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ADVANCES IN GLOBAL SERVICES AND RETAIL MANAGEMENT

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ADVANCES IN GLOBAL SERVICES AND RETAIL MANAGEMENT: VOLUME 2

ISBN 978-1-955833-03-5

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ISBN 978-1-955833-03-5

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The Impact of Effective Implementation of Customer Relationship Management to the Success of Hotels in Afikpo North Local Government of Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study assessed the impact of effective implementation of customer relationship management to the success of hotels in Afikpo North. The researchers formulated three objectives and one hypothesis for the purpose of the study. A total of eighty (80) respondents were sampled for the study. Questionnaire and personal interview were the instruments used for data collection. Relevant data collected were analyzed using simple percentages and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypothesis. The findings of the study showed that product customisation, long term relationship, customer loyalty and return on investment were the importance of Customer Relationship Management on hotel establishment. Also, the researcher found out that inspite the above importance of CRM to hotels, there exist factors affecting effective implementation of Customer Relation Management in hotel establishment and made ways forward to the factors. Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that despite the factors affecting CRM, there exist numerous benefits. Therefore the researcher recommended that hotels in Afikpo North should adopt a Customer Relationship Management technique if they want to survive in this dynamic business environment.

Keywords: customer relation, management and hotels

Recommended Citation: Callister, O., & Lilian, M. (2021). The Impact of effective implementation of customer relationship management to the success of hotels in Afikpo North local government of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. In C. Cobanoglu, & V. Della Corte (Eds.), *Advances in global services and retail management* (pp. 1–11). USF M3 Publishing.
<https://www.doi.org/10.5038/9781955833035>

Introduction

Customer relationship Management (CRM) is a technique that big and successful establishments adopt, especially those in service industry that finds it useful in addressing the ever increasing business challenges and improving its interaction with customers in the dynamic business world. Hotels stand to benefit from customer relationship management as it contributes towards meeting customers' expectations and satisfaction. Currently, the hotel industries show a substantial increase in competition, requiring hotels to adopt a strategy that will enable them outdo their competitors by maintaining their relevance and goodwill through retaining existing customers and attracting new ones using customer relationship management (CRM). Some establishments adopt different strategies and techniques that improve their competitiveness and survival in the dynamic environment. A working strategy is customer relationship management (CRM). Customer relationship management refers to all the business attributes such as financial

projections, goal on actualisation and customer loyalty. With proper implementation of customer relationship management (CRM), hotels in Afikpo Metropolis can build a long lasting relationship with their customers, thereby gaining competitive advantage, understanding customer expectations, interactive management, customer loyalty, partnership and personalization of products and services. Effective implementation of (CRM) aids hotels achieves excellent service delivery and quality management processes. Today, customers are becoming more sensitive to prices with corresponding services, with regarding brand loyalty due to inflations, making it necessary for business organization to implement a strategy like customer relationship management (CRM). However, a framework for customer relationship management implementation is really lacking in many industries, especially in hospitality industry, when its owners are struggling with customer satisfaction, managerial processes, customer retention, management knowledge, supporting technology capabilities and alignment of the model with the business process for competency (Lund, 2020).

Implementation of customer relationship management is mostly non existence in the hotel industry as evident through interactive research (Forester, 2016) Although it exists in some urban hotels in Nigeria, there is need for understanding whether customer relationship management (CRM) could work for hotels in rural areas like Afikpo that does not show with implementation and has a need to adopt such a model to succeed in its hotel industry. This study rose from the recognition that customer relationship management is important to the success of any establishment (Hotels).

Problems of the Statement

Increased competition in the business environment has forced many service industry like hotels to adopt a strategy that will enable it stay relevance. Improving customer satisfaction is a crucial component of the hospitality industry's value and a sure bet to a successful business operation, creation of customer loyalty, retained customers, increased loyalty. This is while Forrester (2016) opined that the costs associated with finding new customer mean that every existing customer could be important as these costs are under control in a better and more effective way. There is total lack of well framed customer relation personnel that will manage guests reviews and complaints including wants and communicate effectively with potential customers through social media platforms and blog since customers are the main source of concern as they help build the reputation and growth of any establishment. Customer relationship management helps establishments to gain an insight into the behaviour and wants of their customers and modify their business challenges, thereby building customer satisfaction, management knowledge and product customization. In as much as lot of resources are utilized in the purchase, installation and training of personnel on customer relationship management, there are still sufferings and struggling with management knowledge in most hotels located in rural areas like Afikpo. This struggling with management knowledge is caused by lack of professional customer relation manager with hotel management background. It is clear that in this technological era, technological capabilities need for proper implementation of customer relationship management (CRM) is lacking in the hospitality and tourism industry. Today, the skills required for the techniques of 'CRM are in aberration since most personnel in the industry are not computer literate. Also, most hospitality industries do not have the fund for the purchase of the state – of – art – equipment useful for 'CRM' and are not aware of the benefits of CRM. If hotels are to remain profitable, then the solution could be considered to be revolutionary in the area of

