

INFLUENCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SERVICE QUALITY ON CUSTOMERS'PATRONAGE OF CHICKEN REPUBLIC, UYO

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of Public Relations and Service Quality on Customer Patronage of Chicken Republic Outlets in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The objectives of the study included: identifying various public relations services rendered at Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo; examining the influence of service quality on customer patronage of Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo; determining the influence of food quality on customer patronage, and identifying other factors that influence customer patronage of Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo. The population of the study was 522,398 and a sample size of 384 was drawn based on the Topman Formula. The survey research method was adopted with the questionnaire as instrument of data gathering while the multistage sampling procedure was used to reach the final respondents. Frequency tables and simple percentages were adopted to analyse the research questions. The study was anchored on the Two-Way Symmetric Model and the Social Exchange Theory. Findings from the study revealed a strong and positive relationship between public relations activities and customer patronage of Chicken Republic outlets. It was revealed that service quality and food quality had tremendous influence on customer patronage of Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo. Results from the study also showed that price fairness was another factor that influenced customers' patronage of Chicken Republic outlets. The study concluded that the quality of service rendered and the quality of food served were the major factors that influenced customer patronage of Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo metropolis. It was therefore recommended that attention should be given to cheerful and friendly disposition of staff to customers and the tastiness of food served to customers given the revelation

that specific services and food quality influenced customer patronage of Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo.

KEYWORDS: Public Relations, service quality, food quality, influence, customer patronage.

INTRODUCTION

Public relations (PR) has been practised throughout the ages and under all climes. It has existed for hundreds of years, and has flourished over time. In fact, it is very safe to say that what we now refer to as public relations had actually been with us from the beginning of man's existence. Although the phrase "public relations" was invented in the twentieth century, the practice of public relations had been since the dawn of recorded history. The idea of PR according to Austin and Pinkleton (2018) stems from the concept of communication, which dates all the way back to the philosophers of Ancient Greece. This idea of using communication to persuade is one of the first practical uses of PR, and it has remained a persuasive tool of communication. As decades passed, PR has continued to develop. The public relations industry has evolved, adapting to rapid technological change and the emergence of the internet, and new trends like social media (Alert & Zawawi, 2014).

The contemporary fast food revolution essentially had its origins in the US in the mid 1950's and this style of catering has continued to grow there and to the rest of the world (Nnamani, 2017). According to Oxford Business Group (2014), and Ciuci Consulting Report (2015) cited in Aguet *al.* (2015), Nigeria's fast food industry experienced rapid growth and development between 1970 and 1980 when the first modern and oldest fast food chain Mr. Biggs, owned by UAC, was founded, followed by other companies such as Kingsway, Leventis, Kas Chicken leading the market. Since the introduction of Mr. Biggs into the fast food industry, consumer acceptance of fast food has continued to increase. These include Tantalizers, Sweet Sensation, Tasty Fried Chicken, Chicken Republic, Mama Cass, Munchies, among others. Some of the fast food chains like Mr. Biggs, Tantalizers and Tasty Fried Chicken are now listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange. According to a report by Oxford Business Group (2022) cited in Nnamani (2017), this industry in Nigeria has experienced fast growth and has contributed to the economic development of the country.

Chicken Republic is one of the fast rising fast food industries in Nigeria that has spread across all states. It is proudly a Nigerian brand that comes from humble beginnings. It was founded by Deji Akinyanju in

2004with headquarters in Apapa, Lagos. The company is a subsidiary of Food Concepts Plc., a Nigerian food based company. The first Chicken Republic Restaurant was opened in Lagos in 2004 and is presently trading in over 150 locations across Nigeria and Ghana with plans to operate 430 restaurants by the end of 2024. Chicken Republic has a mission of providing excellent customer experience, great tasting products and everyday affordable value meals, delivered via clean, comfortable and convenient restaurant environments and online channels.

The situation today is that fast food industry is highly competitive with numerous establishments vying for customers' attention, and doing their best to convincecustomers, attract their patronage and secure loyalty. In this context, some PR strategies in fast food industries, like, service quality, food quality, restaurant physical environment (Ambiance), price fairness (value), sales promotionsamong others play a critical role in influencing and shaping customer perceptions, and their decision to patronise the business; and these tactics must be deliberately and tactically applied,

This study explores public relations and service quality on customer satisfaction, behaviour, decision-making and overall patronage. Through a comprehensive analysis of research findings, and case studies, this study is hinged on examining the influence of public relations and service quality on customer patronageof Chicken Republic Uyo.

STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The fast food restaurant business is one of the fastest-growing industries in the world. International and local restaurant chains are trying to satisfy the demands of customers for a variety of products and services. Along with changing market trends, customers are now becoming more sophisticated and demanding. Customer satisfaction is an essential business issue, as organisations have realised that favourable customer feedback is key for a long-term sustainable operation. Customers who have an excellent experience at a restaurant may recommend the restaurant to others, spread positive information, and influence customer patronage.

Leveraging the power of public relations remains one of the secrets of leading restaurants. Public relations practices are geared towards the customers and the general public to influence them to have favourable dispositions on the organisations concern, in this case Chicken Republic fast food outlets. As no fast food restaurant can succeed without the patronage of its customers, the tool to reach and influence them becomes very important. On a careful look, however, there is a perceived increase in the number of branches of Chicken Republic fast food restaurants that crop up in every area

of Uyo, the capital city of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The implication of this is that Chicken Republic is gaining acceptance among consumers. Moreover, the number of fast food establishments scattered all over major roads and streets of Uyo city has increased in the past few years with different exotic and enticing physical environment.

It has become so curious that Chicken Republic has gained so much momentum in Uyo with lots of customers to patronise their products. It is on this premise that the researcher decided to carry out an assessment on how public relations practices, service quality and food quality have influenced the patronage of Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo by customers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study were to:

1. identify various public relations services rendered at Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo.
2. examine the influence of service quality on customers' patronage of Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo.
3. determine the influence of food quality on customers' patronage of Chicken Republic fast food outlets in Uyo.
4. discover other factors that influenced customers' patronage of Chicken Republic fast food outlets in Uyo.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are the various public relations services rendered at Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo?

Does the quality of service rendered by Chicken Republic outlets significantly influence customers' patronage?

What is the influence of food quality on customers' patronage of Chicken Republic outlets?

What are the other factors that influenced customers' patronage of Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term Public Relations has been defined variously by experts, scholars, and laymen alike from different perspectives. Depending on who is defining it, different aspects may be stressed. Many people, however, agree that public relations involves a wide variety of functions carried out by a communication experts aimed at creating, fostering and maintaining mutual understanding and goodwill between an organisation and its publics. This study considers few definitions out of the numerous existing definitions of public relations.

Nwosu and Uffoh (2017) provide what they call a working definition. According to them, Public relations is “essentially about positively and systematically using actions and communications to influence people’s attitudes, opinions, belief, interest and behavior in a given or desired direction (e.g. adopting good environmental behaviours as well as building, lasting, credible reputation for individuals and corporate entities (Nwosu&Uffoh, 2017). Public relations, according Mairiga (2017) is concerned with the promotion of goodwill between persons, special publics or the community at large, through the distribution of interpretative materials, the development of neighborly interchange and assessment of public reactions.

Alert and Zawawi (2014) describe public relations as the ethical and strategic management of communication and relationship in order to build and develop coalitions and policy, identify and manage issues and create message to achieve sound outcomes within a socially responsible framework” PR is concerned with how and what people think about you either as a person or an organization. These images or views are either favourable or unfavourable. Hence, the effort of Public Relations is to change negative impression to positive impression or image. Therefore, public relations is a distinctive management function which helps to establish and maintain mutual line of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organisation and its various publics. It involves the management of problems or issues, help management keep abreast of and effectively utilise change serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trend and use research and sound ethical communication and its principal tools.

The British Institute of Public Relations as cited by Okudo (2017) sees Public Relations as “deliberate, planned, and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between organization and its publics. This definition agrees with the present day perception of the role of Public Relations which emphasises management function aimed at understanding and using Public Relations as a management tool for effective management of men and resources. The reviewed literature suggests that the managerial capabilities associated with public functions are both general and specific. In the opinion of Austin and Pinkleton, (2018) public relations is a planned and sustained programme conducted by organisation’s management dealing with the relationship between the organisation and its various constituent publics.

Hudson (2015) defined PR practice as the practice of using media channels and other strategies to manage, relate, promote an organisation and cultivate a positive public perception. Johnson and Zawawi (2014) see it as the process of managing your organisation’s brand and communications,

especially in times of crisis. Public relations practitioner according to them is a professional that creates, builds, maintains, and sustains a good image, goodwill, understanding, support, good relationships among various groups, organisations and publics.

