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The intervention of organizational characteristics in the relationship between CRM and organizational performance in the Nigerian insurance industry

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study is to find out if Organizational characteristics intervene in the relationship between CRM and organizational performance in the Nigerian insurance industry. Relevant literature was reviewed and a model consisting of fourteen variables was conceptualized and tested by means of empirical data collected through a questionnaire survey. A total of one hundred and eighty (180) copies of questionnaires were administered, one hundred and forty nine (149) copies were duly completed and returned. This represents a response rate of 82.78%. Partial correlation was used to test the hypothesis. Findings show that there is a positive relationship between customer focused and customer satisfaction in the Nigerian insurance industry. Findings also show that Organizational characteristics intervene in the relationship between CRM and organizational performance in the Nigerian insurance industry. The study also shows that the strength of the intervention of companies' image is stronger than that of branch network. The study recommended that insurance companies should pay more attention to their companies' image and pay less attention to proliferation of branches.

Introduction

The Nigerian insurance industry operates in an unpredictably fast changing environment in terms of customer, competition and market share. In order to survive in the dynamic business environment, relationships form the differentiating factor in view of the similarity of services. The quality of the relationships differentiates one organization from another. Also, because relationships determine the future value of an organization, there is a need to keep a relationship score card that describes the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of the relationships (Achumba, 2006).

However, in the current era of hyper competition, a very slight difference exists in the services provided by the major players in this industry. In such a scenario, as the services offered by these companies are homogenous and the boundaries between the offerings of major players in the industry are becoming increasingly blurred, a customer is unlikely to be overly impressed by the attributes of an offering. Hence, financial service providers should seek to find differentiating factors for their products. Organizational characteristics then become an important differentiating tool. Organizational characteristics tend to give an organization, distinctive or comparative advantage over competitors, because it enables them to display a uniqueness that cannot be easily copied by competitors.

Adopting CRM effectively tends to give an organization distinctive or comparative advantage over competitors, because it enables effective communication with the customers and know what they need and want. It also highlights the reasons why they continue to patronize the organization's products and services, why some leave the organization, and the strategies to use to manage such relationships effectively. When long-term relationships exist between organizations and customers, the distance between them becomes shorter and the organization benefits from repeat purchase and the goodwill of the customer (Jackson, 1985; Gronroos, 1990).

Building an enduring relationship with customers is important to the survival of the insurance industry. Insurance companies can increase their profits by maximizing the profitability of the total customer relationship over time, as this is more effective on the long run than getting 'all' profit from any single transaction (Fagbemi and Olowokudejo, 2011) at the expense of a long term relationship with the customer or concentrating scarce resources on attracting new customers. This is because, it has been established that it costs a company more to attract new customers than it does to retain existing ones (Achumba, 2002; Bose, 2002).

Although several researches have been carried out on the relationship between CRM and organizational performance in both developed and developing nations, there is a paucity of research involving organizational characteristic. In order to fill this gap, this paper seeks to find out if companies' image and/or branch network, which are two major organizational characteristics found to affect performance in developing countries, intervene in the relationship between CRM and organizational performance. The paper is in five sections. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The next section presents a review of relevant literature. Section III describes the methodology used in this paper. Section IV contains the analysis of data and presents the results while Section V contains conclusions and recommendations.

Literature review

Global changes brought new trends, directions and new ways of doing business, which also brought new challenges and

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opportunities to financial institutions. The Nigerian insurance industry of the 21st century has entered a new era where personal attention is decreasing because of the use of technology which has replaced human contact in many application areas. Operations have changed with the advent of information communication technology, in all financial institutions, the world over. The automated teller machines (ATM) displaced cashier tellers, internet replaced the mail, credit cards and electronic cash replaced traditional cash transactions and interactive television will eventually replace face-to-face transactions (Shekhar and Gupta, 2008). But even though, the advent of ICT enhanced access to remote areas and easier payment modes, an upward mobile insurance company will pay attention to its branch network and companies' image. Dauda (2010) confirms that only about 62 percent of Nigerians were educated as at 2005. UNICEF (2008) also found that only 28% of Nigerians are internet savvy while Adeleke, Ibiwoye, and Olowokudejo (2012) reports a high rate of cybercrime in Nigeria. All these make it almost impossible for all Nigerians to take advantage of technology. The implication of these is that a reasonably high number of the insureds and potential insureds with purchasing power could still need to have branches located near them for accessibility. Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler (2012) also pointed out that customers of intangible products like insurance services will generally rely on tangible attributes of the products they want to purchase. Companies' image is one such tangible attribute.

