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Customer relationship management and customer satisfaction of automobile marketing firms in rivers state of Nigeria

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Abstract

The automobile marketing sector in Nigeria is a major component of surface transport and plays a crucial role in economic development of the country. Even though the concept of customer relationship management has been systematically examined in an assortment of studies there is a research gap regarding its usage in generating customer satisfaction in the automobile marketing industry. The aim of this study therefore, is to investigate the effect of customer relationship management on customer satisfaction in automobile marketing firms in Rivers State of Nigeria. The population of the study was 49 automobile marketing firms in Rivers State. The Taro Yemen's formula was used to select 29 automobile marketing firms out of the population. The simple random sampling technique was employed to select 116 respondents from the 29 automobile marketing firms

under study. Data were gathered through questionnaire survey on 116 respondents. Out of the 116 questionnaire distributed, 100 was returned useable, obtaining a 91 percent response rate. The simple regression statistics was used to test the hypotheses. The results illustrates that knowledge management has a moderate, positive and significant influence on customer commitment and technology-based CRM has a moderate, positive and significant influence on customer commitment. The study therefore, concludes that customer relationship management significantly influences customer satisfaction of automobile marketing firms in Rivers State of Nigeria and recommends amongst others that automobile marketing firms' management should position strategically, technology-based CRM and knowledge management to attract customer commitment to their firms.

Keywords: Customer satisfaction, Customer relationship management, Knowledge management, Technology-based CRM

Introduction

The high level of competition has been one of the most difficult challenges in the automobile marketing industry. It is reflected in progressively more tapered margins and increasing pressure to make available more and better products and services, which has shown the way to escalating costs, condensed customer loyalty and accordingly a decline in occupancy velocity (Yi-Wen & Edward, 2010; Verdugo, Oviedo-Garcia & Roldan, 2009; Wang & Wang, 2009; Sigala, 2005) ^[39, 36, 37]. The most central ambition of a firm is to uphold customer satisfaction and spotlight on customer centric approach in their managerial and marketing policies. It is crucial to put the customer at the centre of the business according to its plans, events and procedures. Hence, firms should be more customer-focused and service-oriented by embracing the tenets of customer relationship management (CRM) in order to satisfy their customers. This is because customer relationship management needs to have direct impact on customer satisfaction, and since every business has been influenced to some extent by progressions in the worldwide market, they aspire to satisfy their customers but they try to do this more resourcefully and successfully than their contenders in the competitive market place to reach their goals.

Customer relationship management is a concept engaged upon for managing a firm's interfaces with customers and sales prospects to realize customer satisfaction, and AlKhoury (2012) in a study suggested key familiar mechanism of CRM framework as: key customers focus, knowledge management, CRM organizations, and technology based CRM. Customer relationship management triggers customer satisfaction and shows the way to a boost on a firm's income and profitability, to accomplish customer relationship management practices, several firms employ deposit of apparatuses, technologies, and modus operandi to sustain relationship with customers to attract product sales. For that reason, customer relationship management is an issue of strategic business significance. Panda (2003) ^[24] acknowledged that customer relationship management has its derivation in the fundamental archetype of marketing which is to satisfy customers with the most excellent achievable substitute in the market through a relational exchange procedure powered by the assimilation of four vital modules consisting of people, process technology and data. Customer service and relationship management specifically are decisive to

achieving a sustainable competitive advantage in the marketplace (Berndt, Herbst & Roux, 2005) ^[8].

