

### **The Effect of Relationship Marketing towards Enhancing Organizational Performance**

#### **Abstract**

*Businesses are living in a world of stiff competition. To be successful in this competition, considering customer relationship is a requisite, and organizations need to concentrate more on applying relationship marketing variables. The objective of the study is to assess the effects of relationship marketing towards enhancing organizational performance. The researchers made use of exploratory research design to make an in-depth investigation of the problem and to develop a working hypothesis from an operational aspect. Customers and employees of Ethio-telecom, Kobo branch were the target population of the study. A five point Likert-Type questionnaire and structured interview were administered to collect the pertinent data among selected Staffs of Ethio-telecom; kobo branch. Stratified sampling technique was used to identify the sample respondents from the sampling frame and the data were analyzed by using SPSS version 20 software. The result of the study shows that commitment has highest effect on performance followed by conflict handling( $\beta=0.287, p=0.01$ ), communication( $\beta=0.229, P=0.01$ ) and trust (0.154,  $p=0.05$ ) respectively. The need to augment the level of loyalty to customers, developing a cooperative behavior to clients, hire employees who are likely to become linked to the organization, rendering a flexible service packages, providing sufficient and trustworthy services and demonstrate knowledge and expertise and confer continuous and uninterrupted services are among the possible recommendations forwarded on the basis of the finding of the study.*

**Keywords: Determinant, relationship-marketing, organizational-performance, commitment, communication, conflict handling.**

## 1. Background of the study

Relationship marketing is one of the oldest and yet the least understood approaches to marketing (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). It is a broad topic and many scholars and researchers have approached it from different perspectives. According to Grönroos (1994), the aim of relationship marketing is to establish, maintain, and enhance relationships with customers and other partners, so that the objectives of the parties involved are met. Building and maintaining a base of committed customers are many and can be linked directly to an organization's bottom line (Aalton, 2004). Relationship marketing theory suggests that successful relationship marketing results from certain aspects of cooperative relationships that characterize successful relational exchanges (Hunt, Arnett, and Madhavaram 2005). Ndubisi and Chan (2005) study on variables of relationship marketing such as trust, commitment, communication, conflict handling, customer satisfaction. However, they reach that communication is a prerequisite for building trust among exchange partners since it is a means of providing information on service; fulfilling their promises; and providing information if a delivery problem occurs (Noe et al., 2017). Therefore, it is the communicator's task to build awareness, build consumer preference by promoting quality, value, performance and other features, and convince interested buyers. It is becoming one of those fashionable concepts that every marketer and manager uses (Morgan & Hunt, 2007). Relationship marketing refers to the development, growth, maintenance of long-term, cost-effective exchange relationship with the individual, customers, suppliers, employees, and another partner for mutual benefit (Boone and Kurtz, 2007).

Ndubisi (2007), and Negi, (2010), have assessed relationship quality with similar variables in the case of Banks of Malaysia and Ethiopian telecommunications respectively. In their study conflict handling is an important relationship builder. Since it is difficult to achieve perfect service all the time, it is better to have problem solving strategy like reactive and proactive. Therefore, an organization should identify that factors that drive a customer to the competitor may not be an occurrence of a problem per se, but how the problem was handled. These efforts would bring about better relationship quality with customers. Contrary to this, Ndubisi (2007), also states that trust which contributes most significantly than commitment, communication and conflict handling to overall relationship quality.

When identifying relationship quality as a goal, trust is an appropriate starting point, followed by good conflict resolution, commitment and Relationship marketing is witnessing a growing interest, Competition and rivalry, which is the hallmark of today's business environment, has led to businesses to focus on building strong relationships with its customers. Building relationships are how you relate to and communicate with people. Relationships with others have been used from time immemorial to cope with the complexity of everyday life with the development of globalization, international communication and competitive markets in telecom service are also affected (Gilaninia& et al, 2011). Among telecom at the global level, relationship marketing is taken into consideration as the ideal way to create and maintain long-term relationships with clients /customers; because deliverable services in telecom is relatively same and for most telecom, to differentiate services towards competition is difficult. So many of the world's telecom are oriented the use of relationship marketing approach and implementation of its foundations (So and Spece, 2000).

All relationship marketing activities are ultimately evaluated on the basis of the company's overall profitability as a key relationship marketing outcomes. Developing excellent service quality creates the opportunity to build an ongoing relationship with customers

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Relationship marketing is designed to develop strong connections with customers by providing them with information directly suited to their needs and interests and by promoting open communication. This approach often results in increased word-of-mouth activity, repeat business and a willingness on the customer's part to provide information to the organization.

