HOTEL BRAND ATTRIBUTES AND GUEST SATISFACTION: EVIDENCE FROM NIGERIA

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Article history:		Abstract:
		The study examined the effect of hotel brand attributes (perceived service quality and brand personality) on guest satisfaction in the hospitality industry in a university community in the garden city of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research gathered data from 150 guests who patronised the five hotels selected for the study. A well-structured questionnaire containing 23 items, with five demographic items was used to generate primary data from the respondents. To validate the hypotheses, inferential statistics was conducted with the help of SPSS. The result of the inferential statistical analysis showed that,the two brand attributes individually had direct positive significant effect on brand loyalty, while brand loyalty also had direct positive effect on brand advocacy. To enhance positive behavioural intentions by guests towards hotels through guest satisfaction, hotel owners/managers are expected to develop capabilities in quality service delivery and customer experience management in terms of humanising some aspects of their offerings.

INTRODUCTION

Consumers conform to consumers' purchase decision making process (Kotler & Keller 2010) wherein they evaluate products (goods and services) by considering many product attributes. For instance, in the case of hotel choice, consumers may consider price, hotel stars, location, etc (during an initial booking). It therefore becomes imperative for hotel marketing managers who seek to promote consumer purchase and enhance satisfaction, to first determine what attributes consumers evaluate and how important to satisfaction each of these attributes is(Sungha,Liu, Kang, &Yang, 2018) to them.

In extant literature, the hotel attributes that can enhance guests' satisfaction have been confirmed to be heterogeneous (Dolnicar& Otter, 2003; Egresi, Puiu, Zotel& Alexandra 2020). This perspective is because several complex factors contribute to meeting the needs, aspirations, and the expectations of individual hotel guests. The job of the hotel marketing managers is therefore more complicated becauseof the inherent service characteristics of the hospitality product: perishability, inseparability perishability, intangibility, and heterogeneity (De Chernatony&Dall'Olmo Riley, 1999).

Several empirical studies ((Kandampully&Suhartanto 2000;Chu & Choi, 2000;Chan & Wong, 2006;McCleary, Weaver & Hutchinson, 1993;Dolnicar& Otter, 2003;(Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1998) outside the shores of Nigeria have been conducted to determine the effect of hotel attributes and that of Airbnd accommodation using different dimensions of hotel attributes. This current study attempts to fill the gap in literature by examining the effect of hotel attributes on brand satisfaction in a university community in Rivers State, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Theoretical Foundations
The Theory of Anthropomorphism

In his quest to explain several aspects of the consumer-brand relationship Fournier (1998), in his pioneer work introduced the interpersonal relationship metaphor which is considered very useful in this regard. The author suggested that the personalisation of brands by consumers is a form of anthropomorphism. The theory of anthropomorphism finds support and expression from studies on animism. The study is of the view that human beings tend to anthropomorphise objectsin order to facilitate interactions with the non-material world.

The foregoing explains why marketing practitioners and academics tend to humanise brands which helps them to explain the degree and marketing importance of consumer-brand relationships. In brand marketing, the theory of anthropomorphism offers clue which helps managers to understand and appreciate how and why people endow brands that are inanimate objects with human personality qualities. Boyer (1996), noted that this development is very important because endowment helps to explain the projections of human qualities on both non-human beings (such as gods and animals) and inanimate objects, which describes brand personification. Cohen (2014, p.3) defined brand personification as, "imbuing trademarked or otherwise proprietary-named products and services with a human form and/or human attributes, including a generally distinctive physical appearance and personality".

The endowment of brands with personality helps in facilitating the cultivation of a mutual interdependence between a brand and a consumer. This development which encourages the target market to consider and see brands in human terms (Brown 2011) is considered very advantageous to marketers and that is why many organisationspay serious attention to brand management. In some iconicorganisations, brand managers are given full responsibilities for the marketing and management of brands. Typical examples of advantages accruable to organisations include: brand love, "brand loyalty and commitment, enhanced consumer willingness to disparage competing brands, greater willingness to spread positive Word of Mouth (WOM), and a willingness to pay a price premium" (Macinnis, &Folkes 2017, p.371).

