

Influence of Customer Service on the Success of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Customers are very important to the success of business organizations. This implies that customers should be well served and treated in order to enjoy continuous and referral patronage. The aim of this paper is to present the influence of customer services on the success of Small and Medium scale Enterprises (SMEs) and sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper conceptually looked at customer services, small and medium scale enterprises and sustainable development. It examined various types of customer's services, customer's services skills, characteristics of customer's services. Furthermore, it discusses the interconnectedness between successful SMEs and sustainable development. It also established that customer services could enhance the success of SMEs because it could lead to increase in sales and profit and by extension, sustainable development in Nigeria through generating employment, contributing to economic growth, utilizing local resources, alleviating poverty and increasing investment. The paper concluded that customer's services is not merely a transactional component but a powerful force that shapes the trajectory of SMEs and the broader nation, and consequently making provisions for the present and future generations. Finally, the paper suggested that there should be campaigns by the government agencies responsible for promoting entrepreneurship and Non-governmental organizations on the effect of customer services on business success and their attendant effect on the entire society.

Keywords: Customer services, Small and medium scale enterprises, Effect, Sustainable development

Introduction

In the realm of economic growth and development, Small and Medium scale Enterprises (SMEs) play a pivotal role in fostering innovation, generating employment opportunities, and driving local economies. In a country like Nigeria, characterized by a diverse market landscape and a burgeoning entrepreneurial spirit, the success of SMEs holds the key to unlocking sustainable development. At the heart of this success lies an often underestimated factor - customer service. The quality of interactions between businesses and their customers has emerged as a critical determinant in the trajectory of SMEs, influencing their growth, competitiveness, and impact on sustainable development. This research work delves into the multifaceted relationship between customer service and the triumph of SMEs, elucidating its far-reaching consequences for both the enterprises and the nation as a whole.

Gidado, Akaeze and Babakura (2022) defines sustainable development as a form of development which does not compromise the benefits of the future generation for the present generation. It is a process of social advancement that makes it possible for the current and

future generations to share similar interest while integrating social, economic, and environmental considerations when making a decision. This implies that the current generation will have to lay a foundation that will lead to improvement in their standard of living which is expected to improve the lives of the generations to come.

Sustainable development in Nigeria is intrinsically linked to the practices of SMEs. The ethical and responsible conduct of these enterprises contribute to economic growth, job creation, and community upliftment. Customer service plays a pivotal role in this equation. As SMEs prioritize customer satisfaction, they enhance their brand reputation, thus, attracting socially conscious consumers. The resulting growth supports sustainable development goals, making customer service an integral contributor to Nigeria's progress.

From the foregoing, it could be seen that customer service is a catalyst for SME Success. Exceptional customer service emerges as a catalyst for the success of SMEs in Nigeria. By providing personalized, responsive, and empathetic interactions, SMEs create a lasting impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty. This, in turn, generates positive word-of-mouth and referrals, propelling SMEs to the forefront of their respective markets. Consequently, customer service becomes the driving force that differentiates SMEs, enabling them to secure a competitive edge and thrive in a dynamic business environment.

In the realm of customer service, SMEs adopt customer-centric strategies that prioritize the individual needs and preferences of customers. By aligning their offerings with customers' demands and expectations, SMEs can fine-tune their products and services to achieve higher levels of satisfaction. This customer-focused approach leads to repeat business, increased sales, and sustainable growth for SMEs. As customer service remains at the forefront, SMEs create a foundation for enduring success.

The influence of customer service on SMEs extends beyond business transactions. These enterprises, as agents of economic change, wield the power to impact communities and society as a whole. By fostering positive relationships with customers, SMEs promote trust, transparency, and ethical conduct. Such practices create a ripple effect, inspiring other businesses to emulate responsible behavior and contribute to the social fabric of Nigeria. Likewise, customer service promotes synergy for Sustainable Development. The synergy between customer service, SME success, and sustainable development paints a holistic picture of Nigeria's economic future. By nurturing customer relationships and adhering to ethical practices, SMEs generate economic value while fostering social and environmental well-being. This synergy aligns with Nigeria's sustainable development agenda, bridging economic progress with societal advancement.

