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SERVICE DELIVERY PROCESS AND CUSTOMER RETENTION OF AIRLINES IN RIVERS STATE

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A B S T R A C T

This study conducted an empirical investigation into the impact of the service delivery method on customer retention for airlines in Rivers State. The study utilised primary data collected through the administration of questionnaires. The study encompassed all twenty-four (24) airlines that operate in Rivers State. Due to the relatively limited number of airlines, the whole population was included in the study. The study utilised the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to examine the link between the dependent and independent variables. The analysis revealed a strong and positive correlation between self-service technology and customer retention, leading to improvements in customer satisfaction and commitment. Similarly, service process blueprinting also showed a significant and positive relationship with customer retention, resulting in enhanced customer satisfaction and commitment. The study determined that the process of delivering services has a substantial impact on client retention. Hence, it is advisable for airlines to ensure that their self-service technologies are readily available and user-friendly. Additionally, airlines should be cognizant of how their consumers acquire information about their service offerings in order to properly manage external communications for the company.

K E Y W O R D S

Service delivery process, Customer Retention, Self-Service Technology, Service Process Blueprinting, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Commitment

Introduction

The aviation industry significantly contributes to the global economy by enabling corporate travel. The industry is considered a crucial driver of economic growth due to its ability to provide employment opportunities and employ a significant number of individuals globally. Additionally, it facilitates rapid

and efficient global connection, enabling enterprises to access foreign markets and engage in cross-border collaborations. This interconnectivity facilitates the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and commerce across individuals, urban areas, and nations. As to a survey by Nigeriafinder.com, the worldwide airline sector consists of 2,235 rival airlines, out of which 345 are operational in Africa. In Nigeria, there are a total of fourteen local airlines and nine foreign carriers. In addition, according to Oxford Economics (2017), the global transportation business annually transports over 2 billion people and approximately 50 million tonnes of freight, resulting in a contribution of over 3.4 trillion USD.

Innovation is seen as a crucial element in preserving a lasting competitive edge and ensuring the continued loyalty of customers. Various studies have examined the correlation between customer retention and innovation. According to Arnold et al. (2010), organisations' innovation has a crucial role in attracting and keeping customers. In addition, Tsado et al. (2022) did a study on micro, small, and medium companies (MSMEs) in Northern Nigeria's construction industry. They discovered that innovation has a significant influence on client/customer satisfaction, retention, and relationships. Kim and colleagues. According to Kim et al. (2019), consumers' impression of innovativeness has an influence on value co-creation, which in turn leads to increased satisfaction, loyalty, and retention.

Multiple research have explored the relationship between organisational innovativeness, customer happiness, loyalty, retention, and overall performance. Researchers can get useful insights in the tourist business by examining the connection between service innovation and consumer co-creation, happiness, and loyalty (Gustafsson et al., 2020). Den Hertog (2000) introduced a model of service innovation that consists of four dimensions. This model has been cited in several studies, including those by Miles (2008), Park et al. (2015), Kuusik et al. (2011), and Chaparro-Peláez et al. (2014). The concept proposes that service innovation should be comprehended in relation to four characteristics of originality. The dimensions encompass novel service concepts, customer interfaces, service delivery systems, and optional technologies that enable service innovation (Miles, 2008; Park et al., 2015; Kuusik et al., 2011; Chaparro-Peláez et al., 2014). Bhat and Sharma are individuals working in the hotel sector. In their study, Bhat & Sharma (2021) investigated the many aspects and outcomes of service innovation. Bhat and Sharma (2021) recognised three fundamental aspects of service innovation: technical innovation, organisational innovation, and human capital innovation.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between service delivery innovation and customer retention, in light of the unusual observations present. This will be accomplished by using a blend of several frameworks, acknowledging the generally recognised belief that retaining customers is vital for the durability and long-term prosperity of firms in today's service-oriented economy. This research adopts a firm theoretical position and integrates innovative technology breakthroughs in the field of aviation. This study examines the correlation between the service delivery method and customer retention in the airline industry in Rivers State. The airline sector has been severely affected by the COVID-19 worldwide epidemic and the subsequent surge in aviation fuel prices, resulting in a substantial decline in patronage, retention, and overall performance. Therefore, the focus of this study is on the method of delivering services and the ability of airlines to retain customers in Rivers State.