Self-Congruity Theory

Most marketing professionals and scholars are aware that consumers purchase products for functional benefits and also for the symbolic meanings behind the brands of their choice (McCracken, 1986). It is through the symbolic meanings attached to brands that helps consumers to express important aspects of themselves, such as self-identity, value, and goals (Aguirre-Rodriguex, Bosnjak, & Sirgy, 2012).This is a consequence or description of the theory of self-congruity, which postulates that due to the possession of symbolic character by products, consumers tend to be attracted to products with symbolic value propositions which are consistent with how they think about themselves (Gardner &Levy, 1955). Based on the theory of self-congruity, Fournier, (1998) explain that consumers tend to patronise and consume branded products that represent the meanings relevant to themselves. Brands in this category are deemed to possess characteristics or features that are said to be *self-congruent* (Aw, Flynn& Chong (2019).

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW
Hotel Attributes

Hotel attributes connotes accommodation product and services which account for hotel guests' satisfaction (Qu, Ryan & Chu, 2000).In the case of hotel services marketing, the inherent service characteristics: perishability, inseparability perishability, intangibility, and heterogeneity (De Chernatony&Dall'Olmo Riley, 1999) makes the management of hotel attributes a complex task for marketing managers. The service features also make a case for a greater notion of branding which is required to tangibilise and give credence to the service brand.Extant literature studied various dimensions of hotel attributes such as; food and beverage, housekeeping, reception, and price (Kandampully&Suhartanto 2000), security, front desk, rooms, recreation and food (Chu & Choi, 2000), quality service and convenient location (Chan & Wong, 2006), location (McCleary, Weaver & Hutchinson, 1993), location, service quality, friendliness of staff, reputation, room cleanliness, price, value for money (Dolnicar& Otter, 2003), service, cleanliness, value, sleep quality, location and room(Almeida, &Pelissari, 2018). and the quality of tourist-staff interactions (Parasuraman, et al, 1998). For this current study, the hotel attributes dimensions of interest are perceived service quality and brand personality.

Perceived Service Quality (PSQ):

Perceived service quality is described as the difference between customers' expectations from service and the perceived performance (Parasuraman et al 1985, 1988). The ability of service organisations to deliver quality service is regarded as a winning strategy that defines organisational success in the competitive marketing environment. Parasuraman, et al (1988) developed a service quality measurement model (SERVQUAL) to assist in the measurement of service quality in service organisations based on some factors. Service quality dimensionsare,tangibility, responsiveness, assurance, reliability and empathy with 22 scale items measuring expectations and performance of the actual service.

Empirical evidence shows that several studies in different market contexts have been executed to determine the effects of service quality on customer satisfaction and customer behavioural intentions. Examples include airline (Aydin & Yildirim 2012; Liou, Yen &Tzang, 2010), health care (Lu & Wu, 2016; Wilkins, Merrileesa&Heringtona 2007), tourism (Johnson, &Klefsjo, 2006; Khan, 2003) retailing(Chinomona, Mahlangu, &Pooe, 2013), public electricity utility in Malawi (Chodzaza, &Gombachika, 2013) banking (Chidambaram, & Ramachandran, 2012) E-retailing by banks (Herington &Weaven, 2009; Chu, Lee, & Chao, 2012), retail banking sector of Pakistan (Hassan, Malik, Imran, Hasnain, & Abbas, (2013), restaurants (Vijayvargy, 2014; Tripathi & Dave, 2014;Jalagat, Bashayre, Dalluay, & Pineda, 2017), retail banking (Johnston, 1997; Chavan, & Ahmad, 2013; Johnston, 1997; Hamzah, Lee, &Moghavvemi, (2015) Islamic Banks in the Sultanate of Oman (Fida, Ahmed, Al-Balushi, & Singh, 2020), Indian mobile telephone sector (Kungumapriya, 2018), hotel(Kipapci, 2007; Akbada 2006).

In a move that suggest the questioning of the suitability of SERVQUAL model, Cronin and Taylor (1992) developed the service quality performance (SERVPERF) which measures the perceived service in SERVQUAL. The

authors claim that using SERVPERF is better than SERVQUAL because it produces better results in terms of reliability, validity and predictive power. However, for this current study, the dimensions of service quality as provided by the SERVQUAL model was used to measure the perceived service quality of hotels in a university community.

The service quality dimensions are briefly explained below.

- ➤ **Tangibility:**Consist of physical surroundings (interior designs), subjects (such as appearance of service employees), physical facilities.
- ➤ **Reliabilit**y: describes the capability of the service provider to deliver dependable and accurate services.
- ➤ **Assurance:** connotes the essential feature that provides customers the cue to develop confidence on the service brand.
- ➤ **Responsiveness:**describes the willingness of the service provider to offer assistance to its customers through the provision of fast and efficient service performance.
- ➤ **Empathy:** describes the readiness and ability of the service provider to provide each customer with personal service.

