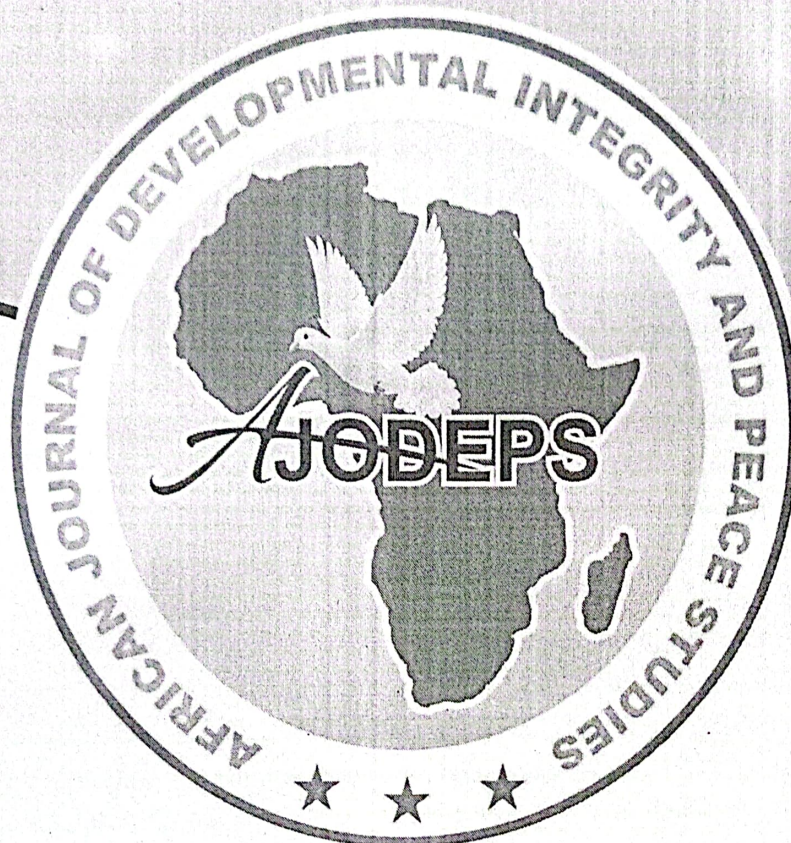


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Socio-Cultural Peculiarities and Shoppers' Patronage in an Emerging Retail Business: Evidence from Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The retailing business is rapidly changing shopping experience that hardly players involved in this sector withdraw from the business but rather employ the accordion theory of scheming their business operations to a single item to retain the loyalty of customers. It is on this premise that the study intends to examine the influence of socio-cultural peculiarities and the shoppers' patronage in an emerging retail business. This study employed a cross-sectional research design and three hundred and eighty-four (384) structured questionnaires administered among the retail outlets in Kwara State though only two hundred and ninety-eight (298) were filled, returned and coded for the data analysis. The returned questionnaire represents 77.6% and this result is adequately fit for the study. The ANOVA table revealed $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ which is less than 0.05 (sig) and since $p\text{-value} < 0.05$, the two null hypotheses tested rejected and alternative hypotheses accepted that is. Northernization & modernization and urbanization have a great influence on shoppers' patronage in an emerging retail business with $R = 0.66$. Hence, the study concluded that paying more attention to the sociocultural peculiarities of businesses will not just improve their customer base but yield a good and sustainable relationship between the shoppers and the retail outlets. Therefore, the study recommended that the management of emerging retail businesses should integrate into the community of interest and appropriate necessary costs to achieve favourable performance.

Keywords: Northernization, Urbanization, Modernization, Shoppers' Patronage, Emerging Retail

Introduction

Recently, the upsurge of emerging retail businesses in Nigeria is getting more attention from shoppers. Researchers claimed this has been due to the unprecedented rise in the standard of living, economic development and provision of infrastructure by the government. The North-Central region of Nigeria represents one of the largest geo-political regions with many opportunities for businesses to thrive. It has a population of 14.5% of the total population of Nigeria with the majority of the residents known to be Christians and Muslims (Ojewale, 2021). He further explained that it is a convergence of various minority ethnic groups that have major occupations in the civil services and farming sectors. According to Asenguah (2022), the North-Central region has a poverty rate of 42.7%, which is considered to be the third-highest in the country. It is also part of the middle belt, which includes Benue State, Plateau State, Nasarawa State, Kwara State, Niger State, Kogi State and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The buying behaviour of shoppers in this region is characterized by cultural peculiarities, so existing and prospective businesses must completely employ a marketing adaptation strategy in operations and show respect for the region's tradition and culture which influence and determine shoppers' behaviours and patterns so that business survival and profitability objectives can be achieved. The region is unstable and prone to militia attacks, sectarian conflicts, banditry, kidnappings, and frequent fights between herders and farmers who live in one place (Ojewale, 2021).

