



THE INFLUENCE OF CUSTOMER RETENTION STRATEGIES ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN DODOMA, TANZANIA.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of customer retention strategies on customer loyalty in higher education in Dodoma, Tanzania. A cross sectional questionnaire survey involving 120 bachelor three students was conducted at the College of Business Education Dodoma Campus due to the fact that CBE is the oldest higher education of all in Dodoma. Two case studies of students perusing master degree at the College of Business Education Dodoma Campus were developed from qualitative data which were collected using in-depth interview. Qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis whereas data were first transcribed into text and thereafter relevant themes were developed and the results were matched with relevant literature and theory. To estimate the influence of customer retention strategies on customer loyalty Multiple Regression was performed. The regression results indicate that fee charged to students had a negative significant influence on customer loyalty. Service quality and customer satisfaction had a positive significant influence on customer loyalty. The study recommends that the college management need to embrace customer retention strategies for sustained customer loyalty.

Keywords: Customer Retention, Customer Loyalty, Higher Education

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Measuring the influence of customer retention strategies on customer loyalty globally has become of great attention elsewhere in the world (Nyarko, Agyeman-Duah and Asimah, 2016). Customer retention refers to the activities and actions companies and organizations take to reduce the number of customer defections (Martey, 2014). In the same view, Martey (2014) also defined customer retention as the activity the firm performs to prevent customers from switching to rivals. In this study therefore the operational definition for customer retention is the activities and actions taken by firms' management to prevent customers' decisions to purchase from rivals.



Kotler and Armstrong (2012) define customer loyalty as the decisions taken by customer to make repeat purchase. Further, Thakur (2016) defined loyalty as a customers' intention to remain committed to specific provider in the market place by repeating their purchasing experiences. It is evident that good customer retention strategies result into increased customer loyalty which consequently increased profitability of the firm (Martey, 2014). Higher education institutions globally have paid great attention on measuring effectiveness of customer retention strategies on customer loyalty so as to be able to take appropriate actions to restore the situation in case of disequilibrium. In the era of increased competition among higher education institutions to attract highly qualified students toward achieving highly qualified students has necessitated them to pay more concern to design effective customer retention strategies. Kottler and Amrstrong (2012) argue that the cost to retain customers is cheaper than attracting the new ones. Globally, the study by Martey (2014) in Ghana found that brand image, price, service quality and customer satisfaction had positive significant effect on customer loyalty.

Most of the previous related studies in Tanzania have concentrated measuring service quality in higher education but they have not taken into account to establish the influence of customer retention strategies on customer loyalty. For instance, the study by Mwasongo, Kazungu and Kiwia (2015) measured service quality in higher education but it did not address customer retention strategies. Mashenene (2019) examined the effect of service quality on students' satisfaction in Tanzania higher education but the study was not directly linked with customer retention strategies. Higher education institutions spend a lot of budgets to in marketing activities that include attracting new students, but the majority of these students join other institutions up on completion of one level of the programme instead of proceeding with the same institution. From this view, it was found important to conduct this study. Therefore, the objective of this study was to examine the influence of customer retention strategies on customer loyalty in higher education in Dodoma, Tanzania.

2. 1 REVIEW OF CUSTOMER RETENTION

Various previous studies have presented either directly or indirectly the influence of customer retention strategies on customer loyalty. For instance, Martey (2014) argued that customer retention in Ghana brings about increased company sales, reduced customer acquisition costs and increased referrals by customers but its essence is acceptable price, good brand image, high service quality and acceptable customer satisfaction are important dimensions for customer loyalty. Mashenene (2019) though studied the effect of service quality on students' satisfaction in higher education in Tanzania, but in broad sense the two concepts i.e. service quality and customer satisfaction are the customer retention strategies. Gengeswari, Padmashantini and Sharmeela-Banu (2013) in Malyasia studied the impact of customer retention practices on firm performance; the study used word of mouth, price sensitivity, repeat purchase and non-complaining behaviour as measurement of customer retention. The results from the study indicated that all dimensions measured had a positive significant influence on the firm's performance. In the focus of this study, customer retention will be measured by brand image, price and service quality. In addition, customer satisfaction as an intermediate variable will be treated in the same way as other customer retention strategies.

