



**EFFECT OF SHOP COMMUNICATION ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY AMONG
SELECTED PHARMACEUTICAL CHEMISTS IN MAIDUGURI
METROPOLITAN COUNCIL, BORNO STATE**

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of shop communication on customer loyalty among pharmaceutical chemists in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council. The population of the study was three hundred and ninety thousand six hundred and seven (390,607) with a sample size of three hundred and ninety nine (399) respondents obtained using Yamane formula. Data was collected using structured questionnaires administered to the respondents. The data collected was analysed using multiple regression analysis with the aid of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The major finding of the study revealed that there is significant effect of shop behaviour on customer loyalty among pharmaceutical chemists among Maiduguri Metropolitan Council. The study recommends that managers should ensure that effective and efficient communication will go a long way in persuading customers' loyalty about the products, managers should also focus attention on customers' attitude and perception of products through effective communication, because emotional appeal and message come through efficient communication.

Keywords: *Shop Communication, Customer Loyalty, Pharmaceutical Chemists*

Introduction

Globalization, diffusion of markets and growth of Information Technology have all improved consumer knowledge and produced a state where extensive accomplishment is no longer possible through optimized

product and price technologies. As an alternative, the companies have to rely on long-standing and healthy buyer relation. Consistent with several researches it is almost six times harder to capture new customers than to retain the old ones (Awara, 2014). Hence, there is more emphasis on winning loyal customers than capturing new ones.

Nowadays Pharmaceutical companies are worried that modern customers have a propensity to be less devoted to certain brand. The consumers are availed with so many alternatives to choose from and so they do not care about sticking to one particular brand (Marjit, 2007). The consumers receive wide choices in prices, product quality and characteristics that they become indecisive of what to choose. Similarly, communication between the shop owners and the customers are effective strategy for achieving profitability. However, in the contemporary market context, characterised by increasing competition and a rapidly changing marketing environment, customer loyalty has become an extremely valuable business intangible asset being essential for any business strategy. Moreover, brand loyalty as a constituent of brand equity and behavioural tendency of shop would customer loyalty, has been intensively a key component of marketing. Furthermore, shop consumer satisfaction also plays a pivotal role in attracting loyal customers, it is frequently used as the marketing yardstick of a company's performance. It is also commonly thought that a satisfied consumer is a loyal customer, repeat purchases and spread a positive opinion about their product image. Therefore, it is against this background that the study assess the effect of shop communication on customer loyalty among selected pharmaceutical chemists in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council, Borno State.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing competition in the wholesale and retail industry in Nigeria has forced and given pressure to wholesalers and retailers to search for new ways to distinguish themselves and gain better competitive position in the minds of customers in order to improve customer loyalty. Furthermore, customer loyalty often depends on the quality of communication after the first sale, businesses that use one-on-one

marketing tactics can often build loyalty in areas where competitors fail by tailoring effective communication to individual customers.

Despite the different measures taken by the pharmaceutical chemists owners to persuade customers to be loyal toward their companies' products faces a lot of constrained. Though similar study have been conducted in the study area. Such as Wisnalmawati and Rahayu (2014), carried out a study on the effect of Store Image on Store Loyalty and Perceived Quality as Mediation in Indonesia, Shivaji and Mohinta (2015), conducted a study on the relationship between Store Loyalty and Shopping Behaviour in India. Mintar (2011), carried out a study on the influence of Mechanism Research of Store Image for Consumer Brand Loyalty in Maiduguri Metropolis. However, none of these studies looked at the effect of shop communication on customer loyalty among selected pharmaceutical chemists in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council. Therefore, thus leave a clear existing gap this research intends to fill.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Concept of Customer Loyalty

According to Francis and Kang'rua (2015), Customer loyalty has been defined as the strength of the relationship between the individual's relative attitude and repeat Patronage In the same vein, Dick and Basu (2004), stated that loyalty is the combination of recurring patronage and encouraging attitude. However, behaviour shown through continuous purchases is actually defined as loyalty, strongly held dedication to further repurchase or chosen or favoured product or service regardless of situational control and marketing strategies that have possibility to cause consumer switching activities, is defined as loyalty (Kotler, 2009). Brunner (2008), described, repurchase likelihood, probability of long term choice, or switching manners are the measures of behavioural loyalty. Where as in attitudinal aspect, brand inclination or emotional commitment that is evaluated through repurchase intention, not considering other better choices, price acceptance and plan to communicate product or service to others is loyalty. Practitioners as well as academics understand the central importance of customer loyalty to business success. Customer loyalty expresses an intended behaviour related to the service or the company