Interestingly, the Nigerian North-Central region has been a potential market for businesses and emerging retail businesses are not an exception as a result of untapped business opportunities surrounding this particular environment. Retail business is not just about buying and selling consumer goods, the emerging retail business makes the

shopping experience more interesting and rewarding. Aschemann-Witzel, Gimenez and Ares (2020) opined that emerging retail businesses include outlets where food and other items are displayed on the shelves with no reduction in price. The growing urbanization, media boom, changing demographics and shift by the consumer from the patronage of informal retail business to more shopping experience with comfort have propelled the growth of the emerging retail business (Kotler, 2018). It is often stated that the only constant in retail is change, and it is certainly true that the pace of development within retail is accelerating (Reinartz, Wiegand & Imschloss, 2019). According to Feedough (2021), emerging formal retail businesses can be divided into five: service retail, internet retail, corporate retail, non-store retailing, and store retail. In Nigeria for example, the following emerging formal retail businesses like Shoprite, Games, Addide, PrinceEbeano, Spar, Park n Shop, Bedmates, Just-interior, and Hubmart have no doubt brought more interesting experiences to shopping.

Shoppers' patronage patterns have brought tremendous growth to the emerging retail business operating in the North-Central region. The present state of performance of formal retail businesses in the North-Central region falls into the different cyclical operations in that individual retailer's performance is captured between life-cycle theory and accordion retail theory. These are general operational models that define and reveal performance trends among emerging retailing businesses. There are some fundamental issues regarding the influence of sociocultural factors on shoppers' patronage in an emerging retail business bearing in mind the wide gap in exposure and economic standards between the North-Central region and South-West region. This phenomenon is particularly under-researched in the North-Central region especially now that shopping habit has shifted from informal retail business to formal retail business. Stakeholders in the

region claimed the unrest in the region is more of politics than other social vices. This may however support or prevent prospective businesses or distract the existing ones. Moreover, the general objective of this study is to examine the influence of socio-cultural peculiarities on shoppers' patronage in an emerging retail business (evidence from Kwara State).

Literature Review

Conceptual Review: Emerging Formal Retail Business

Emerging retail business is also categorized as formal retail business or hypermarket. According to Hanninen, Smedlund and Mitronen (2018), the changing and demanding needs of retail shoppers has transformed the retail business into a digitalization-driven business solution for meeting and satisfying the need of their target market. The growing urbanization, media boom, changing demographics and shift by the consumer from the patronage of informal retail business to more shopping experience with comfort have propelled the growth of the emerging retail business (Kotler, 2018; Weyer, Tiberius, Bican & Kraus, 2020). In the view of Izogo and Jayawardhena (2018) the objective of emerging retail business is not primarily profit motive in the short time but to ensure a seamless shopping experience among potential and prospective customers which transforms into huge profit in the long run. Shopping habits and consumer psychological buying modes changed as the invention of technology and the sociocultural environment factors, interestingly shaped their patronage patterns especially within the emerging retail sector (Smart, 2017). Also, emerging retail business can be referred to as formal retail business in the form of a supermarket, mall or departmental store on large hectares of land with an exterior design to promote a good shopping experience (Diallo, Diop-Sall, Djelassi & Godefroit-Winkell, 2018; Ceccato & Tcacencu, 2018). Feedough (2021), opined that emerging

formal retail businesses can be divided into five: service retail, internet retail, corporate retail, non-store retailing, and store retail

Shoppers' Patronage in an Emerging Retail Mall

Emerging retail business operations have changed the shoppers' buying behaviour. The shoppers due to the ambience condition and perceived quality service delivery provided by the retailer, the shopping experience now becomes more of a recreational centre, a meeting point for young couples and family members during the festive period (Dokcen, Obedgiu & Nkurunziza, 2021). Most businesses view and better understand the concept of shoppers patronage by examining the following business performance metrics; repeat purchase, customer retention, sales performance, high return on investment, and architectural design of the retail mall. Researchers confirmed these metrics to be factors responsible for shoppers' patronage and choice of a brand (Uimonen, 2020; Pangriya & Singh, 2020; Yang. *et.al*, 2022, Adjei.*et.al*,2022, Htut, 2022; Drezner & Mikla-Kalczynka, 2023).

