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The Moderating Role of Customer Orientation Experience on Salespersons' Attitude and Customer Patronage

Kennedy Ogbonna Nwagwu[1]; Arinzechukwu Jude Okpara[2] & Isaac Jonathan Maude[3]

[1, 2, 3]Department of Marketing, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Jos

Email: nwagwuk@unijos. edu.ng

Phone: +234-8033217514,

ABSTRACT

Getting and keeping customers are usually tough jobs particularly in a competitive industry such as Smartphones and Accessories retailing. While salespersons' attitude has been fingered to either bolster or inhibit customer loyalty, learning to treat the customer as a king could be the game changer required to both improve the salesperson's attitude and capture customer loyalty. In this study the role of customer orientation experience in better understanding the relationships between salespersons attitude and customer loyalty is interrogated. To achieve the aim of the study, a survey research design was adopted. To generate data, copies of a structured questionnaire were randomly administered on 223 employees who serve as salespersons in the relevant retail outlets at the sampling site. For data analyses, a combination of SPSS (version 26) and Hayes (2022) process software were employed. While the descriptive statistics were done and presented in tables, frequencies and percentages, regression analysis was used for the inferential statistics. The study indicates the three dimensions of salesperson's attitude positively influenced customer patronage. Also, it was found that customer orientation moderated the relationship between a salesperson's attitude and customer patronage. Subsequently, it was recommended that business owners should ensure that those who serve as salespersons are properly trained on how to put up good listening and ethical attitudes as well as emotional intelligence in their dealings with customers as the preachment of customer orientation is to render kingly service to customers whose patronage is the sole rudder for the survival of a business.

Keyword: Customer patronage, ethical attitude, listening attitude, emotional intelligence, moderator, customer orientation.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Businesses must continually reconfigure and rebuild their systems to remain competitive through sales and customer patronage (Nwokah, & Poi, 2016). Patronage is the sustenance, help, opportunity, and financial aid that an organization or individual confers on another. It can be seen as the support given to an organization by someone. Customer patronage has been associated with different measures, they include; product and service quality, service environment, store choice, shopping experience, cost and merchandise value, location, merchandise and store atmosphere, access in store atmosphere and cross category product store assessment (Eze, et al., 2015). According to Nkpurukwe, et al., (2020), firms that provide high quality products on a regular basis will have more satisfied customers and these customers will likely re-patronize the firms next time. As such, better awareness of consumer behaviour is a positive contribution towards achieving a goal of enhancing customer patronage. The relevance of a customer and its patronage per say is so profound that business firms cannot survive without customer patronage as it manifests in actual sales (Olsen & Connolly, 2013). A consistent patronage or re-purchase from a buyer shows that he/she is deeply committed to such a firm or its product(s). Islam and Salma (2014), point out that those customers who are loyalists do not evaluate the brand; they just make a purchase confidently based on their experiences.

Customer patronage is the approval or support provided by customers with respect to a particular brand. Patronage delivers the foundation for an established and growing market share. All business survives as a result of patronage from customers and this patronage can be affected by several factors like attitudes of salespersons such as unethical attitude, not listening to customers and lack of emotional intelligence (Christiano, et al, 2015). Salespersons are the most important marketing tools in the interface between companies and their customers. However, this interface and/or relationship between the customer and the salesperson might be botched when and if the customer perceives the salespersons attitude in bad light. For a customer focused firm, a salesperson's deviance represents another way that a salesperson can break from the norms, having been defined as salesperson attitude that violates organizational norms in unproductive ways (Satornino, et al., 2022). The current study focused on the positive attitude of salespersons that is ethical attitude, listening and emotional intelligence and how it has affected customer patronages of smartphone. Ethical behavior of salesmen has been found to impact customer satisfaction.

Scholars have found the role of salesperson attitude as very key in the enhancement of customer's patronage; this attitude may be positive or negative. From review of literature, studies show existence of inconsistencies in the relationship between salespersons attitude and customer patronage (Fergurson, 2020; Hoyle, et al., 2020; Panagopoulos et al., 2017). Based on this premise, the study introduces customer orientation experience as a moderating variable to strengthen the relationship between salespersons attitude and customer patronage.