which includes the likelihood of future renewal of service contracts, possibility of customer loyalty in service like the convenience stores business has received considerable attention in both marketing and management theory and practice. The reputation and the stereotype that business man and consumers attach to products of a specific nation and this image is created by such variables as representative products, national characteristics, economic and political back ground, history, and traditions. Attitudinal measurement use attitudinal data to reflect the emotional and psychological attachment inherent in loyalty (Bower & Chen, 2001). The attitudinal measurements are concerned with the sense of loyalty, engagement and allegiance. Composite measurement of loyalty combined both the behavioural and attitudinal dimensions. Dick and Basu (2004), convinced that loyalty is determine by the strength of the relationship between relative attitude and repeat patronage, and that it has both attitudinal and behavioural elements. They verified that the use of both behaviour and attitude in defining loyalty significantly increase the predictive power of loyalty. Loyal customer can bring enormous benefits to an organization. They allow for a continuous stream of profits, reduce marketing and operating cost, increase referral, and are immune to competitors' promotion efforts. Moreover, the expenses of acquiring new customers are much higher than those of retaining and existing one.

Factors affecting customer loyal

Customers are dynamic and thus their behaviour keeps changing influenced by their tastes and preferences, change in the economy and the various products and services promotion programs, thus what could be drawing them to develop loyalty for a particular supermarket could change by a provision of another appealing taste in another supermarket. They customers could also switch to other supermarkets in search of more satisfaction or obtain better and quality service from another store. This forms an independent variable that does influence customer loyalty (Fatima, 2012).

Effect of competition is a major challenge for pharmaceutical chemist owners. The loyalty of a customer is affected by the rivalry that exist among the retailer where leading brands have dynamic tactics of enticing

customers, with the advantage of economies of scale they can invest in customer loyalty programs promotion and have a versed experience of modes of influencing customers buying behaviour thus they are better placed than the new entrants supermarkets. Therefore, competition among the supermarkets affects customer loyalty (Omotayo, 2011).

Concept of Shop Communication on Customer Loyalty

Building a lasting relationship between organisations and customers require effective communication. Communication is a specialized branch of general communication that is specifically concerned with business activities. Generally, when communication take place between or among parties regarding business related functions (Guastafsson, 2005). Communication means listening to your customer or client, as well as conveying your own message. One sided communication is a speech; mutual communication is a conversation (Burnham, 2003)). Communicate when things are going well and when there are problems. When things are going as expected, bring it to their attention. When there are problems, provide the scope of the challenge and your solutions, preferably before the customer even knows that the problems exist. This builds credibility, confidence and trust.

It has been argued that communication rather than persuasion is the foundation of customer focused marketing efforts (Duncan, 1998). A basic way to classify the content of brand communication would be to divide it into promotional and relational communication. Promotional communication like price promotions and persuasive letters are intended to quickly generate sales and other responses, relational communication focuses on enhancing customer's attitudes and loyalty in the long term by providing content such as information about new products, usage tips, or invitations to events. Relational brand communication can be perceived by the recipient as a service rather than as advertisement or offer, which might allow increased frequency before the messages start to wear out. This is also suggested by Tellis (1997), who states that complex messages, including soft-sell or emotional appeals and novel messages may be able to sustain and benefit from higher ad frequency.

Similarly, personalization is expected to be an element that can work to boost customer loyalty by creating more personal, interesting and relevant brand communication, and better service. In the literature different terms are used when talking about personalization (e.g. customization, targeting, segmentation, profiling, and one-to-one marketing). Kotler' (2009), opined that idea of personalization is that the ultimate level of segmentation leads to segment of one, customized marketing, or one-to-one marketing. Peppers and Rogers (1993), define one-to-one marketing quite simply: treating different customers differently. The goal is to differentiate customers individually and customize marketing messages to each customer's needs. This is also the basic idea of personalized brand communication. For example, the timing of brand communication could be different for different customers, based on their purchase frequency, need for assistance, etc. Or if a marketer would know at what time and where a customer would like to have her coffee, a local cafe could send a personalized offer to the customer's mobile phone. This would comply with the Regency theory, which suggests that advertising is most effective when it occurs close to the time when consumers are ready to buy, Broussard (2000). In addition, mobile location services could be used to detect the customer being near his favourite cafe and he would automatically receive an invitation to visit. Thus, the marketing communication would have the potential for a stronger effect on boosting sales and customer loyalty because of using personalization. Marketers are increasingly using personalization. For example, Tesco, the UK's largest grocer, has over 8 million different message configurations, and offers tailored mailings to specific audiences (Humby, 2003).