Heung, Mok, and Kwan, (1996), in the context of business and leisure market segments of the tourism industry in Hong Kong, carried out a study to measure and compare the expectations of hotel guests in terms of perceived service quality. The result showed that both business and leisure travellers had high expectations for service quality in Hong Kong hotels. However, it was confirmed that 'Responsiveness' and 'Empathy' were more important to business travellers than leisure travellers.

Brand Personality: Brand personality as a marketing strategy is utilised in making a brand unique by associating it with human characteristics (Aaker, Fournier & Basal, 2004; Aaker, 1997). As a brand concept, brand personality includes all the tangible and intangible trait attributes to a brand, because it ascribes human characteristics to a brand (goods, services, organisations). The marketing assumption is that based on these human characteristics ascribed to brands, consumers tend to establish relationships with brands. It was Fournier (1998) who introduced the concept of interpersonal relationship metaphor with a view to describing certain aspects of the consumer-brand interaction. It is on the basis on this relationship metaphor between brands and consumers that Sweeney and Bradon (2006, p.645) defined brand personality as, "the set of human personality traits that correspond to the interpersonal domain of human personality and are relevant to describing the brand as a relationship partner".Brand personality is widely recognised as an important brand component which plays a significant role in brand management and marketing strategy (Aaker, 1996).

Aaker (1997) developed a brand personality framework with five principal dimensions: excitement, sincerity, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. Geuens, Weijtes and DE Wulf (2009) developed another brand personality framework with the following dimensions;responsibility, activity, simplicity, aggressive and emotionality.

Haji,Evanschitzky, Combe, and Farrell, (2012)observed that, "existing brand personality frameworks fail to captureconsumers' anxious and frustrated feelings towardsbrands".Consequently, they proposed a new conceptual framework showing brand personality antecedent constructs, negative brand personality dimensions and consumers' behavioural intentions. The negative brand personality dimensions are lacking logic, critical, socially irresponsible, boring and egotistical. In the context of mobile industry, Nikhashemi, Valaei, and Tarofder, (2017)found that among the dimensions of brand personality; excitement, competence and sophistication are the most significant qualities predicting the construct of brand personality.

Brand Loyalty A brand has been confirmed to be more than a mere identity for a particular product (goods and services) (Keller, 2003). Rizwan, Javid, Aslam, Khan and Bibi (2014) posit that attributes of a brand (tangible and intangible) interacts with consumers' perception which results in the creation of a place in the minds of the consumers in addition to satisfying their needs, wants and aspirations.

Loyalty to a particular brand is built "when customers recognise it as being good and trustworthy. Loyalty is demonstrated through developing a strong positive relationship with the brand, enhanced value of the brand in this viewpoint, and the creation of customers repurchase intention(Rizwan, et al, 2014).

Brand Advocacy Fullerton (2010) describes customer advocacy as the willingness of customers to freely give very strong recommendations and praise about products and services to other consumers. A similar construct to customer/brandadvocacy is the popular positive Word of Mouth (WOM) communication which has been extensively researched(Harrison-Walker, 2001). The two constructs appear much alike but not identical. Customer/brand advocacy could be described as extreme favourable form of positive WOM communication. In practical terms therefore, while positive WOM will see consumers who are customers of organisations merely talking about a particular product and or service, a brand advocate tends to actively recommend a particular brand to family and friends and generally say positive things about a brand in general (Fullerton, 2010; Urban, 2004, 2005). Some scholars argue that advocacyis part of loyalty while some contend that advocacy is the best indicator for loyalty. This should be because customers will only voluntarily promote brands or companies when there is an emotional link between the advocates and the brand or when the customers feel connected in some way to the brand/ organization (Fullerton, 2010). Organisations are said to be engrossed with development of brand advocacy strategies because of the belief that "by assisting consumers to find and execute their optimum solution in a given market, it will be easier for anorganisation to earn their long-term trust, purchases and loyalty"(Lawer& Knox, 2006).

Conceptual Model and Hypotheses Development

Figure 1: Hotel Attributes-Brand Loyalty Model

The research model demonstrates that hotel attributes (perceived service quality and brand personality) have direct influence on brand loyalty of hotel guests. On the other hand, brand loyalty has direct effect on brand advocacy in the context of hotel services in a university community.

