

Dimensions of Service Quality and Customer Patronage of Grocery Services in Nigeria

ANETOH, JOHN CHIDUME

Department of Marketing,
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University
Igbariam Campus, Anambra State, Nigeria.
Email: anetohjohn@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This work examined the use of SERVPERF model in measuring the relationship between service quality dimensions and customer patronage of grocery services in Nigeria. Service quality and customer patronage are very important concepts needed by grocery outlets in order to survive the competitive challenges of time. The study utilized 130 usable copies of questionnaire and evaluated the relationship between dimensions of service quality and customer patronage of grocery business in Nigeria with reference to Anambra area. Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation was used to test the formulated hypotheses necessitated using SPSS software package. The results indicated that there is significant relationship between service quality dimensions and customer patronage of grocery services in Nigeria. The major findings revealed that all dimensions are significantly correlated to customer patronage and also that SERVPERF model is a useful tool in measuring service quality and customer patronage of Nigerian grocery services. The conclusion drawn from the study is that customer patronage is a function of service quality. The study recommends that grocery stores should continue to improve on their service quality dimensions for enhanced customer patronage as well as been consistent in maintaining high level of competitiveness in order to remain in business.

Keywords: Dimensions of Service Quality, Customer Patronage, Grocery Services, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The complex nature of service quality has generated concern and divergent views among the companies, service providers, trader and academics about the best way to conceptualize and measure quality. The operationalization and delivery of high quality services to customers of grocery stores are very pertinent in order to maintain high level of competitiveness and also to ensure organizational success. Grocery outlets have started engaging in multifaceted approaches to improve the service quality by grasping the verities that quality does not improve unless it is measured. Over the years, services have gone to the heart of value creation within the economy as customers are concerned with the performance of service rendered to them. Service quality determines service performance. The effectiveness and efficiency of the service offering depend on the quality of service rendered. Grocery stores play an instrumental role in the lives of people and it is primordial for firms to know what consumers expect and perceive from these stores. Grocery outlets handlers are considered successful when they have gotten a good number of customers who consistently patronize their services.

Service quality and customer patronage are very important concepts that companies, firms and grocery outlets must understand in order to remain in business. Palmer (2005) opines that the absence of tangible manifestations made measuring of service quality difficult. Jain and Gupta (2004) emphasize that quality has come to be recognized as a strategic tool for attaining operational efficiency and improved business performance. SERVPERF constitutes one of the major service quality measurement models. The consensus continues to elude up till this present dispensation as to which measuring scale is superior in assessing performance of grocery outlets. Extant Literature supports the contention that SERVPERF is prominent scale forming the genesis for service quality assessment in grocery outlets and also in different service sectors. Although many researchers have tried to develop other various models in measuring service quality and service performance, some are attitude-based measures while others are disconfirmation models.

SERVPERF model is associated with measuring service performance and customer patronage as captured by the previous studies (Bolton and Drew, 1990; Cronin and Taylor, 1994; Palmer, 2005). Wicks and Roethlein (2009) capture that there is a link between service quality, service performance and customer satisfaction which highlights the importance of service performance and customer satisfaction when defining service quality. Regrettably in Nigeria, some grocery outlets are still experiencing low customer patronage notwithstanding that they strive to improve on their service performance but still find out that their quality ratings are falling due to the fact that their customers' expectations have exceeded their service performance improvement. Sequel to this missing link, there is need for further empirical investigation. Therefore, this study seeks to assess the relationship between service quality dimensions and customer patronage of grocery services in Nigeria with reference to Anambra State using SERVPERF model.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Many studies have used SERVPERF model as framework in measuring service quality in many sectors but gap still exist in findings as a result of varying ways of operationalization and conceptualization. Different dimensions have been reported in measuring service quality of grocery outlets in terms of the expectations, perceptions, gap scores and customer patronage which at times overlap. Shortcomings concerning convergent and discriminate validity have been experienced in measuring the service quality and customer patronage of grocery stores generally. There is still a controversy as no specific accord has been established on the relationship and extent to which customer patronage is driven by service quality of grocery outlets in Nigeria. Besides, notwithstanding that shop owners are making efforts in providing quality service to their numerous customers, the customers of grocery outlets in Nigeria still experience; dissatisfaction, service failure, poor service quality, low expectations and low customer patronage. In the light of the above imbalances, there is need to fill the gap. Thus, the need for this study arises; as this study seeks to assess the relationship between the dimensions of service quality and customer patronage of grocery services in Anambra part of Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The major objective of this study is to assess the relationship between the dimensions of service quality and customer patronage of grocery services in Anambra part of Nigeria using SERVPERF model. The specific objectives of this work are;

