



Impact of Communication on Customers' Satisfaction in Hospitality Industry in Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This research examined the relationship between effective communication and customer's satisfaction with a particular reference to hospitality industry in kwara State. It is aimed at finding out the extent to which effective communication helps customer's satisfaction in Kwara State. In an attempt to establish the thrust of this research, primary and secondary data were generated. Secondary data were sourced from articles textbook and journals and primary data was generated through self-administered questionnaire. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized for data analysis with the aid of statistics package for social science. Descriptive data was analyzed using simple percentage table and regression analytical tools were used to test the hypothesis. From the empirical result obtained, it was discovered that (communication channel and message design) considered in this study were predictors of customer satisfaction. The result also showed that there was a significant relationship between communication channel and customer loyalty. Based on the findings from the study, it was recommended that both management and junior staff should develop more interest in best communication strategies to retain both new and old customers.

Keywords: Effective communication, Customer's Performance, Communication channel, Customer loyalty and message design

Introduction

Modern Marketing calls for more than developing a good product, appropriate pricing and making it accessible and within the reach of the customers (place) but must ensure that there is an effective communication (promotion) with present and potential customers, stakeholders, and the general public. However, the question is not whether to just communicate to all the stakeholders but rather what to say, to whom and how often.

Today, there is a new view of communication as an interactive dialogue between the Company and its customers that takes place during the pre-selling, selling, consuming and post consuming stage. The company must ask not only, "How can we reach our consumers but also, how our customers can reach us? (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Many organizations are unable to accomplish or achieve their objectives as a result of their failure to communicate effectively with their customers.

Effective communication is the key to organizational accomplishment. It is important for the creation of a successful company (Sphao, 2013). Instead of this, communication should be located in the strategic planning process of an organization (Harge, Dickson & Tourish, 2004). As this

always assists such organizations in providing high-quality services and enhancing customer satisfaction which is recognized as important factors leading to the success of companies in hotels, catering and tourism industries (Leblank, 1992).

In today's world, effective communication is used by an organization to build virile customer satisfaction with its esteem customers because it is the leading factor towards the company's competitiveness and success as well as for product differentiation and to also develop a strong relationship with customers. Satisfaction is the customer's evaluation of a product or services in terms of whether that product or service has met their needs and expectations (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). Knowing customers' satisfaction level and its requirements will also help in finding out the best direction in which a company needs to go on. To build customer satisfaction, organizations must effectively communicate with their customers and efficiently build a good customer relationship. It is against this background that this study intends to examine the impact of communication on customer satisfaction in an organization.

Statements of the Research problem

One of the biggest challenges of hospitality industry in Nigeria is the inability and failure to increase the value of the services rendered for their client. This should be an on-going process as client's patronage orientation changes overtime. Also in the contemporary service environment, it has also been a difficult task to determine what constitute customer satisfaction (Chinedum, Okocha & Nwakaego, 2017). Furthermore, the growth in the hospitality industry in recent years which have resulted into sporadic competition and the challenges of finding and keeping valued customers have been a problem confronting hospitality in Nigeria.

The problem of organization's poor message design sometimes contributes significantly to poor customer retention. The inability of an organization to effectively design their communication messages more than often leads to a high rate of customer defections. Unfortunately, most marketing communication messages are designed basically to create or attract new customers rather than on retaining existing ones. The emphasis traditionally has been on making sales rather than building a relationship, on preselling and selling rather than caring for the customers afterward (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The problem of inability of an organization selecting an efficient communications channel to carry the messages becomes more difficult to build both brand and customer loyalty as channels of communication becomes more fragmented and cluttered. The inability of some organizations in expanding the battery of communications channels to include ads in related journals, direct mail (including audio and videotapes), free samples, and even telemarketing have made it difficult for such an organization to gaining the loyalty of the customers towards its brand (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to assess the effect of effective communication (message design and communication channel) on customer satisfaction of hospitality industry in Kwara state. Specifically, the study intends to;

- i. examine the effect of message design on customer loyalty; and
- ii. ascertain the relationship between communication channels and customer retention.

Research Questions

- i. What is the effect of message design on customer loyalty in the hospitality industry in Kwara State?
- ii. What is the effect of communication channels on customer retention in the hospitality industry in Kwara State?