Different ways must be analyzed to meet customer needs (Shekhar and Gupta, 2008). Every organization is unique as all organizations use their own particular blend of approaches and methods to manage and sustain high performance. In order to compete with newly increasing competitive pressures, financial institutions must recognize the need of balancing their performance by achieving their strategic goals and meeting continuous volatile customer needs and requirements.

A review of literature reveals several ways to assess business performance. A firm's performance can be measured using financial measures (e.g. profitability, sales growth etc), operational indicators (e.g. market share, branch network, companies' image e.t.c), stock price or a combination of factors (Dawson and Watson, 2005). While financial performance measures have been dominantly used in the past, non-financial measures have not enjoyed the same widespread use. Different authors such as Neelankavil and Comer (2007) and Kaplan and Norton (1992) have debated about the most important metrics of measuring performance within companies. But Kirby (2005) argued that there is no single factor or metric which guarantees organizational success. Rather, high performance is a composite of many things. For instance, companies seen as highly ethical and with a reputation for caring and for social responsibility may have an edge in improving their organizational performance (Weber 2005). Several authors (Oyeniyi and Abiodun, 2008; Gelade and Young, 2005; Shaker and Alsadi, 2010, Fagbemi and Olowokudejo, 2011; Fagbemi, 2006) have adopted the use of Increased Profit, Increased number of Customers, Customer satisfaction and Customer Retention as a measure of performance.

Customer Retention simply means keeping customers and not losing them to competitors. (Gronroos, 2004). The goal of customer relationships management is to convert first-time or occasional buyers into loyal, long term customers thereby reducing or totally eliminating customer defection and where there had been defection, management is to reinitiate valuable customer relationships, which have been already terminated by searching out such 'lost' customers, select valuable relationships and attempt to regain them in an effective, efficient and systematic way, Michalski (2004). Retention, if well managed leads to increased profitability.

Niraj,Gupta and Narasimhan(2001) demonstrate the use of company's profitability to determine the success of CRM. They assess the performance of service industries using their net profit and concluded that generally organizations can be assumed to be performing better than competitors if their profit after tax is higher than that of competing firms. Zeithaml(1999) also discovered that profitability in the service industry is improved if effort is made to attract, maintain and retain customers that are found to have a high economic value. But the profitability objective of the organization is easily achieved when the customer is satisfied.

Customer satisfaction measures how well a company's products or services meet or exceed customer expectations. These expectations often reflect many aspects of the company's business activities including the actual product, service, company, and how the company operates in the global environment. Satisfaction with the product, interpersonal satisfaction, satisfaction with the price of the offering, and satisfaction with vendor performance are independent variables that have direct effects on overall satisfaction. But Organizational characteristics which are the aspects of an organization that can be identified, usually in relation to performance, usually play a vital role in the CRM-organizational performance relationship.

The trend towards consolidation of branches in very large branch networks has implications for both customers and the insurance companies themselves. Consumers in developing countries have traditionally relied most heavily on branches to access financial services.

Prior research suggests that these customers face something of a trade-off in light of the growth of very large branch networks. It also suggests that, larger organizations and organizations that operate in multiple markets tend to charge higher fees and offer lower deposit rates than smaller, single-market institutions (Hannan, 2002, 2004; Hannan and Prager, 2004, 2006; Park and Pennacchi, 2004), with the implication that branch-dependent customers could face additional costs as branches are increasingly consolidated into the large branch networks of these organizations. According to Dick, (2003) depositors value geographic reach (having branches in many states and municipalities) and local branch density (having many branches of an institution in a given area) when selecting a depository/financial institution the scope and scale of large branch network are qualities that many customers value because large branch networks offer the convenience of many possible points of contact with the institution and, potentially, the ability to avoid usage fees by staying within the insurance companies' own network.

