

Relationship marketing and customer satisfaction in the Ghanaian hospitality industry

An empirical examination of trust and commitment

George Kofi Amoako

Department of Marketing, Central University, Accra, Ghana

Emmanuel Kotey Neequaye

Department of Life Assurance, A-Plus Life Assurance Company, Accra, Ghana

Solomon G. Kutu-Adu

Department of Marketing, Central University, Accra, Ghana

Livingstone Divine Caesar

SBS Swiss Business School, Kloten, Switzerland, and

Kwame Simpe Ofori

Department of Computer Science, Ho Technical University, Ho, Ghana

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate how relationship marketing practice can lead to customer satisfaction in the current practices in the hotel industry in Ghana. Globally, the hospitality industry ranks as one of the most competitive business sectors with competing organisations relying on a cocktail of strategies such as relationship marketing to stay relevant, and attract and retain customers. This paper examines how relationship marketing impacts on trust, commitment and satisfaction for customers in the Ghanaian hospitality industry.

Design/methodology/approach – A positivist methodological framework was used for the collection of data, analysis and theoretical development in this research. The data collection questionnaire was administered to 167 guests of a 3-star hotel in the Accra Metropolis. Structural equation modelling was used to ascertain the significance of the relationship that exists between trust, commitment and customer satisfaction with respect to the relationship marketing practices of hoteliers in Ghana.

Findings – Study findings provide insight into the processes and practices of relationship marketing that is based on trust and commitment. The findings show a positive and significant relationship between trust, commitment and customer satisfaction. The study also revealed that commitment partially mediates the association between trust and customer satisfaction.

Research limitations/implications – While this study is limited to a single hospitality and tourism company in Ghana, the findings can have far reaching implications for managers in the hospitality industry in Ghana, it provides a vivid illustration of the impact that customer satisfaction can have on the fortunes of business and a genuine desire to develop trust and be committed to the welfare of business clients can lead to higher customer patronage.

Practical implications – Trust and commitment in the hospitality industry requires innovative business practices that makes the client value all the service experience that he or she may encounter. The findings indicate that customer satisfaction is influenced by trust and commitment in the hospitality industry.

Originality/value – Value to the authors' knowledge, the relationship between trust and commitment in relationship marketing and customer satisfaction concepts has not previously been investigated using structural equation modelling analysis within the Ghanaian hospitality industry. This implies that both trust and commitment are necessary to attain customer satisfaction.

Keywords Ghana, Customer satisfaction, Trust, Commitment, Relationship marketing, Hospitality industry

Paper type Research paper



1. Introduction

Due to the intense competition within the hospitality industry of Ghana, it has become needful for hoteliers to implement relationship marketing strategies. The two main factors responsible for the successful implementation of relationship marketing plans are trust and commitment (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). In the same direction, Morgan and Hunt (1994) opine that the presence of commitment and trust drives marketing practitioners to forgo short-term benefits in support of the anticipated long-term profits of relationship marketing. Consequently, trust and commitment form vital aspects of relationship marketing; providing the impetus for certain behaviours that are vital for the successful implementation of strategic relationship marketing.

In the Ghanaian hospitality industry, the present Minister of Tourism, Mrs Juliana Azumah-Mensah states that substantial challenges remain in the hotel sector, especially in 3-, 4- and 5-star hotels, which are either not available in significant numbers or fail to meet international market standards. This is significant considering the fact that Ghana is now the preferred destination for international meetings and conferences, with investors looking for areas to invest in (Boakye, 2011; Imbeah, 2017; Akwensivie and Abedi-Lartey, 2018). Further, these hotels are mostly patronised by middle to high income earners or foreigners whose attraction and retention is based on the services provided by the hoteliers. Although the literature is replete with research on the Ghanaian hospitality industry, most of the research works available focus on hygiene, food safety and the environment (Darko *et al.*, 2015). Others, such as Narteh *et al.* (2013), examined how relationship marketing might impact customer loyalty. In Ghana, there are limited studies on the two key drivers (i.e. trust and commitment) responsible for effective implementation of relationship marketing, especially within the hospitality industry. Thus, there is the need to investigate how trust and commitment affect customer satisfaction within the Ghanaian hospitality industry. It is against this background that the researchers examined the influence of trust and commitment on customer satisfaction within the hospitality industry of Ghana.

This paper focuses on achieving the following objectives:

- to analyse if trust and commitment have a positive and substantial influence on customer satisfaction;
- to establish whether the link between trust and commitment is a positive and significant one; and
- to establish whether commitment will mediate the connection that is present between trust and customer satisfaction.

2. Literature review

2.1 Concept of relationship marketing

Relationship marketing has several definitions as there is no one accepted definition for relationship marketing (Abdullateef *et al.*, 2010; Hamid, 2009; Ngai, 2005). According to Koi-Akrofi *et al.* (2013) relationship marketing represents an evolution from marketing that places emphasis on direct response to one that encourages building long-term relationships with customers instead of individual transactions. Furthermore, Sheth (2017), in trying to redefine and revitalise relationship marketing, believes that emphasis must shift from “share of wallet” to “share of heart” and from management of relationships with customers to having and “managing contractual or virtual joint ventures” with consumers. Also, he postulates that relationship marketing should involve a more holistic understanding of customers by collecting, analysing and interpreting conversations in addition to unconscious or conscious streams of thought. Lastly, Payne and Frow (2017) proffer that the role of relationship marketing should cover all stakeholders because it is a concept that would make relationship marketing's interdependence more relevant and explicit.

Again, organisations must move from a “value-in exchange” to a “value-use perspective” in the management of consumer relationships. Contemporary relationship marketing must involve deliberate research to unearth the “dark side” behaviour and abnormal processes in relationship marketing from the perspective of service providers as well as customers and must cover and drive action from policy makers and regulators in the industry. The concept of relationship marketing became very popular in the 1980s. This was when the attention of marketers started to shift from “acquisition of customers” to the “retention of customers” (Grönroos, 2000). Thus, the retention of existing customers by improving relationships and enhancing their loyalty is perceived as the key objective of relationship marketing. Admittedly, this is a justifiable shift when one considers the turbulent nature of today’s customer service space and the demands for businesses to create products as well as services that cater for the changing needs and expectations of customers.

