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BUILDING CUSTOMERS' TRUST IN THE BANKING SECTOR OF SOKOTO STATE, NIGERIA

Abdulrahman Bello Bada and Premalatha Karupiah,
School of Social Sciences,
Universiti Sains Malaysia,
11700 Minden, Penang.
bada4sociology@gmail.com or prema@usm.my

Abstract

Customers' patronage in relation to banking sector, the use of its products and services are manifesting constant challenges for assessment of trust. Trust strongly depends on the level of improvement and banking commitment to customer satisfaction. However, trust is tied to some associated important dimensions which are: dispositional, institutional and interpersonal. Therefore, this article tends to highlight the need for management and policy makers in the banking sector to identify and understand the important of all the dimensions stated above in building customers' trust on bank, its products and services. Further, this paper recommend the need for executive members of the banking sector to use any of the identified dimensions that strongly influence or predicts customers' trust on banking sector to improve influential strategies for banking products and services.

Key words: *facework commitment, faceless commitment, the banking sector, dispositional, institutional, interpersonal*

INTRODUCTION

The growth and development of trust in an organization is a complex task of both the management and employees (Holland, 2008). Trust is one of the most important component that hold different kind of organization together (Tariq, Aslam, Habib, Siddique, & Khan, 2012). The issue of trust is critical for the attainment of profit, market and objectives of the organization (Poppo & Schepker, 2010). Moreover, trust help in maintaining and improving cordial relationship that exist between customers and the organization (Shams-Ur-Rehman, Shareef, & Ishaque, 2012). Issues surrounding trust can benefit organization by reducing their transaction costs, increasing their flexibility, efficiency and helping them to design their future marketing plans or strategies more accurately (Chen & Dhillon, 2003; Nooteboom, 2003).

Therefore, it is imperatives for the management and employees in an organization to build trust in their relationship with customers or external environment. Moreover, trust help in changing clients perception and increases his ability to patronize organization and its products and services (Semerciöz, Hassan, & Aldemır, 2011). The objectives of most business organization are to provide conducive atmosphere for their esteem customers, thereby increasing their level of

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confidence so as to create positive perception towards their products and services (Simpson & Cacioppe, 2001). Hence, building trust in an organization such as the banking sector is classified into three dimensions: dispositional, institutional and interpersonal (Tan & Sutherland, 2004). These dimensions help in explaining the kind of confidence and business relationship or interaction that exists between customers and the banking sector (Knoll & Gill, 2011). These dimensions emerge as separate components over time, unique and distinct predictors which positively or negatively determine customers trust in the banking sector, its products and services. Therefore, this article aim at providing insight on different perspective on the dimensions (dispositional, institutional and interpersonal trust) of customers' trust in relation to banking sector, its products and services.

Background of the study area

Nigerian banking sector was introduced in 1892 with the establishment of the African Banking Corporation with headquarter in South Africa (Alao, 2010; Somoye, 2008). This was subsequently acquired by the Bank of British West Africa in 1894 and Barclays Bank in 1925, but all these banks were owned and managed by foreign nationals (Fadare, 2011). Further, National Bank of Nigeria Limited was established in 1933 as the first indigenous bank, later Agbonmagbe Bank Limited and African Development Bank in 1945 and 1948 respectively (Abdulrahaman, 2013). Furthermore, there was a major development in Nigerian banking sector from 1977 to 1991. These periods witnessed the development of Rural Banking, Peoples bank and Community banking, thereby raised the total number of Nigerian banks to 120 banks (Alao, 2010; Uchenna & Okelue, 2012).

However, from 1991 to 2006, the Nigerian banking institution witnessed illiquidity, insolvency and many of them became distressed (Uchenna & Okelue, 2012). Though, as at 2004 there were 89 banks in existence, which are badly shaped with the exception of few (Gunu & Olabisi, 2011). To address the issue of insolvency and protect shareholders funds, these banks were consolidated to 25 banks as at December, 2005. But, in 2006 the number of banks reduced to 24 banks and by the end of 2011, the surviving banks in Nigeria were reduced to 21 banks (Abdulrahaman, 2013). These 21 banks are featured around in all the 36 states in the country including the State Capital (Abuja). These trends of events show the lack of adequate policies, problems and issues surrounding the banking sector since its establishment.