In the intricate tapestry of Nigeria's business landscape, customer service emerges as a pivotal force that weaves together the triumphs of SMEs and the aspirations of sustainable development. By prioritizing customer satisfaction, SMEs not only achieve success but also embody principles of responsible growth that resonate with the nation's development goals. As Nigerian SMEs continue to embrace customer-centric approaches, they set the stage for a future where business excellence and sustainable progress coexist harmoniously. This paper thus, focuses on the influence of customer services on the success of small and medium scale and its sustainability in Nigeria. This is because it sees customer services such as rendering personalized services to customers, advising customers on the right product to choose, listening

to the customers' complains and empathizing in dealing with the customers are variables which can lead to their success and consequently, sustainable development in Nigeria.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework adopted for this paper is treated under the following:

Concept of customer services

According to Entrepreneur (2017), customer service is the degree of assistance and courtesy given to the people who patronize a business thereby giving them the chance to relate their feelings. Customer services lie at the heart of business success, acting as the bridge between enterprises and their customers. Investopedia. (2023) defines customer service as the direct one-on-one interaction between a consumer and a company representative. Customer service is a cornerstone of business success, serving as the bridge between companies and their customers. In a diverse and competitive landscape, it is imperative for small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria to adopt a range of customer service strategies that cater for various customer preferences. By understanding and implementing different types of customer services, SMEs can foster loyalty, build brand reputation, and contribute to sustainable development. In the Nigerian context, a nation known for its diverse cultures, dynamic economy, and growing entrepreneurial spirit, understanding the concept of customer services takes on unique dimensions. As we delve into this concept, we uncover the principles, challenges, and opportunities that define customer services in Nigeria. These includes:

- i. **Principles of Customer Services:** At its core, customer services in Nigeria adhere to universal principles of effective communication, responsiveness, and customer satisfaction. However, the concept extends beyond transactional exchanges. Nigerian businesses understand that cultural nuances, social values, and localized preferences shape the customer experience. Thus, customer services in Nigeria prioritize personalized interactions that respect individual backgrounds, creating a sense of connection that transcends mere transactions.
- ii. **Cultural Diversity and Sensitivity:** Nigeria's cultural diversity presents both challenges and opportunities for customer services. Businesses operating in Nigeria must navigate a tapestry of languages, traditions, and perspectives. Effective customer services necessitate cultural sensitivity, acknowledging the significance of gestures, greetings, and communication styles. Embracing this diversity fosters inclusivity and enhances customer relationships, positioning businesses as respectful and empathetic partners.
- iii. **Challenges and Solutions:** Nigeria's customer services landscape is not devoid of challenges. Infrastructure limitations, inconsistent power supply, and varying internet connectivity can impede effective communication channels. Nigerian businesses must creatively adapt, leveraging offline and online options to reach customers. Moreover, a lack of access to education and awareness about customer

rights underscores the importance of educating both businesses and customers about their roles in cultivating positive customer experiences.

- iv. **Opportunities for Innovation:** Innovative technology solutions are transforming customer services in Nigeria. Mobile applications, social media platforms, and online customer support systems offer avenues for businesses to engage with customers. The prevalence of smartphones and digital connectivity in Nigeria opens doors for real-time interactions and tailored services. By embracing these opportunities, businesses can bridge geographical gaps and enhance customer engagement.
- v. **Impact on Sustainable Development:** The concept of customer services in Nigeria intersects with sustainable development goals. Businesses that prioritize ethical behavior, community engagement, and environmental consciousness resonate with Nigerian consumers who value socially responsible practices. This alignment between customer services and sustainable development propels businesses beyond economic success, fostering positive societal impacts.