Studies in service relationship marketing have not reached a consensus in identifying the main determinants of relationship marketing. Different researchers identified different determinants or dimensions of relationship marketing in their countries context, the study setting and similarly different in the case of our country's experience. Constructs of relationship marketing quality is a combination of trust, commitment, communication, conflict handling, and satisfaction, goal congress, investment and profit (Naudé&Buttle, 2000). Based on past related literature (Callaghan et al., 1995; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Wilson, 1995; Yau et al., 2000), Relationship marketing is a multi-dimensional construct consisting of six components: trust; bonding; communication; shared value; empathy; and reciprocity. Arnett and Badrinarayanan (2005) conceptualize a relationship marketing competence as a firm's ability to identify, develop, and manage cooperative relationships with key customers characterized by trust, relationship commitment, communication and those determinates along with customer satisfaction, and conflict handlings are key factors to organizational performance.

Tseng (2007) discussed that tactics as direct mail, tangible rewards, interpersonal communication, preferential treatment and membership which could enhance long-term relationship and increase relationship satisfaction, trust and commitment. Some study's in the effects of relationship marketing in telecom services such as Colgate & Danaher (2000), a study in the effect of implementing the strategy of relationship marketing in the domain of telecom on the customer's satisfaction and trust. The study noticed that the presence of both positive and negative effects; the positive effects appear when the strategy of relationship marketing is carried out in a highly skilful way, resulting in enhancing the customer's satisfaction and trust, while the negative effects appear when the execution of such strategy is deficient, resulting in the customer's dissatisfaction and distrust. Hennig – Thurau and et.al. (2002) assigning a model for the successful long-term relationship between public service companies and customers. The study concluded that the customer's satisfaction, commitment and trust are three dimensions for the relationship quality with the customer which directly or indirectly affect the performance of the company.

Ndubisi's (2007) study examined the impact of relationship marketing strategy on customer trust. Multiple regression analysis assessed the impact on customer loyalty of four key constructs of relationship marketing (trust, commitment, communication and conflict handling). The study concluded that the four variables have a significant effect and predict a good proportion of the variance in customer loyalty.

Moreover, they are significantly related to one another. Similar study has been conducted by Ndubisi (2007) and he states that trust contributes more significantly than conflict handling commitment, communication respectively to the overall relationship quality.

Hence, as the study shows, when building relationship quality is the goal, trust is an appropriate starting point, followed by good conflict resolution, commitment and communication. On the contrary, Ndubisi (2007), Jela and Alwieie (2010b) point out that commitment is the most important dimension of relationship quality. To have a good relationship quality, service providers should be committed to relationship quality activities as well as to their customers. If only one party tries to develop it without soliciting cooperation from the other party, good relationship quality will not occur.

Moreover, **some literature conducted** in Ethiopia only focus on determinants of relationship marketing and assess customer loyalty in Ethiopia mobile telecommunication sector. Moreover, as to the studies in Ethiopian set-up, the work of Negi (2010) is worth mentioning. Negi

(2010) has also tried to see the antecedents of relational marketing and customer loyalty in the case of Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation. Naudé and Buttle (2000) made an overview of the major constructs of relationship marketing quality identified in the literature. Based on their constructs relationship marketing determinants are trust, commitment, communication, conflict handling, and customer satisfaction.

Negi (2010), states that conflict handling is among the highest contributors for the quality of Ethiopian Telecommunication Corporation (ETC) customer relationship followed by trust, commitment and communication. Generally, the investigation made on the determinants of relationship marketing by various researchers at different periods did not show consistency in their degree of contribution or Effects of relationship marketing on organizational performance is different (Palmatier et al. ,2006), (Ndubisi, 2007), (Jela and Alwieie, 2010b), and Negi ,2010). For instance, Jela and Alwieie (2010b) indicated that commitment has a great influence on relationship quality, whereas, trust has the least contribution to the existence of relationship quality than conflict handling and communications.

Therefore, relationship marketing is not yet fully discovered issue. Particularly in Ethiopia, the concept of relationship marketing is at its infancy level that needs further investigation. Besides, so far to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is only one study conducted on this specific issue in the context of Ethiopia particularly in the telecom industry, and there is no documented date in the study area regarding the effect of relationship marketing on the performance of the organization. Due to the above-stated gap the researcher motivated to conduct an intensive study on this particular area. Therefore, this study assess the effects of five determinants of relationship marketing such as trust, commitment, communication, conflict handling and customer satisfaction on the performance of Ethio-telecom in the case of kobo branch.