CUSTOMER PATRONAGE

The customer is as old as business and the sole purpose of every business is to create customer. In the context of marketing, patronage is an exchange process where one receives a service or goods in exchange for money or other considerations. A customer is a person or organisation that purchases goods or services. Customer patronage, according to Williams, Ogege and Ideji (2014), is therefore an act of purchasing of goods and service from a vendor by a customer or a business. The customer purchases and expects to derive benefits or satisfaction from the goods or services as consideration for the exchange for money paid. Customer expectations of satisfaction lead to an increase in tendencies to purchasing a particular brand. They reiterated that firms that provide high quality products and services on a regular basis will have more satisfied customers and these customers will likely re-patronise the service and products next time. These assertions are supported by Osman, Mohamad and Mohamad (2015) when indicating that comparatively, firms that offer service of superior quality is bound to get their customers satisfied as well as get higher economic returns more than their competitors.

Customers' purchases of various products are on the rise. Alongside, newer products also are entering the market, hoping to gain a good market share. Today, there is cutthroat competition in all markets, and the challenge lies heavily with businesses to create and maintain a cordial relationship with the customers in order to maintain and increase their market share.

SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMER PATRONAGE

Service quality is a measure of how well a service conforms to the customer's expectations and the success factor of a fast food restaurant. Service quality is the main component of a fast food restaurant that can be measured and improved continuously. In the opinion of Nwodu (2018), when there is a close interaction between a service employee and a customer, the perception of what is being delivered is as important as what is actually delivered. In other words, it is the result of the comparison between expectations about service and perceptions of the way the service has been performed that customers make. Therefore, the employees' behaviours and attitudes can influence a customer's perception of quality for the service offered.

A firm's personnel are the employees who work for the company. Their attitudes to work and how professional or pleasant they interact with or attend to customers of the firm suggests their quality level. Kalu (2015) points that interaction with the service employee is the most important influence on customer service quality assessment and overall service satisfaction. Osman, Mohamad and Mohamad (2015) suggest that the behaviour of service employees, when serving the needs and wishes of existing customers create impression which either increases customer satisfaction or subsequent continuous patronage or cause dissatisfaction and less patronage.

Nwafor and Anyasor (2020) outline four essential skills needed by service delivery personnel in the discharge of his duties towards satisfying the customers. They include technical skills - the knowledge and skills that the employee should have in order to serve and fulfill the customer's needs; social skills - the ability of the service employee to understand the customers' perception in terms of thoughts and feelings. An understanding of the customer's perspective is important for proper and timely understanding of his/her needs. Motivation - employee motivation leads the employee to exert technical skill and social skills in carrying out their duties. The employee's feeling of authority to make decisions on issues that concern customers' interest and need subsequently promotes the business.

Given therefore, that perceived quality levels of service in restaurants are based on the relationship between patrons and the provider, Kalu (2015) has suggested that customer's perceptions and evaluation of service quality may be strongly dependent on the service provider's performance in delivery. Therefore, a positive relationship between restaurant's personnel quality and customer patronage is postulated for this research. There are five important features of services, they are: Intangibility, Perishability, Inseparability, Heterogeneity and Ownership.

Food Quality and Customer Patronage

Food quality is an important component and it has been constantly shown to be a core value that a customer considers in deciding which fast food restaurant to eat at. It is considered the highest driver of customer patronage. Studies by (Haery and Badiezadeh, 2014; Canny, 2014; Al-Tit, 2015) have investigated food quality characteristics, such as the freshness of food, food presentation, food taste, a variety of menu options, and food temperature. These studies discovered that food quality is considered to be a key foundation for customers' satisfaction, patronage and revisit intention. According to Haery and Badiezadeh (2014) food quality is an absolute requirement to satisfy the needs and expectations of restaurant

customers. Youth-aged customers who mostly prefer eating delicious food require good quality food and beverages to satisfy them; therefore, the quality of menu items affects customers' revisit intention.

According to Canny (2014), food quality is a quality characteristic of a food that is served, which can be evaluated by checking the points that must be controlled through the nutritional value contained in the food, the level of ingredients used, taste, and appearance. Meanwhile, according to Al-Tit (2015), providing food quality that matches customer expectations can have a positive influence on the relationship between the company and customers.