1. to determine whether there is significant relationship between service reliability and customer patronage of grocery services.
2. to investigate whether there is significant relationship between service assurance and customer patronage of grocery services.
3. to determine whether there is significant relationship between service tangibility and customer patronage of grocery services.
4. to evaluate the extent of the relationship between service empathy and customer patronage of grocery services.
5. to determine whether there is significant relationship between service responsiveness and customer patronage of grocery services.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the objectives of this study, the following questions are formulated;

1. How significant is the relationship between service reliability and customer patronage?
2. How significant is the relationship between service assurance and customer patronage?
3. How significant is the relationship between service tangibility and customer patronage?
4. How significant is the relationship between service empathy and customer patronage?
5. How significant is the relationship between service responsiveness and customer patronage?

STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses are formulated which serve as guide for the study:

- H0₁: There is no significant relationship between service reliability and customer patronage.
- H0₂: There is no significant relationship between service assurance and customer patronage.
- H0₃: There is no significant relationship between service tangibility and customer patronage.
- H0₄: There is no significant relationship between service empathy and customer patronage.
- H0₅: There is no significant relationship between service responsiveness and customer patronage.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This work serves as a useful source of information for further studies. This study is of great benefit in solving the complex issues related to service quality and customer patronage in grocery outlets as well as other behavioral outcomes such as customer satisfaction, expectations, perceptions, and performance. The shop owners and retailers will through this study go a long way in overcoming the challenges from their

competitors as well as sustaining their businesses continually. The general public is expected to benefit through the resultant vibrancy of this study.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is limited to using SERVPERF model in assessing the relationship between the dimensions of service quality and customer patronage of grocery services. We focused our study on grocery services only. Grocery outlets embrace all sizes be it small or big. Our sample is drawn from customers who purchase and have experiences of grocery services. Twelve grocery outlets in Anambra area of Nigeria were utilized for the study, namely; Dozzy Business Outlet, Pomace store, Dobico Grocery store, Michael's store, Freedom store, Ezeogwu Grocery store, Charles store, Chuks store, Davidson store, Chuddy Biz Outlet, Chris store, and Mrs. Kola outlet.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Discrepancy theory by Elsevier (1999). This theory states that customer's satisfaction assessment is based on the outcome of customer's perception of the difference between service quality and customer patronage. According to this theory, customer patronage is a function of service quality. That positive service quality will lead to high customer patronage while negative service quality will lead to low customer patronage. Therefore, we anchored our study on this theoretical framework since our study seeks to investigate whether significant relationship exist between service quality and customer patronage of grocery services in Nigeria with particular reference to Anambra part of Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

SERVPERF Model

SERVPERF is a performance only model of service quality which avoids the need to measure customer's expectations of a service. There are conceptual difficulties in defining what is meant by expectations. The difficulties in conceptualizing expectations led to the development and application of SERVPERF. Palmer (2005) observes that the simplest approach to measuring service quality is simply to ask customers to rate the performance of a service. Gilbert et al., (2004) see SERVPERF as performance-only model which assesses service quality by merely asking customers about their level of satisfaction with various service features following a service encounter. SERVPERF model requires the customers of a grocery outlet to rate a provider performance extending from strongly disagree to strongly agree. SERVPERF has outperformed SERVQUAL as it not only cut down the number of variables but also reduced the work load of customer survey and helped in generating unbiased responses. SERVPERF model requires the consumer to rate only the performance of a particular service encounters (Palmer, 2005). It eliminates the need to measure expectations on the grounds that customer expectations change when they experience a service, and that the inclusion of an expectation measure reduces the content validity of it measures (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; McAlexander et al., 1994).

Studies conducted by Cronin and Taylor (1992) and (1994) using this performance-based measure found that SERVPERF explained more of the variance in an overall measure of service quality than did performance-expectations model (SERVQUAL).

Ideally, expectations should be measured before a service has been consumed. However, in reality, this is often not practical. Thus, some researchers are likely to record expectations retrospectively. SERVPERF model of measuring service quality of a grocery outlet is more preferable to SERVQUAL because the stated expectations may be influenced by subsequent performance of service delivery, making the retrospective measure of expectations fairly meaningless. From a measurement perspective, the use of SERVPERF model is seen to be more popular because of the psychometric problems associated with SERVQUAL measurement which include; reliability, discriminate validity and variance restriction problems. However, considerable research supports a more straightforward approach of assessing quality on the basis of simple performance-based measures (Bolton and Drew, 1990; Cronin and Taylor, 1994).