Customer relationship management is the procedure of running meticulous information regarding individual customer and cautiously managing every single customers touch points to capitalize on customer loyalty. Customer relationship management is used by automobile marketing firms and other organization as a business tactic to boost performance through customer satisfaction. The concept of customer relationship management is a significant subject in marketing, and the research in this issue also gives a lot of contribution in marketing strategy. For example, Alawuji and Babatunde (2014) ^[5] studied customer relationship management (CRM) and bank performances in the financial services industry, Abdulalem, Basribin and Shaharuddinbin (2013) investigated the relationship between CRM dimensions and various aspects of organization performance in Malaysian hotels, Nwankwo and Ajemunigbohun (2013) ^[21] evaluated the relationship between CRM and customer retention, and Hisham (2011) ^[15] explored the theoretical foundations of customer relationship management and its relationship to the marketing performance from the several perspectives. Even though the concept of customer relationship management has been systematically examined in these assortments of studies, there is a research gap regarding its usage in generating customer satisfaction in the automobile marketing industry. Against this background, this study assesses customer relationship management of automobile marketing firms in Rivers State of Nigeria to achieve customer satisfaction and bridge the gap in knowledge in this sphere by providing customer relationship management model inclusive of two customer relationship management dimensions (knowledge management and Technology-based CRM) and one customer satisfaction measure (customer commitment) in the automobile marketing firms in Rivers State of Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The automobile marketing industry in Nigeria has become inundated with firms that engage in stiff competitive warfare to remain afloat and relevant in the business world. As a result of similar features in automobiles, it is now difficult to differentiate between brands and this has impeded customers' commitment. For that reason, customers currently, only rely on value, efficiency, excellent service, fuel economy and product leadership for their purchase decision. Given the competitiveness of the environment achieving customer satisfaction depends largely on the viability of key customer relationship management weapons (Knowledge Management and Technology-based CRM) at the disposal of firms in the automobile marketing sector. These customer relationship management weapons are often translated into market strategies, and satisfying customers in an exchange relationship constitutes the ultimate goal of all businesses that wish to attract customer commitment, satisfy their customers and thus build repeat business. It is very important for managers in the intensely changing competitive environment to be in direct contact with the customers in order to build up good relationship to magnet customer satisfaction. Against this background, this study seeks to investigate the influence of customer relationship management on customer satisfaction of automobile marketing firms in Rivers State of Nigeria.

Literature review and hypotheses

Customer Relationship Management

The term relationship marketing was first made-up by Berry (1983) ^[9] in the perspective of services marketing and broadened by Gronroos (1994) to hold close channels and some operational attributes. Customer relationship management (CRM) is a philosophy contained by the decision-making field that requests to generate lifelong affiliations with customer, and it is portrayed as a strategic method which is concerned with generating improved shareholder value by means of the development of fitting configurations with major customers and customer fragments (Payne & Frow, 2005).

Relationship marketing absorbs drawing, maintaining and increasing customer relationships. It is projected to establish, uphold and heighten involvements with customers and other partners, at a profit, to arrive at affirmed objectives. Berry (1983) ^[9] noted that servicing and selling existing customers is observed to be as very important to long-standing marketing success as getting hands on new customers (Gronroos {1994) assert that this relationship is achieved by a mutual exchange and execution of promises. Stepping aside from business issues, partners recognize the mutual benefit to be pinched from such interactions (Gronroos, 1995).

Customer relationship management is a deposit of business activities sustained by the configuration of both technology and process triggered by policy and drawn to boost firm performance in an area of customer management (Richards & Jones, 2006) ^[28]. Hence, flourishing customer relationship management aspires at working out the aspirations and requirements of the customers and is brought about by the assimilation of these aspirations with the firm's strategy, technology, people and enterprise process (Fagbemi & Olowokudejo, 2011) ^[13]. The dimensions of customer relationship management are: key customers focus, knowledge management, CRM organizations, and technology based CRM (Abdul & Basri, 2012; Akroush *et al.*, 2011; Abdullateef, 2011) ^[2, 4, 3]. This study adopts two of the mechanism of CRM (knowledge management and technology based CRM) as the dimensions of customer relationship management.

Knowledge Management

Knowledge management involves acquiring, sharing, and developing the customer knowledge among employees for making profit to the organization and customers. In recent years, customer knowledge has been considered as an important organizational resource, and that the procedures of diffusion of knowledge on the subject of customers are core resources that consent to a firm to fortify its bond with the customers, and realize sustainable competitive advantage (Croteau & Li, 2003; Shi & Yip, 2007) ^[10]. Consequently, customers' knowledge performs a fundamental function in customer relationship management, as it assist firms to succeed by structuring healthier customer interactions which have positive influence on firm's performance (Akroush *et al.*, 2011; Sin, Alan & Yim, 2005; Yim, Anderson & Swaminathan, 2005) ^[4, 30, 38]. Companies can adopt it to put together and expand their affiliation with customers (Zahay & Griffin, 2004), and it allows firms to grow a competitive advantage in the market (Sin *et al.*, 2005). Furthermore, Thriving customer relationship management is envisaged on successfully converting customer information into customer

knowledge (Plessis & Boon, 2004; Stringfellow *et al.*, 2004). Engendered customer knowledge needs to be shared and circulated right through the firm (Ryals & Knox, 2001), for the reason that the prospective of knowledge transpires when it is shared contained by an assortment of tasks of the firm in order to convene existing customers and their projected requirements. Knowledge management is therefore, a premeditated and methodical synchronization of an organization's people, technology, processes, and configurations in order to insert value through recycling and modernization. This is accomplished through the promotion of creating, sharing, and applying knowledge as well as through the nourishing of priceless instructions learned and best practices into business reminiscence in order to promote unrelenting organizational learning.