adopting a strategy that will enhance customer experience. This is why the adoption of customer relationship management (CRM) is a key in achieving competitive advantages.

Research Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to know the impact of effective implementation customer relationship management to the success of hotels in Afikpo north, the specific objectives are:

- To find out the importance of customer relationship management on hotels in Afikpo north
- To know the factors affecting CRM on hotels in Afikpo north
- To suggest ways CRM can be effectively achieved in hotels in Afikpo north

Hypothesis

- H0. There is no significance relationship between importance of CRM and hotels in Afikpo north.

Literature Review

Customer relationship management is a technology for managing all the company's relationship and interactions with existing and potentials customers. According to Sandrov (2015), customer relationship management is a process of managing customer relations in an organised way. It refers to all strategies, techniques, tools and technologies used by enterprises for developing, retaining and acquiring customers. It is a strategy for a business to manage its interactions with its customers (Lakshan, 2018). It is about investing time in your current customer base and prospects with the aim of retaining their custom as long as possible and increasing their spend by delivering great customer service. They aim at managing each 'moment of Truth' that is experienced by the customer. There are various contact points where the hotel comes in direct contact with the customer which are known as 'Touch points' in the CRM language. These touch points are considered important as there is direct interaction with the customer and they provide valuable input to the hotel. The input provided by the customer has to be captured in such a way that it becomes information and can be used by various processes within the hotel. It is bases on the argument that 'the happier a customer is with a relationship, the greater the likelihood they will stay with an organization'. It is argued by some researchers that CRM can be seen as the organizational implementation of a relationship management philosophy (Mithias, Krishana and Fornel 2005). Through delivering more responsive and customized services to customers, CRM increases customer satisfaction and this in term improves customer loyalty. (Prasongsukarn, 2006). The importance of relationship management is increasingly being recognized. Patel,(2019) wrote that companies/establishments must move from short –term transaction – oriented goals to long – term relationship – building goals (Hargrave, 2020). The evolution of relationship management is also closely associated with the realization of the importance of the customer to an establishment, the advancement of technology, the diminishing of product differences and the ever –increasing pressure of competition has led to the acknowledgement that customers are one of a establishment's most valuable assets (Chai, Ehrens and Kiwak, 2020). Badiechia (2020) argued that the only real sustainable business growth strategy is through autoplastic symbiotic relationship with customers, which enables a business to understand their needs more clearly and

to create and deliver superior value. The concept of customer relationship management has a broader focus of not only serving the customer but also creating the customer and retaining him for measurable and substantial returns.

The Impacts of CRM in Hotel Industry

According to Columbus (2016), the following are the main reasons most organizations embark on Customer Relation Management practices:

- Product/service customisation
- Increased sales
- Return on investment
- Customer loyalty and profitability
- Customer Retention

Product or Service Customization

Customers that are know and understood are served on an individual basis. Products and services are tailor-made to meet customer requirements. Ongoing interaction between the organization and its customers leads to mutual understanding to such an extent that the organization will be able to render services based on individual taste and preferences (Alipour and Mohammadi, 2011). As opposed to mass marketing, one to one transaction creates a bond that is characterised by respect and understanding between the organization and the customer. Once the hotel understands the need and wants of their customers, products will be designed to satisfy this needs and wants.

Long-Term Relationship

Hargrave (2020) state that CRM stresses commitment rather than flitting. The greatest importance is to ensure that the organization develops long-term relationships, especially with the most profitable customers. Long-term relationships make it easier for the organization to establish customers that have the highest life time product value (CLV) and ensure that they continue doing business with that particular organisation. Customers with a long-term relationship with an organization are always easy to serve and easy to satisfy since their needs will long be known (Esak, 2013). For businesses that focus more on physical relationship Management involves employee training. Employees must be shown how to treat customers, how to answer their questions effectively and how to make the service experience an enjoyable one thereby increasing customer loyalty. This type of employees training is often most vital part of CRM strategies since it is fostering long-term relationship (Gandolfo, 2010).

