

## **Customer Care: Antecedent Tool for Customer Patronage Among Selected Hotels in Southwest Nigeria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The study investigated the influence of customer care on customer patronage of selected hotels in southwest, Nigeria. Primary source of data collection was adopted while multiple sampling techniques were used. Specifically, stratified, heterogeneous purposive and proportionate sampling techniques were utilized. A total number of 69 hotels consisting of all categories were sampled. A survey research design was adopted while questionnaire was used to collect data from 400 customers as respondents. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to measure customer care. Constructs for customer care were satisfaction with staff relation, staff good assistance, staff good listener and commendable warmly greetings. Findings showed that customer care is capable of influencing patronage of hotels in southwest Nigeria. Giving these results, and in ranking we concluded that patronage is a function of giving assistance to customer when needed, ensuring exemplary courtesy, good relations and be a good listener. The study recommended that investors in hotel business should employ qualified personnel and engage in continuous train and retrainings of staff in order to be professionally fit in their duties for customer engagement.*

**Keywords:** Staff relations, Good listener, Assistance, Greetings, Satisfaction, customer care Hotels and Customer patronage.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The jockeying for customers in the competitive landscape among service providers of hotels is an issue of worry in the contemporary business environment. This is perhaps the reason why service providers are thinking strategically of capturing a reasonable share of the market in order to create pathway for relevance in the business environment. In this sense, there is no how customer caring for achieving business success can be ignored. As this will cross sell organisational product or service for sustained performance. This means that the satisfaction of this customer will go a long way to strengthen relationship with organisations.

Generally, customer will not patronise unless they are satisfied with the caring they receive. In other words customer caring is an antecedent of satisfaction. This shows that caring for a customer as a strategy has capacity to invoke satisfaction, and satisfaction has tendency to produce customer patronage. In the case of service providers like hotels, the assurance of giving good attention and proper handling of complaints, warm reception, and assisting customer are the key to sustained unbreakable customer patronage. This is why Okibo and Ogwe (2013) opined that company can create its own image to the public in a manner it receives, handles and discharges services to its customers.

Customer care According to Kotler (in Natuhwera, 2011) is described as a service in any activity or benefit that one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. Mosoma (2014) showed that all organisations established different goals that are at the core of their organisation formation. This shows that rendering caring services cannot be possible if there is no worry of rejection, frustration, loneliness, and fear by customer in the service of their patronage. Consequently, the

assurance of making customers warmly receipted being secure, accepted, giving warmly reception must be guaranteed in order for the hotels business to enjoy patronage. It could reasonably be said the expectation of customer in terms of caring is dependent on the organisation's ability to discharge professional care of service. Just like man needs blood to survive, likewise, every organisation survivor is hinged on the patronage of his customers to achieve specific and desirable ends.

Studies are numerous on customer care in different industries with less emphasis on customer patronage in the hotels sectors of the hospitality industry in Nigeria e.g. Ekiz, Ragavan and Hussain (2011) in Hong Kong, Okibo and Ogwe (2013) in Kenya, Mosoma (2014) in Tanzania, Natuhwera (2011) in Kampala and Shanmugaraja, Nataraj and Gunasekaran (2010) in India. Nigeria is an emerging economy with a growing population of about 170 million according to Nigeria population census (2006). It is fast becoming a center of attraction for develop market products in the form of direct investment. There is no doubt that inflow of investors and tourists as well as other events will not flourish in an economy like this. Therefore, the examination of relationship of customer care and customer patronage among hotels in Nigeria is necessary. Hence, this study.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

### **Customer Care:**

Every customer expectation is to be provided with high quality services, and in most cases, they are willing to pay high premium for better quality service. According to Natuhwera, (2011), customer care is defined in the following ways: Customer care is defined as a service in any activity or benefit that one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. It can also define as any good service rendered to a customer in the process of selling a product or service. Again, it is defined as any service rendered to a customer.

In the viewed of Mosoma, (2014), customer care is understood as a constituent concept that includes all activities and efforts carried out by business owners and management to make customers feel that the business firms or companies take into account their welfare, as well as their present and future needs as they relate to the companies. In the case of Chartered management institute (in Mosoma, 2014), customer care is defined as part of purposeful approaches of organisation to win and retain customer. Customers' care exists to help tourist or new people who have just come to a new country adapt to their new place as peaceful as possible <http://wiki.answers.com>. Again, customer care can be described as a process of looking after customers, its ultimate aim is for the assistance of the customers and it involves a set of behaviours regarding the interaction with the customers <http://www.blurtit.com>. One can infer that caring about customers is a way of making customers happy and feel secured always, listen to compliant and proffer solution, share customers' burden, warm welcome greetings at the point of check-in and warmly farewell at the point of checkout of the hotel premises.

