Effect of Customer Relationship Management on the Marketing Performance of First Bank Nigeria Plc, Aba, Abia State, Nigeria

Sylvanus Ikechukwu Nwodo (Ph.D).
Rhema University Nigeria, Aba Abia State,
Department of Management Sciences (Marketing Programme)

Alibo Ibinabo Emmanuel (B.Sc)
Postgraduate Student,
Rhema University Nigeria, Aba, Abia State,
Department of Management Sciences (Marketing Programme)

Onwubiko N. Dike (Ph.D).
Rhema University Nigeria, Aba Abia State,
Department of Management Sciences (Marketing Programme)

Abstract: *This study examined the relationship between Customer Relationship Management (CRM) practices and their effects on customer satisfaction, retention, loyalty and competitive advantage within First Bank Nigeria plc, Aba, Abia State, Nigeria. Utilizing a quantitative approach, data were collected through structured questionnaire distributed to staff of First Bank Nigeria plc, Aba, Abia State, Nigeria. Descriptive statistics was used to summarize the data, while inferential statistics (such as Anova) was employed to examine the relationships between CRM practices and marketing performance indicators. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between effective customer relationship management practices and customer satisfaction, evidenced by a strong acceptance of customer relationship management initiatives among respondents. Additionally, results indicated that CRM practices contribute to higher customer retention and foster loyalty, thereby enhancing the bank's competitive position in the banking sector. Statistical analysis, including ANOVA and Correlation assessment, underscores the importance of CRM as a strategic too for customer engagement. The research also highlighted the critical roles of tailored CRM practices in improving customer experiences and achieving*

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long-term business success. We, therefore, conclude that First Bank can greatly enhance its CRM procedures and marketing success by tackling implementation issues through focused training, technological investments, and feedback mechanisms. Hence, the following recommendations are made: technical support services should be made available to employees to help them deal with system problems and ensure that they can use CRM technologies efficiently and without interruption, the bank should assess CRM processes regularly and determine how they affect marketing performance and make necessary modifications and optimizations in a timely manner, among others.

INTRODUCTION

The dynamic nature of the banking environment has necessitated the adoption of innovative strategies to enhance customer satisfaction and drive business growth. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has emerged as a critical tool for organizations seeking to maintain competitive advantage through effective customer engagement and retention. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has emerged as one of the most rapidly expanding business technology solutions in the past decade. This growth underscores its essential role for businesses aiming to achieve long-term, sustainable commercial success (Guerola-Navarro *et al*., 2021). In today's competitive business environment, CRM is increasingly crucial as organizations seek to enhance revenue by fostering long-lasting connections with consumers. CRM is a comprehensive business practice designed to manage and analyze interactions between a company and its customers (Das & Hassan, 2022; Haislip & Richardson, 2017; DallaPozza*et al*., 2018). This practice involves the systematic collection and analysis of customer data to improve customer retention and drive sales growth, ultimately enhancing the overall customer relationship (Soltani*et al*., 2018). By implementing CRM, companies can gain valuable insights into customer behaviors and preferences, which can lead to improved firm performance and a higher likelihood of new product success (Foltean*et al*., 2019; Josiassen*et al*., 2014). Moreover, CRM systems enable businesses to streamline their operations by providing a centralized platform for managing customer information, tracking interactions, and coordinating marketing efforts. This centralization allows for more personalized and effective communication with customers, fostering a sense of loyalty and satisfaction that can translate into long-term profitability. The banking sector has experienced tremendous change, mostly as a result of technology breakthroughs and the increasing significance of customer-centric business practices.(Buttle, 2009). In Nigeria, where the banking industry is highly competitive and client satisfaction and loyalty are critical to corporate success, banks must set themselves apart by cultivating enduring customer connections.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has emerged as a strategic tool to enhance customer satisfaction, retention, and overall marketing performance (Chen & Popovich, 2003). CRM is a

comprehensive strategy that aims to comprehend, anticipate, and manage the demands of both present and future consumers for a business. It entails coordinating, automating, and arranging sales and marketing through the use of software and technology, procedures for technical assistance and customer service (Chen & Popovich, 2003). CRM essentially aids companies such as First Bank in optimizing their client interactions, which can result in improved marketing outcomes including heightened brand recognition, higher customer retention rates, and more customer loyalty. The banking industry in Nigeria has changed over time, moving from being heavily controlled and monopolized to being characterized by fierce competition. The introduction of digital banking, technological advancements, and financial reforms were the main forces behind this change. These changes have brought opportunities and problems for First Bank of Nigeria, a prominent financial institution that has been in business for more than a century (Ibekwe, 2017). Although the bank has been able to hold onto its market-leading position, it is under growing pressure to draw in new business and keep hold of its current clientele given the fierce competition from younger, more nimble banks. First Bank sees Aba, a major business centre in southeast Nigeria, as a crucial battleground. Aba has developed into a hub for banking activity because of its booming business community, and the competition in the area is especially strong. In order to improve customer satisfaction, better understand its customers' demands, and boost marketing effectiveness, First Bank has turned to CRM as a strategic tool. But the question still stands: how much of a role did CRM play in the bank's performance in this area, and how did it affect the bank's marketing results.