Al-Tit (2015) posit that the quality of menu - food offering is considered the highest driver or otherwise of a dining experience. Haery and Badiezadeh (2014) have also shown that food quality is the major influencer of customer choice, patronage of a restaurant, and ultimately his loyalty enforcer. They maintained that when food quality is compared with other aspects of a restaurant, including service quality and environmental components, it remains key element of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Al-Tit (2015) tested the influence of food quality on customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions and found a positive correlation between the two variables.

Hassan *et al.* (2013) considered tastiness of food, nutrition and menu variety aspects of food quality in measuring the effect of excellent food on customer satisfaction and return patronage. They deployed menu design, variety, food presentation, and serving size, to measure the impact of product quality in the restaurant industry.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Two-way Symmetric Model

The two-way Symmetric Model of Public Relations was propounded by James Grunig and Hunt in 1984. It focuses primarily in making sure that decisions made by organisations are mutually beneficial to them and their customers. Grunig's two-way symmetric model provides for the sole question of this study that organisations should bargain and or negotiate issues alongside customers who form an important part of the organisations environment. That is to say organisations especially those running open systems like fast food should relate and create quality service and relationship with its customers to help create a favourable image for it. This will foster a sense of belonging for the customers of the organisation and therefore create a platform for dialogue between the organisation and the customers. It will also build an acceptable image for the organisation and therefore a favourable customer service which will stimulate patronage and at eventually loyalty.

An organisation's service to customers is an important variable that positively or negatively influences marketing activities. Service is considered to have the ability to influence customers' perception of the goods and services offered particularly in a fast food industry like Chicken Republic. Thus, service will have an influence on customers' buying behaviour. Service quality rendered at fast food restaurants is considered to influence customers' minds through the combined effects of advertising, public relations, food quality, word-of-mouth, and their actual experiences with the food and services. It also advocates that service business can retain customers and achieve profitability by building reciprocal relationships founded on safeguarding and affirming customer service, fairness and self-esteem. It requires that companies view customers as people first and consumers second. A progressive business organisation is on familiar terms with the fact that it is in its own interest to be socially responsible, since an enhanced service delivery is more likely to be attractive to customers.

SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

Social exchange theory was propounded by John Thibaut and Harold Kelley in 1952. Social exchange theory uses the economic metaphor of costs and benefits to predict relational behaviour. This is on the assumption that individuals and groups choose plans of action based on estimate rewards and costs. Individuals first weigh the consequences of their behaviour before acting, in an effort to keep their costs low and their rewards high Exchange involves the gives and takes of things of value - tangibles and intangibles – money, product or services between two parties. The involved parties are always cautious of what would be their gain, and so try as much as possible to minimise cost He contended that exchange theory is not all about individual actors or persons, and that corporate bodies or business firms which can sue or be sued are entities interacting in a social system.

Each entity, whether human or corporate, is known to have an aim or motive for going into interaction or exchange with another. The motive may be to have or acquire more shares, obtain a loan, knowledge, happiness or self-satisfaction. Whatever is the motive, and for that interaction to persist without a breakdown there must have to be satisfaction. Charles argued that when the motive is not satisfied in the process of interacting, the relationship could be discontinued or new alliances forged. In relation to this study, as much as fast food restaurants try to make more profit and maintain their reputation, they as well prioritise their customer satisfaction with their products/services offerings. In other words, customers could discontinue patronising a particular outlet once they discovered that they do not have their

interest or satisfaction at heart. It is therefore through effective and efficient public relations services that a fast food can adequately assess the perception of its customers and if unsatisfied, put more effort at improving on it until they become loyal.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The survey research design was adopted for this study with the questionnaire as a data collection instrument. This design was employed to capture accurate assessment of the influence of public relations on customer loyalty of fast food restaurants in Port Harcourt and Uyo metropolis, River and Akwa Ibom State respectively. The survey is a vital research method for collecting valuable data from a population too large to be observed directly. It does not only gather, analyse and present data, it goes further to interpret the data, synthesise and integrate them with other variables in order to unravel the relationship between the data and the variables (Senam and Akpan, 2014). Thus, usually the researcher is compelled to draw a representative sample of the population in order to draw inferences.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population of the study comprised all the residents of Uyo metropolis. The population was based on the 2006 National Population Census (NPC, 2006) projected to 2022 at the rate of 3.4%. The projected population of Uyo as of 2022 stood at 522,398. This figure constituted the population of this study. The population consists of customers that patronize Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo, the capital city of Akwa Ibom State, South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES

The sample size for the study was 384. This sample size was statistically determined using the Topman Formula. This formula was used for determining sample size at 0.05 level of tolerable error for a finite population of Uyo residents estimated at 522,398. For equal representation and generalisation, the multi-stage sampling procedure was employed; the researcher made use of two sampling procedures at different stages.

