

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION AND CUSTOMER
SATISFACTION: NIGERIAN EVIDENCE**

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Abstract

SMEs are an important part of a nation's economy as they represent the majority of businesses and contribute significantly to GDP. A crucial component of sustainable SME performance is customer satisfaction. The reality is that customer satisfaction is largely dependent on employee performance. This is because employees are the ones who serve customers, and the quality of service received has a huge impact on customer satisfaction. This study provides a Nigerian test of the employee motivation/customer satisfaction hypothesis. It achieves this aim by investigating the relationship between employee motivation of bakery employees and satisfaction levels of their customers in Ilorin, the capital city of Kwara state, in Western Nigeria. A questionnaire survey research design was utilized to measure the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation levels of 40 employees from four bakeries in Ilorin, whilst the satisfaction levels of 40 wholesalers from these bakeries were also measured. The results revealed that there was virtually no relationship between employee motivation and wholesaler satisfaction. The main implication of this finding is that SMEs in Nigeria cannot rely on motivating employees as the sole means of ensuring customer satisfaction. They have to integrate other strategies as well, such as enhancing product quality and utilizing innovative marketing techniques.

Keywords: employee motivation, customer satisfaction, SMEs, sustainable performance, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

“According to U.S. Census Bureau Data, in 2014 SME businesses with less than 20 workers accounted for 97.9 per cent of all firms in the U.S. They contributed 46 per cent of the private nonfarm GDP in 2008 (the most recent year for which the source data are available), making them hugely important for economic growth, innovation, and diversity” (Ward, 2018). SMEs representing the vast majority of businesses are not unique to the US alone, it is the same for all countries in the world, Nigeria included (Odoom, 2017; Kumar & Singh, 2017). The implication of this statistic is that SME performance has a huge and direct impact to the overall development of a country: a country where SMEs thrive will be prosperous, while a country where SMEs struggle will suffer recession (Rasheed et al., 2017; Brem et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2017).

The macroeconomic condition of a country is an important determinant of overall SME performance (Iraldo et al., 2017, Tsourvakas et al., 2018, Hosoda M, 2018). However,

for individual SMEs to be consistently successful, it is dependent on the strategies developed and executed by the SME owner and his or her employees (Rebelo et al., 2017; Mishra, 2017; Kwateng & Darko, 2017). A crucial first step to sustainable organizational performance is to ensure that customers are satisfied (Yildirim et al., 2017; Thanki & Thakkar, 2017; Najmi et al., 2018). Only when customers are satisfied again and again can an SME start expecting other indicators of organizational performance such as increased income and increased market shares to be realized (Hooi & Leong, 2017; De Spiegelaere et al., 2017; Batista et al., 2017). It can thus be said that the biggest indicator of an SME's performance is the extent to which customers are satisfied with its product or service offering (Bodle et al., 2017; Kamukama & Sulait, 2017).

The reality is that customer satisfaction is largely dependent on employee performance (Madera et al., 2017; Gaur et al., 2017; Arunachalam & Palanichamy, 2017). This is because employees are the ones who serve customers, and the quality of service received has a huge impact on customer satisfaction: happy employees offer great service which leads to more satisfied customers, while unhappy employees offer poor service which leads to less satisfied customers (Kashif et al., 2017; Dahlin & Isaksson, 2017; Swain & Kar, 2018). It can be inferred from this scenario that employee motivation is an important prerequisite for customer satisfaction amongst not only SMEs, but all businesses in general (Zebal, 2018). This hypothesis that employee motivation is associated with customer satisfaction has empirical support from several studies carried out globally: Choi and Joung (2017) from the USA, Rod et al. (2016) from Russia, Soderlund (2016) from Sweden, Alhelalat et al. (2017) from Jordan, Singh et al. (2017) from Malaysia and Otterbring and Lu (2018) from China are just a few examples of these studies.