Empirical Review

Several empirical studies have been conducted on the effect of shop behaviour on customer loyalty. For example Zohre (2014), conducted a study on store image and its effect on customer perception of retail stores. The study was carried out in Multi Media Universitys Malaysia. A survey was conducted on customers in shopping malls to identify the effects of the principal factors of store image on customer perception. This study used path analysis as the principal analytical tool for conducting causal

evaluations and investigated the significant effects of store image attributes (i.e store, atmosphere, music, merchandise, quality service, price and convenience) on customer perception. Findings indicated that the perceptions of customer integrate all of issues and messages they have received and experienced in the store, in addition to their own perceptions of the importance of store image dimensions. The study revealed that studying customer perceptions on store image further enhances the knowledge of marketers. Marketer can use this knowledge in acquiring more loyal customers and meeting their requirements in terms of store image. The study also identified the factors that are deemed to be the most important by customers and provides marketers with awareness regarding the psychological elements of customers that influence their perception of store image.

Similarly, Ki-Ham Chung (2014), carried out a study on the effects of store image, charity image, and customer orientation influence customer satisfaction and loyalty. The study was conducted in Gyeongsang National University South Korea. The data was obtained used convenience sampling for data collection purpose, a personal interview technique was used. The findings were revealed that store image, charity image, and customer orientation positively influence both customer satisfaction and loyalty in the non-profit store. It was identified that customer satisfaction is strongly associated with customer loyalty. Thus, store should focus on reinforcing marketing activities. The moderating effects of trust in the relationship between store, image and customer satisfaction, charity image, customer loyalty and customer orientation and customer loyalty are significant. Thus, the store should make an effort to enhance its trust. The recommends that nonprofit organizations are endeavour to attract the customer through marketing management philosophy (Marketing concept) because consumer are the focal point of all the business activities.

In addition, Jansone (2012), conducted a study on the determinants of store loyalty in Latvian Grocery market in Latvia-Riga. The purpose of this study was to investigate, how Latvian retailers can position their stores best and which store loyalty variables the marketers need to focus and improve in order to maintain customer loyalty. The study adopted the field survey where questionnaire were administered to a sample size of 152

respondents. The data collected were analyzed using chi-square. Findings of the study revealed that the direct determinants of store loyalty considered in this study were: store affect, social congruity, ideal social congruity, and demographic factors (age, gender, income and distance). The indirect (mediated through store affect) determinants of store loyalty considered in our study were: store atmosphere perceptions, store merchandise value perceptions, interpersonal service quality perceptions, social congruity and ideal social congruity. The study concluded that marketers need to consider the determinants appropriately in order to maintain customer loyalty. The study also recommends that Latvian retailers must have to harmonize the indirect determinants of store loyalty to fast track customer loyalty.

Theoretical Review

There are so many theories that can explain the study of this nature. Therefore, Theory of Reasoned Action and Customer Demand Theory will be reviewed for the purpose of this study.

Theory of Reasoned Action

This theory was postulated by Fishbein and Ajzen, (1975). The theory can be used to understand and predict customer behaviour. The theory is based on assumptions that human beings are rational and they systematically use information available to them. Information available for individual logically and systematically follows individual's behaviour, the theory further suggests that subjective norm influences customer's intention to act. Behavioural intention is a function of attitude toward performing behaviour and subjective norm regarding to behaviour. Thus, individual believes that specific behaviour will lead to certain consequences and individual evaluates these consequences.

Subjective norms are individual's perceptions of whether or not relevant people to individual think that individual should perform specific behaviour. The subjective norms consist of individuals beliefs whether relevant people think that individual should perform specific behaviour (approves or disapproves) weighted by individuals motivation to agree with those relevant people.

It can be assumed that theory of reasoned action suggests that behaviour can be predicted by two variables: attitude toward behaviour and subjective norm. These variables are expected to vary with specific behaviour which is predicted, with conditions under which specific behaviour will be performed and with specific individual who will perform specific behaviour. Theory of reasoned action posits that loyalty intentions have direct influence on customer's behaviour (willingness to buy). Willingness to buy is attached to customer's desire to search for favorite offers even though it requires considerable effort. Competitive offerings are not considered as alternatives in customer's mind. Expansion of the theory of reasoned action suggests that customer's previous behaviour can explain their actual behaviour. It means that customer will prefer to choose the same store they visited in previous purchase occasions, even though customer perceives that other store provides the same benefits. It can be explained with psychological commitment to previous choices and customer's willingness to decrease their costs of decision making. This is called inertia effect. It is rational, because it helps customer to reach satisfaction by saving costs of decision making, decision takes place automatically and without conscious thinking.

Customer Demand Theory

This theory was proposed by Michelle (2011). The customer demand was based on the consideration of some demographic variables, which were developed over years of research studying the habits of consumers. The theory attempts to define what drives loyalty in customers and can represent an effective tool for gaining and retaining your hard-won patrons. Business owners who witness repeat customers know on an intuitive level that customer loyalty is an invaluable commodity. Incorporating the precepts of the customer loyalty theory into daily dealings can influence the creation of more business.

