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EFFECT OF CUSTOMER SERVICES ON SUCCESS OF SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRISES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract: Businesses rely on satisfied customers to stay in business and bring in new ones. Treating customers well is essential to retaining and growing customer loyalty. The focus of this article is on how customer service impacts sustainable development in Nigeria and the prosperity of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). Sustainable development, small and medium-sized businesses, and customer service were the theoretical foci of the article. It also found that customer service could help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) succeed by increasing sales and profits, which in turn could help SMEs generate jobs, boost the economy, make better use of local resources, reduce poverty, and attract more investors. This would all add up to sustainable development in Nigeria. Customer services, the study found, are potent tools for increasing consumer happiness, which in turn helps the Nigerian economy grow and provides for both current and future generations (sustainable development). Finally, the study recommended that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) establish customer service standards and that company owners and workers possess strong customer service abilities.

Keywords: Effect, Customer services, Small and medium scale enterprises, Sustainable development

Introduction

The happiness of consumers is the end goal of every company's operations. This is due to the fact that satisfying the demands of consumers, who are essentially the ones who purchase a company's goods and services, is the driving force behind any business's entrepreneurial endeavors. Because of this, a company that is serious about making it big would start by researching what their target market wants and needs. The next step is to identify those requirements and desires, and then create a product or products to meet them. Then, to increase revenue, the firm must work to acquire and keep clients. These considerations lead Aruwa (2006) to the conclusion that consumers are essential to the success of any for-profit company, and that a business unit's very survival is

dependent on fulfilling client orders. The client is the only boss an organization has, according to Ikenga-Dennis (2007), and he may dismiss everyone by taking his money elsewhere. Similarly, public-facing enterprises should aim to attract consumers, since they are the ones responsible for creating demand (Investopedia, n.d.). A client's loyalty is directly proportional to his level of contentment with the service he received from a certain company unit, hence improving customer service is one way to accomplish this goal. Customers should be treated with respect and care at all times, and this can only be achieved through providing them with first-rate customer service before, during, and after a purchase. This type of service is self-serving and aimed at attracting and retaining customers for the benefit of a company's operations.

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Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) constitute the largest proportion of business enterprises all over the world on a global scale and are acknowledged as factors that propel economic expansion and progress. This is due to the fact that they aid in fast industrialization by creating jobs and revenue, boosting productivity, promoting the use of local resources, developing technology, and providing domestic links. Many sectors of the economy, including production, distribution, retail, and service provision, are home to SMEs. These businesses are often run by their owners and are tiny in size and scope. They also need little in the way of managerial expertise, cash, and personnel. In order to ensure that current generations continue to reap the advantages of growth, sustainable development must take into account the needs of future generations without sacrificing either. The reason for this is because when we take care of the present for the sake of future generations, it ensures that they will enjoy a standard of living that is comparable to, if not better than, our own. Because of this, the current generation will be motivated to enhance their level of life, which will in turn benefit the lives of future generations.

All things considered, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are powerful instruments for attaining sustainable development in Nigeria. This is because they play a pivotal role in fostering expansion and improvement in the economy. Unfortunately, this vital part of the economy is dealing with a lot of problems, and that's causing a high death rate among them. Consequently, the impact of customer service on the long-term viability of small and medium-sized businesses in Nigeria is the primary subject of this article. This is because it considers customer service—including providing individualized attention, helping customers make informed product purchases, responding to customer complaints in a timely manner, and showing empathy—as a key component to its success and, by extension, to Nigeria's long-term prosperity.