### **3. Objectives of the study**

#### ***General objective***

The general objective of this study is to assess the effect of relationship marketing towards enhancing organizational performance in the case of Ethio telecom in kobo branch.

### *Specific objectives*

- ✚ To assess the effects of commitment on the performance
- ✚ To examine the effects of communication on the performance
- ✚ To evaluate the effects of conflict handling on the performance
- ✚ To evaluate the effects of trust on the performance

## **4. Hypotheses of the study**

The hypotheses are formulated on the effects of relationship marketing determinants on the performance of Ethio - telecom in kobo branch.

H0: Commitment has no significant effect on performance.

H1: Commitment has a significant effect on performance.

H0: Communication has no significant effect on performance.

H1: Communication has a significant effect on the performance.

H0: Conflict handling has no significant effect on performance.

H1: Conflict handling has a significant effect on performance.

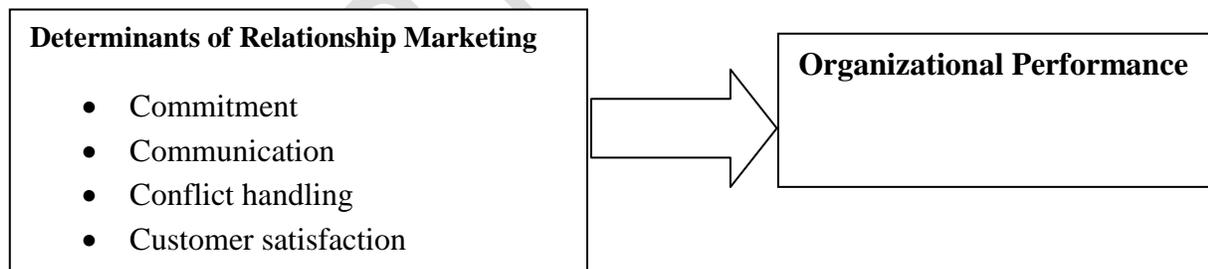
H0: trust has no significant effect on performance.

H1: trust has a significant effect on performance.

Conceptual framework of the study

## **5. The conceptual framework of the study**

Figure 2.5 models of the study



## 6. The significance of the Study

The study is animated for the academia, telecom companies and policy makers, researchers, practitioners and consultants on how to build good relationship marketing. It will contribute to the telecommunication sector by identifying the prominent factors of relationship marketing and state the relationship between each variable in light of organizational performance. For the academics, it will give new insights towards the dimensions of relationship marketing like commitment, communication, customer handling and trust. The study will also be used as reference material for the coming researchers.

## 7. Scope or delimitation of the study

This project given the limited time allocated and budget constraints are limited to only **EthioTelecom kobo branch**. There are many variables that can affect relationship marketing on organizational performance however, this paper focuses only variables by most researchers believed to be significant such as trust, communication, commitment, conflict handling. Regarding to the time score, the researchers make use of a cross-sectional survey at which a snapshot data collection was made only for the year 2017.

## 8. Results and Interpretation

Table1 Relationship analysis

	Commitment	Communication	Conflict handling	Trust	Performance
Commitment Pearson Correlation Sig.(2-tailed)	1 204				
Communication Pearson Correlation Sig.(2-tailed)	0.790 .000 204	1 .000 204			
Conflict handling Pearson correlation Sig.(2-tailed), N	0.742 .000 204	0.744 .000 204	1 204		
Trust Pearson correlation Sig.(2-tailed), N	0.727 .000 204	0.758 .000 204	0.816 .000 204	1 .000 204	
Performance Pearson correlation Sig.(2-tailed), N	0.808 .000 204	0.774 .000 204	0.768 .000 204	0.74 5 .000 204	1 .000 204

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the above analysis, it is noted that Ethio telecom kobo branch performance is positively and strongly correlated at ( $r=0.808^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) with commitments, ( $r=0.774^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) with Communications, ( $r=0.768^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) with Conflict handling, ( $r=0.712^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and finally ( $r=0.745^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) with trust respectively. From this study, we can also conclude that commitment, communication, conflict handling and trust have a positive and strong relationship towards enhancing the performance of the organization.

All independent variables have a positive and strong relationship with each other's. The relationship of commitment to communication, conflict handling and trust are 0.79, 0.742, 0.727 and 0.724 respectively. From this, we can understand that there is a strong and direct relation of commitment to communication, conflict handling, customer satisfaction and trust. Moreover, the relationship of communications with conflict handling, customer satisfaction and trust is 0.74, 0.766, and 0.758 respectively. This displays that communication has a direct and strong relation to conflict handling, customer satisfaction and trust.