Generally, in the hotel industry, caring is a tool that must be embraced and accorded with a sense of priority because it goes a long way to define its image in the mind of customers. Customer care is the key element of operations within the hotel as it is used as a marketing tool to encourage repeat business or referrals (Melia, 2010). Understanding a customer is a very important strategy as this would enable organisations of such to provide better services. More importantly, to provide better customer care, one should be able to deliver in terms of promising. But great customer care involves getting to know your customers (KYC) so well that you can anticipate their needs and exceed their expectations <http://www.marketingdonut.co.uk/marketing/customer-care/understanding-your-customers>. This is consistent with Shanmugaraja, anataraj and Gunasekaran (2010), in customer care management model (cross functional team setting) where it was stated that it an ideal that staff in an organisation to know their customers and their complaints.

Considering these definitions, it can be explain that customer care far go beyond merely treating or serving customer well. Customer care in this study involves deeply interpersonal relationships that ensue between customer and service providers before, during and after service delivery that can enable organisations to develop a loyal customer base as well improve on relationships with customers. It can also be described as an activity of looking after customers and helping them with any complaints.

### **Customer Patronage:**

Patronage is defined as the degree to which a customer exhibits repeat purchase behaviour from a service provider, possesses a positive, long-lasting attitude and disposition towards a service provider (Gremler & Brown, 1996), From the view of Oliver (1999), customer patronage is defined as a deeply held commitment to repurchase a firm's products at the expense of a competitor's offering. Usman (in Sepck, 2009), patronage is

described as the repeat purchase behaviour at a particular store for either the same products or any other products. Drucker (in Ogwo and Igwe, 2012) stated that the main reason for establishing a business is to create customers. Hence, their continue patronising of such a business stand as a blood stream for its survival.

### **Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis:**

The theory underpinning this study is theory of reasoned action (TRA). The theory had been found useful virtually in all the organisations. The theory revealed that the ability of behavioural intention to elicit actual behaviour has to do with antecedent factors, in view of this, it can be explained that the outcome of behaviour being displayed by the customer can be said to have been ignited by the presence of another factor prior to the actual behaviour being displayed. Here, in this study, the antecedent is customer care, its effectiveness has tendencies of satisfy customer which invariably capable of eliciting continuous patronage.

Empirical work is vast on relationship between customer care and customer patronage. For instance Mosora (2014), on effect of internal customer care on employee satisfaction in Tanzania's small and medium hotel industry enterprises indicated that there is positive significant relationship between the internal customer care of an organisation and their employees. Mosora further stressed that when employees are catered for in an organisation, it will boost both the morale and the employment commitment thus lead to job satisfaction. Methods deployed include; survey, unstructured and structured questionnaires and interviews and purposive sampling technique. Respondents were basically employees.

Moreover, Okibo and Ogwe (2013), studies on an assessment of factors affecting quality customer care services in Telkom Kenya showed that quality customer care services is a significant basis which customer use for differentiating between company services of different company offering same product and services. Methods employed are; survey, structured questionnaire, stratified sampling technique, and statistical package for social science. In addition, the study of Natuhwera (2014) on customer care and customer satisfaction in hotels: A case study of Sheraton hotel Kampala showed that there is a positive significant influence of customer care on customer satisfaction in a Sheraton hotel. Sources of data consist of primary and secondary. Such as interviews, observation and document review while statistical package for social sciences was used to analyse the data. Respondents consist of employees and customers.

Shanmugaraja, et al., (2010) studies on customer care management model for services industry showed that using this model revealed that neglecting workload planning an aspect which should be catered for by customer care is considered to be the chronic problem for customer complaints in the industry. Their studies also pointed to the fact that customer is the focal point and early response to their complaint is a key to success for every business. Although, the study was carried out in an automobile industry where services were rendered, it relevancy in the hotel industry cannot be ignore. Because the model showed step by step on how complaints should be managed in order to exhibiting caring behaviour.