Summarily, in Nigeria, the concept of customer services transcends basic interactions, integrating cultural awareness, innovation, and sustainability. By understanding and embracing the nuances of customer services in Nigeria, businesses can cultivate strong customer relationships, enhance brand reputation, and contribute to both economic growth and sustainable development. As Nigerian businesses continue to evolve, the concept of customer services remains a driving force that shapes not only individual transactions but also the broader fabric of the nation's business landscape.

Concept of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

According to Ufua et al. (2020), SMEs are enterprises with a maximum asset base of 500 million naira excluding land and working capital, and with a staff strength ranging between 10 and 300 workers. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) form the backbone of economies worldwide, acting as engines of economic growth, innovation, and employment generation. In the Nigerian context, SMEs play a crucial role in driving economic development due to their adaptability, potential for job creation, and contribution to local markets. SMEs are often characterized by their relatively small scale, limited resources, and dynamic nature. They encompass a wide array of sectors, ranging from manufacturing and services to agriculture and technology. SMEs are central to fostering entrepreneurship and unlocking local economic potential. They tend to be more agile and responsive to market changes compared to large

corporations, allowing them to innovate and fill niche markets. By virtue of their size, SMEs often have the advantage of being closely connected to their communities, which enables them to understand local needs and tailor their offerings accordingly. These enterprises contribute significantly to job creation, particularly in developing economies like Nigeria where formal employment opportunities may be limited. SMEs not only provide employment to a diverse range of skill sets but also offer a platform for skill development and knowledge transfer. As a result, they contribute to poverty alleviation and social development by increasing incomes and enhancing livelihoods.

Concept of Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a multidimensional concept that aims to strike a harmonious balance between economic growth, social progress, and environmental preservation. It emphasizes meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In the context of Nigeria, where the challenges of rapid urbanization, environmental degradation, and socio-economic disparities are prominent, the concept of sustainable development gains immense significance. Sustainable development comprises three interconnected pillars: economic, social, and environmental. The economic pillar calls for inclusive growth, poverty reduction, and equitable distribution of resources. The social pillar underscores the importance of human well-being, social equity, and access to basic services such as education, healthcare, and clean water. The environmental pillar emphasizes responsible resource management, pollution reduction, and the conservation of biodiversity. Since SMEs play a pivotal role in the pursuit of sustainable development. Their localized operations, inherent flexibility, and community engagement allow them to contribute positively to all the three pillars. Thus, by embedding sustainable practices into their operations, SMEs can contribute to economic growth by creating jobs and fostering innovation. Additionally, their emphasis on community engagement and localized supply chains can enhance social inclusivity and empower local communities. For Nigeria to achieve sustainable development, it is imperative that SMEs adopt strategies that align with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Olujobi and Olujobi) (2020). These global goals provide a framework for addressing a range of challenges, from poverty and inequality to environmental degradation. By prioritizing ethical business practices, resource efficiency, and social impact, SMEs can become catalysts for positive change in their communities.

Types of Customer Services

The major types of customer services are as follows:

Personalized Customer Service

Personalized customer service is a strategic approach where SMEs tailor their interactions to meet the specific needs and preferences of individual customers. This involves gathering customer data, understanding their buying behavior, and using this information to offer tailored recommendations and assistance. For Nigerian SMEs, personalized service provides a way to create a unique bond with customers, increasing their loyalty and encouraging repeat business. This type of service goes beyond transactional exchanges, creating a sense of familiarity that enhances the overall customer experience.

Responsive Customer Service

Responsive customer service revolves around timely and effective communication with customers. In this age of instant gratification, Nigerian SMEs need to be proactive in addressing customer inquiries, complaints, and feedback. This type of service requires prompt acknowledgment of customer concerns, followed by timely resolutions. By demonstrating attentiveness and actively listening to customers, SMEs can build trust and show customers that their needs are valued.