2.2 The commitment-trust theory (CTT) of relationship marketing

In existent literature on relationship marketing, researchers mostly examine trust and commitment together, with very few researchers examining one without the other (Pressey and Mathews, 1998). Thus, our study adopts the CTT of relationship marketing constructed by Morgan and Hunt (1994) to examine the influence of commitment and trust on customer satisfaction. The CTT of relationship marketing is regarded as the major significant theory in relationship marketing (Palmatier, 2008). In the opinion of Palmatier (2008), the successful execution of relationship marketing is propelled by some factors; however, commitment and trust are the two main factors that enable the successful execution of relationship marketing. Furthermore, Morgan and Hunt (1994) contend that the successful creation and preservation of relationships with clients depend on trust and commitment. Thus, our study focuses only on the two main factors of trust and commitment and excludes the other factors of relationship marketing.

2.3 Concept of commitment

In relationship marketing literature, commitment is one of the main factors frequently investigated by various researchers (Hsieh and Li, 2008). According to Blois (1997), commitment involves a willingness to establish and undertake activities that will ensure the continued maintenance of a business relationship. Further, per Palmatier *et al.*'s (2006) definition commitment is the need to maintain a relationship with an organisation. Customers who are committed add value and benefits to service providers as well as ensure continuity of the business. As a result, commitment is a vital factor for the success of any long-term relationship (Zeithaml *et al.*, 2001).

Additionally, Shukla *et al.* (2016) postulate that commitment involves the readiness of partners to give up short-term benefits as well as experiences. This is to help them to reap the long-term benefits of the relationship. Commitment must, therefore, connote a “lasting or enduring” aim to form and sustain a deliberate constant relationship with an organisation. On one hand, Dann and Dann (2001) posit that there are two categories of commitment; affective commitment, which is based on fondness and some affection for a business partner; and calculative commitment, which is based on price and gain. In contrast, Gundlach *et al.* (1995) contend that there are three categories of commitment; an attitudinal commitment, which is defined as affective commitment or emotional bond; a temporal commitment that shows that the relationship evolves over a period; and an instrument commitment, which deals with some type of investment.

2.4 Concept of trust

The literature on relationship marketing defines trust in several different ways. Lewicki *et al.* (1998) and Morgan and Hunt (1994) define trust as being optimistic about a partner's

honesty and reliability. Trust is absolute faith in a service provider (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999). Moreover, Grégoire *et al.* (2009) postulates that trust is an expectation of favourable results; that is, the results a party can obtain depending on the anticipated action of the other party. Several researchers posit that trust is a key driver in establishing and sustaining a relationship (Rousseau *et al.*, 1998; Singh and Sirdeshmukh, 2000). Hence, trust is described as the substance that cements relationships together (Singh and Sirdeshmukh, 2000). Consequently, trust is seen as important to the building of relationships as well as being a key driver in enhancing relationships (Wilson, 1995).

According to Rousseau *et al.* (1998), apart from creating collaborative conduct, trust also leads to the reduction of conflicts and business costs, and promotes flexible business relationships and ensures crises are successfully handled. Furthermore, trust ensures reduction in unpredictable conditions that make customers feel helpless since they know that they can rely on the trusted business firm (Aydin and Özer, 2005). From one perspective, Young (2006) theorises that there are two dimensions of trust. The first dimension is called cognitive trust, which is calculative and rational, while the second dimension is called personal trust, which is based more on logical thinking. From another perspective, McKnight *et al.* (2002) opine that trust has three dimensions consisting of ability, benevolence and integrity. Ability refers to the faith a customer has, for instance, in the capability of the service provider to provide a service. Benevolence deals with the service provider being good to the customer. Lastly, integrity is in relation to the customer's faith that the firm would give accurate information and behave morally.

2.5 *Concept of customer satisfaction*

According to Giese and Cote (2000), a number of researchers have tried to define customer satisfaction; however, there is no universally agreed definition for customer satisfaction. Gundersen *et al.* (1996) affirm that customer satisfaction deals with the evaluation of a product or service after its consumption. It involves comparing pre-purchase experience with the product's performance during and after its consumption. In another opinion, customer satisfaction refers to the customer's perception that his/her beliefs were met. Thus, customers are satisfied when their beliefs are met, customers are delighted when their beliefs are exceeded and customers are dissatisfied when their beliefs are not met (Kotler and Keller, 2001).

Consequently, due to the stiff competition within the hospitality industry, hoteliers need to meet the needs of their clients better than their rivals (Choi and Chou, 2001). So as to win the loyalty of their clients and to perform better than their competitors, hoteliers need to ensure that their customers are highly satisfied with their services. In this light, Amoako *et al.* (2012) contend that service quality and customer satisfaction are the major influencers in the fight to gain a competitive advantage and to retain customers. Moreover, Amoako *et al.* (2012) posit that to secure customer satisfaction it is necessary for an organisation to identify and anticipate the needs of its customers. Furthermore, businesses tend to make good profits when they are able to identify and meet the needs of their customers. However, businesses that are not able to identify and satisfy their customers' needs are unable to make any good profits (Barsky and Nash, 2003). Consequently, business organisations, especially those in the hospitality industry, must manage as well as develop a healthy and good relationship with their customers.