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2.2 Customer Loyalty

Many literatures have studied the relationship of customer loyalty with other variables. For instance, some studies have directly concluded that customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are related concepts. Nyarko *et al.* (2016) found that customer satisfaction is said to be a strong predictor of behavioural attributes including customer loyalty, word of mouth and repeat purchase. Likewise, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) found that customer satisfaction is the key determinant of customer loyalty. In another moment, Mashenene (2019) when studied the effect of service quality on students' satisfaction in higher education in Tanzania found that good service quality affects customer satisfaction. It is from these findings the concept of customer satisfaction can be extended to bring an effect to customer loyalty. Similarly, the study of Dehghan and Shahin (2011) when carrying out assessment of customer loyalty in Maddiran revealed that customer satisfaction influences customer loyalty. Further, the study of Ganiyu (2017) in Nigerian airline connectedly revealed existence of a strong association and influence of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty, as the result the study concluded that customer satisfaction is extremely important in building and enhancing customer loyalty. In the same focus, Sayuti and Setiawan (2017) in Indonesia travel agencies found that customer satisfaction, trust, service quality influence customer loyalty. These results imply that firms have to struggle to make sure their customers are satisfied most by being provided with superior value. In this study there, customer loyalty was measured using the behaviour of customers to make repeat purchase.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The following conceptual framework was proposed to show the influence of customer retention strategies on customer loyalty in higher education in Tanzania. The independent variables (customer retention strategies) are measured by brand image, price and service quality of services offered by higher education institutions. As the result, if customer retention strategies are well implemented by higher education institutions there is high likelihood of customers of such institutions to be satisfied with services offered. On the other hand, the dependent variable, customer loyalty in this case was measured in terms of repeat purchase, spread of positive word of mouth, reference to others made by customers and premium prices paid customers. The arrows indicate the flow of events and the relationships among variables in this study.

