



Customer Patronage and Petroleum Products Retail Outlets: A Study of Warri and Environs

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Abstract

In a competitive and dynamic market, the petroleum industry strives to maintain and expand its market position as a petroleum dealer. The awareness of renewable energy has influenced consumer behaviour towards trends, eco-friendly environments, and technology, prompting companies to develop products and improve services to meet changing customer needs and foster retention and loyalty. The study created a conceptual model to analyze factors influencing customer patronage of petroleum products retail outlets in Delta State. The study was based on the theory of reasoned action (TRA) and the patronage behaviour theory. Thus, 400 respondents sampled from management, staff, and consumers of petroleum products in Warri and its surroundings were collected and analyzed using SPSS version 25. The study employed descriptive and inferential statistics, Simple Linear Regression and Multiple Linear Regression for hypotheses tests to establish the connection between independent and dependent variables. The results indicated that factors such as pump price, outlet proximity, dispensing pump assurance, and product quality significantly influence consumers' loyalty towards petroleum products retail outlets in Delta State. Consequently, operators of petroleum retail outlets should devise strategies to build trust, sustain their market position, and remain competitive in this rapidly changing business landscape.

Key words: *Midstream Petroleum, Downstream Petroleum, Consumer Patronage, Petroleum Marketers, Competition, Service Marketing, Delta State.*

Introduction

The oil and gas sector in Nigeria can be divided into two main parts: the upstream and the downstream. The upstream involves exploring and drilling crude oil, while the

downstream includes importing, exporting, re-exporting, shipping, transportation, processing, refining, storing, distributing, and marketing products (Ogwo & Agu, 2016). The downstream sector is where most visible

marketing activities take place. Over time, the government has implemented various measures to streamline downstream activities, such as regulation and subsidy regimes (Ogwo & Agu, 2016). Nigeria ranks as one of Africa's primary oil producers reversing 37.50 billion barrels on 2.19 million per day production capacity (Komolafe, 2024). Nigeria generated N7.93 trillion (USD 26 billion) from oil exports between January and July 2018, constituting approximately 86% of the country's total export earnings (Ogbunamiri & Agu, 2022). Additionally, downstream reform has been implemented at various times to drive economic growth and achieve developmental objectives (Ogwo & Agu, 2016).

The distillation of petroleum yields several by-products, including Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), Dual Purpose Kerosene (DPK), Aviation Turbine Kerosene (ATK), Household Kerosene (HHK), Automotive Gas Oil (AGO), and High Pour Fuel Oil (HPFO), Low Pour Fuel Oil (LPFO). Ogwo & Agu (2016) highlighted the significance of petroleum products such as lubricants (engine oils, grease), asphalt, bitumen, and petrochemicals. These products play various vital roles for individuals, industries, and society as a whole. The primary uses of petroleum products include fuel for engines (such as plants, automobiles, generators, and vessels), lubrication, heating, lighting, and raw materials for manufacturing other goods. Generally, demand for white petroleum products is higher due to their various applications in human activities and essential needs. The Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulation Authority (NMDPRA) reported in Adejoke (2023) that, in Q2 2022, Nigerians consumed 14 million litres of diesel, compared to approximately 66.8 million litres of PMS per day.

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited is in charge of the majority of petroleum product imports. Nevertheless,

middlemen are employed by the Pipeline and Products Marketing Company (PPMC) and other private depots for activities such as distribution, storage, standardizing, etc. Additionally, according to DAPMA (2020), there are over 7000 registered filling stations dispersed throughout Nigeria, along with over 80 private depots and tank farms (<http://nigerianinfofinder.com>). Various petroleum product retail outlets, comprising major and independent marketers with multiple stations dispersed throughout the nation, market these products to consumers. Prominent oil marketers include NNPC, Mobil, Total, Oando, MRS, Forte, and Conoil, to name a few. A few are international oil corporations also engaged in petroleum exploration and production. In light of this, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited expanded the number of significant oil marketers in Nigeria with over 7000 retail outlets from 10 in 2013 to 18 in 2018 and 27 in 2022 (Okechukwu & Akintayo, 2022). Given the generally consistent quality of petroleum products and the industry's deregulation, which has resulted in price competition, the competition among petroleum product marketers can be fierce.