2.6 *Effect of trust and commitment on customer satisfaction*

Numerous studies have studied the effect of commitment and trust on customer satisfaction. In one stream of research, Nauroozi and Moghadam (2015) examined the relationship with customer satisfaction and loyalty among Ghavamin Bank customers in Sistan and Baluchistan provinces in Iran. In their research, findings indicated that a positive connection existed between trust, communication, conflict and commitment management with customer satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, Al-Hersh *et al.* (2014) analysed the influence of relationship marketing on

customer satisfaction in the banking sector of Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Their findings showed that relationship marketing factors like trust, commitment, communication, compassion, social attachment and the fulfilment of promises had an effect on customer satisfaction. Also, the study's findings showed that the relationship marketing factors of trust, commitment, communication, empathy, the fulfilment of promises and social bonding are linked to customer satisfaction. In addition, Velnampy and Sivesan (2012) investigated the relationship between relationship marketing variables, for example, trust, commitment, empathy and equity and customer satisfaction in mobile telecom companies in Sri Lanka. The findings of the study indicated that there was a positive connection between the relationship marketing variables of trust, commitment, empathy and equity and customer satisfaction. As a result, relationship marketing has an effect on customer satisfaction.

Then again, Aka *et al.*'s (2016) study investigated the connection between the components of customer satisfaction and relationship marketing. The findings of the research indicated that the relationship marketing variables of trust, communication, commitment and service quality had an impact on customer satisfaction. Therefore, the study recommended that service delivery firms in Nigeria work on building their customers' trust, commitment to customers, communication and service quality. This is because the relationship marketing factors of trust, communication, commitment and service quality help in ensuring customer satisfaction. Likewise, Narteh *et al.* (2013) examined the influence of the relationship marketing variables of competence, communication, commitment, conflict management, trust and relational bonds on the loyalty of customers in the luxury as well as first-class hotel industry of Ghana. The study's findings showed that each of the relationship marketing factors cited had a positive effect on customer loyalty. In view of the examination of other studies, our study puts forward these hypotheses:

- H1. There will be a positive and significant connection between trust and customer satisfaction.
- H2. There will be a positive and significant connection between trust and commitment.
- H3. There will be a positive and significant connection between commitment and customer satisfaction.
- H4. Commitment will mediate the connection between trust and customer satisfaction.

2.7 Conceptual model

In view of the above literature review, our study proposed a conceptual model to empirically test and to affirm that there exists a positive and significant connection between trust, commitment and customer satisfaction. The conceptual model being examined in this paper is shown in Figure 1.

2.8 The hospitality industry in Ghana

The services provided by hoteliers in the country falls under the tourism industry. Further, the tourism industry is primarily regulated by the Ghana Tourist Board (GTB), which was established in 1973. The GTB was placed under the supervision of the Tourism Ministry twenty years after its formation. The country's parliament passed the Tourism Act 817 in 2011 that renamed the GTB to Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA); this shifted focus to tourism infrastructural development in the nation. The Ghanaian tourism sector comprises services that are provided by hotels, inns, resorts, eateries and tourist destinations. The Ghana Hotels Association (GHA) is a major umbrella organisation that champions the course of hoteliers in the nation. The GHA membership consists of hotels, inns and guest houses licensed by the GTA. As at September 2012, the registered members of GHA stood at over 1,000. Out of this number, 817 were hotels (Nimako and

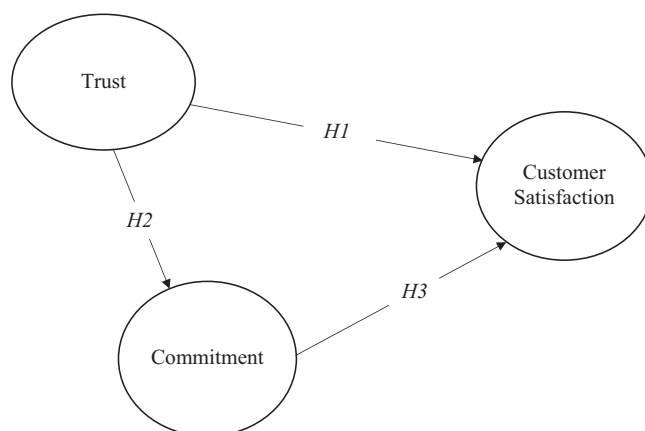


Figure 1.
Conceptual model
(researchers' own
construction)

Mensah, 2013; Ghana Tourism Authority, 2014). The members are supervised by the GHA to deliver quality services to various categories of customers.

The hospitality and tourism industry in Ghana is said to be a major player in the country's economy. It is said to be bringing in over 6 per cent of Ghana's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and is seen as the fastest growing sector in the Ghanaian economy (Ministry of Tourism, 2012; Mensah-Ansah *et al.*, 2011; Sarkodie and Adom, 2015). Because of the increase in the number of visitors to the country, the demand for services provided by hoteliers has gone up (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2014). According to Mensah-Ansah (2014), the number of direct and indirect jobs provided by the hospitality and tourism sector in the country increased from 234,679 to 330,514, while foreign tourist influx increased from 698,069 in 2008 to 1,080,220 in 2011, consequently the revenue earned from tourists grew from \$1.4bn to \$2.1bn. The increase in the number of visitors to the country is attributed to the discovery of oil and gas in the country as well as tourism, business and exploration for investment opportunities. In addition, the tourism industry generates foreign exchange and contributes about 7 per cent of the GDP. It is estimated that during the next two decades the tourism industry will grow at an average rate of 4 per cent per year. In view of this, a number of foreign and local investors have invested in the establishment of hotels and restaurants in many parts of the country. For instance, wholly owned Ghanaian 3-star hotels make up 60 per cent of hotels while 20 per cent of the hotels owned by partnerships where Ghanaians are majority shareholders and the remaining 20 per cent are owned by partnership where the majority shareholders are foreigners. Furthermore, 40 per cent of 4-star hotels are jointly owned by a majority of foreign shareholders and 40 per cent of other kinds of hotels are held by partnerships with majority Ghanaian shareholders (Bokpin and Nyarko, 2009). In the time past, there were no 3- or 4-star hotels solely owned by Ghanaian organisations within the hospitality industry but this is changing with the likes of Alisa Hotel being owned exclusively by Ghanaians. For Ghanaian business owners to get the right return on their investment in the hotel industry, they must understand the value of relationship marketing to stakeholders especially customers.