i. From the literature reviewed, a model which consists of fourteen variables showing the intervention of organizational characteristics in the relationship between customer relationship management and organizational performance is developed as shown in figure 1 *Scandal free organization:* Most of the staff questioned (93.5%) believe that their organizations are sometimes or always scandal free. 6.1% of the respondents are uncertain while 0.8% claim that their organizations are never scandal free. Customer responses show that ninety seven respondents (65.9%) claim that their insurance companies are always or sometimes scandal free. 26.5% are uncertain, while 7.5% chose 'seldom or never'.

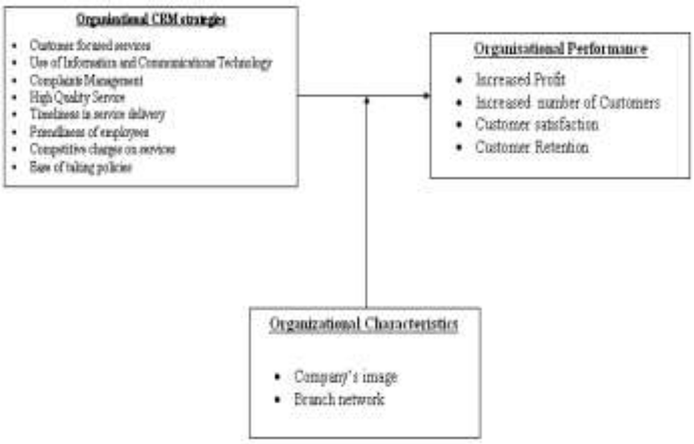
ii. *Advertisement in the national dailies:* Over seventy percent (70.5%) of the staff claim that they always or sometimes advertise the services offered by their organization in the dailies, 16.7% of the staff claim to be uncertain about the advert situation of their company, while 12.9% claim that they seldom or never advertise. Responses from customers show that 78.2% of the respondents claim that their organization always or sometimes advertise their services in the dailies, however 10.2% claim to be uncertain while 11.5% chose 'seldom or never'.

iii. *Standard of services rendered:* Most (83.5%) of the staff believe that their services are always or sometimes of international standard. 12% are uncertain, 4.6% chose 'seldom or never'. While 66.7% of the customers ticked always or sometimes, 29.3% are uncertain and 4.1% chose seldom or never.

iv. *Social Responsibility:* The staffs were asked if their organization undertake community development projects in their environment. Their responses show that 63.3% of the respondents believe that their organization always or sometimes undertake community development projects in their environment. 27.3% chose 'uncertain' and 5.4% chose 'seldom or never'. In response to the same question, customers' responses show that 60.3% of the respondents believe that their organization always or sometimes undertake community development projects in their environment. 31.5% chose 'uncertain' while 8.3% chose seldom or never'.

v. *Image:* When asked if their organization has a positive image around the country, 92.4% answered in the affirmative, 5.3% were 'uncertain' and 2.3% chose 'seldom or never'. The customers were also asked about the image of their insurance companies/insurance companies around the country, 69.2% answered in the affirmative, 27.4% chose 'uncertain' while 3.4% chose 'seldom or never'.

Figure 1: A model showing the intervention of organisational characteristics in the relationship between customer relationship management and organisational performance



Source: Researcher, 2009

Methodology

Organisational performance was the dependent variable in this study. Researchers have offered a variety of measures of organisational performance. Subjective measures were used rather than objective measures as subjective measures can capture a wide concept of business performance. Phillip (1981) recommends that researchers should ask questions relating to business performance as straight as possible in order to remove or reduce ambiguity in response. Similarly, Fredrickson and Mitchell (1984) suggest that when there is sufficient disagreement in the responses of multiple respondents, such data should be discarded. Venkatraman and Ramanujam (1986) however pointed out the need to use multiple respondents to assess business performance in order to improve construct validity. A mix of the customers and staff in this case.

