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## **Direct Selling Strategies and Customers Loyalty in the Nigerian Deposit Money Banks**

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**Abstract**---Direct Selling has become a veritable part of business success story particularly in the deposit money bank of Nigeria. The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of direct selling strategies on customer's loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks. Primary data was used for the study. The data were collected through a structured questionnaire. The study adopted the cross-sectional survey research design method. The population of the study was 812 employees from selected deposit money banks (Zenith Bank, GT Bank, UBA, First Bank, and Fidelity Bank) in Delta State. A total number of 260 respondents were selected as the sample size. To validate the instrument, face and content validity were adopted. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the responses from the respondents. Multiple regression analysis was applied to analyze the effect of the variables of direct selling strategies on customer's loyalty. Findings show that face-to-face communication ( $\beta = 0.185$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), sales team cohesion ( $\beta = 0.196$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), sales technology ( $\beta = 0.328$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and adaptive selling style ( $\beta = 0.293$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) exhibited significant positive effect on customers loyalty.

**Keywords**---customers loyalty, direct selling strategies, money banks, Nigerian deposit.

## Introduction

In a dynamic environment, industry players must be innovative in their strategies and ensure proper implementation of the strategies to achieve their objectives. Increased sales volume is one of the main focuses of any business or bank. Banks have traditionally operated in a relatively stable environment for decades, however, today the industry is facing dramatically aggressive competition in a new liberalized environment. Banking is one of the prominent service sectors that constitute the backbone of the economy of every nation (Sinha & Mukherjee, 2020). By knowing the effect of direct selling strategy as a strategic response to the competitive business environment in enhancing a bank's profit, the bank's management can concentrate their efforts to optimize their direct selling strategies to increase banks' performance. Marketing of banking services has become the prime interest of researchers all over the world (Odi et al., 2014; Waruguru, 2015; Muthengi, 2015). The banking products have become so similar in features and similarity which has left the customers with difficulty in the choice of the bank to use. This in turn has made the banks adopt aggressive differentiation and marketing strategies to be able to out-smart their competitors. Among the strategies, banks pursue towards meeting their broad goals and objectives is the adoption of a direct selling strategy. In this strategy, banks employ a large sales force that is charged with the responsibility of selling various bank products and services. The banks have formed formidable direct sales teams whose supervision is done by the sales managers and are divided as per the various product lines the bank wants to drive in the market (Castaldo et al., 2016; Ahn et al., 2021).

In the modern world, direct selling strategy is fast becoming a significant approach to businesses. Most organizations employ this strategy as a way of ensuring a high level of influence on their customers. Customers' perceptions about a firm's products and services are easily fast-tracked. Euromonitor (2012) stated that direct selling strategy has been in existence for a reasonably long period in the developed world. This has led to the establishment of strong direct selling tactics compared to the developing world. In Nigeria, the direct selling strategy has consistently gained prominence for the past few years. Some organizations appear to be investing substantial income in training, development, and management of the direct sales force. This focus on direct sales has led organizations, especially in the service industry, to invest heavily in the management of the sales force. The successful implementation of the sales strategy has led to a very significant increase in sales volume. Selling has however become very competitive and this has led to compromises on the work ethic that eventually affects customers' loyalty. In short, you build customers loyalty by treating people nicely and professionally (Ferrell & Ferrell, 2012; Peterson et al., 2019).

As Kelvin & Kotler (2018), points out, customers loyalty is all about driving perceived value, whether that is rational (functional, quality, cost, etc.), emotional

(trust, service, communication, information, and brand equity) or a combination of these two dimensions. First, identify what leverages top-end customers commitment and advocacy behavior, and then build customers' experiences around it. Not only is our decision-making influenced by what we feel, but we also get an energy boost from strong emotions (Kelvin & Kotler, 2018). Direct selling strategies and tactics should be geared towards customers loyalty by inspiring and motivating people. People are emotional creatures. Not only is our decision-making influenced by what we feel, but we also get an energy boost from strong emotions (Kelvin & Kotler, 2018).

Direct selling strategies are held as an important first step in creating or growing one's business. For a company to succeed or survive, it is imperative to have effective sales strategies. Direct sales can be viewed as a methodology used by a salesperson to gain a sale by focusing on the product features and its benefits to the customers against the competition during the sales talk. Direct selling strategy is a strategy mostly applied in an industry that has a high mobile sales force and emphasizes interpersonal relationships. Direct Selling is a marketing method defined as face-to-face selling away from fixed retail locations (Brodi et al., 2002). Direct selling typically includes home selling situations such as door-to-door solicitations, appointments, referrals, and product parties, as well as catalogues and the Internet to disseminate information (Alturas, 2003). By design, direct selling organizations (DSO's) rely more on the selling skills of their sales force than on indirect communications such as advertising (Nat & Keep, 2002). Direct selling representatives sell aggressively to reach the consumer who buys at the premises of consumers. Persons responsible for the sale are encouraged to include in their current activities modern tools offered by information technology to increase productivity and efficiency. A customer always wants to establish a strong relationship with salesmen who he/she trust to a reasonable extent. Limited studies have been conducted on direct selling strategies and none has addressed the effect it may have on customer's loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks, therefore this study aims to fill this knowledge gap (Eluyela et al., 2018; Hassan, 2015).