According to Anabila *et al.* (2012), hoteliers require relationship marketing to enable them to deliver superior services. Therefore, the hospitality industry is seen as a very good place for the adoption of relationship marketing strategies. Furthermore, the fierce competition within the hospitality sector is perceived as a major factor for the adoption of relationship marketing strategies. This has resulted in the desire for effective management of relationships. This will in turn guarantee long-term positive relationships that would help to encourage competitive advantage on a sustainable basis (Ndubisi, 2003).

3. Methodology

3.1 Instrument development

There were three latent variables (trust, commitment and satisfaction) in our research model; all of these variables were measured with multiple indicators. All the indicator variables used in the current work were derived from available literature, with the goal of enhancing content validity (Gefen and Straub, 2004). After re-wording the items to mirror the context of the study, the resulting questionnaire was then given to experienced professional in the hospitality industry and some experts in the study area. Their comments were incorporated into the questionnaire to it make more comprehensible and respondent friendly.

3.2 Measurement instrument

Trust was measured with three items that were adopted from Fullerton (2011), while satisfaction was likewise calculated with three items derived from Li *et al.* (2015). The four items utilised to calculate commitment were also derived from Fullerton (2011). They were calculated with a five-point Likert scale where 1 represented strongly disagree and 5 represented strongly agree.

3.3 Sample and data collection

Data were gathered via a survey that was carried out over a two-month period at a 3-star hotel. Guests who were ready to take part in the survey were asked to answer questionnaires. Over the period, a total of 220 questionnaires were given to guests to fill out, out of which 186 were returned. A total of 19 responses were discarded because the respondents did not fill out significant portions of the questionnaire. Therefore, the final data used for the analysis was 167, of which 102 were males and 55 were females. Table I indicates the complete demographic information of the respondents.

4. Results and analysis

4.1 Measurement model assessment

Before the data gathered were analysed, it was essential to determine its suitability. Hence, a non-response bias test was conducted. A comparison of the mean values for the scale items showed no significant variance between first (that is respondents who answered during the first three days of the survey) and late participants (respondents who answered the

Variables	Frequency	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	102	61.1
Female	65	38.9
<i>Age group</i>		
< 21 years	3	1.8
21–30 years	43	25.7
31–40 years	54	32.3
41–50 years	36	21.6
51–60 years	29	17.4
> 60 years	2	1.2
<i>Marital status</i>		
Married	81	48.5
Single	59	35.3
Divorced	27	16.2
Total	167	100

Table I.
Background
information

questionnaire later) (Lings and Greenley, 2010). The Komogorov–Smirnov test of normality indicated that $0.178 < \alpha < 0.227$; $p < 0.01$ for all items. Likewise, the Shapiro–Wilk test of normality indicated that $0.915 < W < 0.940$; $p < 0.01$ for all items. The results indicate that the data utilised is not evenly distributed.

In the data analysis, Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM) were utilised in the creation of the SEM model (SmartPLS Release: 3.2.7) (Henseler *et al.*, 2015). PLS is suitable for predictive models utilising very small or very large samples (Chin, 1998; Hair *et al.*, 2011) and is the ideal method when hypotheses of normality are not fulfilled (Wold, 1982; Chin and Newsted, 1999; Usakli and Kucukergin). The impact of every route was verified utilising bootstrap *t*-values (5,000 sub-samples) (Efron and Gong, 1983; Tortosa *et al.*, 2009), a method accessible in PLS.

Reliability was measured utilising Cronbach’s α and composite reliability. The results from Table II indicate that reliability scores for all the constructs are above the 0.7 threshold recommended by Hair *et al.* (2016). Lastly, average variance pulled out estimates of 0.911, 0.926 and 0.894, which were gotten for customer satisfaction, commitment and trust, respectively. All the estimates obtained were above the 0.5 threshold recommended by Hair *et al.* (2016). Every one of the item loadings for the scale utilised was statistically significant utilising bootstrap *t*-values (5,000 sub-samples) (Efron and Gong, 1983; Tortosa *et al.*, 2009). The outcomes suggest that convergent validity has been met effectively, as indicated in Table II.

Discriminant validity was measured using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. From Table III, it can be seen that the square root of the average variance obtained for all the three constructs is higher than the inter-construct correlations between them (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair *et al.*, 2016).

4.2 Structural model assessment

After the confirmation of the psychometric properties of the scales utilised, the next step was to study the structural model so as to measure its descriptive power, as well as the significance of the hypothesised paths (Lings and Greenley, 2010). An analysis of the predictive accuracy (R^2) of the model indicated that trust described about 78 per cent of the variance in commitment; while trust and commitment explicated about 89 per cent of the variance in

Construct	Item	Loadings	<i>t</i> -statistics	Cronbach’s α	Composite reliability	AVE
Customer Satisfaction	csat1	0.965**	91.885	0.951	0.968	0.911
	csat2	0.964**	102.381			
	csat3	0.933**	43.690			
	csat4	0.950**	68.028			
Commitment	com1	0.973**	110.845	0.973	0.980	0.926
	com2	0.965**	82.852			
	com3	0.962**	81.627			
Trust	tr1	0.963**	81.863	0.940	0.962	0.894
	tr2	0.970**	110.931			
	tr3	0.903**	28.197			

Note: ***t*-value is significant at 0.01 level of significance

Table II.
Reliability and
convergent validity

	Commitment	Satisfaction	Trust
Commitment	0.962		
Satisfaction	0.590	0.954	
Trust	0.884	0.587	0.946

Table III.
Discriminant validity
using fornell–Larcker
criterion

customer satisfaction. Both outcomes are significant (Chin, 1998). Besides the R^2 , this research used cross-validated redundancy (Q^2), a blindfolding method, as a measure for predictive relevance (Chin, 2010) of the endogenous variables. Q^2 – values of 0.676 and 0.765 were gotten for commitment and customer satisfaction, both of which are greater than 0, indicating predictive relevance (Fornell and Cha, 1993; Chin, 2010). Lastly, the effect sizes (f^2) calculated for the exogenous variables indicated that trust had a great influence on commitment; additionally, both trust and commitment had a great influence on customer satisfaction. The outcomes of the predictive accuracy (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2) and effect sizes (f^2) tests are shown in Table IV.