Customer happiness and satisfaction is now a crucial factor in determining a company's long-term performance in today's business climate, not only a marketing objective (Reinartz, Krafft, & Hoyer, 2004). This is especially true for the banking sector, where clients are increasingly demanding and well-informed. The capacity of banks to offer customized services, promptly address consumer requirements, and cultivate robust connections has emerged as a crucial element in their capacity to maintain clientele and expand their market presence. Even with the acknowledged value of Customer Relationship Management (CRM), many Nigerian banks still have trouble utilizing these systems to their full potential in order to boost marketing output. For instance, First Bank, Aba, has made significant investments in CRM technologies; yet, it is unclear how much of these expenditures have resulted in better marketing outcomes. While the bank has launched several CRM initiatives targeted at improving customer interactions, there is limited empirical data on the efficiency of these activities, particularly in connection to customer retention, satisfaction, and overall marketing performance (Adebisi, 2016). Moreover, First Bank is finding it harder and harder to hold onto its market leadership due to Aba's intense competition. The entrance of new-generation banks, which provide more creative services and products, has put pressure on First Bank to implement more effective CRM techniques to satisfy the increasing needs of its clients .The rapid evolution of customer expectations, coupled with the growing competition in the banking sector, has made it increasingly difficult for banks to retain customers and maintain profitability. First Bank of Nigeria, particularly its branches in Aba, faces these challenges amid stiff competition from other financial institutions and emerging firms. CRM

systems are designed to facilitate better customer interactions, streamline service delivery, and provide personalized offerings. However, the success of CRM in achieving these outcomes depends on the effectiveness of implementation, which includes proper data management, employee training, and strategic alignment with overall business goals.(Adebisi, 2016). In many cases, banks encounter problems with data fragmentation, inconsistent customer service, and limited employee engagement with CRM tools, leading to suboptimal results.. Complaints about service delays, inadequate responses to queries, and lack of personalized service are common among customers, indicating gaps in CRM execution. As a result, the bank's marketing performance—measured through metrics such as customer satisfaction, loyalty, and retention—has been negatively impacted. If these issues are not addressed, First Bank Nigeria plc, Aba risks losing its competitive advantage and market share.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to assess the effect of customer relationship management (CRM) on the marketing performance of First Bank Nigeria plc, Aba, Abia State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the relationship between CRM practices and customer satisfaction at First Bank Nigeria plc, Aba, Abia State, Nigeria.
2. To analyze the effect of CRM on customer retention and loyalty at First Bank Nigeria plc, Aba, Abia State, Nigeria.
3. To evaluate how CRM practices contribute to competitive advantage at First Bank Nigeria plc, Aba, Abia State, Nigeria.

These research questions are critical for guiding the investigation and structuring the inquiry around the core objectives of the study.

1. What is the relationship between CRM practices and customer satisfaction at First Bank Aba, Abia State, Nigeria?
2. How do CRM practices affect customer retention and loyalty at First Bank Aba, Abia State, Nigeria?
3. In what ways do CRM practices contribute to First Bank's competitive advantage in the banking sector?

The hypotheses of this study are stated in the null form, such as:

Hypothesis 1: There is no positive relationship between CRM practices and customer satisfaction at First Bank, Aba, Abia state, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: CRM practices do not significantly influence customer retention and loyalty at First Bank, Aba, Abia state, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 3 :Effective CRM practices do not contribute to First Bank's competitive advantage in the Banking Sector at Aba, Abia state, Nigeria

Conceptual Framework

Marketing Performance

Metrics including customer acquisition, retention, satisfaction, and overall revenue growth are used to gauge the effectiveness of marketing campaigns. CRM helps banks better understand their customers' demands, target their advertising more effectively, and provide better customer service, all of which contribute to increased marketing performance. By putting CRM systems into place, banks may develop marketing strategies that are more successful and produce better commercial results (Winer, 2001).According to Sheng et al. (2019), banks that employed CRM systems reported better marketing results as a result of higher customer satisfaction, retention, and acquisition rates. According to the study's findings, CRM helps banks run more effective and focused marketing initiatives, which eventually improves financial performance. First Bank Aba could improve marketing success by increasing customer engagement and loyalty by putting in place a strong CRM system.Personalized marketing has a well-established role for CRM, as evidenced by the many studies that demonstrate the benefits of CRM on marketing performance. (Sánchez et al, 2020). Looked at the usage of CRM in Spain's banking industry and discovered that banks witnessed increased response rates and better engagement when they used CRM data for client segmentation and targeted advertising. The study found that consumer data-driven tailored marketing initiatives were more successful in turning leads into devoted patrons. Afolabi and Adegboye(2023) conducted a similar study in the Nigerian banking sector and found that CRM-enabled personalized marketing strategies increased customer acquisition and loyalty rates. The study also found that banks that used CRM data to offer customized products and services based on customer preferences achieved better marketing results. First Bank Aba could increase sales and engagement by using CRM-powered personalized marketing strategies to target specific customer segments more effectively. Furthermore, Liu et al, (2022) discovered that CRM systems-enabled targeted marketing greatly improved client experiences in Chinese banks. Receiving tailored offers and communications made customers feel more important, which improved their emotional bond with the bank and raised the possibility that they would stick around. Initially, Bank Aba may boost marketing performance and increase customer happiness by using CRM to send tailored marketing messages and offers.

