

The Influence of Customer Relationship Marketing on Customer Loyalty (Case of Selected CBE, in Jimma Zone)

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Abstract

These days a significant number of research works have been carried out on various issues relating to customer relationship management. However, limited empirical studies on market orientation and performance have been established in banking sector of Ethiopia. In an effort to contribute to the existing customer relationship marketing works, a study of selected Commercial Bank of Ethiopia in Jimma Zone was conducted. A framework of customer relationship marketing was designed to guide the study and quantitative research techniques and semi-structured questionnaire were designed. In order to collect primary data, a self-completed questionnaire was designed and distributed to the customers of the banks. For the purpose of analysis, SPSS 20.0 version was used to carry out descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. Additionally, regression analysis was carried out to examine the influence or contribution of independent variables.

Index terms— customer relationship marketing, satisfaction, trust, communication, bonding, empathy and customer loyalty.

1 Introduction

Over the past decades, marketing literature has recognized the existence of a shift in the nature of customer-firm relationships from a transactional to a relational approach (Ganesan, 1994). This change has generated an increasing interest in the study of the factors and mechanisms determining the establishment, development and maintenance of successful relational exchanges (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). As a consequence, practices that have been common up to now, which focused on attracting new customers and gaining a large market share, have given way to policies aimed at consolidating the firm's customer base and retaining the existing customers (Dick and Basu, 1994).

Due to the competitive environment in today's business, the most important issue the sellers face is no longer to provide excellent, good quality products or services, but also to keep loyal customers who will contribute long-term profit to organizations (Tseng, 2007). Furthermore, caused by fierce competition in today's business, many companies are required to build long-term profitable relationship with customers and to achieve customer loyalty. Therefore, relationship marketing has become important since last decade of 20th century, especially in service industry.

Relationship marketing helps to develop marketing productivity and builds up mutual values for both customer and company through growing marketing effectiveness and efficiencies (Sheth and Parvatiyar 1995). Meanwhile, Kotler (1992) claimed that companies can make more profit if they move from relationships with short-term goals towards long-term relationships.

Furthermore, as stated by Grönroos (1994), the most important goal of customer relationship marketing is to obtain and keep customers. Based on previous studies, all marketing activities intend to create customer loyalty.

Many empirical studies have provided evidences that relationship marketing tactics have positive impact on behavioral loyalty which affects customer retaining. Therefore, awareness of the target consumers and building

good relationship with them is the most noteworthy issue. As customer relationship marketing's role in both the marketing and overall strategy of an organization's strategic mix gains momentum, thus research into this area becomes increasingly important.

Even if in our country banking sector has long history and the number of banks is increasing and expanding from time to time, the service is still poor. There is customer's dissatisfaction over the service offered and the available services didn't match the expectation of the customer (Mesay, 2012). Not many studies have been done on customer management and organizational performance of Commercial Bank of Ethiopia. Banks increasingly find it difficult to handle customer management and organizational performance. There are problems in areas of customer handling, service quality (Robson, 2013).

As a result, CBE in Jimma Zone, as an organization, is selected to inquire the issues regarding relationship marketing efforts and their outcomes to O develop loyal customers and business sustainability. In practical sense, the proposed study could try to see as to how customers were served by the CBE to ensure their loyalty for future businesses. Furthermore, by seeing the bank as a key partner in the economic development of the nation, the researcher realized the importance of customer relationship practices to be adopted by the banks in order to develop certain competitive advantages while focusing on the financial needs of their customers. Based on the above justification, the study raised the following basic research questions: What are the antecedents of relationship marketing? How does Commercial Bank of Ethiopia in Jimma Zone practice relationship marketing to ensure customer loyalty? What kind of relationship exists between relationship marketing blocks, customer satisfaction and loyalty in the context of CBE, in Jimma Zone?

The basic objective of the study was to examine the influence of relationship marketing practice of some selected Commercial Bank of Ethiopia in Jimma Zone on maintaining loyal customers. The specific objectives include: To identify the building blocks of relationship marketing in the context of commercial banking, to describe the practices of CBE in ensuring customer loyalty in Jimma Zone and to examine the relationship between relationship marketing antecedents, customer satisfaction and loyalty.