Service Quality-Brand Loyalty

Perceived service quality (PSQ) has received global recognition in terms of empirical literature and is generally understood by scholars to mean the comparative judgment or evaluation of perceived performance versus expectations by consumers (Parasuraman, et al, 1988). When customers are satisfied with the quality of goods or services delivered to them, the result is customer satisfaction (Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994). In the same vein, when a hotel guest perceives the quality of service delivered in the hotel to exceed his/her expectations, needs and wants they will equally be satisfied (Ishaq, Hussain, Asim, & Cheema, 2014). In practical terms therefore, customer satisfaction from quality services rendered to consumers turns them into loyal customers (Al-Msallam, &Alhaddad, 2016).

In different market contexts, empirical evidence has shown that perceived service quality engenders brand loyalty. Examples include; Chinese hotels (Kuo, Chang, Cheng & Lai, 2013); Malaysian hotels (Lait &Chiau, 2015;Gil, Hudson & Quintana, 2006); Pakistan hotels (Saleem & Raja, 2014); Hong Kong hotels(Heung, Mok& Kwan, 1996).
In Pakistan, Saleem and Raja (2014) in the context of 5 and 8 Star hotels investigated the effect of service quality on consumer satisfaction, customer loyalty and brand image. The findings shows that high quality of services had significant influence on customer satisfaction and then afterward satisfaction enhanced and strengthened customer loyalty.Lait and Chiau, (2015)in the context of Malaysian hotel industry, investigated the antecedents of customer loyalty using 200 respondents at Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA). The result showed that perceived service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction and corporate image predicted customer loyalty significantly, while trust did not.

Brodie, Whittome, and Brush, (2009) developed and tested a model describing the influence of service brand on the customer value–loyalty process. One of the thestatistical results of the study that sampled 552 airline customers revealed that service quality (company image, employee trust, and company trust) does not have a direct influence on customer loyalty. Other studies that did not have significant relationship between perceived service quality and brand/customer loyalty include:Kandampully and Hu, (2007) andKim, Jin-Sun and Kim, (2008) while the following studies: Chitty, Ward, and Chua, 2007; Ekinci, Dawes, and Massey, (2008) found indirect relationship.
The relationship between customer satisfaction arising from PSQ and brand loyalty could also be moderated. For example, in the context of in-house restaurants in Indian hotels, Naderian, and Baharun, (2015) investigated the influence of service quality antecedents on customer satisfaction and the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty with the moderating role of switching cost. The findings suggest that, switching costs moderated the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

Generally, PSQ is positively associated with the consumers' loyalty whenever the company offered valuable services to the consumers (e.g., Bell, Auh, & Smalley, 2005; Anton, Camarero, &Carrero, 2007). It is safe to state that, the high quality of service delivered to customers could trigger high level of loyalty behaviour. Hence, we hypothesise that.
H1: Perceived service quality of hotel guests is positively associated with the brand loyalty in hotel brands in a university community in Port Harcourt.
H1a: Perceived brand tangibility of hotel guests is positively associated with the brand loyalty in hotel brands in a university community in Port Harcourt.
H1b: Perceived brand assurance of hotel guests is positively associated with the brand loyalty in hotel brands in a university community in Port Harcourt.
H1c: Perceived brand assurance of hotel guests is positively associated with the brand loyalty in hotel brands in a university community in Port Harcourt.
H1d: Perceived brand responsiveness of hotel guests is positively associated with the brand loyalty in hotel brands in a university community in Port Harcourt

Brand Personality-Brand Loyalty

Zhang, Wang and Zhao (2014) examined the effect of brand personality on brand loyalty, with brand satisfaction mediating the relationship. The result showed that satisfaction fully mediated the relationship between excitement and brand loyalty, while the effect was partial in the relationship between sincerity, competence, sophistication and brand loyalty respectively. In Turkey, Akin (2017) investigated the effect of brand personality on brand loyalty in the Turkish automobile industry. The findings showed that brand personality (competency and excitement) had positive effects on brand loyalty.

In the context of variety of goods, Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello, (2009) found that brand personality influenced brand satisfaction and loyalty significantly.Mirabi,Lajevardi, and Mousavi, (2016) in the context of shopping experience found that the five dimensions of brand personality (sincerity, excitement, sophistication, competence and ruggedness) had . significant effect on customer satisfaction.

In the Indian luxury market segment, Thakur,Kaur, andJasrai, (2016) investigated the relationship between brand personality and attitudinal brand loyalty. The study which embarked on a secondary data review found a positive relationship between brand personality and attitudinal loyalty. Nguyen, and Thanh (2016) examined the effect of brand personality on consumer loyalty in the context of customers of frozen sea food in the supermarkets in the city of Ho Chi Minh. The statistical results showed that brand personality (based on Utility, Creditability, Excitement, Competency) had significant effect on brand loyalty.Shirazi,Lorestani, and Mazidi, (2013) examined the influence of brand identity and brand identification on brand loyalty indirectly through perceived value, customer satisfaction, and trust in the context of cellular-phone consumers in the Iran's north-eastern city of Mashhad. The statistical results showed that both brand identity and brand identification have positive indirect effect on brand loyalty through satisfaction,perceived value, and trust.