1.1 Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aims to determine the relationship between service delivery process and customer retention of airlines in Rivers State. The objectives are to:

i. Ascertain the relationship between Self-Service Technology and Customer retention.

ii. Know the relationship between Service Process Blueprinting and Customer retention.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Customer Retention (CR)

Customer retention is an essential element in achieving a competitive edge in the commercial realm. Developing and sustaining fruitful relationships with consumers is a fundamental element of relationship marketing (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Many organisations consider retaining customers to be a crucial goal, particularly in today's competitive business environment. Brands invest significant time and financial resources in building strong and lasting relationships with potential customers to achieve better performance and meet marketing objectives. This is especially important in saturated markets with intense competition (Bataineh, AlAbdallah, Salhab, & Shoter, 2015). Ang and Buttle (2006) and Larivie and Poel (2005) define retained customers as those who have a longer tenure with a business. Due to the significance attributed to customer retention, several researchers have proposed multiple definitions in recent years, although no agreement has been reached. Oliver (1997) provided a definition of customer retention as a strong dedication to regularly repurchase or support a chosen product or service in the future, even when faced with external factors or marketing strategies that may encourage switching to alternatives.

2.1.1. Customer Satisfaction

Building a content client base is a well-known aspect of relationship marketing (Homburg, Wieseke & Bornemann, 2009; Rather, 2018). Customers who are satisfied typically have a sense of fulfilment in relation to their consumption and are happy with the products or services they have received (Oliver, 1997). The topic of customer satisfaction has garnered significant scholarly interest in recent years. Consequently, there is a substantial amount of scholarly contribution stemming from it (Anderson & Mittal, 2000; Iacobucci, Grayson, & Ostrom, 1994; McCollough, Berry, & Yadav, 2000). Customer satisfaction refers to the subjective experience of either contentment or dissatisfaction that arises from the assessment of services rendered by an organisation to an individual in relation to their expectations (Oliver, 1980; Leisen & Vance, 2001). According to Oliver (1997), customer satisfaction is the assessment that a product or service, or its specific features, have supplied or are delivering a satisfactory degree of fulfilment associated to consumption. Customer satisfaction is the profound sense of contentment that arises when a consumer's expectations are either fulfilled or exceeded. Satisfaction refers to the consumer's sense of fulfilment in reaction to a product or service (Andreassen, 2000). A satisfaction judgement refers to the evaluation of a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, based on the amount of enjoyment and fulfilment it provides in relation to consumption. This judgement can also include instances when the level of fulfilment falls short or exceeds expectations (Tronvoll, 2010). Satisfaction may be defined as the consumer's evaluation of the goods or service they got, both before and after making a purchase. The importance of customer happiness is a central focus in marketing literature. However, despite the efforts of researchers to quantify and clarify customer satisfaction, there is still no agreement on its definition and how to assess it.

2.1.2 Customer Commitment

The notion of commitment has been crucial in service marketing for fostering and sustaining connections between enterprises and customers (Chai, Malhotra & Dash, 2015). The importance of client loyalty has become crucial in the sustainability of business-to-customer interactions. According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), the relationship marketing paradigm suggests that successful relationship marketing relies on relational commitment, which is crucial for developing relationship marketing. Many researchers regard the study of sociology and psychology to be the origin of the notion of commitment (Pritchard, Havitz, & Howard, 1999). Psychologically, commitment refers to the decisions or cognitions that firmly establish or bind an individual to a certain behavioural inclination (Pritchard et al., 1999). Crosby and Taylor (1983) defined commitment in the business area as a consistent preference that prevents the inclination to oppose changing attitudes. The capacity to sustain a commercial partnership without any purpose to discontinue or terminate it. Morgan and Hunt (1994) define commitment as the belief of a business partner that a continued connection with another partner is valuable enough to justify putting forth full effort to sustain it. There is a strong and intense desire to maintain important ties with clients.

2.2 Service Delivery Process

Services are typically perceived as concepts with unique attributes that cannot be completely duplicated since services are both created and consumed simultaneously. A service refers to a series of intangible activities that usually take place when clients engage with service staff, physical resources or items, or systems of the service provider. These actions are provided as remedies for consumer issues (Gronroos, 2007). A service can be described as an intangible action or benefit rendered by one individual to another, without resulting in the acquisition of any material asset (Kotler, 1997). It is a confluence of intangible interactions between consumers and service personnel that lead to the production and exchange of value. Services are ethereal entities that cannot be physically perceived or touched. Services has distinct characteristics and can be exceedingly challenging to replicate in its entirety due to their diverse and varied nature.

