



EFFECT OF CONSUMER RIGHTS ON PERFORMANCE OF SERVICE ORGANISATIONS IN NIGERIA (A Study of Selected Restaurants in Benin City Metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria)

BY

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Abstract

The study was carried out to examine the effect of consumer rights on the performance of organizations in the Benin metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria. The research adopted a survey design. The population of the study comprises all consumers who patronize the restaurant industry in the Benin metropolis. Since it was not possible to generate a sampling frame, judgmental sampling was employed to work with a sample size of 150 respondents, conveniently selected from the four local government council areas in the study area. The instrument used to generate data was a questionnaire in which items were based on a 5-point Likert scale. The research instrument was validated by four experts in management. Split-The half technique and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were used to establish the reliability of the research instrument. Data were analyzed in the form of frequency of opinion and hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics. The finding revealed that consumers are now becoming aware of their rights due to their interactions and transactions with producers/sellers. The study concluded that consumer rights must be protected to ensure the welfare of societies. The study recommended that government should be involved in promoting and sustaining consumer rights awareness as this would enhance organizations to speedily achieve their goals and objectives.

Keywords: Consumer rights, performance, restaurant industry, interactions, and transactions.

Introduction

It is globally recognized that a real and perceived imbalance of power relations exists between the producers and consumers of goods and services. What has strengthened this imbalance of power is the ever-growing free market philosophy which seems to put the producers at liberty to do whatever they want (Eze, Ehiwa, & Nwobodo, 2010). Over the years, consumers have shown some discontent against the activities of organizations with which they engage in trade relationships. The level of consumers' awareness of their rights is still low, thus giving rise to the near absence of action against unwholesome business practices. In the face of this ugly situation, the rights of the

consumers need protection. Consumer rights protections are actions taken (occasionally in the form of laws) to protect consumer rights from the purchase and consumption of defective and degrading goods and services.

According to Asker and Day (1974), it is related to consumerism which involves the evolving set of activities of governments, businesses, and independent organizations established to protect the rights of consumers. In developed countries of the world, the consumer is the king (Aldeina, et al, 2001, Anderson, 2006). In line with this perspective, Al-Ghamdi et al (2007) in Ovini (2014) opine that in developed countries, for protection, there is consumers' increasing reliance on market mechanisms as opposed to

developing and underdeveloped economies where consumers rely more on government intervention model. In Nigeria, consumers depend on the government for protection because consumerism is in its infant stage of growth.

In Nigeria, the get-rich-quick syndrome and the quest for excess profit have given rise to most businesses engaging in unethical practices that have endangered the health of consumers, giving birth to sporadic complaints from individual consumers. It seems therefore that there is no real organized mass movement of consumers to fight for the Owing to these problems, the Nigerian protection of the rights of the consumers. The government has introduced different legislations, amended older ones, and created different implementation institutions. These include the Consumer Protection Council (CPC) created by Decree No. 66 of 1992 as the apex consumer protection agency of Nigeria. Additionally, the Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON) was created by an enabling Act No. 56 of 1971 with three amendments to date. Apart from the aforementioned agencies, the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), National Orientation Agency (NOA), Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC), Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON), Nigeria Broadcasting Commission (NBc) and other relevant organization were established at various times in Nigeria's history to protect the consumer rights (Monye, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

There are growing concerns about the effect of consumer rights on the performance of organizations in Nigeria. Nigerians and governments alike have expressed grave concerns about the dwindling performance of manufacturing organizations. The general assessment seems to be that manufacturing organizations bring out low-quality products that cannot penetrate the market. This is because consumers are hardly heard about the performance of products in the market. On the part of the government, there is no enforcement of consumers' rights. On the part of the citizens, democratic variables of age, sex, occupation, household size, income, and religion which determine the customer base of companies have affected the performance of organizations in Nigeria. This type of situation translates into merger and acquisition with its concomitant effect of retrenchment of employees.

Again there has been a paucity of studies on the effect of consumers' rights on the performance of organizations, whereas so much has been written about the potential of consumers' rights

in improving organizational performance in developed countries. Against this background is considered worthwhile to investigate the effect of consumers' rights on the performance of organizations.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to examine the effect of consumer rights on the performance of organizations in the Benin City metropolis using restaurants as a case study. To achieve this, the study specifically outlines the following objectives:

- To investigate the influence of consumers' awareness of their rights on performance of restaurants in the Benin-city metropolis.
- To examine the influence of consumers' rights enforcement on the performance of restaurants in Benin-city metropolis.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- To what extent does consumers' awareness of their rights affect the performance of restaurants in Benin City metropolis?
- Does enforcement of consumers' rights affect the performance of restaurants in Benin- a city metropolis?

Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses for this study are:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between consumers' awareness of their rights and the performance of restaurants in the Benin-city metropolis.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between the enforcement of consumers' rights and the performance of restaurants in Benin City metropolis.

Review of Related Literature

The Concept of Consumer

There has been a series of scholarly articles on the actual definition of the term "consumer" which need to be protected. However, a modern definition of the consumer according to Akomolede and Oladele (2006) in Ovinii (2014)" ..is any person who purchased or is supplied goods or uses of consumer goods and services at the end of a chain of production". The above definition has two major features: (1) the consumer is a buyer and/or user of a product or service and (2) the consumer is a member of the production chain. These features bring to the fore the importance of the consumer in both economic and marketing theories. This implies

that without the consumers, there can be no reason for production and thus no market. It is in this light that the consumer is regarded as the pivotal point of not only marketing but of all business activities (Barksdale and Derden, 1971), and whose interest must be served and his rights protected at all times. Etriveland Mohanasundari (2011) opine that in actual practice the consumer is treated as a "slave" or "servant" instead of being treated as the king as often advertised by businesses. This underscores the proposition by Bell and Emury (1971) that if the business falls in its responsibility to help the consumer (out of his disadvantaged position) "...then the government or other parties must act on the consumer's behalf".

Consumer behaviour studies characteristics of individual consumers such as how emotion affects business behaviour. It studies characteristics of the individual environment such as demographic and behaviour variables to understand what the people want (Kahle & Close, 2011, Minton and Khale, 2014).

The concept of Consumer Behaviour

It is the study of individuals, groups, or organizations and the process they use to select, secure, use, and dispose of products, service expenses, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impact that these processes have on the consumer and society (Kuaester, 2012).

The key points in the above definition are:

- Behaviour takes place either for the individual, in the context of a group (e.g. friend influence, what kind of clothes, a person wears or an organization (people in the job decide as to which products the firm should use).
- Consumer behaviour involves ideas and services as well as tangible products.
- The effect of consumer behaviour on society is relevant.
- Consumer behaviour has to do with the use and disposal of products as well as the study of how they are purchased.

Consumer behaviour is difficult to predict even for experts in the field (Armstrong, 1999) consumer behaviour is influenced by internal conditions e.g. demographic, psychographics (lifestyle) personality, motivation, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, factors such as perception, attitude, motivation, and belief constitute psychological factors while personal factors include age, lifestyle, occupation and personality.

According to Perner (2015), applications of consumer behaviour are for marketing strategy, for social marketing and it makes organization better consumers. Consumer behaviour is social. This means that consumers must be understood in terms of their relationship with others because a person can only be a consumer by there being another person who is a seller or a service provider.

This social approach is a contrast to the one that focuses on the individual as an isolated entity who can be understood apart from a social environment. This social approach has been described by some authors as relational analysis in which the relationship between two or more people becomes the main unit of study rather than the individual alone. The contexts in which purchases are made and products are used often involve other people, and such consequences as satisfaction and safety may depend heavily upon how other people respond.

Characteristics of Consumer Markets

- They tend to be quite large in terms of the number of current and potential buyers.
- The individuals who operate in the consumer market have very limited purchasing power, as against the industrial or institutional users.
- Buyers in these markets generally lack specialized product knowledge, unlike industrial buyers.
- Usually, final consumers frequently buy in small quantities.
- Unlike industrial or institutional users, consumer markets tend to be widely dispersed geographically (Ijewere, 2005).

The consumer market pertains to buyers who purchase goods and services for consumption rather than resale. However, not all consumers are alike in their tastes, preferences and buying habits due to different characteristics that can distinguish certain consumers from others. These particular consumer characteristics include various demographic, psychographic, behavioral and geographic traits. Marketers usually define these consumer characteristics through market segmentation

Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics of consumers based on demographics include differences in gender, age ethnic background, income, occupation education, household size, religion, generation, nationality and even social class. Most of these demographic categories are further defined by a certain range. Companies often identify these

demographic characteristics through market research surveys used to discover which demographic groups comprise the majority of their customer base. Companies can then target their advertising towards these demographic groups.