### **Problem statement**

Banks have strived to have superior customer's acquisition strategies while paying little attention to customer's retention. Therefore, these deposit money banks in Nigeria have employed direct selling strategies which entail face-to-face communication, sales team cohesion, sales technology, and adaptive selling style to achieve increased customers acquisition and customers loyalty (customer retention). Unfortunately, some firms are yet to recognize the effects the above may have on their sales performance. Due to the rapid expansion of technology, many individuals fear that people may be too immersed in this digital world and not be present enough in the real world. The incompetent nature of a company's sales force can affect the firm's marketing performance in particular and human society's economic well-being in general. It becomes apparent that the effect of poor sales force performance in a sales job is not limited to the firms alone but also the economy by extension (Boles et al., 2000).

Direct selling can save the company a lot of costs, yet they are accompanied by uncertain risks faced by salespersons. Most customers sometimes appear to worry about the misuse of these strategies and are always concerned that they may become victims of fraud. Direct sales representatives are usually employed on a contract basis and their pay is pegged on their performance. They do not enjoy most of the fringe benefits as the permanent and pensionable employees. Despite the relevance of direct selling strategies, some organizations are yet to adequately utilize them successfully. Few research has been done on direct selling strategies and none has addressed the effect it may have on customer loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks, therefore this study seeks to examine the effect of direct selling strategy on customer loyalty in the Nigerian banking industry (Suleiman & Dandago, 2014; Onakoya et al., 2018).

### **Objectives**

- Determine the effect of face-to-face communication on customer's loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks.
- ascertain the effect of sales team cohesion on customers loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks.
- examine the effect of sales technology on customers loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks.
- determine the effect of adaptive selling style on customers loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks.
- Research Questions
- This study is guided by the following research questions;
- how does face-to-face communication affect customers loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks?
- to what extent does sales team cohesion affect customers loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks?
- how does sales technology affect customers loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks?
- what is the effect of adaptive selling style on customers loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks?

### **Research hypotheses**

- H<sub>01</sub>: There is no positive significant relationship between face-to-face communication and customer's loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks.
- H<sub>02</sub>: Sales team cohesion has no positive significant relationship with customers loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks.
- H<sub>03</sub>: There is no positive significant relationship between sales technology and customers loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks.
- H<sub>04</sub>: Adaptive selling style has no positive significant relationship with customers loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks.

## **Review of related literature**

### **Conceptual review**

#### **Direct selling strategy**

Direct selling is the marketing and selling of products directly to consumers away from a fixed retail location. Peddling is the oldest form of direct selling (Direct Selling Methods). Modern direct selling includes sales made through the party plan, one-on-one demonstrations, and other personal contact arrangements as well as internet sales (Merrilees & Miller, 1999). Direct selling is distinct from direct marketing because it is about individual sales agents reaching and dealing directly with clients (Gupta, 2016). Direct marketing is about business organizations seeking a relationship with their customers without going through an agent/consultant or retail outlet (Gupta, 2016). Direct selling often, but not always, uses multi-level marketing (salesperson is paid for selling and sales made by people he recruits or sponsors) rather than single-level marketing (salesperson is paid only for the sales he makes himself) (Abrams, 2019). Direct selling is a type of sales channel where products are marketed directly to customers, eliminating the need for middlemen – wholesalers, advertisers, and retailers (Gupta, 2016). Direct selling can be conducted one-on-one, in a group or party format, or online.

#### **Customers loyalty**

Customer loyalty is all about attracting the right customer, getting them to buy, buy often, buy in higher quantities, and bring you even more customers. Customer loyalty, according to Heskett & Schlesinger(1991), is built by keeping in touch with customers using email marketing, thank you cards, treating the sales team well so they treat customers well, showing that you care and remembering what customers like and don't like, and building loyalty by rewarding customers for choosing the company over competitors. Loyalty represents a profound commitment to repeat the buying process of a favorite product or service, generating a continual buying behavior of the same brand or product, apart from situational influences of competitive companies marketing efforts (Oliver, 2018). Before 1970 loyalty was considered to be only a continual buying behavior but Day introduces the approach supporting that loyalty has to be considered as a relationship between attitude and behavior (Kuusik, 2007). Approaching loyalty as a two-dimensional concept is very practical and is explained in studies that prove the multi-dimensional characteristic of this phenomenon. The two-dimensional approach of loyalty facilitates the identification of customers' segments as a function of loyalty level and marketing strategies adapted for attracting specific types of customers (Baloglu, 2002).