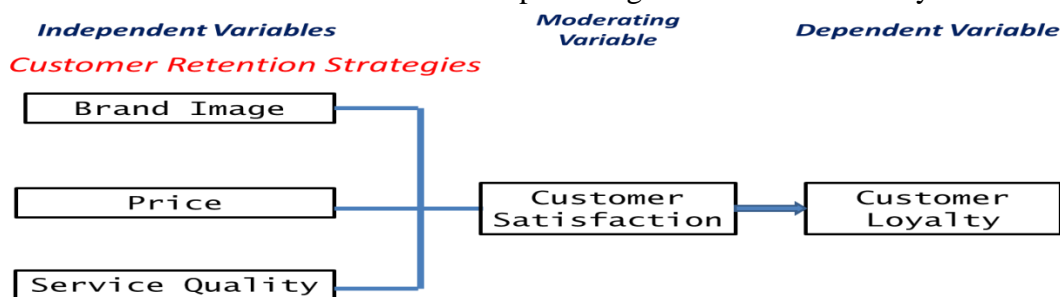


Figure 1: Conceptual framework
Source: Researchers' Compilation



3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out at the College of Business Education - Dodoma Campus due to the reason that the college is the oldest of all five higher education institutions in Dodoma region which started in 1983. As the oldest college, it was believed to have well established customer retention strategies which in return could influence customer loyalty. Further, the choice of the College of Business Education Dodoma Campus was due to its unique programmes which start from certificate to master degree levels. The population for this study was 192 bachelor three (3) in 2018/19 academic year (62 students) and students completed in 2017/18 academic year (130) degree students of the College of Business Education – Dodoma Campus who have pursued their studies at the College of Business Education Dodoma Campus from certificate, diploma, up to bachelor degree levels. This population was selected to enable the researcher to measure customer loyalty since bachelor three (3) students have been at the college for the period of six (6). This period is quite long enough to enable students as customers to fairly evaluate the retention strategies used by the college. Further, two (2) case studies were developed from the in-depth interview conducted with master's degree students who have been at CBE Dodoma for the period of about 8 years. The case studies involved one (1) female master student and one (1) male student. The two case studies were developed from qualitative data so as to supplement the quantitative results. The students selected from in the case studies had demonstrated a degree of loyalty to CBE Dodoma by being at the college for such long period. For ethical consideration, the students involved in the case studies were requested consent to agree or disagree on their names to be disclosed in the study; both of them granted permission for disclosure of their names in the study. The sample size for this study was 120 respondents who were selected from the population of 192 bachelor students. At the beginning of the study the intention was to include the entire population of the study since it was a small population but due to saturation point which was reached only 120 respondents were included. Lugumilza (2012) asserted that saturation point can be used to determine adequacy of sample size.

However, due to delay of some questionnaires to be returned, questionnaires having missing data and some respondents being unreachable for those who were interviewed using telephone, a sample of 120 was deemed adequate following the saturation point of the responses (Mashenene, 2019). Class representatives were used by researchers as research assistants though researchers also were involved in data collection. In some circumstances where respondents were not easily found, telephone interview was used. Snowball sampling technique was used to identify respondents using class lists in collaboration with class representatives.

The study used primary data which were collected using a structured questionnaire for quantitative data which was filled for about 18 minutes and in-depth interview for qualitative data which lasted for about 1.25 hours. For the questionnaire, all independent variables (brand image, price, service quality and customer satisfaction) and customer loyalty were captured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). Many previous studies on retention and customer loyalty have used the same type of questionnaire questions (Martey, 2014). Likert – type scale questions for the first time were developed by Rensis Likert and have been widely used by many researchers especially those measuring attitudes and perceptions (Mashenene, 2019; Mashenene, 2016; Ame and Tegambwage, 2016; Mbise, 2015; ISSN: 2408-7920



Martey, 2014). The customer retention variable had the following statements; brand image 4, price 5, service quality 6 and customer satisfaction 4. On the other hand, customer loyalty was measured using 4 statements.

During data analysis, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software Version 23 was used as an analytical tool. Before data were entered into the SPSS software were edited and validated to eliminate missing data in some questionnaires. To establish the influence between customer retention and customer loyalty multiple regression was performed. Before regression was performed, test for model fitness was performed. The multiple regression equation was presented as hereunder;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 B_i + \beta_2 P + \beta_3 S_q + \beta_4 C_s + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots(1)$$

Whereby:

- Y = Customer Loyalty
- B_i = Brand image of the College
- P = Price/fee charged by the College
- S_q = Service quality offered by the College
- C_s = Customer satisfaction perceived by students
- B = Coefficients estimated in the model

Before the regression analysis was performed, the customer retention strategies and customer loyalty which were captured using Likert scale were transformed and later segregated into index scores using SPSS software.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Multicoliniarty Test

Before multiple regression was performed multicollinearity test was carried out. Multiple regression model normally faces multicollinearity problem for independent variables. Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) were used for testing multicolliniarty in the model (Table 1). Gujarati (2007) asserted that when the VIF value is less than 5 it indicates no multicollinearity in the model. Since all VIF results of all variables under this study were less than 5, it is concluded that there was no multicollinearity problem.

Table 1: Multicoliniarty Test

Variable	Tolerance	VIF
Age	0.397	2.519
Sex	0.577	1.734
Brand image	0.741	1.350
Price/fee	0.653	1.532
Service quality	0.302	3.313
Customer satisfaction	0.222	4.507



4.2 Model Summary

The results from the regression model indicate the R^2 is 0.734, meaning that 73.4% of the total variance in the dependent variable is accounted for by the independent variable. It is from these results, the four constructs of customer retention were important in creating customer loyalty.