Fromextant literature, we argue that the relationship between brand personality and brand loyalty in the context of hotel service in a university community will be significant and positive. This is based on the argument that brands with pleasant personalities will enhance customers' experiential value perceptions which account for relativistic preferences held by individual customers(Vahedi, Shirian, Vajari, Kelishmi, &Esmaeili, 2014; Brakus, et al, 2019).Service brands like hotels that are capable of associating more with human characteristics, will likely have more satisfied customers and therefore expect positive behavioural outcome such as brand loyalty and revisit intentions. We therefore expect that:

H2: Brand personality perceived by hotel guests is positively associated with the brand loyalty in hotel brands in a university community in Port Harcourt.

Brand Loyalty and Brand Advocacy

Schepers, and Nijssen, (2018) examined the effect of brand advocacy by frontline employees (FLEs) on customer satisfaction based on service encounters. Thefindings of the study shows that brand advocacy behaviour harms customer satisfaction especially in service encounters such as maintenance especially for products that are new to the market.

Machado, Cant, and Seaborne, (2014) made use of a mixed-method approach to investigate the relationship between experiential marketing and brand advocacy through brand loyalty. The qualitative and quantitative research studied Apple customers via a web-based questionnaire administration. The findings showed that the experiential marketing efforts by Apple had influence on customers' feeling of loyalty toward the brand. As the feeling of loyalty increased, the customers studied displayed a high tendency toward becoming brand advocates for the Apple brand.

Shailesh and Reddy (2016) investigated the mediation role of customer advocacy in the relationship between customer loyalty and brand equity in the context of in-store brands in the city of Bangalore, India. The results of the Sobel's test showed that the mediating effect of customer advocacy in the brand loyalty -brand equity is significant. Wilk, Harrigan and Soutar (2018) found that in an online environment, "I Love <Brand>" was not sufficient to translate to Online Brand Advocacy (OBA).

In an online survey, Chiosa and Anastasiei (2018) investigated the antecedents of brand advocacy on Facebook, and specifically, the effect of brand attitude on brand advocacy. The study which sampled 108 Romanian Facebook users showed that brand trust and brand tribalism had positive effect on brand attitude, while brand trust and the status of the consumer are confirmed determinants of online brand advocacy.

From the foregoing, we therefore hypothesise that.

H3: Brand loyalty significantly influence brand advocacy in hotels in a university community in Port Harcourt, Nigeria

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design: The study was structured in line with a descriptive research design. Thechoice isattributed to the fact that the study required the collection of data based on the attitude, preference, behaviour and perception of hotel guests with a focus on the hotel attributes that affect guests' behavioural intentions to the hotelsin terms of perceived service quality and brand personality associated with the hotels studied.

Sample and data collection: The hotel guests constituted the target population for the study, while the current hotel guests found lodging at the hotels during the period of questionnaire administration formed the sample. A sample size of 150 was determined usingFreund and William's formula for sample size determination from unknown population since the total population was unknown. A structuredquestionnaire was used to generate data from the

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respondents based on convenient sampling technique. The 130 questionnaires retrieved were all useful and therefore subjected to data analysis.

Demographic Profile of Respondents: The analysis of the respondents' profile showed that, 93 respondents (75%) were male while 37 respondents (38%) were female. Regarding age brackets, 17 respondents (13.1%), were less than 20 years, 41 respondents (31.5%) were within 20–29 years, 61 respondents (46.9%) were within 30–39 years while 11 respondents (08.5%) were greater than 40 years. This description shows that the respondents within the ages of 30 – 39 years were of the majority.

With regard to the level of education of respondents, the analysis showed that no guest was without formal education. Only one guest (0.8%) had the first school leaving certificate (FSLC); senior secondary school certificate (SSCE/GCE) holders were 13 (10%). The rest were represented as follows: Higher National Diploma/Bachelor degree (HND/B.SC) 46 (35.4%), MA/MSC/MBA 67 (51.5%) and Ph.D3 respondents (2.3%). The analysis showed that guests with a second university degree were of the majority. This should be expected since the hotels are located within a university town.