Gronroos (2000) argues that services are produced and consumed in collaboration with consumers, making it difficult to isolate these aspects or manufacture them in advance and keep them until they are desired. According to Quinn and Gagnon (1986), services are economic activity that do not produce a physical product or construction as their main result. Kotler (1997) defines a service as an intangible action or advantage that one individual may offer to another, without the involvement of any physical possession. Over the past few years, the term "services" has become more widely used, resulting in multiple interpretations as a result of the interaction between service clients and service suppliers. A service refers to a series of intangible activities that usually take place when clients engage with service staff, physical resources or items, or systems of the service provider. These actions are provided as remedies for consumer issues.

2.2.1 Self-Service Technology

Technological advancements in the service business have recently caused a shift in how services are provided, moving away from in-person interactions to self-service technology (SST) (Lu, Chou & Ling, 2009). Over the last ten years, the use of SSTs has become a prominent trend in the service sector industry (Leung & Matanda, 2013). This technology breakthrough has brought about a significant

change in the way businesses operate, revolutionising their methods and altering the way customers connect with service organisations by removing direct contact with personnel. Previous studies have started examining the implementation of SST (e.g., Curran & Meuter, 2005; Dabholkar & Bagozzi, 2002; Meuter et al., 2005) in various industries such as banking, insurance, aviation, and healthcare services, among others. The discovery aimed to reduce human interactions by implementing creative, efficient, and cost-effective ways that offer clients a diverse range of services, hence reducing the need for human involvement (Kokkinou & Cranage, 2013).

SST refers to technology interfaces that allow consumers to create a service without the need for direct engagement of service employees (Meuter et al., 2005). It enables clients to access and utilise services without the need for service staff. The process transitions service procedures from a "low tech, high touch" approach to a "high tech, low touch" one, allowing customers to have more involvement in the production of services. Check-in technologies are a type of SST that are utilised in the airline sector for various pre-flight activities such as booking, purchasing aircraft tickets, check-in, and boarding (Lu et al., 2011). SST are technological systems that allow individuals to complete tasks or transactions without the need for assistance from service personnel. These technologies require active participation from the consumer and serve as a replacement for high-touch services, providing technology-based alternatives that are user-friendly.

2.2.2 Service Process Blueprinting

In addition to the recognition of the prevalence of services in global economies, there is an increasing focus in corporate operations on generating significant and memorable client experiences (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). According to Bitner et al. (2008), a service is characterised as intangible, flexible, and offered over different time and location. In order to make the service delivery process, which is ethereal by nature, concrete, it is necessary to create a service blueprint. This blueprint guarantees that high-quality service is consistently provided. The airline sector is now facing a significant challenge in providing high-quality service. To improve service quality, the implementation of a service plan might be of utmost importance. Service design is typically characterised by the utilisation of several visualisations, including service blueprints. To enhance the quality of service, it is crucial to have a precise and detailed comprehension of service procedures and components (Zeithaml et al., 2013). The Service Blueprint (SB) has emerged as a highly valuable instrument for visualising and conceptualising the entire service process in the fields of service design and innovation (Fließ & Kleinaltenkamp, 2004). Blueprints have emerged as fundamental instruments in service design and are included in several compilations of methodologies for service design (Miettinen & Koivisto, 2009). The use of the service blueprint approach enabled the creation of services and experiences with meticulous attention to details and all delivery procedures. Service blueprinting is often seen as the initial endeavour to examine service interactions from the standpoint of the client (Shostack, 1977).

2.3 Service Delivery Innovation and Customer Retention

Service innovation is praised for its ability to generate better outcomes for customers, as well as contribute to service innovation within the organisation and provide a competitive edge (Chen et al., 2018). Walls et al. (2011) have shown that innovation leads to greater growth, higher acquisition of new customers, enhanced operational efficiency, and heightened consumer value, experience, and loyalty. According to Sarmah, Rahman, and Kamboj (2017), service innovation has an impact on

several customer outcomes, such as motivation, engagement, trust, and commitment. Furthermore, Wu (2014) asserts that innovation plays a crucial role in establishing consumer loyalty, particularly within the service industry. Service innovation can have a beneficial impact on repurchase intention by addressing or better fulfilling consumers' hidden requirements, rather than only focusing on existing products or services (Leckie, et al. 2018). The service business is composed of several segments, including financial services and telecommunications, which are unique from each other (Lovelock, 1983). Furthermore, a service can be perceived as a result or consequence, representing "what a customer obtains" (Mohr & Bitner, 1995).

