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**Impact of Relationship marketing on customer loyalty with reference to nursing mothers in
Greater Accra region of Ghana: Case study of crèches.**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of relationship marketing on customer loyalty among nursing mothers in Tema Metropolis, Ghana. A cross-sectional study of 202 nursing mothers participated in a questionnaire survey. Relationship marketing was measured through commitment, trust, communication and conflict handling. The data was analyzed using multiple regression. The results showed a positive linear relationship between relationship marketing and customer loyalty among. It was recommended that crèches should strive to earn nursing mothers trust by giving and keeping promises, showing concern for the security of their babies, providing quality services, showing respect to nursing mothers, fulfilling obligations to nursing mothers, and striving always to enhance nursing mothers' confidence.

Keywords: childcare, customer perception, ward attendance, Babies

INTRODUCTION

Child care programs originated with the 19th century welfare and reform movements. The day care centers of modern times evolved directly from the "day nurseries" that began in the 1840s in Boston. These early nurseries took care of children of widows and working wives. Most of the families involved with day nurseries were part of an economically underprivileged group of merchant seamen.

During the Great Depression, day care was sponsored by the U.S. federal government. The reason for federal involvement was to help unemployed adults find jobs. During World War II, the federal government sponsored 400,000 preschool children to attend day care so their mothers could work to produce war materials. After the war, the government withdrew its support of day care programs and advised women to return home.

In addition to government sponsorship of child care during World War II, a unique child care program began in 1943 in Portland, Oregon. Henry Kaiser created child care centers at the entrances of both of his shipyards. His centers were the world's largest day cares during that time. Kaiser built the centers with the intention of decreasing the absenteeism rate among working mothers employed at his shipyards. The centers provided hot meals for mothers to take home and had nurses on-site. The cost of child care was shared by the Kaiser Corporation and the parents.

Kaiser's day cares closed after the war. His centers served as inspiration for other businesses to offer on-site child care centers. Stride-Rite Corporation began its child care center in 1971. Stride-Rite now sponsors an "intergenerational center," which serves both children and the elderly.

Corporations continue to help provide child care programs and services. Levi Strauss subsidizes child care centers for low income families and offers grants to improve the quality of community child care programs. The American Business Collaboration partners with AT&T to support programs that improve both local and state child care centers. Groups like the Children's Defense Fund, the Association for Childhood Education International and the National Association for the Education of Young Children also support programs to improve child care.

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) is the timely provision of a range of services that promote the survival, growth, development and protection of the young child. Institutionally, however, various Ministries, Departments and Agencies have been responsible for various aspects of early childhood care and development.

Before 2001, the focus of ECCD had been on the cognitive development of the child. This is seen in the establishment of Creches, Day Care Centres, Nurseries and Kindergartens by the Government and private operators to take care of children whilst their parents go out to work. The Ministries of Education and Employment and Social Welfare have had joint responsibilities

for these early childhood facilities because of the welfare/care and educational needs of children. Furthermore, the mandate of the Ghana National Commission on Children (GNCC) made the commission responsible for the welfare of all children in Ghana.

The responsibility for policy making in respect to children has shifted from the GNCC to the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC) with the establishment of the Ministry in 2001

The Children's Act 1998 (Act 560) enjoins the District Assemblies and other Decentralized Departments to facilitate the establishment of Day Care Centres and other ECCD institutions. The rationale of the policy is to provide a framework for the guidance of Government, as well as other relevant Sector Ministries, District Assemblies, communities, families, the private sector, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the Donor Community for investment in, and effective implementation of, ECCD programmes.

Private proprietors are encouraged to provide quality ECCD services. Where necessary; the proprietors provide services to children with disabilities. Support the training of their staff and take full responsibility of salaries of staff under their jurisdiction. Until recently, there are close to 1200 day care and crèches owned by private proprietors in the Greater Accra region of Ghana.

In modern business world, Owners of crèches are increasingly concentrated on managing marketing relationship.

Marketing relationship has been defined by Grönroos (1990), states that the purpose of relationship marketing is to identify and establish, maintain, and enhance relationships with customers and other stakeholders, at a profit, so that the objectives of all parties involved are met" and that this is done by a mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises."

Customer value creation is more essential concept in marketing from customer perception and also organizational perception. In Greater Accra region of Ghana especially Tema, both parents are engaged in economic activities in order to make ends meet. Searching for Crèches to leave behind babies in order to go and work has always been the choice of nursing Mothers.

