Effects of Relationship Marketing on Organizational Performance in The Nigerian Telecommunication Industry. A Case of Airtel Telecommunication Company in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

In the current business world, organizational performance depends on identifying, attracting, acquiring and maintaining customers in the highly intensive competitive environment. This study identifies how organizational performance can be enhanced through customer relationship marketing capabilities. Population of this research was Airtel Telecommunication Company in the South-western part of Nigeria. Population of this research consists mainly of customers of Airtel Telecommunication Company in the South-western part of Nigeria. The data collection was done through the distribution of online and offline questionnaires on organizational performance and competition intensity. Logistic regression analysis test was used for further analysis. Findings revealed that good relationship with their customers, help the organizations to enhance their profitability and get the competitive advantage in the market place. This paper will enable organizations (especially organizations in the telecommunications sector) to understand and use their customers relation marketing capabilities in a good way.

Keywords: *Relationship marketing, Customer relationship marketing, Organizational performance.*

INTRODUCTION

The telecommunications industry in Nigeria has experienced significant growth and competition in recent years (Osemeke, 2020). With the advent of new technologies and increased market saturation, telecommunication companies are facing challenges in retaining customers and sustaining organizational performance (Adekunle et al., 2019). In this context, relationship marketing and customer relationship marketing have emerged as critical strategies to address these challenges and enhance organizational performance.

Relationship marketing is a strategic approach that focuses on building and maintaining long-term relationships with customers (Gummesson, 2002). It emphasizes the importance of understanding customer needs, preferences, and behaviors to deliver personalized experiences and foster customer loyalty (Grönroos, 1994). By establishing strong connections and trust with customers, telecommunication companies can enhance customer satisfaction, increase customer retention, and ultimately improve organizational performance (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

Customer relationship marketing, a subset of relationship marketing, specifically emphasizes the management and cultivation of individual customer relationships (Peppers and Rogers, 1993). It involves utilizing customer data, segmentation, and targeted marketing strategies to tailor offerings and communications to meet the specific needs and preferences of customers (Kotler et al., 2002). Customer relationship marketing aims to foster deeper customer engagement, strengthen brand loyalty, and drive customer lifetime value (Reinartz and Kumar, 2003).

Organizational performance, in the context of telecommunication companies, encompasses various dimensions such as financial performance, market share, customer satisfaction, and operational efficiency (Taleghani et al., 2021). These indicators collectively reflect the company's ability to achieve its strategic objectives and remain competitive in the market. By implementing effective relationship marketing and customer relationship marketing strategies, telecommunication companies in Nigeria can potentially enhance their organizational performance across these key areas.

However, the extent to which relationship marketing and customer relationship marketing practices influence the organizational performance of telecommunication companies in Nigeria remains a subject of interest and investigation. This study seeks to bridge this research gap by examining the effect of relationship marketing on the organizational performance of Airtel Telecommunication Company in the South-Western part of Nigeria, with a specific focus on the role of customer relationship marketing.

By exploring the relationship between relationship marketing practices, customer relationship marketing strategies, and organizational performance indicators, this study aims to provide valuable insights for telecommunication companies operating in Nigeria. The findings will help inform strategic decision-making, resource allocation, and the development of effective marketing strategies to enhance organizational performance and gain a competitive edge in the dynamic telecommunications industry. Additionally, the study may contribute to the existing body of knowledge on relationship marketing in the specific context of Nigerian telecommunications, offering practical implications for industry practitioners, policymakers, and researchers alike.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The Nigerian telecommunications industry faces intense competition and evolving market dynamics, posing challenges for telecommunication companies to maintain customer loyalty and enhance organizational performance. While relationship marketing and customer relationship marketing are recognized strategies, their specific impact on organizational performance in Nigeria remains unclear due to limited empirical research. This study aims to address this knowledge gap by examining the effect of relationship marketing, particularly customer relationship marketing, on the organizational performance of telecommunication companies in Nigeria. The research will identify the relationship marketing strategies that contribute to improved performance indicators, providing valuable insights and practical recommendations for enhancing organizational performance and competitiveness in the dynamic telecommunications industry.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to investigate the effect of relationship marketing, with a specific focus on customer relationship marketing, on the organizational performance of telecommunication companies in Nigeria. Moreover, the specific objective is:

1. To examine the relationship between relationship marketing practices and organizational performance indicators, such as customer satisfaction, customer retention, customer loyalty and customer interaction, in the Nigerian telecommunication industry.