Technology-based CRM

Owing to ever-increasing competition and customer prospects, companies have assumed ICT as a contrivance for handling fast shifting environments (Sirirak, Islam & Khang, 2011) ^[31], and with steps forward in information communication technology (ICT), a contemporary method can be adopted to advance the muscle of companies to trim down in-house costs, enhanced intermingling with the surroundings, and boosts economic profit in the long-standing. Customer relationship management strategy will only be successful to produce the predictable results if suitable implementation of information technology is guaranteed all through the process (Dutu & Halmajan, 2011) ^[12]. Furthermore, the use of CRM technology is anticipated to improve firm's capability to maintain profitable customer relationships by the enabling information integration and sharing that impact smooth and well-organized firm-customer connections, suitable analysis of customer data and customization of response (Mukerjee & Singh, 2009) ^[20]. Hence, the tactical exploitation of technology by firms is one of the most significant prospects in organizations for the reason that it is indispensable to get the accurate information from the precise people at the exact time, so that the correct decisions can be prepared (Dev & Olsen, 2000) ^[11]. A handful of studies details that CRM technology has a significant positive influence on organization's performance (Abdullateef, 2011; Akroush *et al.*, 2011; Sin *et al.*, 2005) ^[3, 4, 11].

Concept of customer satisfaction

Satisfaction is a decisive balance of how well a customer's requirements and demands are convened (Faizan, Nawaz & Khan, 2011) ^[14]. In the perspective of relationship marketing, satisfaction is perceived as a building block of the relationship quality model. Customer satisfaction is defined as a general appraisal of a company's products or services (Anderson, Fornell & Rust, R.T (1997) ^[7]. Customer satisfaction is a connected component of company objectives which can be achieved through understanding the requirements of the target market and the provision of needs satisfying products and service in convening and satisfying these requirements at a superior degree, thus, edifying and sustaining enduring and approving liaison with the target market. (Ibojo, Olawepo & Akinruwa, 2013) ^[16]. Thus, for a firm to persistently keep hold of its plentiful customers in the face of competition, the satisfaction of the requirements of the customers is tactically continually requisite (Ibojo *et al.*, 2013) ^[16]. The subject of customer

satisfaction has been attracting growing attention in the midst of researchers and practitioners as an elementary apparatus for augmenting firm's performance and profitability (Mohsam *et al.*, 2011), and the subject of customer satisfaction cannot be effortlessly discharged since the more contented the customers, the effortless they publicize information regarding the products (Mohsam *et al.*, 2011). This study adopts customer commitment as the measure of customer satisfaction.

Customer Commitment

Customer Commitment in relationship marketing literature has broadly been accredited to be a fundamental ingredient of any enduring business relationship (Stephens, 2000) ^[32]. As defined by Orisingher, Valentini and Angelis (2010) ^[23], commitment is the unrelenting longing to sustain a valuable relationship. When customers feel committed to a product (good or service) and trust the marketer, they are more probable to forgive an unfortunate product experience (Priluck, 2003). Commitment to a firm suggests that the customer has an investment in the relationship (Moorman, Zaltman, & Deshpande, 1992) ^[19], since committed customers will engage in repeated redraft from a firm and as well may advocate the business to others (Tan, 2014) ^[34]. Thus, commitment can be viewed as the maximum level of relational bonding which makes up a crucial fraction of a thriving relationship, for the reason that it constitutes a class of long-lasting intent put together to sustain an enduring relationship. Customer commitment necessitates three diverse dimensions: Affective commitment which expresses a positive attitude towards the future subsistence of the relationship, Instrumental commitment which is exposed each time some form of investment (time, other resources) in the relationship is completed, and Temporal commitment which designates that the relationship subsists over time (Tronvoll, 2012; Stephens, 2000) ^[35, 32].