SERVPERF AND SERVQUAL MODELS CONCEPTUALIZATION AND CONTENTION

Extant literature on the service quality construct supports the contention that SERVQUAL and SERVPERF are the two most prominent scales forming the genesis for service quality assessment in different service sectors and even in grocery services. Pertinently, delivery quality service to customers is very necessary in order to ensure organizational success but thus needs to be evaluated (Adil, Mohammed and Albkour, 2013). Many organizations have started engaging in multifaceted approaches to improve the service quality of grocery outlets as they have grasped the verities that quality does not improve unless it is measured. Service quality has increasingly been recognized as one of the key strategic values of organizations in both the manufacturing and service sectors (Berry, Zeithaml and Parasuraman 1985; Bitner, Booms and Tetreault, 1990; LeBlanc and Nguyen, 1988). Many models have been developed to assess the determinants of service quality in grocery firms.

The works of Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985, 1988, 1991 and 1994) led to the development of a service quality model known as SERVQUAL, which compares expectations and perceptions of customers regarding a particular service. Many researchers have used extended and adopted SERVQUAL 22-item variables to study service quality in different sectors of the service industry (Avkiran, 1994; Babakus and Boller, 1992; Fick and Ritchie, 1991; Newman, 2001; Smith, 1995). However, SERVQUAL is a model for assessing and managing service quality (Buttle, 1996). The concept was conceptualized and proposed by Parasuraman et al., (1985) and then further developed for the next eight years by the same researchers. SERVQUAL has undoubtedly had a major impact on the business and academic communities (Buttle, 1996). Christopher, Payne and Ballantyne (2002). SERVQUAL has been said to be insightful and remain a practical framework to use in service quality management. East (1997) observes that SERVQUAL measures service quality through customer's expectations i.e. what firms should provide in the industry being studied and their perceptions viz how a given service provider performs against these criteria. According to Palmer (2005) this type of model is often referred to as a disconfirmation model.

Interestingly, Cronin and Taylor (1992) have modified the gap-based SERVQUAL scale into SERVPERF. SERVPERF according to them is a performance-only construct. Palmer (2005) supported that SERVPERF model for measuring service requires the customer to rate only the performance of a particular service encounter. This helps to eliminate the need to measure expectations on the grounds that customer expectations change when

experience a service, and the inclusion of an expectations measure reduces the content and discriminant validity of the measures (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; McAlexander et al., 1994). The SERVPERF model developed by Cronin and Taylor (1992) was derived from the SERVQUAL model by dropping the expectations and measuring service performance just by evaluating the customer's overall feeling towards the service rendered. They identified two important equations:

(a) SERVPERF = Performance (b) Weighted SERVPERF = importance x (performance)

SERVPERF model is based upon a generic 22-item questionnaire encapsulated into five broad dimensions of service quality in grocery stores setting. Cronin et al., (1992) capture that SERVPERF model assesses customers experience based on the same attributes as the SERVQUAL and conforms more closely on the implications of performance, satisfaction and attitude based literature. The 5 dimensions of service quality are designed and known as RATER. The RATER acronym implies:

R = Reliability (dependability, accurate performance).

A = Assurance (competence, courtesy, credibility, security).

T = Tangibles (appearance of physical elements).

E = Empathy (easy access, good, communications, customer understanding).

R = Responsiveness (promptness and helpfulness).

