Customer Value and CRM performance in B2B market: A study of South African fresh fruit export industry

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Growing competition for South African fresh fruit export has contributed to the need to understand customer value and its relation with performance of customer relationship management (CRM). This study is in the area of B2B marketing and is based on a framework provided by Wang, Lo, Chi and Yang (2004). This study covers buyers (32 in number) representing two major international markets (Europe and Asia) for South African fresh fruit exports. The relationships between the customer value, intangible and tangible indicators of CRM performance were examined using cross tabulation and chi-square tests. This paper intends to contribute to the less researched context of B2B markets in South Africa. The findings of this study may help in increasing the effectiveness of South African export in the Asian and European markets.

Introduction and Background

"The South African fruit industry is facing increasing competition from Southern Hemisphere producers in its traditional European markets as well as in emerging markets such as Asia" (Adriaen, Kleynhans and Tollens, 2004:185). Growing customer demand for quality products and better services often results in increased competition among suppliers (Rintomaki, Kuusela and Mitronen, 2007). *"This increasing competition has forced South African companies to change their views about their customers as mere buyers of the products to partners who provide information on how the product should be produced, processed and packed, marketed and consumed"* (Tregurtha and Vink, 2002:2). Literature suggests that delivering superior customer value positively influence customers' purchase decisions (Sheth, Newman and Gross, 1991) and gains competitive advantage (Rintamaki et al., 2007). Since CRM can be used to create a personalized experience, it opens new marketing opportunities to deliver superior customer value (Woodruff, 1997). Relationship marketing helps companies to focus on retaining long lasting relationships with customers' transactions (Wang et al., 2004). Bose (2002: 89) defined CRM as an *"integration of technologies and business processes used to satisfy the needs of a customer during a given interaction"*. This view of CRM is important since it directly impact the success of any business (Wang et al., 2004). The effect of good CRM program improves satisfaction and loyalty which are intangible customer behaviour indicators (Wang, et al, 2004). It also affects retention, repeat purchase, cross buying and word of mouth which are considered as tangible customer behaviour indicators (Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1996). This study examines the relationship between customer value and CRM performance in the South African fruit export industry.

This paper is structured as follows. First we discuss the background where we review literature related to the customer value and its relationship with tangible and intangible indicators of *'customer behaviour-based CRM performance'*. The next section presents the framework, this study follows and presents emerging hypothesis. The following section presents methodology followed by analysis and findings. The concluding section covers limitation of the study and the suggestions for future research.

Theoretical background

Literature reviewed so far indicates that delivering value is an important aspect of a firm's offering which influences customer behaviour and *'customer behaviour-based CRM performance'* (Wang et al., 2004: 172). Implementing CRM solutions involve considerable time and expense (Tein, Chui, Chung, Tsai and Lin, 2011). However, there are many potential benefits, such as the development of better relations with existing customers (Richards and Jones, 2008); individualize marketing communication (Padmavathy, Balaji and Sivakumar, 2012); improve pricing, efficiency and effectiveness of customer services (Greenberg, 2001; Ryals and Knox, 2001; Jones, Sundaram and chin, 2002; Nguyen, 2007); increase customer satisfaction and loyalty (Buttle, 2004); increase in sales (Dyche, 2001); cross selling of other products (Greenberg, 2001; Gray and Byun, 2001); customer retention (Greenberg ,2001); decrease in sales costs (Greenberg, 2001; Burnett, 2001; Ryals and Knox,2001); improve sales force efficiency and effectiveness (Jones, Sundearam and Chin, 2002); maximization of the lifetime customer value (Grary and Byun, 2001) and improved knowledge management (Leigh and Tanner 2004). These outcomes of CRM are also used by many researchers as tools to measure CRM performance. However, measuring CRM performance in terms of customer behaviour was identified better measurement (Grant and Schlesinger, 1995; Wang et al., 2004). Wang et al., (2004) further categorised these behaviours into categories of tangible and intangible indicators of customer behaviour. Behaviours such as referring the company's products to other customers, paying a price premium for the company products and spending more money with the company are regarded as favourable tangible behaviours (Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1996). *"While intangible benefits like satisfaction, loyalty, commitment, trust are used to measure the relationship quality"* (Wang et al., 2004: 171).