Venkatraman and Ramanujam (1986) pointed out that neither primary nor secondary data is superior to the other. According to Ford (1979), questionnaire data tend to tap more emergent phenomena compared to institutional records. Hence, we have decided to use the structured questionnaire to gather data for this study. Two variables of organizational characteristics - companies' image and branch network were used and a set of questions used to measure if these variables intervene in the relationship between CRM and organizational performance. Five Likert questions were asked to ascertain the impact of companies' image on organizational performance and two questions were also asked to ascertain the impact of branch network on organizational performance.

Data Analysis

The responses of both staff and customers are discussed in tables 1 and 2 below.

Company's Image

Two questions were asked to determine people's perception of companies' image. The responses to these questions are presented in Table 1.

Branch Network

Customers usually appreciate personalized conveniences such as neighborhood branches, located in places that are within their reach. Two questions were asked to determine the organizational characteristics of the selected financial institutions. The responses of staff to these questions are presented in Table 2.

i. *Location:* Responses from the insurance companies show that 63.5% of the respondents claim that their organization have branches in almost every state in Nigeria. 22.2% claim to be uncertain while 14.2% chose 'seldom or never'. Responses from the customers however show that only 46.9% of the respondents claim that their organization have branches in almost every state in Nigeria. 47.6% are not certain if their organization has branches in every state, while 5.4% ticked 'seldom or never'.

ii. *Accessibility:* Most of the staff (88.8%) are of the opinion that their organization always or sometimes locate their branches where it will be easily accessible by customers. 6% are however uncertain if their organization locates branches where it will be easily accessible by customers while 5.2% chose seldom or never. Responses from the insurance companies show that 87.1% of the customers believe that their insurance company locates offices where it will be easily accessible to them. 10.2% are 'uncertain', while 2.8% chose 'seldom or never'.

Hypothesis Testing

A hypothesis was used to test whether organizational characteristics intervene in the relationship between CRM and organizational performance in insurance companies. The Hypothesis, H_0 is stated below:

H_0: Organizational characteristics do not intervene in the relationship between CRM and organizational performance in the Nigerian insurance industry.

This hypothesis was conducted separately for staff and customers. The partial correlation was used to test this hypothesis. Two variables of organizational characteristics were selected by the researcher. These variables are branch network and companies' image. Using each of these variables as the control variable, the results from the analysis are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Responses on Company's Image

		Staff *(n = 139)*	Customer *(n = 149)*
Scandal free organization.			
Never		1(0.8%)	4(2.7%)
Seldom		0%	7(4.8%)
Uncertain		8(6.1%)	39(26.5%)
Sometimes		25(19.1%)	33(22.4%)
Always		97(74%)	64(43.5%)
Advertisement in the national dailies			
Never		7(5.3%)	3(2%)
Seldom		10(7.6%)	14(9.5%)
Uncertain		22(16.7%)	15(10.2%)
Sometimes		67(50.8%)	74(50.3%)
Always		26(19.7%)	41(27.9%)
Standard of services rendered			
Never		3(2.3%)	4(2.7%)
Seldom		3(2.3%)	2(1.4%)
Uncertain		16(12%)	43(29.3%)
Sometimes		29(21.8%)	45(30.6%)
Always		82(61.7%)	53(36.1%)
Social Responsibility			
Never		6(4.7%)	3(2.1%)
Seldom		6(4.7%)	9(6.2%)
Uncertain		35(27.3%)	46(31.5%)
Sometimes		47(36.7%)	43(29.5%)
Always		34(26.6%)	45(30.8%)
Image around the country			
Never		2(1.5%)	1(0.7%)
Seldom		1(0.8%)	4(2.7%)
Uncertain		7(5.3%)	40(27.4%)
Sometimes		28(21.2%)	35(24%)
Always		94(71.2%)	66(45.2%)

Source: Field survey, 2010

Table 2: Responses on Branch Network

		Staff *(n = 139)*	Customer *(n = 149)*
Location of branches in every state in Nigeria			
Never		10(7.9%)	3(2%)
Seldom		8(6.3%)	5(3.4%)
Uncertain		28(22.2%)	70(47.6%)
Sometimes		37(29.4%)	35(23.8%)
Always		43(34.1%)	34(23.1%)
Accessibility to customers			
Never		2(1.5%)	2(1.4%)
Seldom		5(3.7%)	2(1.4%)
Uncertain		8(6%)	15(10.2%)
Sometimes		15(11.2%)	43(29.3%)
Always		104(77.6%)	85(57.8%)