Self-Service and Technology-Driven Customer Service

Incorporating technology-driven solutions into customer service is increasingly becoming a norm for Nigerian SMEs. Self-service options such as interactive websites, chatbots, and automated responses provide customers with the flexibility to find information and resolve issues at their convenience. This not only enhances customer empowerment but also optimizes operational efficiency for SMEs. By leveraging technology, SMEs can ensure round-the-clock support and a seamless customer experience.

Social Media Engagement

The rise of social media has reshaped the way Nigerian SMEs engage with customers. Social media platforms offer direct channels for SMEs to interact with customers, address queries, and showcase their brand personality. By actively participating in social conversations, SMEs can not only resolve issues but also establish a real-time connection with their audience. This type of engagement fosters customer loyalty and enables SMEs to keep their finger on the pulse of customer sentiment. This can be achieved through:

1. After-Sales Support

After-sales support entails assisting customers beyond the point of purchase. Nigerian SMEs can differentiate themselves by offering ongoing assistance, troubleshooting, and warranty services. By nurturing relationships post-sale, SMEs can turn satisfied customers into brand advocates who spread positive word-of-mouth. After-sales support is a powerful tool to enhance customer satisfaction and build a loyal customer base.

2. Community Engagement and Social Responsibility

Community engagement reflects SMEs' commitment to giving back to the societies they operate in. By actively participating in local events, supporting social causes, and contributing to community development, Nigerian SMEs can foster goodwill and align themselves with sustainable development goals. This type of engagement transcends business transactions, positioning SMEs as responsible corporate citizens and garnering support from socially conscious consumers.

Customer Service Skills

Collins Dictionary. (n.d.). defines a skill as an ability that has been acquired by special training and knowledge. Customer service is more than a mere transaction; it's an art that requires a diverse set of skills to create exceptional experiences for customers. In the context of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria, mastering these skills is essential for building strong customer relationships, enhancing brand reputation, and contributing to sustainable development. A deduction from Doyle (2017) shows that the following constitute some of the customer service skills which are required for organizational success.

1. **Communication Skills:** Effective communication lies at the heart of successful customer service. For Nigerian SMEs, the ability to articulate information clearly and listen actively is paramount. This skill ensures that customers' concerns are understood and addressed accurately. Good communication involves empathetic listening, the use of appropriate language, and the art of conveying complex ideas in simple terms.
2. **Problem-Solving Skills:** SMEs in Nigeria often encounter a range of customer issues, and the ability to resolve them efficiently is crucial. Problem-solving skills enable SMEs to analyze situations, identify root causes, and develop creative solutions. By demonstrating resourcefulness and offering timely resolutions, SMEs can turn potential challenges into opportunities for customer satisfaction.

3. **Patience and Resilience:** Patience is a virtue that holds particular significance in the realm of customer service. Nigerian SMEs must navigate through diverse customer emotions, ranging from frustration to confusion. Cultivating patience ensures that interactions remain positive and professional, even in challenging circumstances. Resilience complements patience, enabling SMEs to remain composed and focused in high-pressure situations.
4. **Adaptability and Flexibility:** The business landscape in Nigeria is dynamic, and customer service teams must be prepared to adapt to changing circumstances. SMEs should be flexible in responding to customer preferences, market trends, and unforeseen challenges. By demonstrating adaptability, SMEs show customers that they are willing to go the extra mile to accommodate their needs.
5. **Conflict Resolution Skills:** Conflicts can arise in any customer interaction, and SMEs must be equipped to manage them effectively. Conflict resolution skills involve de-escalating tense situations, empathizing with customers' concerns, and finding mutually agreeable solutions. Nigerian SMEs can turn potentially negative experiences into opportunities for showcasing exceptional service.
6. **Cultural Sensitivity and Diversity Awareness:** In Nigeria's culturally diverse environment, being sensitive to customers' backgrounds is essential. SMEs should understand cultural nuances, respect diverse viewpoints, and ensure that interactions are inclusive and free from bias. This skill enables SMEs to create a welcoming environment for customers from all walks of life.
7. **Time Management:** SMEs in Nigeria must manage their time efficiently to meet customer needs promptly. Time management involves prioritizing tasks, setting realistic expectations, and ensuring that customers receive timely responses. By delivering on promises and meeting deadlines, SMEs enhance their reliability and customer satisfaction.

