

The Influence of Satisfaction with Attributes of Off-Campus Student Accommodation on the Loyalty Behaviour of Student-Residents

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Abstract

Building satisfaction with housing and its attributes is unquestionably one of the important objectives of most investors and designers, and this objective is achieved by incorporating attributes that are considered to be satisfactory by residents. Satisfaction with housing and its attributes has consequences on the behaviour of resident such as the decision to stay, adjust housing conditions or switch residence which is crucial to the success of housing investment. The purpose of this study is to investigate how the satisfaction with attributes of student housing facilities (SHFs) affects the loyalty behaviour of student-occupants. The data used in this report were obtained through the administration of a questionnaire on students residing in off-campus SHFs in three tertiary institutions located in Edo State, Nigeria. The data were analysed using the descriptive and inferential statistics. The study revealed that the attributes of off-campus SHFs have varying degree of influence on the loyalty behaviour of students who reside in these residences. It is suggested that attributes that are incorporated in housing should be prioritised based on their ability to secure the loyalty and retention of students.

Keywords: Loyalty, satisfaction, student housing.

Introduction

Private interest in housing provision for students in tertiary institutions has grown over the years and this increase in demand is attributed to the inability of universities to build and maintain enough on-campus accommodation for the increasing student population. As a result of shortages of on-campus residences, private off-campus students housing facilities (SHFs) have become the main source of accommodation for students in tertiary institutions (Fields, 2011: 2; Rawlinson, 2007: 68; Thomsen & Eikemo, 2010:210; Akingbohungbe & Akinluyi, 2011: 69).

Off-campus private housing is generally viewed as an investment and the success depends on the level of patronage by students (Zaransky, 2006: 2) and this in turn is influenced by the degree of satisfaction experienced by residents. Satisfaction is one of the key factors that determines the prospect of SHFs. In spite of the understanding that satisfaction with residential environment has a positive impact on resident behaviour, the nature of the relationship between satisfaction and the behaviour of residents is not properly understood (Levy, 2006: 1).

SHFs are location specific and are diverse in types and attributes (Akingbohungbe & Akinluyi, 2012:69; Fields, 2011:1). Thomsen (2007:578) suggested that in the planning for the construction of student housing, it is important that attributes that promote user needs,

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desires and preferences are incorporated. One notable advantage of this is that it elicits positive behaviour such as loyalty from occupants (Llinares & Page, 2011:233).

The focus of this study is to identify the attributes of the physical/dwelling that drive residents' satisfaction and their individual impact on the loyalty behaviour of residents of SHFs. Understanding the nature of the relationship between satisfaction with product attributes and loyalty can improve the effectiveness and efficiency of resource allocation. In addition, this knowledge can be used by investors to incorporate the attributes that contribute most to loyalty.

Literature

Private interest in housing provision for students has attracted the attention of developers worldwide due to the inability of tertiary institutions to provide accommodation for students on campus. The main motives of these investors are to make profit and grow property. However, attainment of this goal depends on the demand for SHFs and the degree of satisfaction derived by users from the utilisation of these attributes. Generally, the success of any housing project is influenced by user satisfaction with the attributes of the accommodation and amenities and this has been the key challenge faced by investors in this sector (Ukoha & Beamish, 1997).

Satisfaction

Satisfaction with housing attributes is adjudged as the ultimate test of the success of a housing development project (Al-Noori (1987:1). Residential satisfaction evaluation is used to predict user response to the various dimensions of residential environment (Amole, 2009: 76). Satisfaction measures are applied as criteria to evaluate residential quality and predict behaviour of residents (Amerigo & Aragones, 1997:47). Satisfaction measure is also used in building performance evaluation as the dominant factor in the evaluation of the performance of attributes. Generally, satisfaction is explained about how consumer expectations and perception of performance of products/services are interrelated in the fulfillment of needs and desires. The two main perspectives or approaches that guide the development of these theories includes the view that consumer satisfaction is either a process or an outcome (Yang & Zhu, 2006: 668; Parker & Mathews, 2001: 38). The process approach focuses on identifying the gap that exists between expectations and the perceived performance of service or product as an explanation of consumer satisfaction (Grigoroudis & Siskos, 2010: 4). Furthermore, the feeling of satisfaction with residential environment is found to produce a positive response to the environment, effectively describe the quality of life of inhabitants in a defined residential environment and also acts as a driving factor affecting residential mobility (Amerigo & Aragones, 1997: 107).