The outcomes of structural paths, shown in Figure 2, shows that there is a positive and significant connection between trust, commitment and customer satisfaction in the relationship marketing practices of Alisa Hotel. This affirms the first three hypotheses ($H1$, $H2$ and $H3$).

4.3 Mediation

Using Nitzl *et al.*'s (2016) model for testing mediation in PLS-SEM, commitment moderately facilitates the relationship between trust and customer satisfaction. This affirms the fourth hypothesis ($H4$), and implies that both trust and commitment are required to achieve customer satisfaction. The partial nature of the mediation suggests that a few customers were satisfied mainly because of trust without the availability of commitment, see Table V for more information.

5. Conclusion

The results of the study indicate that there is a positive and significant connection between trust, commitment and customer satisfaction. This means that trust and commitment jointly

Table IV.
Predictive accuracy (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2) and effect sizes (f^2)

Constructs	R^2	Q^2	f^2 (Commitment)	f^2 (Customer satisfaction)
1. Trust	–	–	3.56 (Large)	0.438 (Large)
2. Commitment	0.781	0.676	–	0.527 (Large)
3. Customer satisfaction	0.892	0.765	–	–

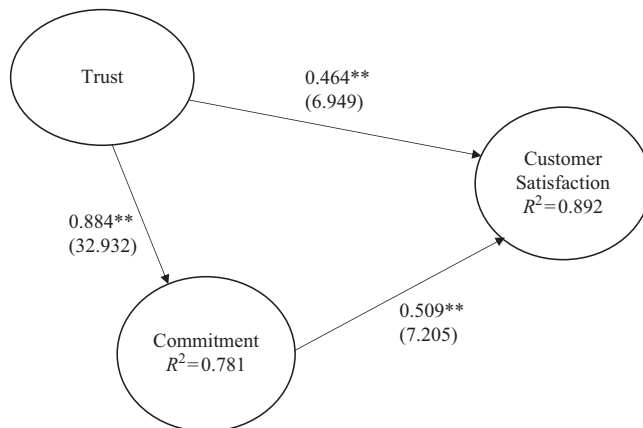


Figure 2.
Path diagram showing path coefficients and variance explained

Note: **Statistically significant at $\alpha=0.01$ (t -values are shown in parenthesis)

result in customer satisfaction. Clearly, this implies that an improvement in both trust and commitment will significantly result in improvements in customer satisfaction. Furthermore, the study also showed that a positive as well as significant connection exists between commitment and trust. Therefore, the study's results are consistent with that of Nauroozi and Moghadam (2015), Al-Hersh *et al.* (2014), Velnampy and Sivesan (2012), Aka *et al.* (2016) and Narteh *et al.* (2013); and show that trust and commitment have an impact on customer satisfaction. Accordingly, it is imperative for the managers of the 3-star hotel to prioritise commitment and trust so as to ensure satisfaction of customers. This is certainly the way to secure a sustainable competitive advantage over other competitors within the competitive hospitality industry of Ghana.

6. Theoretical implications

The findings indicate a positive and significant connection between trust, commitment and customer satisfaction. Per the findings of the study, commitment partially mediates the link between trust and customer satisfaction. Not many studies have advanced specific industry foci in the way it was tried in this study in Ghana. As the findings highlight the role of commitment as a partial mediator, managers and policy makers must employ relationship marketing strategies and communicate commitment as an important ingredient in the marketing mix strategy to acquire and retain customers. This research has deepened insight into relationship marketing practice in the Ghanaian hospitality space and added some knowledge from the perspective of the African hospitality industry. This develops present knowledge, as summarised in this study, principally placing trust and commitment as relationship marketing variables in a developing country context.

Moreover, managers of 3-star hotels in Ghana should prioritise trust and commitment in the implementation of relationship marketing to improve customer satisfaction. Second, our study extends the body of knowledge of relationship marketing practices within the hospitality industry of Ghana.

7. Practical implications

From a managerial perspective, one key implication of the findings from this research is the need for managers of 3-star hotels and hoteliers to continuously adopt an innovative approach towards the creation of excellent customer experiences for hotel clients. This is crucial for the attraction of new customers and the retention of existing ones. Essentially, it has become evident that a multidimensional array of relationship marketing strategies needs to be embraced by hoteliers within the Ghanaian hospitality industry to guarantee a long-term relationship with their customers. This study went beyond the identification of gaps in practice to recommend what could be done. These findings can be leveraged on for industry-wide training in Ghana. In terms of industry focus, the study's findings offer insight into the procedures and practices of relationship marketing that is based on trust and commitment. These findings can be explored by policy makers and academia to develop training programmes for specific processes and practices that can enhance customer satisfaction in the Ghanaian hospitality industry.

Exogenous variable (<i>x</i>)	Path coefficient <i>a</i>	Path coefficient <i>b</i>	Path coefficient <i>c</i>	Indirect effect (<i>a</i> × <i>b</i>)	SD (<i>a_i</i> × <i>b_i</i>)	<i>t</i>	Mediation type	Proportion of mediation
Trust	0.884**	0.509**	0.464**	0.4500	0.0641	7.022	Partial	0.492

Note: ***t*-values are significant at *p* < 0.01

Table V.
Results of mediation for commitment on customer satisfaction

Furthermore, managers of 3-star hotels need to consciously consider and include their employees in any relationship marketing strategy. For instance, a careful scrutiny of the literature available on internal marketing shows that external relationship marketing campaigns will only be successful if employees are adequately motivated and satisfied with their jobs. Given the profound nature of this axiom and how it might impact relationship marketing strategies for hoteliers, managers of 3-star hotels need to actively engage their employees (especially the front desk division) and effectively implement measures aimed at building trust with customers.