In the first stage, the cluster was used; Uyo metropolis was divided into six (6) clusters, with each cluster representing each Chicken Republic outlet in Uyo metropolis. In the last stage, the purposive sampling procedure was adopted on the ground that respondents must be customers of Chicken Republic outlet and must be found in the restaurant. Therefore, individual respondents were selected purposively. The three hundred and eighty four

(384) sample population was divided by the selected six (6) Chicken Republic Outlets located in Uyo. Each of the six outlets was allocated 64 copies of the questionnaire as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Size and Questionnaire Distribution of Selected Chicken Republic branches in Uyo

| S/No. | Locations | Sample size | Percentage (%) |
|-------|-----------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1. | UniUyo | 64 | 16.7 |
| 2. | Oron Road | 64 | 16.7 |
| 3. | IkotEkpene Road | 64 | 16.7 |
| 4. | Abak Road | 64 | 16.7 |
| 5. | Aka Road | 64 | 16.7 |
| 6. | Nwaniba Road | 64 | 16.7 |
| Total | 6 | 384 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2023

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The questionnaire was the data gathering instrument for the study. The questionnaire was made up of 13 structured items with maximum of 4 options framed to supply information on the variables under consideration. The questionnaire consists of two (2) sections (A) and (B). Section A (questions 1-4) focused on essential demographic information about the respondents, such as age, gender, marital status, educational level among others. Section B assessed the influence of public relations on customer patronage of Chicken Republic restaurant in Uyo. The respondents were selected through purposive sampling procedure. Items 5, 6 and 7 took care of objective 1, items 8, 9, 10 and 11 addressed objective 2, and item 12 took care of objective 3, while item 13 addressed objective 4. A maximum of six (5) options were provided while individual respondents were given the options. An introductory note assuring respondents of the confidentiality of their personal details and responses was attached to appropriately answer the research questions confidently.

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The data generated from the respondents were analysed using descriptive statistics such as: simple percentages and frequency distribution. The highest percentage (%) in each question was considered as representing the views of the majority of the respondents. this allows for the results to be presented in easy-to-read tables and explanations were given on responses.

The formula for the simple percentage is:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{x}{N} \times 100$$

N

Where X = Individual stem in the group of response

N = Total response

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table 1: Various Public Relations Services rendered by Chicken Republic outlets

| Options | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Courteous and polite | 82 | 22 |
| Cheerful and Friendly disposition | 125 | 33 |
| Prompt and Attentive | 56 | 15 |
| Table Services and speedy delivery | 58 | 15 |
| Smart and Proactive | 59 | 15 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data displayed in Table 1 displayed different kinds of PR services rendered at Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo metropolis, The data revealed that 125 (33%) of the respondents opted for Cheerful and Friendly disposition as the PR services often rendered at Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo. This suggests that Cheerful and Friendly disposition as the most frequently used PR services rendered at Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo metropolis.

Table 2: Responses on whether Respondents were influenced by Service Quality to Patronise Chicken Republic

| Options | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Agreed | 101 | 26 |
| Strongly Agreed | 277 | 73 |
| Disagreed | 2 | 1 |
| Strongly Disagreed | - | - |
| Undecided | - | - |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

The data presented in Table 2 reveal that 277 (73%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they were influenced to patronise Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo as a result of the service qualities rendered. This shows that an overwhelming majority of the respondent were influenced by the service quality rendered at Chicken Republic outlets to patronise their products.

Table 3: Servicesquality that influenced customer patronage of Chicken Republic outlets

| Options | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Courteous and polite | 87 | 23 |
| Cheerful and Friendly disposition | 119 | 31 |
| Prompt and Attentive | 66 | 17 |
| Table Services and speedy delivery | 48 | 13 |
| Smart and Proactive | 60 | 16 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data displayed in Table 3 show that 119 (31%) of the respondents said that the specific service that influenced their patronage was the cheerful and friendly disposition of the staff of Chicken Republic. This shows that employees of Chicken Republic were cheerful and friendly to their customers.

