

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MARKETING AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN THE NIGERIAN BANKING INDUSTRY

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Abstract

Marketing in the banking industry has witnessed a paradigm shift in orientations from transaction marketing to relationship marketing. Today, banks are working in extremely competitive and rapidly dynamic work environment which has necessitated the focus on responding to customers' needs satisfactorily. This study examined the effect of customer relationship marketing on customer satisfaction of the Nigerian banking industry, with reference to First Bank of Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and a well-organized structured 5 Point likert scale questionnaire was distributed among two hundred (200) selected customers of First Bank of Nigeria using accidental sampling technique. The result of the study using regression analysis show that customer relationship marketing has significant effect on customer satisfaction since 84.6% of variance recorded in customer satisfaction is traceable to the practice of customer relationship marketing ($R^2 = 0.846$, $p < 0.05$). The study also discovered that trust, commitment and communication have positive effects on customer satisfaction. Based on these findings, the study therefore recommended that there is a need for banks to develop a good customer relationship with their customers by periodically training employees on building enduring customer relationship.

Key words: Customer Relationship Marketing, Customer Satisfaction Banking Industry, Trust, Commitment, Communication

1. Introduction

Traditionally the banks had been primarily occupied in just cash related activities such as accepting deposits, paying cash, opening accounts and giving out loans to customers. Banks are now more innovative, crafting new ways of reaching out to prospective customers and retaining more customers to their base (Karr, 2012). One of the various strategies adopted by banks to increase their share of the market in recent years is Customer Relationship Marketing (CRM). The utilization of CRM is increasing owing to the wake of competition, globalization and technological advancements (Kafko, 2017). The banking industry is an integral part of the business world which has a grown impact on all other industry's of the economy because of financial services provisions. Marketing in the banking industry has witnessed a paradigm shift in orientations which has revealed a major movement from transaction marketing to relationship marketing (Onashile, 2017). This change came about when the banking industry recognized that to achieve sustainable competitive advantage banks must become trusted participants in strategic alliances (Al-Hersh, Aburoub & Saaty, 2014).

The strategy of relationship marketing is particularly significant to the banking industry because of the intangible nature its service and high level of customer interaction (A-Hersh, et al., 2014). The prospect of relationship marketing is increasing the investments value and long-term relationship with customers as firms can gain quality sources of marketing intelligence for better planning of marketing strategy (Kafko, 2017). Customer Relationship Management is a strategy that enables a bank to analyze customer profiles, detect their needs and potential profitability areas and establish the necessary actions to achieve customer satisfaction (Woodcock, Foss & Stone, 2015). From a customer's points of view, the competition brings various choices and increases their bargaining power. Customers search for, lower transaction fees, and higher interest rates for their deposits, sign of affluence, new products, and access to the bank from different convenient channels among other benefits. This has made bank managers to rethink new ways to satisfy customers so as to remain in business. CRM is one way that deposit bank can differentiate themselves from other financial institutions and encourage brand loyalty among its customers.

In the banking industry, it is essential to understand the customer's needs in order to strengthen the relationship and to achieve higher profits (Adiele & Gabriel, 2013). Hence, efforts must be concentrated on improving customer satisfaction which is achievable through the implementation of customer relationship marketing strategy.

Statement of the Problem

Today, banks are working in extremely competitive and rapidly dynamic work environment as the financial industry is also affected by the level of competition both locally and internationally. The complexity in the

banking industry has made bank managers to focus on creating close affiliation with their customers to address customer issues and complaint (Kafko, 2017). The CRM concept has been gaining increased attention from academics and practitioners. A lot of research works have been undertaken to find out the impact of marketing actions on the level of customer satisfaction. However, while the number of CRM user firms has grown globally, CRM uptake in Nigeria has remained consistently low.

