ROLE OF CORPORATE REPUTATION DIMENSIONS ON THE LOYALTY OF CUSTOMERS OF HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS IN PLATEAU STATE

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Abstract

Understanding customer loyalty in a competitive business environment like Nigeria is critical hence the need to establish relevant predictors to it. Several empirical studies confirm the role of corporate reputation (CR) on customer loyalty (CL) however, there is a limited literature on the contributions of the dimensions of CR on CL. This study hypothesized that a positive relationship exists between dimensions of CR (product/service, innovation, workplace, governance, citizenship, leadership, performance) and CL. A cross-sectional mixed method approach was adopted to achieve the objectives of the study, using a sample of customers (retailers and wholesalers) of selected manufacturing companies in Plateau State. A hierarchical regression through SPSS-version 22 was used to analyze the quantitative data. The qualitative data collected were analyzed using the content analysis technique with the aid of NVivo9 software. The results revealed that the relationship between some of the dimensions to CR such as product and services, workplace innovation, citizenship, and leadership on CL was supported, while two of the relationships governance, and performance associated insignificantly with CL. The study recommended that firms in Nigeria should devote time to developing their *internal customers (employees) to enhance CL.* The implication of these findings was discussed and directions for future research were provided.

Keywords: Corporate reputation, Customer Loyalty, Household products.

Introduction

The hallmark for survival in today's competitive business environment is not just to attract new customers but the ability to retain them. Retaining a loyal customer is key to every organization because as competition increases, what keeps a business going is the customer base. This usually leads to repeat purchases, increases in sales, profitability, and return on investment (Bogale, Verhees & Trijp, 2018). Van, Chi, Chi, and Van Quang, (2016) underscore this position by acknowledging that organizations with loyal customers tend to gain in the area of; a) low promotional cost b) high bottom-line, since loyal customers are less sensitive to price changes, c) stable market share, since loyal customers spend more time with the company, d) strengthening of corporate reputation and brand image through loyal customers' positive recommendations. Despite the high potentials for growth, developing economies with half of the world's customer base and the largest growing market for middle-class customers , cannot compete with their foreign counterparts.

A World Economic Forum report (2018) reveals a steady decline (3.81% in 2009 to 3.3% in 2018) in the ability of Nigerian companies to compete with their foreign counterpart. This perhaps is indicative of the degree of pressure being experienced by businesses in developing countries (Azmat, & Huong, 2013). As competition becomes tough, businesses are under intense pressure to gain customers' trust and loyalty, hence the need to adopt the right strategy to get the needed result. This explains why most companies across the globe and indeed Nigeria strive for customer loyalty as the world's economy integrates. Customer loyalty is relevant in any business model. For example, (Marakanon and Panjakajornsak (2017) infer that perceived risk and customer trust have a direct influence on customer loyalty while perceived quality has an indirect effect on customer loyalty via customer trust. The finding places a premium on loyalty based on what the customer thinks as against what the organization wants him or her to believe. Others perceived loyalty from the organization's perspective (Paparoidamis, Katsikeas, & Chumpitaz, 2017 in press) and hence made a case for corporate social

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responsibility as a way of attracting loyal customers. (Fara, Azmat & Huong, 2013; Yeboah-Asiamah, Narteh & Mahmoud, 2018). Though corporate reputation has been researched as a precursor to customer loyalty (Keh & Xie, 2009; Foroudi, Jin, Gupta, Melewar, & Mahdi, 2016; Islam, et al.,2021), there is a dearth of studies on the effect of the seven dimensions of corporate reputation on customer loyalty.

This study contributes to the ongoing debate by evaluating the contributions of each dimension of corporate reputation on customer loyalty. The seven dimensions as advanced by (Fombrun, Ponzi, and Newburry (2015) include, product/service, innovation, workplace, governance, citizenship, leadership, and performance. Interestingly a search in the current literature on this from the Nigerian context reveals a lack of studies on these dimensions of corporate reputation on customer loyalty. Thus, this current study proposes a model to evaluate the contribution of each dimension of corporate reputation on customer loyalty with the hope of identifying which construct impacts the most. Similarly, the study answers the call by Milan, Slongo, Eberle, and Bebber (2017) for a novel approach to assimilate the dimensions of corporate reputation in loyalty study by unraveling their roles thereto. It answers a further call by Van, Chi, Chi, and Van Quang (2016) to identify the influence of the dimension of corporate reputation on customer loyalty of firms.

Theoretical Foundation

This study found image theory by Mitchell and Beach (1990) relevant in explaining the hypothesized relationships. The theory focuses on an individual and how s/he decides a relationship or organizational context. This is with the hope that the decision taken may remain or the decision is later changed. The theory posits that information structures represent what the decision-maker does, how and why he or she is doing it, and the kind of progress is being made (Beach & Mitchell, 1987). In addition, the theory views decisions as being made intuitively and automatically (Miles & Jeffrey, 2012). In line with image theory, people most often make decisions using simple, easy, non-analytic, and rapid processes for each decision, even when the decision has considerable importance to the decision-maker.