Table 4: Likert Scale Rating of Service Quality in Chicken Republic

| Options (Likert 5- Scale) | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Excellent (5) | 192 | 51 |
| Very Good (4) | 149 | 39 |
| Good (3) | 39 | 10 |
| Fair (2) | - | - |
| Poor (1) | - | - |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

The data shown in Table 4 displayed a 5-Point Likert Scale rating of Service Quality in Chicken Republic, the result revealed that 192 (51%) of the respondents rated the service quality at Chicken Republic "Excellent". This shows that consumers were satisfied with the services rendered at Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo.

Table 5: Responses on Whether Respondents were influenced by Food Quality to Patronise Chicken Republic outlets

| Options | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Agreed | 199 | 53 |
| Strongly Agreed | 164 | 43 |
| Disagreed | 9 | 2 |
| Strongly Disagreed | 8 | 2 |
| Undecided | - | - |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 5 showed that 199 (53%) of the respondents agreed that they were influenced by the quality of food served at Chicken Republic to patronise foods in their different outlets located in Uyo. This indicates that majority of the respondents purchase foods sold at Chicken Republic as a result of the quality.

Table 6: Food quality that influenced customer patronage of Chicken Republic outlets

| Options | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Tastiness of food | 141 | 37 |
| Freshness of food | 88 | 23 |
| Nutritious food | 13 | 4 |
| Portion size | 35 | 9 |
| Appropriate serving temperature | 103 | 27 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Data computed in Table 6 revealed that majority 141 (37%) of the respondents said that the taste of food sold at Chicken Republic Outlets was the specific quality that influenced their purchase. This shows that food sold at Chicken Republic Outlets were Tasty.

Table 7: Rating of Food Quality in Chicken Republic

| Options (| No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|---------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Excellent (5) | 150 | 39 |
| Very Good (4) | 187 | 50 |
| Good (3) | 31 | 8 |
| Fair (2) | 12 | 3 |
| Poor (1) | - | - |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

The data shown in Table 7 displayed rating of Food Quality served in Chicken Republic, the result revealed that 187 (50%) of the respondents rated the Food quality at Chicken Republic “Very Good”. This shows that consumers were satisfied with the food quality served at Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo.

Table 8: Favourite Food that influenced Customer Patronage of Chicken Republic Outlets

| Options | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Fried Rice | 32 | 8 |
| Grilled Chicken/Fish | 127 | 33 |
| Pies, Donuts, Pizza & Burger | 44 | 12 |
| Sharwama | 155 | 41 |
| Cakes | 22 | 6 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 8 displayed different kinds of food made and sold at Chicken Republic Outlets. The data revealed that 155 (41%) of the respondents identified Chicken Republic Sharwama as their most favourite food sold at their different outlets in Uyo. This shows that Sharwama is one of the best foods prepared and sold at Chicken Republic.

Table 9: Other Factors that Influenced Customer Patronage of Chicken Republic Outlets

| Options | No. of Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Social Media Relations | 8 | 21 |
| Physical Environment | 28 | 7 |
| Restaurant Image | 9 | 2 |
| Price Fairness (value) | 212 | 56 |
| Sales Promotions | 123 | 33 |
| Total | 380 | 100 |

The data shown in Table 9 displayed other factors that could contribute to customer patronage of Chicken Republic outlets. The data indicated that 212 (56%) of the respondents reveal that price fairness was the other that influenced customer patronage at Chicken Republic Outlet Uyo. This shows that price fairness (customer value) is the contributory factor that influenced customers' patronage of chicken Republic outlets in Uyo.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

RQ1: What are the various public relations services rendered at Chicken Republic Outlets in Uyo?

This question is aimed at identifying some public relations services rendered at Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo. The answer to this question is found in

Table 1. Table 1 outlines courteous and polite, cheerful and friendly disposition, prompt and attentive, table services and speedy delivery, smart and proactive as different public relations service quality rendered at Chicken Republic outlets. The data presented in the table show that majority of the respondents being 125 (33%) opted for Cheerful and Friendly disposition as the PR services often rendered at Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo. This suggests that Cheerful and Friendly disposition as the most frequently used PR services rendered at Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo metropolis.

In summing up the import of the data in table 1, it can be inferred that employees cheerful and friendly disposition was the most common form of PR service rendered at Chicken Republic restaurant in Uyo. This finding corroborates Kalu (2015) that employees' attitude, friendliness, and cheerful interaction with the customers were the most important and influential tools used in contemporary firms for customer service quality assessment and overall service satisfaction.