Conceptual Clarifications

The conceptual framework adopted for this paper is treated under the following:

Concept of Customer Services

Offering excellent customer service is mostly done to make consumers happy, so they'll become loyal clients. This leads Ahukannah, Ndinaechi, and Arukwe (2013) to the conclusion that customer services are the offerings made by vendors in an

effort to draw in and keep consumers. Customer service is defined by McKinney (2015) as attending to a client's needs in a timely, courteous, and professional manner before, during, and after the fulfillment of those demands. Likewise, according to the 2017 edition of the Business Dictionary, customer service is defined as "all interactions between a customer and a product provider at the time of sale and thereafter," and it provides value to a product while also establishing a lasting connection between the seller and the buyer. This means that it doesn't end when the sale occurs; rather, it keeps on until the client knows he made the correct decision, which will encourage him to keep coming back and even tell his friends about the firm. This is in keeping with what (investopedia, n.d.) says about customer service: its goal is to make sure the consumer is happy with the goods. This might happen during sales or returns. Other forms include face-to-face meetings, rapid responses to emails and phone calls, and self-service options.

Entrepreneur (2017) states that The level of help and politeness provided to patrons of a company, together with the opportunity for them to express their sentiments, is known as customer service. Doyle (2017) views customer service in a similar light, defining it as the practice of treating customers with respect and kindness, listening attentively to their needs and concerns, and then doing one's best to meet those needs in an accurate and efficient manner. One way to look at customer service is in terms of keeping promises. Therefore, according to Miller (2016), it is the capacity to provide a service in accordance with the promises made.

Concept of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises

Businesses may be considered tiny or medium-sized depending on their size. Since what constitutes a small or medium-sized firm (SME) in one nation could not apply in another, this is the case. Because of this, it's safe to say that SMEs are not defined in a way that everyone agrees with. One may also get the conclusion that SMEs are hard to pin down since different people, groups, and nations use different criteria when trying to define or categorize them. It was said by Sanusi (2003) that

Companies are considered small-and-medium-scale for the purposes of the Small and Medium Industries Equity Investment Scheme (SMIEIS) if their total assets do not exceed ₦200 million (not including the cost of land and working capital), and if they employ between 10 and 300 people. On the other hand, according to Adamu (2005), in 2005, SMIEIS made

changes to the definition in order to be more adaptable. They removed the limitation on the number of workers and raised the maximum asset value to ₦500 million, excluding the cost of land and working capital. A small-scale firm is defined as an enterprise with an asset value that does not exceed, according to Adeyeye (2008).

Concept of Sustainable Development

Various definitions of sustainable development have been proposed. It is a "pattern of development that permits the future generations to live at least as well as the current generation," according to daro and Smith (2006). According to Aina (2009), sustainable development is a new way of thinking about how to improve people's lives now and in the future by addressing issues like poverty, human rights, peace, security, cultural diversity, biodiversity, food security, access to safe drinking water and sanitation, renewable energy, environmental preservation, and responsible resource management. These factors suggest that the core of sustainable development is working tirelessly to guarantee that all generations, including our own, enjoy improved living conditions without jeopardizing the well-being of the generations to come.

Types of Customer Services

The major types of customer services are as follow:

Supports Service

In terms of customer service, this is the bedrock and kingpin. Assistance with billing questions, accepting orders, activating accounts, registering new customers, and documenting complaints are all part of the support services offered. This also includes listening to customers, providing answers to their questions, guiding them, explaining products and services to newcomers, and relaying complaints and grievances to the appropriate parties (Robbinson and Kalakota in Tutorial-reports 2013 and Newman, 2016). Assistance with form completion, supply of credit, transportation and delivery, and cordial greetings (hello, how may I assist you) are further support services.

Sales and Marketing Efforts

Businesses rely on these to educate current and future clients about the goods and services they provide. It could also serve as a marketing tool for a division to inform consumers of the advantages of doing business with the firm and purchasing its wares. According to Robbinson and Kalakota in Tutorial-reports 2013 and Newman (2016), this goal may be attained if the company meets with consumers, keeps

in contact with them via calls and emails, and even does some online research on their behalf. As part of their marketing and sales strategy, they also provide customers with price lists and quotations, show interest in their personal lives, send them credit notes, deal with customers ethically, and assist them with packaging their purchases.