2 II. Towards a Framework for Customer Relationship Marketing

Now a day's transactional marketing can be integrated into relationship marketing (Tyler and Stanley, 1999), relational exchange is a long-term and complex relationship between service providers and customers, not simply or only a series of transactions (Jackson, 1985).

Relationships are likely to rely less on contract law and more on issues such as trust, equity, responsibility, and commitment (Gundlach and Murphy, 1993). Many factors including product, quality, price, exchange rate, and demand can all have a major influence on sales. However, relationship marketing can also impact sales and brand loyalty (Heffernan 2008).

Several studies on the effects of relationship marketing on the business performance of firms across a range of industries have been reviewed Palmer (2000). Given that relationship marketing is more important in the industrial business-to-business context than the consumer context, most studies are located in the industrial business-to-business context. Briefly, the findings of these studies indicate that relationship marketing has a significant impact on the business performance and brands of firms in both service and industrial industries (Lee, 2001). Much of the relational literature has been concerned with identifying the key dimensions of relationship marketing and exploring how these dimensions interact, Morgan and Hunt (1994).

Although marketing academics and practitioners have been examining relationship marketing for more than a decade (Gronroos et al, 2000), most of the studies on relationship marketing have been criticized as overly simplistic because of their one-dimensional perspective and unlike the model of Callaghan et al. (1995) which used a multi-dimensional perspective. In order to retain loyal customer who will bring long-term profit to the firm, the key issue for service provider is to make use of this relationship in the way it manages customers by offering what the customers' needs and wants.

There have been various ways for measurements of service quality proposed by previous researches and literatures. The famous measurement model of service quality is SERVQUAL developed by Parasuraman et al (1988), who measured the differences between customer expectations and perceptions or dimensions. Some of these are: forming bonds, communication, trusting and be mutually empathic.

3 a) Communication

According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), successful relationship communication can be taken into account as a prominent dimension. Many authors argued that communication must be employed as an effective means in order to enhance partner's trust to each other (e.g. Anderson 1991, Morgan and Hunt, 1994). It can help partners to construct a system by which resolving disagreement would be possible. So in establishment of any strong alliance, communication is considered as an important characteristic which is also believed to be a core competency.

It can justly be argued that a relationship can only be established if dialogue or communication with a client is started (Jarvis, 2004). In a firm-client relationship, communication has to become a two-way process or dialogue (Christopher et al., 2002). Two-way communication occurs when firms listen to their consumers, and with better

interaction between consumers and firms. Communication before, during and after transactions can build and maintain relationships.

Furthermore, research has confirmed many benefits resulting from effective communication. These benefits include unbiased marketing, cost savings, a higher quality of service, increased impact on clients, elimination of misconceptions about the service, and greater professional expertise provided to clients (Baker, 2003). Several of these benefits are beneficial for clients, for example, professional service delivery, and may therefore ensure an increased positive perception of a service firm.

4 b) Trust

According to Berry (1995), trust can be stated as the confidence in the dependability of one party to act in the long term interests of the other party. A party to a relationship has trust, if the feeling that the other party can be depended on the other one. Furthermore, in the context of relationship marketing, trust can be seen as the dimension of a business relationship that determines the level to which each party feels they can rely on the integrity of the promise offered by the other (Callaghan et al., 1995). In the banking branch of the financial services industry, clients will trust the bank if they believe the bank will always act in their best interests.

Based on Little (2003), he systematically studied organizational trust and defined trust as the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trust or, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control the other party. .

5 c) Bonding

Bonding is stated as the dimension of a business relationship that results in two parties (the customer and the supplier) acting in a unified manner toward a desired goal (Callaghan et al., 1995). In the dyadic relationship of a buyer and a seller, bonding can be described as a dynamic process that is progressive over time (Dwyer, 1987).

The win-win relationship of the two parties in such a way that a bond is developed is said to be bonding. In the banking branch of the financial services industry, for example, clients will have a strong bond with their bank if they would not switch to another bank and if they feel part of the bank's valued client base. Various bonds exist between parties and indicate different levels of relationships.