The critical nature of customer patronage to survival of firms no doubt has been responsible for the heightened interests of both practitioners and business researchers/writers in unraveling its precursors. Among the factors that gained attention in such studies is salespersons attitude. Unfortunately, as review of literature shows, the outcomes of studies on the influence of salesperson's attitude on customer patronage have been inconsistent. For example while Satornino et al., (2022) found no significant relationship between salespersons attitude and patronage, the works of Cuevas (2018); Hoyle, et al., (2020); Dobrescu and Radu (2014); and Fergurson (2020) found significant and negative relationships between salespersons attitude and customer's patronage.

As a consequence of the inconsistency of literature in the relationship between salespersons attitude and customer patronage, this study introduced customer orientation experiences as a moderating variable as a boundary condition that may help in explaining salesperson attitude proxied as (ethical attitude, listening and emotional intelligence) and customer patronage. Customer orientation is a deliberate firm strategy focused on continuously monitoring and assessing the demands and desires of consumers with the twin goal of acquiring and delighting them (Berhanu, et al, 2023). As averred by Hanaysha and Mehmood (2022) and Muis and Isyanto (2021), firms that adopt consumer orientation focuses on the customers, staff, and the industry to gather market data, forecast future consumer wants, and meet those needs by providing goods and services that are valuable to consumers. In this type of firms staff particularly, salespersons are trained to be deliberate in their dealings with customers who must be treated and served with utmost care. Hence, salespeople go about as a natural help to customers as these trainings empowers them to serve these customers with the aim of meeting their needs. Salespeople with more noteworthy levels of customer orientation have larger doses of sympathy and the capacity to control/manage feelings of both self and customers. The ability of salespersons to render top-notch services to customers is regarded as customer orientation experience and is proposed as a moderator in this study.

As a result of the foregoing, therefore, this study is set to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the effect of ethical attitude on patronage of smartphones and accessories shops.
2. To evaluate the effect listening attitude on patronage of smartphones and accessories shops.
3. To ascertain the effect of emotional intelligence on patronage of smartphones and accessories shops.
4. To determine the moderating effect of customer orientation experience in the relationship between salespersons attitude and patronage of smartphones and accessories shops

2.0. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

2.1.2 Behavioural Theory

The behavioural theory first propounded by Ivan Pavlov and B.F Skinner (1957) assumes that changes in attitude are as a result of an individual's response to events (stimuli) that occur. The behavioural theory also states that we develop responses to certain stimuli that are not naturally occurring; that is to say that as we all know most of the arguments are irrational arguments, but at the end of the day we still respond the way the prompter of market stimulus in this case, mobile phones patronage as salesperson as promoters of mobile business wants the customers to respond to what they are offering (Akdol & Arikboga, 2015). This automatically will lead to patronage to the particular product (Akdol & Arikboga, 2015). Although other factors like financial strength, availability, norms etc may affect the final decision.

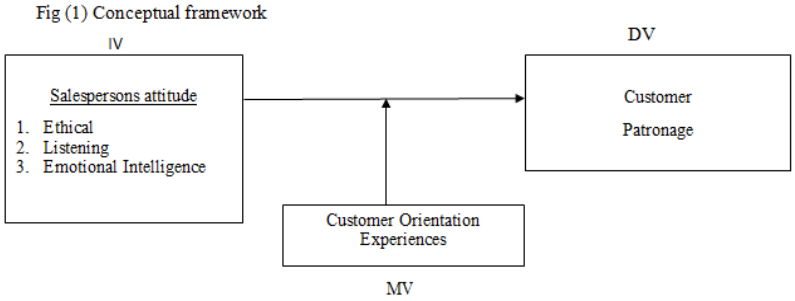
2.1.2 Attribution Theory

Attribution Theory proposed by Heider (1958). In the classical Attribution Theory, individuals, groups and organizations possess an inherent need to understand "why" events or situations occur (Carson, 2019). According to Eberly, et al, (2017), through gaining a better understanding of the causal factors leading to an event, individuals are able to modify their behaviours and control the likelihood of future occurrence of the event. Attribution theory explains the underlying mechanism of message effects on audiences' thoughts and feelings. The theory posits that individuals attempt to infer the motivations for others' behaviors based on past and current behaviors and situations (Sun, et al, 2019). Thus, individuals judge an environmental message sender (in this case, an organization) to be intrinsically or extrinsically motivated based on the sender's past and current environmental communication and situations (attribution process); in turn, the perceived motivation may influence audiences' responses about the message and organization (attributional process) (Sun, et al, 2019).