By accomplishing the objective, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the relationship between relationship marketing, customer relationship marketing, and organizational performance in the Nigerian telecommunication industry. The findings will contribute to a better understanding of the factors that drive performance and enable telecommunication companies to develop effective marketing strategies to enhance customer satisfaction.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

For the purpose of this study, the author formulated the null hypothesis below:

Null Hypothesis (H0): Customer relationship marketing practices such as Customer Loyalty, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Retention, Customer Interaction do not have a significant impact on the organizational performance of telecommunication companies in Nigeria.

This hypothesis will be tested using appropriate statistical analysis methods to determine the presence or absence of significant relationships between relationship marketing practices, customer relationship marketing strategies, and organizational performance in the Nigerian telecommunication industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Relationship Marketing

Relationship marketing is a strategic approach that focuses on building and nurturing long-term relationships with customers to achieve business objectives. It emphasizes the development of strong connections, trust, and mutual benefits between the organization and its customers. Unlike transactional marketing, which primarily focuses on individual transactions, relationship marketing takes a broader perspective by recognizing the lifetime value of customers and the importance of customer satisfaction, loyalty, and retention (Grönroos, 2004).

In relationship marketing, organizations aim to go beyond simply selling products or services. They strive to create meaningful interactions and personalized experiences that cater to the individual needs and preferences of customers. This involves understanding customer preferences, maintaining open lines of communication, and providing exceptional customer service. By investing in building and maintaining strong relationships, organizations seek to establish customer loyalty, increase customer lifetime value, and gain a competitive advantage in the market (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Relationship marketing is based on the premise that satisfied and loyal customers are more likely to make repeat purchases, recommend the brand to others, and become advocates for the organization. This approach recognizes the importance of customer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty as drivers of long-term business success. It involves ongoing efforts to engage customers, understand their changing needs, and adapt marketing strategies accordingly (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2000).

Therefore, relationship marketing focuses on building and nurturing long-term relationships with customers by providing personalized experiences, exceptional customer service, and maintaining open lines of communication. It aims to create customer loyalty, increase customer lifetime value, and gain a competitive edge in the market. By prioritizing relationships over transactions, organizations can foster customer satisfaction and long-term business growth.

Customer Relationship Marketing (CRM)

Customer Relationship Marketing (CRM) is a strategic approach that prioritizes the development and nurturing of long-term relationships with individual customers. It places a strong emphasis on comprehending customer needs, preferences, and behaviors in order to create personalized marketing initiatives and deliver customized experiences. The primary objective of CRM is to cultivate customer loyalty, enhance satisfaction, and maximize the long-term value of customers.

CRM encompasses various practices and techniques aimed at strengthening customer relationships. These include segmenting customers based on their characteristics and behaviors, implementing targeted communication strategies, and offering tailored products or services. By leveraging customer data and utilizing analytics, organizations can gain valuable insights into customer preferences and purchasing patterns, enabling them to create relevant and timely marketing campaigns.

Recent research underscores the significance of CRM in modern marketing. For example, a study conducted by Khan, M. S., et al. (2021) highlights the role of CRM in enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty, which ultimately contributes to improved business performance. Another study by Ha, S. (2020) underscores the importance of personalized marketing initiatives and customer data analysis in CRM implementation, highlighting their positive impact on customer loyalty and profitability.

Successful implementation of CRM necessitates a customer-centric organizational culture, effective data management systems, and integration across various customer touch-points. By investing in CRM strategies, organizations can enhance customer engagement, foster long-term relationships, and gain a competitive edge in today's dynamic market environment.

Organizational Performance

Organizational performance is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various dimensions and indicators. It reflects the effectiveness and efficiency with which an organization achieves its goals and objectives. The measurement and evaluation of organizational performance play a crucial role in assessing the overall health and success of an organization.

Financial performance is a fundamental aspect of organizational performance and is often assessed through metrics such as revenue growth, profitability, and return on investment. For instance, a study by Gupta, K., et al. (2020) examines the impact of financial performance on organizational sustainability in the context of the banking industry.

Operational efficiency is another important dimension of organizational performance. It focuses on optimizing processes, reducing costs, and improving productivity to enhance overall effectiveness. Recent research by Kumar, V., et al. (2021) explores the relationship between operational performance and organizational performance in the manufacturing sector.

Customer satisfaction and loyalty are key indicators of organizational performance. Satisfied customers are more likely to make repeat purchases, recommend the organization to others, and contribute to its long-term success. Research by Li, Y., et al. (2021) investigates the influence of customer satisfaction on the financial performance of service firms.

Employee productivity and engagement are critical factors that impact organizational performance. Motivated and engaged employees are more likely to contribute to the organization's success through their productivity, innovation, and customer service. A study by Ashraf, M., et al. (2022) examines the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance in the healthcare sector.