#### **Face-to-face communication**

The diversity of communication styles and cultural expectations, the lack of time to develop relationships and the heavy reliance on written or electronic forms of communication are all identical to how human beings traditionally create and maintain relationships. The traditional notion of direct selling of an industry is face-to-face and people-oriented, with a focus on building strong personal

relationships with consumers. Interpersonal skills refer to mental and communication algorithms applied during social communication and interaction to achieve certain effects and results. [Rentz et al. \(2002\)](#), opined that the dimensions of interpersonal skills are listening, empathy, optimism, and perceived observation skills. [Comer & Drollinger \(1999\)](#); [Castleberry & Shepherd \(1993\)](#); [Ramsey & Sohi \(1997\)](#), found that effective listening skills are valuable communication skills for successful salespersons. Meanwhile, [Comer & Drollinger \(1999\)](#), pointed out that empathetic skills contribute to salesperson performance. Additionally, [Rich & Smith \(2002\)](#), found that individuals possessing high responsive characteristics seem to have greater identification or perceptive observation skills concerning the social style of others, which are critical traits for successful salespersons ([Afolabi et al., 2017](#); [Lawal, 2014](#)).

### **Sales team cohesion**

[Morgan & Hunt \(1994\)](#), defined relationship commitment as the belief between transaction partners that are maintaining their continuous relationship as important and are willing to exert their best effort to maintain it. In the services relationship marketing area, maintain that relationships are built on the foundation of mutual commitment. Commitment has been defined as the enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship ([Moorman et al., 1993](#)). Relationships with customers are important for a profitable business in consumer and business markets. Human beings do their best to build and maintain strong relationships with other social elements to survive in societies because according to the social exchange theory no one can survive in the world without social interaction with social elements. For a strong relationship, this confidence needs to be strengthened, Trust in relationships reduces the perceived risks that in turn create a strong relationship ([Kingshott & Rexha, 2013](#)). Trust in relationship marketing cannot be avoided. It reduces the perception of risk which further leads to a strong relationship. Trust and relationship commitment are strongly related to each other. Supplier and buyer both try to reduce risk. Both have some mutual benefits to maintain a relationship, the willingness of both parties for sacrifices and burdens is the main factor for strong relationships ([Zhao & Smith, 2016](#)).

### **Sales technology**

Competitive pressures to respond to the next generation and the growing use of technology among all age groups require the direct selling industry to find the right balance of high tech and high touch ([Norris, 2017](#)). Because of the potential for direct selling to provide economic opportunities to many millions of people, particularly in developing countries, research on best practices, challenges, and the role of technology in advancing this industry could have social significance. As technology has grown to play a key role in personal selling, many people hold the assumption that heavier usage of technology is preferable ([Ahearne et al., 2004](#); [Hunter & Perreault, 2006](#); [Rapp et al., 2008](#)). Therefore, discovering the right level of technology used to optimize tasks and strategic success is an important concern for marketers. Technological changes fueling the generation gap provide the opportunity to facilitate ease of interactions between the salesperson and consumer, but, at the same time, may require a reexamination of the traditional nature of personal, face-to-face contact in the direct selling marketplace.

However, technology cannot replace the salesman's ability to generate trust, fulfill special requests, to anticipate customers' wishes. Along with the shift from transactional to the relational model, changes are made both for sales tasks and responsible persons' behavior (Wilson, 1995).

### **Adaptive selling style**

Adaptive selling behavior includes shaping the content and amount of information shared with different customers who have different needs, e.g., a repeat customer does not need the background information required by a new purchaser. Salespeople also adapt their selling tactics to the buyer's communication style (McFarland et al., 2006). Research confirms that adaptive selling leads to strong sales performance (Boorum et al., 1998; Franke & Park 2006). A meta-analysis revealed that adaptive selling enhances sales performance, whether measured by self-reported rating, manager ratings, or more objective measures of performance (Franke & Park 2006). Accordingly, it is not surprising that marketing managers and scholars alike are interested in understanding how adaptive selling is created and encouraged (Tripathi, 2007; Iyadi & Egwuenu, 2017).

### **Theoretical Reviews**

#### **The Edwin Moses theory of direct sales**

Edwin Moses, the two-time Olympic hurdles champion, was arguably one of the mentally and physically prepared athletes in the world. Yet, even at the apex of his career, Moses could easily lose the race simply by tripping over one of the hurdles. It is not documented whether this ever happened to him in practice, but it has certainly happened to most, if not all direct salespeople. The difference is that if the track star fell over a hurdle, he was manifestly out of the race; in the case of the salesperson, him/she can trip over the hurdle and not be aware of it. The result is not only a lost sale, but probably the loss of confidence as well, as the failure to negotiate all of the hurdles is more subtle, and not readily noticeable (Storholm, 2009).

