MODERATING ROLE OF NETWORK CONVENIENCE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN ONLINE BUSINESS PRACTICE IN NIGERIA

Hashim Ilyasu[1]
Department of Business Administration & Management,
Gombe State Polytechnic, Bajoga, Gombe, Nigeria
Correspondence Email: hashimilyas68@gmail.com Phone Number: 07030169924

Yahaya Idriss[2]
Department of Business Administration & Management,
College of Administration and Management Technology, Potiskum
Email: Yahayaidriss00@gmail.com

Muhammad Daudu[3]
Department of Business Administration & Management,
Gombe State Polytechnic, Bajoga
Email: mdkumo001@gmail.com

Abstract

Maintaining customer is one of the phenomena of great concern among marketers including online service providers in Nigeria. This has called for contributions towards guiding and directing concerned authorities on how to formulate effective marketing strategies that are viable for effective customer retention management. Upon this mandate, this paper has conceptualized a framework that explored the moderating role of network convenience on the nexus between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in online business practice in Nigeria. The aim of this paper was to explore a conceptual framework that can serve as a convenient tool for accessing online buying and selling in Nigeria. This paper adopted a literature review method for synthesizing several views and ideas relating to service marketing models. This paper concluded that effective network convenience can strengthen the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in online business practice in Nigeria. The paper recommended that online service providers should put hands on deck to see that their customers are properly satisfied so that they can remain loyal to their businesses.

Keywords: exploring; convenience; nexus; framework; satisfaction; loyalty.

Introduction

One of the significant issues in Nigeria's online business practice today is customer loyalty. This is due the fact that almost all companies have concern on, and worried about exploring ideas or strategies on how to manage customers as the important visitors to their businesses. But the issue here is not only managing customer, but acquiring them. Yudiana and Setiani (2023) stressed that managing customers to stay is a key to the company's success, considering that retaining customers is more effective than finding new ones.

Similarly, customer loyalty has not caged only in a local market, but to the international reach because the advent of globalization and widespread of information technology has changed the barrier of location, time and of course, distance between companies and their customers in terms of buying and selling of goods and services. This has been posited by Ilyasu and Hussaini (2024) that this change has eliminated distance in boundaries, and reduces the differences between urban and rural areas. Time differences, location distances, as well as heterogeneity of population characteristics are no longer obstacles in the speed of information dissemination. This has clearly described the importance and positive effect of acquiring and maintaining customers in both local and international wise.

Contrarily, the report released by the Nigeria Telecommunications Commission (2023) asserted that lack of access to network has been a serious challenge that sets aside to diminish the efforts mounted by government and individuals, including online service providers because most of the online customers normally complain about lack of access to qualitative network which may result to incessant loss of customers at a time Thus, it is pertinent to stress the problem of losing customers which seriously affect the growth and development of any business which online marketing practice is apparently inclusive. There is a growing churn among online customers as it was stressed by Ilyasu (2025) that an increased rate churn-prone rate among online subscribers can be reflected from inconveniencies in using network service, customer dissatisfaction, better offers from competitors, or external factors like economic downturns, high rate of taxation policies, high cost of maintenance, vandalizing network infrastructure, insecurity issues, etc. This situation might simply affect the smooth running of the subscription companies, which will lead to a serious lose of significant number of customers as well market share in which their main goal is always targeting how to acquire and maintain customers at all the times. By summing these issues together, online subscription companies can therefore, study and understand how to come up with effective, accessible and reliable network so that customer loyalty can easily be enhanced.

Besides, customer satisfaction can be attained when some factors are met. For instance, pricing strategy in online marketing can be competitively set so that customers can have full patronage on the product. Daily Trust (2021) posited that many times, service industries are forced to pursue such objectives as pricing to meet competition in order to stay in business and maintain its market share. Lancaster et al. (2002) reported that organizations may try to meet up with competition by reducing prices or even prevent it by adopting what is called “follow the leader” policy or leading price (a policy whereby an organization set a price based on the leading competitor’s price). Similarly, customer relation can be another tool for enhancing satisfaction in online business activities as it was recommended by Chungu and Phiri (2024) that with rapidly evolving customer expectations and technological advancements, banks must invest in robust customer relationship strategies to retain existing customers and attract new ones. This entails more than just providing quality products and services; it requires a concerted effort to build strong and lasting relationships with customers.