2.3.1 Self-service Technology and Customer Retention

Self-service technology offers users a diverse array of amenities, thereby removing the need for human interaction (Kokkinou & Cranage, 2013). Within the airline business, around 87% of individuals utilise SST for making bookings. Additionally, more than half, namely 54%, of consumers globally choose SST for check-in services, as shown via the Airline IT Survey conducted in 2017 by www.sita.aero. This tendency has shown a significant increase and has garnered much scholarly attention in the past decade. Technologically enabled platforms, such as SST, offer easy services to clients, leading to improved productivity and satisfaction (Tsou & Hsu, 2017). According to Oliver (1997), customer satisfaction is the assessment that a product or service, or its specific features, has supplied or is delivering a satisfactory degree of fulfilment associated to consumption. Several academic studies have established a connection between self-service technology and consumer satisfaction in the service industry. Lu et al. (2009) found that implementing and using SST by service providers can streamline service delivery, broaden service alternatives, enhance productivity and efficiency, lower expenses, and improve customer satisfaction. Against this backdrop, we hypothesize thus:

Ho1: There is no statistically significant correlation between the use of self-service technology and the level of customer satisfaction.

Ho2: There is no statistically significant correlation between Self-service Technology and Customer Commitment.

2.3.2 Service Process Blueprinting and Customer Retention

The notion of satisfaction as a factor influencing consumers' contentment and consequent support has been the subject of increasing scholarly discussion in recent years. Researchers such as Lovelock and Van der Merwe (1999), Noori and Radford (1995), Melnyk and Denzler (1996), and Hope and Muhlemann (1997) have utilised service blueprinting as a means of innovating service delivery. This approach aims to enhance service simplicity and customer happiness. The argument was made that in order to achieve satisfaction, service delivery must be simplified and made user-friendly for clients. Kumar et al. (2010) state that service blueprinting is a method that alters current service delivery processes. It enables managers to identify possible points of failure and create reliable procedures to prevent them. This ensures the provision of high-quality service and enhances customer satisfaction. By employing service blueprinting, one may proactively identify possible fall points, effectively addressing both the root cause of customer unhappiness and handling furious customers with tact (Lewis & Spyrakopoulos, 2001). This approach significantly enhances the likelihood of achieving customer satisfaction. In this regard, we hypothesize thus;

Ho3: There is no statistically significant correlation between Service Process Blueprinting and Customer Satisfaction.

Ho4: There is no statistically significant correlation between Service Process Blueprinting and Customer Commitment.

2.4 Theoretical Review

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The TAM, devised by Davis (1986), is a highly prevalent paradigm employed to elucidate user acceptance behaviour. This model is based on social psychology theory, namely the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) developed by Fishbein and Azjen in 1975. TRA posits that beliefs have a significant impact on attitudes, which in turn shape intentions and ultimately drive behaviour. Davis (1986, 1989) proposed the notions of perceived utility (PU), perceived ease of use (PEOU), attitude, and behavioural intention to use as the components of the TAM. PU and PEOU are constructs that shape the views of end-users regarding technology. These beliefs, in turn, determine their attitude towards the technology, which ultimately influences their adoption of it. The acceptance or rejection of an invention is primarily determined by the value it is expected to provide to customers, including factors such as PU, PEOU, attitude, and behavioural intention. Therefore, in order to assess the adoption of a technology in the aviation industry, it is crucial to give significant consideration to factors such as perceived utility, perceived simplicity of use, attitude, and behavioural intention.