Furthermore, the theory proposes three forms of images that shaped one's decision to include, the Value image, the Trajectory image, and the Strategic image. The value image according to Miles (2012) includes the decision maker's principles, such as morals, ethics, value, ideals, standards of equality, justice, loyalty, and goodness, taken together with his or her moral, civic, and religious beliefs. The trajectory image, on the other hand, relates to the future state that the decision-maker tries to achieve an agenda, he or she focuses on, while the Strategic image consists of the various plans or strategies and tactics that the decision-maker adopts to actualize the trajectory image (Miles, 2012; Mitchell & Beach, 1990; Beach & Mitchell, 1987) .

As the theory evolves, the focus has begun to shift to the non-decision-making area such as supervision and job satisfaction (Bissell & Beach, 1996 in Miles, 2012). Others rode on the theory to connect the image of leadership on followers satisfaction and commitment (Dunegan, 2003), and a component of the theory on customer service satisfaction and commitment level (Gopinath, 2008; Miles, 2012). Similarly, Dunegan led advocacy for the integration of the theory with a multitude of managerial and organizational behavior and processes. Consistent with this, we found this theory underpinning the hypothesized relationships. For example, the value image dimension focuses on factors that stimulate an individual's decision. These bother on principles such as morals, ethics, ideals, justice, loyalty among many others (Miles, 2012), in line with this dimension, we proposed that the perception of corporate reputation is shaped by these principles mentioned in Miles. And that where an organization is seen as exhibiting certain values that are consistent with the value image of a customer, the possibility of loyalty becomes high. But where the contrary occurs, customer loyalty is expected to plunge.

Conceptual Review and Hypotheses Development

Citizenship and Customer Loyalty

Corporate Citizenship results in an organization's soft asset created as a result of companies' good deeds exhibited within their span of influence. Studies conducted by Orlitzky and Swanson, 2012; Gorondutse & Hilman, 2013) suggests that stakeholders tend to have high regard and admiration for a firm that is relentless in good deeds. There have been divergent opinions on corporate citizenship. While some score companies high for expressing good citizenship attributes others see it as a distraction and an unnecessary drain on corporate resources (Fombrun et al., 2015). This debate is also prominent among researchers (McGuire, Sundgren, & Schneeweis, 1988) who established that stock-market returns and accounting-based measures relate strongly to corporate citizenship. Similarly, studies have affirmed that firms who invest in citizenship activities tend to enjoy high performance and face significantly lower capital constraints (Cheng, Ioannou, & Serafeim, 2014; Kim, Kim, & Qian, 2018) when the firm's competitive-action level is high (Gorondutse & Hilman, 2013; Kim, Kim, & Qian, 2018). On the other hand, Kang, Germann, and Grewal (2016) concurred that firms are right if they expect to benefit financially as a reward for their citizenship activities. But they cautioned that if the motive is to make amends for their past irresponsibility, they should expect less benefit financially from such investments. Based on this evidence, the organization tends to gain more than the loss for corporate citizenship involvement. Riding on Image Theory (Beach & Mitchell, 1987) we argue that manufacturing firms who engage in corporate citizenship activities tickle positive dispositions from their customers. This is consistent with Fombrun, Gardberg, and Barnett (2000) who posit that citizenship programs are synonymous with corporate advertising in promoting an attractive image of the company. This hence suggests in line with the growing body of evidence that customers act favorably to offerings of firms that are committed to corporate citizenship. This perception stimulates affection for corporate brands and offerings resulting in customer loyalty. We, therefore, hypothesize that;

H1: Perception of citizenship to a greater extent influences Customer loyalty

Innovation and Customer Loyalty

Empirical pieces of evidence have linked innovation with a corporate reputation (Carpenter, 2000; Chun, 2006; Courtright & Smudde, 2009; Foroudi et al., 2016), which implies that effective communication about innovation puts an organization in a better position. Hence companies who respond rapidly to change embrace new products and new idea development which makes them more likely to earn respect and admiration (Gorondutse & Hilman, 2013f; Fombrun, Ponzi & Newbury, 2015) of their stakeholders. One of these stakeholders is the customer. In a study conducted in the service industry by Tsai (2017) innovation was found to associate with customers loyalty. On the other hand, the relation did not hold sway in the findings by Huang, Wu, Wen, Hsin-Fei, and Hairui (2017). Studies to date reveal inconclusive findings between innovation and loyalty (Pappu & Quester, 2016; Tsai, 2017; Huang, Wu, Wen, Hsin-Fei & Hairui 2017) in the service sector. Riding on Image theory we argue that innovation is capable of stimulating a positive image in the minds of customers. This positive perception triggers customers' positive feelings (Meyer & Allen, 1991) thereby inducing loyalty. Based on this we, therefore, hypothesize that;

H2: Perception of innovation to a greater extent influences Customer loyalty

Governance and Customer Loyalty

Governance is seen as the structures, processes, and institutions within and around organizations saddled with the role of allocating power and resource control among members of a giving setting (Kim, McFarland, Kwon, Son, & Griffith, 2011). As firms continue to grow governance is increasingly recognized as a critical challenge (Ndubisi, Malhotra & Wah, 2009)). Instituting the right governance structures is a plus to every corporate organization. Furthermore, a well-managed governance structure creates an image of an organization that is upright and keeps to industry best practices (Radbourne, 2003). Such attributes enable it to gain the admiration of stakeholders thereby bolstering corporate reputation.