Sokoto state is positioned on latitude 40^0 to 60^0 North and longitude 11^0 30^0 to 13^0 50^0 East and North (SSG, 2009). Sokoto state is located at the extreme North-western part of Nigeria, a centre for Islamic learning and jurisprudence. Predominantly it is a Muslims community and former headquarter of defunct Sokoto caliphate of 1804 historical Islamic jihad. Sokoto state was transformed into Northern region of Nigeria in 1903, subsequently, North western state in 1967. Later, it was divided into Sokoto and Niger state in 1976 correspondingly. Likewise, Kebbi and Zamfara state were carved out in 1991 and 1996 respectively. Presently, it has 23 local government areas within it domain and part of it source of economic activities include banking sector. Therefore, there are 21 branches of the main banks currently operating in Sokoto state. But, the performance of some banking sector in Nigeria and Sokoto state in particular from 2006 upward is less qualitative than expected. It is characterize by poor and inefficient services, poor

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management, limited number of branches, lack of liquidity, insolvency and lack of customers trust (Isimoya, 2014).

Thus, the above mentioned problems leads to closure of so many banks, making a great loss to the economy of both state and federal level, leads to unemployment, customers losing their money and at the same time making investors to lose confidence. This attitude exhibited by the banking sector in Nigeria and Sokoto state in particular prompt the research on customers' trust. The concept of trust is too complex when operating in a modernize society (Giddens, 1990). Trust is a central component that produces cohesion within the social networks that compose the structure of society (Simmel, 1964). But, the argument of the paper is that, Sokoto state is predominantly Islamic and conservative society that is still backward when it comes to the issue of modernization. Hence, the modernization and complexity of the banking sector make the concept of trust a mediating factor between Sokoto state bank customers and the banking sector, its products and services. The growth and development of the banking sector (electronic banking) make it hard for a layman to understand due to the fact that, trust in expert system is not the only aspect that customers needs to know (Giddens, 1990).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Giddens: Trust as a Commitment

Giddens (1990) perspective on trust comes from modernization of society and the problems surrounding it. Modernization of institutions has enhanced individual's possibilities in the world (social, political and economic relationships) (Greenberg & Elliott, 2009). Discussion on trust in modern world relate with the fact that, individual's life demand has become more complex which gave birth to increase in social risks (Beck, 1992). Giddens (1990) argue that, there would be no need to trust any system whose workings were wholly known and understood. Thus, when the non-knowledge is missing, there is no need for trust (Levin, Cross, Abrams, & Lesser, 2002). Trust exists only when there is discrepancy between the known and unknown knowledge. Trust always carries the burden of reliability in the face of what could happen in the future, whether it concern the actions of individuals or the operations of systems. According to Giddens (1990), there are two kinds of commitments in the modern world (facework and faceless commitment). This also has strong connection with the need and development of trust.

Facework commitments are concern with the relationships which are maintained and expressed by individual. This commitment is based on the trustworthiness of the individual, and concerns those who know one another. Facework commitment is also called personal trust due to the fact that, it major concern is interpersonal relationship. It is express at very minimal level since it involves one on one interaction, whether it is for business or other related purposes (such as kinship, community or religion) (Ekberg, 2007). Therefore, at this level, the percentage of the risk and danger an individual is exposed to is small since the interaction is navigated at interpersonal level.

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While faceless commitments are a product of complexity of social life in a modernized society (Greenberg & Elliott, 2009). The core of these commitments is the belief in expert systems and new symbolic tokens. Belief in expert system has to do with the issue of science and technology while, symbolic tokens is concern with money. Moreover, the combination of expert system and symbolic tokens together could be term as abstract systems (Ekberg, 2007). Giddens (1990) argue that the character of the modern society is oriented by the future: experts do not only foretell the future, but they create it. Also, the character of expertise is global no one can get out of its circle. Therefore, most of the time, people trust abstract system to deliver what they bargain for at the end of the interaction (Giddens, 1990). Moreover, customers must have confidence and remain reliable to abstract system in modern world since they cannot get rid of them. Abstract system serve as lay man access point to trust vested on established expertise base on calculation of benefit and risk in circumstances where expert knowledge does not just provide that calculus but actually creates the condition (Giddens, 1990). Giddens (1990) argue that trust in abstract systems takes the form of faceless commitments, in which faith is sustained in the working knowledge of which the lay person is largely ignorant.

