# The Influence of Relationship Marketing on Organizational Performance in the Hospitality Industry

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*Abstract: The paper investigates the influence of relationship marketing and organizational performance in the hospitality industry in Bayelsa State. The study adopted cross sectional research design to elicit information about employee's empathy and satisfaction and how these antecedents give rise to increase 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 were drawn using simple random sampling technique. These samples were issued self report questionnaire and the collected data were analyzed using Spearman's Ranke Order Correlation Coefficient through the aid of SPSS version 25. The findings revealed that relationship marketing (empathy and satisfaction) has positive and significant correlation with performance (market share and sales volume) which is influenced by participant's 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 customers who are the focal point of organization and their satisfaction remains key to 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, that 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.*

*Keywords: Empathy, market share. sales volume, satisfaction.*

**INTRODUCTION**

The hospitality industry in Nigerian has experienced rapid growth leading to the emergence of hotels, fast food restaurants, cruise lines and night clubs (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 remains 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 sector of the Nigeria economy; but yet recorded the highest rate of business failures due to poor customer office, poor energy supply, skilled labor shortage caused by 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 customer's relationship needs, purchasing patterns and behaviors remaining 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 to achieving this is to adopt relational marketing approach in order to provide the best indications of what drives customer satisfaction, loyalty and increased patronage.
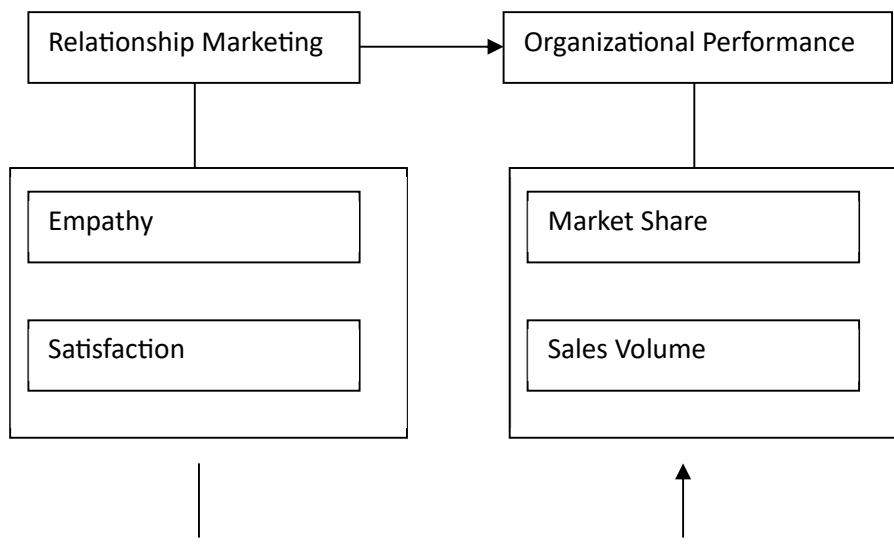
Relationship marketing is not a new concept because it has been in existence for long in the marketing literature. Although the concept (relationship marketing) is a specific business philosophy that understands trade as a managed relationship and product as a process (Johanesova & Vanova, 2020) which is a form of marketing that revolves around the fact that existing customer 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 (Izquiredo, Cillan & Guiterrez, 2015) as top firms knows the relevance of establishing customer 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 places increasing attention on transactional marketing approach. Perhaps, the most management of these hotels failed to understand that customer relationship marketing is replacing the traditional four P's of marketing-Product, Price, Place and Promotion because relationships with customers are the key to stability in an increasingly dynamic market. Although, much has not been done to actually ascertain if most hotels in the state are out of business due to poor relational marketing approach or other factors. This among other myriad of 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 pay vital roles in several economies due to its provision of employment opportunities, rendering quality services, promoting the tourism sector as well as contributing 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 dues 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 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. However, this challenge has affected

the tourism and hospitality sector of the economy especially in Yenagoa, where 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 rooms for growth but unfortunately, the increasing awareness for value creation has given credence to customers now craving for new innovation, security, ambience environment and the like to match their taste, preference and values. Based on the foregoing challenges facing the industry (hotels) in Bayelsa State, the researcher deemed it necessary to investigate the extent to which organizational performance of hotels business can be enhanced within the province of relationship marketing in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