Innovation and market share are also important dimensions of organizational performance. Organizations that effectively innovate and adapt to changing market dynamics are more likely to gain a competitive edge and achieve sustainable growth. Recent research by Frasquet, M., et al. (2021) explores the relationship between innovation and financial performance in the context of technology-intensive firms.

It is worth noting that the dimensions and factors influencing organizational performance may vary across industries and organizational contexts. Organizations should identify relevant performance indicators and continuously monitor and evaluate their performance to drive improvement and ensure long-term success.

The Relationship between Relationship Marketing and Organizational Performance

The relationship between relationship marketing and organizational performance is an important area of research in marketing and management. Relationship marketing, which centers on establishing and nurturing long-term connections with customers, has the potential to positively influence organizational performance in diverse ways.

Firstly, employing relationship marketing strategies like personalized customer interactions, initiatives to build trust, and customer-centric approaches can result in enhanced customer satisfaction and loyalty (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Satisfied and loyal customers are more likely to make repeat purchases, generate positive word-of-mouth recommendations, and contribute to the organization's reputation and market share. By fostering strong relationships with customers, organizations can improve customer retention rates and increase customer lifetime value, thereby driving financial performance.

Secondly, relationship marketing promotes customer engagement and involvement. Engaged customers actively interact with the brand, participate in co-creation activities, and offer valuable feedback and insights (Verhoef, Reinartz, & Krafft, 2010). This engagement leads to a deeper understanding of customer needs and preferences, enabling organizations to tailor their products, services, and marketing strategies to better meet customer expectations. By aligning their offerings with customer demands, organizations can enhance their competitive position and improve performance in the marketplace.

Furthermore, relationship marketing contributes to organizational performance by facilitating effective communication and collaboration with customers (Payne & Frow, 2005). Open channels of communication enable organizations to gather customer feedback, address concerns promptly, and deliver personalized experiences. This strengthens the bond between the organization and its customers, leading to increased trust and satisfaction. Effective communication also enables organizations to anticipate customer needs, adapt to changing market dynamics, and outperform competitors.

In conclusion, relationship marketing plays a crucial role in shaping organizational performance. By prioritizing the establishment of strong customer relationships, organizations can achieve improved financial performance, increased customer satisfaction and loyalty, and enhanced market competitiveness. Embracing relationship marketing principles and strategies provides organizations with a sustainable competitive advantage and contributes to long-term business success.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This was based on quantitative research approach. The researcher has selected the research design based on correlation. Data was collected with the use of online and offline questionnaires. The researcher also interacted with the respondents in order to obtain data. Population is very important in any research study. Therefore, the population of this study will be the customers of Airtel Telecommunication Company in the South-Western part of Nigeria. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher which holds the complete information relating to this research study.

Pilot Study

Before commencing data collection for the research, the researcher first conducted a pilot study to gain preliminary insight on the nature of respondents' feedbacks and the reliability of instruments being used. A pilot study is important to test the feasibility of the approach employed to conduct the study. The findings from the pilot study are useful to refine the questionnaire items, structure and layout, to confirm the readability and literacy level of the target sample, as well as obtaining preliminary feedback on the phenomena being investigated.

Research Strategy

As it is most important for every research study, that the researcher should first of all design and plan the research strategy. Therefore, the current study is based on the research strategy developed by the researcher.

The population for this study are the customers of Airtel Telecommunication Company in the South-Western part of Nigeria. Data collection is done by handing out questionnaires to respondents (Offline) and sending questionnaires to respondents e-mail addresses (Online). The sample size for this research paper is 220 respondents. The collected data has been organized in an excel worksheet.

Population and Sample

Population is most important for every research study. The population of this research study will include the customers of Airtel Telecommunication Company in the South-Western part of Nigeria. It is much difficult to take the data from the whole population that is why random sampling technique is used. In this technique samples are selected, randomly, which were easily available to respond. The sample size for this research paper is 220 customers of Airtel Telecommunication Company in the South-Western part of Nigeria.

Data Collection

For the data collection, the researcher visits the Airtel Telecommunication Company in the South-Western part of Nigeria and distributed questionnaires (offline) to the respondents (Airtel customers in the South-Western part of Nigeria). The researcher collected the questionnaires on the same day from the respondents who have answered the close-ended questions.

At the same time, the researcher distributed questionnaires by e-mail (online) to respondents (Airtel customers in the South-Western part of Nigeria), some of the respondents sent feedback (in the form of an already answered questionnaire) to the researcher. The respondents were followed up by e-mail for the confirmation of their feedback.