Though a plethora of studies exists on the role of reputation on customer loyalty, there seems to be a dearth of literature on the governance dimension to corporate reputation on customer loyalty. Kim et al., (2011) posit that stakeholders (customers) are regularly interested and are often exposed to information about a company's governance structure and procedure, as this is no more hidden. Information can be obtained from media, auditor's reports, and government agencies on request. According to Fombrun et al. (2015) and Ndubisi, Malhotra, and Wah (2009) a company that is perceived to have a strong corporate governance mechanism with an ethical and transparent image, is more likely it is to stimulate customers and other stakeholders' interest. Consistent with the aforementioned, we hypothesized that:

H3: Perception of governance to a greater extent influences Customer loyalty

Corporate Performance and Customer Loyalty

Scholars have long acknowledged the importance of a firm's financial performance in stakeholder perception of corporate image (Fombrun et al., 2015; Lange et al., 2011). Although this position might differ by various scholars, who feel corporate image acquired through citizenship should influence a firm's performance (Kang et al., 2016; Wang, Chen, Yu, & Hsiao, 2015), it is noteworthy that strong financial performance implies the positive outcome. In line with the forgone, it is imperative to state that past and current profitability hold sway to stakeholders' assessment of the company's potential success.

Similarly, since a firm's performance is the aggregation of employees' performance, this no doubt underscores the critical roles they play as the interface between the organization and its customers (Vem & Dakung, 2012; Osibanjo, Adeniji & Abiodun, 2013) and as organization's internal customer (Mohrw-Jackson, 1991). In the course of interfacing between the organization and the customers, employees project the company in good light with a strong prospect. This unique expression of knowledge skills and abilities (KSA) stimulates confidence and a positive image (Miles, 2012) thereby spurring loyalty.

H4: Perception of corporate performance to a greater extent influences Customer loyalty.

Corporate Leadership and Customer Loyalty

Studies seem to be silent on the direct relationship between corporate leadership and customer loyalty. But it is imperative to note that leadership has been found to stimulate customer value creation (Hsiao, Lee, & Chen, 2015), and value creation is found to relate strongly with customer loyalty (Gorondutse, Hilman & Nasidi, 2014; Ya-Ling & Eldon, 2017). The perception of value creation catalyzes positive disposition which in turn could stimulate customer loyalty. In suing for a possibility of a direct relationship, this study aligns with Bendisch, Larsen, and Trueman (2013) that a display of good leadership from chief executive officers is an ingredient for corporate admiration and trust. Heroic or unpopular displays of leadership can positively or otherwise form the perception of a company's image by stakeholders. Since no two managers are the same in their abilities, those with charismatic and proven integrity attract favorable endorsement. This builds a positive corporate reputation and customer loyalty.

Consistent with the above findings and also image theory, we posit that manufacturing firms whose leaders enjoy stakeholder admiration and endorsement will tend to attract customers' interest and loyalty more than those whose CEO lacks charisma and integrity. Hence this study hypothesizes that;

H5: Perception of corporate leadership to a greater extent influences Customer loyalty

Product / Services and Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty can be described as repeat purchase behavior by the customer in favor of a given organization's offering. It has been suggested through existing literature that the customer is attracted to a company from the products and services offered in the marketplace. Hence the perceptions of the product/service brands in terms of quality influence its reputation (Smith, Smith, & Wang, 2010; Osibanjo, Adeniji & Abiodun, 2013) whether positive or negative. That is why authors (Raza, Siddiquei, Awan, & Bukhari, 2012) posit that product or service quality has a strong influence on customer's revisit intention. In this current study, we expected that a manufacturing industry that is interested in attracting the better patronage of customers in a highly competitive business environment must pay attention to the quality of products and services it brings to the market (Shabbir, Malik & Malik, 2016). Since a company's offering strongly influence customers' decision. Similarly, Lange, Lee, and Dai (2011) underscore the role a company's product and services play in creating impressions in non-customers and customers on their subsequent actions.

In keeping with the value image dimension of image theory (Mitchell & Beach, 1990; Miles, 2012) who propose that customer decision making is influenced by certain principles, such as morals, ethics, value, ideals, standards of equality, justice, etc taken together with his or her moral, civic, and religious beliefs. We then argue that so long as customers perceive a product/service as meeting these set principles and are thought to be high in quality, value, and service, the higher their level of loyalty. We, therefore, hypothesize that:

H6: Perception of products/ services to a greater extent influences customer loyalty

Workplace and Customer Loyalty

Studies have shown that internal and external stakeholders are inclined toward companies that create and maintain good workplaces. Where employees feel ostracized (Zhu, Lyu, Deng, & Ye, 2017) in a workplace, tension is created and the customers suffer. Since employees are the interface that connects the organization with its external stakeholders (Vem & Dakung, 2012) employees are more likely to commit to long-term involvement as ambassadors of the company (Fombrun, Ponzi & Newburry, 2015) and give a good employer a favorable rating when the work environment is favorable. Gorondutse, Hilman, and Nasidi (2014) added that a good workplace has high tendencies of attracting a quality workforce whose hallmark is a success. Such positive energy from the employee could, in turn, create the right impact on the customer to perceive the firm is reputable. Unfortunately, studies that connect workplace and customer loyalty are rare in the search conducted using the available databases.