Considering the aforementioned authors, it can be deduced that despite the various researched locations which is mostly, outside the context of this current study and methods used in their researches, customer care is considered as an important weapon that is capable of eliciting satisfaction which invariably has capacity to influence customer patronage. In addition, employees were used mostly as their respondents, hence, there is need to empirically investigate the significant roles of customer care from customers' perspective in a country like Nigeria, especially, southwest where hotels business is becoming alarming consequent upon the various activities which cannot be conveniently carry out in an individual homes or premises.

A study from Remedios (2013) on customer care and customer satisfaction at hotels in Ahmedbad revealed that there is positive relationship between customer care and satisfaction. It stressed further that when a customer is satisfied, then such customer will patronise. Methods employed include: primary and secondary data, descriptive analysis with statistical package for social science and one hundred (100) customers were used. This consists of 50 hotel customers and 50 hotel employees. Purposive sampling and simple random techniques were employed. In the case of Boyinbode and Akinyede (2015) on a study e-customer care service system for Benin Electricity Distribution Company (BEDC) in Akure, Ondo state showed that there is a significant relationship between the variables observed. It stressed further that in order to strengthen customer care, the company (i.e BEDC) create a website with user account where it is possible for all their customers to log in their enquires and complaints. Authors declined on the methods employed.

Also, Dankwa (2014) on customer care in Chana: an empirical study of some selected commercial banks showed that care in the service quality delivery in term of complaint handling, reliability, trust and courtesy have direct impact on customers' satisfaction which is invariably capable of influencing the customers' patronage. Quantitative, Chi-square, five point Likert scale, cluster and simple random sampling techniques

were employed as methods. Although, these studies were carried out in different locations, organisations and using various methods yet, it can be inferred from the authors that patronage of an organisation hinged on the quality of caring the organisation will render to its customers.

Generally, it is important to note that the efficacy of customer care hinged on after-sales service, handling customer complaints and relationship management. For instance, Birgelen, Ruyter, Jong and Wetzels (2002) on customer evaluations of after-sales service contact modes: an empirical analysis of the national culture's consequences in Netherlands advocate that care services of organisation to customers should transcend the geographical as well as cultural boundaries. In the case of hotel, caring for the customer may include after-sales service (such as telephone contact, text messages and feedback). Both qualitative and quantitative were employed for the study.

In the case of Ekiz, Ragavan and Hussain (2011) on how to manage guest complaints: global implications from Hong Kong hoteliers showed that handling customer complaints professionally and provide immediate solutions have a positive significant influence on satisfaction and loyalty intentions. Hence, a hotel can use proper handling of customer complaints as a benchmark against competitors. Questionnaire, descriptive, five point Likert scale were employed as methods. Also, Dinnen and Hassanien (2011) on handling customers' complaints in the hospitality industry in Scotland showed that encouraging customer complaints and feedback should be seen as a way in which to develop a better relationship with and retain customers. The study confirmed the importance of having competent and well trained staff in the area of customer complaints. Therefore, the study suggested that the hotel must be well equipped for logging, processing and analysing. Authors declined on the method(s).

Moreover, Mohammed and Rashid (2012) on customer relationship management (CRM) in hotel industry in Malaysia: A framework proposal on the relationship between dimensions, marketing capabilities and hotel performance shows that in this era of competitive environment, customer relationship management is crucial and has become a niche for firm performance. To this end, four factors such as (customer oriented, customer relationship management organisation, knowledge management, and technology based) were identified as dimensions for effective CRM in the hotel industry. Authors declined on the method(s) employed.

### **Research Hypothesis:**

H<sub>0</sub> customer care does not significantly influence customer patronage of hotels in Southwest Nigeria.

### **RESEARCH METHODS:**

The study employed survey using structured questionnaire. Both content and face validity were tested by the experts in the field of marketing. The population consisted customers of the hotels particularly, those that lodged in the hotel which extracted from the customer records, personal discussion with managers and customer officers of the selected hotels at different visits. Heterogeneous purposive sampling technique was used to select the location of the study in southwest (Ekiti, Ondo, Osun, Ogun, Oyo and Lagos.) Nigeria. The choice of the state capitals was because they are nerve center of commercial activities. Stratified sampling technique was used to select 69 hotels from the six state capitals. From the population of 5,070 obtained at different visits to the hotels, heterogeneous purposive sampling was used to select 450 respondents while proportionate sampling was used to select the number of respondents from each of the hotel. From the 450 questionnaires distributed, only 400 were found usable. Seven point Likert scale adapted and modified from Chu and Choi (2000) and Choorichom (2011) was used to measure the constructs, hierarchical multiple regression was employed at a significant level of 5%.