Customer attraction, retention, and satisfaction with petroleum products (Rosemary, 2019) have become critical to the long-term viability of petroleum marketers (Anyanwu, 2018). Marketing academics concur that customer loyalty and satisfaction—which result from their perception of value and quality—are the primary drivers of profitability (Ogwo & Agu, 2016). Because petroleum product prices were set during regulation, marketers of petroleum products typically sell a limited number of products at roughly the same price. According to Integrity (2024), premium motor spirit (PMS, gasoline/petrol) sells for N1,300 per litre in Nigeria, kerosene (DPK) costs N2,300, diesel (AGO) costs N2,000, and cooking gas costs N1,300 per kilogram. The cost of

lubricants (engine oil, grease) varies depending on the brand. The cost of services varies depending on the retail location. Price has thus become a crucial factor in petroleum products marketing following the federal government's recent deregulation policy (removal of subsidies). Imperatively, the rational consumer may prefer to shop at a retail location with a low pump price if other factors influencing customer preference are held constant by petroleum product retail outlets.

Petroleum product marketing is not without its difficulties. Because our local refineries are no longer in operation, petroleum product marketers are now limited to importing, resulting in sporadic shortages and high prices for petroleum products. Another problem with petroleum product marketing in Nigeria is the quality of the products. Petroleum products are produced with national standards and specifications, which can vary from one country to another.

Customers are thus, frequently unhappy when petroleum products imported do not meet Nigerian quality (specification) expectations. Furthermore, some petroleum product marketers adulterate their products, which could jeopardize property and human safety and unhappiness. Another obstacle to the marketing of petroleum products is union activity. For instance, the Petroleum Tankers Drivers Union (PTD) has the right to terminate its membership at any time, which would completely stop the marketing of petroleum products.

The location of retail outlets is severely restricted by the volatile nature of petroleum products. It could be difficult for marketers to obtain approval for the locations of their depots or retail stores. In addition to removing them from their target market, this puts them at risk for theft and other security issues. Amidst the obstacles and rivalry in the petroleum product marketing industry, marketers must contend with certain

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challenges frequently contemplated by petroleum product consumers. Product adulteration, trust, accuracy of the dispensing pump, product availability, non-uniform pricing (different pump prices), restrictions on the location of retail outlets for petroleum products, and variations in the layout and atmosphere of retail outlet spaces are the main challenges (Akpevwe, 2020; Ogwo & Agu, 2016). The manners and appearance of sales associates are also important factors that impact a customer's preference for a specific retail location (Ogwo & Agu, 2016). Customers also consider the price at the pump of petroleum products because they spend a reasonable disposable income on these purchases.

Direct consumer sales of refined petroleum products are the main business activities of a filling station, a retail location for petroleum products. Additionally, they provide services like car wash, vulcanizing, mini-mart, lube bay, and customer convenience (Onoruese 2018). Depending on the capacity and services provided, there are various retail locations for petroleum products, such as mega stations, filling stations, floating stations, peddlers, and service stations.

Theoretical Review and Hypotheses Development

To gain a deeper understanding of consumer behaviour and loyalty in the petroleum industry in Nigeria, the study created a conceptual model to analyze important variables that impact patronage of retail outlets selling petroleum products in Delta State.

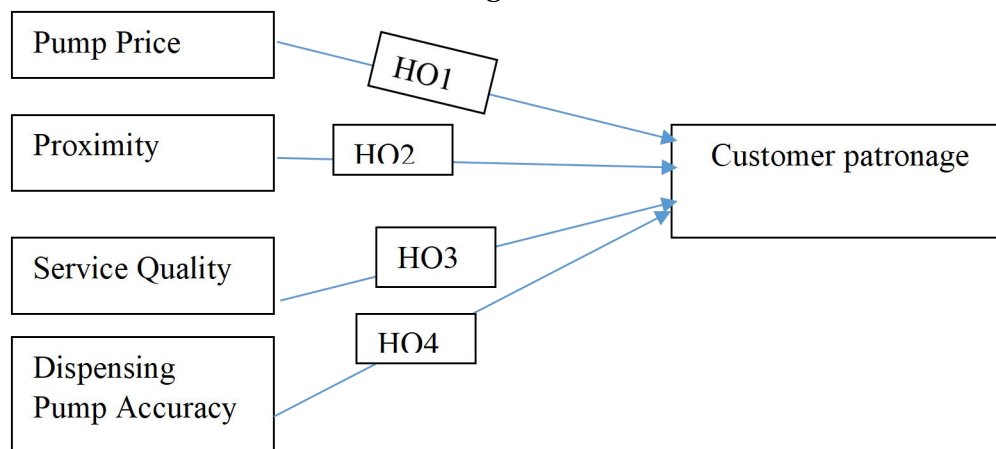
The Theory of Reasoned Actions (TRA)