Considering the obvious influence of the workplace on the behavior of the internal stakeholder, which in turn creates a positive image of the company to the external stakeholders, we posit that the workplace will relate positively to customer loyalty. We hence hypothesized that;

H7: Perception of the workplace to a greater extent influences Customer loyalty

Method

Data and Sample

This study adopted a cross-sectional mixed-methods where the data used for hypotheses testing were drawn from customers of selected manufacturers of household products in Plateau State, North-central Nigeria. Using the sample size determination formula by Cochran (1977) which was developed to calculate a representative sample for an unknown population, a sample of 384 was drawn. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to determine the sample frame. First, we select companies that specialize in the manufacturing of household products. Secondly, 7 companies were streamlined based on having a plant or regional distribution outlet in Plateau State. Thirdly, participants who were mostly wholesalers and retailers were selected using systematic random sampling at an arrival-administration interval of four (4). Research volunteers or Informants were deployed at the companies and major outlets across the State to administer a questionnaire to wholesalers. We liaise with the companies to identify the wholesalers likewise with the wholesalers to locate the retailers.

Given the conceptualization of this study, the quantitative method was predominant, and the qualitative data was employed to complement the quantitative results. Quantitative data were obtained through a self-response questionnaire. This is usually criticized for its potential challenges on research outcomes (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). In this study, we ensured that across measures or similarities in item structure or wording which could induce similar responses are identified and reconciled (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). Questionnaire items were muddled to avoid issues related to consistency motifs, idiosyncratic implicit theories, social desirability tendencies (Podsakoff et al., 2012; Chang, Van Witteloostuijn, & Eden, 2010). Similarly, the data related to the antecedent variables and the outcome variable was collected in two waves within an interval of 4 weeks (Chang, Van Witteloostuijn, & Eden, 2010). Out of 384 questionnaires administered 270 usable responses were considered, indicating a response rate of 70%.

Measures

The antecedent variable, corporate reputation, we measured using a multidimensional measure which includes; product and services, innovation, workplace, governance, citizenship, leadership, and performance dimension, developed by Fombrun et al. (2015). The seven dimensions of corporate reputation are made up of the following items. Product and service were measured using 4 items, which requires customers to rate their perception of the company's product and services. Secondly, the innovativeness dimension to corporate reputation measure consisted of 3 items. Workplace as a dimension to corporate reputation was developed on a 3 item. Another dimension to corporate reputation as developed in Fombrun et al. (2015) includes governance. It consisted of 3 items measured. Corporate citizenship was also used as a dimension to corporate reputation (Fombrun et al., 2015). It is a 3-item questionnaire adapted in this study. Another dimension to corporate reputation as developed by the same author is leadership. It was designed on 4 items. Also, dimension corporate performance was developed on 3-item. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for all the 7-dimension ranged between 0.84-0.96 (Fombrun et al., 2015).

Customer loyalty measure was adopted from Oliver (1997). It was adapted as a uni-dimensional measure made of 15-items, with a Cronbach Alpha of 0.88. All the measures were assessed on a 5-point Likert-typed ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The qualitative data were obtained using a purposive sampling method where 5 customers (retailers and wholesalers) of selected manufacturers of household products were identified and interviewed. This approach was selected because of its ability to provide explanations grounded in reality. With the permission of the respondents, all the interviews were audio-recorded. Each of them lasted between 50 minutes and 1 hour.

The data (typed notes and audio) were transcribed verbatim, imported into NVivo 9, and analyzed using the content analysis technique. The paragraphs (segments) in each transcript that dealt with the management of the study variables constituted the units of analysis. Based on the recommendations by Bazeley (2007), Creswell (2006), Pope et al. (2000), and Miles and Huberman (1994), each interview was coded and data analyzed. First, a scheme representing the various study variables was developed from the literature to determine operational definitions to ease the coding process. The predetermined categories were then coded into nodes (see figure 2). In the second round of coding, all transcripts were reviewed carefully, categorizing text sentences into developing themes. These themes formed the subcategory codes within each of the major categories. This approach helped to manage the data and remove irrelevant data. Using selective coding, the components of each subcategory were specified. This involved grouping quotations from the transcripts that represented each subcategory. The purpose was to enable the researcher to use the words of participants as much as possible to maximize the representation of their views as opposed to those of the researcher.

Data analyses

This section contains preliminary analyses to assess missing values and test the assumptions of the regression to determine whether the dataset is appropriate for further analysis. First, missing values analysis was conducted to assess whether the missing values occur at random. Since the result of Little's MCAR was not significant we conducted the expectation-maximization procedure to replace the missing values. Second, a further test was conducted on the dataset in line with other assumptions. Hence, we tested for normality, linearity, outliers, and multicollinearity. The Histogram reasonably indicated normality while the Normal P-P Plot of regression standardized residual also followed a straight line satisfying the assumption of linearity. Furthermore, multicollinearity was assessed by calculating the tolerance and VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) values. The tolerance values calculated as 0.919, 0.733, 0.786, 0.734, 0.597, 0.537, and 0.480 and the VIF of 1.088, 1.364, 1.272, 1.362, 1.674, 1.862, and 2.085 for corporate citizenship, innovation, governance, performance, leadership, product/services, and workplace respectively, were all within the acceptable threshold (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011; Diamantopoulos, & Siguaw, 2006) making the dataset appropriate for regression analysis.