6 d) Empathy/Concern

It consists of caring and customized responsiveness to customers. This empathy contains access and understanding the customer (OluOjo, 2008). Concern or empathy exists if two parties have an appreciation of, and caring, emotional feeling for each other. Based on such concern, each party will consider the viewpoint of the other party in negotiations and interactions. In the banking branch of the financial services industry, for example, concern will be evident if clients and bank employees care about each other and show respect during negotiations. Therefore, empathy is a necessary condition to foster a positive relationship between two parties.

7 e) Satisfaction

According to Fornell (2006), satisfaction can be defined as an overall evaluation dependent on the total purchase and consumption experience of the target product or service performance compared with repurchase expectations over time. Customer satisfaction is the result of the correlation between a customer's assumption and a customer's feelings.

Based on Zineldin (2000), satisfaction is an overall customer attitude towards a service provider or an emotional reaction to the difference between what customers anticipate and what they receive regarding their need, goal or desire. In addition, Oliver (1981) conceptualized customer satisfaction as an individual's feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his or her expectations.

8 f) Customer Loyalty

According to ??Kotler, 1997), loyalty is defined as deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-purchase a preferred product or service in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause a switching behavior. Furthermore, Soren and Mogens (2009), agrees that true customer loyalty is a substantial intangible asset for a company for branded products/services; it is the most valuable asset of all because it is the ultimate indicator of future sales and profits. Thus, there are virtually no companies that have any factual-based knowledge about their customer's loyalty and the value of such loyalty. Following from the literature review and empirical studies, a research conceptual frame work was designed.

9 Research Methodology

For the study, quantitative method of research was employed. The researcher followed a descriptive inquiry along with causal research design to see the influence of one variable over other. Survey approach was applied to obtain primary data; however, secondary sources such as books, journals, internet etc. were explored to gather background data and practices being adopted by the bank.

10 a) Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Based on a clear definition of the research population, customers who use the services of Commercial Bank of Ethiopia in Jimma Zone were selected as the study population and 6(six) branches among 40 branches which were found in the Jimma Zone were selected by the researcher randomly. These were: Jimma main branch, Aba-Jifar, Hermata, Jiren, Agaro and Serbo. To achieve accuracy, it is important to use a large sample size in a survey study, therefore, the study drawn a sample of 370 respondents (each from 6 selected branches), selecting customers to be entered into the branch by simple random sampling. Additionally, only those customers who have been using the CBE's services for more than a year were selected to take part by considering having relatively good experience of banking services and provisions.

11 b) Data Collection Instrument

For the purpose of gathering primary data, structured questionnaire were developed and administered with the selected sample respondents (customer of those selected branches). In this survey, self-completion questionnaire with closed questions were developed.

12 c) Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed in line with the stated research objectives. For the purpose of analysis, SPSS 20.0 version was used to carry out descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. Additionally, both simple linear (for model 2) and multiple (for model 1) regression analysis were carried out to examine the influence or contribution of independent variables (relationship marketing antecedents and customer satisfaction) to predict dependent (customer loyalty). For the purpose of presentation of findings, tables were developed.

13 d) Research Model Specification

In order to study the influence of customer relationship marketing on customer satisfaction and then to evaluate the influence of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty in the banking sector and to test and explain the causal relationship models were provided. Model Based on the above table when we see the educational level of respondents the first largest 42.5%, n=156 of the respondents were high/vocational school. The second largest of respondents with regard to education level (19.5 %; n = 71) had primary school complete. Only 12%, n=44 of the respondents were university graduate. Most of the clients of the bank were private business workers which accounted 38.5%, n=142. The second and the third were students and governmental workers which accounted 29.5%, n=109 and 28%, n=104 respectively. The clients of the bank who were NGO workers accounted 4 %, n=15 which was the least.

Finally based on table 4.1 due to the extensive number of years that the majority of the respondents indicated that they were clients of their current bank, the conclusion can be made that the majority of the respondents would rather remain as clients of their current bank than change to another. This is confirmed with the highest percentage of respondents (40%; n = 146) having remained clients of their current bank for between 12 and above years. The second and the third were 1-3 years and 4-7 years which accounted 25.5%, n= 96 and 18%, n=68 respectively.