Crèches are found at all corners of the region making the industry very competitive. Crèche owners prefer relationship marketing strategy to secure the customer loyalty. A Study on relationship marketing and customer loyalty in an emerging market such as Tema can be a fruitful empirical work.

Furthermore, there is not much empirical works on relationship marketing and customer loyalty on nursing mothers in the Greater Accra Region. .it is therefore important to empirically examine

the actual impact of relationship marketing on customer loyalty this industry. Findings will help crèche owners to achieve the higher level of loyalty among nursing mothers.

Therefore the present study is initiated to investigate the extent to which Relationship Marketing (RM) predicts Customer loyalty on nursing mothers.

The general objective of the study is to assess the relationship between marketing relationship and customer loyalty among nursing mother when selecting crèches for their children in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The specific research objectives of the study are to assess the relationship between

- commitment and customer loyalty
- trust and customer loyalty
- communication and customer loyalty
- conflict handling and customer loyalty
- marketing and customer loyalty and

To advise crèche owners on models that promotes customer loyalty

LITERATURE REVIEW

Relationship Marketing has been thought of as a new paradigm in marketing over the last few decades. It has been believed by academics and practitioners that companies can achieve success in the long run by maintaining relationship with their customers and business associates (Nguyen, 2006). Christopher. (as cited in Ravesteyn, 2005) noted that Relationship marketing has emerged from a primary focus on consumer goods in the 1950s, industrial marketing in the 1960s, non-profit and societal marketing in the 1970s, services marketing in the 1980s and finally, relationship marketing in the 1990s.

Grönroos (as cited in Ravesteyn, 2005) defined the relationship marketing as “Marketing is to establish, maintain and enhance relationships with customers and other partners, at a profit, so that the objectives of all parties are met.

Baron and Harris (2003) summarized the seven key indicators of relationship marketing approach. Such as high level of trust between both parties, high level of commitment between both parties, long time horizon, open communication channels between both parties within formation exchanged between both parties, having the customer’s best interest at heart, commitment to quality from both parties, an attempt to favorably lock- in or retain the customer And Ndubisi (2006) proposed the four key virtues that underpin relationship marketing, such as trust, commitment, communication, conflict handling. In this research, we also considered the four dimensions that underpin relationship marketing, such as trust, commitment, communication, and conflict handling to predict the customer loyalty in Greater Accra.

The term “customer loyalty is long-familiar as a significant factor in a business of a successful organization. So many research evidences have shown that just having satisfied customers is not sufficient for organization. Because there is no guarantee that customers are satisfied with the purchase of the company (Taleghani, 2011 b).

Therefore, it is clear that the success of customer loyalty in a business organization is the backbone of a successful organization and also customer loyalty is significantly more important than customer satisfaction. Oliver (as cited in das et al., 2009) conceptually, loyalty has both an attitudinal and behavioral dimension. Attitudinal loyalty is reviewing the concept of good and favorable attitude towards a service provider like trust or emotional attachment. And behavioral loyalty emphasizes on customer behavior like repeat purchase, word of mouth (Das, 2009; Taleghani, 2011). Ravesteyn (2005) pointed out the two key

Trust

Trust, which exists when one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity," is a central component in all relational exchanges (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). As Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh (1987) argue, trust is important because it provides a basis for future collaborations. Once trust is established, firms learn that coordinated, joint efforts will lead to outcomes that exceed what the firm would achieve if it acted solely in its own best interests" (Anderson and Narus 1990) Trust is also defined as one party's belief that its needs will be fulfilled in the future by actions undertaken by the other party (Anderson and Weitz, 1989). Mishra (1996) posited that there are four dimensions of trust (i.e., reliability, openness, competence, and concern) and found that communication is critical for demonstrating all aspects of trust (Mishra et al., 2008).

Commitment

Commitment refers to an implicit or explicit pledge of the continuity of a relationship between exchange partners (Dwyer et al. 1987). As Scanzoni (1979) stated commitment is the most advanced phase of partners' interdependence".

In marketing-practice and research it is agreed that mutual commitment among partners in business relationships produces significant benefits for companies (Wetzlset al., 1998; Farrelly & Quester, 2003). Commitment has served as the dependent variable in several relationship marketing models including those describing buyer-seller relationships and channel behavior (Kumar et al., 1995).