However, housing as a heterogeneous product is generally expected to meet the expectations of providing occupants with a safe, comfortable, healthy and secure environment (Ibem, Opoko, & Adeboye, 2013: 178). Components of buildings are distinct, and each serves to achieve a function(s) individually or in combination with other attributes (Coulombel, 2011:8). The extent to which these goals are achieved is directly related to the levels of performance of the constituting elements. Thus, housing developers and designers rely on this knowledge to incorporate attributes of residential environment that are considered attractive to users. These attributes of the residential environment are categorised in existing literature as;

- i. physical/structural aspects;
- ii. location/neighbourhood aspects;
- iii. environment aspects;

- iv. management aspects; and
- v. social aspects (Wong, 2002:219; Amole, 2009:77).

This study will then look at the impact of the attributes of the physical/dwelling aspects on users 'satisfaction and loyalty behaviour which is the main focus of this research.

Physical/Dwelling Aspects of the Residential Environment

The physical/dwelling aspects of housing refers to the attributes (equipment, amenities and facilities) of the residential environment (Amerigo & Aragonés, 1997: 53). A lot of studies were carried out on the relationship between the attributes of the physical/dwelling attributes and the quality of life but little has been done to explain how residential attributes impact of loyalty behaviour of residents((Najib, *et al*, 2011). For example, Christie, *et al* (2002: 221), study shows that the conditions and types of attributes of the physical and dwellings aspect are strong indicators of the students' quality of life and also serve as reference for future decisions on residential choice. Thomsen and Eikemo (2010) study in Norway investigated the influence of the architectural aspects of residences on satisfaction with on-campus and off-campus accommodation. The study revealed that off-campus housing with shared toilets; kitchens and bathrooms are difficult to rent out to students. Other examples of studies on satisfaction with student housing include those that dwell on the predictors of satisfaction and those that dwell on the satisfaction as a criterion variable. Najib *et al* (2011) in a study in Malaysia shifted the focus from measuring the levels of satisfaction alone, but applied the residential satisfaction scale (Weidemann and Anderson, 1985; Song and Yang, 2006; Amole, 2009; and Hui and Zheng, 2010) to study the relationship between satisfaction with attributes and impact on loyalty behaviour by students in SHFs.

Loyalty as A Consequence of Satisfaction

The impact of satisfaction and their corresponding consequences on behaviour are vital for current and future business performance (Martensen et al., 2000: 544). Loyalty of users to a product or service is identified as one of the main consequences of satisfaction on behaviour (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993, Strauss & Neuhaus, 1997). Loyalty refers to having or showing complete and constant support for a product or service. In essence, when residents are satisfied with the attributes of the residential environment, their behavior is affected in the subsequent transaction through repeat patronage. Otherwise, when residents are dissatisfied, they either remain as disgruntled tenants or relocate to accommodation with amenities that offer higher levels of satisfaction. The crucial success factor therefore in business performance is the "ownership" of customers (Hasan, 1996:1). Hence, loyalty by residents in SHFs is regarded as paramount in the quest for survival and prosperity of private off-campus residences.

Method

Participants

The participant in this study are students of tertiary institutions who resides in private off-campus residences. They were selected by means of convenience sampling.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument used for this research was designed to gather data for a broader study bordering on the drivers and consequences of residents satisfaction with housing in

South-South, Nigeria which include Edo State as one of the seven states in the region. This study is therefore, a presentation of the results of a pilot study.

The questions in the survey instrument allow students to provide feedback on their perceived satisfaction with selected items of the physical dwelling and the impact on their loyalty behaviour. The 14 items investigated in this study were selected based on the outcome of literature search, expert panel and focus group discussions with students-residents. A 7-point semantic Likert-scale format (*from 7 = high satisfaction, high impact to 1= no satisfaction, no impact on loyalty*) was used to elicit users' perceptions on the level of satisfaction with attributes and the resulting impact on loyalty behaviour.

Statistical Analysis

The descriptive statistic was used to present the demographic characteristics of student-residents while the levels of satisfaction with residential attributes and loyalty behaviour are estimated using the mean scores for these items. A further correlation was carried out to determine the relationship between the perception of satisfaction with these attributes and perceived impact on loyalty.

Presentation of Results

The results of the study are presented and discussed as below.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of respondents that were involved in the survey. The age profile reveals that 34% and 29% of the students involved in the survey are between the age of 19-22 years and 23-27 years, respectively while a few are below or above 18 years and 28 years respectively. In addition, 53.4% of the respondents are male, while the remaining 45.6% are female. The distribution of the respondents in terms years of study shows that 40.9% are first year students, 27% in the second year, while the remainder are in their third (19.7%) and fourth year (12.1%) of study.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Residents

| Demography | Categories | Percentage of Respondents |
|---------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Age | Below 18 years | 3.0 |
| | 19-22 years | 34.8 |
| | 23-25 years | 28.7 |
| | 26-28 years | 25.5 |
| | Above 28 years | 8.0 |
| Gender | Male | 53.4 |
| | Female | 45.6 |
| Year of study | First year | 40.9 |
| | Second year | 27.3 |
| | Third year | 19.7 |
| | Fourth year | 12.1 |