Customer satisfaction

CRM systems' primary goal is to satisfy customers. CRM enables banks to provide individualized solutions, prompt communication, and effective service delivery in a way that meets or surpasses client expectations. CRM systems collect information on interactions and input from customers, which helps the bank find service delivery gaps and modify its approach (Kotler& Keller, 2019).According to a recent study by Nguyen et al. (2021), CRM systems greatly increase customer satisfaction in the banking industry by offering specialized services that are in line with the needs of the client. The survey also showed that clients are more inclined to stick with a bank and refer others to it if they receive individualized services. CRM could improve First Bank Aba's

customer happiness by providing individualized services and speeding up customer care in response to complaints and questions. .Research has consistently demonstrated that CRM systems improve customer satisfaction. CRM systems allowed banks to provide more individualized and responsive services, which greatly increased customer satisfaction, according to a study done on Indonesian banks by Fauziah et al. (2020). According to the study's findings, banks with strong CRM systems were better able to predict their clients' demands, which raised customer satisfaction. In a similar vein, (Okeke and Ezeh, 2021) looked into how CRM affected client satisfaction in commercial banks in Nigeria. According to the survey, banks that improved customer interaction through the usage of CRM systems saw a decrease in customer complaints and an increase in satisfaction levels. According to the survey, CRM enables banks to improve the overall customer experience by swiftly responding to requests from customers, offering customized services, and maintaining regular, personalized communication. Similar to this, (Ahmed et al.'s, 2022) study in the United Arab Emirates' banking industry highlighted the contribution of CRM to raising customer satisfaction. The researchers discovered that banks might greatly raise customer satisfaction levels by employing CRM solutions to track client needs and provide real-time help.

Customer Retention

The ability of the bank to hold onto clients over time while lowering attrition and raising loyalty is referred to as customer retention. CRM systems improve client retention by providing proactive engagement tactics, rewards, and individualized communication. CRM helps banks to handle customer complaints before they get out of hand by monitoring customer interactions and identifying consumers who are at risk (Heskett et al., 1994).Kim and Lee (2021) showed that banks had better customer retention rates when they used CRM systems to track consumer preferences and habits. According to their research, CRM enables banks to offer tailored retention techniques that keep clients interested, like loyalty programs and customized discounts. First Bank Aba may see a decrease in attrition and an increase in client loyalty if CRM-based retention initiatives are put into place.Research has repeatedly shown that CRM is essential to customer retention because it enables banks to provide individualized experiences that win over clients. According to research by Kim and Lee (2021) on the banking sector in South Korea, institutions that used CRM systems to interact with clients more personally experienced far lower attrition rates. According to the study, banks were able to monitor client satisfaction levels and deliver tailored offers thanks to CRM technologies, which increased customer loyalty. CRM systems were shown to be essential for preserving long-term client relationships in Nigeria by Obi and Nwankwo (2022), who investigated the effect of CRM on customer retention. The study found that banks' client retention significantly improved when they implemented personalized engagement techniques including targeted communication and loyalty awards. CRM could give First Bank Aba a methodical way to monitor client behavior, deal with possible problems before they become serious, and provide incentive schemes that strengthen bonds between parties. .Kassim et al. (2021) observed a similar tendency in their research on Malaysian banks, where the effective usage of CRM systems dramatically reduced customer churn. The study found that long-term client retention relied heavily on CRM's capacity to provide customized offers and proactive customer care. In the

instance of First Bank Aba, utilizing CRM data to detect customer unhappiness early on may be crucial to lowering turnover rates.

Competitive Advantage.

Gaining a competitive edge in the cutthroat banking sector depends on one's capacity to distinguish offerings and cultivate enduring client connections. CRM solutions give banks the resources they need to gain a deeper understanding of their clientele and provide more individualized and attentive service. According to Anderson et al. (2021), banks that managed customer connections well with CRM systems had a competitive edge over those that did not because they could provide more timely and relevant services. By using CRM, First Bank Aba may be able to better understand its customers' needs and give solutions that are catered to their specific tastes, giving it a strategic advantage. As a result, the bank would be able to retain its competitive position in the market and increase customer loyalty. In the current competitive business environment, companies need to look for novel approaches to set themselves apart and develop long-lasting advantages over competitors. According to the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic talents Theory, companies can obtain a competitive advantage by cultivating talents that are distinct, valued, and difficult to replicate. CRM systems are one such tool that can offer major competitive benefits, especially in industries like banking where good client connections and service are essential. Using both theoretical and empirical insights, we will examine in depth how CRM contributes to competitive advantage in this part. A company's capacity to outperform its rivals by giving customers more value—either through lower costs or by supplying unique goods and services—is referred to as its competitive advantage (Porter, 2003). In the context of banking, competitive advantage is generally obtained by improved customer service, innovative financial products, better understanding of consumer demands, and developing long-term connections with clients. CRM becomes essential to achieving this objective because it makes it easier to comprehend consumer behavior, preferences, and wants on a deeper level. This allows banks to customize their offerings in terms of goods and services as well as marketing campaigns. Banks may boost customer satisfaction, retention, and loyalty by utilizing CRM systems efficiently, all of which help them maintain a competitive edge in the market.