From a Nigerian perspective, the importance of this employee motivation/customer satisfaction relationship has not gone unnoticed amongst scholars. In recent times, there have

been quite a lot of studies that have specifically or generally explored the validity of this hypothesis in the Nigerian context (Akpan, 2016; Danjuma et al., 2016; Baba et al., 2018; Ehijiele et al., 2018). These Nigerian-based studies have typically focused primarily on the banking sector (Akpan, 2016; Danjuma et al., 2016; Asiyanbi & Ishola, 2018; Ehijiele et al., 2018). Other sectors researched upon include the hospitality sector (Chinedum et al., 2017), and the education sector (Ibojo & Dunmade, 2016). Whilst these studies are commendable, a vital sector has been neglected: the food sector.

The food sector is of crucial importance to any economy as food is vital for human existence. From a Nigerian perspective, bakeries are an important part of the food sector as they produce bread, which is an essential staple food for most Nigerian homes, particularly for breakfast (Oyeyinka & Oyeyinka, 2018). This study addresses the sample gap by investigating the relationship between employee motivation and customer satisfaction in selected bakeries in Ilorin, Kwara state.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical framework

Herzberg's Two-factor theory serves as the foundation for this study's theoretical framework. The theory proposed by American behavioural scientist, Frederick Herzberg in 1959 states that in the workplace there are certain factors that cause an employee to be satisfied with his or her job, while there are other factors that cause the same employee to be dissatisfied with his or her job (Bhatti et al., 2016). The job satisfaction factors are called motivators and include concerns such as being recognized for one's achievements, being involved in the decision-making process, and doing meaningful work that positively impacts society (Hur, 2018). On the other hand, the job dissatisfaction factors are called hygiene factors, and include such issues as status, salary, benefits and job security (Taba et al., 2018).

According to the theory, the presence of hygiene factors do not increase job satisfaction, but their absence leads to job dissatisfaction amongst employees (Taba et al., 2018).

As it pertains to this study, it can be observed that motivators are synonymous with an employee's intrinsic motivation, and are considered the most important determinant of an employee's satisfaction with his or her job according to the precepts of Herzberg's Two-factor Theory. In this study, motivators are thus used to represent the intrinsic motivation of surveyed employees in selected bakeries in Ilorin, Kwara State. On the other hand, hygiene factors are synonymous with extrinsic motivation factors, and are used to determine how extrinsically motivated employees of the selected bakeries are to their work.

Based on Herzberg's Two-factor Theory, this study posits that a combination of motivators and hygiene factors will determine how motivated employees in Ilorin bakeries are, and this in turn will determine how well these bakeries perform in terms of customer satisfaction. This expected relationship is depicted in Figure 1.

<Insert Figure 1>

2.2 Empirical review

In this section, a review of the findings of prior studies that explored the impact of employee motivation on customer satisfaction is presented. The studies reviewed can be categorized into two groups based on the data collection methods they adopted: 1) Survey alone (He et al., 2010; Yi et al., 2011; Zameer et al., 2018; Conway & Briner, 2018; Ahmed et al., 2012), and 2) Survey and interview (Venkatraman, 2016). Each group is discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

Representing the 'survey only' group, He et al. (2010) and Zameer et al. (2018) surveyed employees and customers in Chinese hotels and banks respectively. They found that employee motivation had a strong positive influence on customer satisfaction. In the United

Kingdom, Yi et al. (2011) and Conway and Briner (2015) surveyed employees and customers in the electronic industry and airline industry respectively. They also found that employee motivation had a positive impact on customer satisfaction. Finally, Ahmed et al. (2012) conducted a survey on 100 employees and 100 customers of a leading private airline in Pakistan. Like other studies discussed earlier, they also found that employee motivation had a strong positive influence on customer satisfaction. It seems that regardless of industry or country, there seems to be a scholarly consensus that highly motivated employees will have a positive impact on customer satisfaction.

As for the 'survey and interview' group, only one of the studies reviewed (Venkatraman, 2016) combined surveys and interviews to determine the relationship between employee motivation and customer satisfaction. This study was conducted in the United Arab Emirates, and involved a questionnaire survey of 10 customers and interviews with 8 employees of Etihad airlines. Like the prior survey-based studies discussed in the preceding paragraph, Venkatraman (2016) also found a strong positive relationship between employee motivation and customer satisfaction.