Similarly, Anderson and Narus (1990) found that communication was positively related to trust from both the manufacturer's and distributor's perspectives. Generally, from the relationship analysis, we can conclude that commitment, communications, conflict handling and trust have a positive and strong relationship with each other. And these also have a direct and strong relationship with the performance of Ethio telecom in kobo branch.

Table 2, **Result of regression model summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. The error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	0.861a	0.741	0.734	0.487	0.741	113.209	5	198	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), commitments, Communications, Conflict handlings, Customers' Satisfaction and trust.

**Source: Researcher's survey, 2016**

The model summary of Table 2 describes whether the model is successful in predicting the performance of Ethio telecom in kobo branch or not. From this we can also clearly show the value of R,  $R^2$  and Adjusted R Square was 0.862, 0.741, and 0.734 respectively. In this analysis, the value of R (The regression coefficient) is 0.861 which is a measure of the correlation between the observed value and the predicted value which is the performance of Ethio telecom kobo in the branch. Whereas R Square ( $R^2$ ) is the square of this measure of correlation and indicates the proportion of the variance of performance of Ethio telecom in kobo branch with the existence of commitments, Communications, Conflict handling Customers' Satisfaction and trust. Hence, R Square=0.741 implies that only 74.1% of performance is explained by commitment, communication, conflict handling, customer satisfaction and trust. But the rest 25.9 % was explained by other factors which are not included

this research. In essence, this is a measure of how good a prediction of predicting the performance of Ethio telecom in kobo branch we can make by knowing, commitments, Communications, Conflict handlings, Customers' Satisfaction and trust. Adjusted R-square=0.734 and a significant level of  $P=.000$  indicated that the model was significant at  $P<.001$ , 2-tailed. The adjusted  $R^2$  gives us some idea of how well our model generalizes and ideally, we would like its value to be the same, or very close to, the value of  $R^2$ .

### Testing the hypothesis

For testing the hypothesis, the researcher employed linear regression model to evaluate the significance level, the direction and effects of each variable on the Ethio telecom in kobo branch performance.

Table 3 Coefficient of variables

Model	Un standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Co linearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)				4.034	.000		
Commitments	.483	.120		6.042	.000	.316	3.162
Communications	.393	.065	.389	3.361	.001	.286	3.499
Conflict handlings	.222	.066	.229	3.615	.000	.204	4.900
Customers' Satisfaction	.270	.075	.287	-1.468	.144	.199	5.018
Trust	-.126	.086	-.119	2.129	.035	.252	3.975

Source: researcher's survey, 2016

As can be seen from the above table, the commitment of employees is the highest predictor to the performance of the organization ( $\beta=0.389$ , significant at 0.01 level of significance). The next factor that determines the performance of the organization in this study is conflict handling ( $\beta=0.287$ , significant at 0.01 level of significance). Moreover, communication and trust could have a positive contribution to the performance of the organization ( $\beta=0.229$  and  $0.154$ ,

significant at 0.01 and 0.05 level of significance) respectively. Conversely, customer satisfaction is the negative predictor of organizational performance ( $\beta=-0.119$  although it is not significant).

The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of this study ranging from 3.162 to 5.018 which is between 1 and 10 and tolerance 0.199 to 0.316 which is less than 1. This indicates, there is no co linearity problem. That is independent variables are different to each other to be taken as predictors by themselves.

### **Hypothesis 1**

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant effect between commitments and performance.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant effect between commitments and performance.

As shown from Table 3 above the beta value for commitment is 0.389, this indicates that an increase of one unit in commitments, increased performance 38.9%. The effect is very significant that is

0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore in hypothesis 1, alternative hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) is accepted whereas the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) is rejected.

### **Hypothesis 2**

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant effect between Communications and performance.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant effect between Communications and performance.

As shown the same Table 3 above the beta value for Communications is 0.229, this indicates that increase of one unit in Communications, performance increase

by 22.9%. So the effect is significant that is 0.001 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore in hypothesis 2, alternative hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) is accepted whereas the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) is rejected.

### **Hypothesis 3**

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant effect between Conflict handlings and performance.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant effect between Conflict handlings and performance.

As shown from the same Table 3 above the beta value for Conflict handlings 0.287, this indicates that increase of one unit in Conflict handlings, performance increased by 28.7%. The effect is significant that is 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore in hypothesis 3, alternative hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) is accepted whereas null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) is rejected

### **Hypothesis 4**

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant effect between trust and performance.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant effect between trust and performance.