Table 2: Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.856	0.734	0.717	0.55489586

4.3 ANOVA Result Model

Overall, the regression model statistically significantly predicts the customer loyalty (i.e., it is a good fit for the data). The results (Table 3) indicate that the F-ratio in the regression model is significant ($p < 0.001$), implying that the customer retention strategies in the regression model predict customer loyalty strongly.

Table 3: ANOVA Result Model

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	83.938	6	13.990	45.434	0.000
Residual	30.483	99	0.308		
Total	114.421	105			

4.4 Multiple regression results

The regression results (Table 4) indicate that age has a significant influence on customer loyalty at p-value 0.000 with coefficient of -0.577. These results imply that age explains 57.7% in decreasing customer loyalty, this can be argued that as the age of students increase their loyalty decrease due to increased reasoning and exposure and hence develop interest to taste other institutions.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Results

Variable	Coefficients	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Constant	16.842	1.947		
Age	-0.577	0.072	-7.974	0.000
Sex	-1.436	0.143	-10.027	0.000
Brand image	-0.042	0.068	-0.617	0.539
Price/fee	-0.170	0.083	-2.050	0.043
Service quality	0.576	0.099	5.842	0.000
Customer satisfaction	0.657	0.134	4.901	0.000

In a similar way the regression results (Table 4) indicate that sex has a significant influence on customer loyalty at p-value 0.000 with coefficient of -1.436. These results imply that sex explains 143.6% decrease in customer loyalty; this can be argued that as female (1) students have the higher chance to decrease loyalty than their counterpart male (0). This can be argued that that retaining female students is likely to be more difficulty than male due to differences in preferences and tastes between them.



Regarding price, the coefficient was -0.170 and significant at p-value 0.043. These results imply that tuition fee explains 17% of decrease in customer loyalty. These results hold true as normally price sensitive customers tend to lose loyalty even in slight increase in price. The implication of these results is that higher institutions are likely to lose customers if price is increased compared to those of competitors. These results are similar to those of Martey (2014) which found that price had a significant positive relationship with customer loyalty. These results are supported by those of the two cases which exhibit;

“...Currently the CBE’s tuition fee is affordable to any individual as we do pay by installments of which I was flexible to work to get an income and pay for my fee smoothly throughout my MIBM study years...”. (Interview held with Roghath Adolph Massawe on 25th October, 2018 at CBE Dodoma Campus).

“... The first thing which attracts me to study at the CBE Dodoma Campus from certificate up to master’s degree is the affordable tuition fee which is paid in various installments...”. (Interview held with Elizabeth R. Ntyama on 25th October, 2018 at CBE Dodoma Campus).

The results on service quality indicate a significant influence at p-value 0.000 with the coefficient of 0.576. These results imply service quality explains 57.6% increase in customer loyalty. The implication of these findings is that as the quality of the service was being improved the loyalty of customers to make repeat purchase was raising. These findings are in harmony with those of Abu-Alhaija, Yusof, Hashim and Jaharuddin (2018) which found that customer’s perceived value and service quality is the primary determinant of customer loyalty. Further these findings supported by the qualitative findings from the two cases which assert;

“...I quickly signed up for Master’s degree in International Business Management (MIBM)...”. (Interview held with Roghath Adolph Massawe on 25th October, 2018 at CBE Dodoma Campus).

“... high quality of education and associated services which are quite different from those provided by other higher education in Tanzania...”. (Interview held with Elizabeth R. Ntyama on 25th October, 2018 at CBE Dodoma Campus).