**Conceptual Framework**

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┌─────────────────────────┐           ┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Relationship Marketing  │──────────▶│ Organizational Performance│
└─────────────────────────┘           └─────────────────────────┘
         │                                        │
┌─────────────────────────┐           ┌─────────────────────────┐
│  ┌───────────────────┐  │           │  ┌───────────────────┐  │
│  │ Empathy           │  │           │  │ Market Share      │  │
│  └───────────────────┘  │           │  └───────────────────┘  │
│  ┌───────────────────┐  │           │  ┌───────────────────┐  │
│  │ Satisfaction      │  │           │  │ Sales Volume      │  │
│  └───────────────────┘  │           │  └───────────────────┘  │
└─────────────────────────┘           └─────────────────────────┘
         └──────────────────────────────────────▶
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Source: Researcher's conceptualization adapted from Abtin & Pouramiri, 2016; Abdullah, er al, 2014; Mwangi, 2013; Peter, 2018.

**Objective 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 seeks to investigate.

**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 Hypothesis**

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

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

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Theoretical Framework**

The study is anchored on the social exchange theory of Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961; Thibaut and Harold, 1959. The exchange relationship develops when employers show concern to employees, which emanate to 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 employee can be motivated and committed to offering caring behavior to consumers within the organization. The ideas are that employees' level of satisfaction at work can only increase when the exchange ideology is strong with adequate training. The exchange relationship involves 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 on 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 extends 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 Ikwuoha, (2019) "relationship marketing is an arrangement where both the buyer and seller have an interest in providing a more satisfying exchange". The exchange transcend 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 centered on long term relationships that add value to the customer, employee 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 market-place 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 working mates or lower subordinates. Abdullah, et al., (2014) defined empathy as seeking understand someone else's desires and goals because it involves individual ability to view another parties situation 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 (Velampy & Sivesan, 2012) because the global environment of today require every firm to get maximum market share and improve its productivity in order to optimized business level (Mwangi, 2013). And as a dimension of business relationship that enables the parties involved seeing the situation from others' 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 un-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 customer's needs and demands (Abtin & Pouramiri, 2016). However, satisfaction is a customers' emotional response to his or her evaluation of the perceived discrepancy between his or her prior experience with an expectation of product and organization as well as the actual experienced performance as perceived after interacting with organization and consuming the product (Abdullah, et al., 2014). Satisfaction also refers to pleasant or unpleasant feeling caused with comparison between imaginative function and expectations (Velnampy & Sivensam, 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 that do not use process performance because of lack of motivation or lack of ability but only rely on prior expectations for their satisfaction 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 pre-determined goals and objectives of major share holders 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 results (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 in terms of financial or non financial (Mohammad, 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 percent of total sales in an industry generated by a particular organization (Ezirim, 2010) that is translated into percentage unit. It is calculated by taking the firms's sales over the period and dividing it by the total sales of the firm over the same period (Mwangi, 2013). Thus, market shares its portion of total sales in relation to the market or industry in which it operates. The 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) refer to market share as the percentage market 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, indicates how an organization's marketing mix is 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, 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. Thus, 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 which the hotel industry is not left out.

## EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Okwara and Iwuoha (2019) empirically investigate the effect of relationship marketing on sales performance of the firms using descriptive survey design with a population of 80 respondents which 50 respondents were chosen as sample size. The outcome revealed that relationship marketing aimed to build stable customer relationship 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. Based on the conclusion, it was recommended that to cope with competition in the market, relationship marketers should endeavour to ensure customers reach the climax of relationship ladder to achieve stable and strong customer relationship and improve sales.

Abtin and Pouramiri (2016) investigate 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 variables.

Also, Kehinde, Adegbuyi and Borishade (2016) investigated the relationship between relationship-marketing and sales performance in Nigeria with keen interest on customers' 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 significance 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 retentions 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 three tenets are used together and not separately.