Empirical Review

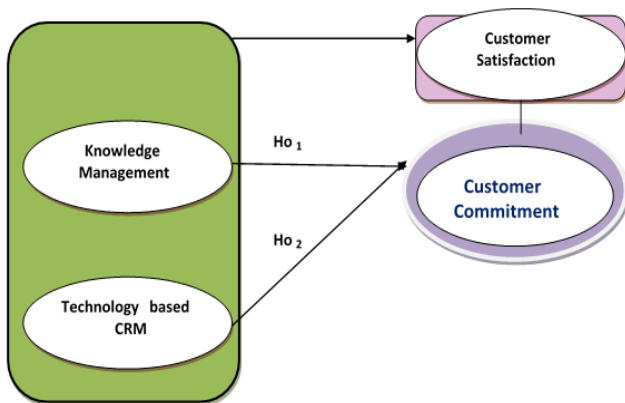
Alawiye-Adams and Babatunde (2014) ^[5] conducted an in-depth investigation of the connection between customer relationship management (CRM) and bank performances in the financial services industry by means of Data brought together from both primary, using three Nigerian Commercial Banks (Access Banks, Skye Bank and Wema Banks) and secondary sources. Data was analyzed using the chi-square analysis and the study established that customer relationship management has a positive influence on banks performances.

Abdul alem, Basri bin and Shaharuddin bin (2013) ^[1] investigated the relationship between CRM dimensions (customer orientation, CRM organization, knowledge management, and technology based CRM) and organization performance (financial, customer, internal process, and learning and growth) in Malaysian hotels. The study adopted a quantitative technique, using managers of 152 Malaysian 3 to 5 star hotels as respondents. Assembled data was analyzed with correlation and regression analysis and the results indicate that all dimensions of CRM (customer orientation, CRM organization, knowledge management and technology based CRM) have a positive and significant influence on dissimilar discernments of hotel performance. Conversely, CRM technology failed to confirm a significant relationship with learning and growth perspective of hotel performance. Nwankwo and Ajemunigbohun (2013) ^[21] evaluated the

association between CRM and customer retention by means of a cross-sectional survey design. The sample population consisted of 58 respondents composed of marketing managers and underwriting managers drawn from 35 insurance companies which were randomly selected from the directory of member companies. The study made use of stratified random sampling technique and collected data through structured questionnaire. The Simple linear regression and Kolmogorov-smirnov test were the statistical instruments employed for data analysis and the study found that CRM positively influences customer retention in the Nigeria’s Insurance Industry.

Hisham (2011) [15] explored the theoretical foundations of customer relationship management and its relationship to the marketing performance from the several perspectives. The results of the study showed positive relationship between CRM and marketing performance. There was also the influence of the dimensions of CRM on marketing performance in financial institutions.

Based on the review of literature, the following operational framework was constructed:



Source: Research’s conceptualization from review of related literature (2020)

Fig 1: Operational Framework of Customer Relationship Management and Customer Satisfaction.

Based on the operational framework of customer relationship management and customer satisfaction, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Ho1: Knowledge Management does not significantly influence Customer Commitment in automobile marketing firms in Rivers State of Nigeria.

Ho2: Technology-based CRM does not significantly influence Customer Commitment in automobile marketing firms in Rivers State of Nigeria.

Research Design

This study examines the impact of customer relationship management on customer satisfaction in automobile marketing firms in Rivers State of Nigeria. It is a survey study and so it adopted a descriptive design to elicit information from the respondents and a causal design to ascertain the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of 49 automobile marketing firms registered with the Commercial Department of the Rivers State Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Sampling and Sample Size Determination

To arrive at the sample size for the study, the Taro Yamane’s formula for determining sample size as depicted in the works of Kelechi (2008) in Ogbadu (2009) [22] was used.

Thus the formulae $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$

Where n is the sample size

N is the population 1 is constant and e is level of significance (i.e. 0.05). Therefore; $n = \frac{49}{1 + 49(0.05)^2}$ $n = \frac{49}{1 + 49(0.0025)}$ $n = \frac{49}{1 + 0.1225}$ $n = \frac{49}{1.1225} = 29$.

The sample size of this study was 29.

The simple random technique of probability sampling was utilized to select 29 firms from the sample and the respondents for the study were verified by contacting four managers from each of the 29 automobile marketing firms under study. The number of respondents contacted was: 29 multiplied by 4, which gives 116 respondents.