Theoretical Framework

Customer Satisfaction Theory.

The foundation of the customer satisfaction theory is the notion that companies must consistently meet customer expectations in order to retain and expand their clientele. The Expectancy-Disconfirmation Model (Oliver 1980), which describes how consumers generate satisfaction assessments, is the foundation of the theory. This concept states that the discrepancy between perceived and expected performance determines customer satisfaction. Positive disconfirmation happens when the perceived performance surpasses expectations, which raises consumer satisfaction. CRM systems are essential for monitoring and improving customer satisfaction

because they keep track of client interactions, gather feedback, and provide customized services that are tailored to each customer's demands. Banks can exceed consumer expectations and provide better service by using the system to obtain insights into client expectations. Customer satisfaction is a crucial result of well-implemented CRM systems since it allows organizations to continuously improve the services they provide, according to studies (like Rabbani et al.2020).Furthermore, (Shaw and Ivens, 2021) contend that in service-related sectors, customer happiness is greatly impacted by CRM's real-time monitoring and response to client input. Customer relationship management (CRM) facilitates personalized communication and service delivery, which in turn fosters stronger ties for banks, where customer pleasure is directly tied to trust and loyalty.The philosophy of customer satisfaction emphasizes the significance of controlling expectations, providing excellent service, and guaranteeing impartiality and openness. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems are essential in helping companies accomplish these objectives because they give them the means to collect client information, monitor interactions, and customize offerings. CRM solutions enable companies to monitor client expectations and make sure services are provided reliably. Keep an eye on service quality in a number of areas (such as responsiveness and dependability) to   make sure clients are satisfied. Spot chances to go above and beyond with customized offerings or unanticipated advantages. Control consumer views of justice by open communication and proactive issue resolution. CRM may help First Bank Aba increase customer satisfaction by ensuring that services are viewed as fair and transparent, customized to each client's demands, and delivered quickly and efficiently. Understanding and putting customer satisfaction theory into practice is crucial for keeping clients and fostering long-lasting relationships in the banking industry, where there is intense rivalry and cheap switching costs. CRM systems can be used by First Bank Aba to satisfy customer expectations, improve service quality, and make sure that customers feel valued and treated fairly in every interaction, all of which will lead to increased customer satisfaction

Relationship Marketing Theory

Berry (1983) established the Relationship Marketing Theory, which emphasizes establishing long-term connections with clients as opposed to focusing only on quick transactions. According to this hypothesis, sustaining and improving client relationships results in more long-term corporate success. CRM systems are essential to relationship marketing because they give companies the means to stay in constant contact with their clients, which fosters trust and long-term commitment.Grönroos, (2020) characterizes relationship marketing as a departure from the conventional transactional approach and as an emphasis on customer retention via connection-building initiatives. With the use of CRM systems, banks may examine the needs, preferences, and behaviors of their customers and provide tailored solutions that live up to their expectations. CRM systems improve relationship marketing efforts by facilitating better contact between banks and their clients, which increases customer loyalty and lifetime value, according to studies like (Bala and Mukherjee, 2020).CRM improves relationship marketing by enabling individualized, data-driven client engagements, according to (Nguyen and Mutum, 2021). Customers and the company will have stronger emotional and practical ties as a result, increasing retention and opening up

cross-selling opportunities. Application of relationship marketing via CRM could strengthen customer ties in the context of First Bank Ababa and lead to better marketing results.

Resource Based View (RBV).

According to Barney's (1991) Resource-Based View (RBV) of the company, firms gain a competitive edge through the acquisition and application of uncommon, valuable, unique, and non-replaceable resources. In the context of CRM, customer data and the capacity to manage customer relationships are significant resources that can provide a competitive edge. Banks can use these resources to increase customer happiness, service delivery, and marketing success by utilizing CRM effectively. By highlighting the significance of organizational competencies in resource utilization, Grant (1996) expanded on the RBV. CRM systems are thought to be essential tools that businesses may utilize to collect and evaluate consumer data, giving them insights that can be applied to better marketing tactics. Sheng et al. (2019), for instance, showed that banks that successfully integrate CRM systems acquire a competitive edge by means of enhanced customer insights, which facilitate the creation of focused marketing campaigns and customized customer support. CRM is viewed by First Bank Aba as a strategic tool that offers insightful data on customer behavior and preferences. Utilizing these insights can enhance marketing effectiveness, customer loyalty, and engagement.