As shown from the same Table 3 above the beta value for trust 0.154, this indicates that increase of one unit in trust, performance increased by 15.4%. So, The effect is significant that is 0.035 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore in hypothesis 4, alternative hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) is accepted whereas null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) is rejected. Therefore, the final model is  $EKP = -0.483 + 0.393 \text{ COMI} + 0.222 \text{ COMM} + 0.270 \text{ CONFH} + 0.148 \text{ TR}$ . The value 0.483 indicates that when commitment, communication, conflict handling, customer satisfaction, and trust are zero, the value Ethio telecom, kobo branch performance is 0.483.

## 9. Conclusions

Relationship marketing is an important strategy for business organizations in general and service organizations in particular. Service by its very nature needs interaction and physical presence. The knowledge of good relationship marketing is important to enhance organizational performance. The most important determinants of relationship marketing are: commitment, communication, conflict handling and trust.

Based on the respondent rate Commitment have got the highest value of respondents, Communications is the second, Conflict handling is the third and trust is the fourth determinants of relationship marketing to the argument the performance Ethio telecom in kobo branch.

From correlation or relationship analysis the researchers understood that Ethio telecom kobo branch performance is positively and strongly correlated at ( $r=0.808^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) with commitments, ( $r=0.774^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) with Communications, ( $r=0.768^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) with Conflict handling, ( $r=-0.712^{**}$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) with Customer Satisfaction and finally ( $r = 0.745^{**}$ ,  $p <0.01$ ) with trust respectively. In addition commitment, communication, conflict handling and trust have a positive and strong relationship with each other in order to enhance the performance of the organization respectively. Therefore, all dependent and independent variables have a positive and strong relationship with each other's.

From effects or regression analysis, commitment is the highest predictor to the performance of the organization ( $\beta=0.389$ , significant at 0.01 level of significance). The next factor that determines the performance of the organization in this study is conflict handling ( $\beta=0.287$ , significant at 0.01 level of significance).

Moreover, communication and trust could have positive contribution to the performance of the organization ( $\beta=0.229$  and  $0.154$ , significant at 0.01 and 0.05 level of significance) respectively. Conversely, customer satisfaction is the negative predictor of organizational

performance ( $\beta=-0.119$  although it is not significant). The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of this study ranging from 3.162 to 5.018 which is between 1 and 10 and tolerance 0.199 to 0.316 which is less than 1. This indicates, there is no colinearity problem. That is independent variables are different from each other to be taken as predictors by their selves. From this study, we can conclude that commitment, conflict handling, communications and trust has positive effects on the performance of Ethio telecom in kobo branch respectively. But, customer satisfaction has negative effects on the performance of Ethio telecom in kobo branch. Therefore, to improve their performance they should focus on commitment, communication, conflict handling.

A commitment has a much more (dominant) effect on Ethio telecom, kobo branch performance. So, to improve the performance they should loyal to its customers, uses their maximum effort to perform their responsibility, cooperate with their clients, commitment to their work in timely and effectively.

The effect of Communications on Ethio telecom, kobo branch performance is found to be significant. Therefore, they should be communicated clearly with customers, provides sufficient, reliable and quick information for the service it provides, informs its plan, goal and current performance to the client and providing facilities like visually appealing brochures, pamphlets to spread and intake information.

The effects of Conflict handlings on Ethio telecom, kobo branch performance is found to be significant. Hence, there should be Creating a conducive work environment and customer service, desires to improve work after reviewing work result, customer focused and cared for customer, accepts any complaints from the customers, ,handling customers' concerns in an efficient, reliable, and fair manner, and gives a consistency response to handle the customers for a prolonged relationship.

## 10. Recommendations

Based on the major findings obtained from the stud the researchers provided the following recommendations. The study indicated that nearly one-third of respondents were replied as they are poor in commitment. Therefore, it is advisable that the employees and management should be loyal to their customers, have a cooperative behaviour with their clients, provide flexible service, and offer customized services.

Majority of the respondents were replied that Communications of ET is poor Communication however it has a vital role in performance. Therefore to improve performance, Ethio telecom should create awareness for its client about its service, Provides sufficient information for the service it provides, exchange reliable information with customers, provide timely and trustworthy information and safeguards sensitive information to customers.

**Majority of respondents valued Conflict handlings as poor and fair.** Therefore, employees and management should create a conducive work environment and customer service, desire to improve work after reviewing work result, solve customer's problem quickly and easily manner, handle customers' concerns in an efficient, reliable, and fair manner. Furthermore, it is better to introduce complete changes in customer complaint handling system and its outcome by giving clear cut instructions to the concerned sections for legitimate evaluation on customer complaints.

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