

Effect of Performance Appraisal on Service Quality in Selected Beverage Companies in Southeast Nigeria

Cynthia Ejike & Chiemeka Onyema

Department of Sociology, Imo State University

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100900071>

Received: 09 September 2026; Accepted: 17 September 2026; Published: 30 September 2026

ABSTRACT

The effect of Performance Appraisal on service quality in selected beverage companies in Southeast Nigeria was the subject of this study. The study was conducted on three companies which are Nigerian Breweries Plc, Seven Up Bottling Company Plc and Coca-Cola Nigeria Limited. The sample of 500 employees was taken from a population of 1,500 management, supervisory and operational employees, using a multi-stage sampling process. The study was of descriptive survey type. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed and of those 488 were completely filled in and analysed. Descriptive statistics and simple linear regression were used to analyse the data. The results indicated that the overall appraisal of performance in the selected companies were based on clear standards, job-related criteria and attained set targets. The regression analysis resulted in the coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.491$ and the correlation coefficient $R = 0.701$, which means that the analysis related to performance appraisal accounted for 49.1% of the variation in the service quality. The relationship was positive and statistically significant ($B = 0.703$, $t = 15.09$, $p = 0.000$). The study hence concluded that periodic evaluation of the services could enhance service quality as it makes the employees accountable and gives them a clear indication of the required service, which in turn makes them strive to deliver the services. The study suggests that beverage companies must have clear and performance-based appraisal systems that are closely aligned with employee development and service improvement.

Keywords: Performance Appraisal, Service Quality, Human Resource Management, Beverage Companies, Organisational Performance.

INTRODUCTION

One of the basic human resource practices that organisations use to evaluate how well their employees do their job is performance appraisal. It allows management to monitor employee performance, give feedback and assess if individual performance is aligned with organisation's objectives. It also allows organizations to see areas that need improvement, understand areas that employees need further support or development and recognize good performance when they see it.

Performance appraisal is more noticeable in the organisations where employees interact with customers and other stakeholders on regular basis. The quality of service is not just about the products offered by an organisation but also how the employees respond to the customer, how they deal with complaints, how they give information and how they do their jobs. The beverage companies are engaged primarily in manufacturing but also require the services of sales, distribution, customer relations and after-sales. Staff working in these areas are expected to be competent in their services.

The Nigerian beverage industry is beset by numerous problems such as the increasing cost of operations, inflation, fluctuations in exchange rate, changing preferences of consumers, and problems in the distribution chain. The challenges have made it more important for businesses to optimize their activities and continue to have excellent relationships with customers, distributors and retailers. Human resource practices that assist workers to understand their roles and to enhance their performance are thus significant to the ongoing success of these organisations.

If a person is rated in a way that is relevant to their work and easy to understand, then performance appraisal can help this process. It can inform employees how they are doing and where they need to improve. It can also offer management relevant data when making decisions about training, promotion, recognition and employee development.

An appraisal system doesn't necessarily lead to better performance. How the system is operated is important. Staff can lose faith in it if the criteria is not explicit, feedback is not given in a timely fashion or supervisors allow personal relationships to affect their decisions. These can lead employees to feel unfairly treated in relation to the appraisal and diminish its effectiveness.

Research Objective

The general objective of this study is to examine the effect of performance appraisal on service quality in selected beverage companies in Southeast Nigeria.

The specific objective is to determine the extent to which performance appraisal influences service quality in selected beverage companies in Southeast Nigeria.

Research Question

To what extent does performance appraisal influence service quality in selected beverage companies in Southeast Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

Performance appraisal significantly influences service quality in selected beverage companies in Southeast Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisal is the systematic process of assessing the performance of employees in a specific period of time. Appraisal is both a measuring and a communication instrument, because it assists organisations to judge performance and give feedback to the employees to stir them into action for improvement, says Armstrong (2020). For beverage companies that have strict production targets and distribution schedules, performance appraisal is a way of holding people to account and ensuring they are treated fairly. Coca-Cola HBC (2020) pointed out that its system of performance management connects every employee's goals with the overall business goals. Similarly, Nigerian Breweries (2020) conducts yearly performance assessments and development plans to inform employees of their expectations and training needs. An open and honest evaluation system fosters employee motivation, morale and a culture of excellence (Boselie, Paauwe, & Richardson, 2005).