There is no doubt that responding to customers' needs and maintaining customers' relationship needs, is among the most important factors that organizations use to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. Yet most researchers such as Gilaninia, AskariRankouh and Farokhi (2013), Epetimehin, (2010), Mohamad, Othman, Jabar and Abdul-Majid, (2014) Chuchuen and Chanvarasuth (2011), investigated the nature of the relationship between customer relationship marketing and organizational financial performance in terms of profit, market share, Return on Investment (ROI), Return on Equity (ROE) e.t.c without giving considerable attention to customers' satisfaction which is the key factor in determining the performance of banking industry. According to Gilaninia (2011), complete awareness of customers' needs and desires is required for close relations establishing with the customers; therefore, it is necessary to conduct a research that identifies the specific components of customer relationship marketing that increases customers' satisfaction. Hence, this study tends to examine the effect of customer relationship marketing on customer satisfaction in First bank of Nigeria Plc. The study specifically intends to examine the level at which dimensions of customer relationship marketing such as trust, commitment, and communication influence customer satisfaction.

1. Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

Customer Relationship Marketing

Relationship marketing has emerged over the years as an exciting area of marketing that focuses on building long-term relationships with customers and other parties. Relationship marketing was first defined as a form of marketing developed from direct response marketing campaigns which emphasizes customer retention and satisfaction, rather than a focus on sales transactions (Gillett, 2015). It is the ongoing process of engaging in collaborative activities and programs with immediate and end-user customers to create or enhance mutual economic, social and psychological value, profitably; an arrangement where both the buyer and seller have an interest in providing a more satisfying exchange.

Customer relationship marketing differs from other forms of marketing in that it recognizes the long term value of customer relationships and extends communication beyond intrusive advertising and sales promotional messages. It is a cross-functional marketing concept organized around processes that involve all aspects of the organization (Gillett, 2015). A-Hersh, et al., (2014) defines customer relationship marketing as the process of identifying, establishing, maintaining, and enhancing connection with customers and other stakeholders with the purpose of exchanging value.

Customer relationship marketing in a financial institution as an approach to providing seamless coordination among process, people, information and technology that creates positive experiences for a party each time he or she interacts with the institution. It is particularly important in the banking industry which is central because of direct contact between the banks and customers. It is the capability for delivering each valued experience enabled by the bank's knowledge about a party including their preferences, behaviors, goals, and attitudes.

Customer Relationship Marketing Attributes

The determinants of Customer Relationship Marketing that encourage and ensure a long-term relationship with exchange partners are discussed below:

- **Trust**

Trust is considered as a great weapon for influencing a customer; It is based upon reputation, personality, experience, satisfaction, empathy, systems and processes (Alqahtani, 2011). A high level of trust enhances a positive attitude, which in turn increases customers' satisfaction (Al-Hersh, Aburoub & Saaty, 2014). Trust is a dimension of a business relationship that results in customers and suppliers acting in a unified manner toward a desired goal. This attribute results directly in feelings of affection, a sense of belonging to the relationship, and indirectly to the sense of belonging to the organization (Callaghan, McPhail & Yau, 2015).

Hefferman, et al. (2008) in a study on the development of trust for relationships between staff and customers in the banking industry, found out that trust is made up of dependability, knowledge, and expectations and that there are significant correlations between trust components and emotional intelligence.

- **Commitment**

Commitment is customer's durable intention to develop and sustain the relationship with the supplier on the long run (Anderson & Weitz, 2012; A-Hersh, et al., 2014). It is a useful construct for measuring the likelihood of customer satisfaction and predicting future purchase frequency (Gundlach 2015). Banks should lay emphasis on commitment in providing services to customers (Wu, 2011). Jemaa and Tournois (2014) in the study of relationship marketing key concepts as relationship value determinant and found that there is a positive relationship between customer's commitment and satisfaction.

- **Communications**

Communication is considered as a vital component in the establishment of business relationships. Yet it is a variable that is often assumed or taken for granted and consequently overlooked as a component of relationship development (Andersen, 2011). Communications also inform dissatisfied customers what the organization is doing to rectify the causes of dissatisfaction. When there is effective communication between an organization and its customers, a better relationship will result and customers will be more loyal.