Socio-Cultural Peculiarities and Shoppers' Patronage in Emerging Retail Business

Nigeria's business environment is vulnerable and dynamic with no exception to the people living in the North-Central zone of the Federation and the North-Central region is not an exception to which Kwara-State belongs as a component that made up the region. It is a general assertion that the weather in this particular market is very harsh and difficult for the inhabitants living in this particular area. While the environmental factors are opportunities for some retailing activities to thrive and gain more competitive advantages over others, it is a threat to others and obstruction to their operations especially during the harmattan period *locacisanyi*. Pollutants and parasites influence shoppers' decision so as such people focus more on buying

necessities and forget about the rest needs until the situation call for it (Rabiu, 2021). Emerging Retail businesses have the worst sales during this period compared to the booming sales in other weather conditions. The buying experience in the North-Central is interesting as customers buy a particular product not because it is necessary but the fear of the unpredictable weather conditions, they experience which most times fail as predicted by the weather forecast expert. According to Akingbolu (2022), residents of Northern Nigeria spend N322 billion monthly on personal care products and this big revelation is already an attraction to players in the personal care segment. He further explained a breakdown of the spend on drinks with 53% of northern consumers consuming some form of non-alcoholic drinks several times every single week, 66 per cent currently consuming CSDs, 45 per cent consuming Malt drinks, 24 per cent consuming fruit-based drinks, 5 per cent take wine products and 15% are consumers of energy drink products. Over 60 per cent have Zobo and unbranded milk products within their repertoire of drinks.

Theoretical Review

Retail life-cycle theory is one of the cyclical theories in retail change, first propounded by Professor Malcolm P. McNair in 1958 to explain the level of development in retail. The retail life-cycle theory focuses on new ideas and makes the retail business less uncertain. Krasnyuk, Kirillova, Bakharev and Lyamin (2019), opined that innovations are a continuous process, so the issues related to the life cycle management of a retail enterprise are germane to the stakeholders in the industry. Effective enterprise life cycle management allows for the reduction of risks and the reduction of the degree of uncertainty in its innovation activity in the retailing business.

Wheel of Retailing Theory

The emerging retail business is promising with a high rate of return on investment, and this is possible because of the institutional change and innovation introduced by the players in the industry. The theory is a cyclical theory explaining the changes in the retail business, propounded by Professor Malcolm P. McNair in 1958. The wheel of retailing is a theory revealing the institutional changes that take place when business trailblazers, including large business houses, develop an interest in the retail business. According to Savitt (1984), the wheel of retail theory emphasizes that retail change must be linked more precisely with events in the environment and the marketing channel.

Accordion Retail Theory

The retail evolution theory was first presented by Hollander in 1966. It explained how the concept of retail evolves as a contracting trend similar to an accordion. According to the theory, a retail establishment that starts with a limited selection of products might eventually expand its operations and carry a variety of styles within one product. Initially, a retail establishment is a general store. Eventually, it becomes specialized and begins carrying a limited selection of products. Nowadays, majority of the emerging retail businesses serve and focus on a specific product targeting a segment of the market to ensure exceptional service delivery and customer satisfaction.

Implication of Cyclic Theories on the Emerging Retail Business

Informal retail business with a notable achievement in the past enters a decline stage in the retail life-cycle when, simultaneously, was subject to several years of divestment and new retail business emerged to attend to specific customer's need (Guimarães, 2019). Also, Sun, Kay and Chew (2009) discovered that most retail business in the developed country is already in their maturity stage. However,

shopping is taking a new dimension and the emerging retail businesses have been affected by the shoppers' psychology and ideology. In the North-Central region, some emerging retail businesses reached the maturity stage of retail and instead of getting to the decline stage shrink the business to a particular retail item to serve a specific target audience. By this, the accordion theory of retail is adopted and this saves the business from starting from the introductory stage.

