



RELATIONSHIP MARKETING AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF THE HOTEL INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA

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Cite this article:

Otobo P., Banabo E. (2024), Relationship Marketing and Organizational Performance of the Hotel Industry in Nigeria. British Journal of Management and Marketing Studies 7(3), 223-241. DOI: 10.52589/BJMMS-YWKCFKU7

Manuscript History

Received: 2 Jun 2024

Accepted: 4 Aug 2024

Published: 9 Sep 2024

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigates the influence of relationship marketing and organizational performance in the hospitality industry in Bayelsa State. It adopts the cross sectional research design to elicit information about employees' empathy and satisfaction and how these antecedents give rise to increased market share and sales volume of hotels in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. The population consists of all existing hotels in the state and their workforce from which a sample size of seventy-six (76) employees was drawn using the simple random sampling technique. These samples were issued self report questionnaires and the collected data were analyzed using Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient through the aid of SPSS version 25. The findings revealed that relationship marketing (empathy and satisfaction) had a positive and significant correlation with performance (market share and sales volume), which is influenced by participants' level of education. Based on this, it was concluded that relationship marketing dimensions of empathy and satisfaction are key predictors of organizational performance in terms of market share and sales volume among hotels in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. The study therefore recommends that since in today's competitive world, customers are in the center of organization's attention and their satisfaction is the main factor in gaining competitive advantage, therefore, continuous training of employees on relationship marketing approach should be encouraged in the hotel operations as it would help hotels to retain valuable customers and equally attract potential ones. Also, hotels in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State should only employ individuals with requisite knowledge of themselves (self awareness) as this will reflect on the way they serve customers.*



INTRODUCTION

In recent times, the Nigerian economy has experienced rapid growth in the hospitality industry, leading to the emergence of hotels, fast food restaurant, night clubs and cruise lines (Hospitality Institute Report, 2018). Hotel, which is an integral part of the hospitality industry, has gone beyond providing rooms and jobs but also extends by paying taxes as well as contributing to the Gross Domestic Product of Nigeria's economy (Amalu & Ajake, 2015). Hotels happen to be a strong feature in the hospitality industry by forming a major attraction for both residents and travelers, who rely on hotels for their comfort and business activities. However, with a wide array of hotels in the country, stakeholders in the country believe that the industry is arguably one of the most buoyant sectors of the Nigeria economy; yet it recorded the highest rate of business failures due to poor customer service, poor energy supply, skilled labour shortage caused by a few entrepreneurs with little or no knowledge of the working of the industry (Hospitality Institute Report, 2018) as well as poor relationship marketing approaches. There is no denying the fact that responding to customers' need as well as maintaining customers' relationship needs, purchasing patterns and behaviors remains one of the most important factors that organizations need to maintain competitive edge. However, in order to select the proper marketing strategy, hotels need adequate information about their customers and their buying behaviors competitors. One of the best approaches for achieving this is to adopt relational marketing approach in order to provide the best indications of what drives customer satisfaction, loyalty and increased patronage.

Relationship marketing is not a new concept because it has been in existence for long in the marketing literature. The concept (relationship marketing) is a specific business philosophy that understands trade as a managed relationship and product as a process (Johanesova & Vanova, 2020) which is a form of marketing that revolves around the fact that existing customers will make repetitive purchase and thus contribute to the continuity of firms. However, relationships are only appropriate when they create higher value than transactional exchange (Izquierdo, Cillan & Gutierrez, 2015) as top firms know the relevance of establishing a strong relationship with customers to ensure long term profitability and sustainable core revenues (Abdullah, Abdelmo'ti & Abdalelah, 2014). Relationship marketing is an aspect of the customer relationship management that focuses on customer loyalty and long-term customer engagement rather than on short-term goals, such as customer acquisition and individual sales. Unfortunately, despite the relevance attached to these relational approaches as a means of enhancing businesses, hotels in Nigeria, especially the ones in Bayelsa State, have failed to adopt these relational approaches as a means of retaining their customers for long-term profitability, rather choosing to place increasing attention on transactional marketing approach. Perhaps, most management of these hotels failed to understand that customer relationship marketing is replacing the traditional 'four Ps' of marketing (product, price, place and promotion) because relationships with customers are key to stability in an increasingly dynamic market. Much has not been done to actually ascertain if most hotels in the state are out of business due to poor relationship marketing approach or other factors. This among other many challenges necessitated the study in order to investigate the root causes of hotel business failures and low patronage in the state.