Research Hypotheses

HO₁: Message design has no significant effect on customer loyalty.

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between communication channels and customer retention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of Effective communication

It has been observed through this research work that there is no single definition for Communication; rather it varies from scholars to scholars and the way it (concept) appeals to them. With the Conceptualization of different authorities which includes Etzel, Walker, and Stanton (2010), Kotler and Keller (2016) Bearden, Ingram and Laforge (2009), Miller (2005), LittleJohn and Foss (2011) discussed below. It is clear shows that there is no consensus in the views of the scholar. Etzel, Walker, and Stanton (2010) defined Communication as the verbal and nonverbal transmission of information between someone wanting to express an idea and someone else expected or expecting to get that idea.

Ogundele (2005) defined effective communication as a "translation of ideas or directions, commands or guides, into oral or written words or action. This is, in such a manner that will transfer the ideas from the mind of the communicator to the mind of the receiver, with the aim that the receiver will react in a manner as envisaged by the communicator". In spite of the lengthy nature of the above definition, it indicates that effective communication is a two-way process. Sekaran (1989) also notes that communication can be described as an interpersonal process of sending and receiving symbols with meaning attached to them, in any communication, there is a person who sends out the message (sender) there is also one or more person(s) who receives the message (receiver) and there is also a medium through which the message is communicated.

Communication is considered to be effective when the receiver ends up with the same message that the source intends to send, Enzeanya (2001) defined

effective communication as “essentially messages sent and received and confirmation of their receipt and interpretation is returned from a sender, to ensure a two-way process. Cole (2002) defined communication as the process of creating, transmitting and interpreting ideas, facts, opinions, and feelings. It is a process that is a sharing one, that is, a mutual interchange between two or more persons. George and Jones (2006), sees communication as effective when people share information and all those involved understand the information clearly.

Miller (2005), the term Communication is the process of sending and receiving messages. However, it is said to be effective only when the message is understood and when it stimulates action or encourages the receiver to think in new ways. Eyre (1979) defined Communication as the transferring of a thought or a message to another party so that it can be understood and acted upon. Fisher (1981) sees Communication as the process by which verbal and nonverbal symbols are exchanged between two or more persons. Sereno and Mortensen (1970) said Communication is the transfer of information from person to person, creature to creature, or point to point.

In line with all the above definitions, this research work will focus its attention on the definition of Communication given by Miller (2005) who defined it as the process of sending and receiving message and belief to be effective only when the message is understood and stimulates actions or encourages the receiver to think in new ways .

Communication Process

According to Etzel, Walker, and Stanton (2010), Communication process requires only four elements - a message, a source of his message, a communication channel and a receiver, while another element to be reckoned with is noise, which is anything that tends to distort the message at any stage in the system.

To communicate effectively, Stanton (1981) believe that marketers need to understand the fundamental elements underlying effective communication.

Message:

This simply means a piece of information or idea which is to be passed across to a receiver to understand (decode) and respond. It is the physical product of source and external stimuli. It involves the treatment of content to become a

code. It may be written or spoken. The information the sender want to show must first be coded into a transmittable form. The marketing communication messages represent what the company is trying to convey about its products.

Sender:

This could be said to be the source of the message. It generates ideas that are packaged in a presentable manner to be understood. He must encode his messages by choosing symbols impression that expects the receiver to get which will elicit the desired response of the receiver.

Channel:

Channel is the medium through which the coded information is being transmitted to the receiver. It could be grouped into internal and external or personal and non- personal. Once the message is transmitted through communication channel, the symbols must be decoded or given meaning by the recipient. The message as received may be what the sender intend or something else that is possibly less desirable depending on the recipient's frame of references.

Receiver:

This is the person that takes the sent message. The receiver stands at the center gap of the communication to state whether or not there is an understanding body or the targeted decoder. He decodes the message. The roles here include receiving the message, interpreting it and responding to it. If the message is transmitted as intended, there is some change in the receiver's knowledge, belief or feelings. As a result of this change, the receivers formulate a response. The response could be internal or could involve some actions.