2.2 CONCEPTUAL MODEL/FRAMEWORK

The variables used in the study involved independent variable (salesperson attitude), moderating variable (customer orientation experiences) and dependent variable (patronage). The framework depicted direct relationship between the independent variable (salesperson attitude) and dependent variable (patronage), and to show what happens to this relationship due to the levels of salesperson's orientation experiences (which could be perceived by the customers as either positive or negative). See (fig 1)

Fig (1) Conceptual framework



2.3 Conceptual Review and Hypotheses Development

2.3.1 Concept of Patronage

Patronage is defined as the level to which a customer displays repeat purchase behaviour from a service provider, possesses an affirmative, enduring outlook and temperament concerning a service provider (Onigbinde & Odunlam, 2015). From the observation of Awah (2015), customer patronage is defined as a profoundly held dedication to repurchase a firm's products at the cost of a competitor's offering. Customer patronage is an amalgamation of psychological factors that impacts on purchase behaviour and these factors are well thought-out important by consumers (Moye & Giddings, 2021); and used as a criterion in influencing which firm to patronize (Ogbuji, et al, 2016). Customer patronage has been measured by an assortment of authors in diverse magnitude, as well as store traffic flow; willingness, word-of-mouth and repurchase (Baker et al, 2002); repeat purchase, customer retention and customer referrals (Awah, 2015); and customer satisfaction and referrals (Ogbuji et al, 2016). Consequently, and in corroboration with earlier studies, this study adopts store traffic flow and customer referrals as the measures of customer patronage, and scrutinizes customer patronage as the means of a respondent's evaluation for his or her firm's store traffic flow and customer referrals level.

2.3.2 Concept of Attitude

Attitude is evaluative statements, both desirable or undesirable, regarding objects, people, or events. Attitude is an evaluation, feeling and tendency of someone who is relativelyconsistent with an object or idea, in other words, attitude is a feeling that arises in a person towards an object, both before and after people see, feel, and enjoy the object. Attitude as a tendency based on what is obtained from consistent learning outcomes, which shows the likes or dislikes of an object (Powers & Kennedy, 2020). Attitude as a way of placing or carrying oneself, or a way of feeling, way of thinking, and behavior. Good attitude is regarded as ethical salesperson's attitude and they are those attitudes that are generally acceptable to the society that entails exhibiting honesty, fair play and giving out full information in conducting business with customers aimed at attracting them toward their offerings (Wedatama & Sukaatmadja, 2019).

The attitude indicators are flexible and free-thinking in thinking, freedom of expression, interest in creative activities, belief in one's ideas, and involvement in

tasks. Attitude can be seen either as favorable or unfavorable evaluative statements about objects, people, or events, which was summarize and can be considered as the cause and the explanation of the consistency of one's attitude while having relatively enduring nature. Research showed strong attitudes are more stable over time, rigid to change regardless of surrounding context but also a better predictor of attitude compared to weaker attitudes.

2.3.3 Concept of Salesperson

Salespersons as the faces of the selling firm, are crucial links between buyers and sellers in business-to-business (B2B) markets. Their ability to link the needs of potential customers (accounts) with the offerings or solutions provided by their firms is a key determinant of the financial performance of B2B firms. Sales force plays a vital role in the success of any organization because of the cut throat competition (Yi & Amenuvor, 2021). The firm has to modify its working condition in the competitive environment to achieve its objectives by employing skilled, dedicated and committed salesperson. In today's competitive market it is important for the company to have proper sales force to balance the market share.

2.3.4 Concept of Salesperson's Attitude

According Chinelato (2021), a salesperson's performance is influenced by salesperson's attitudes. This finding is consistent with what (Powers & Kennedy, 2020) said that salesperson attitude is related to salesperson performance. In this regard, Yi and Amenuvor (2021) see salesperson's attitude as a salesperson's activity that is needed in every sales process and activities related to customer relationship formation. Salesperson attitude has a positive effect on salesperson performance (Bolander, et al, 2021). Abdel- Aty and Deraz (2021), remarked that the salesperson's ethical attitude is a moral virtue that affects customer attitude, and relationship quality. Attitude is a tendency based on what is obtained from consistent learning outcomes, which shows the likes or dislikes of an object. Attitude is a way of placing or carrying oneself, or a way of feeling, way of thinking, and attitude.