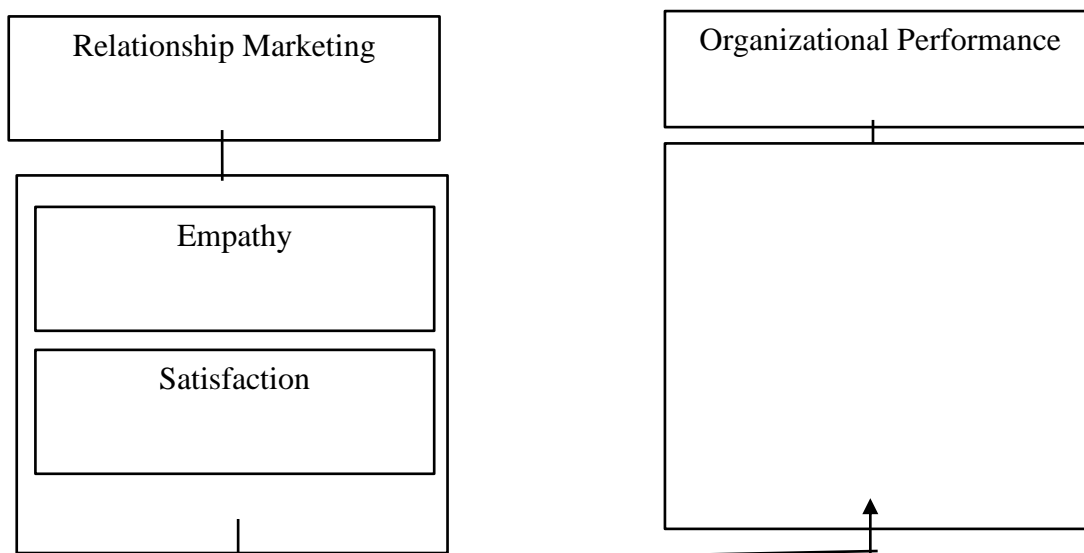


Statement of the Problem

Hotels play vital roles in several economies due to their provision of employment opportunities, rendering of quality services, promotion of the tourism sector as well as contribution to the Gross Domestic Product of nations. However, the industry is facing a lot of challenges due to poor relational approach and, as such, employees are no longer putting their best due to poor remuneration, deteriorating work environment, poor power supply, insecurity (Amah & Ule, 2015), bad road network and low patronage due to low purchasing power. The industry is also faced with a high level of employee turnover arising from poor managerial style and planning, illness, death, ageing workforce, and search for better opportunities (Samuel & Amah, 2018) which has given rise to business failures. This challenge has affected the tourism and hospitality sector of the economy, especially in Yenagoa. Managers and owners of these hotels are now facing the challenges of low productivity and, as a result, hotels who try to surpass these challenges always inflate the prices of their services, thereby making customers and tourists uncomfortable due to poor relationship marketing approach.

The situation has forced many into extinction and some others into rapid redevelopment of their offering. Though the smart operators still have room for growth, unfortunately, the increasing awareness for value creation has given credence to customers now craving new innovation, security, ambience environment and the likes to match their taste, preference and values. Based on the foregoing challenges facing the hotel industry in Bayelsa State, the researcher deemed it necessary to investigate the extent to which organizational performance of hotel business can be enhanced within the prefecture of relationship marketing in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Source: Researchers' conceptualization adapted from Abtin and Pouramiri (2016), Abdullah et al. (2014), Mwangi (2013) and Peter (2018).



Objectives of the Study

The study is aimed at investigating the influence of relationship marketing and organizational performance in the hospitality industry in Bayelsa State with specific emphasis on hotels in Yenagoa. Specifically, the objectives of this study seek to investigate:

- i. the relationship between empathy and hotels' market share in Yenagoa.
- ii. the relationship between empathy and hotels' sales volume in Yenagoa.
- iii. the relationship between satisfaction and hotels' market share in Yenagoa.
- iv. the relationship between satisfaction and hotels' sales volume in Yenagoa.

Research Questions

Based on the study objectives, the following research questions are raised to guide the study:

- i. What is the relationship between empathy and hotels' market share?
- ii. What is the relationship between empathy and hotels' sales volume?
- iii. What is the relationship between satisfaction and hotels' market share?
- iv. What is the relationship between satisfaction and hotels' sales volume?

Research Hypotheses

From the research questions raised, the following hypotheses are postulated to give answers to the questions:

- i. Empathy does not significantly influence hotels' market share.
- ii. Empathy does not significantly influence hotels' sales volume.
- iii. Satisfaction does not significantly influence hotels' market share.
- iv. Satisfaction does not significantly influence hotels' sales volume.