Benefits of Customer Relationship Marketing

Customer relationship marketing has received increasing attention in both marketing theory and practice. Enhancement and focus on customer relationship building creates many benefits for firms and customers. Successful management of customer relationship is one of the competitive advantages that the firms can be exploited to avoid transferring of customers to other firms, (TaherPoor, , Habibollah, & Ahmad, 2010).

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is regarded as a primary determining factor of repeat purchasing behavior (Parker & Mathews 2011). Satisfaction is a customer's emotional response to his or her evaluation of the perceived discrepancy between his or her prior experience with and expectations of product and organization and the actual experienced performance as perceived after interacting with organization and consuming the product. A customer develops expectations through advertising, word of mouth or any other media, and compares those expectations to what such have actually received. Customer satisfaction comes from superior and quality service by exceeding customer's expectations.

Relationship marketing relies upon the communication and acquisition of consumer requirements from existing customers in a mutually beneficial exchange usually involving permission for contact by the customer through an opt-in system. accuracy of communication and overall relevancy to the customer remains higher than that of direct marketing. The principal aim of relationship marketing is going beyond customers expectation through varying means to ensure repeated calls from pre-existing customers. Through a mutually beneficial relationship, customers requirements are met above what competitors have to offer, if the customer perceives the importance of relationships strongly, then he/she develops a stronger relationship with the supplier, (Ward, Frew &Caldow, 2007). Satisfied customers are more willing to stay and keep the relationship that satisfy them where un-satisfied customer are more inclined to look for other relationship with other companies.

Theoretical Framework

Relationship Marketing Theory

The key goal of relationship marketing theory is the identification of key drivers that influence important outcomes for the firm and a better understanding of the causal relations between these drivers and outcomes. The theory affirms that the main benefit companies can get from pursuing relationship marketing is the gain of stronger customer relationships that intensify the customer retention (Matagne & Gerard, 2013). The relationship marketing theory which is the genesis of customer relationship marketing is based on trust which enhances customer satisfaction (Armstrong & Kotler, 2006).

Relationship Quality Theory

Relationship Quality Theory opined that customers are highly satisfied and corporate performance optimized only when the relationship is sufficiently strong on all critical aspects of the many-sided dimensions of a relationship. The theory captures multiple aspects or dimensions of a relationship (e.g., trust, commitment, relationship satisfaction) and postulates that these dimensions when combined or synergized have stronger impact on objective

performance than when allied in isolation. Palmatier (2006) suggest that different aspects or dimensions of a relationship may be synergistic, and performance is optimized only when the relationship is sufficiently strong on all critical aspects.

The Commitment-Trust Theory

Morgan and Hunt (1994) cited in Magasi, (2016), in the commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing posit that presence of relationship commitment and trust is central to successful relationship marketing, not power. They argued that trust and relationship commitment are the key mediators in exchange between participants, which essentially lead to building a relational co-cooperation. They insist that relationship commitment (an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship) and trust (the confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity) represent the key elements that explain a relationship's impact on performance.

Empirical Review

Effects of Trust on Customer Satisfaction

Trust is the main focal point of many theories of relationship marketing (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Hefferman, et al. (2008) in a study on the development of trust for relationships between staff and customers in the banking industry, found out that trust is made up of dependability, knowledge, and expectations and that there are significant correlations between trust components and emotional intelligence.

According to Kiyani, Niazi, Rizvi and Khan (2012) brand trust have significant impact of the customer satisfaction and that customers who derive high level of trust are more likely to come for repeat purchase.

Effects of Communication on Customer satisfaction

Communication refers to the ability to provide timely and trustworthy information (Ndubisi & Chan, 2005). Leong and Qing (2010) support the notion that effective and positive communication is crucial in a relationship. Communication has direct effects on satisfaction. According to Pike and Murdy (2012), good communication with the customers guarantees customer satisfaction. The use of e-mails, internet, phone messages and so, enable banks to improve the understanding of the customer needs. This communication has to be continuous between the two parties in order to have a good effect as the main purpose of the communication is to decrease the uncertainty as well as the misunderstandings (Pike & Murdy, 2012).

