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Effect of Customer Relationship Management on Repeat Patronage in Ado-Ekiti Retail Organizations

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Abstract

The study focused on the relationship between customer relationship management and repeat patronage in Ado-Ekiti retail organizations. Specifically, the study examined the relationship between customer service, complain handling management, customer intimacy and repeat patronage. The study used survey research design. Data was gathered from primary source. The target populations for the study comprise of customers of selected retail organization (supermarkets and food stores) in Ado-Ekiti under study. purposive sampling techniques was used to draw a sample of 180 from the respondents. Questions structured on a 5-point Likert scale were used in the survey to obtain responses from participants. Data from 180 respondents were analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation to examine the relationship between customer service, complaint handling, customer intimacy and repeat patronage. The findings based on the statistical tool utilised in the study revealed that there was strong significant relationship between customer service, complain handling management, customer intimacy and repeat patronage. The study conclusion relied on the findings. The study attracts the following recommendations: The management of retail outlet in Ado- Ekiti should improve their strategies to boost customer service, they should develop a measure to handle complain effectively in order to encourage repeat patronage of consumer goods and they should imbibe the strategy to create customer intimacy to entice numerous customers to repeat patronage of consumer goods.

Introduction

Retail organizations across various categories depend on customers to survive in a competitive business environment. Retail business owners must establish favorable relationships with customers from different dimensions to sustain their business. The appropriate marketing strategy to adopt for achieving business success is customer relationship management. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is an approach to managing a company's engagement with current and potential customers by creating a trustworthy partnership (Bhardwaj et al., 2021). The CRM approach aims to provide consumers with better benefits and build strong consumer connections. CRM systems allow businesses to communicate independently and at relatively low costs with large customer groups. The implementation of CRM plays an important role in increasing company profitability. Companies become more

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profitable when customers are satisfied with the services provided, which fosters customer loyalty. Therefore, the relationship between CRM, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty is interdependent. By implementing a CRM strategy, companies can enhance their profitability (Qalbi, Chan, Barkah & Tresna, 2022).

In today's retail climate, customers expect more facilities and anticipate businesses to offer a broader range of products and services. Companies should consider consumers' needs, desires, and buying behavior, and focus on developing and managing experiences that build optimal customer experiences (Nazar, Ramzani & Temoor Anjum, 2018). The overall aim of the company should be to use technology and CRM principles to foster customer loyalty. Businesses can gather individual customer experiences, formulate custom solutions, and develop mutually beneficial relationships (Aakanksha & Sharma, 2021). CRM is a tool that attracts new customers and retains existing ones. CRM can be defined as a customer-focused business strategy aimed at enhancing customer satisfaction and increasing loyalty by offering fast and customized services according to customer requests. By utilizing CRM, organizations can build customer relationships through improved information management (Hardjono & San, 2017). CRM involves maintaining better customer relationships, building networks with individual customers through the services offered, and strengthening the bond between the company and the customer, ultimately adding value to the company (Kampani & Jhamb, 2020).

CRM is a strategy used by organizations to manage business relationships with their customers. This includes maintaining long-term relationships with loyal and profitable customers (Navimipour & Soltani, 2016). CRM is primarily concerned with customer-focused companies that engage in building long-term, mutually beneficial relationships. It helps identify and convert potential customers, developing new relationships based on past interactions and records. Despite the growing recognition of CRM's role in enhancing customer retention, retail organizations in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria, have not fully leveraged this concept to drive repeat patronage (Adefarasin & Toludare, 2018). This study addresses this gap by empirically testing the impact of CRM on repeat patronage in Ado-Ekiti retail organizations.

In my offline and online research, I found that most studies conducted on the independent variables are numerous, but the dependent variables are often conceptual in nature and lack empirical validation. Additionally, none of the studies explored the effect of CRM on repeat patronage in Ado-Ekiti retail organizations. Few academic studies have addressed this area, and some lack empirical validation. This study aims to fill this gap by empirically correlating CRM with repeat patronage in Ado-Ekiti retail organizations. The main objective of the study is to examine the relationship between CRM and repeat patronage. The specific objectives are to examine the relationship between customer service, complaint handling management, customer intimacy, and repeat patronage.

