AN ASSESSMENT ON THE LEVEL OF COMPETENCY OF ESTATE AGENT'S EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN LAGOS PROPERTY MARKETING

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Abstract
In real estate service, emotions underpin all client's action in decision making. However, the understanding of client's emotional needs require some degree of competencies to achieve customer's satisfaction in property marketing. As a result, emotional intelligence competencies are essential in real estate agency to understand customer's behaviour in property market. This study therefore assess the level of competency of estate agent's emotional intelligence in Lagos property marketing. Structured questionnaires were randomly administered on 236 registered estate firms while 205 (86%) questionnaires retrieved were found suitable for analysis. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics. Findings indicated that empathy, self-awareness and motivation ranked high among the competencies in emotional intelligence adopted by estate agents in estate agency service. However, it was observed that 54% of respondent within 6 – 10 years of experience in real estate agency possess a moderate level of emotional intelligence. The study recommends that estate agents should improve on their level of competency in emotional intelligence to understand customer's behaviour and emotional needs in decision making.

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1. Introduction

Achieving a successful property transaction depends on building relationships and trust through effective two-way communications, and creating products that will help to solve customers' problems (Olukolajo, Ojo & Akinwamide, 2018). According to Su (2004) customers' satisfaction and service quality have increasingly been identified as key factors in the

battle for competitive differentiation in solving customers' problems in various organisations. However, service quality has been proven to have significant influence on the level of customers' satisfaction (Preko, Agbanu & Feglo, 2014). It is common to measure service quality using the traditional attributes of how service is delivered such as hours of availability, use of up-to-date technology, and agent professionalism. Although the benefits are clear, and while there is a consensus surrounding the need for a consistent measurement instrument, there is still much debate over how to best measure service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1994; Seiler, 2004).

According to Bettencourt (2010) different traditional attributes adopted in various studies to measure customers' satisfaction constrains thinking because it fails to understand why these features are valuable to customer in terms of their functional and emotional needs. Considering the emotional needs in building an excellent relationship with customers, Yaya, Akintayo and Uzohue (2016) refers to Emotional intelligence (EI) as a psychological term that enables an individual to know and manage his or her feelings and emotions and use this information to guide his/her thinking and action while relating with other people in the workplace.

However, the application of Emotional Intelligence have been proven in most professional fields to be an effective tool in providing positive benefits in the workplace (Kidwell, Hardesty, Murtha & Sheng, 2011; Swanson and Zobisch, 2014; Yaya et al, 2016). Naghavi and Redzuan (2011) stated that EI has been associated with overall intelligence, adaptability, personality, satisfaction, and emotional disorders. Emotional Intelligence competencies are essential in determining not only employee job commitment and job satisfaction, but also includes the level of customers' satisfaction in a workplace (Masrek, Abdullah-Sani & Jamaludin, 2012). EI enhances higher level of inter-relationships, mutual understanding and greater productivity at the work place (Yaya *et al,* 2016; Akinwamide & Idris, 2019). The study of Akinwamide (2019) employed exploratory factor analysis to determine the impact of emotional intelligence on the performance of Consultant Estate Surveyors and Valuers in Nigeria. Findings revealed that critical factors such as empathy skill, self –awareness and management skills, social skills, and motivational skill has an influence on the performance of consultant Estate Surveyors and Valuers in service delivery.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to assess the level of competency of estate agent's emotional intelligence in Lagos property marketing. The study focuses particularly on the application of Emotional Intelligence in service quality to promote customer's satisfaction in real estate service delivery. This is achieved by investigating into the views of real estate agents on customer's expectation to develop an Emotional Intelligent quality instrument for measuring real estate service quality in Lagos property market. While some real estate professionals have the knowledge of Emotional Intelligence applicability for quality service delivery in business and workplace, others are yet to reach such understanding.