Ajzen and Fishbein (1975, 1980) developed the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which explains an individual's voluntary behaviour as the underlying motivation behind an action. The hypothesis was evolved to provide a clearer understanding of the relationship

between viewpoints and goals, which is influenced by behaviour attitude and social standardizing observations. It claims that attitudes toward behaviour and emotional standards—mentalities imposed by reference groups—provoke expectations and behaviour change. The idea that mental attitude is influenced by desires or convictions regarding attributes of the thing or activity and the evaluation of those traits led to the creation of the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2015). Reasoned action theory, helps to explain why some customers prefer a particular outlet to another. Besides, consumers can make purchase of a particular product or services based on expected outcome such as confidence (Akazue et al., 2024), which brings about positive change toward a retail outlet. Furthermore, the TRA suggested that consumer behaviour be

determined by their intention. Consumer intention in this context, is the extent to which an individual is ready to engage in a particular behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2015, Fishbein, 2017). Thus, TRA is influenced by viewpoints, resolutions, experience, purpose, and aspirations formed by the arrangement of beliefs, and culminates in the setting of a value based on behaviour (Ameachi, 2017; Akazue et al., 2024). Because it clarifies the fundamentals of consumer patronage, including the intention to support a specific brand or business based on attitudes, volitional control, and subjective norms, this theory is relevant to the research as a customer's intention to buy is influenced by more than just the product; it is also shaped by their prior experiences, level of satisfaction, and surroundings.

Figure 1: Model of Petroleum Products Retail Outlet and Customer Patronage



Conceptual Model 2024

Petroleum Products Retail Outlet 's and Pump Price

economic good or service (offering) is the unit of measurement or exchange rate. Prices, therefore, are determinants that affect demand for or the purchase of goods and services (Okofu 2021) and are related to the benefit perceived they will receive (Kotler and Armstrong, 2018), which can be advantageous to competitors (Shoham et al., 2018). Musa (2020) conducted a study to ascertain customers' preferences regarding gasoline consumption in Sokoto State. The study opined that product pricing, marketing campaigns, location, personnel, and tangible proof influence consumer spending. Umukoro (2017) and Etokudo (2018) have conducted comparable studies that demonstrate the impact of price on customer loyalty and repeat purchase decisions. Thus, the following hypothesis that:

HO 1: *There is no significant relationship between petroleum products retail outlet's pump price and customer patronage of petroleum products.*

Petroleum Products Retail Outlet 's and Proximity

The success of a business may determined by location or site. In this context, proximity refers to the physical area, ambient conditions, layout, sanitation, accessibility, ease of use, physical evidence, safety, and cleanliness—all of which can entice customers to make a purchase (Saduwa, 2017; Ogbunamiri & Agu, 2022). Accordingly, proximity includes time efficiency, ease of purchase, and the associated transportation costs (Anne, 2019). Thus, customers will choose the closest retail location to them while all other variables are competitive. Aaron et al. (2022) discovered that customer preference and satisfaction at Malaysian gas stations were convenience, marketing, and other factors stations. Therefore, the hypothesis that:

In a market economy, the price of any

HO 2: *There is no significant relationship between petroleum products retail outlet's proximity and customer patronage of petroleum products.*

Petroleum Products Retail Outlet's and Service Quality

One way to measure service quality is how well a business or organization understands the needs of its clients and meets their expectations. A ratio that indicates how well a service meets or exceeds expectations in terms of tangibility, assurance, responsiveness, satisfaction and experience is known as service quality. However, to improve productivity, service quality must surpass customers' expectations (Udoh 2018). In the investigations by Ahmed (2017) and Aaron et al. (2022) to examine the factors influencing customer satisfaction at gas stations in Malaysia, the studies discovered that customer patronage of gas stations correlates with service quality.