Therefore, Giddens arguments on both facework and faceless commitment to trust could be use to support the insight provided on the importance of dispositional, institutional and interpersonal dimensions in building customers' trust in the banking sector, its products and services. Customers' interpersonal trust in relation to the banking sector, its products and services is related to facework commitment to trust. Facework commitment to trust is base on individual who are well known to one another, who also, on the basis of long term acquaintance, have substantiated the credentials which render each reliable in the eyes of the other. Thus, it could be used to support the findings on customers' interpersonal trust to the banking sector, its products and services. While institutional and dispositional trust could be measured in terms of Giddens perspective on faceless commitment to trust which he viewed inform of abstract system or trust in expert system. Faceless commitment to trust is concern with the trust vested in abstract system and the reliance of lay actors on established expertise.

The banking sector

Banking sector or financial system is a conglomerate of institutions, markets, instruments and operators that interact to provide such financial services as resource mobilization and allocation, financial intermediation and facilitation of foreign exchange transactions (Ofanson, Aigbokhaevbolo, & Enabulu, 2010). The competition in the banking sector is getting more intense because customers want additional improvement in products and services provided by the banks apart from keeping their money safe (Kasum, Abdulraheem, & Olaniyi, 2004). This is why customers change their patronage from banks that operate conventionally, using paper entry to banks that operate using electronic system, such as ATM, internet, mobile and telephone banking. The quality of banking products and services are determined by customers' assessment resulting from the trust and satisfaction they derive in patronizing and utilizing accessible and

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affordable facilities (Olaleke, 2010). Therefore, building customers trust is imperative for the growth and development of the banking sector, its products and services.

Bank customers’ level of trust and satisfaction with service delivery is derived largely from the quality of services provided using electronic system (Adeoye & Lawanson, 2012). This therefore emphasizes that trust has always been a key factor in all business organizations, especially in the banking sector (Toth, 2009). This probably explains why Giddens (1990) argue that, trust in an organization, its products and services which a layman has less knowledge and control over, can be associated with abstract system (expert system). Therefore, even though people trust abstract system to perform their duty, the major contradiction of the modern society is the tension between trust and mistrust, or trust and uncertainty (Jalava, 2006). It thus becomes imperative to provide explanation on how to build customers trust in an organization such as the banking sector.

It is in view of the preceding argument that this article considers the sociological proposition that without some element of trust, human social life will not be possible (Good, 1988; Simmel, 1990). Equally, if trust is one of the most valuable aspects in the study of customers and organizations (Giddens, 1990; Simmel, 1990), can lack of trust hinder the growth and development of the banking sector, its products and services. Since Aladwani (2001) assert that weak customers’ trust on banking sector, its products and services could possibly affect the credibility and image of the banks, including customers’ usage of electronic banking services?

Dimensions of trust

Disposition trust

Dispositional trust was derived from the field of Psychology which means the extent to which a person displays a tendency to be willing to depend on others across a situation (McKnight & Chervany, 2002). Likewise, there are some customers who are willing to trust situations that some customers may not be able to trust. Also, are willing to involve in a transaction even if it doesn’t favor them because of the problem associated with it (Li & Zhu, 2009). Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) proposed the concept of “Propensity to trust” in other to explain dispositional trust. For him, propensity to trust means positive or negative factors within-party that will affect the likelihood of the party to trust. However, propensity to trust might be thought of as the general willingness to trust others in relationship, also propensity influences how much trust one has for a party prior to data on that particular party being available (Mayer et al., 1995). Besides, customers have different perception on the factors that determine their propensity to trust in the banking sector.

McKnight and Chervany (2002) introduce two sub-constructs of dispositional trust, which are faith in humanity and trust stance. Faith in humanity argues that, some people assume others are usually upright, well meaning and dependable to interact with. While trust stance was on the view that, regardless of what people believes about other peoples' attributes, one assumes better outcomes from dealing with people with the perception that, they are well meaning and reliable.