Reliability

To establish the reliability of the variables in this model, Cronbach's alpha was used. The Cronbach's alpha values obtained from the analysis are 0.807, 0.803, 0.815, 0.816, 0.849, 0.800, 0.788 and 0.801 for citizenship, innovation, governance, performance, leadership, product/service and workplace respectively. These are above the threshold of .70 by Nunnally (1978).

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 represents the respondents' profiles. A total of 270 respondents are considered in this survey, with the following characteristics. In respect to gender, one hundred and fifty (150) respondents, which represent 56%, were female, while the remaining 44% were male. The composition of the customers is as thus;

Wholesalers were fifty (50) which represents 19%, while two hundred and twenty (220) retailers represent 81% of the customer base. The ages covered in the survey were between 21-30yrs representing 32%, 31-40yrs representing 27%, 41- 50yrs representing 23%, and above 50yrs representing 17% of the total number. Based on years of experience, those that have patronized the company between 1-10yrs make 39% of the respondents, while those above10 years constituted 61% of the respondents

Table 1 Respondents Profile

Indices	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
Gender		
Male	120	44
Female	150	56
Dealing with company		
Wholesaler	50	19
Retailer	220	81
Age		
21-30	86	32
31-40	74	27
41-50	63	23
50 and above	47	17
Business Experience		
1-10yrs	105	39
10yrs and above	165	61

A correlation analysis was conducted and presented in Table 2, to have an idea about the strength of association between major variables in this study. Gender was associated with dealing but not significantly associated with other variables likewise is dealing. This shows that customer loyalty and reputation do not depend on these. Experience was seen to associate strongly with corporate citizenship and innovation ($p<0.01$) and weakly associated with performance and workplace ($p<0.05$). Other variables apart from governance and performance were found to associate strongly with customer loyalty as seen in their $p<0.01$ while weakly associated with themselves. This suggests a strong correlation between the five dimensions of CR with customer loyalty.

Results

We evaluated the relationship between corporate reputation dimensions and customer loyalty using hierarchical multiple regression via SPSS version 22. The results in Table 3 indicated that Model 1 shows that corporate citizenship accounts for 32% of the variance explained by the model with a statistically significant relationship between corporate citizenship and CL (FΔ 94.949; $p<.001$). In the relationship between innovation and CL, model 2 revealed an extra 14.5% of the variability in CL (FΔ 53.810; $p<.001$).

However, when governance is added in model 3, it accounted for 1.9% variance explained in CL as observed in (FΔ 7.442; p-value>0.05). Similarly, the

Table 2 Correlation and Discriminant validity among Major Variables

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	Gender	1										
2	Dealing	.230**	1									
3	Experience	-.178*	-.128	1								
4	Citizenship	-.096	-.083	.278**	0.802							
5	Governance	-.080	-.038	.128	.115*	0.703						
6	Innovation	-.014	-.002	.241**	.062	.120*	0.715					
7	Leadership	.118	.004	-.001	.116*	.115*	.377**	0.801				
8	Customer Loyalty	.037	.006	.087	.568**	.012	.421**	.399**	0.708			
9	Performance	.004	.092	.169*	.063	.151*	.120*	.145*	.015	0,734		
10	Product/Services	.005	-.020	.014	.131	.014	.117*	.012	.232**	.121*	0.747	
11	Workplace	.000	.056	.166*	.191	.117*	.206**	.213**	.438**	.112*	.100	0.735

addition of performance dimension in model 4 also yielded insignificant results as seen in the increase of variance explained of 0.8% and (FΔ 3.093 p-value>0.05). Model 5 showed an increase in variance explained of 7%, with a statistically significant link between leadership and CL as seen in (FΔ 31.42; p-value<0.01). in addition, model 6 and model 7 both have a statistically significant relationship as seen in the predictive roles of product/service and workplace on CL which reveal (FΔ 27.77; p-value<0.01) and (FΔ 14.70; p-value<0.01), with an increase in variance explained of 5.4% and 2.7% respectively. Therefore, the H1, H2 H5 H6, and H7 analyzed in Table 4, using hierarchical regression analysis with CL as the dependent variable were supported, while H3 and H4 were not supported.

Table 3 Result of Hierarchical Regression

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Constant	16.527	12.139	9.886	8.856	8.929	9.146	8.479
Citizenship	0.567***	0.340***	0.306	0.297	0.227	0.143	0.122
Innovation		0.444***	0.401	0.373	0.284	0.230	0.178
Governance			0.114	0.130	0.083	0.013	0.051
Performance				0.102	0.029	0.024	0.003
Leadership					0.337***	0.291	0.263
Product/Services						0.317***	0.256
Workplace							0.236***
R	0.568	0.684	0.698	0.704	0.752	0.787	0.808
R2	0.323	0.468	0.487	0.495	0.565	0.620	0.646
Adj. R2	0.320	0.462	0.479	0.485	0.554	0.608	0.634
R2 Change	0.323	0.145	0.019	0.008	0.070	0.054	0.027
F Change	94.949	53.81	7.442	3.095	31.42	27.77	14.70
Sig. F Change	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.080	0.000	0.000	0.000