2.3 Hypothesis development

In order to develop testable research hypothesis for this study, this study relied on the precepts of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory as well as empirical findings of prior studies testing these precepts. As can be observed from the preceding subsections, Herzberg's theory proposes that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation combine to determine employee motivation. Additionally, prior empirical studies have found that motivation has a strong positive association with customer satisfaction. Based on these evidences, this study had two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The level of intrinsic motivation of bakery employees in Ilorin will be positively associated with the satisfaction levels of their wholesalers.

Hypothesis 2: The level of extrinsic motivation of bakery employees in Ilorin will be positively associated with the satisfaction levels of their wholesalers.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between employee motivation and customer satisfaction amongst selected bakeries Ilorin, Kwara State. In order to fulfil this aim, this study adopted a quantitative research approach by surveying employees and customers of selected bakeries in Ilorin, Kwara State using structured questionnaires. The survey method was adopted because it allowed the researcher to collect data from a large pool of employees and customers within a short period of time as compared to the lengthy process of conducting interviews.

3.2 Population and sample size

As this study was focused on bakery companies in Ilorin, the Corporate Affairs Commission, the organization in charge of registering all businesses, was consulted to ascertain the total number of registered bakery companies in Ilorin, Kwara State. However, the Ilorin Corporate Affairs Commission did not have an official record of the total number of registered bakeries in the city. For this reason, all bakeries in Ilorin served as the study's population.

A lack of information about the actual number of registered bakeries prevented a usual sampling technique to be applied in this study. However, there are four districts in Ilorin: Ilorin South, Ilorin West, Ilorin East and Asa (Kwara State Government, 2017). In order to ensure that each district was represented, one bakery was randomly chosen from each district. In total, 40 employees and 40 wholesalers were surveyed, for a total of 80 respondents. Wholesalers were selected as opposed to retail customers because they had

much regular contact with bakery employees due to the fact they bought on a regular basis as opposed to retail customers who tended to buy from wholesalers closest to them, rather than from the bakeries directly.

3.3 Data collection

Data for this study was collected from 40 bakery employees and 40 bakery wholesalers respectively in Ilorin using close-ended questionnaires. The questionnaire for employees had two sections: the first section collected demographic data about the employees, while the second section collected data regarding the employees' levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Items from the Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (WEIMS) were used to measure the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation levels of the bakery employees. WEIMS was developed by Maxime Tremblay and his colleagues at the University Of Ottawa in Canada (Tremblay et al., 2009). Bakery employees were required to rate ten statements (the first five statements represented intrinsic motivation, while the last five represented extrinsic motivation) using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from '1' = 'strongly disagree', and '5' = strongly agree.

Similarly, the questionnaire for wholesalers also had a demographic section, and then a section collecting data on how satisfied these customers were with the service they received from the bakery employees. Satisfaction levels of wholesalers were measured using items from the Customer Orientation of Service Employees (COSE) developed by German Professor of media marketing, Thorsten Henning-Thurau (Henning-Thurau, 2004). The wholesalers were required to rate their satisfaction with various aspects of the service they

received from the bakery employees using a 5-point Likert scale, with '1' = 'strongly disagree', and '5' = 'strongly agree'.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The ultimate aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between employee motivation and customer satisfaction amongst the four selected bakeries in Ilorin. In order to achieve this aim, the study utilized the Pearson Correlation Coefficient to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between intrinsic motivation and customer satisfaction, and between extrinsic motivation and customer satisfaction. In order to determine to what extent employee motivation was able to predict the variance in customer satisfaction, the Coefficient of Determination was utilized.

4.1 Demographic characteristics

80 respondents (40 customers and 40 employees) from 4 selected bakeries in Ilorin were surveyed for the study. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the two categories of respondents.

<insert Table 1>

Regarding gender, for customers, females (28) were the majority, while for employees, males were the majority (24). Regarding marital status, most customers were single (25), while most employees were married (16). Furthermore, most customers (17) and employees (18) were between the ages of 21-30yrs. Customers generally had higher qualifications than employees, with 17 customers having Higher Diplomas, while the majority of employees (28) only had O'level qualifications. Finally, most employees (27) had only been at the bakery for 1-2 years, and a majority of them (21) were temporary staff.