2. Literature Review

Despite extensive studies that have been carried out by many scholars on EI in several professional fields like sales (Rozell, Pettijohn & Parker, 2004), digital marketing (Akinwamide and Bello, 2019) and global sales channel (Sjöberg *et al.,* 2005), unfortunately, it is very rare to find study on EI in real estate field. No doubt, several past studies have attempted to study the EI among real estate professionals e.g. Swanson and Zobisch (2014) assessed the understanding of EI in the field of real estate while Swanson, Hamilton and Zobisch (2015) study was based on establishing best practices for including EI in real estate professionals.

Generally, the EI is made up of the following five main components: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Motivation, Empathy and Relationship Management (i.e social skill) (Goleman, 2002; Yaya, 2007). Emotional Intelligence is the ability to identify and manage your own emotions and to harness those emotions when applying them to tasks like thinking and problem solving (Yaya, 2007). Goleman (1995) declared Emotional Intelligence tools as follow:

i. Self-awareness: refers to knowing one's internal states, preferences, resources and intuition.
ii. Self-management: refers to the ability to manage one's internal states, impulses and resources.
iii. Motivation: refers to the emotional tendencies that guide or facilitates reaching goal.
iv. Empathy: refers to awareness of other's feelings and perspectives.
v. Social skills: refers to adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others.

The study of Blocker (2010) stated that the use of emotions was one of the three most popular methods chosen by real estate professionals to influence clients. It was also concluded in the study that 46% of real estate agent-client relations lacked an appropriate emotional communication while only 26% of the real estate agents knew how to adapt to the emotional state of the client. The study of Mount (2006) found that cognitive ability (IQ) only accounted for 19% of overall work performance, EI competencies accounted for 44% while skills and knowledge accounted for 38%. However, superior performers scored higher than average performers on many of the emotional intelligence competencies results generated. The study of Rode *et al.* (2007) found that the presence of both EI and conscientiousness established a strong positive relationship with individual performance while EI alone was not a strong predictor of individual performance. The study of Akinwamide and Idris (2019) found that majority of respondents (22 out of 25) agreed that training in emotional intelligence would benefit them in real estate practice. Furthermore, emotional intelligence is most relevant in estate agency and marketing, real estate consultancy, and arbitration and alternative dispute resolution among other real estate service in the profession.

3. Research Methodology

The target population for the study are the real estate agents in Lagos Metropolis. The estate agents considered in the study area are the registered Estate Surveyors and Valuers (ESVs). The rationale for the adoption of ESVs lies in the fact that they are the professionals created by law to carry out real estate duties, with stamp and seal, for execution of real estate service jobs in Nigeria. They are members of Estate Surveying and Valuation Registration Board of Nigeria (ESVARBON) who possess the required skills and undergo the necessary training that qualifies them to practice real estate in Nigeria. Lagos metropolis was chosen because real estate service is highly active in the city and has shown consistent development in commercial real estate, as such requires the professional quality services of the ESVs (Olukolajo, *et al.*, 2015).

The sample frame for the study constitute the 375 NIESV membership of Lagos state branch obtained from the 2018 NIESV directory (NIESV, 2018), of which about 270 of them are in Lagos' metropolis (Iroham, Oloyede, Ajibola, & Durodola, 2014). The study of Bamidele, Adenusi, and Osunsanmi (2018) selected 100 ESVs known for agency practice in Lagos Metropolis.

Therefore, 100 ESVs known for agency practice in the proximity of the research were randomly selected. Out of the selected estate agents, 85 responded satisfactorily, showing consistency in their response. This study also adopted self-administered questionnaire and personal interviews as its data collection instrument.