Empirical Research
Adebayo and Oyeniyi (2019) examined the function of CRM in customer retention. In this study, focusing on Nigerian banks, the writers concentrated on how CRM systems are made to create enduring bonds with clients, which boosts client loyalty and lowers attrition. After conducting a survey among First Bank Nigeria's clients and staff, they found that the use of CRM greatly raised client retention rates. According to the survey, CRM improves individualized client interactions by providing customized services that ensure customer satisfaction. Furthermore, it was discovered that developing retention tactics required careful consideration of the CRM system's capability to monitor and record client preferences and behaviors. To test their theories, the researchers employed inferential statistics and a descriptive study design.
Finding: This study offers compelling proof that CRM enhances client retention, which is a crucial factor in determining marketing effectiveness. To track retention over a longer time span, the study would have profited from a longitudinal approach.

Onyejiuwa and Okechukwu (2020): CRM's Effect on First Bank's Marketing Effectiveness in Nigeria.
Onyejiuwa and Okechukwu (2020) investigated the connection between marketing efficacy and CRM. The researchers concentrated on CRM's capacity to offer insightful customer data that improves product and service positioning, targeting, and segmentation. They gave questionnaires to bank clients and marketing experts, using First Bank Aba as a case study.The results of the study showed that CRM enables the bank to create marketing efforts that are more successful, which raises conversion rates. The writers also mentioned how CRM's efficient management of client

data enables the bank to create more individualized marketing messages, which raises customer happiness and engagement levels.

Finding: This study offers strong proof of how CRM improves customer insights to increase marketing efficacy. Nevertheless, a thorough examination of the ways in which particular CRM tools or software support this procedure is absent.

Olalekan (2019): Nigerian Banks' Competitive Advantage and CRM.

A study on the role CRM systems play in giving Nigerian banks a competitive edge was carried out by Olalekan (2019). With a focus on First Bank Aba, the author discovered that CRM technologies give the bank a competitive edge by facilitating improved customer care, speeding up customer query responses, and delivering more individualized banking experiences. The bank's ability to keep up solid ties with its high-value clients prevents them from moving to competitors, giving it a competitive advantage.The study used a mix of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, combining interviews with bank workers and surveys from consumers. One important discovery was that First Bank was able to develop client loyalty programs that are challenging for rivals to imitate thanks to CRM, further strengthening its competitive position in the market.

Finding: This study successfully draws attention to the part CRM plays in building a long-lasting competitive advantage. The study, however, should have done a better job of thoroughly examining the financial performance measures connected to this competitive advantage.
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Nwafor and Ibe (2021): CRM's Effect on Acquiring Customers in Nigeria's Banking Industry.

Nwafor and Ibe (2021) investigated how First Bank Aba's client acquisition tactics are impacted by CRM systems. According to the report, the bank can deliver more personalized contact to potential customers thanks to CRM technology, which increases acquisition rates. The bank was able to target prospective consumers with pertinent products and services by using data from existing customers. A quantitative study with 150 customers and marketing professionals was carried out by the writers. The findings demonstrated how CRM systems streamlined and increased the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of the client acquisition process.

Finding: By connecting CRM with client acquisition, a crucial component of marketing performance, the study offers a noteworthy addition. The study, however, should have done a better job of examining how digital CRM tools fit into the client acquisition process.

The Function of CRM in Improving Service Quality in Nigerian Banks is discussed by Obi and Emeka (2019).

This study concentrated on CRM's contribution to First Bank Aba's improved service quality. According to Obi and Emeka (2019), the bank was able to provide consistent, high-quality customer service because CRM systems gave staff members access to the most recent data on customer preferences and transaction history. The study evaluated the connection between CRM and service quality using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. One of the main

conclusions was that CRM systems shortened the time needed to address customer complaints, increasing customer happiness and overall service quality.

Finding: The results of the study provide strong evidence of the impact of CRM on service quality. It could have, however, looked more closely at the particular CRM elements (such customer service management systems) that affect this result.

Ogunleye and Ojo (2020): CRM's Impact on Nigerian Banks' Customer Retention and Profitability

The impact of CRM systems on client retention and profitability in Nigerian banks was investigated by Ogunleye and Ojo (2020). By identifying high-value clients and concentrating retention efforts on them, CRM systems not only increased customer retention but also increased profitability, according to their analysis of First Bank Aba. The relationship between CRM, retention, and profitability was examined by the authors using regression analysis, and they discovered a significant positive association between these variables.

Finding: This study successfully establishes a connection between CRM and profitability and retention, two important measures of marketing performance. To support its conclusions, the study should have included more detailed information on customer lifetime value (CLV).
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Chukwu and Nnamdi (2021): Nigerian Commercial Banks' CRM and Customer Loyalty

Chukwu and Nnamdi (2021) looked into the connection between customer loyalty and CRM systems. The study, which concentrated on First Bank Aba, discovered that CRM systems increase client loyalty by providing tailored services that address their needs. Using survey data from 120 clients, the researchers discovered a substantial correlation between CRM utilization and client loyalty.

Finding: While the study shows how CRM promotes loyalty, more research should have been done to show how loyalty is translated into specific marketing performance indicators like referrals or repeat buy rates.