RQ 2: Does the quality of service rendered at Chicken Republic outlets significantly influence customer patronage?

The answer to this question is jointly found in Table 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 respectively. The data presented in Table 2 reveal that 277 (75%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they were influenced to patronise Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo as a result of the service qualities rendered. This shows that an overwhelming majority of the respondent were influenced by the service quality rendered at Chicken Republic outlets to patronise their products. Table 3 further show that 119 (31%) of the respondents said that the specific service that influenced their patronage was the cheerful and friendly disposition of the staff of Chicken Republic. This shows that employees of Chicken Republic were cheerful and friendly to their customers. The data shown in Table 4 displayed a rating of Service Quality in Chicken Republic, the result revealed that 192 (51%) of the respondents rated the service quality at Chicken Republic "Excellent". This shows that consumers were satisfied with the services rendered at Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo.

This findings correlates with the findings of Al-Tit (2015) that show a positive relationship between restaurant personnel services and customer patronage and retention of fast food outlets.. The findings also support earlier work by Ugo and Idongesit (2021) that service quality was a major determinant of customer patronage of fast food outlets in Benin City. This clearly shows that the service quality has a positive influence on customer patronage.

RQ 3: What is the influence of food quality on customer patronage of Chicken Republic outlets?

Table 5 reveal that 199 (53%) of the respondents agreed that they were influenced by the quality of food served at Chicken Republic to patronise foods in their different outlets located in Uyo. This indicates that majority of the respondents purchase foods sold at Chicken Republic as a result of the quality. Data displayed in Table 6 revealed that majority 141 (37%) of the respondents said that the taste of food sold at Chicken Republic Outlets was the specific quality that influenced their purchase. This shows that food sold at Chicken Republic Outlets were Tasty. Table 7 displayed different kinds of food made and sold at Chicken Republic Outlets. The data revealed that 155 (41%) of the respondents identified Chicken Republic Sharwama as their most favourite food sold at their different outlets in Uyo. This shows that Sharwamah is one of the best foods prepared and sold at Chicken Republic. The data shown in Table 8 showed rating of Food Quality served in Chicken Republic, the result revealed that 187 (50%) of the respondents rated the Food quality at Chicken Republic "Very Good". This shows that consumers were satisfied with the food quality served at Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo.

This finding supports earlier study of by Haery and Badiezadeh (2014) that food quality is the major influencer of customer choice, patronage of a restaurant, and ultimately his loyalty enforcer.

RQ 4: What are the other factors that influenced customer patronage of Chicken Republic outlets in Uyo?

The data shown in Table 7 displayed other PR practices that could contribute to customer patronage of Chicken Republic outlets. The data indicated that 212 (56%) of the respondents reveal that price fairness was the other PR practices at Chicken republic that influenced their patronage. This shows that price fairness (customer value) is the contributory factor that influenced customers' patronage of chicken Republic outlets in Uyo.

This finding correlates with the findings of Hassan *et al.*(2013) which revealed that one of criteria of measuring customer satisfaction, patronage and loyalty is price fairness.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, public relations activities (Service and Food Quality) in Chicken Republic as we have seen in this study have a significant influence

on customer patronage. Service quality and food quality both have positive and significant relationships with consumer patronage of Chicken Republic restaurants. This research inferred that service and food quality are able to create psychological influence and satisfaction on customers of Chicken Republic. Thus, service quality rendered at fast food restaurants as well as food quality have become a vital instrument to attract, create, sustain customer patronage; at the same time a huge market shares in the competitive market. Services rendered and the quality of food served and the manner it is served has a role to play in the mind of customers and consumers of fast foods.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. That fast food owners and PR managers should strive to improve and review the quality of service rendered by personnel/staff of their organisation to give maximum satisfaction to their consumers in order to get their constant patronage.
- ii. That fast food owners and PR managers should strive to improve and review the quality of food served/presented at the restaurant to give maximum satisfaction to their consumers in order to get their constant patronage.
- iii. Special attention should be given to courtesy and, friendly disposition of personnel, proactive and prompt service to customers in the restaurant.
- iv. Attention should also be given to the tastiness of food, freshness of food, nutritious, appropriate serving temperature of food, and the portion size of food served in the restaurant.

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