Methodology

This study applied a cross-sectional research design using a quantitative approach to gather information about the influence of socio-cultural peculiarities on shoppers' patronage in emerging formal retail businesses. Considering the problem of the study and the nature of the research questions, data were collected using statistical techniques to elicit information on the general objective of this study. The study's population comprises some selected emerging retail outlets in Kwara State. The selected emerging retail outlets are based on the following criteria; The retail outlet size in this study is defined by retailing outlets found in a shopping mall; in a closed estate or independent outlet occupying at least one-storey building and an independent sprawling on at least two-plot size of land with amenities like car park for number of cars, a comfort station that can occupy two or more customers simultaneously, small space for religion purposes and a cloak room or box (Diallo, Diop-Sall, Djelassi & Godefroit-Winkell, 2018; Ceccato & Tcacencu, 2018; Badar & Irfan, 2018). Manpower strength is defined by a company with at least 15 staff from all functional units within the outlets. Also, the criteria for selected emerging retail outlets covered those with registration numbers from the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC).

The three hundred and eighty-four (384) retail outlets/ respondents who are staff of the retail outlets were arrived at using Godden's (2004) formula for infinite population which is as follows:

$$SS = \frac{Z^2 p(1 - p)}{\alpha^2}$$

Where:

SS = required sample size

Z^2 = Z-value (e.g., 1.96 for a 95 per cent confidence level)

P = Percentage of population picking a choice, expressed as decimal in this case (0.5)

α = Confidence interval, expressed as decimal (e.g., .05 = +/- 5 percentage points)

$$SS = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5(1 - 0.5)}{0.05^2}$$

$$SS = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025}$$

SS = 384.16, 384 respondents.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select the registered retail outlets and the structured questionnaire was used to gather data for the respondents. The five-point Likert scale was employed to structure the statements, ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). This instrument was administered physically to the respondents, however, there are special requests by the management of the mall that the researcher should come next time.

Data Analysis**Table 1: Demographic Data of the respondents**

		Frequency/Percentage (%)
Respondents' gender	Male	88 (29.53%)
	Female	210 (70.47%)
	Total	298 (100)
Respondents' age:	Below 21years	112(37.58%)
	21 – 30years	50 (16.78%)
	31 – 40years	59 (19.80%)
	41 – 50years	31 (10.40%)
	Above 50years	46 (15.44%)
	Total	298 (100)
Respondents' educational qualification	WASC/GCE	174 (58.39%)
	B.Sc./BA/HND	120 (40.27%)
	M.Sc./MA/MBA	4 (1.34%)
	Ph.D.	-
	Others	-
	Total	298 (100)
Respondents' marital status	Single	203 (68.12%)
	Married	77(25.84%)
	Widow/Widower	10 (3.36%)
	Divorced	8 (2.68%)
	Others	-
	Total	298 (100)
Respondents' religion	Christian	76 (25.50%)
	Islam	222 (74.50%)
	Others	-
	Total	298 (100)

Source: Authors Computation, 2022

From the demographic table 4.1, the descriptive analysis shows that 29.53% of the respondents are male while 70.47% are female and the implication of this is that the majority of the respondents are female.

For the respondents' age, 37.58% of the total respondents are below 21 years of age, 16.78% are between 21 and 30 years of age, 19.80% are between the ages of 31 and 40, 10.40% are between 41 and 50 years of age, and 15.44% are above 51 years of age. The higher proportion of 37.58% with age brackets below 21 years indicated that majority of the respondents were of active age. For the educational qualifications, the highest percentage of 58.39% was for the WASC/GCE holders, B.Sc./BA/HND degree holders, 40.27%, and 1.34% for the M.Sc./MA/MBA degree holders. The highest proportion of 58.39% implies that the majority of the staff in emerging retail outlets have school leaving certificate. The marital status shows 68.12% of the respondents are single, 25.84% are married, 3.36% are widowed or widowers and the divorced percentage stands at 2.68%. Finally, the result revealed that 25.50% are Christians and 74.50% are Muslims which implies that the majority of the respondents are Muslims.

Hypotheses Testing

H_{01} : there is no significant influence between sociocultural peculiarities (Northernization and Modernization) and Shoppers' Patronage in an emerging retail business in Kwara-State.

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.815 ^a	.664	.660	.41120	
a. Predictors: (Constant), Socio-Cultural peculiarities of Kwara-State					
ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.