Technical Support

This type of service helps to provide customers with solution to the technical difficulties of a product / service. This is because customers could need different technical support services such as data verification and problem resolution (Robbinson and Kalakota in Tutorial-reports 2013 and Newman, 2016). The technical supports also include installation of machines and equipments, maintenance services and activation of electronic equipments such as Subscriber Identification Module (SIM) card and Automated Teller Machine (ATM) card as well as

searching for available radio and television stations on transistor radios and televisions respectively. This implies that it deals with what requires technicalities and could be resolved through technical skills and competence.

Analytic Based Support

This pertains to the examination of various client inquiries and grievances, as well as the service quality (quality auditing) and the reaction given by the business unit to these inquiries and complaints.(Newman, 2016; Tutorial-reports, 2013; Robbinson and Kalakota, 2016).It provides the lynchpin for marketing efforts and the hints necessary to provide consumers with expected, relevant, and timely items. This means that it might provide a company the power to influence consumers' purchasing decisions. Businesses may boost their returns on investment, customer loyalty, and the rate at which consumers react to their efforts when they are able to target the correct customers with timely, relevant messages and goods.

Customer Service Skills

S"Kill" may be seen as a long-standing pattern of behavior (Pulife, 2012). It is also defined by Anikweze (2013) as the skill of doing an activity competently, which is often honed via experience and instruction. In light of the above, it is clear from a combination of Ciotti (2016) and Doyle (2017) that the following are essential

customer service abilities for every successful company:

One crucial talent in customer service is empathy, which is reacting to customers' concerns with compassion and kindness.

Secondly, having enthusiasm means paying close attention to the concerns of customers.

3. Striking for complete information: detail-oriented.

Four, a desire to learn as much as possible.

Diplomatic: using tact while interacting with clients.

Having patience while interacting with clients is the sixth quality.

Paying close attention to the customer's needs, wants, or complaints so that you may address them effectively is the seventh quality.

The ability to express oneself clearly and interact effectively with clients is the eighth quality.

9-Product Knowledge: Being Familiar with the Product's Specifications.

Skill in acting: conforming one's behavior to that of the consumer in order to win him over.

Ability to read customers: knowing each consumer well enough to tailor your service to their specific needs.

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Characteristics of Customer Services Promptness

A key component of customer service is the ability to promptly meet the needs of consumers. Avoid product delays and cancellations at all costs, says McKinney (2015). All promises of timely delivery of goods, services, or information must be kept. It is important to remember that being punctual makes people happy and keeps them coming back. The reason for this is that clients will believe the firm is worthy of doing business with.

Politeness

This refers to being courteous while interacting with current and potential clients. According to McKinney (2015), excellent manners include things like greeting customers, thanking them for their business, and asking how they may be of service. Approaching consumers in a manner that is both natural and appropriate is another aspect of being polite.

Professionalism

The emphasis here is on providing competent, caring service to clients in a professional manner (McKinney, 2015). What this means is that wooing clients requires using people skills ethically.

Personalization

Here, the customer's traits, including name, title, position, or social standing, are used to tailor a service or services to the customer's unique nature. Customers are more loyal when they feel that the person they're working with understands them on a personal level, which is why using their name boosts loyalty (McKinney, 2015).

Effect of Customer Services on Success of SMEs

CDelivering exceptional customer service results in satisfied clients who are more than eager to continue supporting the company's operations. This is in keeping with what Naylor (2014) says, which many small companies overlook: client services are crucial to a company's health. According to Naylor (2014), SMEs can benefit from providing excellent customer service because: customers remember their experiences, positive treatment leads them to believe that a company has good products, and customer service makes customers feel cared for, which is a powerful marketing tool. In other words, if customer service is good, the company may see an uptick in revenue from satisfied customers who, all else being equal, would return and even tell their friends about the company and its wares. Providing excellent customer service is the most important thing for a company, according to John (2017). This is because it boosts sales by establishing credibility, which in turn encourages customers to remain loyal to the brand (customer loyalty). Since individuals are prepared to spend more for a memorable experience, customer service is more important than pricing (John, 2017). Enhancing referral buying, reducing problems (because customers know they can voice out their complaints), and appealing to customers (because, nowadays, customers want to be treated as people),

customer service also creates brand awareness. In Shuttle's (2017) view, customer service is crucial for businesses for several reasons, including making customers feel valued, setting the company apart from competitors, encouraging repeat business, generating positive word-of-mouth, and reducing the likelihood of consumer complaints or lawsuits. It is clear from the above that customer services have the potential to ensure the survival of SMEs. This is due to the fact that it has the potential to boost sales and, by extension, profits for SMEs, which in turn signals to operators the need of maintaining operations and maybe even leads to the realization of economies of scale. They may be better able to compete with one another and with larger companies if this happens.