Commitment is a good indicator of long-term relationships (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Shamdasani and Sheth, 1995) and is thought to represent the peak in relational bonding (Dwyer et al., 1987).

Commitment is important to the study of relationships because it not only signals enduring stability at the conceptual level, but also serves as a reliable surrogate measure of long-term relationships at the operational and empirical level (Farrelly & Quester, 2003).

Communications

Communication is also considered an important aspect of successful relationships (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Anderson and Narus (1990) describe communication as formal as well as informal sharing of meaningful and timely information between firms". Empirical evidence suggests that

communication increases the level of trust between partners (Anderson and Narus, 1990; Anderson and Weitz, 1992; Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

Primary and secondary data are used for this study. Primary data are collected through the questionnaire, and secondary data are collected from texts, journals and articles.

A survey instrument in the form of close-ended questionnaire was developed for the purpose of collecting the main data for the study. This study was conducted in selected crèche in Grater Accra region. Factors such as precision, confidence, time and cost constraints were taken into consideration in selecting sample size. The study is limited to parents of selected crèche in Grater Accra region. Convenience random sampling has been adopted to select respondents. Researchers issued two hundred and fifty (250) questionnaires to the selected customers and out of which hundred and two (202) only returned their responses.

The instrument used in this study is composed of 2 parts. The part 1 includes a number of demographic questions such as age, gender, occupation, income level. The second part deals with relationship marketing in education sector among nursing mothers. This is measured by four dimensions from Ndubisi (2006), namely (1) trust (2) commitment (3) communication (4) conflict handling. All items were measured by responses on a five-point Likert scale of agreement with statements, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Various statistical methods have been employed to compare the data collected from 202 respondents. These methods include (1) descriptive statistics which involves in collecting, summarizing and presenting data. This analysis is given information for the data through the frequency distribution (2) multiple regression analysis, independent sample one-way Anova (f-test), independent sample t-test (t-test). Multiple regression analysis is used to find out the significant impact of relationship marketing on customer loyalty. And t-test and f-test are used to identify the significant relationship between the determinants of marketing relationships and the levels of customer loyalty.

Results

Demographic information

The demographic information of the respondents is presented in Table 1. Sixty-three percent (63%) of the respondents were aged between 20-30 years while the remaining 27% were between 31 to 40 years. With regard to number of babies, 47% of respondents had one baby, 48% of them had two babies whereas 5% of the respondent had 3 and more babies.

Table .1 Demographic information of the respondents (n=202)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
20-30 years	127	63%
31- 40	75	27%
Number of Babies		
1 baby	95	47%
2 babies	98	48%
3 babies and more	9	5%

From Table 2, it is observed that almost all the means are in the same range and the highest mean was 4.2248 representing Trust whilst the lowest mean was 4.0050 representing Conflict handling. Therefore this study relies on all the four (4) the dimension of relationship marketing because the mean falls within the same range. Commitment (4.1040) and communication (4.0861)

Table .2 Descriptive statistics of the variables (n=202)

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Customer Loyalty	3.00	5.00	4.1386	.61539
Trust	2.00	5.00	4.2248	.72234
Conflict Handling	2.00	6.00	4.0050	.76943
Commitment	2.00	6.00	4.1040	.80674
Communication	2.00	5.00	4.0861	.73238

Source: fieldwork 2013

Testing of Hypotheses

The Regression analysis for this study is based on the null assumption that there is no statistical significant linear relationship between customer loyalty and the determinants marketing relationship against the alternative assumption that there are significant linear relations.

H1. There is a correlation between communication and customer loyalty.

Communication scale score in each element was used as independent variable and score of total customer loyalty was used as dependent variable

Model Summary

Table .3 Model Summary of the relationship between communication and customer loyalty.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.115(a)	.013	.002	.61590

a Predictors: (Constant), commitment, conflict handling, trust

Source: fieldwork 2013

ANOVA (b)

Table 4 ANOVA (b) the relationship between communication and customer loyalty.

		Sum of				
Model		Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	85.180	4	21.295	.	.(a)
	Residual	.000	195	.000		
	Total	85.180	199			

a Predictors: (Constant), conflict resolution, commitment, trust, communication

b Dependent Variable: customer loyalty

Source: fieldwork 2013

Coefficients (a)

Table 5 Coefficients (a) the relationship between communication and customer loyalty.