Significance of the Study

The practical significance of this study cannot be undermined in the sense that it will aid hotel managers and owners in Bayelsa State to x-ray the problems of low productivity in the hotel business activities and proffer suitable solutions that will alleviate the industry for better performance and growth for the entire economy.

Besides, guiding managers on how to increase productivity in their organizations, the theoretical significance will add to the existing body of knowledge by contributing to the growing literature on relationship marketing and performance of hospitality industries in their respective domain.



LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the social exchange theory of Blau (1964), Homans (1961), and Thibaut and Harold (1959). The central tenet of the exchange relationship is built on the behaviourism and economic theory where human actions are seen as a function of its payoff. The basic assumptions of the social exchange theory are built on the nature of individuals and their relationships (Sabatelli & Sheham, 1993). This relationship assumes the fact that individuals who involve in any interaction with others are rationally seeking to maximize profit for their businesses while minimizing cost. The exchange relationship centers on the interdependence of individuals. The interdependence rests on the norms of reciprocity, which means repayment (Gouldner, 1960) or results comes from the combination of both efforts.

The exchange relationship develops when employers show concern to employees for beneficial consequences. This simply means that hotel managers and owners that want to attain greater height in their quest for higher productivity should pay specific attention to its employees. This is the only way such employees can be motivated and committed to offering caring behaviours to customers within the organization. The idea is that employees' level of satisfaction at work can only increase when the exchange ideology is strong with adequate training. This exchange relationship involves a series of interactions that evolve into trusting, loyalty and mutual commitments. These interactions between organizations and employees who work together grow on daily bases and become stronger as both parties believe in the norms of reciprocity.

Conceptual Review

Relationship Marketing

The term relationship marketing is perceived differently in the marketing literature by scholars as it recognizes the long-term value of customer relationships that extend communication beyond intrusive advertising and sales promotional messages (Okwara & Iwuoha, 2019). The concept has emerged as a popular new paradigm due to the shift in focus from customer acquisition to customer retention. To Okwara and Iwuoha (2019), "relationship marketing is an arrangement where both the buyer and the seller have an interest in providing a more satisfying exchange." The exchange transcends the post purchase-exchange process with a customer to make richer contact by providing a more personalized purchase that uses experience to create stronger ties. Peter (2018) defined relationship marketing as a business process through which client relationships, customer loyalty and brand values are built and enhanced via marketing strategies and other related activities. Johanesova and Vanova (2020) defined relationship marketing as an aspect of the customer relationship management that focuses on customer loyalty and long-term customer engagement rather than on short-term goals such as customer acquisition and individual sales. Despite the various views among these scholars, there is an agreement that relationship marketing centers on long-term relationships that add value to both the customers, employees and organization through the provision of a satisfying exchange relationship among the parties involved. The concept (relationship marketing) is particularly applicable where the customers have many other options in the marketplace for the same product or service and, as such, he/she is entitled to make a selective decision (Mwangi, 2013). However, the concept is operationalized with several dimensions such as trust, commitment, empathy, communication, fulfilling promise, equity, satisfaction,



bonding, reciprocity, conflict handling, good experience and internal relationship marketing (Abdullah et al., 2014; Abtin & Pouramiri, 2016; Mwangi, 2013; Peter, 2018; Velnampy & Sivesan, 2012) but this study only adopts empathy and customer satisfaction.

Empathy

Empathy can be defined as the ability of a person to understand and share the feelings of emotion and trust with others. This person in question can be a working mate or a lower subordinate. Abdullah et al. (2014) defined empathy as seeking to understand someone else's desires and goals because it involves individual ability to view another parties' situations from the other perspective in a truly cognitive sense. Empathy is more than sympathy in which one can just understand the feelings of others. It is the quality which relates to everyone in an organization and has been given very much importance lately by organization (Velnampy & Sivesan, 2012) because the global environment of today requires every firm to get maximum market share and improve its productivity in order to optimize the business level (Mwangi, 2013). And as a dimension of business relationship that enables the parties involved to see the situation from the other's perspective, empathy seeks to understand somebody else's desires and goals. Empathy may be concerned with liking someone or some organization. In the initial stages of a relationship, it is important that the seller empathizes with the buyer, but, as the relationship develops, empathy from both parties becomes increasingly important. Liking the other on behalf of each party develops a close interpersonal and business relationship that gives a more positive outlook to each party.