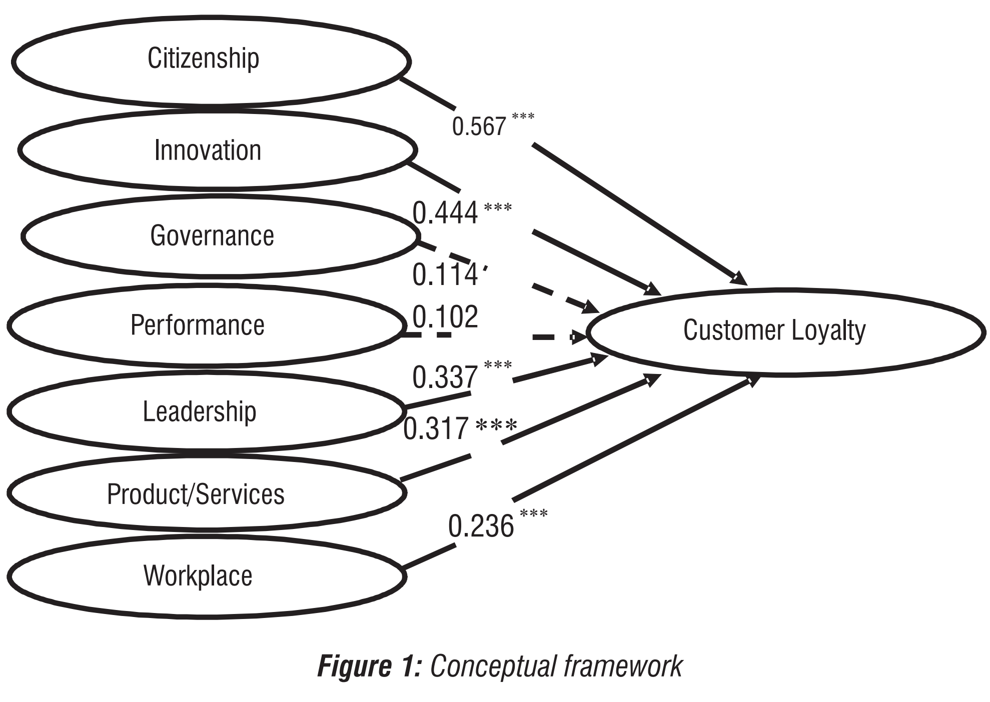

Figure 1: *Conceptual framework*

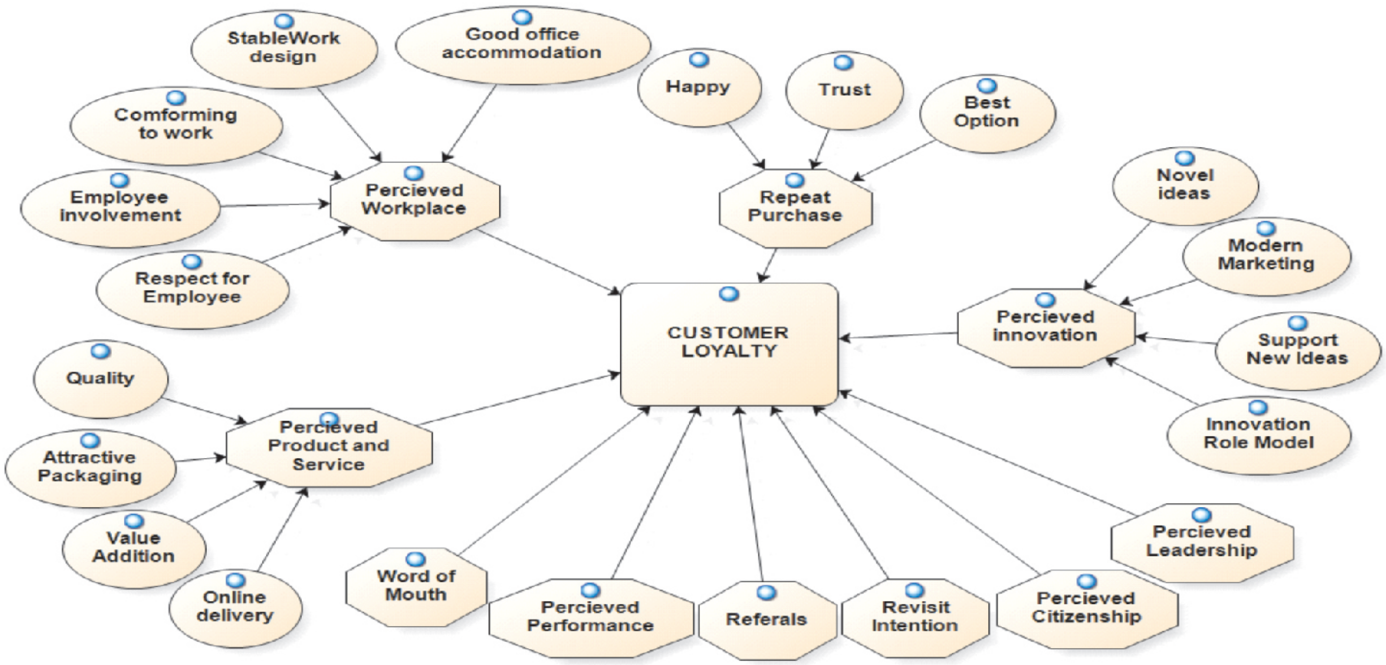

Figure 2 *Hierarchical Model of Qualitative Results*

Qualitative Results

Emerging themes on factors associated with customer loyalty

To obtain a clearer picture, it was necessary to examine these emerging factors (product and services, workplace, innovation, citizenship, and leadership on customer loyalty governance, performance, and customer loyalty). The emergent themes and sub-themes were translated into a narrative account and connected using a hierarchical model developed with the aid of the model function in NVivo 9 software. The main themes characterizing the aspects of each variable/ component are shown as subheadings and discussed as vignettes.