Disintermediation

Most intermediaries bridge the gap between the supplying organization and the customer unnecessarily, Rather than adding value within the chain, they only pursue individual benefits (Kofter and Lee, 2011). A critical example is found in the tourism sector nowadays. Travel agents and tour operators must intermediate to ensure that customers get attractive and packaged services with easy excess and affordable discounted services. However, their motive is more profit maximization than customer service.

From the 18th century, tourism intermediaries became highly profit conscious, such that the main goal became profit maximisation at the expense of the principals on whose behalf they render services as well as the customers. Besides increased inflation, rates charged by the tourism intermediaries abruptly increased too far above the inflation rate (Rodrigo, 2012). On that note, it then becomes more beneficial for the principals to sell directly to their customers, that being one most important benefit of customer relationship management (CRM).

Customer Loyalty and Profitability

According to Columbus (2016), CRM tools contain all the details of a customer and it is very easy to track a customer accordingly. The details can be used to determine which customers can be more profitable than others. In CRM systems, customers are grouped according to different aspects in relation to the type of business they do or according to physical location and are allocated to different customer managers, known as account managers. This helps to focus and concentrate on each and every customer separately.

A customer relationship management (CRM) system is not only used to deal with existing customers, it is also useful in acquiring new customers (Sandrov, 2015). The process starts with identifying a customer and maintaining all the corresponding details into the CRM system used by the organization. The sales and finds representatives by getting business out of these customers by following up with them and converting them into buying customers. All this is done easily all the customers efficiently and providing them what they actually need to increase customer satisfaction. This in term increases the chance of getting more business, which ultimately enhance turnover and profit. If the customers is satisfied, they will always be loyal to your and will remain in business indefinitely resulting in an increased customer base and ultimately enhancing net growth of business.

The key benefits of CRM that were largely ignored in the past are customer loyalty and customer profitability (Richard, Keith and Jones, 2008). According to the author a report published by the Hawad business Review shows that in most service industries, especially the telecommunication industry. Thus, once customers become loyal, they increase their purchase of specific products as well as a variety. Loyal customers are less-price sensitive because they have tried, tested and developed confidence with the quality offered by the organization. However, new customer are normally highly price sensitive because they will not be prepared to spend much on a product or service they are unsure of.

Return on Investment (ROI)

Mahammed and Zakaria (2012) states return on investment can be viewed from organizational intelligence, customer intelligence and supplier intelligence that helps understand the views of customers, suppliers and organizations. Customer relationship management (CRM) is an integration of contact management, sales automation, marketing automation customer service and support, e-economic commerce, partner and channel management. In most cases, all these are necessitated by a computerised system.

Factor Affecting Customer Relationship Management in Hotel Industry

Many hotel industries today do not successfully implement Customer Relationship Management in their operation because of the numerous factors affecting the technique. Ward (2020) observed that the implementation of CRM has been affected by many factors ranging from lack of skill manpower. Lund (2020) observed that the many hospitality employees do not have the requisite skills for successful servicing of customers to meet their needs. The perceived employees' rudeness, lack of social and technical skills in computer operation seen to be the most common causes for customer dissatisfaction. In the opinion of Avery (2019) Managerial knowledge in the area of computer is lacking in all sectors, therefore personnel training is one of the critical components of successful implementation of CRM in hotel establishments.

Desire for Change of Adaption of New Technique

Geronikolas (2011) emphasizes that human beings have a strong desire for exploration and change for customers continue to mention their loyalty to a particular hotel, provision must be made for change, development and proper management of customers information database in order to create room for customer's orientation strategy to thrive in the hotel industry. Change in the area of customers. Information, meeting customers' needs, and providing impresses and quantity services is a key to achieving successful CRM implementation in the hotel industry Esak (2013) noted that it is important for organization to adopt new technique since what is acceptance today become obsolete tomorrow. This makes it of essence that there should be constraint research and waning for hotels to remain relevant to the needs of their customers.

Lack of Awareness in the Use of Internet Database of Soft

Many hotel industries lack the desired awareness that CRM are software designed to manage customers data-base. This is while Peppers and Martha (2011) emphasizes that CRM application is still relatively new compared to the tourism industry. As a result, there still some aspects like the hotel, motels etc of tourism that are not aggressively involved in using CRM in marketing. Rebecca, (2018) noted that many hotels in Afikpo metropolis do not use the CRM integrated packaged programmes in their benefits in customer satisfaction and retaliation. This has affected the overall goal of the hotel industry.