Literature Review

Customer Relationship Management

The capability of CRM is the tool that attracts new customers and retains the existing customers. CRM also can define as a customer-focused business strategy which aims

to enhance customer satisfaction and increase their loyalty by offering fast and customized services according to customer request. According to Mohammad et al. (2013), the concept of CRM can be defined in different ways meaning that different thing to different people, depending on context and other contingent factors. Customer Relationship Management is the strategic use of information, processes, technology, and people to manage the customer's relationship with company (Marketing, Sales, Services, and Support) across the whole customer life cycle (Kincaid, 2013. Padmavathy (2012) defined CRM as a set of customer-oriented activities supported by organizational strategy and technology, and is designed to improve customer interaction in order to build customer loyalty and increase profits over time. Customer relationship management is concept that manage the customer relationship initiation, maintenance, and termination across all customer contacts points in order to maximize value relationship with customers.

In previous research, Kotler and Armstrong (2012) defined CRM as "the overall process of building and maintaining profitable customer relationships by delivering superior customer value and satisfaction. It involves the integration of marketing, sales, customer service, and the supply-chain functions of the organization to achieve greater efficiencies and effectiveness in delivering customer value. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) practices are business strategies designed to reduce costs and increase profitability by solidifying customer loyalty. From the customer perspective, Buttle cited in Fiiwe, Egele, Ozo, Obasiabara, (2023) views it as a systematic process to manage the customer relationship initiation, maintenance, and termination across all customer contact points to maximize the value of the relationship portfolio. Also, Masrujeh (2012) defined CRM as a set of customer-oriented activities supported by organizational strategy and technology and is designed to improve customer interaction to build customer loyalty and increase profits over time.

Components of Customer Relationship Management

Customer service

Customer service is defined as an organization's ability to meet the needs and desires of its customers. Excellent customer service is a vital part of marketing for agritourism enterprises. It is the ability of an organization to consistently exceed the expectations of its customers. Customer service is the support, assistance, and advice provided by a company to its customers both before and after they buy or use its products or services. Customer service is a critical factor in ensuring buyer satisfaction, retaining customers, and growing a business. Customer service is also considered a key aspect of servant leadership (Grant, 2024). Good customer service is the lifeblood of any business. The purpose of customer service is to create loyal customers and attract new customers through word of mouth.

Good customer service centres on forging genuine human connections. Great customer service marries the efficiency of artificial intelligence (AI) with the empathy of human agents, ensuring swift, seamless, and tailored support. Companies that deliver excellent customer service understand that the customer is always human, harnessing intelligent technology to craft experiences with a personal touch. Good customer service can change customers' perceptions of a company. It can make

customers feel appreciated, help you develop relationships with them, and facilitate business growth. In this guide, we cover 11 ways to deliver excellent customer service and create an outstanding customer experience (Wren, 2024). Good customer service is critical for retaining and acquiring customers.

Complaint handling management

Complaint is an "expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organization, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required". complaint management may be considered as a key or an essential variable within a service- based relationship. Complaints are an important way for the management of an organization to be accountable to the public, as well as providing valuable prompts to review organizational performance and the conduct of people that work within and for it (Ombudsman Western Australia, 2020). Complaints should be acknowledged promptly. Complainants and, if applicable, the person who is the subject of the complaint, should be kept informed of progress and the outcome of the complaint. Complaints should be addressed promptly in order of urgency and staff should be aware of any target timelines for resolving complaints.