The analysis of the occupational status of respondents showed the following:88 respondents (67.72%) were workers, 27(20.8%) were businessmen/women. The remaining 15 respondents (11.5%) were Students. This description shows that the respondents in the working class category were in the majority. In terms of the number of years that the guests had patronised the respective hotels, data analysis revealed the following: 37 respondents (28.5%) were less than two years. The rest were represented as follows: 53 (40.7%) 2-4years; 20 (15.4%) 5-7years; 10(7.7%) 8-10 years, while 10 (7.7 %) had patronised the hotels for 11 years and above.

Measurement Instrument and Questionnaire design

A well-structured questionnaire was the major instrument for data collection, while all the items were adapted from extant literature. The two dimensions of hotel attributes were adapted as follows: perceived service quality (Ryu , Lee & Kim, 2012; Liu & Jang (2009) and brand personality (Aaker 1997).Items for brand loyalty were modeled afterZeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, (1996) while items for brand advocacy were adapted from Fullerton (2011).In order to enable the respondents to express their degree of agreement with the items or otherwise,all the measurement items were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale anchored by: Strongly Disagree [SD](1). Disagree [D](2), Agree [A](3), Agree fairly strongly(4) and Strongly Agree [SA](5)

RESEARCH RESULTS
Reliability Analysis

Table 1 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.987	.991	23

Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the 23-item research instrument with a value of .991 as shown in Table 1. The value is above the threshold value of .7 as suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). By this result, the measuring instrument is deemed to be internally consistent which makes the instrument to be considered helpful and applicable in measuring opinions of hotel guests in the context of how two principal hotel attributes affects guest behavioural intentions.

Discriminant Validity

Table 2 Correlation Matrix

		Perceived Service Quality	Brand Personality	Brand Loyalty	Brand Advocacy
Correlation	Perceived Service Quality	**1.000**	.756	.853	.756
	Brand Personality	.756	**1.000**	.597	.859
	Brand Loyalty	.853	.597	**1.000**	.634
	Brand Advocacy	.756	.859	.634	**1.000**

The correlation matrix as shown in Table 2 above demonstrates the determination of the discriminate validity of the measurement instrument. Hair Jr, Black, Babin, and Anderson, (2010, p.126) defined discriminant validity as the "the degree to which two conceptually similar concepts are distinct". Fornell and Larker (1981) opined that the discriminant validity occurs if the diagonal elements are higher than all the off-diagonal elements in both columns and rows. The statistical results in Table 2 satisfies the conditions stipulated by Fornell and Larker (1981) which implies the confirming of the discriminant validity of the measuring instrument.

Sampling Adequacy

Table 3 KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.915
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	7346.122
	Df	253
	Sig.	.000

Table 3 shows the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) performed on 23 exploratory items of hotel attributes and guests' behavioural intentions as demonstrated in the conceptual model in Figure 1 for the conduct of theKMO and Bartlett's Test is shown in Table 3. Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant at pv=.000 and KMO measure of sampling adequacy is .915. This value is greater than 0.5 whichis suggested as a minimum level by Kaiser (as cited in Wong & Musa 2010, p. 3417).

Data Analyses and hypotheses testing

To ascertain the effect of hotel attribute(perceived service quality and brand personality) on guests' behavioural intentions, in the hypothesized relationships were subjected to statistical analysis using Multiple regression analysis.

Testing of hypotheses 1, 2 and sub hypotheses

Decision Rule

If   PV < 0.05   =   Hypothesis is supported

              PV > 0.05 =   Hypothesis is not supported

Hypothesis one and two

Table 4 describes the summary of the multiple regression analysis showing the effect of hotel attributes on brand loyalty.

Table 4. The regression analysis for the influence of hotel attributes on brand loyalty

Dependent variable	Independent Variable	Beta(β)	t-value	p-value
Brand Loyalty	Perceived Service Quality	.702	13.442	0.00**
	Brand Personality	.226	4.245	0.00**

Notes: P≤ 0.05; R=.916; R^2 =.840; Adjusted R^2 =.837; F=332.260; $P=0.000$

From Table 4, the following results are shown; adjusted R square = 0.837, F = 332.260&p=.000< 0.05 for hotel attributes (perceived service quality and brand personality). This specifies that perceived service quality and brand personality explains 83.7% variation in brand loyalty in hotels in a university community in Port Harcourt, Nigeria

HYPOTHESIS 1

Statistical results from Table 4, reveals the following: un-standardized beta (β) of perceived service quality (β = 0.702), t-value = 13.442, and p=.000< 0.05. This specifies that perceived service quality had significant effect on brand loyalty, which implies that hypothesis one is supported.