Mangeli, (2013) and Ehiemere, Ogbuefi and Awum (2016) suggested 22-item wording, five-dimension questionnaire for Service Quality (SERVQUAL) questionnaire consisting of a 7-point response format for measuring customers' expectations with anchors of "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree." Therefore, this study is well within the range suggested for unit of measurement while using customer satisfaction variables classified under four Emotional Intelligence Competencies (self-awareness, self-management, motivation and social skills). The quantitative data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean item score and frequencies while remarks were generated based on the result.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The Association between demographic factors and Estate Agents' Competency level in adopting Emotional Intelligence for Estate Agency Service

Table 1. Association between emotional intelligence and demographic variables

Demographic Variables	Level of Emotional Intelligence			Total N (%)
	High N (%)	Moderate N (%)	Low N (%)	
Gender				
Male	28 (57.1)	20 (55.6)	0	48 (56.5)
Female	21 (42.9)	16 (44.4)	0	37 (43.5)
Total	**49 (100.0)**	**36 (100.0)**	**0**	**85 (100.0)**
Age				
18-25 Years	18 (36.7)	0	0	18 (21.2)
26-35 Years	31 (63.3)	14 (38.9)	0	45 (52.9)
35-45 Years	0	12 (33.3)	0	12 (14.1)
Above 46 Years	0	10 (27.8)	0	10 (11.8)

Total	**49 (100.0)**	**36 (100.0)**	**0**	**85 (100.0)**
Year of Experience				
1-5 Years	17 (34.7)	0	0	17 (20.0)
6-10 Years	14 (28.6)	32 (88.9)	0	46 (54.1)
11-15 Years	18 (36.7)	0	0	18 (21.2)
Above 15 Years	0	4 (11.1)	0	4 (4.7)
Total	**49 (100.0)**	**36 (100.0)**	**0**	**85 (100.0)**
Professional Qualification				
Probationer	0	15 (41.7)	0	15 (17.6)
Graduate	0	19 (52.8)	0	19 (22.4)
ANIVS	44 (89.8)	2 (5.6)	0	46 (54.1)
FNIVS	5 (10.2)	0	0	5 (5.9)
Total	**49 (100.0)**	**36 (100.0)**	**0**	**85 (100.0)**
Academic Qualification				
ND	4 (8.2)	0	0	4 (4.7)
HND/Bsc	45 (91.8)	9 (25.0)	0	54 (63.5)
Msc.	0	23 (63.9)	0	23 (27.1)
PhD	0	4 (11.1)	0	4 (4.7)
Total	**49 (100.0)**	**36 (100.0)**	**0**	**85 (100.0)**

Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 1 above reveals that 48% of the respondents were Male while 57% of male had a high level of emotional intelligence. However, 52% of the respondent were within the age bracket of 26 – 35 years while 63% within this age bracket has a high level of emotional intelligence. Considering the year of experience, 54% of the respondent had 6 – 10 years' experience in agency service while the large number (i.e 32 out of 46) of respondent with this year of experience had a moderate level of emotional intelligence. It was also observed that 18% of the respondents were probationer while 22% were graduate member of NIESV. However, 46% of respondents were Associate member (ANIVS) while 89% of ANIVS member had a high level of emotional intelligence to execute estate agency practice. Large percentage (54%) of respondent were holder of HND/Bsc. while 92% of HND/Bsc. holder had a high level of emotional intelligence. Therefore, it could be said that

the respondents had the required working experience with adequate knowledge of research on real estate agency practice that could make the data reliable. Thus, the credibility of the data is sustained and the information obtained actually reflects the view of estate agents in the subject under studied.

4.2. Assessment of Estate Agents' Competency level in adopting Emotional Intelligence for Estate Agency Service

The total scores from the rating scale were calculated for each respondent with each service attribute. Averages were then obtained from each attribute and respondent. These individual average scores were then used to derive the EI competency average mean scores for the entire sample. The average mean scores for each service attribute was based on real estate agents' perception shown in the Table 2 below.

Table 2. Perception of Estate Agents on Customer expectations in Estate Agency Service.