2.3.4.1 Ethical Attitude

Najam and Muhammad (2016) aver that ethics is connected with sales execution in light of its part in growing commonly advantageous organizations with two basic partners, customers and salespeople, and they urge specialists to direct experimental studies investigating the connections between ethics related variables and sales execution measurements**.** Ethical behavior of salespersons is also very important in creating customer satisfaction because salespersons are presenting their organization image in their attitude and interactions with customers. At the point when a salesperson's conduct is seen as moral, the organization is additionally seen as moral (Christiano, et al, 2015) and a salesperson with great ethics could set up a good organization with the customer, consequently getting the consumer patronage (Najam & Muhammad, 2016).

Attitude is the mental condition of a person that is gained from experience, which directs and dynamically influences individual responses to all objects and related situations. The attitude indicators are flexible and free-thinking in thinking,

freedom of expression, interest in creative activities, belief in one's ideas, and involvement in tasks. Through their attitudinal interactions and relationships with their customer, salespersons present their organisation's image and reputation which is highly indispensable in achieving customer satisfaction (ul Zia et al., 2016). The ethical attitude of salespersons has become a strategic weapon of warfare for service businesses as customers continue to value their interactions with the salespersons (Belas, 2012). Ethical attitude of salesperson is very important in creating customer satisfaction because salespersons are representing and projecting their organization image in their attitude and interactions with customers.

2.3.4.2 Salesperson Smart Selling Attitude

Smart selling reflects the authority and situational considerations of a salesperson to plan and implement a wide range of selling attitudes and activities (Borgh & Schepers, 2017). Ranjbari et al. (2015) noted that customer loyalty is positively influenced by smart salesperson's selling attitude. A smart salesperson possesses the ingenuity to build and maintain good and long term relationship with their customers (Aqmala et al., 2021). Interestingly, a salesperson's customer orientation approach has the capability to develop profitable buyer-seller relationship (Qureshi et al., 2017). Indeed, smart selling practice refers to salesperson enthusiasm in responding to customer's question as well as paying attention to customer's requests and complaints (Ranjbari et al., 2015). Hence, the first hypothesis investigated in this paper is as thus

Ho_1: Ethical attitude does not have significant influence on patronage of smartphones and accessories shops.

2.3.4.3 Listening Attitude

Listening is a very complex process involving both behavioral and cognitive activities. Active listening 'occurs when there is a high degree of correspondence between the sender's original message and the listener's recreation of that message' (Sergio, 2014). Listening is a complex behavior that has three stages: sensing, processing, and responding (Pryor, et al, 2013). They represent consecutive stages in the listening process, which implies that a message must be sensed before it is processed, and must be processed before it can be responded to (Sergio, 2014). Active listening exists on a continuum ranging from low to high levels of correspondence. Hence, the second hypothesis investigated in this paper is as thus

Ho_2: Listening attitude does not have significant relationship on patronage of smartphones and accessories shops.

2.3.4.4 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence known as Emotional Quotient (EQ) is one of popular terms in psychological theory, which has been learned by many researchers. One of its early definitions was given by Madhani (2014) as "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action". Seven year later, they developed the term as "Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought,

to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (Punwatkar &Verghese, 2014). Obviously, the term emphasizes the importance of recognizing, expressing, understanding and controlling the emotions of one's own and other people we interact. Hence, the third hypothesis investigated in this paper is as thus:

H_{O3}: Emotional intelligence does not have significant relationship on patronage of smartphones and accessories shops.

2.3.4.5 Customer Orientation Experiences

Several studies were conducted and reports confirmed the link between customer orientation and salespeople's performance (Kenneth, et al, 2015). The notion of customer orientation originated from the work of Levitt (1960), and it was described as the extent to which salespeople get acquainted with trying to assist their customers in making purchase decisions that will invariably satisfy their needs and wants (Kenneth, et al, 2015). They further explained that when salespeople engage in some attitudes meant to achieve customer satisfaction, he/she could be regarded as a customer oriented salespeople. This can be so if they (salespeople's) pursue customer-oriented sales strategies and clearly express interest in the customer they serve, as well as when they generate their business solutions with customers in mind.

A salesperson's customer orientation concentrates on customer needs, the thought of customer hobbies by giving helpful customer arrangements, and the conclusion of sales through a communitarian treatment of any protests that may be put by a customer (Salah & Alzghoul, 2024). Additionally, in a versatile offering setting, which is a customer driven sales conduct, the characteristic inspiration of a salesperson assumes an imperative part and is absolutely connected with customer orientation (Schwepker & Ingram, 2016). Furthermore, normal prize systems have a constructive impact on effort and attention, and are in this way of compelling significance for consistent customer orientation in salespeople.