SUB Hypotheses H1a, H1b, H1c and H1d

Table 5. The regression analysis for the influence of four dimensions of perceived service quality. on brand loyalty

Dependent variable	Independent Variable	Beta(β)	t-value	p-value
Brand Loyalty	Tangibility	.114	3.476	0.00**
	Reliability	.776	15.856	0.00**
	Assurance	.115	1.771	0.08
	Responsiveness	.040	-.651	0.52

Notes: P≤ 0.05; R=.978; R^2 =.956; Adjusted R^2 =.954; F=674.316; $P=0.000$

SUB Hypotheses H1a

The statistical results for the influence of tangibility on brand loyalty from Table 5, shows the following; un-standardized beta (β) (β = 0.114),), t-value = 3.476, andpv=.000< 0.05. This specifies that tangibility had significant effect on brand loyalty, which implies that hypothesis **H1a** is supported.

SUB Hypotheses H1b

The statistical results for the influence of reliability on brand loyalty from Table 5, shows the following; un-standardized beta (β) (β = 0.776),), t-value = 15.856, and$p$=.000< 0.05. This specifies that reliability had significant effect on brand loyalty, which implies that hypothesis **H1b** is supported.

SUB Hypotheses H1c

The statistical results for the influence of assurance on brand loyalty from Table 5, shows the following; un-standardized beta (β) (β = 0.115),), t-value = 1.771,   andpv=.08> 0.05. This specifies that assurance had no significant effect on brand loyalty, which implies that hypothesis **H1c** is not supported.

SUB Hypotheses H1d

The statistical results for the influence of responsiveness on brand loyalty from Table 5, shows the following; un-standardized beta (β) (β =- 0.040), t-value = -.651, andpv=.52> 0.05. This specifies that responsiveness had no significant effect on brand loyalty, which implies that hypothesis **H1d** is not supported.

HYPOTHESIS 2

Statistical results from Table 4, shows the following : un-standardized beta (β) of brand personality (β = 0.226), t-value = 4.245, andpv=.000< 0.05. This specifies that brand personality had significant effect on brand loyalty, which implies that hypothesis 2 is supported.

HYPOTHESIS 3

Table 4 describes the summary of the multiple regression analysis showing the effect of brandloyalty on brand advocacy.

Table 6. The regression analysis for the influence ofbrand loyalty on brand advocacy

Dependent variable	Independent Variable	Beta(β)	t-value	p-value
Brand Advocacy	Brand Loyalty	.702	15.699	0.00**

Notes: P≤ 0.05; R=.811; R^2 =.658; Adjusted R^2 =.655; F=246.444; *P=0.000*

From the Table, the following results are shown; un-standardized beta (β) of brand loyalty on brand advocacy (β = 0.702), adjusted R square = 0.655, F = 246.444&p=.000< 0.05. This specifies that brand loyalty explains 65.5% variation in brand advocacy in hotels operating in a university community in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The outcome of analysis show that brand loyalty had significant effect on brand advocacy to the hotels (β = 0.702, p=0.000 < 0.05), therefore hypothesis **H3** is supported.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Statistical analysis ofhypothesis H1 showed a significant effect of perceived service quality on brand loyalty to the hotels operating within a university community (β = 0.702, t=13.442, p=0.000 < 0.05).   Therefore, H1 is supported. This finding is consistent with the findings ofLait and Chiau (2015), Saleem and Raja (2014), where indirect positive relationship occurred and inconsistent with the findings of Whittome and Brush (2009).

Sub Hypothesis H1a, H1b, H1c, and H1d

Hypothesis H1a, H1b, H1c and H1dposited a significant effect of four dimensions of brand personality: tangibility, reliability, assurance and responsiveness on brand loyalty respectively to the hotels. With the following statistical results: tangibility; (β = 0.114, t=3.476, p=0.00< 0.05);reliability; (β = 0.776, t=15.856, p=0.00< 0.05); assurance;(β = 0.115, t=1.771, p=0.08>0.05);responsiveness (β = -0.040, t=-.651, p=0.52> 0.05) the effect is significant with tangibility and reliability only. This result is consistent with the prediction of H1a and H1b. Thus, a higher level of service quality delivery interms of provision of sophisticated equipment for better and fast service delivery and the dependability of the hotels' service personnel enhances the guests' level of loyalty to the hotel brand. This finding is consistent with Kuo, et al (2013), Saleam and Raja (2014) and Mousavi (2016).However, for assurance (p=0.08>0.05) and responsiveness(p=0.052>0.05), the effect is insignificant and thus, hypothesesH1C and H1d are not supported.