EI Competencies	Mean Score
Empathy	
Real Estate customers need personal attention.	5.87
Real Estate firm should operate in convenient hours to clients.	6.58
Real Estate firm should have client's best interest in mind.	6.45
Real Estate agents should understand clients' specific needs	6.44
Real Estate firm should keep client informed about matters of concern to them.	6.16
Average Dimension Score	**6.30**
Self-Awareness	
Real Estate agents should have a realistic evaluation of clients' strength and limitation	6.26
Real Estate agents should align established value with service excellence.	6.21
Real Estate agents should have strong and positive sense of self-worth.	6.27
Real Estate agents should understand organizational politics to make decision.	6.35
Real estate agents should sense clients' emotions and understand their perspective	6.15
Average Dimension Score	**6.248**
Self-Management	
Real Estate agents should have the ability to manage oneself and responsibility to its clients at all time	6.10

Real Estate firm should ensure a seamless customer experience across various interaction opportunities (e.g purchase and sales transaction of properties).	5.95
Real Estate agents should keep disruptive positions and impulses under control	5.83
Real Estate agents should be able to adjust to the changing situation and overcome obstacles	6.13
Real Estate firm should meet their internal standard of Excellence	6.13
Average Dimension Score	**6.028**
Motivation	
Real Estate agents should be inspired with a compelling vision	6.16
Real Estate agents should have a wield range of persuasive tactics to initiate estate agency jobs.	6.25
Real Estate agents should be sufficiently motivated to improve customer's satisfaction and loyalty.	6.18
Real Estate agents should have the necessary interpersonal skills and latitude to deliver superior service	6.13
Real Estate firm should have the readiness to seize opportunities to ensure that customers are ready, able and willing to do what is expected of them.	6.21
Average Dimension Score	**6.186**
Social Skills	
Real Estate agents should have an up-to-date understanding of how well they are serving customers.	4.46
Real Estate agents should consistently display honesty and Integrity in transaction.	6.30
Real Estate agents should be good at cultivating and maintaining a web of relationship.	5.47
Real Estate agents should have detailed information about individual customers to support service delivery.	6.30
Real Estate firm should be doing everything needed to ensure coordination of service activities across individuals and allocation.	5.85
Average Dimension Score	**5.676**

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 3. Ranking Order of Emotional Intelligence Competencies

Competencies	Average Mean Score	Ranking
Empathy	6.300*	1st
Self-Awareness	6.248*	2nd
Motivation	6.186*	3rd
Self-Management	6.028	4th
Social Skills	5.676	5th

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 3 above shows the ranking order of emotional intelligence competencies as identified by average mean score of perception of estate agents on customer expectations in estate agency service. It was found that service empathy has a mean score of 6.300 ranked first followed by self-awareness with 6.248 mean score, and motivation with 6.186 mean score were ranked second and third respectively. Other service competencies with the least mean scores are self-management with 6.028, social skills with 5.676.

Based on perceived customers expectation in estate agency service; empathy, self-awareness and motivation classified as emotional needs were ranked much higher than other service competencies. However, this finding confirmed the submission of Araloyin and Olatoye (2011) that despite real estate professionals attempt to improve their service delivery in customers satisfaction, their conduct in their first impression with customers has a long way to go in affecting real estate customers' opinion about them. In this wise, the adoption of emotional intelligence instrument for service quality delivery would help real estate firms to improve customers' satisfaction on the demand for emotional needs.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This research has assessed the level of competency of estate agent's emotional intelligence in Lagos property marketing. The study focused particularly on the level of competencies of estate agents' Emotional Intelligence in real estate agency with a view to foster client-customers relationship that promote customer's satisfaction in service delivery. Based on perceived customers expectation in estate agency service; empathy, self-awareness and motivation classified as emotional needs were ranked much higher than other service competencies. Therefore, an increase in emotional intelligence competencies of estate agents would help to

enhance customers' satisfaction on the demand for emotional needs in service delivery. This study therefore recommends that;

1. Estate agents should improve on their level of competency in emotional intelligence to understand customer's behaviour and emotional needs in decision making.
2. Real estate agents also need to concentrate on improved customers' satisfaction based on service empathy, self-awareness, and motivation in real estate agency service.

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