Also, Negi (2019) observed that patronage of gas stations in Ethiopia correlated with customer trust. Again, Magnus (2020) noted that capacity storage and timely product regularity determine customer patronage. Therefore, the hypothesis is that.

HO 3: *There is no significant relationship between petroleum products retail outlet's quality service quality and customer patronage of petroleum products.*

Petroleum Products Retail Outlets' and Dispensing Pump Accuracy

Trust, or the assurance, conviction, and confidence that consumers place in a company's goods or services, is one of the elements in the retailing of petroleum products (Muhammad et al., 2019; Geng, 2018). Consumers behaviour to use a product or service is predicted on users trust (Okofu et al, 2024; Okofu, et al., 2023). In this study,

customer loyalty captured the dispensing pump's validity, trust and dependability. Accordingly, reasonable customers would consider the dispensing pump's accuracy because it's likely to be included in measuring customer satisfaction. Fasanmi et al. (2022) examined customer patronage and trust towards Bovas gas stations in Ilorin, Kwara State. The analysis showed a strong correlation between customer loyalty, staff civility, and the accuracy of the dispensing pump and product quality. Thus the hypothesis that:

HO 4: *There is no significant relationship between petroleum products retail outlet's dispensing pump assurance/accuracy and customer patronage of petroleum products.*

Petroleum Products Retail Outlets and Customer patronage

Customer patronage refers to a customer's consistent, positive reinforcement from a seller through repeated purchases of goods, services, or brands (Dawn, 2018; Kotler, 2019). Therefore, marketers focus on patronage to win and survive in a highly competitive environment (Mark, 2023). They are interested in patronage to increase customers satisfactions (Okofu et al., 2024), mitigate switching behaviour due to the availability of new products, dissatisfaction, and price sensitivity (Kotler & Keller, 2018). According to Anyanwu, Ibekwe, and Okereafor (2021), a patron is a customer who makes purchases from a specific business, is not price sensitive, and speaks well of a good or service. Consumer loyalty is a marketer's pledge to stay away from what rivals are offering (Kotler & Keller, 2018). Okeke (2020) noted that client loyalty and satisfaction are crucial for the survival, existence, and firm success of both present and future patronage. Customer loyalty is essential for businesses looking to cut costs and boost profitability (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). According to some researchers,

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factors that increase consumer loyalty include price, brand, trust, service quality, product quality, and loyalty programs (Negi, 2019; Fasanmi et al., 2022; Inne, 2021; Rosemary, 2019 and Musa, 2020).

Research Methodology

The judgmental sampling technique was employed since willing respondents were selected based on the study's objectives. A sample of 400 was determined as a basis of previous studies, with comparable circumstances, to be sufficient for the investigation (Akpevwe, 2020). The study sample comprised customers, employees, and management of specific retail outlets selling petroleum products located on Warri/Sapele Road, Ugbwangwe, Ubeji, Market Road, Airport Road, NPA Expressway, PTI Road, Effurun/Sapele Road, Osubi, Okuokoko, Enerhen road, and Udu road. A structured hard-copy questionnaire was administered among the available respondents, while multiple regression, descriptive statistics and SPSS version 25 were utilized for data analysis. Cronbach Alpha generated on the adopted items was inclusive, with a value of 0.836 for internal consistency, above the suggested cutoff of 0.7 (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019).

Regression Model

Dependent variable		Independent variables
CUSPATRO	=	f(PR, PRO, SERVQTY, DISPUMP)
CUSPATRO	=	$\beta_0 + \beta_1 PR + \beta_2 PRO + \beta_3 SERVQTY + \beta_4 DISPUMP + \epsilon_i$

Where;

CUSPATRO	=	Customer patronage of petroleum product retail outlet.
β_0	=	Intercept of regression line
$\beta_1 - \beta_4$	=	Partial regression coefficient of the independent variable

PR = Pump price of retail
outlet
PRO = Proximity of retail
outlet to consumer
SERVQTY = Quality of
service/Quick Service to customers

DISPUMP = Dispensing Pump
Accuracy/Assurance
 ϵ_i = error term or stochastic
varia