8. Limitations and future research

This study was not without limitations. First, data were collected only from customers who patronised the services of a selected 3-star hotel. Consequently, the study's findings cannot be generalised or applied to all hotels within the hospitality industry of Ghana. Future researchers will need to expand this study to cover customers of a larger number of hotels within the Ghanaian hospitality industry. Second, this study examined only two key drivers (trust and commitment) on customer satisfaction. Therefore, future research could investigate more than two drivers of relationship marketing on customer satisfaction. Customer perception on the impact of relationship marketing practices appears to differ in the literature on a sector by sector basis. This provides a fertile ground for cross-sectoral and other forms of comparative studies on the phenomenon from the customer's perspective. Also, there appears to be an abundance of research on the views of customers with regard to relationship marketing practices to the neglect of the views of managers/practitioners of the strategies. A qualitative study that employs face to face or telephone interviews of managers on the findings made in past studies could provide fresh insights into how relationship marketing practices impact the customer as existing literature does not systematically explain the process.

In recent times, the impact of radical innovation on the *status quo* of managerial practices and organisational processes has been phenomenal. Future research could examine how radically innovations contradict findings on the effect of relationship marketing practices on areas such as customer retention. A guiding question here would be; "Will companies still be able to keep their customers in the face of disruptive products and services from their competitors?"

References

- Abdullateef, A.O., Mokhtar, S.S. and Yusoff, R.Z. (2010), "The impact of CRM dimensions on call center performance", *International Journal of Computer Science and Network Security*, Vol. 10 No. 12, pp. 184-195.
- Aka, D.O., Kehinde, O.J. and Ogunnaike, O.O. (2016), "Relationship marketing and customer satisfaction: a conceptual perspective", *Bimus Business Review*, Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 185-190.
- Akwensivie, G.A. and Abedi-Lartey, A.M. (2018), "The migrants guide to the best places to live in ACCRA – Ghana in the wake of globalization", *The Business & Management Review*, Vol. 9 No. 4, pp. 17-23.
- Al-Hersh, A.M., Aburoub, A.S. and Saaty, A.S. (2014), "The impact of customer relationship marketing on customer satisfaction of the Arab bank services", *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, Vol. 4 No. 5, pp. 67-100.
- Amoako, G.K., Arthur, E., Bando, C. and Katah, R.K. (2012), "The impact of effective customer relationship management (CRM) on repurchase: a case study of golden Tulip hotel (Accra-Ghana)", *African Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 4 No. 1, pp. 17-29.
- Anabila, P., Narteh, B., Tweneboah-Koduah, E.Y. and Box, L.G. (2012), "Relationship marketing practices and customer loyalty: evidence from the banking industry in Ghana", *European Journal of Business and Management*, Vol. 4 No. 13, pp. 51-61.

- Aydin, S. and Özer, G. (2005), "The analysis of antecedents of customer loyalty in the Turkish mobile telecommunication market", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 39 Nos 7/8, pp. 910-925.
- Barsky, J. and Nash, L. (2003), "Customer satisfaction: applying concepts to industry-wide measures", *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 44 No. 4, pp. 173-183.
- Blois, K.J. (1997), "When is a relationship a relationship?", in Gemünden, H.G., Rittert, T. and Walter, A. (Eds), *Relationships and Networks in International Markets*, Elsevier, Oxford, pp. 53-64.
- Boakye, A.N. (2011), "An analysis of customer relationship management practices of some selected hotels in Kumasi Metropolis", masters dissertation, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi.
- Bokpin, G.A. and Nyarko, E.S. (2009), "Assessing the corporate governance practices of the hospitality industry in Ghana", *Investment Management and Financial Innovations*, Vol. 6 No. 3, pp. 18-24.
- Chin, W.W. (1998), "The partial least squares approach for structural equation modeling", in Marcoulides, G.A. (Ed.), *Modern Methods for Business Research*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, London, pp. 295-336.
- Chin, W.W. (2010), "How to write up and report PLS analyses", in Vinzi, V.E., Chin, W.W., Henseler, J. and Wang, H. (Eds), *Handbook of Partial Least Squares: Concepts, Methods and Applications in Marketing and Related Fields*, Springer, Berlin, pp. 655-690.
- Chin, W.W. and Newsted, P.R. (1999), "Structural equation modeling analysis with small samples using partial least squares", in Hoyle, R. (Ed.), *Statistical Strategies for Small Sample Research*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 307-341.
- Choi, S.T. and Chou, Y.T. (2001), "Vibration analysis of elastically supported turbomachinery blades by the modified differential quadrature method", *Journal of Sound and Vibration*, Vol. 240 No. 5, pp. 937-953.
- Dann, S.J. and Dann, S.M. (2001), *Strategic Internet Marketing*, John Wiley & Sons, Milton.
- Darko, S., Mills-Robertson, F. and Wireko-Manu, F. (2015), "Evaluation of some hotel kitchen staff on their knowledge on food safety and kitchen hygiene in the Kumasi Metropolis", *International Food Research Journal*, Vol. 22 No. 6, pp. 2664-2669.
- Efron, B. and Gong, G. (1983), "A leisurely look at the Bootstrap, the Jackknife, and cross-validation", *The American Statistician*, Vol. 37 No. 1, pp. 36-48.
- Fornell, C. and Cha, J. (1993), "Partial least squares", unpublished working paper, University of Michigan Business School, Ann Arbor, MI.
- Fornell, C. and Larcker, D.F. (1981), "Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 39-50.
- Fullerton, G. (2011), "Creating advocates: the roles of satisfaction, trust and commitment", *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 92-100, available at: <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2010.10.003>
- Garbarino, E. and Johnson, M.S. (1999), "The different roles of satisfaction, trust and commitment in customer relationships", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 63 No. 2, pp. 70-87.
- Gefen, D. and Straub, D.W. (2004), "Consumer trust in B2C e-commerce and the importance of social presence: experiments in e-products and e-services", *Omega*, Vol. 32 No. 6, pp. 407-424.
- Ghana Tourism Authority (2014), "Tourism statistical fact sheet on Ghana", *Ghana Profile*, 15 October, p. 10.
- Giese, J.L. and Cote, J.A. (2000), "Defining consumer satisfaction", *Academy of Marketing Science Review*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 1-22.
- Grégoire, Y., Tripp, T.M. and Legoux, R. (2009), "When customer love turns into lasting hate: the effects of relationship strength and time on customer revenge and avoidance", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 73 No. 6, pp. 18-32.
- Grönroos, C. (2000), *Service Management and Marketing: A Customer Relationship Management Approach*, 2nd ed., John Wiley and Sons, London, pp. 46-287.