The mastery of customer service skills is a journey that transforms SMEs into customer-centric powerhouses. By honing communication, problem-solving, patience, adaptability, conflict resolution, cultural sensitivity, and time management skills, Nigerian SMEs can deliver exceptional experiences that set them apart in a competitive landscape. These skills not only nurture strong customer relationships and drive business success but also contribute to sustainable development by creating positive impacts on communities and the society at large.

Characteristics of Customer Services

Customer service forms the bedrock of successful interactions between businesses and their clientele. In the context of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria, understanding and embodying specific characteristics of exceptional customer service is paramount for fostering customer loyalty, building brand reputation, and contributing to sustainable development.

1. **Responsiveness:** Responsiveness stands as a hallmark of effective customer service. For Nigerian SMEs, promptly addressing customer inquiries, concerns, and feedback is not just an obligation, but a strategic advantage. By offering swift responses, SMEs demonstrate their commitment to customer satisfaction and build trust, leaving customers with a positive impression of their experience.
2. **Consistency:** Consistency is a foundational characteristic that underpins customer trust and brand reliability. Nigerian SMEs must strive to deliver consistent service quality across all customer interactions. By ensuring that each customer touchpoint adheres to a defined standard, SMEs establish themselves as dependable entities that customers can rely on for exceptional experiences.
3. **Empathy and Understanding:** Empathy entails the ability to understand and share the feelings of customers. SMEs in Nigeria can stand out by genuinely valuing customer emotions, concerns, and needs. By demonstrating empathy, SMEs create a connection that transcends transactions, making customers feel valued and understood.
4. **Personalization:** Personalization involves tailoring interactions to individual customer preferences. For Nigerian SMEs, recognizing that each customer is unique and catering to their specific needs can be a game-changer. By offering personalized recommendations, addressing customers by name, and remembering past interactions, SMEs create a sense of familiarity that fosters loyalty.
5. **Professionalism:** Professionalism is a cornerstone of successful customer service interactions. Nigerian SMEs should emphasize courtesy, respect, and a polished demeanor in all customer interactions. By conducting themselves in a professional manner, SMEs uphold their brand image and create positive lasting impressions.
6. **Proactivity:** Proactivity involves anticipating customer needs and addressing them before they arise. For SMEs in Nigeria, this characteristic goes beyond reactive customer service to proactive problem-solving. By identifying potential issues and offering solutions before customers voice their concerns, SMEs demonstrate foresight and dedication to customer satisfaction.

7. **Transparency and Honesty:** Transparency entails open and honest communication with customers. Nigerian SMEs should prioritize clear explanations of products, services, and policies. By being forthright about offerings and potential limitations, SMEs build trust, which is a crucial foundation for long-term customer relationships.
8. **Reliability:** Reliability is a core element that sustains customer loyalty. Nigerian SMEs must deliver on promises consistently and meet customer expectations. By being reliable in terms of product quality, service delivery, and responsiveness, SMEs cultivate trust that extends far beyond individual transactions.

The characteristics of exceptional customer service go beyond mere interactions; they shape the essence of businesses and their relationships with customers. By fostering responsiveness, consistency, empathy, personalization, professionalism, proactivity, transparency, honesty, and reliability, Nigerian SMEs elevate customer experiences and drive growth. These characteristics not only pave the way for SME success but also contribute to sustainable development by creating a positive impact on customers, communities, and society as a whole.