Inadequate Funding

customer relationship management is a technique is cost-effective in its implementation (Sandrov, 2015). Many hotel establishments lack of the needed fund in the purchase of CRM software installation and implementation. This has directly and indirectly affected their operations in the area of meeting customers' needs and satisfaction. According to Willey (2003) fund is the basic necessity in any business kick off and a tool for acquisition and procurement of necessary equipments and techniques for business operation. Where it is lacking, stagnation, Labour turnover and decreased patronage are inevitable.

Ways Through Which Customer Relationship Management Can Be Implemented

For hotels to achieve success in a dynamic business environment the adoption and implementation of a strategic techniques call CRM is the option. Therefore the best way to implement a successful CRM includes:

Proper Orientation of Service Staff and Hotel Managers

It is pertinent to inform hotel managers on the benefits of CRM in achieving their overall objectives. Hotel industries today are compared to develop a working database for effective management of their customers and improved guest relation or get out of business. This therefore demands that hotel employees should be given proper orientation on the need for CRM technique in their operation.

Proper Training and Orientation of Hotel Employees on CRM

According to Patel (2019) personnel training and orientation is one the critical component of successful implementation of CRM technique in the tourism and hospitality industry, so that employees can keep up with the rapid development of information technology. Some staff members are not adequately trained in CRM; this makes the adoption and implementation of CRM techniques unsuccessful and unreliable. Therefore, hotel CRM should be properly trained on thus techniques for effective application of CRM or hotel industries.

Provision of Adequate Fund

Hotel managers and owners should make initial capital for purchases, installation and management of CRM technique if it must be in business (Forester,2016). The business environment s dynamic in nature today because of competition and this call for CRM budget in order to be the leader in the marked. More importantly, hotel industries should create sources of income in order to invest in into CRM Technique. In order to outdo their compotators and take competitive advantage

Adoption of New Technique Strategy

Business organizations must inspire for change in this changing era. This change can be achieved through constraint research and development in the hospitality industry. Research must be conducted regularly and the results published quickly in order to ascertain the current market needs and demand and the new technology for survival in this competitive environment. Hotels businesses should adopt change in its operation, service delivery, product development and packaging and customer management if it must survive in this era of business dynamism.

Methods

Research Design

Field survey research design was adopted for this study since information was to be obtained from some staff of the hotels considered good enough to represent the population. Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized in gathering relevant information for the purpose of

this study. The population of the study comprised namely staff of Ebonyi hotels, Ndibe beach hotels, P-noble hotel and focus hotel. As revealed by information obtained from preliminary visit to the area, Ebonyi Hotels Afikpo had a population of 15 staff, Ndibe beach 30, P-noble 40 and Focus hotels 15 staff, giving an aggregate population of 100. From the population, a sample size of 80 respondents was obtained using Taro Yamane formula when a population size is known ($n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$).

Data Collection Instruments

The instruments used for data collection were both personal interview and questionnaire. Sources of data for the study were from both primary and secondary sources. Face validation was done on the instruments by five experts from Hospitality Management and Tourism.

Area of the Study (Brief History of the Selected Hotels)

Ebonyi Hotels Afikpo, Ndibe Beach Hotel and Resort, P-noble Hotel and Resort and Focus Hotel are all located in Afikpo north local government of Ebonyi state, Nigeria. They are the four most popular hotels in Afikpo city. They are idea center for relaxation, picnicking, swimming and other leisure activities in Afikpo North Local Government Area.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected for the study were presented with the use of simple tabulations and analyzed with the use of simple percentages and the null hypothesis was tested using ANOVA.

Presentation of Results

Table 1. Analysis to Determine the Positive Impacts of Customer Relation Management

| Options | Ebonyi | Ndibe | p-noble | Focus | Frequenc y | % | Success rating 20% and above |
|-----------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------------|------------|---|
| Customer loyalty | 4 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 18 | 23 | |
| Increased sales | 3 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 16 | 20 | |
| Competitive advantage | 3 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 18 | 22.5 | |
| Return on investment | 2 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 17 | 21 | |
| Customer retention | 1 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 11 | 14 | |
| Total | 13 | 27 | 30 | 10 | 80 | 100 | 86% |

From table 1 above, it is obvious that majority of the population with percentage success rating at of 86% which is a total population of 69 agreed that the customer loyalty, increased sales, competitive advantages, return on investment and customer retention were the impacts of customer relationship management on hotels. Therefore, only about 16% disagreed.