Customer Services, Success of SMEs and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

As said before, client services may greatly contribute to the success of small and medium-sized enterprises. Customer service has the potential to influence small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which in turn may contribute to Nigeria's long-term prosperity. The following methods may be used to accomplish this:

Employment Generation

Nigeria is facing a major challenge with its unemployment rate. Effective customer services may help SMEs lower its level. A rise in demand due to satisfied customers necessitates a rise in output. For something to work efficiently and effectively, more people will need to work on it, which will create jobs. Since creating more jobs means more money goes to more people, this suggests that lowering the unemployment rate might promote sustainable development.

Stimulation of Economic Growth

Increases in both the quantity and quality of a country's output are indicators of economic progress (Mamman, 2010). Its expression is in terms of per capita income, and it is a key factor in development. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play an important role in the development of many nations' economies because of their widespread involvement in

many economic sectors. Because improved customer service boosts sales, the Nigerian economy is likely to expand, which should pave the way for long-term progress.

Utilization of Local Resources

Achieving sustainable development is all about making the most of what society has to offer. According to Aruwa (2006), small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are able to make good use of local raw resources because of the innovation they bring to their respective fields, which include food processing, textiles, woodworking, and leather products. They may use local resources, which would bring in money for the producers of those resources, in an effort to keep up with the rising demand for their goods caused by client services. All of them are thought to provide the groundwork for long-term growth in Nigeria.

Poverty Alleviation

One of Nigeria's most pressing developmental challenges is poverty. According to the World Bank (1997), people are considered to be living in poverty when they are deprived of economic opportunities, education, health, nutrition, and a sense of empowerment and security. One of the main goals of sustainable development is to reduce poverty, says Aina (2009). Because small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) stand to gain from improved customer service, it's possible that this may contribute to a reduction in poverty in Nigeria by way of more employment opportunities, stronger economic development, and stronger connections across different parts of the economy. We hope that by generating cash from these endeavors, we can help reduce poverty in Nigeria and make sustainable development a reality.

Stimulation of Investment

Because it promotes investments, customer service has the potential to contribute to Nigeria's sustainable development. As a consequence of the positive reputation they've earned via their excellent customer service, this arises to meet the increasing demand from their clientele. With all else being equal, these investments should lead to sustained development in Nigeria due to their multiplier

effects. The reason for this is because the investments will provide advantages for generations to come, not just the current one.

Conclusion

The key to increasing sales and profits is providing customer-driven services that bring in new clients and keep existing ones. Reason being, providing customer service is all about treating people the way you would like to be treated. So, this report proved that good customer service may help SMEs thrive, which would be great for Nigeria's long-term economy. The takeaway here is that customer service is a powerful tool for making customers happier, which increases the likelihood that they would purchase from you again and tell their friends about you. This, in turn, helps the Nigerian economy, which provides for both current and future generations.

Recommendations

To help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) succeed by providing excellent customer service, which would lead to sustainable growth in Nigeria, we propose the following policies:

Customer service standards should be in place for all SMEs.

Good customer service skills, which may be taught in-house or at workshops, should be had by all operators and employees of SMEs.

3. Operators of SMEs should treat all clients appropriately since the impact of a single unhappy customer might be catastrophic for the company.

Customers' urgent requests, complaints, and orders may make them feel cared for, which in turn can help them perceive the value in continuing to patronize the company unit.

Government institutions tasked with fostering entrepreneurship and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should launch campaigns highlighting the importance of customer service to the success of businesses and the ripple effects these businesses have on society at large.

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