Table 2.1: Summary of Literature Gap on Service Delivery Innovation and Customer Retention

S/N	Author(s) / Year of Research	Title of Work	Literature Gap: Population Size
1.	McDermott, & Prajogo, (2012)	Service innovation and performance in SMEs.	180 SME managers in Australia
2.	Taghizadeh, Rahman, Hossain, & Haque, (2020)	Characteristics of organizational culture in stimulating service innovation and performance.	171 bank managers in Bangladesh
3.	Le, (2020).	How transformational leadership facilitates radical and incremental innovation: the mediating role of individual psychological capital.	379 participants in 89 manufacturing and service firms in Vietnam.
4.	Le, Lei, Le, Gong, & Ha, (2020).	Creating a culture of collaboration to foster both radical and gradual innovation, with a focus on the influence of sharing tacit and explicit knowledge.	371 participants in 68 Chinese firms.
5.	Lei, Ha, & Le, (2020).	The study examines the relationship between ethical leadership and both radical and incremental innovation, with a focus on the mediating function of tacit and explicit knowledge exchange.	365 participants from 115 Vietnamese firms.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Research Design: This study utilises a quasi-experimental research methodology. This strategy restricts the researcher's ability to exercise full control on the study elements, in contrast to the

experimental research approach which allows for easy manipulation. Therefore, data in this study will be collected within the context of Service Delivery Innovation and Retention.

Population for the Study: The population of this study was all the domestic and international airlines in Nigeria. According to Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority, 24 airlines are operating in Rivers State.

Table 1: List of Aviation Firms in Rivers State

INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES		
S/N	**Airlines**	**Address**
1	Air France	329 Olu Obansajo Rd, Port Harcourt
2	Lufthansa	Hotel Presidential
3	Qatar Air	Cultural Center Port Harcourt
4	Ethiopian Air	Block 3, Elekahia Housing Estate
5	British Airways	Waterlines Building 169, Aba Express way
6	Coronos Airline	Port Harcourt
7	Turkish Airline	Port Harcourt International Airport, Omagwa
8	Av cargo Aviation	Omagwua
9	Cargolux Airlines	Omagwua
10	Nordic Global Airlines	Omagwua
	DOMESTIC AIRLINES	
11	Air Peace	55B Old Aba Road, Rumuobiakani
12	Dana Air	Port Harcourt International Airport, Omagwa
13	Arik Air	Eastern Garden House 47 Aba Road, New GRA
14	Aero Contractors	Air Force Base, Port Harcourt
15	Max Air	Port Harcourt International Airport, Omagwa
16	Ibom Air	Port Harcourt International Airport, Omagwa
17	First Nations Airlines	Eastern Garden House, 10 Ogbunabali
18	Green Nation Airlines	Port Harcourt International Airport, Omagwa
19	Donier Aviation	Air Force Base, Port Harcourt
20	Med-View Airlines	Port Harcourt International Airport, Omagwa
21	Azman Airlines	Port Harcourt International Airport, Omagwa
22	Allied Air	Port Harcourt International Airport, Omagwa
23	Discovery Air	Omagwua
24	Next Oil Aviation	Air Force Base, Port Harcourt

Source: businesslist.com.ng

Sample and Sampling Techniques: Data was collected from the management staff of aviation organisations, including air traffic controllers, airport security managers, airport operations managers, air cargo managers, and customer service professionals, who have a minimum of five years of work experience. Structured questionnaires were utilised for this purpose. A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed to 24 airlines in Rivers State, with each airline receiving 5 copies. A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed to each of the 24 airlines operating in Rivers State.

Methods of Data Analysis: In this study, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed to test the hypotheses.

Table 2: Properties of Service delivery process Instruments

Indicators	λ	λ^2	AVE	CR	α
Self-Service Technology			**0.80**	**0.95**	**0.822**
SST1	0.845	0.714			
SST2	0.921	0.848			
SST3	0.897	0.805			
SST4	0.900	0.810			
SST4	0.911	0.830			
SST5	0.888	0.789			
Service Process Blueprinting			**0.80**	**0.94**	**0.763**
SPB1	0.899	0.808			
SPB2	0.847	0.717			
SPB3	0.898	0.806			
SPB4	0.901	0.812			
SPB5	0.931	0.867			
Customer Satisfaction			**0.82**	**0.96**	**0.848**
CS1	0.894	0.799			
CS2	0.911	0.830			
CS3	0.944	0.891			
CS4	0.912	0.832			
CS5	0.891	0.794			
CS6	0.893	0.797			
Customer Commitment			**0.80**	**0.95**	**0.800**
CC1	0.901	0.812			
CC2	0.921	0.848			
CC3	0.859	0.738			
CC4	0.866	0.750			
CC5	0.855	0.731			

Hint: Standardized loading (λ); Average Variance Extracted ($\Sigma\lambda^2 \div 5$); Composite reliability (CR) ($(\Sigma\lambda)^2 \div ((\Sigma\lambda)^2 + \Sigma(1-\lambda^2))$); Cronbach Alpha (α)