Source: Field survey, 2010

Table 1: Partial Correlation to test the Intervention of companies image between CRM and organizational performance relationship

Control Variable			customer retention		customer satisfaction		Increase in profit		Increase in market share	
			staff	customer	Staff	customer	staff	customer	Staff	customer
companies image	customer focused service	Correlation	0.210*	0.301*	0.257*	0.281*	0.216*	0.421*	0.341*	0.392*
		P-value	0.018	0	0.003	0.001	0.014	0	0.011	0
	ICT	Correlation	0.251*	0.124	0.404*	0.216*	0.421*	0.162*	0.522*	0.211*
		P-value	0.004	0.145	0	0.011	0	0.002	0.03	0.005
	complaints management	Correlation	0.107	0.252*	0.270*	0.37*	0.314*	0.54*	0.617*	0.614*
		P-value	0.231	0.003	0.002	0	0	0.01	0.013	0
	high quality service	Correlation	0.364*	0.165*	0.450*	0.309*	0.62*	0.634*	0.61*	0.81*
		P-value	0	0.052	0	0	0.001	0.022	0	0
	timeliness in service delivery	Correlation	0.285*	0.157*	0.443*	0.147	0.716*	0.557	0.205*	0.315
		P-value	0.001	0.064	0	0.85	0.02	0.064	0.014	0.052
	Friendliness of employees	Correlation	0.173	0.261*	0.205*	0.372*	0.251*	0.372*	0.394*	0.312*
		P-value	0.052	0.002	0.021	0	0.002	0.007	0.008	0.05
	competitive charges on services	Correlation	0.009	0.334*	0.104	0.278*	0.127*	0.581*	0.182*	0.701*
		P-value	0.919	0	0.243	0.001	0.01	0	0	0.007
	ease of taking policies	Correlation	0.149	0.234	0.112	0.006	0.303	0.498	0.197	0.165
		P-value	0.095	0.066	0.209	0.372	0.061	0.101	0.08	0.114

Source: *Field survey, 2010*

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05level

Table 2: Partial Correlation to test the Intervention of branch network between CRM and organizational performance relationship

Control Variables			customer retention		customer satisfaction		Increase in profit		Increase in market share	
			staff	customer	staff	customer	staff	customer	staff	Customer
Branch Network	Customer Focused Service	Correlation	0.255*	0.366*	0.338*	0.347*	0.315*	0.281*	0.212*	0.181*
		P-value	0.004	0	0	0	0	0.003	0.001	0.03
	ICT	Correlation	0.310*	0.179*	0.451*	0.264*	0.208*	0.652*	0.397*	0.158*
		P-value	0	0.035	0	0.002	0	0.008	0.043	0.005
	Complaints Management	Correlation	0.210*	0.317*	0.333*	0.42*	0.411*	0.141*	0.42*	0.342*
		P-value	0.017	0	0	0	0.05	0	0.05	0
	High Quality Service	Correlation	0.468*	0.242*	0.568*	0.372*	0.62*	0.081*	0.3*	0.162*
		P-value	0	0.004	0	0	0.014	0.017	0	0.01
	Timeliness In Service Delivery	Correlation	0.408*	0.246*	0.543*	0.241*	0.521*	0.342*	0.624*	0.5*
		P-value	0	0.004	0	0.004	0.016	0	0.007	0
	Friendliness Of Employees	Correlation	0.321*	0.301*	0.349*	0.413*	0.108*	0.633*	0.225*	0.74*
		P-value	0	0	0	0	0.02	0	0	0.005
	Competitive Charges On Services	Correlation	0.240*	0.394*	0.296*	0.342*	0.344*	0.536*	0.301*	0.62*
		P-value	0.006	0	0.001	0	0.045	0.002	0.005	0
	Ease Of Taking Policies	Correlation	0.337	0.289	0.293*	0.148	0.146	0.179	0.209	0.251
		P-value	0.077	0.051	0.061	0.083	0.102	0.055	0.125	0.122

Source: *Field survey, 2010* *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05level

Holding companies' image as the intervening variable for staff:

The p values of the computed partial correlation between customer focused service, Information and communication technology, high quality service, timeliness in service delivery, competitive charges on services and the four variables of organizational performance are less than 0.05 while the p value of the computed partial correlation between complaint management, friendliness of employees and customer retention, is greater than 0.05. Also the p values of the partial correlation between ease of taking policies and the four variables of organizational performance are all greater than 0.05.