Satisfaction

Satisfaction can be considered as the final basis in the modern marketing; therefore, the success of each business institution depends heavily on identifying and satisfying the superior customers' needs and demands (Abtin & Pouramiri, 2016). However, satisfaction is a customer's emotional response to his or her evaluation of the perceived discrepancy between his or her prior experience with an expectation of a product and an organization as well as the actual experienced performance as perceived after interacting with the organization and consuming the product (Abdullah et al., 2014). Satisfaction also refers to pleasant or unpleasant feelings caused by comparison between imaginative function and expectations (Velnampy & Sivesam, 2012). Thus, customer satisfaction is shaped by a comparison of expectations with perceived performance. However, Abdullah et al. (2014) believed that expectations provide the tools by which they may influence satisfaction. Hence, consumers do not use process performance because of lack of motivation or lack of ability but only rely on prior expectations for their satisfaction judgments. Thus, expectations remain a vital part of the satisfaction process.

Performance

Performance is the operational capability of the management of an organization tailored towards achieving predetermined goals and objectives of major shareholders that is used as a measure of organizational success (Igwe, Coker & Chukwu, 2016). It involves the ability of an organization to fulfill its mission through sound management and persistent rededication to achieving desired result (Mwangi, 2013). Performance enables effective organizations to be mission-driven, adaptable, customer-focused, entrepreneurial, outcomes-oriented and sustainable in their pursuit. Thus, creating flexible, high-performing, learning organizations is



the secret to gaining competitive advantage in a world that is not static. It comprises the actual output or results of an organization as measured against its intended outputs or goals and objectives. Performance helps businesses to periodically set goals that provide feedback to managers on progress towards these goals (Kellen, 2003) and as such can be measured financially or non-financially (Mohamad, Othman, Jabar & Abdul Majid, 2014). The study anchored its root on the nonfinancial performance measures because it focuses on the long-term achievement of the firm by looking at customer gratification, internal business process, sales volume, productivity, market share, service quality and employee fulfillment (Asagba, Coker & Okwudu, 2019; Mwangi, 2013; Peter, 2018; Sharmeela-Banu, Gengeswari & Padmashantini, 2013). Hence, the study chooses to adopt market share and sales volume components of performance for the purpose of this study.

Market Share

Market share is the percentage of total sales in an industry generated by a particular organization (Ezirim, 2010) that is translated into percentage units. It is calculated by taking the firm's sales over the period and dividing it by the total sales of the firm over the same period (Mwangi, 2013). Thus, market share is its portion of total sales in relation to the market or industry in which it operates. This metric is used to give a general idea of the size of an organization (hotel) in relation to its market and its competitors. However, Kalu (2008) referred to market share as the percentage measure of the share obtained by an individual company from the total market available. In this way, market share means the industries, narrow segment or particular geographic areas that can apply to the past, present and future time period. Hence, it indicates how an organization's marketing mix is more effective than its competitors because a decline in it may serve as a basis for investigating potential areas.

Sales Volume

Sales volume is an organization's total sales in terms of units or revenue for a specified period of time; thus, it refers to the number of units sold during a specific reporting period. Ezirim (2010) believed that sales volume is the combination of sales of all products in all territories for all customers. This period could be within a month, quarterly, or a year depending on what level of sales volume an individual firm is seeking to analyze. However, several factors are considered, which include the changing market conditions, general business conditions, conditions within the firm and conditions within the industry (Kalu, 2008). Thus, sales volume can be used to assess the health of a growing or contracting firm and knowing how to calculate sales volume gives an organization a strong grasp on product movement and potential shifts. However, sales volume is commonly used as an aid in determining the effectiveness of the selling effort in an organization of which the hotel industry is not left out.



EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Okwara and Iwuoha (2019) empirically investigated the effect of relationship marketing on sales performance of the firms using descriptive survey design with a population of 80 respondents of which 50 were chosen as the sample size. The outcome revealed that relationship marketing aimed to build stable customer relationships and as well bridge customer exit by building barriers to customer switching. The study concluded that firms should apply relationship marketing rather than just being transactional marketing. Based on this conclusion, it was recommended that to cope with competition in the market, relationship marketers should endeavour to ensure customers reach the climax of the relationship ladder to achieve stable and strong customer relationships and improve sales.

Ashley, David and Rajan (2019) examined customer satisfaction and firm performance by analyzing 251 correlational studies from 96 published works between 1991 and 2017. While the satisfaction-performance relationship is positive and statistically significant on average ($r = .101$), more meaningful insights emerge from the explication of moderating and ediating relationships. Illustrative of these insights is the finding that satisfaction is more appropriately depicted as mediating the effects of selected marketing strategy variables on firm performance outcomes. Moreover, when satisfaction is viewed in the right setting using the right satisfaction and performance measures, a most favorable contingencies (MFC) perspective, the estimated correlation is reasonably strong ($r = .349$).