Decoding:

What is being divided is what was encoded (message) from the source, if the message is not properly decoded due to perception, wrong choice of words that are not drawn from a common frame of reference or semantic misunderstanding bound to occur

Feedback:

This is the response or the action, which indicates that the message was properly transmitted or not. The reaction gives the sender feedback as to whether the

intended meaning was grasped or not. The idea of feedback ascertains that communication is a two-way process. Through feedback, the sender can learn what a communication accomplished. An organisation may have to conduct consumer research, possibly a survey, to determine what, if any, message was communicated. Personal selling and many forms of sales promotion offer relatively quick feedback. Feedback is not so immediate for mass advertising and public relations, and only subsequent sales figure or marketing research will indicate the effectiveness of the message.

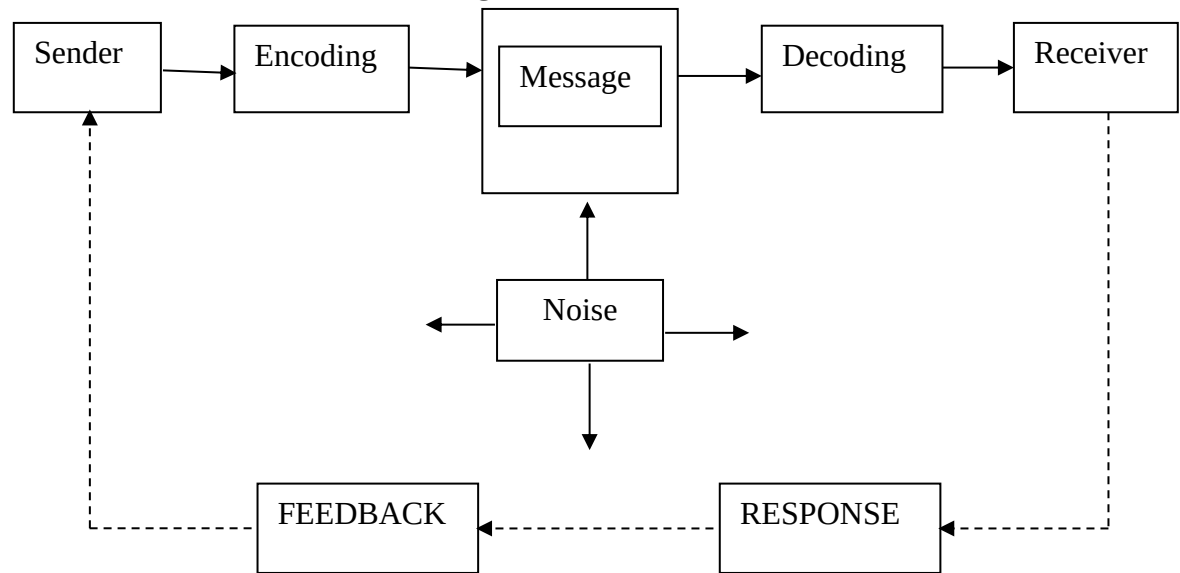


Fig. 2.1: Elements in the communication Process (Kotler & Keller, 2006)

Message Design

Various definitions were advanced for message design by so many scholars based on their different views and opinions. With the conceptualization of different authorities ranging from Edward (2008), Hart (2002) to Hullman (2004) and Cortes and Hample (2005). It is observed that there is little diversity of opinion of the scholar on the subject matter. According to Edward (2008), message design is the formulation of intending information that would manage to get attention, hold interest, arouse desire and obtain action (known as AIDA Model) of the target audience.

Cortes and Hample (2005) defined message design as the formulation of the message to achieve the desired response of the target audience. They went further that the desired response will require solving three problems: what to say (message strategy), how to say it (creative Strategy) and who should say it

(message source). Hullman (2004) described message design as the logic that represents "internally consistent and developmentally ordered stages in the acquisition of working knowledge about the systematic properties of a verbal message".

Peterson and Albrecht (1996) went in the same way as Hullman (2004) in defining message design as also a logic of the kind of communication constituting belief system the message producer relies on in reasoning from the goals sought to the message design used. O'keefe (1991) defined message design as also logic in a communication theory that claims that individuals possess an implicit theory of communication within themselves. The underlying idea behind O'keefe's work is that "communication is not necessarily a uniform process".

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction (CSat) is a term frequently used in marketing. Today's companies are facing their toughest competition ever. It is generally believed by so many authorities in the field of marketing that companies can outperform competition if they can move from a product and sales philosophy to a marketing philosophy.