Regression	48.107	1	27.22 2	166.011	.000 ^b
Residual	23.912	132	.211		
Total	72.019	133			
a. Dependent Variable: Shoppers' Patronage					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Socio-Cultural peculiarities of Kwara State					
Coefficients^a					
	Unstandardi zed Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	.817	.203		5.251	.000
Socio- Cultural peculiarities	.801	.072	.613	11.642	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Shoppers' Patronage					

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

Interpretation and Discussion of Findings

The correlation coefficient R is 0.815 as revealed from the model summary table above, indicating that there is a very strong relationship between shoppers' patronage (dependent variable) and northernization (independent variable). The R^2 , or coefficient of determination, is 0.664, approximately 66 per cent. This implies that a change in the northernization and modernization system of people patronizing emerging retail outlets will account for a 66 per cent shift in customer patronage (repeat purchase, increase in sales performance, customer retention). The remaining 34% can be explained by exogenous variables. The ANOVA table is analyzed to see if any of the variables are significant. In the ANOVA table, $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ which is less than 0.05 (sig) and since $p\text{-value} < 0.05$, the null

hypothesis (Ho) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (Hi) is accepted that there is a relationship between socio-cultural peculiarities (northernization and modernization system) and shoppers' patronage in an emerging retail business. The coefficient of the individual variable revealed that (.817) socio-cultural peculiarities have a positive relationship with shoppers' patronage in an emerging retail business. Furthermore, because the alpha level of 0.05 is greater than the p-value, the p-value and t-statistics value of 0.000 explain that there is a relationship between socio-cultural peculiarities and the shoppers' patronage in an emerging retail business. Hence, the northernization and modernization system (socio-cultural peculiarities of the North-Central region) has a significant influence on shoppers' patronage in an emerging retail business, and this finding was in agreement with the study conducted by Shipment and Vogel (2022) that culture should not be introduced virtually rather to remained offline as this improve mall workers performance.

H₀₂: there is no significant influence of socio-cultural peculiarities (Urbanization) and Shoppers' Patronage in an emerging retail business

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.814 ^a	.663	.517	.43121	
a. Predictors: (Constant), socio-cultural peculiarities (Urbanization)					
ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	38.117	1	41.112	171.085	.000 ^b
Residual	31.629	135	.211		

Total	69.746	136			
a. Dependent Variable: Shoppers' Patronage					
b. Predictors: (Constant), socio-cultural peculiarities (Urbanization)					
Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.313	.141		1.614	.000
socio-cultural peculiarities (Urbanization)	.671	.079	.821	15.024	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Shoppers' Patronage					

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

Interpretation and Discussion of Findings

The coefficient R is 0.814 (i.e., $R = 0.814$) in the model summary table, indicating that there is a strong positive relationship between shoppers' patronage (dependent variable) and socio-cultural peculiarities (independent variable). The data show that the R^2 or coefficient of determination, is 0.663 approximately 66 percent. This shows that a change of 66 per cent in the socio-cultural peculiarities (Urbanization) implies a 66 per cent shift in the level of shoppers' patronage in an emerging retail business. The remaining 34 per cent can be explained by other factors that were not captured in the model. The ANOVA table is analyzed to see if the variables are significant. From the ANOVA table, p-value = 0.000 which is less than 0.05 (sig) and since p-value < 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted i.e. there is a significant influence of socio-cultural peculiarities (Urbanization) on shoppers' patronage in an emerging retail business. The coefficient of

the individual variable reveals that (.671) socio-cultural peculiarities (Urbanization) have a significant influence on the shoppers' patronage in an emerging retail business. In addition, the p -value = .000 further explains that there is a significant relationship between socio-cultural peculiarities (Urbanization) and shoppers' patronage since an alpha level of 0.05 is greater than the p -value, which shows the independent variable (socio-cultural peculiarities (Urbanization) have significance effect on the dependent variable (shoppers' patronage) in the emerging retail business. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Loo. *et.al* (2023) that integrating activity-travel patterns in risk models can help businesses identify areas that attract highly mobile visitors and are conducive to super spreading and controlling the daily life of the urban population.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Retailing today is not just a business but an avenue to connect with old friends and loved ones while shopping. Conclusions were drawn from the discussion of findings following the research objectives and questions based on the results of the data analysis and hypothesis testing. With a p -value less than 0.05, the two null hypotheses under test were found to be false. For the selected emerging retail outlets, hence, this study concluded that socio-cultural peculiarities (northernization and modernization, urbanization) have a significant influence on shoppers' patronage in an emerging retail business (Vogel, 2022; Lepcha, 2022; Loo. *et. al*, 2023; Dalkavouki & Stratigea, 2023). However, paying more attention to the socio-cultural peculiarities of businesses will not just improve their customer base but yield a good and sustainable relationship between the shoppers and the retail outlets. Therefore, the study recommends that;

- (i) Individual staff of the retail outlet must be integrated into the culture and norms of the people living in the environment

- (ii) Retail business stakeholders should ensure the urbanization features are adequately monitored, maintained, and controlled to attract more of the urban population.

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