### **RESPONDENTS' DATA:**

**Table 4.1: Distribution of Questionnaire by Hotel Category**

Hotel Categories		Questionnaires Distributed	Returned Questionnaire	Relative Percent
Valid	One Star	100	73	18.3
	Two Stars	100	98	24.5
	Three Stars	100	97	24.3
	Four Stars	80	71	17.8
	Five Stars	70	61	15.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4.1 indicates that (73) representing 18.2% recovery from One Star Hotel out of (100) copies of a questionnaire distributed, (98) representing 24.5% recovery from Two Star out of (100) copies of a questionnaire distributed. Out of 100 copies of a questionnaire distributed to Three Star Hotel, (97) representing 24.3% were adequately filled and recovered. 17.8% and 15.3% were the percentages recovered from Four Star and Five Star Hotel out of 80 and 70 copies distributed respectively. This information revealed more respondents from One, Two and Three Star Hotels than Four and Five Star Hotels. Of course, four and five star hotels were not so common in most part of the selected states unlike another type of hotels. Approximately 89 %, representing the total rate of return from all the hotels, which the researcher considered to be and sufficient for the analyzed data since 100% recovery is most times unrealizable.

#### **Distribution of the Respondents by Gender:**

**Table 4.2: Distribution of the Respondents by Gender**

<b>(Hotel Star * Sex of the Respondents Cross tabulation)</b>					
		<b>Sex of the Respondents</b>			<b>Total</b>
		<b>Missing</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	
Hotel Star	One Star	0	18	55	73
	Two Stars	0	38	66	104
	Three Stars	0	51	76	127
	Four Stars	1	16	38	55
	Five Stars	0	15	26	41
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>400</b>
<b>Percentage</b>		<b>0.25</b>	<b>34.5</b>	<b>65.25</b>	

Table 4.2 shows the cross tabulation of the respondents by Gender across the selected hotels. 138 respondents representing 34.5% are female, 18 of the female respondents are from one star hotel, 38 of the female respondents are from two star hotels, 51 respondents are from three star hotels, 16 female respondents are from four star hotels and 15 of the female respondents are from five star hotels while the male respondents constitute (261) 65.25% overall out of which 55 are from one star hotel, 66 are from two stars hotel, 76 are from three stars hotel while 38 and 26 are from four and five stars respectively. The result also reveals that one of the respondent's genders was not filled which shows about 0.25% of missing value in the analysis. This implies that the male responded to the questionnaire more than their female counterparts. The result also showed that the male genders make use of hotel than female counterpart. The reasons may be attributed to the fact that men are involved in diverse businesses that may require special attention, therefore, place necessity on them to lodge in hotel. Some men with their families may go to hotel for holiday while others go to hotel for other purposes and so on. Again, Table 4.2 indicates that customers patronise three stars hotel most.

**Table 4.3: Distribution of the Respondents by Age**

<b>Hotel Star * Age of the Respondents Cross tabulation</b>					
		<b>Age of the Respondents</b>			<b>Total</b>
		<b>20-30 years</b>	<b>31-40 years</b>	<b>41 years above</b>	
Hotel Star	One Star	24	33	16	73
	Two Stars	30	54	20	104
	Three Stars	30	64	33	127
	Four Stars	14	22	19	55
	Five Stars	11	18	12	41
<b>Total</b>		<b>109</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>400</b>
<b>Percentage</b>		<b>27.25</b>	<b>47.75</b>	<b>25</b>	

Table 4.3 shows the cross tabulation of the respondents by age across the selected hotels. 109 respondents representing 27.25% are within the age bracket 20-30 years, 24 of the respondents ages are patronising one star hotel, 30 of the respondents ages are patronising two and three star hotels, 14 respondents ages are from four star hotels, while 11 respondents ages are patronising five star hotels. On the same Table, 47.75% are within age bracket 31-30 years, 33 respondents are patronising one star, 54 respondents are patronising two stars, 64

respondents are form customers from three stars, while 22 and 18 respondents attributed to four and five star hotels respectively. Respondents above 41 years constitute 25% out of which 16 respondents are from one star hotel, 20 respondents are form two stars hotel, 33 respondents patronising three star hotels, while 19 and 12 respondents are from four and five stars hotel respectively. From Table 4.3, it shows that respondents within the age bracket 31-40 responded to the questionnaire more than other ages. It reveals that customers within the age bracket 31-40 patronise hotel more than any others that is within 20-30 years and above 41 years. The reasons may be attributed to the fact that customers within the range of 31-40 years may be those people that are engaging in most activities that required lodging in hotels.