Abdullah, et, al., (2014) examined the impact of customer relationship marketing on customer satisfaction in banking industry in KSA and Jordan. An e-mail questionnaire was designed and sent to 500 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 attributes regarding the importance of customer relationship marketing dimension between the two samples. It also indicates different results regarding the impact of customer relationship marketing on customers' 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 or 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 adoptee 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 a positive impact towards brand trust, customer satisfaction, repeat purchase, more customer referrals, shareholder value, customer retention, and customer loyalty, hence their overall performance.

Mohammad, et, al., (2014) investigated the impact of customer relationship marketing practices to organizational performance through a propose conceptual model in Malaysian small and medium enterprises (SMEs) food manufacturing industry. A model developed and empirically tested through survey data obtained from 3690 organizations. The results indicated that customer relationship marketing practices have 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 enhances 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 face due to global market challenges. The study identified the relevance of empathy as a pivotal leadership tool effectiveness by testing four hypotheses to determine the relationship 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 busieness leaders have significantly 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 nature gave rise to the positivist philosophical perspective as it involves 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 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 it analysis was done using the spearman's ranked Order Correlation Coefficient Statistical tool and 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% |
| | | |
| **Educational 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 presented 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 the 45 participants representing (59.2%) were male while 31 respondents (40.8%) were female. This shows that majority of the study participants were male. The age distribution indicates that 7 respondents (9.2%) fall within the age bracket of 18-25yrs; 25 respondents (32.9%) fall within the range of 26-30yrs; 20 respondents (26.3%) fall within the age bracket of 31-35yrs; 24 respondents (31.6%) fall within the age bracket of 36yrs & above. It therefore, implies that respondents within the ages of 26-30yrs 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 educated. Finally, the marital status indicates that 34 (44.7%) are single; 39 (51.3%) are married while 3(3.9%) are others, probably divorcee or widowers.

Participants' response rate on the dimension of relationship marketing and measures of performance

**Respondents Analysis on Empathy**

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

**Source: Survey Data, 2023.**

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

**Respondents Analysis on Satisfaction**

| S/N | Scale Items | SA (5) | A (4) | U (3) | DA (2) | SD (1) | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6. | I often meet my customers' expectations that any other hotel. | 24<br><br>31.6% | 36<br><br>47.4% | 7<br><br>9.2% | 7<br><br>9.2% | 2<br><br>2.6% | 76<br><br>100% |
| 7. | I am often satisfied with the kind of interaction I always have with our customers. | 30<br><br><br><br>39.5% | 31<br><br><br><br>40.8% | 10<br><br><br><br>13.2% | 3<br><br><br><br>3.9% | 2<br><br><br><br>2.6% | 76<br><br><br><br>100% |
| 8. | I am satisfied with the level of services we render to customers. | 20<br><br><br>26.3% | 37<br><br><br>48.7% | 6<br><br><br>7.9% | 12<br><br><br>15.8% | 1<br><br><br>1.3% | 76<br><br><br>100% |
| 9. | I am satisfied with hotel services prices. | 33<br><br>43.4% | 28<br><br>36.8% | 5<br><br>6.6% | 5<br><br>6.6% | 5<br><br>6.6% | 76<br><br>100% |
| 10. | Offering services from this hotel has been a worthwhile experience. | 19<br><br><br>25.0% | 35<br><br><br>46.1% | 14<br><br><br>18.4% | 6<br><br><br>7.9% | 2<br><br><br>2.6% | 76<br><br><br>100% |

**Source: Survey Data, 2023.**

From the satisfaction scale items, it was revealed that 47.4% 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 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 ok while 46.1% agrees that using the services of the hotels were worthwhile.

**Respondents Analysis on Market Share**

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

**Source: Survey Data, 2023.**

The results of respondents analysis on market share indicates that 51.3% of the total participants agrees to 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 they expanding the market share of their hotels was beneficial for the reputation of the hotels. Finally, 56.6% strongly agree that expect the market share of their hotels o increase in the next three months.