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Dispositional trust has been argued to be the most influential factor of trust in organization, its products and services (Mayer et al., 1995). Sokoto state bank customers recognize the importance of dispositional trust due to the fact that, sometimes, there is a gap of knowledge between customers and the banking sector, its products and services owing to lack of personal contact between the customer and the banking sector staff. Sokoto state bank customers with high level of dispositional trust will be willing to use different banking products and services. In a nutshell, dispositional trust could be found in Sokoto state bank customers' relationship with banking sector, its products and services, where clients decide to look at the image and reputation of the bank before using its products and services.

Institutional trust

Institutional trust is a subjective belief which customers use to assess organizational aims and objectives, if they are favorable for a conducive and successful business transaction (McKnight & Chervany, 2002). Institutional trust is viewed as a key part of electronic banking transactions because of the rising issues associated with it (McKnight & Chervany, 2002). Ratnasingam and Pavlou (2002) and Cao, Zhang, and Seydel (2005) propose the term technology trust to capture institutional trust that exists among trading partners because of adherence of the banking sector to technical standards, security procedures and protection mechanisms. Therefore, the importance of institutional trust to Sokoto state bank customers in relation to the banking sector, its products and services is inevitable. Due to the fact that, just like any other customer, Sokoto state bank customers are more concern about the banking sector that is ready to satisfy their main objective.

Institutional trust has its origins in the sociological literature, which argues that intentions and behaviors are generated by the situation and assurances that expectations will be fulfilled (Pavlou, 2002). Moreover, institutional trust argues that, impersonal structures where put in place by the banking sector to support the likelihood of the success of a transaction. While, Shapiro (1987) describes institutional trust as the belief that a customer develop about the security of a situation due to assurances, safety nets and guarantees from the organization that, the environment is safe for transaction. But, McKnight, Cummings, and Chervany (1998) describe two types of institutional trust: situational normality and structural assurances. Situational normality refers to the belief that success is anticipated because the situation is perceived to be normal. While, structural assurances refer to a belief that favorable outcomes are likely to be achieve due to guarantees, rules and regulations put in place to guide customers' business relationship.

Interpersonal trust

Rotter (1967) defined interpersonal trust as an expectancy held by an individual or a group of people that, the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual or group of people can be relied upon. Interpersonal trust view behavior (ability) and the intention (integrity) of a person in his/her relationship to another person. Besides, an individual may have confidence in another person but may doubt his intention to act the way he/she is expected to. This has to do with individual trust regarding his/her relationship with another individual (Abrams, Cross,

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Lesser, & Levin, 2003). However, Lewicki, McAllister, and Bies (1998) suggest three dimensions of trust that help in developing trust in another party; benevolence, competence and predictability.

Benevolence trust argue that, customer tries to analyze the interest of an organization whether it satisfies his needs or not (Dwyer & Sejo, 1987). Customers are likely to rely on the benevolence of the banking staff in interpersonal relationship for the lack of knowledge about the bank, its products and services. In addition, benevolence trust gives customers ability to analyze the other side of the interaction whether they have sufficient expertise to offer solutions when the need arises. While, competence trust on the other hand, give customers opportunity to assess the banking sector to see whether they have the power and resources to satisfy their needs (Swan, Michael, & Lynne, 1999). But, predictability was concern with the banks' image and reputation as a financial sector (Abrams et al., 2003). Therefore, these factors play a major role in influencing customers' ability to choose the banking sector, its products and services to patronize. However, Lewis and Weigert (1985) divided interpersonal trust in to two different forms; cognitive and affective trust.

Cognitive trust develops over time and may be driven by cognitive cues from group membership and reputation (Kim, Ferrin, Cooper, & Dirks, 2004). Cognitive trust is concern with customer's confidence or willingness to rely on a service provider's competence and reliability across a business transaction (Moorman, Zaltman, & Deshpande´, 1992; Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985). This arises from an accumulated knowledge that allows one to make predictions, with some level of confidence, regarding the likelihood that a partner will live up to his/her obligations (Johnson & Grayson, 2005). However, Rempel et al. (1985) call this ''predictability'' while Johnson-George and Swap (1982) call it ''reliableness'' due to the ability of the customer to predict the outcome of the behavior base on reputation of the other partner. Knowledge is accumulated from observation of the behavior of partner within the relationship and reputation he/she generated during his/her previous relationships with other parties. Therefore, when there is strong reputation, the rest of the interactions may be an opportunity to confirm or disconfirm prior perceptions about the banking staff.