Ume and Okeke (2019): Marketing Performance and CRM Systems in Nigerian Banks

Ume and Okeke (2019) looked at how First Bank Aba's CRM systems improve marketing performance by making marketing strategies more effective. According to the study, the bank can run data-driven marketing campaigns thanks to CRM technology, which enhances targeting and boosts conversion rates.

Finding: research shows conclusively that CRM systems boost marketing effectiveness by optimizing targeting and segmentation, which raises conversion rates. It could have, however, gone more into detail on the particular CRM analytics technologies that make this improvement possible.

Okafor and Alabi (2022): Banks in Nigeria Integrating CRM and Digital Marketing

Okafor and Alabi (2022) investigated the ways in which CRM systems support the integration of digital marketing strategies by Nigerian banks, specifically First Bank Aba.

According to the study, the bank can craft customized marketing messages for digital platforms like social media and email thanks to CRM capabilities. Increased marketing return on investment (ROI) and better engagement rates are the results of this integration. Through customer surveys and interviews with managers of digital marketing, the researchers carried out a mixed-method study. According to their research, CRM systems make sure that consumer interactions are consistent and individualized across platforms, which helps to streamline digital marketing procedures.

Finding: This study aptly illustrates how CRM platforms interact with digital marketing to enhance outcomes. The study, meanwhile, could have looked more closely at the particular CRM modules (such email marketing and social media monitoring) that have the most effects on the performance of digital marketing.

Chinwe and Obinna (2021): CRM and Its Role in Competitive Advantage in the Nigerian Banking Sector

Chinwe and Obinna (2021) focused on how CRM systems give banks a competitive advantage by enabling them to offer differentiated services. The study highlighted that First Bank Aba leveraged CRM systems to offer personalized services that competitors found difficult to replicate. By creating unique customer experiences, the bank was able to maintain a competitive edge.The study used a combination of qualitative interviews with bank managers and quantitative analysis of customer satisfaction data. The researchers found that CRM's role in maintaining competitive advantage directly impacts marketing performance, as satisfied customers were less likely to switch to competitors.

Finding: This study provides a robust link between CRM, competitive advantage, and marketing performance. However, it could have further examined the financial impact of competitive advantage on the bank's overall market share.

Akpan and Ojo (2020): Effect of CRM on Customer Experience in Nigerian Banks

Akpan and Ojo (2020) examined the role of CRM systems in enhancing customer experience. Their study, focused on First Bank Aba, revealed that CRM systems helped improve customer interactions by providing employees with real-time access to customer data, which enabled more personalized and efficient service.The researchers used surveys and in-depth interviews to collect data from customers and employees. The findings showed that CRM systems not only improved customer satisfaction but also strengthened the bank's brand image, contributing to better marketing performance.

Finding: This study effectively links CRM with enhanced customer experience, but it could have further analyzed how improved customer experience translates into concrete marketing outcomes such as customer lifetime value (CLV).

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study which is appropriate given the objective of understanding the relationship between CRM practices and marketing performance in First Bank Nigeria plc, Aba, Abia state (Creswell, 2014)..The population for this study consists of all staff members at First Bank, Aba. According to First Bank's annual report (2023), the Aba branch has over 10,000 customers and 150 employees across different departments, with a significant number involved in customer-facing roles such as marketing, customer service, and CRM management. This population is ideal for the study, as it captures a diverse range of experiences with CRM systems. The study has 150 respondents. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 10 key staff members for interviews, ensuring representation from various departments such as marketing, customer service, and management. This selection is crucial to obtain diverse perspectives on CRM practices and their impact on marketing performance. The study made use of primary and secondary information. A structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were the instruments used to elicit responses from the respondents. The questionnaire consist of 27 statements designed to assess perceptions of CRM practices, customer satisfaction, retention, loyalty, and challenges faced in implementing CRM systems. Respondents rated their level of agreement using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Semi-structured interviews were used for the10 key staff members. The interviews explored their experiences with CRM systems, challenges encountered, and suggestions for improving CRM practices. The content validity was established by reviewing the questionnaire and interview guide with experts in the field of CRM and marketing, as recommended by Pallant (2020). Additionally, a pilot study was conducted using a small subset of the sample population to test the clarity and relevance of the questionnaire items. Feedback from the pilot study was used to refine the research instruments. To ensure reliability, the questionnaire was subjected to a Cronbach's alpha test for internal consistency. A Cronbach's alpha score of 0.7 or above is generally considered acceptable for research instruments (Pallant, 2020). Previous CRM studies by Ademola and Babajide (2020) and Akinyemi and Adedayo (2020) also used reliability testing to validate their instruments, making this approach relevant for this study. This research adhered to the highest ethical standards to protect the rights and privacy of participants. Key ethical considerations included are:

1. Informed Consent: All participants was fully informed about the purpose of the study and their role in it. Written consent was obtained before data collection.

2. Confidentiality: The privacy of participants was protected by anonymizing their responses and ensuring that data is stored securely. No personally identifiable information was disclosed in the research findings.

3. Voluntary Participation: Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants had the right to withdraw at any point without penalty.