**Respondents Analysis on Scale Volume**

| S/N | Scale Items | SA (5) | A (4) | U (3) | DA (2) | SD (1) | TOTAL |
|-----|-------------|--------|-------|-------|--------|--------|-------|
| 14. | What we say about ourselves, our strategy and our offerings resonates with prospects. | 30 <br><br><br><br> 39.5% | 31 <br><br><br><br> 40.8% | 10 <br><br><br><br> 13.2% | 3 <br><br><br><br> 3.9% | 2 <br><br><br><br> 2.^% | 76 <br><br><br><br> 100% |
| 15. | Our customer and prospect relationships are virtually unbreakable. | 18 <br><br><br> 23.7% | 29 <br><br><br> 38.2% | 12 <br><br><br> 15.8% | 13 <br><br><br> 17.1% | 4 <br><br><br> 5.3% | 76 <br><br><br> 100% |
| 16. | Our sales process represents a competitive advantage for us. | 24 <br><br> 31.6% | 37 <br><br> 48.7% | 7 <br><br> 9.2% | 6 <br><br> 7.9% | 2 <br><br> 2.6% | 76 <br><br> 100% |
| 17. | our sales and marketing team is performing at optimal levels. | 23 <br><br> 30.3% | 34 <br><br> 44.7% | 7 <br><br> 6.6% | 12 <br><br> 15.8% | 2 <br><br> 2.6% | 76 <br><br> 100% |
| 18. | We understand and utilize the best sales and marketing technologies to our advantage. | 32 <br><br><br> 42.1% | 30 <br><br><br> 39.5% | 5 <br><br><br> 6.6% | 3 <br><br><br> 3.9% | 6 <br><br><br> 7.9% | 76 <br><br><br> 100% |

**Source: Survey Data, 2023.**

The analysis on sales volume revealed that 40.8% agree that what they say about their selves, their strategy and their offerings resonates with prospects. The second item revealed that 38.2% of the participant agrees that hotels customers and their prospect relationships were virtually unbreakable. The third item revealed 48.7% agrees 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 utilizes 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 revealed that relationship marketing actually influence performance as all indicators on the mean values exceed that of performance as seen above, given as 3.68; 3.57 against 3.34 and 3.09 respectively. From the findings it is obvious that empathy dimension has the highest mean score then followed satisfaction dimension. It therefore means that empathy is the predominant relationship marketing practice being adopted in 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 heart which is a function of hotels desire to achieve increased profit and productivity that is a direct function of performance that is essential for survival, increased market share and sales volume. The result revealed that satisfaction is second to empathy thus attributed to the fact that employees often realize their full potentials when they are satisfied by putting themselves in the shoes of their customer. This behaviour tends to increase sales volume and increased market share because the customers felt they are kings since employees service to them are 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 |
| | 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 |

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 had (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

| | | | Empathy | Market share | Sale volume |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | Empathy | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .864** | .635** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .000 | .000 |
| | 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 |

The second sets of hypotheses were tasted to determine the correlations between satisfaction dimension of relationship marketing and performance measures (market share and sales volume) using spearman Ranked Order Correlation Coefficient statistical tool. The result indicates that satisfaction and market share had a significant and positive relationship ($r = .864**$, n = 76, p = .000 less than 0.05) while satisfaction and sales volume also had significant and positive 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-trailed).

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The findings of this study are discussed in line with literatures on relationship marketing and performance of hospitality firms. The outcomes revealed that majority of the study participants were male and those within the ages of 26-30 years dominate in the hospitality operations in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. Furthermore, it was also found that majority of the participants were educated and are 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 more significant role to performance than satisfaction. It is believed that empathy dimension confers on employees the wholesome sense of responsibility to please customers than themselves which is direct function of performance.

However, the tested hypotheses revealed that relationship marketing dimensions (empathy and satisfaction) had positive and significant correlation with performance measures (market share and sales volume). This outcome corroborate the findings of Okwara and

Iwuoha (2019); Abdullah, et al., (2014) Mohamad, et al., (2014). These scholars found that the essence of relationship marketing is to build stable relationship 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 referral and customer retention (Mwangi, 2013). Since 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 need 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 follow:

1. Empathy as a component of relationship marketing is 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 policy makers.

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 relationship among their workforce as this could help in bridging exit.
3. Satisfaction remain 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 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.

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