H_{O4}: Customer orientation experience does not moderate the relationship between salespersons attitude and patronage of smartphones and accessories shops.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed a cross sectional and a survey research design. This type of designed allowed data to be generated from respondents within a specified time period (Khan, 2017).

3.2 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The research population consisted of salespersons of some selected smartphones and accessories distributors in Jos Metropolis. According to Association of Mobile phone dealers and accessories, Jos North Branch, this number sums up to a total population of about 234 salespersons. The employees were invited to participate in the research survey by filling copies of the questionnaire that were distributed to them were drawn from Alexis, Bullet, Hamaz, Twinphone, Oppo5, Sliverbell, and

Triple C. For the purpose of this study, census method was adopted. The drop off style of questionnaire administration was adopted for convenience of respondents and to avail them enough time to attend to the questions. This approached resulted in a high response rate for the study.

3.3 INSTRUMENTATION AND MEASUREMENT

The study collected data from primary source and hence, the questionnaire served as instrument for data collection. The constructs used in this study were adaptations from the studies of Zakaria, et al, (2017) and Purwantini, et al (2020), while all questionnaire items were measured using a five-point Likert scale.

3.4 VALIDATION OF INSTRUMENT

Prior to the deployment of the instrument it was subjected to a validation process. First, to ensure that the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure (validity), the adapted questionnaire items were given to three experts for scrutiny (face and content validity). Thereafter, the consistency of the instrument to measure what it was meant to measure (reliability) was verified via a pilot study consisting of fifteen respondents who have similar characteristics as those who took part in the main study. Data generated through this means were used to compute the Cronbach alpha value of the constructs of the study. The results showed that each construct met the bench of 0.7 as set in literature. See table 1 below.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Construct	**N of Items**	**Cronbach's Alpha**
Customer patronage	6	.801
Ethical attitude	5	.707
Listening attitude	5	.823
Emotional intelligence	5	.782
customer orientation	5	.711

Source: SPSS Output

3.6 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Moderation is a regression based model. Hence, regression analyses were used for the testing of hypotheses via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 and Hayes (2022) process model. Multiple linear regression analysis is an analysis of association between two or more independent variables on a single, interval-scaled dependent variable (Mei, et al. 2022). In this study, independent variables are entered into the same regression equation to predict whether salesperson attitude has any significant effect on patronage. As a set of techniques for studying the straight-line relationships among two or more variables, multiple linear regression analysis estimates the β's in the equation (Mei et al., 2022). Process analysis by Hayes, (2018), was used to test the moderating effect of customer orientation experiences on

the relationship between sales persons' attitude and patronage. Moderating analysis is one of the most straightforward approaches to examine the individual and holistic relationships among research study variables.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the data analyses were presented in tables to provide a concise and clearer meaning to the information gathered from respondents.

4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF RESPONDENTS

The distributions of respondents' demographic characteristics are presented in Table 2: The Table shows that 111 respondents representing 49.8% are males while the remaining 112(50.2%) are females. Also, for age of employees 39(17.5%) fall between 20-25years, 68(30.5%) fall within 26-30years, 24(10.8%) fall within 31-35years, 59(26.5%) are between 36-40years, while 40 years have 33 respondents with (14.8%). For educational qualification 39(17.5%) hold primary education, 68(30.5%) hold SSCE, 24(10.8%), hold college of education certificate while for Degree 60(26.9%), 32(14.2%) hold either degree or polytechnic degree. For years of working with the organization the respondents have spent between 1-5 years in their current work place with 86 (38.6%), 82(36.8%) have 6-10years, and 11-15years with (24.2%), 16years have only one person with (0.4%).