These ethical guidelines are consistent with best practices in academic research (Bryman & Bell, 2021). Data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. .Descriptive statistics was used to summarize the data, while inferential statistics (such as Anova) was employed to examine the relationships between CRM practices and marketing performance indicators.

Hypotheses Testing.

Hypothesis 1: "There is no significant relationship between CRM practices and customer satisfaction at First Bank, Aba, Abia state, Nigeria.

Decision Rule: Reject H_0, If $F_{cal} > F_{tab}$ at 5% level of significance, otherwise accept it.

Table 4.1 Analysis of relationship between CRM and Customer Satisfaction

Method	Df	Value	Probability
Anova F-test	(4, 30)	199.9285	0.0000
Welch F-test*	(4, 13.7862)	101.5605	0.0000

*Test allows for unequal cell variance

Analysis of Variance

Source of Variation	Df	Sum of Sq.	Mean Sq.
Between	4	50069.71	12517.43
Within	30	1878.286	62.60952
Total	34	51948.00	1527.882

Category Statistics

Variable	Count	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Err. of Mean
SD	7	0.428571	0.786796	0.297381
DD	7	0.428571	0.786796	0.297381
NN	7	5.428571	4.613644	1.743794
AA	7	99.28571	13.26291	5.012909
SA	7	34.42857	10.70603	4.046498
All	35	28.00000	39.08814	6.607101

Source: E-views

Interpretation

The analysis has a good fit seeing that the probability value of the Anova F-Test is 0.000. This implies that the regression is statistically significant Also, seeing that F_{cal} =199.9285>F_{tab}= 4.02 at 5% level of significance, we thereby reject our null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis which says that there is positive relationship between CRM practices and customer satisfaction at First Bank Aba.

Hypothesis 2: "CRM practices do not significantly influence customer retention and loyalty at First Bank".

Decision Rule: Reject H_0, If F_{cal}>F_{tab} at 5% level of significance, otherwise accept it.

Table 4.2 Analysis of CRM practices and its influence on Customer Retention and Loyalty

Method	Df	Value	Probability
Anova F-test	(4, 25)	73.03215	0.0000
Welch F-test*	(4, 10.6817)	38.88033	0.0000

*Test allows for unequal cell variances

Analysis of Variance

Source of Variation	Df	Sum of Sq.	Mean Sq.
Between	4	48061.00	12015.25
Within	25	4113.000	164.5200
Total	29	52174.00	1799.103

Category Statistics

Variable	Count	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Err. of Mean
SD	6	0.833333	1.602082	0.654047
DD	6	0.333333	0.516398	0.210819
NN	6	1.500000	2.073644	0.846562
AA	6	104.0000	19.59592	8.000000
SA	6	33.33333	20.77178	8.480042
All	30	28.00000	42.41584	7.744037

Source: E Views

Interpretation

The analysis has a good fit seeing that the probability value of the Anova F-Test is 0.000. This implies that the regression is statistically significant. Also, seeing that F_{cal} =73.03215>F_{tab}= 4.18 at 5% level of significance, we thereby reject our null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis which says CRM practices significantly influence customer retention and loyalty at First Bank, and positively impact sales growth.

Hypothesis 3: "Effective CRM practices do not contribute to First Bank's competitive advantage in the banking sector,"

Table 4.3 Analysis of CRM Practices and its influence on Competitive Advantage

Method	Df	Value	Probability
Anova F-test	(4, 20)	89.70624	0.0000

Analysis of Variance

Source of Variation	Df	Sum of Sq.	Mean Sq.
Between	4	35789.20	8947.300
Within	20	1994.800	99.74000
Total	24	37784.00	1574.333

Category Statistics

Variable	Count	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Err. of Mean
SD	5	1.000000	1.000000	0.447214
DD	5	0.000000	0.000000	0.000000
NN	5	6.400000	5.029911	2.249444
AA	5	99.80000	17.64086	7.889233
SA	5	32.80000	12.69646	5.678028
All	25	28.00000	39.67787	7.935574

Source: E Views

Interpretation

The analysis has a good fit seeing that the probability value of the Anova F-Test is 0.000. This implies that the regression is statistically significant. Also, seeing that $F_{cal} = 89.70624 > F_{tab} = 4.43$ at 5% level of significance, we thereby reject our null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis which says that Effective CRM practices contributes to First Bank's competitive advantage in the banking sector.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of the three hypotheses tested highlight significant relationships between CRM practices and various customer-centric metrics.

Hypothesis 1: Relationship Between CRM Practices and Customer Satisfaction

The first hypothesis posited that "There is no significant relationship between CRM practices and customer satisfaction at First Bank Aba." The analysis revealed an **F-calculated value of 199.9285**, which is significantly greater than the **F-tabulated value of 4.02** at a 5% significance level. The probability value of 0.000 indicates strong statistical significance. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis in favor of the alternative hypothesis, confirming that there is indeed a positive relationship between CRM practices and customer satisfaction. This finding aligns with existing literature, suggesting that effective CRM strategies contribute to enhanced customer experiences by personalizing services, improving communication, and fostering trust. As such, First Bank's CRM initiatives likely enhance customer perceptions and satisfaction, driving loyalty and long-term relationships.