Furthermore, customer satisfaction can be achieved when customer expectation; perception as well as adequate service differentiation are properly put in place by the online service marketers because what customer expect is benefit, and during post-usage stage, he perceives the reality of what he expects form the assessment or evaluation he has on the product or service he consumes. This is true about service differentiation in online marketing because the way company thrives in making its product to be unique in terms of features and performance, that is how customers are always developing habit of repeat purchase since they are really satisfied with the improvement such company has mounted in place for their satisfaction. Various studies have demonstrated the positive relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty (Flint et al., 2011). Satisfied customers responded by voluntarily promoting the products and services they experienced to third parties (e.g., family, friends, and others) who sought their advice. Positive word-of-mouth is a strong representation from customers and is expected to enhance the manufacturer's image (Shibuya et al., 2022). This has clearly indicated that there is strong relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty which some prior studies such as: (Nawang, et al. 2024; Tufantoz & Yıldız, 2022; Hossain, et al. 2023; Saricam, 2022; & Ikawidajaja, 2023) have confirmed. On the other hand, studies such as: (Nathannia & Fachira, 2025; Denni, et al., 2024; Denni, et al., 2024; Basavaraj, et al., 2024; & Ahmed, et al., 2023) have found that there is no positive and significant relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

Consequently, the results above have proven that there is inconsistency on the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty which opens a wide gap for literature contribution; therefore, this study is set to fill the gap by examining the moderating role of network convenience on the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in online business practice in Nigeria.

Conceptual Issues

Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty has been conceptualized by several marketing scholars whom have offered different views about its meaning and how it relates to service marketing (Ilyasu et al., 2025). It is defined as Customer loyalty is one of the concepts that receive the attention of practitioners as well the academicians in today's global competitive village. Even though, the study conducted by Dandis, et al. (2023), argued that research on customer loyalty in service industries is a relatively unexplored area. Despite its situation, different scholars have tried to give it definitions and conceptual significance, for instance, Budur and Poturak (2021) defined customer loyalty as the cornerstone of the success of any organization and its integration with the rest of the other dimensions, as the process of customer retention is a very difficult issue due to changes in the psychology and behaviour of customers. Their study stressed the importance of customer loyalty towards organizational success in terms of growth and development. For any organization to achieve effective customer relationship management it must integrate the strategies of customer satisfaction and retention so that repeat purchase might take place; by so doing, a strong relationship customer and service would easily be established. Customer loyalty is conceptualized by Etuk, et al. (2024) as a cornerstone of business success, representing the willingness of customers to repeatedly purchase from a brand and advocate for it. Customer loyalty is the tendency of customers to constantly choose the products and services of a particular organization despite the presence of competitors in the market; in this case, the customer is loyal to this organization and is not affected by the offers and prices of other organizations (Joudeh et al., 2023; Khairawati, 2020). This profound the importance of maintaining customers by the companies amidst competitors, when a customer inclined trust on a particular brand as a result of his experience of post usage, he can develop an emotional feelings and admiration towards that particular brand, and offers as well as pricing strategies of other competitors does not stop him from patronizing that product.

Based on the conceptual contributions offered by the above scholars, this study, therefore, defined customer loyalty as willingness, interest and preference of a customer to repurchase an online product or service consistently and recommend it to friends and relatives.