The answer lies in doing a better job of meeting and satisfying customer needs. There is generally congruence in the conceptual clarification of customer satisfaction by different authorities.

Yi (1993) defined customer satisfaction as a collective outcome of perception evaluation and psychological reaction to the consumption expectation with a product or services. Faris and Neil (2010) defined customer satisfaction as the number of customers or percentage of total customers whose reported experience with a firm, its products or its services (ratings) exceeds specified satisfaction goals.

Giltman and Carl (2007) in their view, see customers satisfaction from the perspective of being a key performance indicator within the business which is also parts of the balanced scorecard. They went further to assert that in a competitive market place where business competes for the customer, customer satisfaction is seen as a key differentiation and increasingly has become a key element of business strategy.

Johnson and Andreas (2006) defined customer satisfaction from the view of how products or services meet or exceed expectations. These expectations as he

confirmed are a key factor beyond satisfaction. Kotler and Keller (2016) see customer satisfaction as a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product perceived performance (or outcome) in relating to his or her expectation. They went further to say that if the performance falls short of expectation the customer is dissatisfied. If the performance matches expectations the customer is satisfied. If the performance exceeds expectations the customer is highly satisfied or delighted.

Underpinning Theory: Disconfirmation Theory

This study is underpinned by the disconfirmation theory of customer satisfaction and supported by the theories of cognitive dissonance and assimilation-contrast. The suitability of the underpinning theory is anchored on the fact that the theory explained the concept of customer satisfaction vividly by explaining the experience that occurs as a result of comparing services performance against expectations.

Empirical review

Haque, Bappy, and Arifuzzaman (2018) examined the impact of brand awareness and customer loyalty towards Igloo ice cream. The study which was carried out on Dhaka University students with 100 respondents using a stratified sampling technique were surveyed with 5 points Likert scale. The data were analyzed using factor analysis and multiple regression analysis. The findings of the study revealed that marketing programs significantly affect brand awareness amongst the other three factors. From the regression analysis, it was found that brand awareness building variables and customer loyalty have a high degree of positive association.

Douglas and Paul (2017) researched the impact of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty in the banking sector in Botswana and the effect of demographics as a moderating construct. An explanatory research design was adopted in which a self-administered questionnaire was distributed to forty-four respondents randomly selected from those visited at Standard Chartered Bank. Data analysis was done with statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS version 16.0). The study revealed that there is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Banks were therefore recommended to influence customer satisfaction positively to achieve customer loyalty.

Mariana and Jan (2018) conducted research titled customer satisfaction and loyalty as a part of customer-based corporate sustainability in the sector of mobile communication services in Slovakia. The study tries to investigate and provide information about customer satisfaction with the quality of electronic communication services and show the results of the application of the European customer satisfaction index (ECSI) model which was carried out in Slovak electronic communications market. The marketing research pointed out that the ESCI model can provide a better understanding of the complex relationship of the variables of customer loyalty and customer satisfaction and their impact on the sustainability of the Slovak Telecom provider

Bogdan and Nicoleta (2019) carried out research work on electronic word-of-mouth for online Retailer: Predictors of volume and valence. The research work was carried out to build a model that can successfully evaluate the influence of affective commitment, high-sacrifice commitment, and satisfaction on the customers' word-of-mouth concerning online retailers. In the research work, two word-of-mouth dimensions were considered: volume and valence. A survey was administered to 282 respondents and structural equation modeling techniques were used to process the data and test the hypotheses. The research finding shows that satisfaction and high-sacrifice commitment have an important impact on both word-of-mouth volume and valence, while affective commitment only influences word-of-mouth valence.

Research Method

This study examines the Impact of communication on customers satisfaction of hospitality industry in Kwara State. It is a survey research method, and therefore adopted the use of questionnaires in eliciting information from the respondents. The population for this study was 258 hotel customers in Ilorin and Offa of Kwara State. The study employs the use of questionnaires as instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into three sections, section A measures demographic information of the respondents which include age, sex, marital status, educational qualification e.t.c, while section B measures effective communication in terms of communication channel and message design and section C measures Customer Satisfaction in terms of customer loyalty and customer intention. The items were measured on a 5 – point likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). Primary and secondary data were used. Primary data was obtained with the aids of questionnaire. The use

of questionnaire was employed to gather relevant information from the respondents. The secondary source was obtained from related journals and articles. Data was analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics involves frequency tables and percentages while the inferential statistics involves regression, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and multiple regression analysis.