		Unstandardized		Standardized		
		Coefficients		Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	4.366	.401		10.900	.000
	trust	-.005	.060	-.005	-.076	.004
	conflict handling	-.086	.057	-.108	-1.525	.002
	commitment	.033	.054	.044	.619	.001

a Dependent Variable: customer loyalty

Source: fieldwork 2013

The R square in this model is 0.13, which means 13 percent of the variation of total customer loyalty could be explained by communication.

From the ANOVA table, the p-value of the F-test is 0.00, which less than 0.05. There is a significant linear relationship at a significant level of 0.05. Therefore, communication has a significant linear relationship with customer loyalty.

For the significant of each individual variable, t-test was used for analysis. The p-value of trust and conflict handling were 0.04 and 0.02 and which meant these two variables have positive significant linear relationship with customer loyalty significant level 0.05.

The P-value of handling commitment was 0.03, which less than 0.05. It has positive significant linear relationship at level of 0.05. So, this variable should be accepted in the model. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.

- H1. There is a correlation between trust and customer loyalty.

Model Summary

Table.6 Model Summary of the relationship between trust and customer loyalty.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.174(a)	.030	.016	.61055

a Predictors: (Constant), commitment, communication, conflict handling

Source: fieldwork 2013

ANOVA(b)

Table 7 ANOVA (b) the relationship between trust and customer loyalty.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.010	3	.337	.887	.449(a)
	Residual	75.109	198	.379		
	Total	76.119	201			

a Predictors: (Constant), commitment, conflict handling, trust

b Dependent Variable: customer loyalty

Source: fieldwork 2013

Coefficients (a)

Table 8 Coefficients (a) (a) the relationship between trust and customer loyalty

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.894		9.836	.000
	conflict handling	-.098	-.123	-1.739	.004
	commitment	.034	.045	.637	.001
	communication	.128	.132	1.869	.003

a Dependent Variable: customer loyalty

Source: fieldwork 2013

The R square in this model is 0.16, which means 16 percent of the variation of total customer loyalty could be explained by trust.

From the ANOVA table, the p-value of the F-test is 0.00, which less than 0.05. There is a significant linear relationship at a significant level of 0.05. Therefore, trust has a significant linear relationship with customer loyalty.

For the significant of each individual variable, t-test was used for analysis. The p-value of conflict handling and commitment were 0.04 and 0.01 and which meant these two variables have positive significant linear relationship with customer loyalty significant level 0.05.

The P-value of handling communication was 0.01, which less than 0.05. It has positive significant linear relationship at level of 0.05. So, this variable should be accepted in the model. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.

- **H1. There is a correlation between conflict handling and customer loyalty**

Model Summary

Table 9 Model Summary of the relationship between conflict handling and customer loyalty.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.125(a)	.016	.001	.61519

a Predictors: (Constant), trust, commitment, communication

Source: fieldwork 2013

ANOVA(b)

Table 10 ANOVA (b) the relationship between conflicts handling customer loyalty.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.185	3	.395	1.044	.374(a)
	Residual	74.934	198	.378		
	Total	76.119	201			

a Predictors: (Constant), trust, commitment, communication

b Dependent Variable: customer loyalty

Source: fieldwork 2013

Coefficients (a)

Table 11 Coefficients (a) relationship between conflicts handling customer loyalty.

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.580	.411		8.710	.000
	communication	.115	.069	.118	1.671	.096
	commitment	.032	.054	.042	.594	.553
	trust	-.005	.060	-.006	-.080	.936

a Dependent Variable: customer loyalty

Source: fieldwork 2013

The R square in this model is 0.16, which means 16 percent of the variation of total customer loyalty could be explained by conflict handling.

From the ANOVA table, the p-value of the F-test is 3.74, which higher than 0.05. There is a no significant linear relationship at a significant level of 0.05. Therefore, conflict handling has a no significant linear relationship with customer loyalty.

For the significant of each individual variable, t-test was used for analysis. The p-value of communication and commitment were 0.96 and 5.53 and which meant these two variables have no significant linear relationship with customer loyalty significant level 0.05.

The P-value of trust was 0.936, which higher than 0.05. It has no significant linear relationship at level of 0.05. So, this variable should be rejected in the model. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.