Abtin and Pouramiri (2016) investigated the impact of relationship marketing on customer loyalty enhancement in Kerman Iran Insurance Company. This study was carried out through a survey method using questionnaires as the main instrument. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to assess the relationship between loyalty as dependent variable and trust, satisfaction, management, communication, and competence as independent variables. The outcome revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between the variables.

Also, Kehinde, Adegbuyi and Borishade (2016) investigated the relationship between relationship marketing and sales performance in Nigeria with keen interest in customer satisfaction, reduction of perceived risks, customer loyalty and long- and short-term customer satisfaction. The study collected data using questionnaires in the banking sector of Ogun State and regression analysis was used for the analysis. The outcome found a positive and significant relationship which can be seen that did not include the brand value which this study added for conclusive findings on customer relationship marketing and performance.

Furthermore, Magasi (2015) in Tanzania investigated customer relationship marketing and its influence on customer retention in the banking sector. The findings revealed that satisfied customers do not always enter into long-term relationship with the firm. However the study concluded that a long-term customer-organization relationship is crucial in creating longer-term customer retention. The study used multiple regression analysis on data collected using questionnaires. It concentrated on customers' trust, commitment, satisfaction and relationship influence on customers' retention. The study however did not include brand value and customer relationship processes but only focused on customer royalty. Customer relationship marketing might only work if the three tenets are used together and not separately.

Abdullah et al. (2014) examined the impact of customer relationship marketing on customer satisfaction in the banking industry in KSA and Jordan. An e-mail questionnaire was designed



and sent to 500 hundred customers of Arab Bank in KSA and Jordan, creating two sample pools of respondents. A total of 151 of the collected questionnaires were valid. The study findings show medium to high degrees of positive attributes of the two samples towards customer relationship marketing dimensions (trust, commitment, communication, empathy, social bonding and fulfilling promises) on customer satisfaction. The findings also indicated different attitudes regarding the importance of customer relationship marketing dimension between the two samples. It also indicated different results regarding the impact of customer relationship marketing on customer satisfaction due to gender, age and educational level. Ultimately, the study suggested that Arab bank, whether in the study's two selected countries or in other countries where it has branches and operates from, should apply customer relationship marketing in order to maintain its market share in the market.

Mwangi (2013) investigated the influence of relationship marketing on performance of commercial banks in Kenya. The study used a descriptive survey design which involves identifying the characteristics of an observed phenomenon or exploring possible correlations among two or more phenomena. The target population of this study was all the 43 banks in Kenya. Data was collected through questionnaires administered through drop and pick method to the respondents. The raw data from questionnaires was checked for completeness, errors, and coded for analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Qualitative data was analyzed by use of content analysis. The study concluded that relationship marketing is about winning the customers at every sales encounter and that there are various marketing practices adopted by the commercial banks. And to a great extent, relationship marketing has enhanced customer satisfaction, repeat purchase, more customer referrals, shareholder value, and customer retention, an indication that retention marketing practices adopted had a positive impact on brand trust, customer satisfaction, repeat purchase, more customer referrals, shareholder value, customer retention and customer loyalty, hence their overall performance.

Mohamad et al. (2014) investigated the impact of customer relationship marketing practices to organizational performance through a proposed conceptual model in Malaysian small and medium enterprises (SMEs) food manufacturing industry, a model developed and empirically tested through survey data obtained from 369 organizations. The results indicated that customer relationship marketing practices have a significant positive effect on organizational performance. Similarly, the results revealed that enhanced key customer focus and relationship marketing leads to better organizational performance. Market turbulence was found to have a negative moderating effect on the relationship between customer relationship marketing practices and organizational performance. It was concluded that customer relationship marketing practices enhance organizational performance.