Performance Appraisal and Service Quality

The relationship between Performance Appraisal and Service Quality in beverage companies in South East Nigeria is a critical link between the internal assessment system and the external service quality system. Beverage companies are mainly manufacturing companies, however, they depend on the service quality they offer during distribution, corporate relations and after sales. Performance Appraisal is the formal process of measuring and guiding employee performances, whereas Service Quality is the qualitative product which shapes the customer's perception of the brand.

Sitanggang, Rahim, Nazaruddin 2023, define performance appraisal as a systematic assessment of the performance of an employee and his potential development. In the field of beverages, a good appraisal system is not limited to attendance, but rather includes important metrics like safety compliance, inventory

precision, and customer responsiveness with the distributors. When viewed as an independent variable, appraisal serves as a diagnostic tool to determine the strengths and weaknesses in employee performance. It is better for an appraisal to be objective, without a subjective bias, in the Nigerian manufacturing sector. When staff know what they are being assessed on, they will have a better chance of engaging in the right kinds of day-to-day behavior to support the company's strategic objectives, Mary (2025).

Service quality is a measure of how well a firm's service performs, in relation to customer expectations. This is particularly true for the beverage industry, where delivery reliability, sales representatives' responsiveness, and market responsiveness are all included. This is especially applicable to the beverage industry, where delivery reliability, sales representatives' responsiveness, and market responsiveness are all part of it. Service quality, as a dependent variable, can be directly measured as a reflection of the employees' commitment to excellence. If implemented properly, performance appraisals can give employees feedback they need to enhance their interpersonal and technical relationships with stakeholders. Kavitha SR (2025) also notes that high service qualities are especially important in South East Nigeria, where fierce competition among brands can cause a distributor or retailer to opt for another brand when they experience a glitch in service.

The combination of these variables makes a feedback-improvement loop. Performance Appraisal gives information to correct the behaviour of the employees and this leads to improvement of the service level to the market. In the case of beverage companies, this relationship means that human capital is not only working, but working towards specific quality markers which are valued by the customer. Rewards and recognition can be tied to the appraisal results, which can encourage employees to focus on positive service interactions, Mehari, Ayenew, Dinber (2024). In the end, in this study, the appraisal process is the steering process that makes sure that the performance of the human being becomes a better, and consistent, service experience for the end-user for the selected beverage companies.

Performance Appraisal as a Human Resource Practice

Performance appraisal is not independent of other HR practices. Its results can be used in decisions relating to training, promotion, compensation, recognition and employee development. For instance, when a person is being appraised, it can be found that the employee needs more training, or that the person is ready for more responsibility.

Performance evaluation procedures are also important factors of employee productivity. If staff is continually assessed against a clear model of performance, they will focus more on the targets and increasing their output. Performance appraisal gives feedback to help employees recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and make the necessary adjustment in their work behavior. Armstrong (2020) states that performance appraisal is one of the essential tools of HR which helps to bring employees' performance in alignment with the organizational objectives by establishing the expectations and measuring the outcomes. Robbins and Judge (2019) also reported that performance feedback helps employees improve their performance and makes them more responsible and accountable, which drives productivity in a positive direction.

But an effective appraisal system relies on having the knowledge of how employee performance will be evaluated. Criteria, which should be related to the employee's current duties, should be applied consistently. Employees are more likely to accept the result of an appraisal if they know the basis for it. Conversely, evaluations generalizing from personal opinion or relationship could lead to dissatisfaction and loss of confidence in the system.

Performance appraisal should therefore aim to provide feedback on the work of the employee and use the appropriate and measurable indicators. This makes appraisal more than an administrative exercise and makes an impact on employee performance.

Service Quality as a Dimension of Organisational Performance

Service quality is a significant aspect of organisational performance as it is linked to customer and other stakeholder perceptions of an organisation. Although an organisation might be profitable in the short term, if the service fails they can end up with dissatisfied customers, loss of customers and tarnished reputation.