Discussion of Findings

The study was conducted to determine the relationship between corporate reputation dimensions; product/ service, innovation, workplace, governance citizenship, leadership and performance (Fombrun et al., 2015), and customer loyalty. Following the analysis conducted using hierarchical regression, the result obtained and presented in Table 4 and figure 1, is thus discussed

Based on the result in H1 it is deduced that perceived product/service positively and significantly influence customer loyalty. Meaning that customer loyalty is influenced by the quality of goods and services offered by the companies studied. This is consistent with who inferred that product or service quality has a strong influence on customer's revisit intention but goes contrary to the findings of who discovered an insignificant direct relationship between perceived service quality and customer loyalty. This is supported also by the findings from the analysis of qualitative data which indicate that the customers were influenced by the quality of products/services offered by manufacturing firms

> *"I have been enjoying the quality of the products/services. Specifically, the after-sales support I received made them loyal to the companies. Also, because my complaints are always being adhered to and well appreciated, it encouraged my revisit intentions. A typical case I can recall is my experience in 2016 where Grand Cereals manufacturing firm called to appreciate my loyalty to the firm's products. I was highly rewarded during the 2016 Christmas period…."* Case 1

The allegiance pledged by customers is tied to their perception and satisfaction with packaging, styling as well as the quality of the products they patronize. This study also provides support for the assertions of the Image Theory where customer perception of positive reputation translates into positive energy, hence stimulating loyalty.

Furthermore, the result between perceived innovation and customer loyalty was also positive and significant. This result suggests that loyalty to the organizations studied is influenced significantly by innovation. That is, the more customers perceive a manufacturing firm as innovative in the area of product and service delivery the more the expression of loyalty behavior is in favor of the firms. Adding to that, it is possible to assume that coming up with novel ideas in a product or service plays a critical role in the patronage and retention of customers. In Nigeria for instance, some customers may not necessarily pay their loyalty to certain products after patronage immediately, rather prefer to be identified with their newness/uniqueness as evidenced in the interview

> ………. *seeing companies who respond rapidly to changes by embracing new product and idea development makes them earn their respect and admiration. For me, I can say that innovation by such firms has influenced my loyalty to their products/services."* Case 2

Though other scholars (discovered otherwise in the service industry and others feel it is inconclusive , this study in Nigerian context underscores who established that innovativeness influence customers loyalty.

Similarly, Perceived workplace and customer loyalty yielded a positive and significant relationship. Considering the results of this study, this construct impacts the most on customer loyalty. Suggesting that an organization with a positive image in terms of workplace involvement as against ostracism safety of its employees in line with ergonomically sound practice tended to attract customer loyalty. This is because employees are the interface between an organization and its customers and an unhealthy environment might pose psychological and hygiene challenges which could affect the employee well-being, which spills over to the quality of products, and services offered. This is supported by the interview conducted

> "I respect the inclination of the stakeholders (internal and external) toward creating and maintaining a good workplace. So far, as a retailer, I feel connected with these firms because of the commitment of their employees to long-term involvement as ambassadors of their companies. Such positive energy from the employees has, in turn, created the right impact on me to perceive the firm as reputable". Case 3

The relationship between governance and customer loyalty was positive but statistically insignificant. Suggesting that, customers' loyalty is not predicted by corporate governance. By implication, customers are not concerned about corporate governance issues but are interested in what affects them directly. An interesting example is a case illustrated in the interview with a wholesaler

> …..while, instituting the right governance structures could be a plus to a corporate firm. I am pretty sure that such attributes enable it to gain admiration especially from other stakeholders like the shareholders, would-be investors, and government agencies, thereby bolstering corporate reputation. However, for me as a wholesaler, I am not so much concerned about corporate governance issues of the firms but very much interested in what affects me directly. What concerns me is prompt response to my complaints, a show of respect, and meeting my product/service expectations..: Case 4

Findings, however, go contrary to the position purported in which says that, the more a company is perceived to have a strong corporate governance mechanism with an ethical and transparent image, the more likely they can stimulate customers and other stakeholders' interest.

In addition, the relationship between citizenship and customer loyalty revealed a positive significance. Meaning that customer loyalty to the companies studied is significantly influenced by citizenship. These findings underscore the previous finding that high citizenship performance significantly lower capital constraints (, thereby deepening the firm's competitive-action level (.

Similarly, the result from the test of the relationship between perceived leadership and customer loyalty is positively significant. Meaning that customer loyalty can also be influenced by the type of leadership found in the organizations studied. This is in tandem with who asserted that a display of good leadership from Chief Executive Officers is an ingredient for corporate admiration and trust. There is no gain-say that, an organization with good leaders or leadership style influences not only the employee but customers alike. Lastly, the result of the relationship between perceived performance and loyalty reveals a positive but insignificant relationship, meaning that a company's performance does not influence customers' loyalty. This suggests that customers may not be aware of an organization's internal performance of but they are interested in product quality and price of goods and services provided to them. The evidence of this finding is further buttressed by the interviews conducted and illustrated.