Customer complaint management refers to the application of management principles in handling customer complaints" It requires planning, organizing, controlling and directing of activities towards identifying, anticipating, communicating and responding to new complaints as they come' Agu cited in Oru, and Madumere (2022). Customer complaints should be met with interest and diligence leaving no room for negative responses. This might only be achieved if enough time is reserved for caring about the customer's complaint and solving it (Odabaşı cited in Bengül, & Yılmaz, 2018). The ties between the customer and the firm would be strengthened if customer complaints were correctly answered in transparent complaint solving processes that involve the customer in the process, showing due respect and care (Barlow and Moller cited in Bengül, & Yılmaz, 2018).). Customers become return customers when they believe that the firm takes earnest care of their complaints and would make every effort to solve issues (Hansen et. al., cited in Bengül, & Yılmaz, 2018). Complaints should be considered as an indicator of organizational performance assessment, signaling problems or failures in internal processes that need quick recovery in order to avoid loss of profitable customers (Oru, & Madumere, 2022).

Customer intimacy

Customer intimacy is one of the identified paradigms, which helps organizations to manage relationships with customers for mutual benefits (Treacy and Wiersema cited in Ose, 2017). Customer intimacy is a process of alignment of needs and values of the customers it deals with the understanding of the Customer their needs and wants, creating customer intimacy has evolved as a business approach which deals with interacting with the customers in order to learn more about them and understand their requirements about the product and services. Customer intimacy focuses on building a long-term relationship with the clients by building a mind-set which is customer focused and earning their trust (Ramgade, et al., 2022).

Customer repeat purchase

Repeat Purchase also known as Repurchase or Replacement Sale is when consumer purchases the same brand that replaces the previous purchase which is already consumed. To increase repeat purchase, there is need to pay more attention to customers than competition, and then repeat purchases can be garnered. Either as salesperson or a corporate organization, repeat sales are necessary to make profits (Fiiwe, Egele, Ozo, & Obasiabara, 2023). According to Porter (2017), repeat purchase is the purchase by a consumer of same-brand or product as bought on a previous occasion. A repeat purchase is an indicator of a degree of customer loyalty to a brand. It is also an opportunity for marketers to establish longterm customer relationships.

Ehrenberg (2020) opined that repeat- buying is any situation where a person buys the item in question more than once. It is one aspect of the way in which consumers buy fast - moving goods. These are the kinds of products which are bought fairly frequently, like the various lines of transport services, health services and so on, which tend to be generally available at different outlets. In as far as the same person patronizes any company offering those services more than once within a relatively short time- period, such as a week, a month, or a year, the notion of repeat- purchase becomes particularly relevant. Repeat purchase intention is a purchase from the same customer more than three times (Moriuchi & Takahashi, 2016). Many studies are trying to understand what determine customer purchase intention in purchasing decision. There are five stages of buying process: recognition of the need, search of information, evaluation of alternatives, buying decision, and post-purchase behaviour (Kotler, 2003). Customer repeat purchases, indicates that a customer keeps purchasing from the firm, as long as there is need for the firm's product by the customer. This repeat purchases by the customer show cases that the customer derives satisfaction after using the product.

Conceptual Model Customer Relationship Management and Repeat Patronage

This Conceptual model shows the relationship between customer relationship management and repeat patronage. Both manufacturing firms, retail organization and service organization depend on this model to visualize their business objectives. Every business-oriented organization beef up their customer service to convince customer for continuous patronage. Good customer service can change customers' perceptions of a company. It can make customers feel appreciated, help you develop relationships with them, and facilitate business growth (Wren, 2024). Business firms depend on customers to survive. Also complain handling management is of value to satisfy customer desire in building trust on business firms which gear towards repeat patronage of their product, Customer complaints involve the practice of focusing on customers' interest and diligence leaving no room for negative responses. This might only be achieved if enough time is reserved for caring about the customer's complaint and solving it (Odabaşı cited in Bengül, & Yılmaz, 2018). Moreover, Customer relationship management can be strengthened by customer intimacy. Intimacy with customer entice customers to become attached with the business firms which encourage repeat patronage. Customer intimacy focuses on building a long-term relationship with the clients by building a mind-set which is customer focused and earning their trust (Ramgade, et al., 2022). This conceptual

model of customer relationship management and repeat patronage, if consummate into business practice can assist in building continuous repeat patronage for business firm across the globe.