Rahman and Castelli (2013) examined the impact of empathy on leadership effectiveness among business leaders in the United States and Malaysia. The study was executed in a bid for businesses to manage their employees across varying cultures, different time zones, and complex organizational structures owing to the increasing challenges being faced due to global market challenges. The study identified the relevance of empathy as a pivotal leadership tool in today's global market. The study investigated the impact of empathy on leadership effectiveness by testing four hypotheses to determine the relationships between empathy, leadership effectiveness, and leaders' backgrounds using a sample of 216 business leaders located in the United States (51.9%) and Malaysia (48.1%). Davis's Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) was used to measure empathy and to test the impact of empathy on leadership effectiveness in the United States and Malaysia. The results indicated that American



business leaders have significantly higher empathy than Malaysian business leaders, and that leaders with higher empathy appear to be more effective. The clear implication is that multinational organizations need to develop leaders with high empathy skills.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the cross-sectional research design to investigate the influence of relationship marketing on organizational performance in the hospitality industry in Bayelsa State with specific emphasis on hotels. The study's nature gave rise to the positivist philosophical perspective as it involved the use of questionnaires to elicit information about employees' empathy and satisfaction and how these antecedents gave rise to increase market share and sales volume of hotels in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. The empathy scale was adapted from Shiu, Hair, Bush and Ortinao (2009) while the satisfaction scale was a combination of the researchers' effort and some items adapted from Gupta and Sahu (2015). The scale for market share and sales volume are purely from the researchers' effort after extensive literature review on the constructs. However, the sample size for the study consisted of seventy-six employees with each issued questionnaires by the researcher and his assistant using simple random sampling technique. The research instrument adopted a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree and its analysis was done using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient Statistical tool with the result presented below.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	45	59.2%
Female	31	40.8%
Age Bracket		
18-25 years	7	9.2%
26-30 years	25	32.9%
31-35 years	20	26.3%
36 years and above	24	31.6%
Education Level		
Master's degree and above	11	14.5%
Bachelor's degree/HND	46	60.5%
OND/NCE	13	17.1%
SSCE/WAEC	6	7.9%
Marital Status		
Married	39	51.3%
Single	34	44.7%
Others	3	3.9%



The table above presents the demographic information of respondents and this involves gender distribution, age, educational level of respondents and their marital status. From the gender distribution, it was discovered that 45 participants (representing 59.2%) were males while 31 (respondents 40.8%) were females. This shows that the majority of the study participants were males. The age distribution indicates that 7 respondents (9.2%) fall within the age bracket of 18-25 years; 25 respondents (32.9%) fall within the range of 26-30 years; 20 respondents (26.3%) fall within the age bracket of 31-35 years; and 24 respondents (31.6%) fall within the age bracket of 36 years & above. It therefore implies that respondents within the ages of 26-30 years dominate the hotel industry within the study domain. Furthermore, the educational level of participants proves that 6 (7.9%) are school certificate (WAEC) holders; 13 (17.1%) are NCE/OND holders; 46 (60.5%) are first degree holders while 11 (14.5%) are master's degree holders and above. It therefore implies that the majority of the respondents are educated. Finally, the marital status indicates that 34 (44.7%) are single, 39 (51.3%) are married, while 3 (3.9%) are others, probably divorcees or widowers.

Participants' Response Rate on the Dimensions of Relationship Marketing and Measures of Performance

Respondents' Analysis on Empathy

S/N	Scale Items	SA (5)	A	U (3)	DA (2)	SD (1)	TOTAL
1.	We give customers individual attention.	33 43.4%	28 36.8%	4 5.3%	6 7.9%	5 6.6%	76 100%
2.	Our staff deals with customers in a caring fashion.	24 31.6%	36 47.4%	7 9.2%	8 10.5%	1 1.3%	76 100%
3.	We have our customers' best interest at heart.	20 26.3%	37 48.7%	6 7.9%	12 15.8%	1 1.3%	76 100%
4.	We understand the needs of their customers.	30 39.5%	31 40.8%	10 13.2%	3 3.9%	2 2.6%	76 100%

Source: Survey Data, 2021.

Respondents' analysis on empathy scale items reveals that 43.4% of the study participants strongly agree with the fact their service employee gives customers individualized attention. On the second item, it was discovered that 47.4% of the respondents agree with the fact that service employees deal with customers in a caring fashion in the various hotels. Also, service employees proved to have the customers' best interest at heart as 48.4% attest to this. Furthermore, 40.8% of the participants agree that service employees understand the needs of their customers.



Respondents' Analysis on Satisfaction

S/N	Scale item	SA (5)	A	U (3)	DA (2)	SD (1)	TOTAL
6.	I often meet my customers' expectations than any other hotel.	24 31.6%	36 47.4%	7 9.2%	7 9.2%	2 2.6%	76 100%
7.	I am often satisfied with the kind of interaction I always have with our customers.	30 39.5%	31 40.8%	10 13.2%	3 3.9%	2 2.6%	76 100%
8.	I am satisfied with the level of services we render to customers.	20 26.3%	37 48.7%	6 7.9%	12 15.8%	1 1.3%	76 100%
9.	I am satisfied with the hotel service prices.	33 43.4%	28 36.8%	5 6.6%	5 6.6%	5 6.6%	76 100%
10.	Offering services from this hotel has been a worthwhile experience.	19 25.0%	35 46.1%	14 18.4%	6 7.9%	2 2.6%	76 100%

Source: Survey Data, 2021.