These are the important customer-related measures of organisational performance highlighted by the thesis: customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, service quality, customer retention, and brand reputation. This is especially applicable because customers' behavior can be affected by the way the organisation treats them, thus affecting their behavior to continue their business with the organisation. Service quality is not just about the end user for beverage companies. The distributors and retailers are also stakeholders in the supply and distribution chain. The ability to provide timely and accurate information, respond to complaints and maintain good professional relationships can help build better relationships with these stakeholders.

The quality of service is thus one of the key measures of the success of the beverage firms in satisfying their markets. Enhancing how employees execute their service related work can result in customer satisfaction and can affect the overall performance in the organisation.

Performance Appraisal and Service Quality: Empirical Perspective

Much of the existing literature on HRM indicates that good HRM practices can lead to communicating expectations and help motivate behaviours that contribute to organisational objectives. Appraisal is more helpful when coupled with feedback, employee development and fitting recognition. Employee motivation and growth are impacted by performance appraisal systems and career development programs. In a Kenyan manufacturing firms, Gichuhi, Abaja and Ochieng (2016) observed that the performance appraisal systems motivated employees and enhanced operational efficiency. The same is true of Adewale and Anthonia (2020), who found that feedback and recognition as a result of appraisals boosted employee motivation and productivity in Nigerian beverage companies. Further studies (2021–2024) that link the impact of career development opportunities and quality appraisal to retention and performance would add to the support for this theme.

Granted, studies have been done in this area, but most of them failed to look at performance appraisal in relation to employee productivity, motivation and organisational performance (Armstrong, 2020; Robbins & Judge, 2019). This study took it up a notch by trying to explain how performance standards, feedback and evaluation criteria, translates to improved service quality. Although Adewale and Anthonia (2020) examined appraisal practices in Nigerian beverage companies, the focus was mainly on employee motivation rather than service quality.

In the same vein, it was noted that only a few empirical evidence was found when it comes to the relationship between performance appraisal and service quality within beverage companies in Southeast Nigeria. Taking it further, the difference in methodological application in other similar studies also requires further studies. Many studies have relied mainly on employee-based surveys, which provide useful insights into employees' perceptions but may not fully capture other service fallouts.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Becker (1964) popularised the Human Capital theory which contended that employees are assets whose capabilities, knowledge and experience can be enhanced by investment in education and training. A firm's investments in people lead to greater productivity and profitability.

This theory argues that HR practices (like recruiting, training and performance reviews) should be treated as investments and investments that pay off over time. Staff, as well as machines and buildings, help to make the organization productive. But human capital is an asset that increases in value as it is used (Schultz, 1961).

While Human Capital Theory is mostly related to employee training and development, it can also be applied to performance evaluation. Appraisal provides organisations with the means of evaluating employee performance and determining where an employee might need improvement; it can then give feedback that enable an employee to do their job more effectively.

This theory is very applicable to beverage companies. Companies like Coca-Cola and Nigerian Breweries Plc have a robust employee training and leadership development initiatives to enhance output efficiency and customer service. These investments have yielded higher product quality, and improved market performance (Nigerian Breweries, 2020; Coca-Cola HBC, 2020). The theory therefore justifies the notion that HRM is not simply a cost but an investment that increases the performance of an organisation.

The theory is applicable to this study since employee behaviour may affect the outcome of the service provided. Job knowledge and feedback on working performance gives employees a better chance of improving the way they perform their work. With better employee performance, comes greater responsiveness and better interactions with customers and other stakeholders.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive survey research design to investigate the impact of performance appraisal on service quality in some selected beverage companies in Southeast Nigeria. The study was carried out on three companies which are Nigerian Breweries Plc, Seven-Up Bottling Company Plc and Coca-Cola Nigeria Limited.

The sample group included 1,500 management, supervisory and operational staff members from the selected companies. 500 employees were sampled using a multi-stage sampling method, and a sampling strategy was used to ensure the inclusion of employees from various organisational levels and the selected companies. Questionnaires were sent to 500 people and a total of 488 were completed and accepted as valid for analysis.

The sample was proportionately allocated among the three selected beverage companies based on their estimated workforce size. This measure was taken to ensure that company was adequately represented according to its employee population. The distribution of respondents is presented below.