**Table 4.4: Distribution of the Respondents by Marital status**

<b>Hotel Star * Marital status of the Respondents Cross tabulation</b>							
		<b>Marital status of the Respondents</b>					<b>Total</b>
		<b>Single</b>	<b>Married</b>	<b>Widow</b>	<b>Widower</b>	<b>Divorce</b>	
Hotel Star	One Star	24	42	3	2	2	73
	Two Stars	37	57	8	0	2	104
	Three Stars	41	73	3	2	8	127
	Four Stars	13	37	1	2	1	54
	Five Stars	13	23	4	1	0	41
<b>Total</b>		<b>128</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>399</b>
<b>Percentage</b>		<b>32</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>4.75</b>	<b>1.75</b>	<b>3.25</b>	

Table 4.4 shows the cross tabulation of the respondents by marital status across the selected hotels. 128 respondents are single, 24 respondents patronise one star hotel, 37 respondents are from two stars hotel, 41 respondents patronise three stars hotel, while 13 respondents patronise each of the four and five stars respectively. In the case of married, 232 form the total population, out of which 42 respondents are from one star hotel, 57 respondents are from two stars hotel, 73 respondents patronise three stars hotel, 37 respondents patronise four stars hotel and 23 respondents are from five stars hotel. The Table equally indicates the total respondents of 19, 7, and 13 from other categories of the respondents such as widow, widower and divorce. From Table 4.4, the result showed that married constituted a larger population of the customer patronage of the selected hotels. It also showed that married patronise hotels more than other respondents. The reasons may not be far-fetched, Married (men or women) may prefer lodging in hotels while on an assignment outside their immediate environment, others for personal reasons, seminar, conferences, holiday and so on. Next to married, are single respondents.

**Table 4.5: Distribution of the Respondents by Educational Background**

<b>Hotel Star * Educational Background of the Respondents Cross tabulation</b>					
		<b>Educational Background of the Respondents</b>			<b>Total</b>
		<b>University</b>	<b>Polytechnic</b>	<b>Others</b>	
Hotel Star	One Star	41	14	18	73
	Two Stars	55	40	9	104
	Three Stars	78	38	11	127
	Four Stars	34	12	9	55
	Five Stars	20	11	10	41
<b>Total</b>		<b>228</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>400</b>
<b>Percentage</b>		<b>57</b>	<b>28.75</b>	<b>14.25</b>	

Table 4.5 shows the cross tabulation of the respondents by educational background across the selected hotels. 228 showed respondents from university. Out of these, 41 respondents patronise one star hotel, 55 respondents patronise two stars hotel, 78 respondents are from three stars hotel, 34 respondents are from four stars hotel while 20 respondents patronise five stars hotel. On the same Table, 115 constitute total patronage from polytechnic out of which 14 respondents are from one star hotel, 40 respondents are from two stars hotel, 38 customers patronise three stars hotel, 12 and 11 respectively patronise four and five stars hotel. Under others, which consist of other institutions, constitute total population of 57 of which 18 respondents are from one star hotel, 9 respondents patronise two stars hotel, 11 respondents are from three stars hotel, while 9 and 10 were attributed to four and five stars respectively. From Table 4.5, it can be deduced that patronage from university

outweighs patronage from other institutions. The reason may be attributed to the fact that the study areas consist of more of universities than any other institutions, therefore, more university graduates constituted a larger proportion of the areas. In addition, the Table revealed a highest population of 127, which shows that more customers patronise three stars hotel than any other star of the hotels.

**Table 4.6: Distribution of the Respondents by Monthly income**

<b>Hotel Star * Monthly income of the respondents Cross tabulation</b>							
		<b>Monthly income of the respondents</b>					<b>Total</b>
		<b>Below 150,000</b>	<b>151,000-250,000</b>	<b>251,000-350,000</b>	<b>351,000-450,000</b>	<b>451,000 and above</b>	
Hotel Star	One Star	46	19	5	2	1	73
	Two Stars	16	10	27	51	0	104
	Three Stars	50	34	18	15	10	127
	Four Stars	11	7	20	17	0	55
	Five Stars	16	10	3	12	0	41
<b>Total</b>		<b>139</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>400</b>
<b>Percentage</b>		<b>34.75</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18.25</b>	<b>24.25</b>	<b>2.75</b>	