The studies conducted showed that the AVE and composite reliability, as well as the SPSS output of Cronbach's Alphas for the twenty-one (21) statement items, indicated a high degree of reliability in the service delivery process dimensions. All goods had loadings exceeding 0.70. Furthermore, none of the items had significant cross-loading on aspects that were not meant to be examined. The AVE exceeded the threshold of 0.50, so confirming discriminant validity.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity

Construct	SST	SPB	CS	CC
SST	**0.95**	0.353	0.399	0.333
SPB	0.353	**0.94**	0.351	0.389
CS	0.399	0.351	**0.92**	0.317
CC	0.333	0.389	0.317	**0.95**

Table 3 shows that the average variance retrieved exceeds the criterion of 0.5 in all instances. Specifically, the values are 0.80 for self-service technology, 0.80 for service process blueprinting, 0.82 for customer happiness, and 0.78 for customer commitment. The composite dependability coefficient

for self-service technology, service process blueprinting, customer satisfaction, and customer commitment is 0.95, 0.94, 0.92, and 0.95 correspondingly. These coefficients above the 0.7 criterion for convergent reliability, indicating that all the scales meet the requirements for further analysis and are consistent. It is evident that the square root of the average variance retrieved (values in bold) for each construct is significantly greater than all off-diagonal components of the correlation matrix, which indicate the correlation between the constructs. Consequently, the criterion of discriminant validity has been met.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of one hundred and twenty (120) copies of questionnaires distributed. Ninety eight (98) of 81.7% copies of questionnaires were retrieved. Nineteen (19) copies of questionnaires of 15.8% were discarded. Ninety-eight (98) representing 81.7% of the total copies of questionnaires distributed was useful in the study.

Relationship between dimensions of Service delivery process and Measures of Customer Retention using Pearson Product Moment Correlation

Table 4. Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between dimensions of service delivery process and measures of customer retention

Correlations

		Self-service technology	Service process blueprinting	Customer satisfaction	Customer commitment
Self-service technology	Pearson Correlation	1	.912**	.786**	.799**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	98	98	98	98
Service process blueprinting	Pearson Correlation	.912**	1	.886**	.859**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	98	98	98	98
Customer satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.786**	.886**	1	.959**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	98	98	98	98
Customer commitment	Pearson Correlation	.799**	.859**	.959**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	98	98	98	98

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Survey Data, 2024, SPSS 25 Output

Decision

The table above presents a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.786 and a probability value of 0.000 (Sig< 0.05). This discovery indicates a robust and favourable relationship between the utilisation of self-service technologies and the degree of customer satisfaction among airlines in Rivers State. Moreover, the link between self-service technology and consumer contentment of airlines in Rivers State is estimated to be 61.7% based on a coefficient of determination of 0.617. This indicates a strong and reliable correlation between self-service technologies and consumer satisfaction. With a

significance level of less than 0.05 and a correlation coefficient more than 0.5, the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This indicates that there is a statistically significant correlation between the use of self-service technology and the level of pleasure experienced by consumers of airlines in Rivers State.

The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) between self-service technology and client commitment is 0.799, with a probability value of 0.000 (Sig< 0.05). This discovery indicates a robust and significant relationship between the utilisation of self-service technologies and the degree of customer dedication in the airlines operating in Rivers State. Moreover, the coefficient of determination of 0.638 demonstrates that there is a strong and statistically significant link of 63.8% between self-service technology and consumer commitment in the airlines of Rivers State. With a significance level below 0.05 and a correlation coefficient over 0.5, the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This indicates that there is a statistically significant correlation between the use of self-service technologies and the level of consumer loyalty among airlines in Rivers State.

The table above displays a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.886 and a probability value of 0.000 (Sig< 0.05). The results indicate a robust and significant relationship between service process blueprinting and customer satisfaction among airlines in Rivers State. Moreover, the coefficient of determination for the connection between service process blueprinting and customer satisfaction of airlines in Rivers State is 0.785, which translates to a strong and statistically significant link of 78.5% between these two variables. With a significance level below 0.05 and a correlation coefficient over 0.5, the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This indicates that there is a statistically significant correlation between service process blueprinting and customer satisfaction of airlines in Rivers State.