Method of Data Analysis

The data analysis involved the use simple regression analysis with the aid of computer by means of the statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 22.0 package, and the hypotheses raised earlier were tested in order to determine the direction and strength of the influence of the predictor variables on the criterion variables.

Statistical Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

Effect of Knowledge Management

Ho1: Knowledge Management does not significantly influence Customer Commitment in automobile marketing firms in Rivers State of Nigeria

H1: Knowledge Management significantly influence Customer Commitment in automobile marketing firms in Rivers State of Nigeria

Table 1: Effect of Knowledge Management on Customer Commitment (N=100).

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the estimate
1	.400	.160	.155	4.255

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Knowledge Management
- b. Dependent Variable: Customer Commitment

The sum of customer commitment was regressed with the sum of knowledge management. The value of R is 0.400. The R²-value of 0.160% represents the correlation between knowledge management and customer commitment. It represents a very week correlation between knowledge management and customer commitment. This means that 16% of the change in customer commitment is spelt out by the independent variable. It shows that knowledge management makes a contribution of 16% to every change in customer commitment, while 84% of the changes are not spelt out. Since for hypothesis one, the significant is .000 which is less than 0.05; there is a significant influence of knowledge management on customer commitment.

Effect of technology-based CRM on customer commitment

Ho2: Technology-based CRM does not significantly influence Customer Satisfaction in automobile marketing firms in Rivers State of Nigeria

H2: Technology-based CRM significantly influence Customer Satisfaction in automobile marketing firms

in Rivers state of Nigeria.

Table 2: Effect of Technology-Based CRM on Customer Commitment (N=100).

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the estimate
1	.507	.257	.252	3.586

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Technology-based CRM
 b. Dependent Variable: Customer Commitment

The sum of customer satisfaction was regressed with the sum of technology-based CRM. The value of R is 0.507. The R² value of 0.257% represents the correlation between technology-based CRM and customer commitment. It represents a weak correlation between technology-based CRM and customer commitment. This means that 26% of the change in customer commitment is spelt out by the independent variable. It shows that technology-based CRM makes a contribution of 26% to every change in customer commitment, while 74% of the changes are not spelt out. Since for hypothesis two, the significant is .000 which is less than 0.05; there is a significant, influence of technologybased CRM on commitment.

Discussion of Findings

Knowledge management is significant as a baton that enhances customer commitment. The study's findings reveal that knowledge management has a moderate, positive and significant influence on customer commitment. From this finding, it is understood that when knowledge management is properly channeled, it triggers customer commitment, since knowledge management positions effectively as a central managerial source that powers the diffusion of knowledge on the subject of customer commitment, serving as a vital instrument to reinforce firm's attachment with the customers, and realize sustainable competitive advantage. The study's finding agrees and supports the findings of Akroush *et al.* (2011)^[4], Sin *et al.* (2005)^[30] and Yim *et al.* (2005)^[30] who found that knowledge performs a basic function in the formation of improved customer interactions which positively influence firm's performance.

Further, on the influence of technology-based CRM on customer commitment, H₀₂ was rejected and H₂ accepted. The study's finding confirms that technology-based CRM has a positive and significant influence on customer commitment. If automobile marketing firms display sound technology-based CRM policies, it will demonstrate the best of professional competency on the firms and positive outcome, since they will advance their firm's capability to sustain cost-effective customer relationships. Thus, technology-based CRM should be persistently considered and reflected upon by all stakeholders in the automobile marketing sector to enhance customer satisfaction. The study's finding is in line with the studies of Abdullateef (2011)^[3] and Sin *et al.* (2005)^[30] who found that CRM technology has a significant positive influence on organization's performance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This work focused on investigating the influence of customer relationship management on customer commitment of automobile marketing firms in Rivers State of Nigeria, and it is palpable from the findings that there is contained influence of customer relationship management on customer commitment as the results of the analysis demonstrate that

the variables of customer relationship management (knowledge management and technologybased CRM) significantly influence customer commitment. The study thus, concludes that, customer relationship management positively and significantly influences customer commitment of automobile marketing firms in Rivers State of Nigeria and proffers the following recommendations:

1. Automobile marketing firms' management should position strategically, technology- based CRM and knowledge management to attract customer commitment to their firms.
2. Management of automobile marketing firms should package the attributes of customer relationship management identified by this study and link them to customer commitment. This is necessary because the study showed that the attributes of customer relationship management significantly influence customer commitment.

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