Similarly, the results of customer satisfaction indicate a significant influence at p-value = 0.000 with the coefficient of 0.657, suggesting that customer satisfaction explains 65.7% increase in customer loyalty. These findings are in harmony to those by Martey (2014) which revealed that customer satisfaction had a significant positive relationship with customer loyalty in Ghana. Likewise, these findings are congruent to those of Abu-Alhaija *et al.* (2018) which revealed that customer’s satisfaction is one of the primary determinants of customer loyalty. In the same view, these findings are supported by qualitative results from two cases which asserts;

“...I’ve always been proud and motivated to speak positive about CBE as I’ve not only learnt from the trainers but also from other advice from various staff members of the college, in this regard I genuinely congratulate the CBE Dodoma Campus Management at large for running the College strategically and giving out the best individuals who can easily adopt the change of the world and updates on technology and other attributes involving in mankind...”. (Interview held with Roghath Adolph Massawe on 25th October, 2018 at CBE Dodoma Campus).



“... Another competitive advantage of CBE Dodoma Campus is customer satisfaction; the college strives much to ensure that students as customers are satisfied with the services provide. Some efforts made to enhance customer satisfaction include handling students’ complaints effectively and timely and involvement of students in decision making processes...”. (Interview held with Elizabeth R. Ntyama on 25th October, 2018 at CBE Dodoma Campus).

4.5 Summary of Qualitative Results

Table 5 presents summary of qualitative results from the two case studies. Generally, all the three attributes of customer retention strategies were positively rated. As the result, the students in the two case studies were able to pursue their college studies from certificate to master degree level since all attributes of customer retention were favouring them. These findings were supported by those of Martey (2014) which revealed that price, brand image, service quality and customer satisfaction demonstrated a significant positive relationship with customer loyalty. Although the brand image as an attribute of customer retention indicate to be insignificant in quantitative results but its implication from qualitative findings reveal great need for higher learning managements have to ensure that they struggle much to build and maintain good image of their institutions so as to be able to cultivate long-term customer loyalty. Further, the qualitative results imply that price is an important ingredient in fueling customer loyalty and the lesson learned from these results is that any price change should be effectively and timely communicated to students. It is in this view, students’ involvement during the process of adjusting prices is important. In the same manner, provision of high service quality should be in the heart of higher education management since its outcome influences customer satisfaction. Such satisfied customers will spread positive word of mouth and make reference others, as the result customer will make repeat purchase as one of attributes of customer loyalty.

Table 5: Summary of Qualitative Results

Customer retention strategies	Perceived value
Brand image	+
Price	+
Service quality	+
Customer satisfaction	+

4.6 Lesson Learned from Qualitative Findings

The repeat purchase behaviour demonstrated by the two students in the case studies is a practical testimonial to prove that attribute of customer retention such as appropriate and fair prices, high customer service and satisfactory customer satisfaction have enable the said students to make repeat purchase in four different times i.e. from certificate to master degree levels. The period of 7/8 years students have stayed at CBE Dodoma is an indictor that the college has embraced customer retention strategies that favour students’ loyalty. It is therefore the right time for high education management to ensure that they do everything needed to fuel customer loyalty.



5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that service quality and customer satisfaction indicate a positive significant influence on customer loyalty implying that as services quality and customer satisfaction are improved, customer loyalty improves as well. On the other hand, price indicates a negative significant influence on customer loyalty, meaning that as tuition fee increases customer loyalty decreases. In addition, the age and sex of students indicate a negative significant influence of customer loyalty implying that as the age of students increase they become very saturated with the same learning environment and they start thinking of finding new learning environment for the higher academic year. For the case of sex, the findings imply that female and male students differ on the level of satisfaction, hence their loyalties differ.

5.2 Recommendations

Following the research findings from this study, the following recommendations have been established;

- i) The management of higher education has to involve students in price change whenever they intend to change prices. This will act as the motivation to students and consequently it will result into their satisfaction and it will reduce the possibility of students to switch to other higher education institutions with lower prices.
- ii) The higher education management has to embrace the provision of high quality services such as use of improved learning infrastructure, modern equipment and technology, good customer care, lectures' responsiveness and empathy. For higher education to provide high quality services, they have to correctly understand customers' expectations and deliver perceived services accordingly. In addition, continuous improvement of quality of services offered to students has to be made as it gives higher education institutions with competitive advantage while serving their customers.
- iii) The higher education management has to ensure that measuring of customer satisfaction is done continuously since customer preferences and tastes change with time. Frequent tracking of customer complaints and coming up with informed solutions effectively and timely will enhance customer loyalty.