SERVPERF Equation

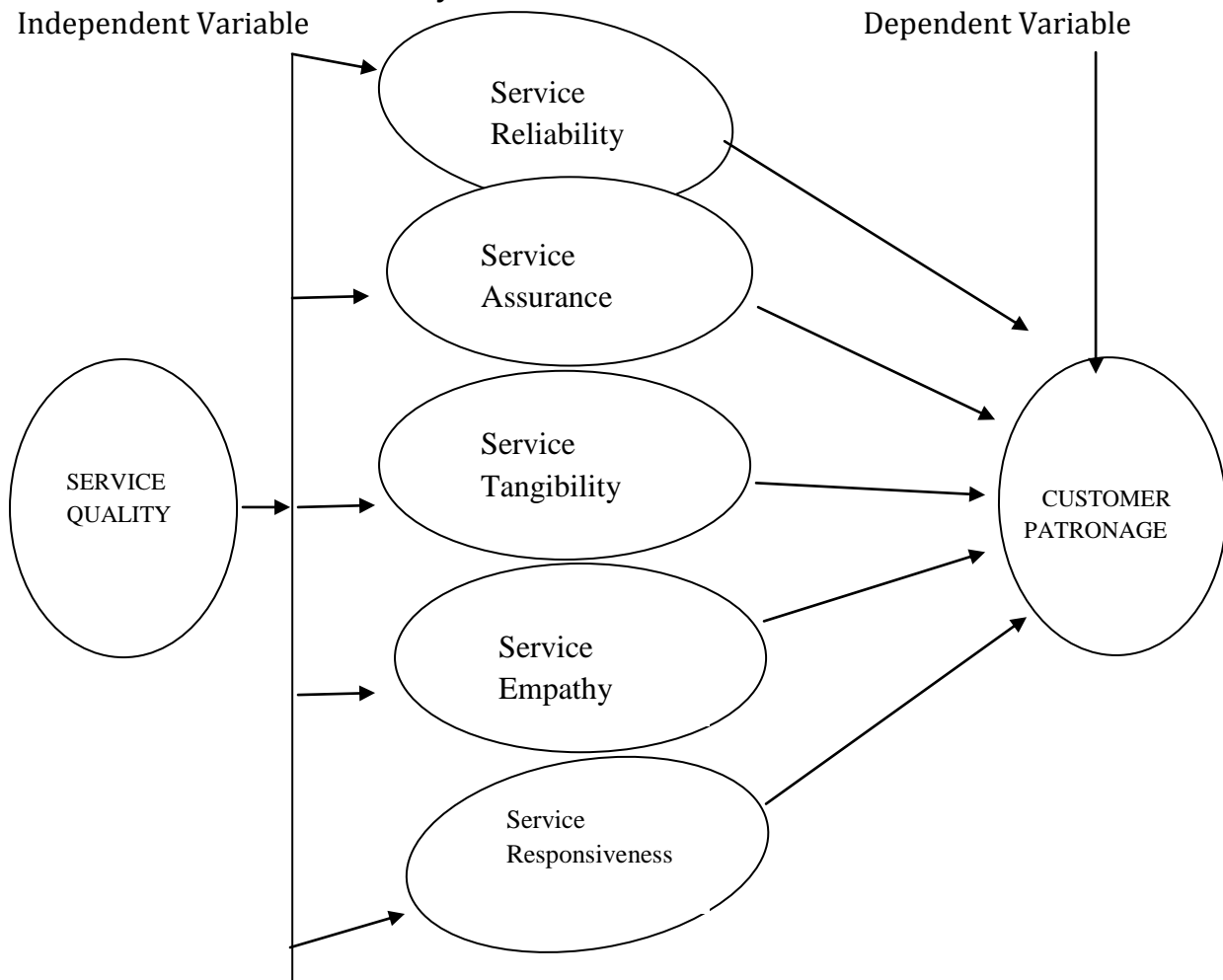
$$SQ_i = \sum_{j=1}^k P_{ij}$$

Where: SQ_i= perceived service quality of individual "i"

K = number of attributes/items

P = perception of individual 'i' with respect to performance on attribute "j".

Finally, there have been considerable supports in favour of SERVPERF model (Babakus and Boller, 1992; Botton and Drew, 1991b; Boulding et al, 1993; Churchill and Surprenant, 1982; Gotlieb, Grewal and Brown, 1994; Hartline and Ferrell, 1996; Mazis, Antola and Klippel, 1975; Woodruff, Cadotte and Jenkins, 1983).

Theoretical Model of the Study:

Source: Developed by the Researcher (2016).

Figure 1: is the theoretical model which captures the independent and dependent variables of this study. According to this model, service quality (independent variable) is surrogated by the 5 service quality variables known as SERVPERF dimensions (service reliability, service assurance, service tangibility, service empathy and service responsiveness). Based on this model, customer patronage (dependent variable) is a function of the service quality surrogated by the five perceptual SERVPERF dimensions.

Service Quality and Customer Patronage in the Grocery Outlets

Grocery outlet is considered successful when it has gotten a good number of customers who consistently patronize its services. Shop keepers dream of having satisfied customers who return time and time again to make more transactions. Store owners should try to render quality services in order to build goodwill which attracts consistent customer patronage. Smith (2012) reveals five tips for ensuring consistent customer patronage. Thus they are; building good personal relationship with your customers, be courteous to customers, maintaining integrity, rewarding clients patronage and finally, adding value to the society. All these will facilitate quality service for enhanced customer patronage and satisfaction.