- Gundersen, M.G., Heide, M. and Olsson, U.H. (1996), "Hotel guest satisfaction among business travellers: what are the important factors?", *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 37 No. 2, pp. 72-81.
- Gundlach, G.T., Achrol, R.S. and Mentzer, J.T. (1995), "The structure of commitment in exchange", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 59 No. 1, pp. 78-92.
- Hair, J.F., Ringle, C.M. and Sarstedt, M. (2011), "PLS-SEM: indeed a silver bullet", *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, Vol. 19 No. 2, pp. 139-151.
- Hair, J.F. Jr, Hult, G.T.M., Ringle, C. and Sarstedt, M. (2016), *A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM)*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Hamid, H. (2009), "Toward unfolding CRM implementation in Pakistan: a case study", *17th European Conference on Information Systems, Islamabad, Vol. 28, June*, p. 2011.
- Hsieh, A.T. and Li, C.K. (2008), "The moderating effect of brand image on public relations perception and customer loyalty", *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, Vol. 26 No. 1, pp. 26-42.
- Imbeah, N. (2017), "Tourists' perception of the role of safety in tourism at a selected tourist destination in central region of Ghana", *Acta Carolus Robertus*, Vol. 7 No. 2017, pp. 89-102.
- Koi-Akrofi, G.Y., Koi-Akrofi, J. and Welbeck, J.N.O. (2013), "Relationship marketing tactics and customer loyalty – a case of the mobile telecommunication industry in Ghana", *Asian Journal of Business Management*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 77-92.
- Kotler, P. and Keller, K.L. (2001), *A Framework for Marketing Management*, Vol. 2, Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ.
- Li, Xu, Wang, Y. and Yu, Y. (2015), "Present and future hotel website marketing activities: change propensity analysis", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 47, pp. 131-139.
- Lewicki, R.J., McAllister, D.J. and Bies, R.J. (1998), "Trust and distrust: new relationships and realities", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 23 No. 3, pp. 438-458.
- Lings, I.N. and Greenley, G.E. (2010), "Internal market orientation and market oriented behaviors", *Journal of Service Management*, Vol. 21 No. 3, pp. 321-343.
- McKnight, D.H., Choudhury, V. and Kacmar, C. (2002), "Developing and validating trust measures for e-commerce: an integrative typology", *Information Systems Research*, Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 334-359.
- Mensah-Ansah, J. (2014), "Small tourism accommodation business owners in Ghana: a factor analysis of motivations and challenges", *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 1-17.
- Mensah-Ansah, J., Martin, E. and Egan, D. (2011), "Tourism trends in Ghana: the accommodation sector", *Tourism Analysis*, Vol. 16 No. 2, pp. 157-168, available at: www.cognizantcommunications.com (accessed 20 January 2012).
- Ministry of Tourism (2012), "National tourism development plan, 2013-2027", available at: <http://ghana.travel/info/downloads/gtdp.pdf> (accessed 20 August 2015).
- Morgan, R.M. and Hunt, S.D. (1994), "The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 58 No. 3, pp. 20-38.
- Narteh, B., Agbemabiese, G.C., Kodua, P. and Braimah, M. (2013), "Relationship marketing and customer loyalty: evidence from the Ghanaian luxury hotel industry", *Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management*, Vol. 22 No. 4, pp. 407-436.
- Nauroozi, S. and Moghadam, S. (2015), "The study of relationship marketing with customer satisfaction and loyalty", *International Journal of Innovation and Research in Educational Sciences*, Vol. 2 No. 2, pp. 96-101.
- Ndubisi, N.O. (2003), "Service quality: understanding customer perception and reaction, and its impact on business", *International Journal of Business*, Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 207-219.
- Ngai, E.W. (2005), "Customer relationship management research (1992–2002): an academic literature review and classification", *Marketing Intelligence Planning*, Vol. 23 No. 6, pp. 582-605.