Customer Satisfaction

The significance of customer satisfaction cannot be overemphasized. This is evidenced in various literature works conducted by different marketing scholars. Customer satisfaction is viewed customer satisfaction is the level of a person's feelings after comparing the perceived performance or results that are in accordance with his expectations (Juhria et al 2021). Marselin, Frederik and Fitty (2023) defined it as the level of a person’s feelings after comparing the performance/results they have experienced with their expectations. Customer satisfaction is viewed by Melati and Tjokorda (2022) as an emotional response in the form of feelings of pleasure and relief because their desires have been fulfilled or fulfilled after purchasing an online product or service. Umar and Hapzi (2022) proposed that customer satisfaction as feeling after comparing the service experienced with the expectations obtained from customer satisfaction obtained after the service is delivered. It is an evaluation that customers give to the company for the use of its products, where the product has been purchased or ordered online is called e-satisfaction (Lilik et al., 2024). It is an act of evaluating an online product or service by comparing it to the customers' expectations and assessing whether it fulfilled those expectations (Raza, et al. 2024). It is thought as an evaluation based on how well performance matches up with what was expected (Negassa & Japee, 2024).

Based on the above conceptualization, this study defines customer satisfaction as a relationship management which evaluates the behaviour of the customer in terms of expectation and perception of a particular commodity or service.

Network Convenience as a Proposed Moderating Variable

Despite the fact that some service marketing scholars view network convenience as different from network service convenience, but for the purpose of this study, network convenience is viewed as network service convenience because online businesses is focused on how convenient a particular network service is. Therefore, network convenience was conceptualized as a moderating variable in some previous studies. Some of these studies include a work titled, "investigating the effect of service quality on customer post-purchasing behaviours in the hotel sector: a moderating role of service convenience" conducted by Kuo-Cheng, et al (2012). Based on this assessment, network convenience is fit and suitable to be put as a moderating variable of the study.

Empirical Review

Previous studies were conducted using the same variables, and in different places around the globe. For instance, the studies of Nawang, et al. (2024) examined service quality, brand image, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty towards telecommunications service providers in Malaysia: a PLS-SEM approach. The findings of their study revealed that there was a significant relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Another study conducted by Tufantoz and Yıldız (2022), who investigated the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Similarly, Hossain, et al. (2023) conducted their study on the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in e-commerce. They confirmed that there is strong relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in e-commerce. Another supporting idea was confirmed by the study of Saricam (2022), who carried out on analyzing service quality and its relation to customer satisfaction and loyalty in sportswear retail market in Turkey. Thus, the study carried-out by Ikawidajaja (2023) viewed customer satisfaction and loyalty, where he found that there is strong relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

However, Nathannia & Fachira (2025) examined the influence of service quality, amenities, and value on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty at Bobocabin Cikole Bandung, Indonesia. The study found that there was no strong relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. In the same wing, Denni, et al. (2024) investigated the impact of SERVQUAL on consumers' satisfaction, loyalty, and intention to use online food delivery services. Findings of their study revealed that there was no strong relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Thus, Basavaraj, et al. (2024) investigated the post-pandemic textile market: the stake of private labels in customer loyalty in Belagavi, North Karnataka in India. They also found that there was no strong relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Similarly, Ahmed, et al. (2023) examined the intricate relationships of consumers' loyalty and their perceptions of service quality, price and satisfaction in restaurant service in Bangladesh. They also confirmed that there was no strong relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Furthermore, the study of Naufal, et al., (2023) examined the influence of e-service quality dimensions on e-customer satisfaction and its impact on e-customer loyalty tiket.com in Indonesia. Findings of the study revealed that there was no strong relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

Based on the empirical review conducted above, the results have shown inconsistency in their findings, and this is an uncovered gap for the direction of future studies, therefore, this study filled the identified gap by examining the moderating role of network convenience on the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in online business practice in Nigeria.

Theoretical Underpinning

This study is guided by the underpinning theory of Technological Acceptance (TAM) Model. This theory was developed by Davis (1989) and has added ingredients to the primary constructs of perceived benefits and perceived ease of use. The relationship between this theory and this present study is that, when online subscribers perceived a positive outcome of what they expect from getting access to internet, they will be satisfied with the company, and so they become loyal to the company in the long-run. The theory still postulated the assumptions that adopting technological system can provide some important advancements and convenience technology users, which can as well influence their behaviour.