14 b) Data Reliability Testing

In this survey, there were total of 370 feedbacks from sample population as respondents. All the feedbacks were complete, i.e. no missing data in the questionnaires. Cronbach Alpha coefficient scores were calculated in order to assess the internal reliability of the measuring instrument. Cronbach Alpha coefficient scores with a value of more than 0.70, is recommended. The measuring instrument can therefore be considered as reliable and for all items Cronbach's alpha was 0.848(see table 4.2).

15 c) Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

After checking the reliability of the items, it needs to take the average scores of items for each construct as the final score upon which the researcher conduct further analysis. Table 4.3.1 shows the means, standard deviations for all the constructs. All of the six constructs had scales mean that were within half of the scale of the center of scales. The sample standard deviations of trust (0.7319) and bonding (0.7799) were relatively higher, while the others range from 0.5927 to 0.7. By looking at the correlation matrix between the factors we can understand that trust is the most correlated element with satisfaction. The correlation of 0.671 between these two factors shows that a little change in the trust has a major influence on the satisfaction of the customer towards his/her bank.

16 Source: Survey Data

The bank must be trustful and reliable for its customers to make them satisfied such as fulfill obligations and keeping security. Once the bank is trustful, the customers' level of satisfaction increased. The next factor which is more important is bonding. The correlation between bonding and satisfaction is 0.543 which shows that the highly bonding of the bank is always bring satisfaction to the customers. The next factor which is more important

is the loyalty with a correlation of 0.528 which shows a strong relationship with satisfaction. This shows that if our customers are satisfied, it can lead to loyalty to the bank.

Finally the correlation between communication and satisfaction is 0.225 which indicates that communicating our clients/customers leads to satisfied customers to the bank.

The empathy factor is also correlated but not as much as the trust, bonding, loyalty and communication. Then the researcher analyzed the correlation of each factor with other factors. Trust is most correlated with the bonding factor and least correlated with empathy factor. So to have more satisfied customers, trust and bonding factors are more important to be considered by the bank. If the bank is successful in increasing the bonding activities like fast and efficient service, treating customers equally and establishing long term relationship, the bank becomes successful in increasing the number of satisfied customers.

When a bank is flexible and tries to give personalized services as its concern customer is delighted and loyal to the bank.

The bonding factor is also correlated with the loyalty. This means that when the bank maintains long term relationship, give fast and efficient service to the customers, loyalty on the sides of customers is improved.

17 d) Modelling Relationship Marketing Constructs, Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty

For this study, both simple (model2) & multiple regression (model1) analyses were used to test and explain the casual relationships between variables. For model 1, multiple regression analysis was conducted to predict the dependent variable (Satisfaction) based on the independent variables. positive influence on the dependent variable/satisfaction respectively and each has an impact on it. These relationships imply that when there is high trust and extensive bonding of bank employees lead to improved, maintained relationships between a bank and its customers. The low variance (R^2) can be attributed to the fact that only the influence of satisfaction on loyalty was measured. It is possible that other variables, which influences were not measured in this study, could have an influence on loyalty.

The ANOVA analysis (see table 4.6.5) was conducted b/n satisfaction and loyalty. The significance value (p-value) 0.000 in the study is less than 0.05 thus the model is statistically significant in predicting how the independent variables influence on satisfaction. The $F(1,288) = 16.75$ and this shows that the overall model was significant. Model 2. $LOY = 4.295 + 0.378SAT$ According to table 4.4.6, the independent variable (satisfaction) positively influences the dependent variable (loyalty). The relationship between satisfaction and loyalty (point estimate 0.378; $p < 0.001$) is significant at the 99% confidence level.

Moreover, regression analysis shows the relationship between customer relationship loyalty and satisfaction is supported and it is significant at alpha value ($0.001 < 0.01$).

This relationship implies that if a bank successfully satisfies its clients, the bank's level of perceived loyalty would increase.

18 V. Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of relationship marketing is to establish, maintain, and enhance relationships with customers and other partners, at a profit, so that the objectives of the parties involved are met. Besides, it can help to create and maintain long term relationships for the firm and its customers as a win-win approach. This is done by a mutual synergy and fulfillment of promises. The basic aim is to foster customer loyalty, which is a deeply held commitment to re-buy or repatronize a preferred product or service in the future.