- Nimakoo, S.G. and Mensah, A.F. (2013), "Examining the relationships among antecedents of guests' behavioural intentions in Ghana's hospitality industry: a structural equation modelling approach", *Asian Journal of Business Management*, Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 252-266.
- Nitzl, C., Roldán, J.L. and Cepeda, G. (2016), "Mediation analysis in partial least squares path modeling: helping researchers discuss more sophisticated models", *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, Vol. 116 No. 9, pp. 1849-1864.
- Palmatier, R.W. (2008), "Interfirm relational drivers of customer value", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 72 No. 4, pp. 76-89, available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.72.4.76>
- Palmatier, R.W., Dant, R.P., Grewal, D. and Evans, K.R. (2006), "Factors influencing the effectiveness of relationship marketing: a meta-analysis", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 70 No. 4, pp. 136-153.
- Payne, A. and Frow, P. (2017), "Relationship marketing: looking backwards towards the future", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 31 No. 1, pp. 11-15.
- Pressey, A.D. and Mathews, B.P. (1998), "Relationship marketing and retailing: comfortable bedfellows?", *Customer Relationship Management*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 39-53.
- Rousseau, D.M., Sitkin, S.B., Burt, R.S. and Camerer, C. (1998), "Not so different after all: a cross-discipline view of trust", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 23 No. 3, pp. 393-404.
- Sarkodie, N.A. and Adom, K. (2015), "Bridging the gap between hospitality/tourism education and hospitality/tourism industry in Ghana", *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies*, Vol. 2 No. 7, pp. 114-120.
- Sheth, J. (2017), "Revitalising relationship marketing", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 31 No. 1, pp. 1-5.
- Shukla, P., Banerjee, M. and Singh, J. (2016), "Customer commitment to luxury brands: antecedents and consequences", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 69 No. 1, pp. 323-331.
- Singh, J. and Sirdeshmukh, D. (2000), "Agency and trust mechanisms in consumer satisfaction and loyalty judgments", *Journal of Marketing Science*, Vol. 28 No. 1, pp. 150-167.
- Straub, D., Boudreau, M.-C. and Gefen, D. (2004), "Validation guidelines for IS positivistic research", *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, Vol. 13, pp. 380-427.
- Tortosa, V., Moliner, M.A. and Sanchez, J. (2009), "Internal market orientation and its influence on organizational performance", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 43 Nos 11/12, pp. 1435-1456.
- Velnamby, T. and Sivesan, S. (2012), "Customer relationship marketing and customer satisfaction: a study on mobile service providing companies in Sri Lanka", *Global Journal of Management and Business Research*, Vol. 12 No. 18, pp. 318-324.
- Wilson, D.T. (1995), "An integrated model of buyer-seller relationships", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 23 No. 4, pp. 335-345.
- Wold, H. (1982), "Soft modeling: the basic design and some extensions", in Jöreskog, K.G. and Wold, H. (Eds), *Systems Under Indirect Observations: Part II*, North-Holland Publishing Company, Amsterdam, pp. 1-54.
- Young, L. (2006), "Trust: looking forward and back", *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 21 No. 7, pp. 92-93.
- Zeithaml, V.A., Rust, R.T. and Lemon, K.N. (2001), "The customer pyramid: creating and serving profitable customers", *California Management Review*, Vol. 43 No. 4, pp. 118-142.

Further reading

- Allen, I.E. and Seaman, C.A. (2007), "Likert scales and data analyses", *Quality Progress*, Vol. 40 No. 7, pp. 64-65.
- Anderson, J.C. and Gerbing, D.W. (1988), "Structural equation modeling in practice: a review and recommended two-step approach", *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 103 No. 3, pp. 411-423.
- Bowen, J. and Shoemaker, S. (1998), "Loyalty: a strategic commitment", *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 39 No. 1, pp. 12-25.

- Carifio, J. and Perla, R.J. (2007), "Ten common misunderstandings, misconceptions, persistent myths and urban legends about Likert scales and Likert response formats and their antidotes", *Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 3 No. 3, pp. 106-116.
- De Leeuw, D. (2005), "To mix or not to mix data collection modes in surveys", *Journal of official statistics*, Vol. 21 No. 2, pp. 233-255.
- Egan, J. (2011), *Relationship Marketing: Explaining Relational Strategies in Marketing*, 4th ed., Pearson Education Limited, Harlow.
- Elo, S. and Kyngäs, H. (2008), "The qualitative content analysis process", *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, Vol. 62 No. 1, pp. 107-115.
- Henseler, J., Hubona, G. and Ray, P.A. (2016), "Using PLS path modeling in new technology research: updated guidelines", *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, Vol. 116 No. 1, pp. 2-20.
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C.M. and Sarstedt, M. (2015), "A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 43 No. 1, pp. 115-135.
- Kotler, P. (2003), *Marketing Management*, 11th ed., Prentice Hall.
- Kotler, P. and Armstrong, G. (2004), *Marketing*, Grada, Praha.
- Kotler, P. and Armstrong, G. (2010), *Principles of Marketing*, Pearson Education.
- Kotler, P.F. and Keller, K.L. (2006), *Marketing Management*, Peter, St Petersburg (in Russian).
- McKnight, D., Cummings, L. and Chervany, N. (1998), "Initial trust formation in new organizational relationships", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 23 No. 3, pp. 473-490.
- Mayring, P. (2004), "Qualitative content analysis", in Flick, U., von Kardoff, E. and Steinke, I. (Eds), *A Companion to Qualitative Research*, Sage, London, pp. 266-269.
- Ministry of Tourism (2013/2014), "National tourism development plan (2013-2017)", Accra, available at: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/.../GhanaTourismDevelopmentPlan> (accessed 20 August 2015).
- Papastathopoulou, P., Avlonitis, G. and Panagopoulos, N.G. (2007), "Intra-organizational information and communication technology diffusion: implications for industrial sellers and buyers", *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 36 No. 3, pp. 322-336.
- Ringle, C.M., Sarstedt, M. and Straub, D.W. (2012), "Editor's comments: a critical look at the use of PLS-SEM in MIS Quarterly", *MIS Quarterly*, Vol. 36 No. 1, pp. iii-xiv.
- Saunders, M.N. (2011), *Research Methods for Business Students*, 5th ed., Pearson Education.
- Usakli, A. and Kucukergin, K.G. (2018), "Using partial least squares structural equation modeling in hospitality and tourism: do researchers follow practical guidelines?", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 30 No. 11, pp. 3462-3512.
- Verdugo, C.M., Oviedo-Garcia, A.M. and Roldan, L.J. (2009), "The employee-customer relationship quality: Antecedents and consequences in the hotel industry", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 21 No. 3, pp. 251-274.

Corresponding author

George Kofi Amoako can be contacted at: gkamoako@gmail.com

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm

Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com

Reproduced with permission of copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.