Company	Estimated Workforce	Proportion (%)	Sample Size
Nigerian Breweries Plc (Awo-Omamma)	700	46.7	234
7Up Bottling Company Plc (Onitsha)	500	33.3	167
Coca-Cola Nigeria Limited (Onitsha Depot)	300	20.0	99
Total	1,500	100	500

Source: Field Work, 2026

Data were collected mainly through a structured questionnaire. A number of HR managers, supervisors and departmental heads were also interviewed, using a semi-structured approach, to gather additional data regarding the linkages between service delivery and performance appraisal systems and the nature of the performance appraisal system.

The questionnaire included two major variables of the study: performance appraisal, service quality. Evaluation items included whether standards for assessing performance were clearly set, whether employees were evaluated through performance standards that were related to their job, the basis used to evaluate

employees, and whether regular evaluation helped motivate employees to enhance their service delivery and work effort. Service quality items dealt with how well service was delivered with respect to the customer's expectation and the overall assessment of service quality.

It should be note that performance appraisal was measured using industry appraisal standards, job-related evaluation criteria, achievement and feedback. Service quality was measured using service delivery, responsiveness and meeting customer expectations.

The questionnaire consisted of Likert scale questions, multiple choice question and rating question. The variety of responses styles enabled respondents to give information about their perceptions and experiences of the appraisal and service quality. The research instrument was pre-tested by experts prior to the main data collection to check the adequacy of the items to represent the study variables and objectives. The Cronbach's Alpha was used to evaluate reliability. A coefficient of 0.70 or greater was judged acceptable because it signifies good internal consistency of the items.

The questionnaire was developed by going through existing literature on performance appraisal and service quality. Our performance appraisal items focused on issues such as clarity of appraisal standards, job-related evaluation criteria, feedback and employee development, while service quality items examined service delivery, responsiveness and customer expectations. To ensure content validity, the instrument was reviewed by experts in human resource management and organisational studies before administration.

Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to analyze the data. Responses were summarised as frequencies and percentages and means and standard deviations presented where applicable. The effect of performance appraisal on service quality and test of the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance was undertaken using simple linear regression.

RESULTS

The results show that employees generally had a positive view of the performance appraisal systems used in the selected beverage companies. They also reported relatively positive levels of service quality.

Performance Appraisal and Service Quality

Sub-Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Performance appraisal standards clearly defined	Yes	281	57.6	1.79	0.81
	No	104	21.31		
	Not sure	73	14.96		
	Don't know	30	6.13		
2. Employees evaluated on job-related criteria	Strongly Agree	168	34.43	2.41	1.07
	Agree	196	40.16		
	Neutral	69	14.14		
	Disagree	38	7.79		

	Strongly Disagree	17	3.48		
3. Main basis for appraising employee performance	Achievement of set targets	212	43.44	3.12	1.18
	Supervisor's judgment	136	27.87		
	Length of service	59	12.09		
	Customer feedback	58	11.89		
	Personal relationship with supervisor	17	3.48		
	Other	6	1.23		
4. Regular appraisal motivates employees	Strongly Agree	177	36.27	2.33	1.01
	Agree	198	40.57		
	Neutral	69	14.14		
	Disagree	33	6.76		
	Strongly Disagree	11	2.25		
5. Extent service delivery meets customer expectations	To a great extent	162	33.2	2.42	0.9
	To a considerable extent	189	38.71		
	To a moderate extent	90	18.44		
	To a slight extent	47	9.65		
6. Overall service rating	Excellent	87	17.82	2.94	1.11
	Above average	178	36.48		
	Average	146	29.92		
	Below average	60	12.3		
	Poor	17	3.48		

Source: Field survey, 2026

The results indicate that in general, performance appraisal represented a structured process in the selected companies. There were 488 respondents of whom 281 (57.60%) indicated that the criteria for appraisal were well specified. This means more than a half were aware of the criteria for assessing their performance. Meanwhile, the responses from those who answered no, unsure or did not know indicated that communication of appraisal standards was still a way to go.

The findings also show that most of the employees were evaluated on job related criteria. A total of 168 respondents (34.43%) strongly agreed and 196 respondents (40.16%) agreed that the evaluation had been done based on the job-related criteria. These answers make up 74.59% of the sample. The implication of this is that most of the respondents found the appraisal process relevant to their actual work responsibilities.