From the satisfaction scale items, it is revealed that 47.4% of the participants admit that their hotel employees completely meet customers' expectations than any other hotel. 40.8% equally agree that they were satisfied with the kind of interactions they often had with customers. 48.7% also agree that they were satisfied with the level of service they give to customers. 43.4% strongly agree that hotel prices in the study domain are okay, while 46.1% agree that using the services of these hotels were worthwhile.



Respondents' Analysis on Market Share

S/N	Scale item	SA (5)	A	U (3)	DA (2)	SD (1)	TOTAL
11.	I am satisfied with the current market share of my hotel?	29 38.2%	39 51.3%	6 7.9%	2 2.6%	- -	76 100%
12.	Expanding the market share of our business will be beneficial for the reputation of our hotel?	14 18.4%	36 47.4%	16 21.1%	6 7.9%	4 5.3%	76 100%
13.	I expect the market share of our hotel to increase in the next 3 years?	43 56.6%	30 39.5%	- -	2 2.6%	1 1.3%	76 100%

Source: *Survey Data, 2021.*

The results of respondents analysis on market share indicates that 51.3% of the total participants agree with the fact that they were satisfied with the current market share of their hotels. From the second item on the scale, it was discovered that 47.4% also attest to the fact that expanding the market share of their hotels was beneficial for the reputation of the hotels. Finally, 56.6% strongly agree that they expect the market share of their hotels to increase in the next three months.

Respondents' Analysis on Sales Volume

S/N	Scale item	SA (5)	A	U (3)	DA (2)	SD (1)	TOTAL
14.	What we say about ourselves, our strategy and our offerings resonates with prospects.	30 39.5%	31 40.8%	10 13.2%	3 3.9%	2 2.6%	76 100%
15.	Our customer and prospect relationships are virtually unbreakable.	18 23.7%	29 38.2%	12 15.8%	13 17.1%	4 5.3%	76 100%
16.	Our sales process represents a competitive advantage for us.	24 31.6%	37 48.7%	7 9.2%	6 7.9%	2 2.6%	76 100%
17.	Our sales and marketing team is performing at optimal levels.	23 30.3%	34 44.7%	5 6.6%	12 15.8%	2 2.6%	76 100%



18.	We understand and utilize the best sales and marketing technologies to our advantage.	32	30	5	3	6	76
		42.1%	39.5%	6.6%	3.9%	7.9	100%

Source: *Survey Data, 2021.*

The analysis on sales volume reveals that 40.8% agree that what they say about themselves, their strategy and their offerings resonates with prospects. The second item reveals that 38.2% of the participants agree that hotel customers and their prospect relationships were virtually unbreakable. The third item reveals that 48.7% agree that their sales process represents a competitive advantage for them. On the fourth item, 44.7% also agree that their sales and marketing team are performing at optimal levels. Finally, 42.1% of the participants strongly agree that they understand and utilize the best sales and marketing technologies to their advantage.

Descriptive Statistics on the Mean and Standard Deviation for the Examined Dimensions of Relationship Marketing and Measures of Performance

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Empathy	76	3.68	1.167
Satisfaction	76	3.57	1.229
Market Share	76	3.34	.930
Sales Volume	76	3.09	1.212
Valid N (listwise)	76		

The outcome of the descriptive statistics on the dimensions of relationship marketing and measures of performance reveals that relationship marketing actually influences performance as all indicators on the mean values exceed that of performance, as seen above, given as 3.68 and 3.57 against 3.34 and 3.09 respectively. From the findings, it is obvious that the empathy dimension has the highest mean score followed by the satisfaction dimension. It therefore means that empathy is the predominant relationship marketing practice being adopted in the majority of the hotels in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. This result proves the fact that relationship marketing approach (empathy) confers a sense of greater responsibility to win customers' hearts, which is a function of hotels' desire to achieve increased profit and productivity that is a direct function of performance which is essential for survival, increased market share and sales volume. The result reveals that satisfaction is second to empathy, thus attributed to the fact that employees often realize their full potential when they are satisfied by putting themselves in the shoes of their customers. This behaviour tends to increase sales volume and market share because the customers feel like kings since employees' service to them is second to none.