Psychographic Characteristics

Psychographic characteristics of consumers include interests, activities, options, values and attitudes many magazines are geared toward a consumer's interest.

For example, prenatal magazines target expectant mothers who are interested in learning more about caring for a baby.

Behaviouralistic Characteristics

Behaviouralistic characteristics of consumer markets include product usage rates, brand loyalty, user status or how long they have been a consumer, and even benefits that consumers seek. Companies like to know how often their consumers visit their restaurants, and stores or use their products.

Organizational Performance

Over the years, the term ethics in organizational performance has long been associated with management scholars and business leaders around the world. There is a broad agreement around the World that as a matter of corporate policy, every organization strives to be committed in an ethically transparent manner. Steinberg (1994) cited in Ovini (2014), argued that ethics in the world of an organization's business involve "ordinary decency" which encompasses such areas as integrity, honesty and fairness. Behaving ethically is seen as part of the social responsibility of organization, which itself depends on the philosophy that organizations ought to impact society in ways that go beyond the usual profit maximization objective.

It is often argued in many instances that, it is in the interest of an organization to behave in a way that recognizes the need for moral and ethical content in managerial decisions as this will benefit the organization, especially in the long run. Ethical behaviour is characterized by honesty, fairness and equity in interpersonal, professional and academic relationships and it respects the dignity, diversity and the right of individuals and groups of people (Legan. (2000) cited in Ovini, 2014). Therefore for an organization to move forward in the aspect of performance, such an organization needs to have a good understanding of ethics and also take it seriously as this can undermine the competitive strength of the organization and the society at large. Morals spring virtually from every

decision, thus organization stability and survival depend on the consistency of quality of ethical decisions made by managers. Managers are challenged and encouraged to have an obligation to organization performance and society at large, to support and assist the society to imbibe an ethical culture in which there is the interest of is everyone (Oladunni, 2000). In recent times, most organizations have come up with codes of ethics in dealing with ethical issues challenging them.

Research Method

The study adopted a survey design. A survey design was considered the most appropriate for gathering the information needed for this study because according to Udo and Joseph (1999) assertion, where all members of a targeted population cannot be reached, a survey design makes it possible to inference on the population to be drawn using the sample.

It is practically impossible to study the totality of industries in Benin-city. This study therefore focuses on the restaurant (service) industry. The population of this study thus

Comprises consumers in restaurant industry in Benin-City.

Since it was not possible to generate a sampling frame judgmental sampling was employed to work with a sample size of 150 respondents. Judgmental sampling is ideal when one wants to study a small subject of a large population in which many members of the subject are easily identified but the enumeration of all of them would be impossible. This is the case for consumers who patronize restaurant organizations in Benin-City (Egwu, 2005).

To cover Benin City, convenient sampling was used to select respondents from selected restaurants in the four (4) local government council areas namely: Ikpoba-Okha, Oredo, Ovia North-East and Egor. The secretariat and its environment on Sapele Road were selected to represent Oredo. Ikpoba-Okha is represented by Benson Idahosa University and its environs. Egor is represented by the Uselu market and its environs. Ovia North-East was selected and represented by the University of Benin and the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH) communities. 180 copies of the questionnaire were administered to restaurant customers in the selected areas, and 165 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved of which 150 were found to be useful for the study.

A five (5) item "Consumer Rights and Performance of Organizations" (CROPO) rating scale was developed by the researchers and was used to collect data from the respondents.

Section A of the instrument (questionnaire) was concerned with the background information of the respondents while section B comprises 18 items. The items were based on a 4-point Likert-type scale of Strongly Agree (SA) 4 points, Agree (A) 3- points, Disagree (D) 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1 point. The respondents were requested to select from the most appropriate options.

To ascertain the validity of the instrument used for the study, copies of the questionnaire were given to four experts in organizational development in the Department of Business Administration at the University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State. These experts went through the research objectives, questions and questionnaire items and made useful suggestions that led to some corrections in the final draft of the questionnaire.