#### **Wheel of retailing theory**

The Wheel of Retailing theory states that the evolution process consists of three phases: entry phase, trade-up phase, and vulnerable phase (McNair, 1958). These changing operational practices make the third phase retailers vulnerable to easy replacement by other retailers. In this vulnerable phase, retail institutions lose market share and profitability, in their quest to survive new innovative strategies devised in response to competition, this strategy may include non-store retailing or a combination of it and innovation in the retail institution. The innovative retail institution may enter the wheel with low costs, low margins, and low price products to the consumer with place convenience (non-store retailing) with its strength of reducing the cost of operation in retail operations and wider market penetration. The retail store location is strategic to patronage, but in this case, the place of location is secondary, while the place of delivery is primary, cost advantage is realizable through distribution especially in non-store-based retail institutions.

## **Commitment trust theory**

The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing posits that two fundamental factors, trust, and commitment, must exist for a relationship to be successful (Cook & Emerson, 1978). Rather than chasing short-term profits goals, firms following the principles of relationship marketing forge long-lasting bonds with their customers. As a result, customers trust these firms, and mutual loyalty helps both parties fulfill their needs (Meyer & Allen, 1984). Stone et al. (2000), explained that the theory assumes that the customers should be treated in a manner that makes them feel valued so that they can retain existing customers and attract prospective customers. This is achieved by considering the customer's needs when designing products and services.

## **Empirical Reviews**

Past empirical studies carried out on direct selling strategies and their implication on marketing performance in different countries are reviewed as follows: Kathuni & Mugenda (2012), examined direct sales strategy application by commercial banks in Kenya. The study revealed that although the majority of the banks are predominantly local, the number of foreign-owned banks is high and intense competition exists between the locally-owned and foreign-owned banks. Banks have embraced a direct sales strategy as a competitive tool. Direct selling stands out among all the other strategies for competitive advantage. Obenge et al. (2014), examined the effects of direct selling strategy on customer loyalty by commercial banks in Kisii, Kenya. The study adopted a quantitative approach with a descriptive research survey that allowed a researcher to collect primary quantitative data through structured questionnaires. The study concluded that direct selling strategies employed by commercial banks affect customer loyalty.

Rattanaphan & Mat (2012), examined the relationships of several predictors of corporate image in direct selling companies in Thailand. Six identified predictor variables were measured using past developed instruments such as brand architecture, Corporate social responsibility, internet marketing, trust, perceived value, and attitude and corporate image as the dependent variable. The study concludes the findings with the suggestion that all latent variables have a strong bond with direct selling. Kustin & Jones (2015), examined direct selling perceptions in Australia. After completing two separate focus group sessions in which general consumers were asked to discuss their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions concerning network marketing (NWM), a questionnaire was structured reflecting their views. Sample responses indicated that 59 percent (289) had never purchased a good or service through a direct marketing salesperson.

## **Methodology**

### **The research design**

The study employed the cross-sectional survey research method. The justification for choosing this method is that it enables the researcher to collect the needed data to answer the research questions and to properly explain the relationship

among the variables of the construct in the conceptual review. The target population in this research refers to all cadres of employees of the selected banks in Asaba, Agbor, Sapele, Warri, and Ughelli in Delta State and is presented thus in table 1 below:

Table 1  
Showing the population spread of bank staff

| S/N   | Banks                     | No of employees |
|-------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| 1     | Fidelity Bank Plc,        | 171             |
| 2     | First bank of Nigeria Plc | 121             |
| 3     | GTB Plc                   | 187             |
| 4     | UBA Plc                   | 169             |
| 5     | Zenith Bank Plc           | 164             |
| Total |                           | 812             |

Source: Human resources department of banks, 2021

### Sample size

The sample size of the study is made up of a total number of 260 respondents, which was determined by using Krejcie & Morgan's as cited in Kenpro, sample size determination table. A proportional rate subjected to the number of employees in selected banks (prorated to the determined sample size of 260) was used to determine the appropriate sub-samples in the banks: Asaba, Ughelli, Agbor, Warri, and Sapele in Delta State (as contained in table 2).

Table 2  
Proportion of sample size from each bank

| SN    | Banks                     | Number of Staff             |
|-------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1     | Fidelity Bank Plc         | $(171/812) \times 260 = 55$ |
| 2     | First bank of Nigeria Plc | $(121/812) \times 260 = 39$ |
| 3     | GTB Plc                   | $(187/812) \times 260 = 59$ |
| 4     | UBA Plc                   | $(169/812) \times 260 = 54$ |
| 5     | Zenith Bank Plc           | $(164/812) \times 260 = 53$ |
| Total |                           | 260                         |

Source: Krejcie morgan sample size determination table

### Sampling techniques

The study used simple random sampling in the manner that eventually led to the picking of the banks whose employees participated. The procedure includes the grouping of the banks in Delta State and the setting up of a table of random numbers whereby the list of banks was adopted as a result of its convenience.