Customer Relationship Marketing and Customer Satisfaction in the Banking Industry

Customer relationship marketing is primarily concerned with building relationships at points of interaction between the firms and the customers. It focuses on identifying factors affecting customer relationship with firms and works towards those factors in order to retain clients. To achieve customer satisfaction, education, training and providing staff with the most sophisticated technical support to understand the importance of treating customers with a long-term relationship is necessary (Kerber, 2010).

Ndubisi (2007) examines the impact of relationship marketing strategy on customers' loyalty of 220 bank customers in Malaysia. The study discovered that trust, commitment, communication and conflict handling have significant effect on customer loyalty.

Overview of the Nigerian Banking Industry

According to Omeje (2007), First Savings Bank, formerly known as the Post Office Savings Bank was the first banking institution in Nigeria, established in 1886 by the British during the colonial era. However, in 1892, the first deposit money bank was established, the African Banking Corporation which is now called First Bank of Nigeria. Between 1927 and 1951, many other Nigerian banks were established. Bello (2011) supports the claim that the banks that firstly operated in Nigeria were foreign-owned. However, in the 1930s, there was an emergence of partially or wholly owned Nigerian banks; and this brought about a fierce competition among the Nigerian banks and those belonging to foreigners. In 1958, the government at the time established the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), as a result of lack of regulations, insufficient capital, and mismanagement of the established banks.

The Nigerian banking industry had experienced many reforms. However, there are two prominent ones, which are 2004 and 2009. The 2004 reform focuses on bank consolidation through the mechanism of merger and acquisition while 2009 focuses on acquisition and management of non-performing loans of various commercial banks in the country. Presently, there are 21 commercial banks existing in Nigeria (CBN, 2017).

2. Research Methods

This study adopted a descriptive survey design in addressing the research problem. The study targeted the banking industry in Nigeria with a case of First Bank Nigeria Plc. The study adopts accidental sampling method to collect data from selected customers of the bank using questionnaire. The measures of CRM which are trust, commitment, and communication make up the independent variable while customer satisfaction is the dependent variable. All measurement scales follows relative literature reviews. The study adopts a 5 point -Likert point scale from 5 to 1 representing strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree, strong disagree in identifying the level to which customers are satisfied with the bank.

200 copies of questionnaires were administered and 175 copies were returned and used for data analysis. Thus, the effective response rate is 87.5% This was a good response according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2009) and Wachir and Were (2016) who recommended at least a response of 70% for a descriptive study.

The research instrument was validated using content validity. The study adopts Cronbach reliability test to measure the internal consistence reliability of the questionnaire. The results show that Cronbach's α of trust, commitment, and communication is 0.807, 0.977, and 0.803 respectively. It indicates that the design of the questionnaire has a high internal consistence.

3. Data Analysis and Presentation

Majority of the study respondents were male. The 56% of the customers who participated were male whereas 44% were female customers. Most of the respondents to the study were the customers aged below 40 years. The age group 31 – 35 years had the most of the respondents representing 47.1% followed by the age group 25 – 30 years with 25.1% and 36 – 49 years with 15.7% of the respondents. Those aged 41 – 45 years were 6.7% while the respondents with above 45 years represented 3.9%. The least among the respondents were the customers aged below 25 years representing only 1.5% of the total respondents.

Test of hypothesis

Regression analysis was adopted in this study to show the level of influence of the independent variables (trust, commitment, and communication) on customer satisfaction. The regression was conducted at the 5% level testing the significance of the relationship. The results are as presented in Tables 2, 3 and Table 4 showing the regression model summary, ANOVA and the regression coefficients respectively.

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.920 ^a	.846	.844	.835

a. Predictors: (Constant), Trust, Commitment, Communication

The overall model showed that the coefficient of determination, R-square that informs the proportion of change in customer satisfaction is caused by the variation in customer relationship marketing practice is 0.846. This shows that trust, commitment and explained 84.6% of the variance recorded in customer satisfaction. The remaining 15.4% is explained by other factors not reflected on the study statistical model.