Table 2. Analysis to Determine Factors Affecting the Implementation of CRM in Hotels

| Options | Ebonyi | Ndibe | p-noble | Focus | Frequency | % | Success rate (%) |
|----------------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|------------------|------------|-------------------------|
| Lack Skilled manpower | 3 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 16 | 20 | |
| No functional database | 3 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 16 | 20 | |
| Inadequate funding | 3 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 16 | 20 | |
| Lack of proper orientation | 2 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 16 | 20 | |
| Lack of training | 2 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 16 | 20 | |
| Total | 13 | 27 | 30 | 10 | 80 | 100 | 100 |

The result from Table 2, showed that all the respondents with 100% success rate agreed that the above factors affect successful implementation of CRM in hotels.

Table 3. Analysis to Determine Ways for Effective Application of CRM in Hotels

| Options | Ebonyi | Ndibe | p-noble | Focus | Frequency | % | Success rate (%) |
|----------------------------|--------|-------|---------|-------|-----------|-----|------------------|
| Training | 3 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 16 | 20 | |
| Orientation | 3 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 19 | 23 | |
| Use of functional database | 2 | 6 | 6 | 1 | 15 | 19 | |
| Adequate funding | 2 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 14 | 18 | |
| Product customization | 3 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 16 | 20 | |
| Total | 13 | 27 | 30 | 10 | 80 | 100 | |

From the table above, about 63% success rate agreed that training, orientation, use of functional database, adequate funding and product customization were ways for achieving effecting Customer relationship management.

Test of Hypothesis

Table 4. There Is No Relationship Between Impacts of CRM and Hotels in Afikpo

| Options | Ebonyi hotel square | | Ndibe beach square | | p-noble hotel square | | Focus hotel square | | Total |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|----|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|--------------------|----|-------|
| Customer loyalty | 4 | 16 | 6 | 36 | 6 | 36 | 2 | 4 | |
| Increased sales | 3 | 9 | 5 | 25 | 6 | 36 | 2 | 4 | |
| Return on investment | 3 | 9 | 4 | 16 | 7 | 49 | 2 | 4 | |
| Competitive advantage | 2 | 4 | 5 | 25 | 8 | 64 | 2 | 4 | |
| Customer retention | 1 | 1 | 5 | 25 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 4 | |
| T _c | 13 | | 27 | | 30 | | 10 | | 80 |
| n _c | 5 | | 5 | | 5 | | 5 | | 20 |
| X ² _c | | 39 | | 127 | | 194 | | 20 | 380 |

Table 5. Summary of ANOVA Table Showing Significant Impacts of Customer Relationship Management on Hotels

| Source of variation | Sum of squares | Df | Mean square | F | Sig. |
|---------------------|----------------|----|-------------|----|------|
| Between groups | 60 | 4 | 15 | | .000 |
| Within groups | 10 | 16 | 0.625 | 20 | |
| Total | 70 | 20 | | | |

Table 5 above presents the ANOVA table. The F-statistic as shown from the table is significant since the probability value of .000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, that there was significant difference on the impacts of CRM on hotels in Afikpo (F= 20; P<0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the Alternative hypothesis (H1) accepted. This implies that Customer relationship management do have impacts on hotels.

Summary

The focus of this study is on the impact of customer relationship management on hotel in Afikpo North. The researchers found that indeed the effective implementation of CRM on hotel operation leads to customer loyalty, increased sales, competitive advantage, return on investment and product customization as shown from responses of the respondents. Also, it was found that most hotels in Afikpo do not use CRM in their operations because of lack of skilled personnel, lack of functional database, inadequate fund, and poor orientation and lack of training. Lastly, it

was found that adequate funding, adoption of functional database, training of staff, staff orientation will aid in achieving customer relation management in hotels.

Conclusions

It is evident that effective implementation of CRM on hotel operation have positive impacts to the success of hotels, despite the factors affecting its successful implementation. Also, since the study has suggested ways for effective implementation, hotels in Afikpo north should adopt and implement good CRM if they want to be relevant in the competitive business environment. CRM has been a technique considered to effective tool for survival in this era of change and dynamism. Therefore hotels should endeavour to purchase, install and implement CRM in their operation and as well as train staff and give staff proper orientation on the need for CRM.

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