Table 4.6 shows the cross tabulation of the respondents by monthly income of the respondents across the selected hotels. 139 respondents representing total population income earnings below 150,000. Out of which 46 respondents patronise one star hotel, 16 respondents are from two stars hotel, 50 constitute customers that patronise three stars hotel, 11 respondents are from four stars hotel and 16 constitute customers from five stars hotel. Still on Table 4.6, 80 respondents form the total population under income earning between 151,000-250,000. Out of which 19 are from one star hotel, 10 from two stars hotel, 34 respondents patronise three stars hotel, 7 respondents are from four stars hotel and 10 respondents are from five stars hotel. In addition, the same Table shows that 73 respondents form the total population whose income is between 251,000-350,000. Out of which 5 respondents are from one star hotel, 27 respondents are from two stars hotel, 18 respondents patronise three stars hotel, 20 respondents are from four stars hotel and 3 respondents are from five stars hotel. Next on the Table, are those whose incomes are between 351,000-450,000 of which their total population is 97. Under these income categories, 2 respondents are from one start hotel, 51 respondents are from two stars hotel, 15 respondents are from three stars hotel, 17 constitute respondents from four stars hotel while 12 respondents represent patronage from five stars hotel. Finally, on the same Table, 11 constituted total respondents under monthly income between 451, 000 and above. Out of these, 1 respondent is from one star hotel, zero form two stars hotel, 10 respondents are from three stars hotel and zero indicated none patronage from both four and five stars hotel respectively. From Table 4.6, it is obvious that the highest patronage is from categories of customers earning below 150,000 as income. The reason for this may include the fact that most of the customers in this income category may prefer lodging in hotel for a while before they finally secure accommodation when they are being transferred from one place to another as rightly disclosed by some respondents during the cause of gathering data of this study. For a business man or woman, it was attributed to personal reason and in most cases to abstain from people for better concentration on special issue about their businesses. On this Table, it was shown that three star enjoyed more patronage than any other stars of the hotels with total population of 127 respondents.

**Table 4.7: Distribution of the Respondents by Years of experience**

<b>Hotel Star * Years of experience as hotel customer Cross tabulation</b>								
		<b>Years of experience as hotel customer</b>						<b>Total</b>
		<b>1-12 months</b>	<b>1-2 years</b>	<b>2-4 years</b>	<b>4-6 years</b>	<b>6-8 years</b>	<b>8-10 years</b>	
Hotel Star	One Star	16	20	12	11	7	7	73
	Two Stars	12	44	22	12	6	8	104
	Three Stars	18	37	29	19	11	13	127
	Four Stars	8	19	11	5	6	6	55
	Five Stars	6	18	5	3	4	5	41
<b>Total</b>		<b>60</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>400</b>
<b>Percentage</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>34.5</b>	<b>19.75</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>9.75</b>	

Table 4.7 shows the cross tabulation of the respondents by years of experience across the selected hotels. 60 respondents representing the total population whose experience is within a year (1-12 months). Of which 16 are from one star hotel, 12 respondents are from two stars hotel, 18 respondents are from three stars hotel, 8 respondents from four stars hotel and 6 respondents are from five stars hotel. 138 constitute total respondents under 1-2 years experiences of which 20 respondents are from one star hotel, 44 respondents are from two stars hotel, 37 respondents are from three stars hotel, 19 respondents are from four stars hotel, 18 respondents form a total population in five stars hotel.

Considering 2-4 years' experience, the total population is 79. Of which 12 respondents are from one star hotel, 22 respondents are from two stars hotel, 29 and 11 respondents constituted respondents from three and four stars respectively while 5 respondents are from five stars hotel. Still on Table 4.7, 50 respondents constitute total population of 4-6 years of experience. Out of which 11 respondents are from one star hotel, 12 respondents are from two stars hotel, 19 respondents are from three stars hotel and 5 respondents are from four stars hotel while 3 respondents are from five stars hotel. Furthermore, Table 4.7 showed that respondents with 6-8 years experiences have total population of 34. Of which 7 respondents are from one star hotel, 6 respondents are from two stars hotel, 11 respondents are from three stars hotel, 6 respondents are from four stars hotel and 4 respondents are from five stars hotel. Finally on Table 4.7, 39 respondents representing the total population within the range of 8-10 years experiences as hotels customers. Out of these customers, 7 respondents are from one star hotel, 8 respondents are from two stars hotel, 13 respondents are make-up customers that patronise three stars hotel. 6 respondents are from four stars hotel while 5 respondents constituted patronage from five stars hotel. The result on Table 4.7 shows that 1-2 years of experiences form a larger proportion of patronage. It equally showed that customers patronise three stars hotel more than any other categories of stars of the hotels.