### Data collection method

The researcher used the survey method to collect data. This was done using a self-administered structured questionnaire distributed to banks' staff and it was retrieved thereafter by hand after giving the respondents sufficient time to

respond to the various questionnaires construct in each of the sub-scales. With the help of the managers with whom the researcher established contacts, copies of the validated questionnaire were administered through Chain-referrals. These enabled participants, who were understandably busy at their jobs, to fill it at their convenience. The questionnaire contained questions pertaining directly to the objectives of the study, which was made up of 20-item Liker-scale questions. The Liker rating scale of point 5 was used for the closed-ended questions; ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree.

### Analytical techniques

Multiple regressions were adopted by the study for the analysis of data. This technique was adopted to ascertain or determine the extent to which the dependent variable accounted for change on the independent variable and to test the statistical significance that exists among the variables. This was done by using SPSS version 23 for the windows package. To ascertain the effect of direct selling strategy on customer loyalty in the Nigerian banking industry, the researcher formulated a statistical model. The formulated statistical model is further presented as follows:

$$CL = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FFC + \beta_2 STRC + \beta_3 ST + \beta_4 ASS + \varepsilon$$

Where: CL = Customer loyalty; FFC = Face-to-face communication; STRC = Sales team relationship commitment; ST = Sales technology; ASS = Adaptive selling style

### Data Analysis and Discussion

#### Data analysis

The analysis of the other research data as well as the testing of the earlier stated hypotheses in chapter one was done here to conclude.

- Research Question One: What is the effect of face-to-face communication on customer's loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks?

Table 3  
Frequency analysis of face-to-face communication and customer loyalty

| S/N | Statement  | Scale                   |                        |                     |                    |                    | Total | Mean |
|-----|--|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------|------|
|     |  | SA<br>5                 | A<br>4                 | U<br>3              | D<br>2             | SD<br>1            |       |      |
| 1   | Effective listening skills are valuable communication skills for successful salespersons | 167<br>(835)<br>(67.6%) | 72<br>(288)<br>(29.1%) | 7<br>(21)<br>(2.8%) | 1<br>(2)<br>(0.4%) | 4<br>(4)<br>(1.6%) | 1150  | 4.66 |
| 2   | Empathetic skills contribute to salesperson  | 172<br>(860)<br>(69.6%) | 70<br>(280)<br>(28.3%) | -<br>-<br>-         | 1<br>(2)<br>(0.4%) | 4<br>(4)<br>(1.6%) | 1146  | 4.63 |

|   |  |                         |                        |                      |                     |        |      |      |
|---|--|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------|------|------|
| 3 | performance<br>By demonstrating<br>appropriate<br>communication<br>cues, direct seller<br>can attract the<br>prospective<br>customer | 175<br>(875)<br>(70.9%) | 55<br>(220)<br>(22.3%) | 17<br>(51)<br>(6.9%) | -<br>-<br>-         | -<br>- | 1134 | 4.59 |
| 4 | For a seller to be a<br>competent<br>communicator<br>he/she must know<br>and show<br>appropriate<br>behavior                         | 173<br>(865)<br>(70%)   | 54<br>(216)<br>(21.9%) | 13<br>(39)<br>(5.3%) | 7<br>(14)<br>(2.8%) | -<br>- | 1134 | 4.59 |

Source: Analysis of field survey, 2021

The descriptive statistics showed the pattern of responses, about face-to-face communication and customer loyalty as indicated in table 3. A total of 239(96.7%) of the respondents agreed that effective listening skills are valuable communication skills for successful salespersons, 7(2.8%) were undecided, while 5(2%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. A total of 242(97.9%) of the respondents agreed that empathetic skills contribute to salesperson performance, while 5(2%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. To the statement, by demonstrating appropriate communication cues, the direct seller can attract the prospective customer, 230(93.2%) of the respondents agreed, while 17(6.9%) of the respondents were undecided. A total of 227(91.9%) of the respondents agreed that for a seller to be a competent communicator he/she must know and show appropriate behavior, 13(5.3%) were undecided, while 7(2.8%) of the respondents disagreed to the statement.

- Research Question Two: What effect does sales team cohesion commitment has on customer loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks?