5.3 Areas for Future Research

The following areas are recommended for future researches;

- i) Another study should be conducted including more than one higher learning institutions in the sample for generalization.
- ii) Another study should be conducted including students who have switched from other institutions so as to be able to establish switching behaviour and their preferences.



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Appendix: Case Studies

Case 1: Mr. ROGATH ADOLPH MASSAWE- Mobile Phone Number: +255(0)717020094

My name is Mr. Rogath Adolph Massawe, the son of Adolph and Neema. I began classes at the College of Business Education (CBE) Dodoma Campus in the year 2009 pursuing one (1) year certificate programme in Business Administration and thereafter I joined diploma course of Business Administration for two years of which I graduated in the year 2012. During 2013 I went further to pursue my bachelor degree programme in Business Administration and graduated in 2015.

Throughout my stay at CBE, the services I received has been of great impact as whatever I was taught had an exact impact to my living environment within the campus, this is from the education that has been provided and all other relevant services. With this regard I got inspired to the extent of having the feelings that incase CBE Dodoma Campus establishes any other higher level of education, I'd get started of which joyously in 2017 they started offering master's degree programmes. I didn't hesitate and I quickly signed up for Master's degree in International Business Management (MIBM). In review whatever that has been taught in class had similar application in my living arena.

Currently the CBE's tuition fee is affordable to any individual as we do pay by installments of which I was flexible to work to get an income and pay for my fee smoothly throughout my MIBM study years. There are a number of positive stories from various people that I hear about the CBE Dodoma Campus and particularly being unique and the best in providing Office Management module. This has gradually inspired most employers that were equipped with enough practical aspects of training and this is acknowledged to have built sharp minded of learners and encouraging trainers who are devoted to make CBE the best College.

I've always been proud and motivated to speak positive about CBE as I've not only learnt from the trainers but also from other advice from various staff members of the college, in this regard I genuinely congratulate the CBE Dodoma Campus Management at large for running the College strategically and giving out the best individuals who can easily adopt the change of the world and updates on technology and other attributes involving in mankind.

Case 2: Miss Elizabeth R. Ntyama- Mobile Phone Number: +255(0)755180068

My name is Miss Elizabeth R. Ntyama. I completed primary school in 2006 at Misufini primary school in Morogoro region. Thereafter I joined Korogwe girls' secondary school from 2007 to 2010 in Tanga region. I started my one (1) certificate programme in Business Administration at the College of Business Education (CBE) Dodoma campus from 2011 to 2012. I graduated my Diploma program in Business Administration at CBE Dodoma campus in 2015. Also I am graduated my bachelor degree in Business Administration at CBE Dodoma Campus in 2018. After I completed my bachelor degree in 2018 I continued with master's degree studies in International Business Management (MIBM) at CBE Dodoma Campus in 2018.

The first thing which attracts me to study at the CBE Dodoma Campus from certificate up to master's degree is the affordable tuition fee which is paid in various installments. The second thing is high quality of education and associated services which are quite different from those provided by other higher education in Tanzania. The third thing is brand image; the brand image of CBE Dodoma Campus is good and it has attracted more students and parents to study at CBE Dodoma Campus. However, the brand image of CBE Dodoma Campus has improved from that of the previous years due to various reasons including increased number of lecturers with PhD qualifications. The fifth competitive advantage of CBE Dodoma Campus is customer satisfaction; the college strives much to ensure that students as customers are satisfied with the services provide. Some efforts made to enhance customer satisfaction include handling students' complaints effectively and timely and involvement of students in decision making processes. Finally, the college has



good and attractive environment for students to pursue successfully their studies as well as availability of qualified lecturers who are friendly to studying environment.