Model Specification

For the purpose of data analysis, various statistical tools and techniques will be used for data analysis. To investigate relationship between CRM and organization performance, logistic regression will be used as statistical tool. While Regression modal as statistical tool was used to examine the impact of CRM and firm Performance in Airtel Telecommunication Company in the South-Western part of Nigeria. For the purpose of regression analysis, the following modal was developed:

$$OP = \alpha + \beta1\ CS + \beta2\ CL + \beta3\ CI+ + \beta4\ CR + \varepsilon \ldots\ldots i$$

$$OP = \alpha + \beta1\ CS + \beta2\ CL + \beta3\ CI+ + \beta4\ CR + \beta5\ EducationxCS + \varepsilon \ldots\ldots\ldots ii$$

Where;

OP denotes Organizational Performance,

CL shows Customer Loyalty,

CS denotes Customer Satisfaction,

CR reflects Customer Retention,

CI denotes Customer Interaction.

RESULT AND FINDINGS

Descriptive Statistics

In Table 1, it is presented that there are four variables in the analysis with 220 observations for each variable. The minimum values for customer satisfaction is -1.28 and its maximum value is 0.880. The mean value for customer satisfaction is 0.004. Similarly, for the customer's retention with having the same observation the maximum value is 5.997, minimum -2.717 and the mean value 0.979. For the third Variable, which is customer loyalty the maximum value, 3.805 and minimum value -2.624 the mean value is 0.612, for the last variable, which is customer's interaction maximum value 5.931 and minimum value according to Table 1 is -2.572 and the mean value is 0.783.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
CS	220	0.004	0.495	-1.28	0.880
CR	220	0.979	1.760	-2.717	5.997
CL	220	0.612	1.601	-2.624	3.805
CI	220	0.783	1.755	-2.572	5.931

Correlation Matrix

Table 2 clearly shows the relationship among independent variables. Beside this, the table also indicate that independent variables are correlated with dependent variable. Customer satisfaction variable indicate that it is 11 percent correlated with dependent variable. Similarly, customer interaction is also correlated at 3.8 percent with sales performance of Airtel Nigeria. From the below table we observe that customer loyalty is also correlated with dependent variable (Sales performance) at 22 percent.
According to Table 2, it is well depicted that customer retention is also correlated with the sales performance of Airtel at 15 percent. Therefore, one can say that there is no problem of multicollinearity and autocorrelation. The reason is that relationship among independent variables is less than 70 percent.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

	Sales/OP	CS	CI	CR	CL
Sales/OP	1.00				
CS	0.11	1.00			
CI	0.038	0.07	1.00		
CL	0.22	0.29	0.06	1.00	
CR	0.15	0.41	0.61	0.11	1.00

Reliability Test

We have utilized Cronbach's reliability test for the questionnaire whether the questionnaire is reliable and accepted. This test is considered the most appropriate test for reliability of the questionnaire. If the value lies between 0.65 and 0.75, then one can say that there is reliability of the questions quoted in questionnaire. However, if it is greater than 0.75 then it means that it is more outstanding and highly accepted. The alpha of customer satisfaction is 0.73 percent which implies that the questions for customer satisfaction variable are reliable and acceptable because its alpha value is greater than 0.65. Besides, the value of other customers are also above of 0.65 which shows that these variables are reliable and acceptable.

Table 3: Reliability Test

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Valid Cases
CS	0.73	220
CL	0.71	220
CI	0.72	220
CR	0.78	220

Regression Result

Model 01 depicted in Table 4 actually demonstrates the baseline model of the study. The aim of this study is to examine how Customer Relationship Marketing influence organizational performance especially in Airtel Telecommunication Company in the South-Western part of Nigeria. In Mode 01, it is well depicted that customer satisfaction positively affects the sales of

Airtel. Beside this, the coefficient of customer satisfaction is highly significant at 1 percent. The coefficient of customer satisfaction is 2.956 which clearly depict that one percent increase in customer satisfaction would cause sales to enhance by 2.956 on average. This result shows that customer satisfaction positively affect organizational performance, therefore, the null hypothesis (H0) is not valid.

Meanwhile, Model 01 shows that there is positive relation between customer's loyalty and sales performance of Airtel Nigeria; from Table 4, it is observed that customer's loyalty is significant by one percent. The coefficient of customer loyalty is 1.870 percent, which explains that 1 percent increases in customer's loyalty will enhance the sales volume by 1.870 on average. The result of this variable shows that customer loyalty positively affect organizational performance, therefore, the null hypothesis (H0) is not valid.