**Table 4.8: Distribution of the Respondents by Job classification**

Hotel Star * Job classification Cross tabulation							
		Job classification					Total
		Professional	Business	Public servant	Contractor	Clergy	
Hotel Star	One Star	14	42	6	9	2	73
	Two Stars	29	33	13	9	20	104
	Three Stars	20	66	22	14	5	127
	Four Stars	8	29	9	6	3	55
	Five Stars	5	23	8	4	1	41
<b>Total</b>		<b>76</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>400</b>
<b>Percentage</b>		<b>19</b>	<b>48.25</b>	<b>14.5</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>7.75</b>	

Table 4.8 shows the cross tabulation of the respondents by job classification across the selected hotels. The Table showed that 76 respondents constituted a total population of professional. Of which 14 respondents patronise one star hotel, 29 respondents patronise two stars hotel, 20 respondents are from three stars hotel while 8 and 5 respectively constituted customers that are patronising four and five stars hotel. Regards to business on Table 4.8, it shows a total population of 193. Out of which 42 are from one star hotel, 33 constitute respondents from two stars hotel, 66 respondents are from three stars hotel, 29 respondents patronise four stars hotel while 23 represent customers are patronising five stars hotel. In the case of public servant, 58 respondents constitute the total population. Of which 6 respondents are from one stars hotel, 13 are from two stars hotel, 22 are from three stars hotel, 9 respondents are from four stars hotel while 8 constitute patronage from five stars hotel. In addition, Table 4.8 revealed 42 as the total respondents from contractors. Out of these, 9 respondents are from one star hotel, 9 respondents are from two stars hotel, 14 respondents are from three stars hotel, 6 respondents are from four stars hotel and 4 respondents are from five stars hotel. Finally, Table 4.8 indicates that 31 constitute the total respondents from clergy. Of which 2 respondents are from one star hotel, 20 respondents are from two stars hotel, 5 respondents are from three stars hotel, 3 respondents are from four stars hotel while 1 respondent is from five stars hotel. The result shows that respondents who are engaging in business activities patronising hotel more than any other job classification with total figure of 193 respondents, while three stars enjoyed lion patronage of the customers with total figure of 127.

**Hypothesis:** Customer care does not significantly influence customer patronage of hotels in southwest Nigeria was achieved with the aid of multiple regression models.

**Table 4.9: Multiple Regression Result for the influence of customer care on hotel patronage)**

Customers Care Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	.786	.195		4.029	.000	
Well satisfied with the staff relation (WSSR)	.380	.053	.394*	7.163	.000	R= .824
Staff are good listener (GA)	-.101	.055	-.102	-1.849	.065	R <sup>2</sup> = .679
Enjoy assistance given to me by the staff (GL)	.652	.038	.655*	13.386	.000	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = .676
Staff warmly greetings is commendable (WG)	.549	.043	.551**	12.899	.000	

a. Dependent Variable: Customers Patronage (CUSpat)

b. P < 0.01 \*\*, P < 0.05\*

Table 4.9 Indicates that all the variables i.e. assistance given by staff (SGA), Staff warmly greetings (WG), and Well satisfied with the staff relation (WSSR) show positive significant relationship with coefficient of standardized beta value of 0.655, 0.551, and 0.394, respectively, only the level of Staff listener (SGL) reflects negative standardized coefficient value of -0.102. with customers patronage. It shows that staff listener does not add significant contribution when the effect of the first predictor was held constant. All the variables were statistically significant at 95% and 99% confident level.