Table 2: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	657.999	3	219.333	314.253	.000 ^b
	Residual	119.349	171	.698		
	Total	777.349	174			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Trust, Commitment, And Communication

Table 2 shows that the F statistic is 314.253 with a corresponding p-value of 0.000. Therefore, the calculated F statistic is greater than the tabulated statistic at the five per cent level of significance. Thus the predictor variables are jointly significant in explaining variations in the level of satisfaction of the banks' customers. Since the p value (0.000) is less than α (0.05) then the result were significant, implying that the trust, commitment, and communication explain the major variation on customer satisfaction.

Table 3: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	3.559	.184		19.353	.000
Trust	.357	.078	.377	4.576	.000
Commitment	.132	.037	.128	3.541	.001
Communication	.418	.058	.622	7.229	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

Results in Table 3 shows the coefficients of the multiple regression model for the explanatory variables. At 5% significance level and 95% confidence level, trust, commitment, and communication were significantly influencing the customer satisfaction. From the table, trust has a positive effect on customer satisfaction ($\beta=0.357$) which was also significant at the 5% level of significance ($p=0.000$); commitment has a significant influence on customer satisfaction at ($\beta=0.132$, $p=0.001$), communication has a significant influence on the customer satisfaction at ($\beta=0.418$, $p=0.008$).

Eisenberger, Fasolo and Davis-LaMastro (2010) found out that customer who feel cared for not only have higher levels of trust, but that they are more conscious about their responsibilities, have greater involvement in the success of the organization. Trust is built upon experience, satisfaction and empathy, a high level of trust is likely to enhance a more positive attitude, which in turn is likely to increase the level of customer orientation/empathy ((Matagne & Gerard, 2013). This is also similar to the findings of Kafko (2017) who asserts that trust, commitment and communication has helped in acquiring new customers, retaining the existing ones, and maximizing their lifetime value in the Kenyan banking industry.

4. Conclusions, Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Studies

This study was undertaken seeking to determine the effect of customer relationship marketing on customer satisfaction at FBN. The study found out that customer relationship management has a positive effect on the level of satisfaction of the bank's customers. The main benefit companies can get from pursuing relationship marketing is the gain of stronger customer relationships that strengthen the performance of the firm. Relationship partners who are committed expend extra effort and work to maintain and strengthen relational bonds, which positively influences cooperation and other positive outcomes. Therefore, continued improvement on building trust, being committed to customers and communicating effectively will enhance customers' satisfaction.

A typical customer is in search of a bank he or she can trust, whose employees are committed to performing their tasks efficiently and effectively, who can relate well with customers, and communicate effectively in order to be satisfied. A good relationship between employees and the management of the organization transfers to the relationship with customers as good relationship from the top management will automatically be passed through the chain leading to satisfying customer services. Although meeting the expectations of each and every client could be challenging given that tastes and preferences differ across individuals, yet it is achievable because the disparities are minimal and therefore identification of an optimal point through standardisation can be sought.

There is a need for organizations especially banks to have a good relationship with their customers so as to satisfy them and possibly exceed their expectations. The employees should also demonstrate commitment and loyalty towards achieving the strategy. Also training and development directed at building enduring customer relationship should be periodically given to all employees. In addition, for CRM to be successfully implemented, all the stakeholders must be in full support. An organizational culture that does not only attract but also retain qualified employees that contribute positively to bank performance should be incorporated.

There is need for the banks also to improve technological methods of measuring customer satisfaction and boost service delivery in the banks in Nigeria. Lastly, there is need for continuous monitoring and evaluating CRM practice in the banking industry and increased customer feedback channels.

Although this study was successfully undertaken, it recommended that a comparative study on CRM practice in Nigeria's new generation banks and old generation banks with respect to customer satisfaction be conducted. Similar studies can also be carried out in other industries segments such.

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