Table 2: Demographic Distribution of Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	111	49.8
Female	112	50.2
Total	223	100.0
Educational Qualifications		
20 – 25yrs	39	17.5
26- 30yrs	68	30.5
31- 35yrs	24	10.8
36-40yrs	59	26.5
Above 40 yrs	33	14.8
Total	223	100.0
Educational Qualification		
Primary education	39	17.5
Secondary education	68	30.5
College	24	10.8
Degree	60	26.9
B.Sc / B. Ed / B. Ed Tech	32	14.3
Total	223	100.0
Years of working with the shop		
1-5 years	86	38.6

6-10 years	82	36.8
11-15 years	54	24.2
16 years and above	1	.4
Total	223	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2024) SPSS OUTPUT V.26

4.2 DIAGNOSTICS/ TESTS OF ASSUMPTIONS

Preliminary analyses were performed to check the assumptions of multiple linear regressions using the descriptive and inferential statistic to confirm the presence or absence of missing and extreme values, outliers, normality of data distribution, linearity, multicollinearity of the predictor variables. This was necessary because regression analysis is sensitive to the violation of these assumptions hence the reason for subjecting the generated data to diagnostics.

4.3 RESULTS OF HYPOTHESES TESTING

Hypotheses one to three of the student were tested through multiple regression analysis. The result is shown below:

Table 3: Model Evaluation Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.492[a]	.383	.318	1.80200

Predictors: (Constant), ethical attitude, listening attitude, emotional intelligence**.**
Source: SPSS Output version 26

The result revealed that R value of 0.492 which shows that the variables of the study correlated moderately. The value of R-squared (coefficient of determination) is 0.383. This indicates that approximately 38 percent of the total variance in customer patronage of smartphones and accessories stores is explained by the three dimensions (ethical attitude, listening attitude, emotional intelligence) of the salesperson's attitude. The estimated standard error from the model is 1.80200% indicating a high precision of which the regression coefficient is measured. Standard error of estimate represents the average distance that the observed values fall from the regression line.

Table 4 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA[a])

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	411.983	3	107.328	21.812	.000[b]
	Residual	789.776	220	5.765		
	Total	1201.759	223			

a. Dependent Variable: customer patronage.
b. b. ethical attitude, listening attitude, emotional intelligence

The evaluation of the ANOVA table shows that all the independent variables statistically and significantly predict the dependent variable df =3 (220, 223); F=21.812, P= 0.000 < 0.05. This result also suggests that the regression model is a good fit for the data.

Table 5: Results of Regression

Coefficients						
Model	Unstandardized coefficient		Standard Coefficient	t	Sig	Decision
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	17.051	.991		17.204	.000	
Ethical	.066	.059	.078	1.120	.004	Reject**Ho1**
Listening	.034	.068	.015	1.202	.000	Reject**Ho2**
Emotional Intelligence	.394	.064	.136	1.950	.005	Reject**Ho3**

Dependent variable: customer patronage

Table 5 illustrates the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable. These results show that each of three components of a Salesperson's attitude tested in this study significantly and positively influences the propensity of customers to patronize smartphones and accessories shops.

Hypothesis Four Results

Table 6: result of moderation analysis (hypothesis 4)

Outcome variable: Customer Patronage

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.2768	.0766	15.1195	6.0577	3.0000	219.0000	.0000
Model						
	Coeff	Se	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
constant	.9374	5.7611	.1627	.0000	10.4170	12.2917
CustOr Ex	.3006	3513	.8559	.0003	.3917	.9929
SalesP..A	1.2611	.3573	3.5298	.0005	.5570	1.9652
Int_1	.0366	0169	2.1668	.0003	.0699	.0033

Source: SPSS/Process output

Table 7: Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):

	R2-chng	F	df1	df2	p
X*W	.0198	4.6948	1.0000	219.0000	.0003

Source: SPSS/Process Output

Table 8: Conditional effects of the focal predictor at values of the moderator(s):

COE	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
15.0000	.2487	.1743	0.4266	.0001	-.5922	.0549
19.0000	.3951	.1652	0.3920	.0176	-.6207	.0596
21.0000	.4684	.1708	0.7425	.0066	-.8050	.1318

Source: SPSS/Process output

In tables 6, 7 and 8, the results of the assessment of the moderating role of customer orientation experience (COE) on the relationship between salesperson's attitude (SPA) and customer patronage (CP) are presented. The results reveal a positive and significant moderating impact of customer orientation experience on the relationship between salesperson's attitude and customer patronage (see table 6: b= -0.0366, t = 2.1668, p = .003). Also in table 7: R2-Chng=0.0198, P=0.0003. As shown in table 8, customer orientation experience has an incremental impact on the relationship between salesperson's attitude and customer patronage, with the high level of customer orientation experience providing the most positive effect on the relationship between the predictor and the criterion variables. Based on these results H4 is rejected, while the alternate is supported that customer orientation experience has a significant moderation effect on the relationship between salesperson's attitude and customer patronage.