Result and Discussion

Determinants of the independent variables on Patronage of Petroleum Product Retail Outlets

Table 1 Mean and Standard Deviation of Customers' Patronage

Construct	Measuring Statement	Mean (X)	Std Dev (SD)
Price			
	PR 1	3.160	1.3129
	PR 2	3.1225	1.13389
	PR 3	3.0100	.65266
Overall Mean		3.0975	0.69665
Proximity			
	PRO 1	3.0375	1.29819
	PRO 2	3.1500	1.33678
	PRO 3	3.1050	1.23604
Overall Mean		3.0975	.98000
Service Quality			
	SERVQTY 1	2.9700	.93342
	SERVQTY 2	3.1300	1.06109
	SERVQTY 3	2.7900	1.11085
Overall Mean		2.9633	.64742
Dispensing Pumps Accuracy			
	DISPUMP 1	3.2025	1.22689
	DISPUMP 2	3.2975	1.22587
	DISPUMP 3	3.1328	1.07034
Overall Mean		3.2083	.86450
Customer Patronage			
	CUSPATRO 1	2.855	1.43815
	CUSPATRO 2	2.730	1.14472
	CUSPATRO 3	2.885	1.24927
Overall Mean		2.820	0.7798

Sources: *Field Work (2023), Using SPSS version 25*

To determinants the patronage of petroleum product retail outlets the mean and standard deviation was described using pump price,

proximity, service quality, and dispensing pump accuracy. The mean value of each item was accepted if it is greater than or equal to 3.0 criterion. On the contrarily, any mean below 3.00 criterion indicates unfavourable

disposition towards the petroleum retail outlet constructs.

Table 1's overall mean index of the pump price, proximity, and dispensing pump accuracy of retail outlets selling petroleum products showed 3.0975, 3.0975, and 3.2083 indicating customers' favorable dispositions, which can draw them to a specific retail outlet and bolster their confidence in the amenities provided. Nonetheless, the patronage rate of 2.9620 and service quality of 2.9633, respectively, indicated a negative attitude towards a specific retail petroleum outlet. Price, proximity, dispensing pump, and

service quality had standard deviations from tables 1 of 0.69665, .98000, .86450, and .64742, respectively.

4.1 Analysis and Interpretation of Results

The hypotheses developed tested the study's model specification, with multiple regression analysis. For the test of significance, 5% (0.005) was the critical value. Thus, if the computed p-Values (sig) are higher than the 0.05(5%) level of significance, the null hypotheses would not be rejected, and vice versa. The test's summary result is shown below.

Table 2 Petroleum Products Retailing and Customers' Patronage Model Summary^b

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.842 ^a	.787	.785	.18781	1.838
a. Predictors: (Constant), SERVQTY, DISPUMP, PRICE, PROXIMITY					

a. Predictors: (Constant), SERVQTY, DISPUMP, PRICE, PROXIMITY

b. Dependent Variable: CUSTPATRO

Table 3 Petroleum Products Retailing and Customers' Patronage ANOVA^a

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	67.953	4	16.988	404.476	<.001 ^b
	Residual	8.959	396	.022		
	Total	76.912	400			
a. Dependent Variable: CUSTPATRO						
b. Predictors: (Constant), SERVQTY, DISPUMP, PRICE, PROXIMITY						

a. Predictors: (Constant), SERVQTY, DISPUMP, PRICE, PROXIMITY

b. Dependent Variable: CUSTPATRO

Table 4 Petroleum Products Retailing and Customers' Patronage Coefficient

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.781	.055		14.200	.000
	PR	.394	.020	.404	19.700	.000
	PRO	.097	.022	.138	4.409	.000
	SERVQTY	.190	.026	.223	7.307	.000
	DISPUMP	.154	.028	.320	5.500	.000
	D.W	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Overall Std Error	F	Sig.
	1.838	0.787	0.785	0.18781	404.476	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: CUSPATRO						

Sources: *SPSS version 25 Output*

The regression equation is thus: $CUSPATRO = \beta_0 + \beta_1 PR + \beta_2 PRO + \beta_3 SERVQTY + \beta_4 DISPUMP + \varepsilon_i$

Therefore: $CUSPATRO = .781 + .404PR + .138PRO + .223SERVQTY + .320DISPUMP + .055$