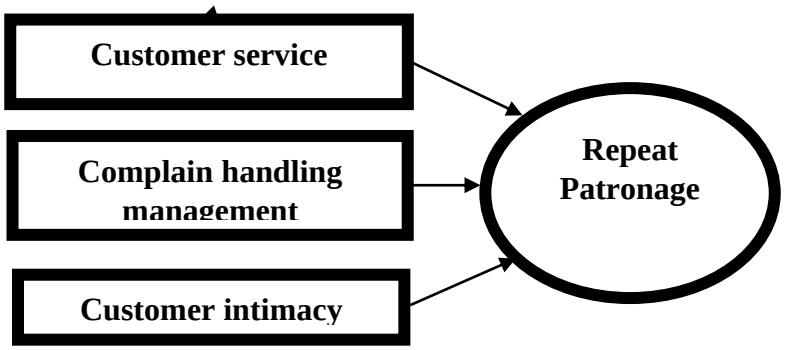

Figure 1: Conceptual model
Source: Researcher

Empirical Review

Obi, (2022) conducted a study on relationship marketing and customer patronage: moderating role of organizational policies: a study of May And baker Pharmaceutical company, Ota, Ogun State The objectives of the study were to ascertain the extent to which customer service influences customer satisfaction and to find out the degree to which organizational policies moderate customer purchase decision-making. The instrument used for gathering data for the study was copies of questionnaire administered to respondents that were customers of May and Baker. A total of 200 copies of questionnaire were administered and 174 were correctly completed and returned for analysis. Descriptive research method was adopted. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study using regression analysis. The results of the hypotheses tested validated the point that effective relationship marketing serves as a potent factor for achieving superior customer patronage and boosting business bottom-line. Nevertheless, organizational policies are to be streamlined in such a way that they do not adversely affect customer patronage. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that modern organizations should devote more time and attention to training employees to equip them with both hard and soft skills to deliver excellent relationship marketing in order to enhance business performance.

Dike and Chukwuanu (2021) conducted a study on the effect of customers‟ relationship management strategy on customers‟ loyalty in shipping companies in Lagos State. The specific objectives were to: examine the effect of relationship development on customers‟ patronage base in shipping companies in Lagos State, (ii) ascertain the effect of complaint handling on customers‟ repeated patronage in shipping companies in Lagos State, and determine the effect of customers‟ technology adoption on customers‟ satisfaction in shipping companies in Lagos State. The Study adopted descriptive survey research design. The study used structured questionnaire to obtain data. The sample size of 371 respondents was drawn from population of the study which consists of 5,168 staffs of Mediterranean shipping company, King shipping trading, and Genesis Worldwide shipping company

Ltd, all in Lagos State, Nigeria. Research questions were answered using frequency, mean and standard deviation. The hypotheses stated were tested using single regression. The findings of the study revealed that there is a positive and significant effect of relationship development on customers‟ patronage base in shipping companies in Lagos State, Nigeria (t -statistics (43.312) >p-value (0.000). the study revealed that there is a positive and significant effect of complaint handling on customers‟ repeated patronage in shipping companies in Lagos State, Nigeria (t-statistics (48.491) > p-value (0.000). the study also revealed that there is a positive and significant effect of customers‟ technology adoption on customers‟ satisfaction in shipping companies in Lagos State, Nigeria (t-statistics (52.292) >p-value (0.000). The study concluded that there was positive and significant effect of customer relationship management on customers‟ loyalty in shipping companies in Lagos State. The study recommended that shipping companies should give sense of belonging to customers and be commitment to develop relationship with partners and customers to ensure repeated patronage from them.

Ohazulike, (2019) conducted a study on customer relationship management: an effective tool for repeat purchases. The objective of the study is to examine customer relationship management: an effective tool for repeat purchases. Method adopted is survey research design. The study adopted social exchange theory (SET) which is the theoretical framework. Data was collected with the use of questionnaire and analysed by application of Likert scale of questioning at five points. The study found out that customer relationship management is an indispensable tool in today's business among others. The implication of the study is that firms should ensure that better customer services are rendered. It is recommended that organizations should use the right social, financial and structural benefits to develop stronger customer relationships.