Hypothesis 2 posited a significant effect of brand personality on brand loyalty to the hotels. With β = 0.226,t=4.245, p=0.00< 0.05, the effect is significant. This result is consistent with the prediction of H2 and is therefore supported. Thus, a higher level of demonstration of human characteristics such as competence and sophistication provided by hotels the higher the propensity by guests to remain committed to their respective hotel brands interms if inability to brand switch, payment of premium prices, etc. This finding is consistent with the findings of Mousavi(2016), Akin (2017), Brakus, et al (2019).

Hypothesis 3 posited a significant effect of brand loyalty on brand advocacy to the hotels. With β = 0.702, t=15.699, p=0.00< 0.05, the effect is significant. This result is consistent with the prediction of H3 and is therefore supported. The result is a demonstration of the fact that quality service delivery by hotels and successful humanizing of hotel brands engenders a higher propensity by hotel guests to be satisfied, with the possibility of being loyal to the hotel brand. A loyal hotel guest will find it very easy to provide very strong recommendation and praise about the hotel brand to family and friends. This finding is consistent with Schepers and Nijssen (2018).

CONCLUSION

The research effort examined the effect of hotel attributes on brand loyalty at hotels operating in the hospitality market segment in a university community at Choba, Rivers State, Nigeria. Data collected from current guests of five hotels who were lodging at the hotels at the time of questionnaire administration was used to test three principal and four sub hypotheses developed for the study. The empirical results supported all the research hypothesessignificantly except two sub hypotheses.

The fact that the two dimensions of hotel attributes (perceived service quality and brand personality) explain up to 83.7% variation in brand loyalty is a very important outcome of this research effort. This is because, a well-conceived service quality architecture and the humanising of certain offers of hotels have the capacity to engender pleasurable experiences that promotes the self-congruenceof its target market. This therefore is in support of the self-congruity theory. Insightful and fruitful implications to both the practitioners and academics are discernible from this empirical study.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The current study is a bold attempt to examine the effect of brand attributes (perceived service quality and brand personality) as a predictor of brand loyalty in the context of hotels operating in a university environment in a developing country, Nigeria. The direct effect of brand loyalty on brand advocacy was equally tested. As expected, the study findings will to a large extent, provide fruitful and useful academic and practitioners' implications.

On the academic side, this current study makes significant contribution to the brand management literature by systematically examining the impact of perceived service quality and brand personality as hotel attributes on brand loyalty as well as the influence of brand loyalty on brand advocacy. The findings of this study provides tentative support to the proposition that perceived service quality and brand personality should be recognised as significant antecedents for enhancing brand loyalty in hotels in Nigeria.

On the practitioners' side, the significant effect of perceived service quality and brand personality on brand loyalty and the influence of brand loyalty on brand advocacy in Nigeria is highlighted. Certainly, hotel owners/marketers could benefit from the implications of these findings. For instance, given the robust relationship (adjusted R squared) between hotel attributes (perceived service quality and brand personality) and brand loyalty (0.837), and also between brand loyalty and brand advocacy (0.655), hotel owners/marketers ought to pay attention to both perceived service quality and brand personality in order to enhancebrand loyalty and engender brand advocacy by hotel guests.

For example, by providing modern equipment and physical facilities and employing well trained personnel with degrees in marketing and hospitality management, hotel owners/managers could enhance the delivery of excellent service quality that matches the self-image of the guests. In the same vein, the hotel owners/managers are expected to improve the personality attributes of the hotel brand by shaping a distinct brand personality that is in tandem with the target markets' self-image. By so doing an emotional bonding could be created. To achieve this, the quality of the hotel environment (atmospherics, Colour, noise level, room cleanliness, nice reception, etc) is expected to be improved upon. Also, the owners/managers could execute marketing communication campaign with humanized content and deliver robust quality of service capable of enhancing guests' emotions and excite the human senses. It is certain that when hotel guests can connect emotionally with the hotel, there level of satisfaction will be enhanced with the possibility of remaining loyal to the hotel brand. This is in conformity with the theory of anthropomorphism. It is guests who are loyal to a hotel brand that will be able to serve as advocates for the hotel brands.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite how useful this current study is there are still limitations. Firstly, data collection was from a cross section of Nigerians who lodged at the various hotels operating within the precinct of a university campus. Therefore, the generalizability of research findings could be improved upon if future research replicates the research model in other geo-political zones across the country. Secondly, the current study was conducted in Nigeria which is a limitation geographically. For results comparison, future research effort should be conducted in Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa.

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