Meaning of Customer Perception

Perception is seen as an approximation of reality (Parner, 2010). That is our brain attempts to make sense out of the stimuli to which we are exposed. Kotler and Armstrong (2004) see perception as a process by which people select, organize and interpret information to form a meaningful picture to the world. They further posited that people can form different perception of the same stimulus because of the three perceptual processes: selective attention, selective distortion, and selective retention. Selective attention is the tendency for people to screen out most of the information to which they are exposed. Boone and Kurtz (2004) define perception as the meaning that a person attributes to incoming stimuli gathered through the five senses: sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell. Perception is how an individual sees and interpret what he experiences in life within his micro and macro environment (Ndubisi, 2008). Anyanwu (2005) defines perception as the entire process by which an individual becomes aware of his environment and interpret it so that it will fit into his own frame of references.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many empirical studies have been conducted on service quality in various sectors in different parts of the world, although with varying findings as a result of different ways of conceptualization, contextualization and operationalization. Some of the related studies on grocery retail services are reviewed in order to create gap in literature:

Bhattacharya and Dey (2014) conducted a study on the evaluation of store patronage behavior of shoppers in India: a multivariate approach. The main aim of the study was to find out the patronage behavior of the customers towards traditional and organized retailers. Primary data were collected from a sample of consumers visiting both organized and unorganized outlets. A survey design with the help of a structured questionnaire for shoppers was utilized in the study. The data were collected from the four metros; New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai. The findings of the study revealed that trust, satisfaction and ambience were found to be very important explanatory variables that shed light on the store loyalty behavior of shoppers. The study concluded that the buyers are more loyal to the unorganized retailers.

Goswami (2009) investigated on whether Indian Consumers will move from Kirana stores to organized retailers when shopping for groceries. The study concluded that customer patronage to grocery stores was found to be positively related to location, helpful, trustworthy salespeople, home shopping, cleanliness, offers, and quality. The study also revealed that store patronage was found to be negatively related to travel convenience. Lumpkin, Greenberg, and Goldstucker (1985) conducted a study on the marketplace needs of the elderly: determinant attributes and store choice. They found that elderly customers behave differently from younger ones in terms of the type of store patronized.

Aaker and Jones (1971) evaluated on their studies on the modeling store choice behavior. They found store choice to be dependent on socioeconomic background of consumers, their personality, and past purchase experience. Sinha and Banerjee (2004) conducted a study on store choice behavior in an evolving market in India. In their study found that store convenience and customer services positively influences consumer store selection. Wornchanok and Watanyoo (2011) conducted a study on factors influencing store patronage: a study of rodern Retailers in Bangkok, Thailand. Their study aimed at investigating what factors affect Thai customers purchasing goods and

services from such types of retail stores in Bangkok, Thailand. 424 respondents were selected from 4 areas in Bangkok. Correlations and multiple regressions statistical analyses were employed to estimate relationships between independent and dependent variables. The results showed that factors that correlated with purchase of goods and services from modern retail stores were as follows; distance from home, distance from workplace, purchase intention, customer satisfaction, perceived service quality, personal income, and household income.

Duman and Yagci (2006) conducted a study on factors affecting continuous purchase intentions of supermarket customers: an attempt at modeling. The study discovered that customers' patronage intentions are affected by value perception, product quality perception, service quality perception, discount perception and comparable price perception. The study also found out that customers evaluate the quality of the products that they purchase using some cues which include internal cues, exemplified by taste and colour of the product and external cues which consist of price and brand of product. Cronin, Joseph, Brady, Hult and Tomas (2000) in their study assessed the effect of quality, value and customer satisfaction on consumer behavioral intentions in service environments. Their findings revealed that the quality of retailer service which are generally assessed by customers are as follows; the appearance of staff and their attentiveness, kindness, politeness, staff level of experience, safe shopping environment etc.

Grewal, Krishnan, Baker, and Borin (1998) conducted a study on the effect of store name, brand name and price discounts on consumers' evaluations and purchase intentions. Their findings revealed that special discounts and promotion increase customers' interest toward the supermarket. The study also discovered that discounts and promotions are financial sacrifice by the business which attracts customers. Their study also found that store name, brand name and price discounts determine and affect customers' patronage behaviours. The study concluded that customers who think that they have benefited due to discounts and promotions displayed more loyalty to the store.

Uslu (2005) investigated the reasons for shopping mall preferences by consumers. The study found that the approach of the store staff to customers, contents of products, packing space, issues of hygiene, after sales services, variety of products, product price, location convenience, and quality of products on offer are major factors impacting customers' choice of shopping centres.