Effect of customer services on success of SMEs

Customer services lead to the development of happy customers who will always be willing to patronize the business unit. In line with this, Naylor (2014) states that customer services are vital to the health of businesses, but many small businesses fail to realize this. It can be deduced from Naylor (2014) that good customer services can lead to the success of SMEs because customers would always remember how they were treated; good treatment makes them assume that an organization has good products. Also, customer services make the customer believe that they are cared for and this is an important marketing tool. This implies that customer services could make the business gain more patronage in the sense that a happy customer would, all things being equal, come back and also recommend the organization and its products to others which would lead to increased profit. John (2017) also points out that delivering services to the customers is the most valuable thing to a business in the sense that it allows the business to increase sales by building trust which gives customers a reason for staying with the business (customer loyalty). John (2017) also states the customer service matters more than the price because people are willing to pay more for the right experience. Customer service also creates brand awareness, because it enhances referral buying. It reduces problems since the customers know they can voice out their complaints. Also, this appeals to customers because nowadays, customer want to be treated as people and this is achievable done through customer services. To Suttle (2017), customer service is of importance to a business unit, it differentiates a

business from its competitor, it leads to repeat patronage, gives publicity to the business and helps in avoiding filling a complaint with the customer protection council or litigation. From the foregoing, it is obvious that customer services could lead to the survival of SMEs. This is because, it could make the SMEs to increase sales and consequently, profit which tells the operators that there is need for continuous operation and could lead to the enjoyment of economies of scale. It could also enhance the ability of withstanding competition both among themselves and the large scale enterprises.

Customer Services, Success of SMEs, and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

In the dynamic and evolving landscape of Nigeria's business ecosystem, the intersection of customer services, success of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs), and sustainable development has emerged as a multifaceted and powerful force. As we delve into the intricate relationship among these elements, it becomes evident that effective customer services serve as a linchpin that fuels SMEs' growth, aligns with sustainable development goals, and contributes to the overall advancement of Nigeria.

Customer Services as a Driver of SME Success

Customer services stand as a cornerstone of SME success. By providing exceptional customer experiences, Nigerian SMEs pave the way for customer loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and increased market share. The ability to meet and exceed customer expectations positions SMEs as trusted partners, thereby fostering a loyal customer base and driving repeat business. As SMEs in Nigeria focus on personalized interactions, responsive communication, and empathetic support, they lay the foundation for long-term success.

Employment Generation

Unemployment is a serious problem confronting Nigeria and customer services can through SMEs help in reducing its level. The increase in demand, which calls for increase in productivity, certainly requires more hands for efficiency and effectiveness. This implies that a reduction in the level of unemployment can lead to sustainable development because it makes income to be evenly distributed as a result of generating job opportunities.

Stimulation of Economic Growth

Economic growth is an expansion of the national income and the volume of goods and services produced in a country (Mamman, 2010). It is an important determinant of development and per

capita income is used for expressing it. The fact that SMEs are involved in different sectors of the economy shows that they contribute significantly to economic growth of many countries. Since customer services increase their sales, it will consequently lead to economic growth which is expected to bring about sustainable development in Nigeria.

SMEs as Engines of Sustainable Development

Nigerian SMEs are not just economic entities; they play a pivotal role in driving sustainable development. Through job creation, localized impact, and economic growth, SMEs contribute to poverty reduction and community empowerment. In the context of Nigeria's diverse social and environmental challenges, SMEs have the unique potential to drive positive change on grassroot level. By supporting local communities, sourcing responsibly, and adhering to ethical practices, SMEs align their operations with the principles of sustainable development.

The Synergy: How Customer Services Foster Sustainable SMEs

The interplay between customer services and sustainable SMEs is a virtuous cycle. Exceptional customer services, characterized by empathy, responsiveness, and personalized interactions, foster not only business success but also sustainable practices. As Nigerian SMEs prioritize ethical behavior, community engagement, and environmental stewardship, they contribute to sustainable development goals and earn the trust of socially conscious consumers. The synergy between customer services and sustainable practices positions SMEs as agents of positive change.