Glory et al., (2021) conducted a study on effect of relationship marketing on customer retention in the telecommunications industry. The study specifically examines the effects of customer care, communication, trust-building and service quality on customer retention in the telecommunications context. The study adopted survey research design. A structured questionnaire was used to obtain primary data from 198 customers of MTN Nigeria Plc and Globacom Nigeria Plc in Calabar. The data were analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistics, while the hypotheses developed for the study were tested using multiple linear regression. Consequently, the findings of the study revealed that customer care, communication, trust building, and service quality had significant positive effects on customer retention of telecommunication firms in Calabar. Therefore, the study recommended that: telecommunications companies should strengthen their customer care capability by using trained service professionals to elicit and promptly resolve customers enquiries and complaints; telecommunications companies should improve communications with customers by opening up more channels such as phone calls, direct messaging, social media and email through which information can be transmitted to subscribers to enhance informed patronage decisions; and it is imperative for telecommunications companies to consolidate customers' trust in their delivery capabilities by demonstrating through effective service delivery that they are capable of satisfactorily meeting the service needs of subscribers.

Methodology

The researcher used survey research design. Data was gathered from primary source. The target populations for the study comprised of customers of selected retail organization (Supermarkets and Food stores) in Ado-Ekiti metropolis under study. purposive sampling techniques was used to draw a sample of 180 from the respondents. Purposive sampling was chosen due to the need to capture insights from customers with regular patronage of the selected retail outlets, ensuring the relevance and reliability of the data. Questions structured on a 5-point Likert scale were used in the survey to obtain responses from participants. Each respondent's rating is scored as Strongly Agrees = 1, Agrees = 2, Neutral = 3, Disagrees = 4, and Strongly Disagrees = 5. An individual's score is determined by the sum of all possible points (Gay et al cited in Tanujaya, et al., 2022). Content validity was used to determine the validity of the instrument by given to research professional to make adjustments and corrections necessary to evaluate the instrument and the reliability test value was analysed using 5 items on each variable: Customer Service = 0.92, Complain handling management = 0.89, Customer intimacy 0.90 and Repeat Patronage = 0.87 using the Cronbach Alpha test. Pearson moment correlation statistical tool was used to test the hypothesis through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The decision criteria of the hypothesis rely on the relationship between the p-value and level significance of 0.05. When the p-value is less than the level of significance of 0.05 we reject the null hypothesis (**H_0**) and accept alternative hypothesis (**H_I**).

Results

Hypothesis one

H_{O1}: Customer Service has no significant relationship with repeat patronage.

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics of customer service and repeat patronage with mean (28.26, 18.81) and standard deviation (3.890, 2.754) respectively emanated from 180 responses, while table 2 shows the Pearson product moment correlation of customer service and repeat patronage of which was found to be strongly positive

Table 2 Correlations[b]

		Customer Service	Repeat Patronage
Customer Service	Pearson (r)	1	.997**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Repeat Patronage	Pearson (r)	.997**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

b. Listwise N=180

and statistically significant (r = .997, p < .000). Hence, H1 was supported. This shows that an increase in customer service would lead to a higher repeat patronage Therefore, customer service has significant relationship with repeat patronage

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Customer Service	28.26	3.890	180
Repeat Patronage	18.81	2.754	180

Hypothesis Two

H_{O2}: Complain handling management has no significant relationship with repeat patronage.

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics of complain handling management and repeat patronage with mean (28.28, 18.81) and standard deviation (3.685, 2.754) respectively emanated from 180 responses, while table 4 shows the Pearson product moment correlation of complain handling management and repeat patronage which was found to be strongly positive and statistically significant (r = .993, p < .000). Hence, H2 was supported. This shows that an increase in complain handling management would lead to a higher repeat patronage. Therefore, complain handling management has significant relationship with repeat patronage.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Complain handling management	28.28	3.685	180
Repeat Patronage	18.81	2.754	180

Table 4. Correlations[b]