The following are some of the recommendations. These are:

? So as to build client relationships, a bank may provide special benefits to loyal clients, for instance, lowering bank charges. ? Bank employees should be motivated to acknowledge clients, interact with clients and generally make clients feel welcome. ? A lovely atmosphere should be created in a bank branch to ensure that clients feel clam, and important and then they can trust the bank. ? The managers should try to maintain long term relationship with their customers. The customers must believe firmly that their respective banks deliver what they promise in their advertisement. ? The managers should regularly take the feedback of the customers and should incorporate the changes desired by the customers in their feedbacks. ? The managers must arrange training programs for their employees in order to make them more effective while dealing with the customers. ? Managers must ensure that customer complaints are addressed with top most priority. ? Managers must ensure that all main services are available in each branch of bank.

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communication; ?3 indicated the beta value of bonding, values of the second model and ?7 showed the beta value of trust and ?5 represented beta value of satisfaction. value of empathy. And ?6 showed the constant beta Communication IV. Results and Discussion

a) Basic Data of Respondents

Table 4.1: Biographic Data of Respondents The smallest percentage of respondents, with regard to Bonding

Male Female	Trust
	203
	167
Total	370
Age	Empathy
18-30	98
31-42	155
43-58	70
59-74	30
75& above	17
Total	370
Level of Education	
No formal schooling	42
Primary	71
High/Vocational School	156
Diploma	57
University Graduate /More	44
Total	370
Employment Status	
Student	109
Private business	142
NGO worker	15
Governmental	104
Total	370
Years of being client of the Bank	
1-3 yrs 4-7 yrs 8-11 yrs 12 &+ yrs	96
	68
	60
	146
Total	370

Where,
SAT=Satisfaction (dependent variable/ explained

The above beta values were representing the following: ?1 represents constant beta value for th first model, ?2 showed the beta value of Source: S

Figure 1:

4

2: Reliability Analysis		
Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Communication	0.866	3
Trust	0.769	3
Empathy	0.701	3
Bonding	0.878	3
Satisfaction	0.874	2
Loyalty	0.777	3
Overall Scale Reliability	0.848	17
Source: Survey Data		

Figure 2: Table 4 .

4

3.1: Descriptive Statistics			
Constructs	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Communication	2.103	.6168	370
Trust	2.576	.7319	370
Bonding	2.597	.7799	370
Empathy	2.369	.5927	370
Loyalty	2.466	.6711	370
Satisfaction	2.428	.7463	370

Figure 3: Table 4 .

4

	Satisfaction	Loyalty	Communication	Trust	Empathy	Bonding
Satisfaction	1					
Loyalty	.528 **	1				
Communication	.225 **	.236 **	1			
Trust	.671 **	.280 **	.437 **	1		
Empathy	.123 **	.119 **	.136 **	.139 **	1	
Bonding	.543 **	.413 **	.237 **	.202 **	.146 **	1

Source: Survey data.

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

Figure 4: Table 4 .

4

4.1: Model Summary/(Constant), bonding, empathy, communication, trust and dependent Variable: satisfaction

Model	R	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics	R Square	Change
1	.54 a	.296	.295	.6653	.2916	19.679

Figure 5: Table 4 .

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Figure 6: Table 4 .

4

	Model Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	31.840	4	8.710	19.6790
	Residual	126.140	285	.443	b
	Total	160.979	289		

a. Dependent Variable: satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), bonding, empathy, communication, trust

The four predictors based on (table 4.4.3) were positively related to the outcome variable/satisfaction, such as communication (?= .130, t=1.514 & p = .008), trust (?= .290, t=4889 & p = .000), empathy (?= .194, t=1772 & p = .007) and bonding (?= .271, t=1.514 & p = .000).

Model 1. SAT= 1.132 + 0.130 COM + 0.290TR + 0.194 EM

Figure 7: Table 4 .

4

6.5: ANOVA /Constant), satisfaction & Dependent Variable: loyalty /						
Model		Sum of	Df	Mean	F	Sig.
		Squares		Square		
1	Regression	.790	1	.790	16.75000	
	Residual	129.365	288	.449		
	Total	130.155	289			
Dependent Variable: loyalty & Predictors: (Constant), satisfaction						

Figure 11: Table 4 .

4

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	4.295	.134	17.113	.000
1 satisfaction	.370	.053	.378	1.326 .000

Figure 12: Table 4 .

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