Utilization of Local Resources

Utilization of the available resource in the society leads to sustainable development. Doyle (2017) is of the view that the creativity of SMEs in their various areas of activities such as food processing, textiles, woodwork and leather product is making them to effectively utilize local raw materials. The desire to also meet up with the increasing demand for their products which is occasioned by customer services could also encourage the utilization of local resources which would generate income to the local producers of the resources. The expectation is that all these would pave way for sustainable development.

Challenges and Opportunities for Nigerian SMEs

Nigerian SMEs encounter challenges ranging from resource constraints to competition. However, each challenge presents an opportunity for growth and development. By leveraging

customer services as a differentiator, SMEs can overcome obstacles and differentiate themselves in the market. The ability to provide exceptional customer experiences offers a competitive advantage that can propel SMEs beyond challenges and into the realm of sustained success.

Poverty Alleviation

Poverty is a very serious developmental challenge in Nigeria. The World Bank (1997) in Gidado, Akaeze, and Babakura, (2017) sees poverty as human deprivation of economic opportunity, education, health and nutrition and lack of empowerment and security. Akinlabi (2017) points out that poverty alleviation is among the focal points of sustainable development. Customer service could therefore lead to poverty alleviation in Nigeria through SMEs in the sense that the benefits that SMEs would derive from it could create jobs, promote economic growth and stimulate linkages among all sectors of the economy. The expectation is that all these would generate income which would alleviate the level of poverty in Nigeria and consequently enhancing sustainable development.

Stimulation of Investment

Customer service could lead to sustainable development in Nigeria in the sense that it encourages investments. This comes up in order to satisfy the growing demand of the customers which results from the goodwill they enjoy through providing good customer services. These investments are expected to have multiplier effects which would lead to sustainable development in Nigeria. This is because the benefits to be derived from the investments would not only stop on the present generation, but also cater for the future generations.

Government Initiatives and Support

The Nigerian government recognizes the pivotal role of SMEs in fostering sustainable development. By launching initiatives, policies, and programs aimed at SME growth and customer service enhancement, the government offers a supportive environment for SMEs to thrive. Nigerian SMEs should actively engage with these initiatives, tap into resources, and collaborate with industry peers to amplify their customer services and contribute to the nation's sustainable development.

As we conclude our exploration of the intertwined relationship between customer services, success of SMEs, and sustainable development in Nigeria, we recognize that these elements are not isolated components but interconnected facets of a holistic business approach.

By embracing customer-centric strategies, Nigerian SMEs can achieve business success, foster sustainable practices, and make meaningful contributions to societal progress. This synergy, where customer services and sustainable development converge, paves the way for a future where SMEs are not only economically thriving but also socially and environmentally responsible, creating a prosperous and sustainable Nigeria for generations to come.

Conclusion

In Nigeria's ever-evolving economy, the interconnectedness of customer service, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and sustainable development has become a catalyst for growth and positive societal impact. Exceptional customer service is not just a transaction; it's a driving force shaping SME success. By prioritizing customer satisfaction, SMEs carve out unique niches in the competitive market, fostering growth and contributing to economic prosperity. Moreover, these enterprises are champions of sustainable development, aligning with Nigeria's goals of social equity, environmental preservation, and economic progress. Nigerian SMEs, armed with an understanding of customer service's impact, are poised to redefine business paradigms, but continued innovation and customer-centric approaches are key to sustained growth and progress. Embracing this synergy can lead to a brighter future with prosperous businesses and a more equitable, resilient, and thriving Nigeria.

Recommendation

The following recommendations are suggested in order to make SMEs become successful in delivering good customer services which would enhance sustainable development in Nigeria;

- SMEs should have customer service standards.
- SMEs operators as well as staff should have good customer service skills which could be acquired through in-house training and workshops.
- SMEs operators should make sure that all customers are properly treated so as not to have devastating effects on the business.
- Customers' complaints, requests, and orders should be urgently treated.
- Campaigns by the grocery agencies responsible for promotion of entrepreneurship and Non-governmental Organizations on the effect of customer services on business success and their attendant effect on the society.

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