4.2 Hypotheses Testing

4.2.1 Hypothesis 1: Intrinsic motivation and customer satisfaction

<Insert Table 2>

Table 2 shows that the Pearson correlation coefficient between the two variables is .069, which means that there is a positive correlation between intrinsic motivation of bakery employees and satisfaction levels of their wholesalers. In other words, the more these employees are intrinsically motivated, the more wholesalers are satisfied with their services.

However, the strength of the relationship between intrinsic motivation and wholesalers satisfaction is very negligible, based on Cohen's (1988) guidelines ($r = .10$ to $.29$ represent small, $r = .30$ to $.49$ represent medium and $r = .50$ to 1.0 represent large). Since $r = .069$ in this analysis, which is less than the "small" threshold of 0.10 , it can be deduced that in reality the intrinsic motivation of bakery employees had very little positive effect on wholesalers' satisfaction.

The coefficient of determination between intrinsic motivation and wholesaler satisfaction is $0.004761(0.069 * 0.069)$. This means that intrinsic motivation of bakery employee was only able to explain 0.476% of the variance in wholesalers' satisfaction levels. Based on these results, it can be concluded that there is virtually no relationship between intrinsic motivation and wholesalers' satisfaction in this study.

4.2.2 Hypothesis 2: Extrinsic motivation and customer satisfaction

<Insert Table 3>

From Table 3, it can be observed that the relationship between bakery employees' extrinsic motivation and wholesaler level of satisfaction is actually negative ($r = -.029$). This initial analysis is contrary to the study's second hypothesis which suggested a positive relationship between these two variables. However, using Cohen's (1988) guidelines, it can

be observed that the strength of the relationship between the two variables is less than the “small” threshold of 0.10. This mirrors the result of the relationship between intrinsic motivation and wholesaler satisfaction discussed in the preceding subsection: there is virtually no relationship between extrinsic motivation and wholesaler satisfaction. This point is further buttressed with the coefficient of determination (0.00084), which indicates that extrinsic motivation is not able to explain even up to 1% of any variance in wholesaler satisfaction.

In conclusion, the results of this study found no support for both hypotheses. This goes against the findings of other studies who found a positive relationship between employee intrinsic motivation and customer satisfaction levels (Yang, 2017; Pansari & Kumar, 2017; Du Preez et al., 2017; Bottger et al., 2017), as well as those who found a positive relationship between employee extrinsic motivation and customer satisfaction levels (Hong et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2017; Bastons et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2017).

4.3 Implication of findings

This study's findings have several implications in 3 realms: 1) Knowledge 2) Practice and 3) Policy. These implications are discussed in the subsequent subsections.

4.3.1 Implications for knowledge

The study's findings provide a valuable Nigeria perspective on the relationship between employee motivation and customer satisfaction. The study shows that at least in Ilorin, it is not always the case that highly motivated employees guarantee high levels of customer satisfaction. The findings of this study also provided evidence that the precepts of Herzberg's Two- Factor theory are not always empirically proven, as it found that there is virtually no association between employee motivation and customer satisfaction.

4.3.2. Implications for practice

The study's findings have one major implication for SME viability and longevity. It shows bakery owners and other SME owners that employee motivation alone is not sufficient to guarantee customer satisfaction. Other factors such as product quality, marketing strategies and promotional strategies must also be integrated alongside motivating employee intrinsically and extrinsically. These strategies combined together are necessary to ensure customers come back again and again.

4.3.3 Implications for policy

The findings of this study serve to enlighten Nigerian policy makers on the need to create comprehensive business training programmes for SME owners, which will equip them with a tool-kit of strategies that will facilitate their collective successes in the market place. This tool-kit should include accounting knowledge, human resource management strategies and marketing strategies. This study's findings have shown that just focusing on one strategy alone is insufficient to guarantee customer satisfaction.

5. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the relationship between employee motivation of bakery employees and satisfaction levels of their customers in Ilorin, the capital city of Kwara state, in Western Nigeria. A questionnaire survey research design was utilized to measure the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation levels of 40 employees from four bakeries in Ilorin, whilst the satisfaction levels of 40 wholesalers from these bakeries were also measured. The results revealed that there was virtually no relationship between employee motivation and wholesaler satisfaction. The main implication of this finding was that SMEs in Nigeria cannot rely on motivating employees as the sole means of ensuring customer satisfaction. They have

to integrate other strategies as well, such as enhancing product quality and utilizing innovative marketing techniques.