Table 6 analysis reveals a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.859 and a probability value of 0.000 (Sig< 0.05). This discovery indicates a significant and relevant connection between the implementation of service process blueprinting and the degree of client dedication across airlines in Rivers State. Moreover, based on a coefficient of determination (r2) of 0.738, it can be concluded that there is a significant correlation between service process blueprinting and customer commitment of airlines in Rivers State. This correlation accounts for 73.8% of the variability in customer commitment. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 and the correlation coefficient is more than 0.5, we may conclude that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This suggests that there is a statistically significant correlation between the process of service blueprinting and the level of customer commitment across airlines in Rivers State.

4.1 Discussion of the Findings

This section of the chapter discusses the stated findings of the study on the relationship between service delivery process and customer retention.

i. Self-service technology significantly and positively correlates with customer retention.

In summary, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient indicates that the perception of self-service technology is a more reliable predictor of customer retention inside a given organisation compared to a measure of customer retention that does not take into account the performance of the organisation. The service delivery process was anticipated to have a significant impact on customer retention, as it reflects how Airlines perceive their own service delivery process as an external element. However, self-service technology has not been successful in capturing a large portion of the customer

retention dynamics, which is different from previous research on self-service technology. In previous studies, perceptions of organisations were able to predict customer retention measures, even when other factors such as customer satisfaction, commitment, and loyalty were taken into account.

The research aligns with the findings of Bitner et al., (2002) and Meuter, Bitner, Ostrom, and Brown, (2005), which indicate that self-service technologies (SSTs) contribute to increased customer loyalty. Similarly, Demirci Orel and Kara, (2014) and Lin and Hsieh, (2007) discovered a positive correlation between SST user loyalty and post-behavioral intentions. Demirci Orel and Kara (2014) found that self-checkout service quality has a favourable impact on customer loyalty through the indirect influence of customer satisfaction. They examined many aspects of self-service quality to reach this conclusion.

ii. Service process blueprinting significantly and positively correlates with customer retention.

The evidence indicates a significant relationship between service process blueprinting and customer retention in the airline industry. Service process blueprinting has a noteworthy influence on three aspects of customer retention: customer satisfaction, customer commitment, and customer loyalty. Significantly, the findings of this thesis indicate that the service delivery process is a strong predictor of customer retention outcomes, even after accounting for the effects of service process blueprinting. Service process blueprinting was found to have a robust and favourable correlation with customer retention measures. Prior research has identified a substantial and favourable correlation between the variables.

Fernandes and Morgado (2018) discovered a clear and direct correlation between post-recovery happiness and high-contact customised services, especially when these services are begun by competent staff. In their study, Muhammed, Fabiha, and Saraj (2017) discovered a positive correlation between customer engagement in the service process and the amount of value co-creation with staff.

5. Conclusion

The findings indicate that the dimensions of service delivery process, namely Self-service technology and Service process blueprinting, have a key role in attaining customer retention of Airlines in Rivers State. The results on the aspects of service delivery process, namely self-service technology and service process blueprinting, have a major beneficial impact on attaining customer retention, which includes customer satisfaction and customer commitment, for airlines in Rivers State. Specifically, it was concluded that:

a. The findings on the correlation between self-service technology and customer retention (customer satisfaction and customer commitment) demonstrated a significant and favourable influence.
b. Based on the second research question, the study indicates that there is a strong and significant beneficial association between service process blueprinting and customer retention (customer satisfaction and customer commitment) of Airlines in Rivers State.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the documented findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendation were advanced:

i. This study suggests that Airlines should ensure that their self-service technology are readily available and user-friendly. Customers expressed dissatisfaction with the challenges encountered

while utilising self-service technologies in the aviation industry. Hence, the inclusion of less complex self-service technology is necessary to enhance the provision of high-quality services.

ii. Furthermore, airlines should be cognizant of the channels via which their consumers get information about their service offerings in order to successfully control their external communications.

iii. iii. Airlines should prioritise aligning their operations to consistently provide a captivating customer experience by effectively engaging with consumers to gain a deep understanding of their perceptions and opinions of the airline's services.

iv. Airlines should see consumers as significant assets, taking into account their formal duties and voluntary actions that contribute to the business environment.

v. In addition, it is important for them to acknowledge that consumers engage in voluntary behaviour without any consideration of receiving a bonus or other forms of incentives. Rather, they volunteer to support their companies.

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