RESULTS AND FINDING

Table, 1 Questionnaire Distribution and Return Rate

	No. Distributed	No. Returned	% Returned	No. Not Returned	% Not Returned
Respondents	258	166	64.34%	92	34.66%
TOTAL	258	166	64.34%	92	34.66%

Source: Authors Compilation, 2019

As shown in Table 1, questionnaire distribution demonstrates an approximately 64.34% response rate. The researcher was able to gather 166 out of the 258 distributed to the various Hotel customer in the study area.

Data Analysis

Analysis Demographic Questions

In order to achieve the main purpose of this study, the researcher found it useful to find out the general information of the respondents. The general information of the respondents included gender, age, marital status, and education qualification.

TABLE 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	%
Male	91	59.1
Female	63	41.9
Total	154	100
Age	Frequency	%
25yrs and below	10	6.7
26-35 years	55	35.4
36-45 years	56	36.6
46yrs and above	33	21.3

Total	154	100
Marital Status	Frequency	%
Single	40	26.0
Married	91	59.1
Others	23	14.9
Total	154	100
Academic Qualification	Frequency	%
Primary Education	5	3.2
Secondary Education	24	15.6
ND/NCE	55	35.7
HND/B.Sc	48	31.2
Postgraduate	22	14.3
Total	154	100

Source: Authors Compilation, 2019

Out of the 154 valid responses used in this study, 91 (59.1%) of them are males while the remaining 63 (41.9%) are females. The number of the respondent by gender is a reflection of the total number of male and female that responds to the questionnaire. The summary is presented in Table 2.

As revealed in the descriptive analysis, 10 (6.7%) of the respondents are 25 years and below, 55 (35.4%) of the respondents are between age 26-35 years, 56 (36.6%) are between 36-45 years of age, and 33 of the respondents representing 21.3% are above 46 years of age. This shows that the larger percentage of respondents that participated in the research work falls between 26-35 years of age.

On marital status, all the 203 respondents, 40 (26 %) were single, 91 (59.1) of respondents were married and 23 (14.9%) of respondents were other categories. This shows that the study has more married respondents than single and others. As seen in Table 2 (3.2%) of the respondents are primary education; 24 (15.6%) of the respondents are secondary education; 55 (35.7%) of the respondents are ND/NCE; 48 (31.2%) had HND/Degree while 22 respondents representing 14.3% of the total number of valid questionnaire had a postgraduate degree. This simply indicate that the majority of the respondents who participated in the research work are National Diploma and National Certificate of Education graduates.

Mean and Standard Deviation of the Message Design

Table 3: *Message Design*

S/N	Items	Min	Max	Mean	S.Dev
1	When communication messages are well designed, it gains the attention of the consumers to patronize the company's products and brands.	1	5	3.96	1.096
2	Well-designed communication message creates and hold customers interest towards company's products/services.	1	5	3.93	1.144
3	Customers' patronage is aroused through good message design.	1	5	3.94	1.235
4	Effective design of communication message elicits customers' action in purchasing the product/services.	1	5	3.90	1.214
5	Good communication message stimulates customer's action to make a repurchase of products/services.	1	5	3.88	1.236

Source: Authors Compilation (2019)

The mean and standard deviation indicated in table 3above shows there is five items representing message design. All items recorded a high level of the mean score. "When communication message is well designed, it gains the attention of the consumers to patronize the company's products and brands".Recorded highest mean score ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.096$), whereas "Effective design of communication message elicits customers' actions in purchasing the potential services recorded the lowest mean score of ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.214$) respectively. This result shows that "Effective design communication message elicits customers' actions in purchasing the product/services" is the main feature representing the standard of Message design.