Set targets were mentioned by the largest number of respondents (212, 43.44%) as the basis for the appraisal of their performance. Supervisor's judgment was also a close second at 27.87%, while length of service and customer feedback trailed at 12.09% and 11.89%, respectively. For 3.48%, it was as a basis due to personal relationships with supervisors. The results thus indicate that measurable work outcomes was more important in appraisal than personal relationships.

The question about the motivation of employees to have regular appraisal also received positive feedback. The majority of the respondents (177, 36.27%) strongly agreed while 198 respondents (40.57%) agreed on the importance of regular appraisal as a motivator for employees to enhance their service delivery and work ethics. Overall, 76.84% agreed. This means that most staff saw regular appraisal as being helpful in improving their work performance.

The results on service delivery were also mostly positive. A total of 162 respondents (33.20%) said that service delivery exceeded their expectations to a great extent, and 189 respondents (38.71%) said considerable extent. These make up 71.91% of those that responded. Overall service quality: 87 respondents (17.82%) rated it excellent and 178 respondents (36.48%) rated it above average. This indicates that over half of the respondents gave a positive rating of the service they received from the chosen companies.

Test of Hypothesis

Performance appraisal significantly contributes to improved service quality in beverage companies in South East Nigeria.

Regression Analysis

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.701	0.491	0.487	0.698

ANOVA Table

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (p-value)
Regression	110.824	1	110.824	227.59	0
Residual	115.098	486	0.237		
Total	225.922	487			

Coefficients

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig. (p-value)
(Constant)	0.987	0.119		8.29	0
Performance Appraisal	0.703	0.047	0.701	15.09	0

Source: Field survey, 2026

This knowledge led to the regression results of which the level of service quality and performance appraisal are strongly related to each other with a value of $R = 0.701$. The R^2 value of 0.491 suggests that service quality is 49.1 percent predictable from performance appraisal practices. The model is statistically significant at 227.59 with a p-value of 0.000.

The result for performance appraisal is positive (+0.703) and significant ($p < 0.01$), which shows that the use of well-structured, job-focused and regular performance appraisal positively influences the performance of the service quality outcomes. When employees are evaluated on a clear basis, they are more likely to perform with success and enhance customer satisfaction and efficiency. This is in line with the results of Section C which showed that performance appraisals encourage improved service delivery and lead to accountability.

In other words, this corroborates the hypothesis that performance appraisal has a significant contribution in service quality. It suggests that businesses with clear, equitable, and standardized evaluation processes reap the rewards of improved service quality, reduced mistakes, and customer satisfaction. Organisations should hence continue to have strong review systems, connect appraisals to actionable feedback and have regular follow-ups to ensure sustainability of service excellence.

Findings from Semi-Structured Interviews

The information gained from interviews was generally consistent with the results of the questionnaire. Participants stated that performance appraisal could provide a chance to managers to share their expectations and evaluate employees' responsibilities. The participants said that typically, an appraisal is used to measure tangible targets and work performance and adherence to organisational goals.

The participants also reported that frequent feedback can help motivate employees to enhance their performance. If staff are made aware of their performance that is not as good as it could be, they have the chance to fix their mistake. This finding aligns with the questionnaire finding where 76.84% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that regular appraisal helps employees to strive for better service delivery and work attitude.

However the interviews did highlight some problems with the appraisal process. Some participants noted delayed feedback, unclear standards in some situations and weak connections between the results of the appraisal and rewards or other types of recognition. These may diminish the effectiveness of the system as employees may not perceive that they will get more out of involvement in the appraisal system.

The results of the interviews therefore corroborate the quantitative results and confirm that effective performance appraisal relies to a great extent on the way in which it is implemented. Assessment cannot be done on a regular basis. Staff should have clear guidelines, prompt feedback and follow-up action following the appraisal.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study revealed that the service quality in the selected beverage companies in Southeast Nigeria is significantly influenced by performance appraisal. The descriptive results indicate that majority of employees found the appraisal standards to be reasonably clear and felt that their performance was measured based on job related criteria.