5.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Having done a proper survey into the influence of salespersons attitude on patronage of smartphones and accessories shops, with the moderating role of customer orientation experience in Jos North LGA of Plateau State, the study discovered that there is a significant impact of ethical attitude on customer patronage. This finding shows that the ethical attitude of a salesperson affects customer patronage of smartphone and accessories shops. This means that the consideration of ethical attitudes should be a pre-requisite for courting customer patronage when a firm aims to boost sales volume. This result is in agreement with the work of Pezhman et al. (2016) who found that ethical behaviour influences customer patronage positively. Hazrati et al. (2012) support this finding, also, revealing that customers' satisfaction is significantly influenced by a salesperson ethical behaviour.

In hypothesis two the relationship between listening attitude and customer patronage was examined. Result reveals that there is a significant relationship between listening attitude and customer patronage of smartphones and accessories shops in Jos

North LGA of Plateau State. This means that the listening attitude of salespersons have an influence on customer patronage. This finding is in tone with the findings of Aguirre-Rodriguez et al. (2022) which reveal that listening has a significant effect on customer patronage. Also, this agrees with the findings of Ranjbari, et al. (2015) that there is a significant relationship between salespeople's listening skills and customer patronage.

Hypothesis three investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and customer patronage of smartphones and accessories shops. The study discovered that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and customer patronage of smartphones and accessories shops. That is, the emotional intelligence of salesperson has influence on patrons of smartphones and accessories shops. This suggests that salespersons that apply emotional intelligence on prospective customers have the tendency to win the patronage of such customers. This result supports the finding of Rahman, et al (2019), which established a positive association between emotional intelligence and customer purchase of consumable products in various private sector business organizations.

Finally, in hypothesis four, the role of customer orientation experience (COE) as a moderator of the relationship between salespersons' attitude and customer patronage was interrogated. As the result showed customer orientation experience significantly moderated the relationship between the two constructs. This implies that customer patronage of Smartphone and accessories retail shops are affected differentially by the different levels of salespersons' customer orientation experience. This result corroborates the study of Salah and Alzghoul (2024), on moderating role of customer orientation on sales performance of firms. Also, this result is in tandem with the previous studies done by Emir (2016), who established that customer orientation training changes behaviours of sales assistance and influences customer patronage.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The findings of this study revealed the consistency of the three dimensions of a salesperson's attitude in influencing customers patronage of smartphones and accessories shops. Also, the study found that the customer orientation experience moderated the relationship between salesperson's attitude and customer patronage, thus, providing the boundary condition in explaining the inconsistency in the relationship between salesperson attitude and customer patronage. It is therefore concluded that while customer orientation experience is a moderator to the relationship existing between salesperson's attitude and customer patronage, all attitudinal dimensions studied (ethical, listening and emotional intelligence) significantly and positively influenced customer patronage of smartphones and accessories shops.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Having looked at the role of salesperson's attitude on customer patronage of smartphones and accessories shops and the role of customer orientation experience as a moderator of that relationship, the following recommendations are made:

i. Business owners should ensure they train and orientate salespersons on ethics of business and approach toward customers, since customer orientation experience plays important role on handling customer complaint.
ii. On the perspective of listening, business owners should apply right training on salespersons in respect of listening skill towards the demand of the customers, and make sure that salespersons comprehend customers order and complaints when necessary.
iii. Business owners need to recruit potential salespeople who have the ability to recognize others' emotion and to adapt when meeting the needs of relationship marketing.
iv. Business owners should also orientate the salesperson on the right way to approach/handle customers. The attitude of the salesperson reflects level of customer orientation experience and increases the propensity to gain customer patronage.

8.0 LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The main limitation for this study emanates from limitations associated with survey research design. In survey research generated data represents respondents' opinions, perceptions and feelings. Such data suffers from self –bias.

9.0 AUTHORS CONTRIBUTIONS

Dr Kennedy O. Nwagwu conceptualized the study and handled issues of design and methodology and drafted the introduction part.

Mr. Arinzechukwu Jude Okpara, reviewed literature, analyzed data and brought the entire manuscript together.

Mr Isaac Jonathan Maude, handled the field work and part of literature review. All the authors read and approved the manuscript

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