Oghojafor, Ladipo and Nwagwu (2012) conducted a study in Nigeria on the outlet attributes as determinants of preference of women between a supermarket and a traditional open market. The major objective of the study was to determine outlet attributes that influence Nigerian women's preference between a supermarket and the African traditional open market, Oghojafor, *et al* (2012) found that seven attributes were considered important by Nigerian women in making a choice of outlets. These attributes in order of importance were: quality, price, location of outlet, cleanliness, product assortment, pricing method, and availability of parking space.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted descriptive research design which used survey method to generate first hand data needed for the study. Primary data through the use of questionnaire were generated about the variables and conclusion drawn based on findings. This study utilized ten grocery outlets in Anambra State of Nigeria. The population of this study consists of consumers of grocery outlets. Because of the nature of this study, the total population of customers was not determined. Based on that, a sample of 156 customers who have purchased from the sampled grocery outlets were conveniently selected for the study. However, 13 customers chosen from the each of the twelve selected grocery outlets totaling 156 customers formed the sample of the study. This study utilized primary sources of data. The study utilized structured copies of questionnaire to generate data needed for the study. The instrument for this study was validated by 3 research experts in order to ensure the soundness and accuracy of the measuring device. On the other hand, the reliability of the instrument for the study was achieved through a trial study by administering 10 copies of questionnaire through a pilot study to ten customers of each of the two chosen grocery outlets in Asaba. The data generated through the administration of the questionnaire were correlated and positive correlation overall result of 0.997 using Cronbach alpha proved the consistency, dependability and reliability of the instrument. Table A: depicts the reliability result;

Table A: Reliability Statistics

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Overall dimensions	0.998	22
Reliability	0.996	5
Assurance	0.987	4
Tangibles	0.958	4
Empathy	0.985	5
Responsiveness	0.989	4
Customer patronage	0.980	5
OVERALL	0.997	27

Source: Cronbach Alpha Computations Output using SPSS Software

The administration of instrument for data collection was done with the distribution of 156 copies of questionnaire to the customers of 12 selected grocery outlets. Customers were contacted by dropping the questionnaire at the front desk of the outlets, which were given to customers and returned through the store dealers. Only 130 copies of usable returned questionnaire were used for analysis. The data generated were presented using tables of percentage and frequencies while the formulated hypotheses

were tested using Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation (r) as necessitated using SPSS package. Decision rule: reject H_0 if p -value is greater than 0.05, used as stipulated significant level; otherwise accept H_0 .

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data generated from the 130 usable copies of the questionnaire as filled by the respondents were presented and analyzed in this section. The formulated hypotheses were also tested using Pearson Correlation (r) and discussion of findings made in this section.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

How Significant is the Relationship between Service Reliability and Customer Patronage of Grocery Services?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strong significant relationship	34	26.2	26.2	26.2
Significant relationship	51	39.2	39.2	65.4
Indifferent	7	5.4	5.4	70.8
No significant relationship	22	16.9	16.9	87.7
Strongly no significant relationship	16	12.3	12.3	100.0
Total	130	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

The above table shows that majority of the respondents 34 (26.2%) and 51 (39.2%) agreed that there is significant relationship between service reliability and customer patronage while 22(16.9) and 16(12.3) of the respondents disagreed significant relationship between service reliability and customer patronage of grocery services.

What is the Extent of Relationship between Service Assurance and Customer Patronage of Grocery Services?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strong significant relationship	31	23.8	23.8	23.8
Significant relationship	26	20.	20.0	43.8
Indifferent	25	19.2	19.2	63.1
No significant relationship	30	23.1	23.1	86.2
Strongly no significant relationship	18	13.8	13.8	100.0
Total	130	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

The above table indicates that 31(23.8%) of the respondents opted for strong significant relationship, 26(20%) of the respondents went for significant relationship, 25(19.2%) of the respondents were indifferent, 30(23.1%) of the respondents agreed on no significant relationship while 18(13.8%) of the respondents voted for strongly no significant relationship between service reliability and customer patronage of grocery services.

How Significant is the Relationship between Service Tangibility and Customer Patronage of Grocery Services?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strong significant relationship	44	33.8	33.8	33.8
Significant relationship	31	23.8	23.8	57.6
Indifferent	12	9.2	9.2	66.8
No significant relationship	27	20.8	20.8	87.7
Strongly no significant relationship	16	12.3	12.3	100.0
Total	130	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

The above shows that 44(33.8%) and 31(23.8%) of the respondents agreed that there is significant relationship between service tangibility and customer patronage 12(9.2%) of the respondents were indifferent while 27(20.8%) and 16(12.3%) of the respondents disagreed.