In addition, the multiple correlation coefficient (R) between the customer care and customer patronage is .824 while the combination of the four variables (WSSR, SGL, SGA and WG) as indicated in table 4.9, account for 67.9% of the variation in customer patronage (R square) 0.679. To buttress the significant relationship between the explanatory variables and the dependent variable, the closeness of the R<sup>2</sup> and adjusted R<sup>2</sup> attested to this (.679 - .676) 0.003/0.3%. The close margin shows that if the model were taken from the population in lieu of sample, it would account for just 0.3% less variance in the result. In addition, the R value (0.824) and an R<sup>2</sup> value of .679 in the Table 4.9 equally affirmed the significant influence of customers care on customer's patronage.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS:

Findings showed that customer care is significant and positively related to customer patronage among selected hotels. This finding is consistent with the research carried out by Remedios (2013). Remedios results showed that there is a significant relationship between customer care and customer satisfaction. In addition, the outcome of this study is ditto to the finding of Dankwa (2014) which showed that there is a strong nexus between care and satisfaction. The aforementioned authors stressed further that when customer are satisfied, there is every tendency that such customer will come back again. Again, these results are consistent with Ekiz et al., (2011) which showed that handling customer complaints professionally as an aspect of caring is capable of influencing satisfaction and loyalty intentions. And where a customer is satisfied and becomes loyal, it is no doubt that such a customer will likely patronise.

Also, the findings of this study are in agreement with Boyinbode and Akinyede (2015) findings, their results showed that customer care has something significant to do with patronage. Although, their study was carried out in the Benin Electricity Distribution Company, but the fact remains that it is a service providing organisation hence, their outcome as regards to the importance of customer care in the performance of their company cannot be ignored while considering a service provider like a hotel.

Moreover, while some authors, such as Mosora (2014) in Tanzania, Okibo and Ogwe (2013) in Telkom Kenya, Natuhwera (2011) in Kampala, and Remedios (2013) in Ahmedabad focused were on customer satisfaction, Ekiz et al., (2011) in Hong Kong, Dinnen and Hassanien (2011) in Scotland focused were on how to manage customer complaints. Their investigations, irrespective of variances in the study areas, showed that managing customers' complaints effectively brings about satisfaction, which effectually results to patronage. These authors' outcomes were not differed from what is obtained in the current study which was conducted in south-western, Nigeria. From these findings, one can deduce that customers were interested in hotels that given priority to their well-being. To buttress the findings of the current study, it was showed that among variables of caring, assistance rendered to customers by the staff of hotels is considered most important. Beyond, customers showed their delight towards staff warmly greetings and relationship.

However, customers expressed their displeasure towards staff listening behaviour. Here, with a good deal of confidence, on-the-job and off-the-job train and re-training of staff will help to cultivate the acts of a good listener. In a nutshell, it was shown that irrespective of variances in research locations, methods employed and services' providers, hotel inclusive, it has been proved beyond reasonable doubt that customer care has a strong significant influence on customer patronage.

## **CONCLUSION:**

From the findings of the study, it shows that customer care, have the capacity to influence customer patronage. Considering the result of the study and the reviewed of the literature, it can be reasonably affirmed that the presence of customer care through proper handling of customer complaints have significant influence on customer patronage. This does not excluding the differences in the study areas, methods, and respondents used. Hence, from this finding, it can be established that the thriving and the niches performance of hotels in southwest rested heavily on the caring about the customers of the hotels.

## **Recommendations:**

Considering the conclusion of the study, it shows that for hospitality industry hotels in particular to continue plays its significant roles of influencing patronage, it is pertinent for the arms of government to take a drastic measure to arrest the total collapse of the industry. This they can do by establishing a vibrant body through policy implementation that must sit to review the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation Act 1992 of which hotels was incorporated in compliance with the international standard. Doing this, will avail the industry to align with the dynamic competitive environment of which the industry is currently operating. Also, arising from the conclusion, it could be recommended that the future investors in the hotel business should ensure that priority is given to proper handling of customers' complaints as this can be use as a benchmark against competitors operating in the same industry.

## **Contribution to Knowledge:**

The following are the contributions of this study to knowledge:

- i. The study provides empirical information on dimensions of customer care that are critical to determining the customer patronage.
- ii. It also helps to strengthen the literature by showing that when customers are caring for it brings satisfaction, and where customers are satisfied there is bound for patronage. Hence, investors' attention must be directed towards satisfied their customers in order to sustained their patronage
- iii. Provide a descriptive framework for the hotels on the implication of adoption of customer care as antecedent influence to customer's patronage.
- iv. It is hope that study's finding will create a platform for better performance of hotels.

## **Suggestion for future research:**

The study suggests that since there are still other factors such as pricing, business operation hour, ambience, items variations, taste, owner's emphasis, promotion, service quality and planning of menu that can influence or determine success or otherwise of hotel performance. Therefore, investigating the influence of these factors on patronage would be a rewarding academic endeavour.

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