Correlations Between the Dimensions of Relationship Marketing and Performance of Hospitality Firms in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State

Correlations

			Empathy	Market Share	Sale Volume
Spearman's rho	Empathy	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.728**	.894**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	76	76	76
	Market Share	Correlation Coefficient	.728**	1.000	.924**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	76	76	76
	Sales Volume	Correlation Coefficient	.894**	.924**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	76	76	76

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

A Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was run to test the relationship between empathy dimension of relationship marketing and the measures of performance (market share and sales volume). The result indicates a positive and significant relationship between empathy and market share ($r = .728^{**}$, $n = 76$, $p = .000$ less than 0.05), and empathy and sales volume ($r = .894^{**}$, $n = 76$, $p = .000$ less than 0.05). Hence, the null hypotheses were rejected and the alternate hypotheses accepted because the correlations were significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations

			Satisfaction	Market Share	Sale Volume
Spearman's rho	Satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.864**	.635**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	76	76	76
	Market Share	Correlation Coefficient	.864**	1.000	.779**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	76	76	76
	Sales Volume	Correlation Coefficient	.635**	.779**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	76	76	76

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



The second set of hypotheses was tested to determine the correlations between satisfaction dimension of relationship marketing and performance measures (market share and sales volume) using Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient statistical tool. The result indicates that satisfaction and market share had a positive and significant relationship ($r = .864^{**}$, $n = 76$, $p = .000$ less than 0.05) while satisfaction and sales volume also had a positive and significant relationship ($r = .635^{**}$, $n = 76$, $p = .000$ less than 0.05). Hence, the null hypotheses were rejected and the alternate hypotheses accepted as the correlations were significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study are discussed in line with literature works on relationship marketing and performance of hospitality firms. The outcomes revealed that the majority of the study participants were males and those within the ages of 26-30 years dominate in the hospitality operations in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. Furthermore, it was also found that the majority of the participants were educated and were equally married. However, the descriptive statistics on the dimensions of relationship marketing (empathy and satisfaction) and the measures of performance (market share and sales volume) revealed that empathy dimension plays a more significant role to performance than satisfaction. It is believed that the empathy dimension confers on employees the wholesome sense of responsibility to please customers than themselves, which is a direct function of performance.

However, the tested hypotheses revealed that relationship marketing dimensions (empathy and satisfaction) had a positive and significant correlation with performance measures (market share and sales volume). This outcome corroborates the findings of Okwara and Iwuoha (2019), Abdullah et al. (2014) and Mohamad et al. (2014). These scholars found that the essence of relationship marketing is to build stable relationships that could bridge customers' exit because improved customer focus and relationship marketing often lead to organizational performance. Hence, it enhances customer satisfaction, repeat purchase, more referrals and customer retention (Mwangi, 2013). Since the majority of the study participants are educated, the result is not surprising because these individuals are fully aware of the significance of education as a means of equipping themselves with the requisite knowledge on the best approach to relate, as well as understanding customers' attitude. This understanding gives employees the knowledge, skills and technique needed to handle customers' need of their service in a way that will impress them to remain with such hotel.



CONCLUSIONS

Owing to the fact that relationship marketing is all about customer relationship management that focuses on customer loyalty and long-term customer engagement other than short-term goals such as customer acquisition and individual sales, it becomes imperative to conclude as follows:

1. Empathy as a component of relationship marketing is a predictor of organizational performance in terms of market share and sales volume among hotels in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.
2. Satisfaction has a positive impact on organizational performance in terms of market share and sales volume among hotels in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study findings and conclusions reached, the following recommendations are made to guide policymakers.

1. For increase performance, hotels should only employ individuals with requisite knowledge of themselves (self awareness) as this will reflect on the way they serve customers.
2. The issue of empathy is identified to be a major component of relationship marketing that is giving rise to organizational performance in the hotel operations. Therefore, managers and owners of hotels should strive to build stable relationships among their workforce as this could help in bridging exit.
3. Satisfaction remains key to both employee and customer retention. Therefore, hotel management should endeavour to meet the needs of these persons. This is the easiest way to increase their profit base.
4. In today's competitive world, customers are in the center of organizations' attention and their satisfaction is the main factor in gaining competitive advantage. Therefore, continuous training of employees on relationship marketing approach should be encouraged in the hotel operations as it would help hotels to retain valuable customers and equally attract potential ones.
5. In checkmating deviations of employees' behaviours at work, hotels management should endeavour to treat all workers the same not minding sex, race or region. This should be done with courtesy and fairness as this would have a significant impact on hotels' productivity and performance.



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