The result is in line with Armstrong (2020), who talks about the importance of performance management to set clear expectations and help their employees perform better. It also supports the Human Capital Theory that suggests that an employee's skills can be a source of value to an organisation.

This relationship can be further substantiated in the regression results. The correlation between performance appraisal and service quality is strong and positive as shown by the R value of 0.701. The R^2 value of 0.491 shows that performance appraisal accounts for 49.1% of the variation in service quality. Further, the positive

coefficient of 0.703 and statistically significant ($t = 15.09$, $p = 0.000$) indicate that the better the appraisal practices, the better will be the service quality.

The findings are also supported by the studies conducted throughout the thesis which showed that performance appraisal was a significant HR practice to facilitate accountability, communicate expectations and enhance employee outcomes. Focusing on performance standards rather than employees' evaluation allows them to concentrate on quality and accuracy.

But it does not imply that the performance appraisal is the only factor that determines service quality. The interview results indicate that weak links between feedback and reward, and unclear criteria for the assessment can diminish the usefulness of feedback. Training, compensation, leadership, resources and customer demands are other factors that could impact service quality.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A total of four hundred and eighty eight (488) respondents were involved in the study from three selected beverage companies in Southeast Nigeria. The sample size of the respondents was sufficient for the study, but the results may not be generalizable to all beverage manufacturers in Nigeria or to other organizations in other sectors.

It was also found that the study was largely based on data gathered from employees, mainly via questionnaires. Respondents' answers were based on their experiences and perceptions and may therefore differ from the actual practices of their organisations.

The other one is that the response sources for the information on performance appraisal and service quality were largely similar. This generates the risk of common method bias. Furthermore, the study had a cross-sectional design, which involved data collection at a single time point. Thus, the study cannot conclude the possible impact of the connection between performance appraisal and service quality over a longer period.

Studies that will be conducted in the future may consider using longitudinal designs to examine changes in appraisal practices over time. Further research may also include customer-based measures of service quality and it can apply more advanced analytical techniques to provide deeper understanding into the relationship between performance appraisal and service quality.

CONCLUSION

This work focused on the impact of performance appraisal on the quality of service in some selected beverage firms of southeast Nigeria. The results indicate that there is a positive and statistically significant correlation between performance appraisal and service quality.

The majority of respondents reported appraisal standards to be well-defined and that employees were typically evaluated based on their job-specific criteria. The most common basis for appraisal was achievement of set targets. Most of the respondents also felt that the regular performance appraisal promotes employees to enhance their service delivery and working attitude.

The regression analysis also demonstrated that the two variables were correlated. The positive and statistically significant regression coefficient, combined with the high level of variance explained in service quality by performance appraisal, suggests that performance appraisal is a key determinant of service quality. This gives proof that the good practices of appraisal are related to the quality of services in the selected companies.

Thus, the study concludes that the practice of performance appraisal is a vital HR practice in enhancing the service quality. Its contribution is likely to be greater if employees are aware of the standards by which they will be measured, if they receive regular feedback and if they are fairly judged using their actual job role.

Beverage firms operating in South East Nigeria, therefore, can benefit from enhancing the appraisal process to bolster their employee accountability, service delivery and customer satisfaction, and improve the overall performance of the organization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Standards of performance should clearly be defined and communicated to employees before they are assessed. Staff should be aware of staff expectations and how they will be assessed.

The appraisal system should remain based on job relevant criteria and measurable goals. This can help in reducing employee bias and also boost their confidence that their performance is being evaluated fairly. Regular performance reviews are to be conducted and feedback is to be given promptly after review. Delays in feedback can mean that employees may not be able to fix performance issues in a timely manner.

Appraisal results should also be utilized to inform training, recognition, promotion and other employee development decisions, made by management. If employees are able to see how appraisal results are contributing to their development then they are more likely to take it seriously.

Thirdly, service-related measures should be part of appropriate assessment systems. These can cover a range of factors such as customer satisfaction, responsiveness, handling of complaints and reliability of the service. The addition of these elements will ensure that staff not only are aware of their own internal organisation targets, but are also aware that they are expected to deliver satisfactory service to their customers, distributors and retailers.

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[\[https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0297765\]](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0297765)(<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0297765>)

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