How Significant is the Relationship between Service Empathy and Customer Patronage of Grocery Services?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strong significant relationship	38	29.2	29.2	29.2
Significant relationship	59	45.4	45.4	74.6
Indifferent	9	6.9	6.9	81.5
No significant relationship	17	13.1	13.1	94.6
Strongly no significant relationship	7	5.4	5.4	100.0
Total	130	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

The table above shows that 38(29.2%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 59(45.4%) of the respondents agreed on significant relationship associated with service empathy and customer patronage of grocery outlets, 9(6.9%) of the respondents were indifferent while 17(13.1%) and 7(5.4%) of the respondents disagreed that significant relationship exist between the two.

How Significant is the Relationship between Service Responsiveness and Customer Patronage of Grocery Services?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strong significant relationship	69	53.1	53.1	53.1
Significant relationship	39	30.0	30.0	83.1
Indifferent	2	1.5	1.5	84.6
No significant relationship	11	8.5	8.5	93.1
Strongly no significant relationship	9	6.9	6.9	100.0
Total	130	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

The above table indicate that majority of the respondents 69(53.1%) and 39(30%) agreed that service responsiveness and customer patronage have strong and significant relationship, 2(1.5%) of the respondents were indifferent while 11(8.5%) and 9(6.9%) of the respondents disagreed that no significant relationship exist between service responsiveness and patronage of grocery services.

Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of Correlations Result

		How significant is the relationship between service reliability and customer patronage?	How significant is the relationship between service assurance and customer patronage?	How significant is the relationship between service tangibility and customer patronage?	How significant is the relationship between service empathy and customer patronage?	How significant is the relationship between service responsiveness and customer patronage?
How significant is the relationship between service reliability and customer patronage?	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 .000 130	.929** .000 130	.844** .000 130	.922** .000 130	.862** .000 130
What is the extent of relationship between service assurance and customer patronage?	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.929** .000 130	1 .000 130	.922** .000 130	.871** .000 130	.826** .000 130
How significant is the relationship between service tangibility and customer patronage?	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.844** .000 130	.922** .000 130	1 .000 130	.834** .000 130	.709** .000 130
How significant is the relationship between service empathy and customer patronage?	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.922** .000 130	.871** .000 130	.834** .000 130	1 .000 130	.900** .000 130
How significant is the relationship between service responsiveness and customer patronage?	Pearson correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.862** .000 130	.826** .000 130	.709** .000 130	.900** .000 130	1 .000 130

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation was used to assess the relationship between service quality dimensions and customer patronage of grocery services. Based on the result of hypothesis no.1 tested, the p-value is 0.000 which is within the research acceptable significant level; thus showing statistically significant correlation between the two variables. The absolute value of correlation is 0.929, which indicates a strong positive correlation. Therefore, H_{01} is rejected and this implies that there is a significant relationship between service reliability and customer patronage of grocery services.

However, based on the result of hypothesis no.2 tested, the p-value is 0.000 which is within the research acceptable significant level; thus showing statistically significant correlation between the two variables. The absolute value of correlation is 0.922, which indicates a strong positive correlation. Therefore, H_{02} is rejected and this implies that there is a significant relationship between service assurance and customer patronage of grocery services.

Furthermore, based on the result of hypothesis no.3 tested, the p-value is 0.000 which is within the research acceptable significant level; thus showing statistically significant correlation between the two variables. The absolute value of correlation is 0.834, which indicates a strong positive correlation. Therefore, H_{03} is rejected and this implies that there is a significant relationship between service tangibility and customer patronage of grocery services.

Moreso, based on the result of hypothesis no.4 tested, the p-value is 0.000 which is within the research acceptable significant level; thus showing statistically significant correlation between the two variables. The absolute value of correlation is 0.871, which indicates a strong positive correlation. Therefore, H_{04} is rejected and this implies that there is a significant relationship between service empathy and customer patronage of grocery services.