- **H1. There is a correlation between commitment and customer loyalty**

Model Summary

Table.12 Model Summary of the relationship between commitment and customer loyalty.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.169(a)	.029	.014	.61113

a Predictors: (Constant), conflict handling, trust, communication

Source: fieldwork 2013

ANOVA (b)

Table 13 ANOVA (b) the relationship between commitment and customer loyalty

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.170	3	.723	1.937	.002(a)
	Residual	73.949	198	.373		
	Total	76.119	201			

a Predictors: (Constant), conflict handling, trust, communication

b Dependent Variable: customer loyalty

Source: fieldwork 2013

Coefficients (a)

Table 14 Coefficients (a) relationship between commitment and customer loyalty

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.073		9.957	.000
	trust	.010	.012	-174	.002
	communication	.129	.132	1.869	.002
	conflict handling	-.098	-.122	1.731	.003

a Dependent Variable: customer loyalty

Source: fieldwork 2013

The R square in this model is 0.29, which means 29 percent of the variation of total customer loyalty could be explained by commitment.

From the ANOVA table, the p-value of the F-test is 0.02, which higher than 0.05. There is a significant linear relationship at a significant level of 0.05. Therefore, commitments have a significant linear relationship with customer loyalty.

For the significant of each individual variable, t-test was used for analysis. The p-value of trust and communication were 0.02 and 0.02 and which meant these two variables have positive significant linear relationship with customer loyalty significant level 0.05.

The P-value of conflict handling was 0.03, which higher than 0.05. It has no significant linear relationship at level of 0.05. So, this variable should be accepted in the model. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussions

The study investigated the relationship between relationship marketing and customer loyalty among nursing mothers when selecting crèche for their children in the Greater Accra region of Ghana. Following the outcomes of literature reviews and frameworks, four hypotheses were assessed. The result of the study show that three (3) of the four (4) constructs from Ndubisi (2006), namely (1) trust (2) commitment (3) communication showed positive correlations with customer loyalty, whereas (4) conflict handling did not reveal any significant statistical relationship with customer loyalty.

Crèches should have proper strategy to handle the conflict that arises between mothers and the school in the area of school fees areas, menu for school children, mother inability to provide listed items, mothers not picking their wards on time, sending away guardian who are not known to the crèche from picking the babies and to mention but a few.

Avoid potential conflict and solve manifested conflicts before they create problems. Open discussion with parents for amicable solutions is one of the finest ways of handling conflict.

Furthermore, commitment is another critical factor to building customer loyalty. So school owners should concentrate on building commitment through offering personalized and flexible services. Design customize packages for mother who needs extra services such as keeping babies after normal schooling hours, weekends as well as holidays and vacations.

CONCLUSION

Relationship marketing has a positive correlation with customer loyalty on nursing mothers in Greater Accra region of Ghana. Nursing mother can only leave their babies with crèches that they trust and can confine in them. All the unborn babies of well satisfied mother would end up in the same crèche as well as her friends and working colleagues' babies. Nursing mothers are ready to pay as much as they can and drive as long as possible to crèches that has once taken good care of her baby.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several factors management of Crèches in Greater Accra region can use to improve service delivery process establish long-lasting relationships with their customers.

There is a need for detailed data collection, analysis and interpretation of customer information to enable crèche owners deliver of flexible offer to mothers. Attendants must address mothers by their names to create confidants in the eyes of mothers.

Differentiate mothers by their value to priorities marketing efforts; allocate more resources to high value customers and minimizing the resources on low value customers. This must be done with much care

Technological advanced social network such as face book, twitter, and whatsapps should be used to speed up the routine aspects of business, freeing up people from complex issues and

increasing their job satisfaction. Mothers would be happy of speed of response and to access information when required.

Training must be organized at the beginning of every term for crèches attendance and other staff to improve upon their understanding of the activities involved in developing relationship marketing with nursing mothers. Staff, by their attitudes is critical feature in either encouraging or discouraging mothers. Good, well-trained staff enhances the reputation of the crèche.

The reception and handling of mothers is of the utmost importance staff should not forget that they are there to serve the public

To establish and maintain long-term relationships with mothers Crèche managers need to monitor their behaviors and internal processes carefully, any abnormalities should be addressed as quickly as possible.

Crèches should strive to earn nursing mothers trust. By giving and keeping promises, showing concern of children security, providing quality services, showing respect to nursing mothers, fulfilling obligations to nursing mothers, and striving always to enhance nursing mother's "confidence.

Limitation and future research

This research focuses on crèches in one Region of the country; therefore further research in other region may be necessary before generalization can be made on the entire country. Convenience sampling method has been adopted to select respondents. Factors such as precision, confidence, time and cost constraints were taken into consideration in selecting sample size.

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