> "*Oh oh…., I am not their employees, please! The fact that I patronize the firms' products does not suggest that I know their internal dealings. I cannot just assure you of my knowledge about the firms' internal performance because that does not concern us. What interests me that will make me devoted are the quality of products/services, good prices, and distribution of the products to my convenience.* Case 5

Given the insights as illustrated in the interview, the rejection of the hypothesis means that customers' expectations and allegiance to the quality of products/services, good prices, and right distribution of the products does not solidly depend on their knowledge about how the internal affairs of the manufactured firms are conducted.

Implication of Findings

The findings of this study showed that most corporate reputation dimensions are associated with customer loyalty. That is to say that, customers perceived the impact of each dimension on corporate reputation differently. Overall, though all the dimensions of corporate reputation are associated positively with customer loyalty, the sample in this study showed that two (Perceived governance, Perceived performance) out of the dimensions are statistically insignificant. This inference portends theoretical, practical, and policy implications to managers.

Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, evidence that emerged from this finding is that corporate reputation has a positive effect on customer loyalty. Therefore, the study has provided empirical validation on the fact that the reputation of a firm impacts positively on the action of its stakeholders and one of which is the customer. Second, the result further raised a question on whether reputation dimensions as claimed in and Reptrak, (2018; 2017) relate to all categories of stakeholders. For example, customers are interested in products and services, as well as innovation in a firm. A firm that meets this need stands a chance of appealing to this set of stakeholders. Similarly, the workplace is of interest to all categories of customers. Considering employees as internal customers, the workplace is key in stimulating normative commitment. This has a multiplier effect through word of mouth and behavior towards the external customer. In addition, corporate citizenship and leadership seemed to interest customers. This is expected given the direct impact on them. For example, corporate citizenship is an altruistic act that has the public as its focus. Likewise, ethical leadership is prone to focusing on others' well-being rather than self. In keeping with the leadership's ethical ideology, they tend to favor industry ideals that are shaped by their conviction on profitability based on triple-bottom-line, hence attracting customers' admiration. The insignificance of perceived governance and performance is not surprising since both dimensions are most likely to be linked to stakeholders such as shareholders, would-be investors, and government agencies rather than customers.

Managerial Implication

The present research has several implications for managers in underscoring the place of corporate reputation in the quest for gaining competitiveness through customer loyalty. This is evident in low promotional cost, high bottom-line (since loyal customers are less sensitive to price changes), stable market share, (since loyal customers spend more resources with the company), and positive recommendations (Reichheld, 1996). Having established that customers are easily tickled by the perception of a specific corporate image dimension that relates to them, manufacturing companies must emphasize those areas that appeal more to the customers. To thrive manufacturing firms in Nigeria and another developing worlds must consider investing in activities that will ensure product and service quality. Similarly, having established a relationship with innovation, emphasis on research and development will be key in stimulating such behavior among firms to stem the nose-diving (World Economic Forum report 2018) competitive trend.

The significant relationship between workplace and customer loyalty buttresses the fact that internal customers (employees) play a key role in-image advertising. This is as reflected in the result of the analysis where the contribution of this dimension to corporate reputation on customer loyalty impacts the most. Though little research interest has been paid to the role of the internal customer within the marketing circle (Mohrw-Jackson, 1991) particularly in Nigeria, factoring (education and training, involvement and contribution, empowerment, and reward structures) into the customer orientation equation will no doubt dovetail the trend of competitiveness of Nigerian firms with others who realized the role of internal customers in their business models. In the same vein, the findings revealed corporate citizenship and leadership as important factors in stimulating customer loyalty. This result is expected, given the immense benefit to the organizational image. For example, Bendisch, Larsen, and Trueman (2013) have argued that good leadership spawns corporate admiration and trust. This calls for periodic training of firms' leadership and supervisor to prepare them for succession. Likewise, managers should step up their corporate citizenship activities given its significant influence on customer loyalty,

Conclusion

This study was conducted to establish the impact of the various dimensions of corporate reputation on loyalty among the customers of manufacturing firms in plateau state. Based on the results of hierarchical regression, we found out that, product/service, innovation, workplace, citizenship, and leadership dimensions positively and significantly influence loyalty, while performance and governance positively but unexpectedly were not significant in influencing customer loyalty. Given the importance of corporate reputation, organizations must not pay lip service to the corporate image, since it is critical to business success. In addition, since most dimensions of corporate reputation relate significantly to customer loyalty, it is expected of firms in developing countries to constantly evaluate themselves on the reputational scale. Doing so will no doubt enhance customer loyalty and consequently, position them to compete advantageously with their counterparts globally.

Direction for future studies

At this point, it is apt to provide some directions for other researchers to extend this debate further. For instance, we expected that governance and performance like other dimensions to relate significantly to customer loyalty, surprisingly it was a weak relationship. Future researchers could explore this relationship further by introducing a moderating factor to understand the condition for the unexpected result. Another suggestion for would-be researchers is to replicate a similar study in other sectors like the service industry and even religious organizations to determine the basis for the absolute loyalty of followers to their leaders and doctrines.

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