Table 4  
Frequency analysis of sales team cohesion commitment and customer loyalty

| S/N | Statement   | Scale                   |                        |                     |                   |         | Total | Mean |
|-----|---|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------|-------|------|
|     |   | SA<br>5                 | A<br>4                 | U<br>3              | D<br>2            | SD<br>1 |       |      |
| 5   | Shared value and opportunistic behavior are the most important elements of trust and commitment | 191<br>(955)<br>(77.3%) | 51<br>(204)<br>(20.6%) | 4<br>(12)<br>(1.6%) | 1<br>(2)<br>(0.4) | -<br>-  | 1173  | 4.74 |
| 6   | The Seller-buyer relationship is built on the foundation of mutual                              | 160<br>(800)<br>(64.8%) | 86<br>(344)<br>(34.8%) | 1<br>(3)<br>(0.4%)  | -<br>-            | -<br>-  | 1147  | 4.64 |

|   |   |                         |                        |                     |                   |          |      |      |
|---|---|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------|------|------|
| 7 | commitment<br>Trust in<br>relationships<br>reduces the<br>perceived risks that<br>in turn create the<br>strong relationship | 194<br>(970)<br>(78.5%) | 48<br>(192)<br>(19.4%) | 4<br>(12)<br>(1.6%) | -<br>-<br>(0.4)   | 1<br>(1) | 1175 | 4.76 |
| 8 | Effective<br>interaction can<br>lead to<br>psychological<br>attachment  | 182<br>(910)<br>(73.7%) | 61<br>(244)<br>(24.7%) | 3<br>(9)<br>(1.2%)  | 1<br>(2)<br>(0.4) | -<br>-   | 1165 | 4.72 |

Source: Analysis of field Survey, 2021

The descriptive statistics indicating the pattern of sample response, about sales team cohesion and customer loyalty as indicated in table 4. A total of 242(97.9%) of the respondents agreed that shared value and opportunistic behavior are the most important elements of trust and commitment, 1(0.4%) disagreed with the statement, while 4(1.6%) of the respondents were undecided. To the statement, the seller-buyer relationship is built on the foundation of mutual commitment, 246(99.6%) of the respondents agreed, while 1(0.4%) of the respondents were undecided. A total of 242(97.9%) of the respondents agreed that trust in relationships reduces the perceived risks that in turn create the strong relationship, 4(1.6%) of the respondents were undecided while 1(0.4%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. A total of 243(98.4%) of the respondents agreed that effective interaction can lead to psychological attachment, 3(1.2%) were undecided, 1(0.4%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

- Research Question Three: How does sales technology affect customer loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks?

Table 5  
Frequency analysis of sales technology and customer loyalty

| S/N | Statement   | Scale                   |                         |                    |                    |         | Total | Mean |
|-----|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------|-------|------|
|     |   | SA<br>5                 | A<br>4                  | U<br>3             | D<br>2             | SD<br>1 |       |      |
| 9   | Technological<br>changes facilitate<br>ease of interactions<br>between the<br>salesperson and<br>consumer | 198<br>(990)<br>(80.2%) | 45<br>(180)<br>(18.2%)  | 1<br>(3)<br>(0.4%) | 3<br>(6)<br>(1.2%) | -<br>-  | 1179  | 4.77 |
| 10  | Technology is the<br>change agent that<br>reinvents a sales<br>role                                       | 145<br>(735)<br>(58.7%) | 101<br>(404)<br>(40.9%) | -<br>-             | 1<br>(2)<br>(0.4)  | -<br>-  | 1141  | 4.61 |
| 11  | Investment in<br>technology tools   | 175<br>(875)            | 58<br>(232)             | 14<br>(42)         | -                  | -       | 1149  | 4.65 |

|    |   |                       |                        |                    |                    |   |      |      |
|----|---|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---|------|------|
|    | such as Salesforce automation will benefit firms and their sales representatives financially  | (70.9%)               | (23.5%)                | (5.7%)             | -                  | - |      |      |
| 12 | Firms use their Web sites to answer questions and provide detailed information about products | 163<br>(815)<br>(66%) | 71<br>(284)<br>(28.7%) | 10<br>(30)<br>(4%) | 3<br>(6)<br>(1.2%) | - | 1135 | 4.59 |

Source: Analysis of field survey, 2021

The descriptive statistics displaying the pattern of sample response, about sales technology and customer loyalty as indicated in table 5. A total of 243(98.4%) of the respondents agreed that technological changes facilitate ease of interactions between the salesperson and consumer, 1(0.4%) were undecided, while 3(1.2%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. To the statement, technology is the change agent that reinvents a sales role, 246(99.6%) of the respondents agreed, while 1(0.4%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. A total of 233(94.4%) of the respondents agreed that investment in technology tools such as sales force automation will benefit firms and their sales representatives financially, while 14(5.7%) of the respondents were undecided. To the statement, firms use their Web sites to answer questions and provide detailed information about products, 234 (94.7%) of the respondents agreed, 10(4%) were undecided, while 3(1.2%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

- Research Question Four: What is the effect of adaptive selling style on customer loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks?