		Customer Intimacy	Repeat Patronage of Consumer goods
Complain handling management	Pearson Correlation	1	.993**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Repeat Patronage	Pearson Correlation	.993**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

b. Listwise N=180

Hypothesis Three

H_{O3}: Customer intimacy has no significant relationship with repeat patronage of consumer goods.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Customer Intimacy	18.81	2.754	180
Repeat Patronage	28.25	3.728	180

Table 6. Correlations[b]

		Customer Intimacy	Repeat Patronage of Consumer goods
Customer Intimacy	Pearson (r)	1	.990**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Repeat Patronage	Pearson (r)	.990**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
b. Listwise N=180

Table 6 shows descriptive statistics of customer intimacy and repeat patronage of consumer goods with mean (18.81, 28.25) and standard deviation (2.754, 3.728) respectively emanated from 180 responses, while table 7 shows the Pearson product moment correlation of customer intimacy and repeat patronage which was found to be strongly positive and statistically significant (r = .990, p < .000). Hence, H3 was supported. This shows that an increase in customer intimacy would lead to a higher repeat patronage. Therefore, customer intimacy has significant relationship with repeat patronage.

Discussion

Hypothesis one revealed that customer service has significant relationship with repeat patronage. Since Pearson product moment correlation found to be strongly positive and statistically significant (r = .997, p < .000). This findings was affirmed by Amaresan, (2024) that customer service direct connection between your customers and your business. It retains customers and extracts more value from them. By providing top-notch customer service, businesses can recoup customer acquisition costs.

Hypothesis two revealed that complain handling management has significant relationship with repeat patronage. Since Pearson product moment correlation found to be strongly positive and statistically significant (r = .993, p < .000). This finding was affirmed by Singh (2019) that customer complaints give a chance to work with customers to perfect company's product. Better handling of customer complaints also swings customers into becoming loyal patrons. Embrace customer complaints and handle them effectively to make product, and company, better.

Hypothesis three revealed that customer intimacy has significant relationship with repeat patronage. Since Pearson product moment correlation found to be strongly positive and statistically significant (r = .990, p < .000). This finding was affirmed by Patel (2024) customer intimacy is beneficial for almost all industries and business models; it is a vital practice for companies that thrive off of long-term collaborations instead of one-off purchases. Its strategy includes close customer communication and resource creation to help customers get the most out of the products or

services. customer intimacy is catering to customer needs and meeting their expectations. It is putting a focus on relationship marketing and fostering long-term client relationships and customer lifetime value.

Conclusion

From the finding, it was revealed that customer service, complain handling management and customer intimacy have significant effect on repeat patronage of consumer goods. This study highlights the critical role of Customer relationship management in driving repeat patronage in retail organizations, emphasizing the need for enhanced customer service, complaint handling, and intimacy strategies.

Customer relationship management as a comprehensive strategy and process of acquiring, retaining, and partnering with selective customers to create superior value for the company and the customer. It involves the integration of marketing, sales, customer service, and the supply-chain functions of the organization to achieve greater efficiencies and effectiveness in delivering customer value. Its practices are business strategies designed to reduce costs and increase profitability by solidifying customer loyalty. Customer relationship management is concerned primarily with only those customer-focused companies and engaged in building long-term mutually beneficial relationships. It helps identify and convert future customers and helps develop new relationships based on past track records and new customers.

This study limits its scope to this geographical area due some constraints such as time factor and financial implication but can be recommended for further studies to cover other importance variables and geographical areas.

Recommendations

First, the management of retail outlet in Ado- Ekiti should improve their strategies to boost customer service. Retail organizations should invest in customer relationship management software that tracks customer interactions. Second, hey should develop a measure to handle complain effectively in order to encourage repeat patronage of consumer goods. Complaints, allowing for personalized follow-ups and faster complaint resolution, both of which are key drivers of repeat patronage. Finally, they should imbibe the strategy to create customer intimacy to entice numerous customers to repeat patronage of consumer goods. Customer intimacy focuses on building a long-term relationship with the clients by building a mind-set which is customer focused and earning their trust.

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