strategies on marketing performance of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria. The study found that attractive pricing is a positive and significant factor affecting customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria. Customer care is a positive and significant factor affecting customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria. While, complaint handling was found to be a positive and significant factor that affects customer satisfaction of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria. The study based on the findings concludes that customer retention strategies have positive and significant effect on marketing performance (customer satisfaction) of Hotels in Abia State of Nigeria.

Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended;

1. Hotel managers in Abia State of Nigeria should work towards value and price paid and the overall expectations of the customers. This will promote satisfaction to customers and increase overall marketing performance.
2. Hotels managers in Abia State of Nigeria must seek to select most suitable employees with outstanding interpersonal skills as frontline staff in their hotels. Furthermore, they must also take steps to train their frontline staff on how to handle customers' sensitivity appropriately, and where necessary deal promptly with a problem.
3. Hotels managers in Abia State of Nigeria should place a complaint box at their reception center physically to receive customers' complaints. Another way would be to factor complaint services into e-mail services such that complaints can be made electronically by just pressing a

button. This would relieve customers of some frustrations that go with going to complaint boxes or frontline staff to lay their complaints.

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