Where:

CUSPATRO = Customer Patronage
 PR = Pump Price
 PRO = Proximity
 SERVQTY = Service/ Quality
 DISPUMP = Dispensing Pumps Accuracy

The strength of the regression model is demonstrated by Table 2, where the combined elements of price, proximity, service quality, and dispensing pump accuracy in the regression model predict and explain 78% of the systematic variations in the customer patronage of petroleum products retail outlets. The regression model's goodness of fit with an R-squared value of .787 indicated approximately 78%. It illustrates how these factors affect patronage in a nation where the government has deregulated petroleum products. The implication is that customer satisfaction and value for money will probably be high. Also, the standard error at (.18781) indicates how far the actual value deviates from the expected value. This

suggests that there is no auto-correlation, or serial correlation, in the model displayed by the regression model with a Durbin Watson-statistic value of 1.838. As a result, the model's results are genuine, legitimate, and trustworthy in decisions making about retail locations for petroleum products.

All of the components in the regression model collectively explained about 79% of the systematic variations in the customer patronage of retail outlets selling petroleum products, even after the model adjusted for the degree of freedom. The empirical model finding has a high degree of goodness-of-fit, making it appropriate for developing policies specifically designed to address, maintain, and raise the number of customers who

frequent Nigerian retail locations selling petroleum products.

The F-statistic of 404.476 at a p-value of .000, or less than the 5% critical value, in Table 3 suggests a significant linear relationship between the retail outlets selling petroleum products and customer patronage in this study. The model is statistically predictive between the independent and dependent variables, as indicated by the p-value of .000.

The coefficients relating each construct to customer patronage in Table 4 have predictive significance, represented by a value of .000 and a constant of .781 for the expected dependent variable (customers' patronage). It indicates that each independent variable is well-liked and has a favourable disposition by customers' patronage in retail fuel stations selling petroleum products. Again, the regression model's coefficients showed the strengths of the relationship and directions between retail locations and Nigerian consumers' spending.

A one per cent change in the pump price will result in an approximate 40% increase or decrease in customer patronage, according to coefficient value for PR of .404 in Table 4. The results also showed that fewer products would be bought at higher prices and more purchases at lower prices. Since the price at the pump and customer patronage are significantly correlated, it implies that there may be a 40% negative or positive impact on customer patronage relative to the quantity demanded for every #1 change in the pump price of petroleum products. Thus, consumer spending is influenced by the petroleum products pumped price. As a result, the alternative hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis rejected. The results are consistent with those of Etokudo (2018) and Musa (2020), who found that consumers will choose retail locations for petroleum products with lower pump prices. Customers' expectation is to patronise retail establishments with the

lowest pump prices after fuel subsidy removal, which raised the price of petroleum.

Additionally, Table 4 coefficient value for PRO is .138, which shows that a one percentage change in PRO will translate into a 13.8% change in customer patronage. The data analysis revealed a positive correlation between customers' proximity and patronage. According to Table 1, the mean is 3.0975 points higher than the 3.00 mean criterion, indicating that customers are more amenable to proximity. The analysis implies that consumers of petroleum products will be more drawn to nearby retail locations than farther outlets. Also, there is a moderate influence on purchase, as indicated by a computed t-statistics of 4.409 and significant at 0.000, which is less than the critical value of 0.05 (5%). Thus, the rejection of the null hypothesis. Again, only a 13% impact on customer patronage, according to the regression coefficient of 0.1308, has a weak but positive relationship. However, the results are consistent with those of Adiele (2018), Akpan (2015), Inne (2021), and Musa (2020). When a retail location is closer to the customer, and all other factors are competitive, time efficiency, ease of purchase, and the cost of transportation related to the purchase process can influence consumers' behaviour.

The results regarding service quality in Table 4 showed that the coefficient value for service quality was .223. This means that a one percent change in service quality will determine customer patronage of 22.3%. The mean for service quality is 2.9633, below the 3.00 criteria mean, and the mean for standard deviation, is .64742, both are extremely low. This implies that consumers in the study area have a negative attitude regarding the accuracy of the dispensing pumps. Customers may not care about the responsiveness or attitude of the pump attendant because other factors affect their decision to use a particular filling station or because pump attendants' attitudes are consistent across the board.