This study had two major limitations: Firstly, it only surveyed employees and wholesalers from four bakeries in Ilorin, with each bakery representing one of the four districts of the city. This small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings. Future studies should include more bakeries in their sample so as to get more generalizable results. Secondly, during the survey process, some of the respondents were reluctant to fill the questionnaires due to their busy schedules and also concern that their manager would consider them wasting company time. Future studies can mitigate this limitation by obtain permission from the manager who can explicitly instruct employees to participate in the survey. Additionally, questionnaires can be given to the employees to fill at home and return, rather than making them fill it during work hours.

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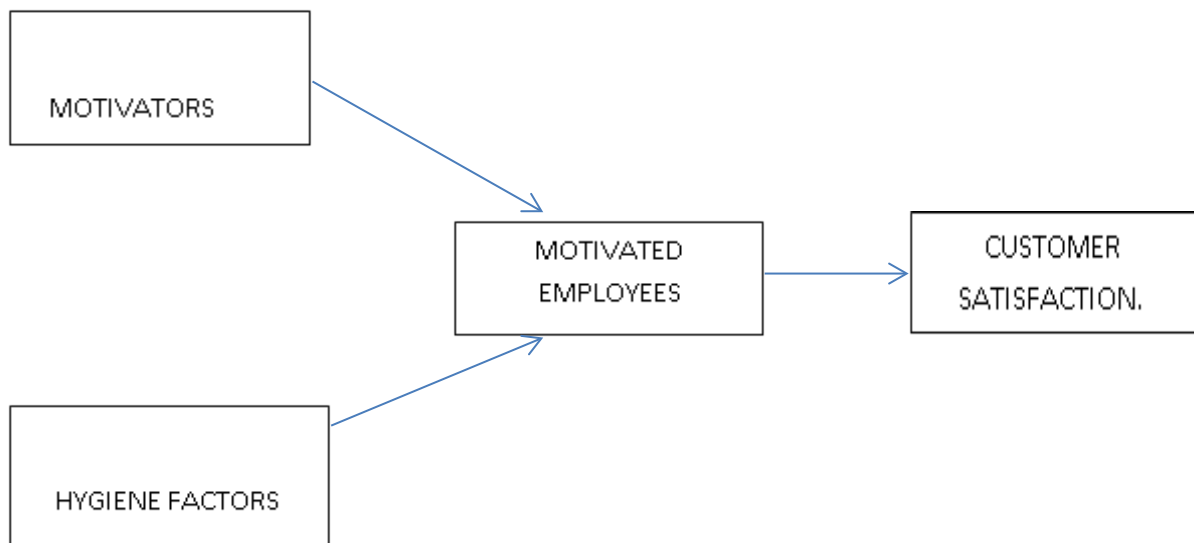
Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

S/N	Demographic Characteristics	Range	Customers	Employees
1.	Gender	Female	28	16
		Male	12	24
		Total	40	40
2.	Marital Status	Single	25	20
		Married	14	16
		Divorced	1	2
		Windowed	-	2
		Total	40	40
3.	Age	10-20yrs	10	3
		21-30yrs	17	18
		31-40yrs	8	14
		41-50yrs	1	3
		51-above	4	2
		Total	40	40
4.	Education	O levels	10	3
		Higher Diploma	17	18
		Bachelor's Degree	8	14
		Master's Degree	1	3
		Others	4	2
		Total	40	40
5.	Years of services	1-2yrs	-	27
		3-4yrs	-	7
		5-6yrs	-	-
		6-above	-	6
		Total	-	40
6.	Contract terms	Permanent	-	19
		Temporary	-	21
		Total	-	40

Table 2: Relationship between intrinsic motivation and customer satisfaction

		Customer satisfaction	
Intrinsic motivation	Pearson Correlation	.069	
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.333	
	N	40	

Table 3: Relationship between extrinsic motivation and customer satisfaction

		Customer satisfaction	
Extrinsic motivation	Pearson Correlation	.069	
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.333	
	N	40	