Table 4: *Communication Channel*

S/N	Items	Min	Max	Mean	S. Dev
1	Information on company's web enhances information to educate the customers	1	5	3.98	1.135

2	Personal communication with customers enhances fact complaint handling	1	5	4.01	1.106
3	Face to face discussion with customers affords the customers to seek information about the product/ services	1	5	4.00	1.126
4	Well package atmospheric environments create and reinforce the customer's leaning towards products/services purchase.	1	5	4.01	1.111
5	Word of mouth with customers builds interest and loyalty	1	5	3.99	1.111

Source: Authors Compilation (2019)

The mean and standard deviation indicated in table 4 above shows five items are representing the communication channel. All items recorded a high level of the mean score. "Personal communication with customers enhances fact complaint handling" recorded highest mean score ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 1.106$) whereas "Information on company's web enhances information to educate the customers" recorded the lowest mean score of ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 1.135$) respectively. This result shows that "Personal communication with customers enhances fast complaint handling" is the main feature representing communication channels in the selected hospitality industry.

Table 5: *Customer Loyalty*

S/N	Items	Min	Max	Mean	S.Dev
1	Customers are willing and ready to continue patronizing the company's product/services it they are well informed.	1	5	4.01	1.155
2	Satisfied customers are ready and willing to recommends the firm's product/services to friends and associates.	1	5	4.02	1.152
3	Loyalty customers exhibits repeat purchase habit.	1	5	3.98	1.180
4	Customers develop trust when they are attached to their service providers.	1	5	4.06	1.095

5	Switching cost are reduced when customers are truly satisfied.	1	5	3.99	1.223
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Source: Authors Compilation (2019)

The mean and standard deviation indicated in table 5 above shows there is five (5) items representing customer loyalty. All items recorded a high level of the mean score. "Customers develop trust when they are attached to their service providers" recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.095$), whereas "Loyalty customers exhibit repeat purchase habit" recorded the lowest mean score of ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 1.180$) respectively. This result shows that "Customers develop trust when they are attached to their service providers" is the main feature representing customer loyalty.

Table 6: *Customer Retention*

S/N	Items	Min	Max	Mean	S.Dev
1	Good customer satisfaction makes customers to stay longer.	1	5	3.75	1.349
2	Customers patronize more as the company introduces more product/services and upgrade the existing ones.	1	5	3.80	1.254
3	When customers are emotionally attached to a brand, they talk favorably about the products/services	1	5	3.82	1.291
4	Firms exceptionally strong services improves customer retention when customers are delighted.	1	5	3.83	1.293
5	Rate of customer defection are low when firms do a better job in meeting customer needs.	1	5	3.84	1.353

Source: Authors Compilation (2019)

The mean and standard deviation indicated in table 6 above indicates there are five (5) items representing customer retention. All items recorded a high level

of the mean score. "Rate of customer defection is low when firms do a better job in meeting customer needs" recorded highest mean score ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.095$), whereas "Good customer satisfaction makes customers stay longer" recorded a lowest mean score of ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.349$) respectively. This result shows that the "Rate of customer defection is low when firms do a better job in meeting customer needs" is the main feature representing customer loyalty.

Assumptions of Multiple Regressions

The variables were checked for normality, linearity, and multicollinearity to satisfy the basic and underlying assumptions of the multiple regression analysis in line with the suggestion by Hair *et al.*, (2010).

Table 7: *Pearson Correlation Analysis of the Variables*

Variables	MD	CC	CL	CR
Message Design (MD)	.259**	1		
Communication Channel (CC)	.344**	.243**	1	

Source: Authors Compilation (2019)

As shown in Table 7, the correlations between the exogenous latent constructs were below the suggested threshold values of .90 or more, which suggests that the exogenous latent constructs were independent and not highly correlated.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study has contributed to our knowledge on the impact of communication on customer satisfaction. The results demonstrated that there is a significant impact of message design on customer loyalty of hospitality industry, likewise a significant relationship between communication channels and customer retention of hospitality industry in Kwara State.

Findings of the paper implies that Organisation should design their communication messages in a way that it would be able to gain attention, develop interest, create desire and elicit action towards making customers to stay longer and reduce rate of defection.

The design of these communication messages will certainly help hospitality industry in foster customer satisfaction in Kwara State. Also, to create customer

loyalty that would elicit the customers to develop trust and attached to the service of the organisation, the service providers should develop good personal communication skills that would enhance fast complaint handling, develop a well packaged atmospheric environment that would make the customers to be willing to recommend the firm's services to friends and associate.

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