Although cognitive trust was base on the knowledge acquired about an individual, the need to trust an individual in a business transaction presumes a state of incomplete knowledge (Donghuynh & Jennings, 2004). The state of complete knowledge and certainty regarding an individual's future actions implies that risk is eliminated and trust is redundant (Sztompka, 1996). However, Williamson (1993) argues that, trust between business entity is best labeled calculative trust, since business entity can minimize uncertainty and opportunistic behavior through rules and regulations. Therefore, customers usage of banking products and services is determine by the calculative gains to achieve by using it.

While affective trust is associated with emotions develop later in life based on interpersonal relationship (Ha, Park, & Cho, 2011; Williams, 2001). Affective trust is the confidence an individual places in a partner on the basis of feelings generated by the level of care and concern the partner demonstrates (Johnson-George & Swap, 1982; Rempel et al., 1985). The core factor of affective trust was relying on a particular partner solely base on the emotional characteristics

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(Fard, 2012). Moreover, the essence of affective trust is reliance on a partner in business transaction based on emotions. Therefore, as emotional connections deepen, trust in a partner may venture beyond that which is justified by available knowledge (Johnson & Grayson, 2005). This emotion-driven element of trust makes the relationship less transparent to objective risk assessments prescribed by economists.

Affective trust is closely related to the perception that a partner's actions are intrinsically motivated (Rempel et al., 1985). According to the literature on customer participation, customers are not placid receivers of services but co-producers of the service and co-makers of expressed emotions (Locke, 1996). As customers participate in the ongoing service delivery process, they become exposed to organizational socialization that generates positive effect and elicits customers' commitment. Thus, we argue that emotional exchanges are a critical and ongoing part of consumer-level service relationships and form the basis for trusting bonds (Johnson & Grayson, 2005).

CONCLUSION

Customers are seen as stakeholders of the banking sector due to the fact that, management and employees work and salary depends largely on the trust and patronage of customers on the banking sector, its products and services. Also, increasing customers' patronage in the banking sector depends on the trust that customers has towards it. However, building customers' trust in the banking sector is categorized into three dimensions: dispositional, institutional and interpersonal. These dimensions illustrate different perspectives on the kind of trust that customers have in their relationship with organization such as bank, its products and services. But, fail to state which among the above dimensions, is the most predicting factor of customers' trust in relation to the banking sector, its products and services. Therefore, future study should rigorously explain which concept has the most influential power in building trust between customers and the banking sector, its products and services. Also, Giddens paradigm on trust as a commitment which is divided into facework and faceless could be use to support or reject the findings on the dimensions mentioned above.

LIMITATIONS

The objective of this article is to identify the importance of three dimensions of trust: dispositional, institutional and interpersonal in building trust among customers in the banking sector. Even though this paper provides a good explanation on the impact of the three dimensions of trust given by (Tan and Sutherland, 2004), there is a gap of knowledge on which of these concepts: dispositional, institutional and interpersonal is the main predictor of customers' trust in their relationship with the banking sector, its products and services. Despite the importance of all the three dimensions of trust in an organization, study on it is scarce in both Nigeria and Sokoto state in particular. Future study should focus on large population of customers and understand which of these factors influence their trust in relationship to the banking sector and how it affects their usage of its products and services. Moreover, there is need to identify the most predicting dimension of customers trust in relation to the banking sector, its products and services. This will also help in busting the banking business and increase profit due to the ability of the banking

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sector to understand the most motivating factor of customers in their business relationship. Also, a sociological perspective can be used to support the findings of the study. Therefore, there is need for business organization such as bank, its management and policy makers to understand the impact of the above dimensions in relationship to customers trust and how this influence hi/her usage of banking products and services.

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