Satisfaction with Attributes of the Physical/Dwelling Environment

The result of the analysis of residents' perception of satisfaction with selected attributes of the physical/dwelling environment is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Mean score of satisfaction with attributes

| Attributes of Physical/Dwelling Environment | Mean |
|---|------|
| Ventilation | 5.57 |
| Toilet and bath | 4.39 |
| Daylight | 4.39 |
| Condition of ceiling | 4.38 |
| Adequacy of size of bedroom | 4.33 |
| Door | 4.30 |
| Condition of house floor | 4.29 |
| Size of kitchen | 4.20 |
| Size of window | 4.20 |
| Internal painting | 4.16 |
| Plumbing installation | 3.94 |
| Overall house design | 3.88 |
| Drainage | 3.75 |
| Electricity/Electrical fittings | 3.70 |
| Overall mean | 4.23 |

The results show that student-residents are more satisfied with buildings with adequate provision for ventilation, toilet and bath and natural daylight in that order. It is interesting from the result that these attributes take precedence over factors like the sizes of room, kitchen and window among others which are the main focus of SHFs development. This could be interpreted to mean that factors that enhance comfort and living and learning are rated more highly than those that do not. For example, the size of the window which is influencing the amount of ventilation and daylight that is admitted into a space is rated differently but lower. Other factors that likely influence the admission of ventilation and daylight into an enclosed space include the positioning of the window in relation to the direction of the wind and solar movement. From the foregoing, poor power delivery as revealed from the rating for electricity and electrical fitting may be responsible for the high rating for ventilation and daylighting.

Impact of Attributes on Loyalty Behaviour

Table 3 depicts the impact of the quality of the physical/dwelling attributes on the loyalty behaviour of student-residents.

Table 3. Mean Score of impact of attributes on loyalty behaviour

| Attributes of Physical/Dwelling Environment | Mean |
|--|-------------|
| Adequacy of size of bedroom | 5.79 |
| Size of window | 5.64 |
| Size of kitchen | 5.19 |
| Size of toilet and bath | 5.00 |
| Condition of house floor | 4.87 |
| Drainage | 4.86 |
| Door | 4.82 |
| Condition of ceiling | 4.79 |
| Electrical fittings | 4.79 |
| Daylight | 4.72 |
| Plumbing installation | 4.70 |
| Internal painting | 4.61 |
| Ventilation | 4.53 |
| Overall house design | 4.53 |
| Overall mean | 4.97 |

The result indicates that the sizes of the bedroom, window, kitchen and toilet and bath contribute highly to the loyalty behaviour of student-residents to SHFs. Whereas, factors like daylight and ventilation among others are shown to be least expected to commit a resident to remain or retain an accommodation. The implication of this contradiction could be explained to mean that though residents may derive higher level of satisfaction from certain attributes, it may however not be sufficient to elicit commensurate level of loyalty.

Correlation of Relationship between Satisfaction with Attributes and Loyalty Response of Residents to Attributes

The overall means of each of the attributes of the physical dwelling selected for investigation were correlated to determine the degree of relationship between satisfaction and loyalty behaviour of student-residents. A Pearson x^2 test shows that a significant relationship (0.862 at $p < 0.001$) exists between satisfaction with physical/dwelling attributes and loyalty behavior of student-residents. This result agrees with the study of Najib *et al* (2011) that a relationship exists between the contribution of the attributes of the physical/dwelling to satisfaction and impact on loyalty behavior of residents.

This result reveals that investors in private off-campus SHFs who provide attributes that are satisfactory to users are more likely to secure the loyalty of their tenants with a positive implication on resident retention. Furthermore, money is saved as it is observed that it cost more to get a profitable tenant than to retain an existing one.

Conclusions

The study focused on understanding the relationship between satisfaction with the attributes of the physical/dwelling residential environment and the impact on loyalty behavior of student-residents. The study examined how the selected 14 attributes of physical/dwelling building can be maximized in SHFs investment. Findings from this study could be used to promote investment in SHFs development. For example, ventilation and natural daylight are found to be strong predictors of satisfaction in SHFs, whereas, their contribution are not as significant in retaining the patronage and loyalty of residents. Generally, it could be inferred that the performance of attributes in terms of contribution to the satisfaction and impact on loyalty is not similar. It is suggested that in the development

of SHFs, a balance should be reached on the desired level of satisfaction and loyalty that is required as the attainment of one may not necessarily mean the fulfilment of the other. Further research is suggested to expand the scope of the study to cover the entire South-South, Nigeria so as to provide a basis for generalization.

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