Finally, based on the result of hypothesis no.5 tested, the p-value is 0.000 which is within the research acceptable significant level; thus showing statistically significant correlation between the two variables. The absolute value of correlation is 0.900, which indicates a strong positive correlation. Therefore, H_{05} is rejected and this implies that there is a significant relationship between service responsiveness and customer patronage of grocery services.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Based on the result of analyses, the following findings were made;

1. there is significant relationship between service reliability and customer patronage of grocery services.
2. there is significant relationship between service assurance and customer patronage of grocery services.
3. there is significant relationship between service tangibility and customer patronage of grocery services.
4. there is significant relationship between service empathy and customer patronage of grocery services.

5. there is significant relationship between service responsiveness and customer patronage of grocery services.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the study concludes that customer patronage is significantly linked to service reliability, service assurance, service tangibility, service empathy and service responsiveness in Nigerian grocery outlets. Therefore, we conclude that significant relationship exists between the dimensions of service quality and customer patronage of grocery services in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion drawn from the findings, we make the following recommendations;

1. The study recommends that grocery stores should continue to improve on their service quality dimensions for enhanced customer patronage.
2. Grocery outlets should try to be consistent in maintaining high level of competitiveness in order to remain in business.
3. Grocery outlets should be cautious while assessing their service quality to avoid shortcoming that will mar their performance.
4. Grocery outlets should also recognize that the relationship between service quality and customer patronage is dynamic and not static.
5. There is need for periodic assessment of the variables due to alarming instability in Nigeria.

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**APPENDIX I
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE STUDY**

Instruction: please kindly indicate (√) in the space provided for the appropriate answer according to your own opinion.

Service Quality Dimensions (X) and Customer Patronage(Y) Responses from the Respondents

Attributes	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Indifferent 3	Agreed 4	Strongly Agree 5	Total
Grocery stores have up-to-date equipment	11	11	7	42	59	130
Physical facilities are visually appealing	12	11	6	54	47	130
Shop keepers are well dressed and appear neat	11	12	10	49	48	130
Physical environment of grocery store is clean	17	18	7	43	45	130
Shop keepers keep to their promise	12	14	12	43	49	130
Shop keepers show sincere interest to customer	10	13	5	52	50	130
Shop keepers perform their services well	12	11	12	43	62	130
Shop keepers provide timely services	10	12	2	57	49	130
Shop keepers keep accurate records	12	12	11	45	50	130
They make information reachable to customers	13	16	10	33	58	130
Shop keepers give prompt services to customers	10	10	2	49	59	130
Sellers are consistent in helping customers	4	6	2	69	49	130
Shop keepers attempt to customers' request	21	11	4	47	47	130
Their behaviour restore customers; confidence	4	14	11	43	58	130
Customers are free and safe	1	2	0	18	109	130
Shop keepers are polite to their customers	14	16	10	51	39	130
They are knowledgeable in answering questions	18	10	6	56	40	130
They give customers' individual attention	13	10	5	52	50	130
They operate at customers' convenient hours	27	18	13	28	44	130
Customers' best interest is their priority	14	16	2	49	49	130
Customers; specific needs should be understood	3	3	0	50	74	130
Grocery stores products are of good quality	10	14	5	48	53	130

Items on Customer Patronage (Y)	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Indifferent 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5	Total
I intend to continue using this outlet and consider it as my first choice	11	21	7	42	49	130
I would like to recommend and encourage other people to patronize this shop	17	12	6	41	54	130
I would like to buy from this shop next time	13	19	8	42	49	130
I will continue buying from this store, assuming the services are the same with other stores	17	23	7	38	45	130
I consider the performance of this outlet strong	14	33	9	49	25	130

Source: Returned Questionnaire from Survey, 2016.

A. How significant is the relationship between service reliability and customer patronage of grocery services?

1. Strongly no significant relationship []
2. No significant relationship []
3. Indifferent []
4. Significant relationship []
5. Strong significant relationship []

B. How significant is the relationship between service assurance and customer patronage of grocery services?

1. Strongly no significant relationship []
2. No significant relationship []

3. Indifferent []
 4. Significant relationship []
 5. Strong significant relationship []
- C. How significant is the relationship between service tangibility and customer patronage of grocery services?
1. Strongly no significant relationship []
 2. No significant relationship []
 3. Indifferent []
 4. Significant relationship []
 5. Strong significant relationship []
- D. How significant is the relationship between service empathy and customer patronage of grocery services?
1. Strongly no significant relationship []
 2. No significant relationship []
 3. Indifferent []
 4. Significant relationship []
 5. Strong significant relationship []
- E. How significant is the relationship between service responsiveness and customer patronage of grocery services?
1. Strongly no significant relationship []
 2. No significant relationship []
 3. Indifferent []
 4. Significant relationship []
 5. Strong significant relationship []