Additionally, table 4 t-Statistics shows 7.307 significance at 0.000, less than the 5% critical value of 0.05. It indicates a strong correlation between client loyalty and service quality. Again, the regression coefficient showed 0.22, meaning that a change in the quality of the services could affect customer patronage by as much as 22%. The results corroborate those of Magnus (2020) and Aaron et al. (2022), who found that retail outlet responsiveness affects consumers' purchases of petroleum products. Put differently, customer patronage is influenced by the service quality provided.

Lastly, the coefficient values for pump accuracy show .320, meaning that a one percent change in dispensing pump accuracy will translate into a roughly three-quarters increase or decrease in customer patronage. The coefficient table used to calculate the t-statistics shows that the t-statistics of 5.500 significant at 0.000 are less than the critical

value of 0.05 (5%). The outcome showed a positive relationship, indicating that customer patronage and petroleum dispensing pump accuracy are significantly correlated. In addition, the average petroleum dispensing pump accuracy is 3.2083, above the 3.00 mean criteria, indicating that customers have a positive attitude regarding the pump accuracy directed towards a specific retail location. The dispensing pump's perceived accuracy and assurance with customer patronage have a positive correlation, as indicated by the regression coefficient of 0.3220. According to the coefficient, there could be a 32% impact on customer patronage from any modification or deviation in accuracy. When all else is equal, filling stations that build trust will have an advantage over rivals because customers want to receive value and satisfaction for their purchases.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The research looked at a few key variables affecting the retail sales of petroleum products in Warri, Delta State. Nevertheless, the following judgment was made, along with some suggestions: The petroleum industry is highly competitive, and to boost patronage, marketers should focus on factors like pump price, outlet proximity, dispensing pump accuracy, and service quality. This will help businesses stay in business, attract new clients, and endure in the volatile deregulated petroleum sector. Given how competitive the petroleum product marketing industry is, particularly in the post-subsidy era, it is advised that retailers of petroleum products focus on competitive pricing strategies at the individual outlet level to draw in and keep more customers (sales).

The factors found in this study served as instruments to highlight how important it is for businesses and decision-makers to increase consumer support for their different organizations. Task-force committees should

monitor filling station petroleum marketers to ensure that accurate dispensing pump facilities are maintained, as this will boost customer loyalty and confidence. Customers will develop a mental image of the brand and value that will result in positive customer relationships.

Based on data analysis, it is clear that to improve customer patronage and draw in new business, petroleum product retail outlets in Delta State, Nigeria, need to build individual customer trust in price, pump accuracy, and responsiveness. According to the study, marketers of retail locations for petroleum products should make sure that their service offerings enhance customers' experiences by providing lube bay services, vulcanizing, enough space, smart, well-dressed attendants, convenient restrooms, and mini-marts.

The study concluded that while several factors influence a customer's decision to return, service quality and trust are not overemphasised in this day of consumerism and information sharing caused by ubiquitous

mobile technology. Therefore, to create and maintain a positive brand image, petroleum marketers should provide pump attendants with sufficient orientation and training to provide quality service through responsive service and civility.

Furthermore, pump attendants should be paid at least the minimum wage because both rich and poor people shop at the same markets. Also, wealthy patrons should be kind enough to extend their generosity to pump attendants by giving them some change or tip-off as a sign of support. Customer and service station owners' positive attitudes and moral support will significantly raise services provided and lower employee chum.

Customers should follow instructions and behave obediently, such as when driving in and out, lining up, and politely conversing with staff members to lessen unfavourable sentiments.

Finally, the government should form committees to keep an eye on marketers who are selling tainted goods, endangering the

public and, in the worst case, killing people in explosions. Committees should be authorised to revoke licenses, impose severe fines, or even imprison violators.

Limitations and further studies.

The study only looks at white petroleum products that fall under the downstream sub-sector of Nigeria's petroleum industry; it leaves out the upstream portion, which consists of oil exploration and drilling activities. An additional constraint of the research is that, although there are over 7000 registered filling stations, the study only included 400 samples of retail outlets selling petroleum products in Warri and its surroundings, while using just one analytical technique.

The study suggests that additional variables, a variety of analytical techniques, and an examination of marketers in the petroleum upstream sector should all be included in future studies.

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