In general, younger customers, especially those with in-depth experience searching the Internet, may exhibit less customer loyalty to individual businesses as a result of the wide variety of online stores. These shoppers do not experience the personal interactions inherent in visiting a physical location. Conversely, some older customers who are less interested in

spending time searching the Internet to shop may develop a comfort level with the particular businesses they frequent. As a direct consequence, these purchasers get to know specific business owners and employees and begin developing much-valued relationships over time, enhancing loyalty to the business.

The differences between male and female shoppers may extend to their shopping habits. Generally, the nature of females includes valuing long-term relationships more than their male counterparts. Women also tend to recognize and exhibit loyalty to product brands with which they become comfortable. Conventionally more social, women may initiate enjoyable interactions more readily with business owners and staff, laying the foundation for business loyalty. If these friendly overtures are consistently reciprocated by employees, the customer may come to expect the positive acknowledgement. This experience, when duplicated each time the customer visits the store, can lead to customer loyalty (Anneke, 2015).

Similarly, customer satisfaction occurs when expectations are met and exceeded; however, expectations vary among different people. For example, a product may be highly appealing to one customer and not impress another at all, so each person's degree of satisfaction is not the same. Rather than attempting to affect customer loyalty solely through the products carried, businesses might more effectively gain consumer loyalty by learning more about what their own customers appreciate and value and working to meet those expectations (Younghan 2011)

Therefore, from the stated theories, Customer Demand Theory is the most relevant. The theory stated that customer needs and wants has to be determined before developing goods and services that meets or exceeds customer expectation, and this lead to satisfaction and eventual customer loyalty in selected pharmaceutical chemists in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council.

Methodology

This research work is restricted to pharmaceutical chemists in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council, Borno State. Similarly, four (4) pharmaceutical chemists were selected using stratified sampling technique. The population of the study was 390,607, while the sample size of the study

was three hundred and ninety nine (399). The sample size was determined based Yamane (1967) formula; i.e $n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$ where n = sample size, N = population, e = error margin = 5%, $n = 309607 / (1 + 309609(0.0025)) = 399$. Questionnaires were issued to 399 respondents. The data was analysed using special package for social science (SPSS) and model was specified in line with the hypothesis that:

Ho₁: There is no significant effect of shop communication on customer loyalty in selected among pharmaceutical chemists in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council.

Table 4.11 Effect of shop symbolism on customer loyalty

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs = 377		
-----+-----				F (8, 377) = 4.22		
Model	.318064405	1	.318064405	Prob > F = 0.0402		
Residual	28.6348152	380	.075354777	R-squared = 0.7654		
-----+-----				Adj R-squared = 0.8124		
Total	28.9528796	381	.07599181	Root MSE = .7451		
-----+-----						
Y1	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
-----+-----						
x2	.7014214	.0049365	2.05	0.041	.198488	.0004357
_cons	6.912404	.0376123	83.06	0.000	3.050086	3.197994
-----+-----						

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 4.11 shows details of the linear relationship of the five questions which used to assess the effect of shop communication on customers' loyalty among pharmaceutical chemists in Maiduguri. These variables were subjected to multiple regression model. Therefore, customer loyalty (Y) which is dependent variable was regressed against independent variables (X_1 — X_2). From the model summary, R- square value is (0.7654) which is 77% and adjusted R- square value is (0.8124) which is 81%, while regression coefficient is 2.05. The P-value of model summary was $P < 0.0402$ $P < 0.05$ which shows that, there is significant effect of shop communication on customer loyalty among pharmaceutical chemist in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council.

Discussion of Results

Since the R-square value of (.8124) which represent 81% by which the variables explained the model fits of the data. The t ratio of regression coefficient is 2, 05. Therefore, P-value of the model summary was $P < 0.0402$ $P < 0.05$. This concludes that null hypothesis is rejected and the result indicates that, there is significant effect of shop communication on customer loyalty among pharmaceutical chemists Maiduguri Metropolitan council.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concludes that store image examines in this research have significantly contributes to customer loyalty in the study area. Therefore, the study concludes that, shop communication has positive significant effects on customer loyalty among pharmaceutical chemist in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council, and this can be explained by way of informing customer about new products and it benefit to customers. In the same vein, the effective and efficient communication will go a long way in improving customer's satisfaction and eventually become loyal toward the products in questions

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations were made:

- i. Managers should also ensure that effective and efficient communication will go a long way in persuading customers loyalty about the products
- ii. Managers should also focus attention on customers' attitude and perception of products through effective communication, because emotional appeal and message come through efficient communication.

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