TAM theory explains that these two primary constructs determine user acceptance of information systems (Wahyu & Fitriyani, 2021). The channel or link that interconnects this study and the TAM theory slants in the aspect of ease of use for the online users, as it is counted as one of the popular and most widely concepts used by researchers and have positively impacted measuring individuals' confidence that using a particular technological aspect will be effort free and hitch free, such as when using internet subscription services, which can provide convenient access for the subscribers. This is relatively similar with the research conducted by (Hossain, et al., 2024), which found that the convenience is one of the key elements that shape the behaviour of the customer; convenient service offered did not create any difficulties simply by accessing network with hitch free endeavours. Thus, consumers can quickly implement it in payment transactions (Rahmawati & Murtanto, 2023). Assuming that the internet service is perceived by customer conveniently and accessible, customers will easily be motivated to admire, accept and of course, utilize the service, which can enhance customer satisfaction with the company's cash free transaction experiences. Furthermore, based on the convenience in relation to online service ease, researcher attempted to re-examine and evaluate whether it remains the same or relevant variable when it comes to online service assessment in Nigeria. Therefore, the researcher utilized the convenience variable as moderator. If a large number of customers use convenient network service, they will assume that is easy to use, and it will boost or change their behaviour to satisfied and remain loyal ones.

Subsequently, the use of TAM theory can be an avenue for online users to accept what they expect based on their perception on online services through increasing their satisfaction and loyalty especially when they experience good and reliable network convenience.

Proposed Conceptual Framework

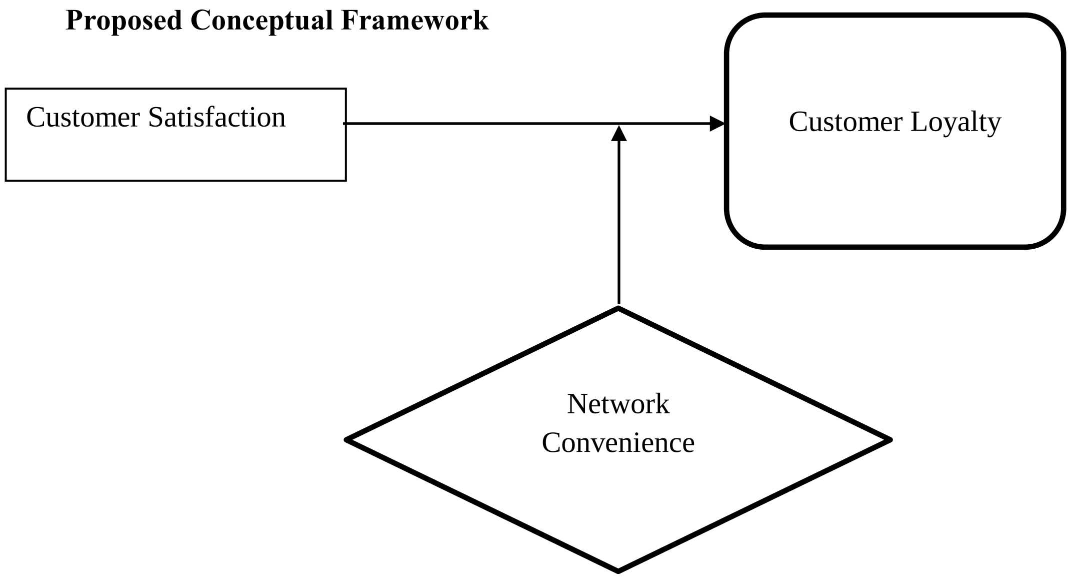

Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework

Proposed Hypotheses of the Study

This study has proposed the following hypotheses:

$H_{1:}$ There is significant relationship between competitive pricing and customer loyalty in online business practice in Nigeria

$H_{2:}$ There is significant relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty through network convenience in online business practice in Nigeria

Methodology

This study used qualitative research approach where relevant works including survey of documented literature works that embraced the concepts of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty were surveyed. The literature studies comprised of relevant data gathered from academic journals, publications, and other relevant documents relating to concepts of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, and how they are practiced in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study explored a proposed conceptual framework on the moderating role of network convenience on the nexus between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in Nigeria's online business practice. After reviewing previous literatures that are related to the topic at hand, it is finally concluded that network convenience can serve as a suitable moderator on the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in Nigeria's online business practice.

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