The result of table shows that customer's interaction is positively associated with sales performance of Airtel Nigeria, it means that if customer's interaction increases by one percent, it will positively affect the sales figures of Airtel at 0.807 in average, so the result confirms that Customer interaction positively affects organizational performance, therefore, the null hypothesis (H0) is not valid.

Equivalently, customer's retentions another independent variable in model 01, which is positively linked with Airtel's performance, the coefficient of customer's retention, is highly significant at 1 percent. This implies that if there is 1 percent increase in customer's interaction, the sales performance will be positively affected and will be increased average by 1.752.This result shows that Customer retention positively affects organizational performance, therefore, the null hypothesis (H0) is invalid.

The R-Squared of Model 01 obviously depicts that 49 percent variation in sales of Airtel Nigeria is due to the four independent variables quoted above in Model 01. Beside this, this value of R-square also shows that the model is fit. To check the significance of overall model, we need F-Statistics. The F-Statistics of Model 01 clearly indicate that overall, the model is significant and good because the probability of F-Statistic is less than five percent.

Model 02 depicted in Table 4 actually demonstrate the baseline model of the study. The aim of this study is to examine that how Customer Relationship Marketing influence organizational performance especially the performance of Airtel Telecommunication Company in the South-Western part of Nigeria. In Model 02, this is well depicted that customer satisfaction positively affects the sales of Airtel, therefore, the null hypothesis (H0) is invalid.

Beside this, the coefficient of customer satisfaction is highly significant at 1 percent. The coefficient of Customer satisfaction is 1.489 which clearly depict that one percent increase in customer satisfaction would cause sales to enhance by 1,489 on average. Model 01 shows that there is positive relation between customers loyalty and sales performance of Airtel Nigeria, from the Table 4 below it is observed that customers loyalty is significant by 1.966 percent which explain that when 1 percent increase accrue in customers loyalty it will enhance the sales volume by 1.966 on average. Similarly, the result shows that customer's interaction positively associated with sales performance of Airtel Nigeria, it means that if customer's interaction increases by one percent, it will positively affect the sales figures of Airtel and 0.744 in average will increase the sales.

In Table 4, Model 02 results designate that customers retention which is an independent variable of the this study is also positively linked with Airtel's performance, the coefficient of customers retention is highly significant at 1 percent, it means that if there is 1 percent increase in customers interaction, the sales performance will be positively affected and will be increased average by 1.926. Furthermore, in second model analysis we have considered customers education × Customer Satisfaction (Customer Education. x CS) as another independent variable of the study, the result find out that the level of education also can positively affect the sales performance of Airtel Nigeria. The results demonstrate that 1 percent increase in customers education level will enhance the sales performance by 1.709.

The R-Squared of Model 02 obviously depict that 54 percent variation in sales of Airtel Telecommunication Company is due to the four independent variables quoted above in Model 02. Beside this, this value of R-square also shows that the model is fit. To check the significance of overall model, we need F-Statistics. The F-Statistics of Model 02 clearly indicate that the model, which is developed for this study, is significant and good because the probability of F-Statistic is less than five percent.

Table 4: Regression Result

Variables	Model 01 Simple Model		Model 02 Interaction Term	
	Coefficient	Std. Error	Coefficient	Std. Error
CS	2.956***	1.905	1.489***	3.141
CL	1.870***	0.550	1.966***	0.575
CI	0.807***	0.328	0.744***	0.334
CR	1.752***	0.533	1.926***	0.604
Customer Education x CS	-	-	1.709***	0.882
Constant	-	-	8.880***	2.185
R-Squared	0.49		0.54	
F-Statistic	36.98		41.22	
Probability	0.00		0.00	

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The result of this paper has found that CRM practices are very important for all organizations, especially telecom organizations to improve their performance and increase profitability. It also emphasizes that the telecom companies should consider and focus on customer's satisfaction, customer's loyalty, customer interaction and customer retention as very important factors of CRM implementation. Nevertheless, according to the finding it has been found that for a successful implementation of CRM, the commitment of the management is needed. The researcher's strong finding suggests that customer satisfaction positively affect the organization performance. This implies that the higher the customer satisfaction, the higher the profit that Airtel Telecommunication Company will make and vice versa.

Beside this, customer's loyalty and customer retention is other factor that could affect the sales and profit of Airtel services. If the users of Airtel network can stick to Airtel telecommunication company, this could enhance the profitability and sales of the concerned organization (Airtel).

Finally, the researcher finds out customer interaction is a necessary tool for Airtel to increase their sales and profit. The findings of this study can be useful and it can serve as an effective tool for the managers and other staffs of all telecommunication companies in Nigeria and other countries of the world as well.

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