Table 6  
Frequency analysis of adaptive selling style and customer loyalty

| S/N | Statement  | Scale                   |                        |                    |                   |         | Total | Mean |
|-----|--|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------|-------|------|
|     |  | SA<br>5                 | A<br>4                 | U<br>3             | D<br>2            | SD<br>1 |       |      |
| 13  | When salespeople adapt to the needs of the customers it fosters customer loyalty | 197<br>(985)<br>(79.8%) | 47<br>(188)<br>(19%)   | 3<br>(9)<br>(1.2%) | -                 | -       | 1182  | 4.79 |
| 14  | To be successful, salespeople must be able to behave adaptively                  | 151<br>(755)<br>(61.1%) | 95<br>(380)<br>(38.5%) | -                  | 1<br>(2)<br>(0.4) | -       | 1137  | 4.60 |
| 15  | Using different selling approaches   | 198<br>(990)            | 43<br>(172)            | 6<br>(18)          | -                 | -       | 1180  | 4.78 |

|    |  |                         |                        |                    |                    |   |      |      |
|----|--|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---|------|------|
|    | to meet customer needs enhances customer loyalty   | (80.2%)                 | (17.4%)                | (2.4%)             | -                  | - |      |      |
| 16 | A salesperson's knowledge about a customer's expectations facilitate adapting to the situation | 179<br>(895)<br>(72.5%) | 63<br>(252)<br>(25.5%) | 3<br>(9)<br>(1.2%) | 2<br>(4)<br>(0.8%) | - | 1160 | 4.70 |

Source: Analysis of field Survey, 2021

The descriptive statistics displaying the pattern of sample response, about adaptive selling style and customer loyalty as indicated in table 6. To the statement, when salespeople adapt to the needs of the customers it fosters customer loyalty 244(98.8%) of the respondents agreed to the statement, while 3(1.2%) were undecided. To the statement, to be successful, salespeople must be able to behave adaptively, 246(99.6%) of the respondents agreed, while 1(0.4%) disagreed with the statement. A total of 241(97.6%) of the respondents agreed that using different selling approaches to meet customer needs enhances customer loyalty, 6(2.4%) of the respondents were undecided. A total of 242(98%) of the respondents agreed that a salesperson's knowledge about a customer's expectations facilitates adapting to the situation, 3(1.2%) were undecided, while 2(0.8%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

Table 7  
Model summary

| Model Summary |                   |          |                 |                              |
|---------------|-------------------|----------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| Model         | R                 | R Square | Adjusted Square | R Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1             | .812 <sup>a</sup> | .660     | .654            | .8933                        |

a. Predictors: (Constant), adaptive selling style, face-to-face communication, sales team relationship commitment, sales technology

Table 7 showed that change in customer loyalty was brought about by the variables of direct selling strategies by 65% (0.654) as indicated by the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value. The dimensions of direct selling strategies explained 65% of the variability of customer loyalty.

Table 8  
Multiple regression analysis of direct selling strategies and customer loyalty

| Model |                            | Coefficients                |                           | t      | Sig. |
|-------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
|       |                            | Unstandardized Coefficients | Standardized Coefficients |        |      |
| 1     | (Constant)                 | -2.485                      |                           | -2.366 | .019 |
|       | face-to-face communication | .183                        | .185                      | 4.225  | .000 |

|   |      |      |      |       |      |
|---|------|------|------|-------|------|
| Sales team cohesion commitment          | .253 | .059 | .196 | 4.253 | .000 |
| sales technology                        | .329 | .055 | .328 | 5.997 | .000 |
| adaptive selling style                  | .358 | .070 | .293 | 5.109 | .000 |
| a. Dependent Variable: customer loyalty |      |      |      |       |      |

Table 8 displayed the multiple regression analysis results for the effect of direct selling strategies and customer loyalty. The table showed that face-to-face communication which is the first variable has a positive effect on customer loyalty ( $\beta = 0.185$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). Sales team cohesion commitment which is the second variable has a positive effect on customer loyalty ( $\beta = 0.196$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). It was reported that sales technology which is the third variable has a positive effect on customer loyalty ( $\beta = 0.328$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). It was also indicated that adaptive selling style which is the last variable has a positive effect on customer loyalty ( $\beta = 0.293$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). The general form of the equation to predict:

$$CL = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FFC + \beta_2 STCC + \beta_3 ST + \beta_4 ASS + \varepsilon$$

$$CL = -2.485 + (0.183 \times FFC) + (0.253 \times STCC) + (0.329 \times ST) + (0.358 \times ASS)$$

### Test of hypotheses

The multiple regression analysis was used as an analytical technique for testing the hypotheses formulated. The statistical relevance of the P-value was used to validate the hypotheses as follows.

- HO<sub>1</sub>: There is no positive significant relationship between face-to-face communication and customer loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks. The null hypothesis was rejected given the P-value ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ), we thus conclude that there is a significant effect of face-to-face communication on customer loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks.
- HO<sub>2</sub>: Sales team cohesion commitment has no positive significant relationship with customer loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks. With a p-value ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ), there was a need to reject the null hypothesis and thus establish that sales team relationship commitment has a significant effect on customer loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks.
- HO<sub>3</sub>: There is no positive significant relationship between sales technology and customer loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks. The P-value ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ) implies the rejection of the null hypothesis, thus we conclude that there is a positive significant effect of sales technology on customer loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks.
- HO<sub>4</sub>: Adaptive selling style has no positive significant relationship with customer loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks. The P-value ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ) established the rejection of the null hypothesis. This implies that adaptive selling style has a positive significant effect on customer loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks.