A pilot study was carried out using 45 students of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma,

Edo State which is outside the study area. Data collected from the pilot study were analyzed using the split-half technique and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. A reliability coefficient of 0.83 was considered satisfactory for the study.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics used include frequency tables, mean and Standard Deviation (SD). The inferential statistics was the t-test used to test the hypotheses for the study. Analysis of the data was performed with the aid of SPSS version 70. Frequencies on Consumers Awareness of their Rights

Table 1: Consumer Awareness of their Right
Frequencies on Consumers Awareness of their Rights

Table 1: Consumer Awareness of their Right

S/N	Items	SA	A	%	D	SD	%	Remark
1	We are always ahead in allowing consumers to know the right safety.	40	35	75	7	4	11	Agreed
2	We are always ahead in allowing consumers to know the right to be heard.	43	28	71	7	3	10	Agreed
3	We are always ahead in allowing consumers to know the right to redress	49	34	83	5	1	6	Agreed
4	We always make sure that consumers are aware of the right to be informed	51	37	88	4	0	4	Agreed

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

In Table 1 above, it is clear that consumers are aware of their right to safety, to be heard, to know the right to redress, and to be informed. This is because the answer with the highest percentage is regarded as what is being held regarding the issue in question in the organization.

Table 2 Mean and Standard deviation on the extent of the effect of consumers' awareness of their right on the performance of restaurants

Question	N	TT	SD	CV	t-cal	Pvalue	Dec
We are always ahead in allowing consumers to know the right to safety	150	3.01	7.50	249.2	18.20	0.000	Sig.
We are always ahead in allowing consumers to know the right to be heard.	150	3.00	3.86	128.7	26.54	0.000	Sig.
We are always ahead in allowing consumers to know the right to redress	150	3.23	6.99	216.4	5.65	0.011	Sig.
We always make sure that consumers are aware of the right to be informed	150	3.34	1.92	57.5	8.88	0.003	Sig.

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Table 2 above indicates that all items were accepted (mean score 3.0 and above). It implies that all items and standard deviation were small. This equally shows that the views of the respondents were closely related. Also, t-test statistic indicates that all parameters used in measuring consumers' awareness of their rights and performances of restaurants are significant at both the 5% and 1% level critical value.

Frequencies on enforcement of consumers' rights

Table 3: Enforcement of Consumers' Rights

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S/N	Items	SA	A	%	D	SD	%	Remark
1	Your company sales volume reflect in the enforcement of consumers' right	36	32	68	7	4	11	Agreed
2	Your sales volume indicates corresponding response to enforcement of consumers' rights	45	35	99	5	2	7	Agreed
3	Enforcement of consumers' rights is critical for measuring organization performance	41	32	73	3	3	6	Agreed

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

In table 3 above, it is obvious that enforcement of consumers' rights affect organizational performance. This is due to the fact that the answer with the highest parental regarded as what is being held regarding the issue in question in the organization.

Table 4: Mean and Standard deviation on the effect of enforcement of consumers right performance of restaurants.

Question	N	TT	SD	CV	t-cal	Pvalue	Dec
Your company's sales volume reflect in the enforcement of consumers' right	150	3.01	6.56	217.9	16.11	0.004	Sig.
Your sales volume indicates corresponding response to enforcement of consumer right	150	3.14	4.00	127.4	20.35	0.002	Sig.
Enforcement of consumer rights is critical for measuring organization performance.	150	3.04	5.03	165.5	9.06	0.012	Sig.

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

The table above shows that all items were accepted (mean score about 3.0 above) implying that all items and standard deviation were small. This equally shows the views of the respondents were closely related. Also, the t-test statistic indicates that all parameters used in measuring the enforcement of consumers' rights on the performance of restaurants are significant at both the 5% and 1% level critical value.

Hypotheses Testing

As specified earlier, the hypotheses were tested using the t-test statistics as shown below

Decision Rule:

Reject the null hypothesis (Ho) if the P-value associated with the t-calculated Value is less than 5% critical value.

Test of Hypothesis I

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between consumers' awareness of their rights and the performance of restaurants in the Benin City metropolis.

Table 4.9: T-test analysis showing the significant relationship between consumer awareness of their right and performance of restaurants

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	Mean	Std Deviation	95% confidence interval of the difference (Lower)	95% confidence interval of the difference (Upper)	1	Sig. (2-tailed)
Consumer awareness of Organizational performance	164,500	.57286	.73345	2.55655	5.743	.010

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

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Source: Fieldwork, 2023

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Table 4.9: T-test analysis showing the significant relationship between consumer awareness of their right and performance of restaurants

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

result in Table 4.9 above shows the result of the t-test analysis using the SPSS

The PV associated with the t-calculated value (0.10) is less than the 5% critical value.

Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. It is therefore concluded that there is a significant relationship between consumers' awareness of the right and the performance of organisation.

Test of Hypothesis II

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between the enforcement of consumer rights and the

	Mean	Std Deviation	95% confidence interval of the difference (Lower)	95% confidence interval of the difference (Upper)	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Consumer awareness of Organizational performance	164,500	.57286	.73345	2.55655	5.743	.010

performance of restaurants in the Benin City metropolis.

Table 4. 10: T-test analysis showing the significant relationship between enforcement of Consumer rights and performance of restaurants.

Table 4. 10: T-test analysis showing the significant relationship between enforcement of Consumer rights and performance of restaurants.

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

	Mean	Std Deviation	95% confidence interval of the Difference (Lower)	95% confidence interval of the Difference (Upper)	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Enforcement of Consumer right-organisational performance	1.73000	.51118	.46017	2.99983	5.86312	.028

The result in Table 4.10 above shows the result of the t-test analysis using the SPSS 17.0 version. The PV associated with the t-calculated value (0.28) is less at 5% critical value.

Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is therefore concluded that there is a significant relationship between the enforcement of consumers' rights and the performance of organization.

This implies that enforcement of consumer rights leads to organizational performance.

Discussion of Findings

This work has provided us with insight into the objectives we set out to achieve.

A discussion of these findings is considered necessary.

On the issue of consumers' awareness of their rights, it was found that a good number of respondents claim to know the existence of consumer rights. This finding is instructive for this study because it is what the consumers know that they will demand. This finding also signals an improvement in previous findings by Ijewere (2005) who noted that consumers in Nigeria suffer several infringements as a result of a low level of awareness of their rights. We can also say that the awareness campaign being championed by the Consumer

The Protection Council (CPC) of Nigeria has started yielding results.

On the level of protection by consumers, it was found that the majority of consumers do not feel protected against the exploitative tendencies of producers/sellers. This is deducible from their responses about the effectiveness of institutions such as the National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Standard Organization of Nigerians (SON), etc.

Concerning the kind of infringement consumers suffer, several factors were revealed. Chief among them is the claim by respondents that they often suffer from major issues relating to the products and services purchased resulting in major complaints by consumers. If we link this finding to the earlier discovery of an

appreciable knowledge of their rights, consumers will certainly be expected to ask for redress through the enforcement of their rights.

The findings also show that there is a significant relationship between consumer rights and the performance of organizations. It was discovered that organizations that render services and sell goods with due regard to the rights of consumers are considered of better image as well as much more able to achieve their organizational goals and objectives. This finding is in agreement with Agbonifoh and Edoreh (1986) who regarded the consumers as the king, to whose tastes and needs the marketer must tailor goods and services. This according to them, will determine the successful existence or otherwise of the organization.

Conclusion

The study investigated the effect of consumer rights on the performance of service organizations in Nigeria using selected restaurants in Benin-city metropolis as a case study. Based on the findings, it is concluded that a good number of consumers are becoming aware of their rights about producers/sellers and this enables them to demand effective products and services delivery. Again, it was established that many consumers do not feel protected against the exploitative tendencies of producers/sellers.

It was also true that organizations that render services and sell goods regarding the right of consumers can achieve organizational goals and objectives.

Recommendations

The study put forward the following recommendations:

- The existing Consumer Protection Council (CPC) should be spread across the nation by establishing offices in all local councils. The council should be empowered to engage consumers on information provision and education. This will form a more formidable consumer activism.
- A law enforcement task force should be set up to monitor government councils. Membership of the task force should comprise Barristers, police officers and medical personnel to monitor and receive consumers' complaints. The standard organization of Nigeria should be reactivated to handle the laboratory testing functions of the councils. Modern equipment should be given to make the task- force function speedily.
- A consumer enlightenment campaign should be organized to educate

consumers about their rights. It should be the responsibility of the Consumer Protection Council of Nigeria to publish consumer information bulletin nightly. This will help to most importantly educate the consumers about their rights, product price, trends and cases of redress from which consumers can learn.

- There should be legal representations at minimum cost easy and accessible to consumers who have clear cases of redress. This process should be single out easy for the common man.
- There should be a total, rather than periodical ban, on identified sub-standard/injurious products. This will act as a deterrent to other producers.
- Operator of commercial transport firms should be monitored to ensure that their vehicles are safe for commuters.

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