Holding companies' image as the intervening variable for customers:

The p values of the partial correlation between customer focused service, complaint management, Friendliness of employees, competitive charges on services, and the four variables of organizational performance are less than 0.05 while the p value of the partial correlation between Information and communication technology, high quality service and customer retention, is greater than 0.05. also the p values of the partial correlation between timeliness in service delivery, ease taking policies and the four variables of organizational performance are all greater than 0.05.

Holding Branch Network as an intervening variable for staff:

The p values of the computed partial correlation between customer focused service, Information and communication technology, complaint management, High quality service, timeliness in service delivery, friendliness of employees, competitive charges on services and the four variables of organizational performance are less than 0.05 while the p values of the partial correlation between ease of taking policies and the four variables of organizational performance are all greater than 0.05.

Holding branch network as the intervening variable for staff:

The p values of the computed partial correlation between customer focused service, Information and communication technology, complaint management, high quality service, timeliness in service delivery, friendliness of employees, competitive charges on services and the four variables of organizational performance are less than 0.05 while the p values of the partial correlation between ease of taking policies and the four variables of organizational performance are all greater than 0.05.

For Staff; Companies' image intervenes in the relationship between customer retention and all CRM variables except complaint management, friendliness of employees, competitive charges on services and ease of taking policies and in the relationship between customer satisfaction and all CRM variables except competitive charges on services and ease of taking policies. Similarly, the organization's branch network is found to intervene in the relationship between customer retention and customer satisfaction and all the CRM variables except ease of taking policies. Also, companies' image and branch network intervene in the relationship between increase in profit and increase in number of customers and all the CRM variables except ease of taking policies.

For customers; Companies' image intervenes in the relationship between customer retention and all CRM variables except information & communication technology, high quality service, timeliness in service delivery and ease of taking policies and in the relationship between customer satisfaction and all CRM variables except timeliness in service delivery and ease of taking policies. The organization's branch network is also found to intervene in the relationship between customer retention and customer satisfaction and all the CRM variables except ease of taking policies. Also, companies' image and branch network intervene in the relationship between increase in profit and increase in number of customers and all the CRM variables except ease of taking policies.

Conclusion And Recommendation

The study set out to examine if organizational characteristics intervene in the relationship between customer relationship management and organizational performance in the Nigerian insurance industry. The CRM variables of this study are Customer Focused Services, Information & Communication Technology, Complaints Management, High Quality Service, Timeliness in Service Delivery, Friendliness of Employees, Ease of taking policies, Competitive Charges on Services. The organizational characteristics variables are companies' image and branch network and the two organizational performance variables are customer satisfaction and customer retention, increase in profit and increase in market share.

Analysis to identify the organizational characteristics that intervene in the relationship between CRM and organizational performance confirm that both companies image and branch network intervenes in the relationship between all the CRM variables and the organizational performance variables (except ease of taking policies) in the insurance industry. However, companies' image is found to be more important to the customers than branch network. This is because potential customers of an intangible product, like insurance, generally rely on the tangible attributes of the product such as companies' image before they commit themselves to a relationship with a company and also, because insurance services, in most cases have perfect substitutes, therefore they can easily get the service desired from other competing firms and also because it is almost impossible to separate a service from the service provider. On the other hand, an insured unlike a bank customer does not have to visit his insurer often. In fact, premium which is usually paid yearly or quarterly, could be paid through the bank and the insurer notified by a phone call. Hence, the insureds do not consider the location of the insurance company's branches too important. Organizations should therefore recognize the importance of the image they build for themselves and the spread of their branch network to the survival, growth and enhanced performance of their organization.

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