## Results and Discussion

### Face-to-face communication and customer loyalty

From the results of frequency analysis in table 3, the majority of the respondents responded positively to the various statements about face-to-face communication and customer's loyalty. This was evidenced in the result in table 8; that face-to-face communication has a positive effect on customers loyalty ( $\beta = 0.185$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). This finding is consistent with [Omar \(2014\)](#), view who opined that communication competence has been identified as a factor that leads to achieving certain desired outcomes. It relates with [Ondieki et al. \(2014\)](#), view that effective listening skills are valuable communication skills for successful salespersons.

### Sales team cohesion and customers loyalty

From the results of frequency analysis in table 4, the majority of the respondents overwhelmingly responded positively to the various statements about sales team relationships and customer's loyalty. Table 8 showed that sales team cohesion has a positive effect on customers loyalty ( $\beta = 0.196$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). This finding agrees with the view of [Kingshott & Rexha \(2013\)](#), that trust in relationships reduces the perceived risks that in turn create a strong relationship. It is consistent with [Robson \(2019\)](#), view that commitment plays important role in the business performance in the international market by establishing a strong international business.

### Sales technology and customer's loyalty

From the results of frequency analysis in table 5, the majority of the respondents overwhelmingly responded positively to the various statements about sales technology and customer's loyalty. In table 8, sales technology has a positive effect on customers loyalty ( $\beta = 0.328$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). This finding is consistent with [Norris \(2017\)](#), view that competitive pressures to respond to the next generation and the growing use of technology among all age groups require the direct selling industry to find the right balance of high tech and high touch.

### Adaptive selling style and customer loyalty

The results of frequency analysis in table 6 indicated that the majority of the respondents overwhelmingly responded positively to the various statements about adaptive selling style and customer's loyalty. Table 8 indicated that adaptive selling style has a positive effect on customer loyalty ( $\beta = 0.293$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). The finding is in agreement with [Franke & Park \(2006\)](#), view that adaptive selling enhances sales performance, whether measured by self-reported rating, manager ratings, or more objective measures of performance.

## **Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations**

### **Summary**

Findings showed that face-to-face communication has a positive effect on customer loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks ( $\beta = 0.185$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). There is a positive significant relationship between face-to-face communication and customer loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ). The study showed that sales team cohesion has a positive effect on customers loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks ( $\beta = 0.196$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). Sales team cohesion has a positive significant relationship with customer loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ). Findings showed that sales technology has a positive effect on customer loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks ( $\beta = 0.328$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). There is a positive significant relationship between sales technology and customers loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ). The study showed that adaptive selling style has a positive effect on customers loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks ( $\beta = 0.293$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). Adaptive selling style has a positive significant relationship with customers loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ).

### **Conclusion**

Direct selling strategies are an important factor to enhance or improve customers loyalty in the Nigerian deposit money banks. The communication between the salesmen and the customers is very important. By demonstrating appropriate communication cues, the direct seller can attract the prospective customers to spending his/her precious hour(s) with the direct seller, agree with the direct seller's ideas, attract the prospective customer to buy the product(s), and may end up to the extent of introducing referrals. Commitment keeps the customers on track. In the field of relationship marketing, the success of a relationship is based on trust and commitment between marketer and customers. By providing resources, maintaining standards about value, maintaining communication, evaluating the performance, and avoid taking advantage of partners are the key drivers of developing committed and trust-based relationships.

Technological changes fueling the generation gap provide the opportunity to facilitate interactions between the salesperson and consumers. But, at the same time, may require a reexamination of the traditional nature of face-to-face contact in the direct selling marketplace. Direct sales companies use catalogs and the internet as the main tools for presenting and disseminating information. As new technologies have emerged, their application in direct selling has moved to a position of strategic importance. In adaptive selling, salespeople adapt to the needs and problems of the customers. It is a client-centric approach to doing business that focuses on creating a positive experience for the customers and keeping them happy and satisfied. In both attitude and behavior, the adaptive salesperson assesses the situation and can tailor a presentation to the customers' unique needs. Salespeople who have higher levels of customer-qualification skills can reduce the complexity of the selling proposition and communications when interacting with prospects and "free up" their mental capacity.

## Recommendations

- Sales personnel should possess effective face-to-face communication skills to enhance sales.
- For companies to be successful, salespeople should behave adaptively, and they must be confident that they will be able to do so.
- A salesperson's knowledge about a customer's expectations and needs should facilitate adapting to the situation.
- Discovering the right level of technology used to optimize task and strategic success should be an important concern for marketers.
- The overall fit between the sales process tasks and the sales technology portfolio requires firms to proceed cautiously in sales technology implementations.

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