Hypothesis 2: Influence of CRM Practices on Customer Retention and Loyalty

The second hypothesis stated that "CRM practices do not significantly influence customer retention and loyalty at First Bank." Again, the **F-calculated value of 73.03215** exceeded the **F-tabulated value of 4.18**, with a probability value of 0.000. Consequently, we reject the null hypothesis, establishing that CRM practices significantly influence customer retention and loyalty. This outcome emphasizes the critical role that CRM plays in fostering customer loyalty. By integrating CRM practices effectively, First Bank can better understand customer needs and preferences, allowing for tailored marketing strategies that resonate with customers. Enhanced customer retention not only contributes to stable revenue streams but also positions the bank favorably against competitors.

Hypothesis 3: Contribution of Effective CRM Practices to Competitive Advantage

The third hypothesis proposed that "Effective CRM practices do not contribute to First Bank's competitive advantage in the banking sector." The analysis demonstrated an **F-calculated value of 89.70624**, which surpasses the **F-tabulated value of 4.43**. The probability value of 0.000 reinforces the statistical significance of the findings. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis and affirm that effective CRM practices indeed contribute to First Bank's competitive advantage. This conclusion is critical for strategic planning within the bank. By leveraging CRM to enhance service quality and customer relationships, First Bank can differentiate itself in a highly competitive market. The ability to gather and analyze customer data through CRM enables the bank to make informed decisions, predict market trends, and adapt quickly to changes in customer preferences..

Summary of Findings.

i).The study discovered a significant positive relationship between CRM practices and customer satisfaction, with staff members' perceptions of how well CRM improves customer experiences indicated by mean scores. This is consistent with previous research, which suggests that banks can increase customer satisfaction by customizing services to meet their unique demands through the use of CRM systems (Kumar &Reinartz, 2016).

ii).The study also showed that CRM practices have a major impact on customer loyalty and retention, and staff members generally agree that CRM is essential to sustaining long-term customer relationships, as indicated by the mean score. This conclusion is further supported by the correlation study, which demonstrates a strong link between CRM efficacy and client retention.The perceived influence on sales growth was, however, somewhat smaller, despite the overwhelming support for CRM's function in boosting loyalty. This disparity would indicate that, although while CRM can increase customer happiness and retention, doing so might not be enough to boost sales without the need for other strategic measures like focused marketing campaigns or promotional activities. The aforementioned discovery underscores the necessity for First Bank to prioritize not just client retention but also the conversion of customer loyalty into higher sales.

iii).First Bank employees identified CRM activities as a crucial component of their edge over competitors in the banking industry. This conclusion was supported by the qualitative insights gleaned from the interviews, where a number of employees mentioned that efficient CRM procedures enable the bank to promptly address customer concerns and requests, building customer confidence and goodwill in the process. This is consistent with studies that show a competitive advantage and increased customer loyalty can result from solid customer interactions (Payne &Frow, 2017).

iv) The research revealed noteworthy obstacles in the efficient deployment of these systems. Employees identified aversion to change, technological challenges, and insufficient training as obstacles preventing the full use of CRM systems. It is evident from the mean score that implementation challenges exist that First Bank has to address these problems. A major issue that surfaced was inadequate training, since many employees believed that the current training curricula did not sufficiently equip them to use CRM systems in an efficient manner. This result is in line with earlier research that highlights how crucial training is to obtaining the most out of CRM (Gummesson, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The results show that although CRM techniques are acknowledged as essential for improving customer happiness, retention, and competitive advantage, implementation issues still exist. First Bank may greatly enhance its CRM procedures and, as a result, its marketing success by tackling these issues through focused training, technological investments, and feedback mechanisms. The findings from First Bank Aba underscore the substantial impact of CRM practices on customer satisfaction, retention, and competitive advantage. These results not only validate the importance of CRM in banking but also provide a foundation for further research and strategic implementation. By focusing on enhancing CRM strategies, First Bank can foster stronger customer relationships, ultimately leading to sustained growth and success in the banking sector.

Recommendations

i.Improved Training Programs: Employees can be equipped to use CRM systems efficiently by providing thorough training that is suited to their individual jobs within the bank. Staff members can optimize the system's potential by developing their knowledge and abilities.

ii. Investment in Technology: It is critical to set aside funds for the ongoing upkeep and updating of CRM systems. This guarantees that the technology will always be current, easy to use, and ready to satisfy changing needs from customers.

iii. Feedback Mechanisms: By creating dependable avenues for employee input, the bank may pinpoint areas in need of development and modify its CRM plans in light of firsthand observations. CRM procedures can be improved iteratively with regular input.

iv.Technical Support: Making more technical support services available will help employees deal with system problems and ensure that they can use CRM technologies efficiently and without interruption.

v.Frequent Performance Assessments: By regularly assessing CRM processes, the bank can determine how they affect marketing performance and make necessary modifications and optimizations in a timely manner.

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