CRM can be used to create a personalized experience and it opens a new marketing opportunity to deliver superior value (Woodruff, 1997). Value is important as it can influence customer purchase and choice behaviour (Sheth, Newman and Gross, 1991). Customer value affects customer satisfaction (Fornell et al., 1996) and loyalty (Wang et al., 2004). Researchers like Dick and Basu (1994), Fornell, *et al.*, (1996) and Ulaga and Eggert (2006) observed that satisfaction has a direct influence on loyalty. Satisfaction further influences tangible customer behaviour like repeat purchase, cross buying and referrals (Dick and Basu, 1994; Ravald and Gronroos, 1996). Similarly loyalty also influences tangible customer behaviour like repeat purchase (Bass; 1974 and Transberg and Hansen; 1986; Espejel, Fandos and Flavian, 2008). Value is measured differently by different researchers. Sheth, Newman and Gross (1991) measured value on five dimensions i.e. social, emotional, functional, epistemic and conditional. Sweeney and Soutar (2001) proposed three dimension of customer value and measured on social, emotional and functional dimensions. Trade-offs between perceived benefits and perceived sacrifices are always considered integral part of value measurement (Mazumdar, 1993). Wang et al., (2004) developed an integrated framework which is mainly influenced by the framework given by Sweeney and Soutar (2001). For its research purposes, this study used the framework developed by Wang et al., (2004:171). As per their framework, customer value affects CRM performance which was measured w.r.t. intangible and tangible indicators of customer behaviour. Customer value was measured on four dimensions. Customer satisfaction and brand loyalty were used as intangible indicator of behaviour while retention, repurchase, cross buying and word of mouth were used as indicator of tangible customer behaviours. The framework developed by Wang et al., (2004) has contributed to emergence of following research hypotheses:

H1. There is no significant relationship between customer value and tangible *'customer behaviour-based CRM performance'*;

    H1a. There is no significant relationship between functional value and tangible *'customer behaviour-based CRM performance'*.

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H1b. There is no significant relationship between social value and tangible *'customer behaviour-based CRM performance'*.

H1c. There is no significant relationship between emotional value and tangible *'customer behaviour-based CRM performance'*.

H1d. There is no significant relationship between perceived sacrifice and tangible *'customer behaviour-based CRM performance'*.

H2. There is no significant relationship between customer value and customer satisfaction;

H2a. There is no significant relationship between functional value and customer satisfaction.

H2b. There is no significant relationship between social value and customer satisfaction.

H2c. There is no significant relationship between emotional value and customer satisfaction.

H2d. There is no significant relationship between perceived sacrifice and customer satisfaction.

H3. There is no significant relationship between customer value and brand loyalty;

H3a. There is no significant relationship between functional value and brand loyalty.

H3b. There is no significant relationship between social value and brand loyalty.

H3c. There is no significant relationship between emotional value and brand loyalty.

H3d. There is no significant relationship between perceived sacrifice and brand loyalty.

H4. There is no significant relationship between customer satisfaction and brand loyalty.

H5. There is no significant relationship between customer satisfaction and tangible *'customer behaviour-based CRM performance'*.

H6. There is no significant relationship between brand loyalty and tangible *'customer behaviour-based CRM performance'*.

Research methodology

The main aim of this study was to understand if there is a relation between customer value and CRM performance in B2B markets (South African fresh fruit export industry). CRM performance was examined w.r.t. customer behaviour which was further categorised in terms of tangible and intangible indicators. For the purpose of this study, the questionnaire (27 item) developed by Wang et al. (2004) was adapted and used. Industry experts were used to ensure content validity of the instrument (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). Wang et al., (2004) adopted the questionnaire from Sweeney and Soutar (2001). The similar framework was also used by Ladhiri (2009). This is important to indicate that all three previous studies used the questionnaire in the context of consumer markets (B2C). The questionnaire uses a five-point Likert scale, where the responses were ranging from "*strongly agree*" to "*strongly disagree*". The survey method was used to collect the data.

The South African fruit industry is comprised of three main sub-sectors, namely citrus, deciduous and subtropical fruit (DAFF, 2011). These sub-sectors make a significant contribution to the South African economy in terms of the gross value of agricultural production, volume of exports (earning foreign

exchange) and through creation of job opportunities (NAMC, 2007). South African fruit is exported to different regions of the world. European markets contributes almost 56 % of the business, Asia 17 % of the business, Middle East 13 % of the business, rest of Africa 7 % of the business, and other remaining 7 % of the business (DAFF, 2011: 8). The study focuses on European and Asian Markets. For the purposes of this study, Europe and Asia were selected through a non-probability judgement sampling method. Europe is selected because it represents the main export destination for South African fruit (DAFF, 2011). Asia is shortlisted because of growth opportunities in terms of volume and possible variety of exports (Sandrey, Jensen, Vink, Fundira, Meyer, Hughes, Nyhodo and Smith, 2008). The sample was drawn from the entire list of retail supermarkets that source fruits from South Africa, ensuring that the sample is truly representative of the entire population. For this study, fruit category buyers from all retailers in Europe and Asia that buy fresh fruit from South Africa were selected as respondents. This was done with knowledge that the fruit category buyers are responsible for the buying of fruit and managing the relationship between each of the retailers and the supplier. They also take overall responsibility for the development and implementation of each fruit category growth strategy in each retailer.

Questionnaires were emailed to fruit category buyers in 45 retailers in Europe and Asia who buy fruit from South Africa. This was done considering that the emails are cost efficient, timely and accessible. Before sending the questionnaires, each category buyer was informed about the purpose of the study and the importance of their responses in improving relationships and quality of services and products they source from South Africa. This step was taken to counter the drawbacks of low response rate which are normally visible in this method of data collection (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). Out of the 45 fruit category buyers who received questionnaires, 32 responded, 14 were from the United Kingdom, 7 from Germany, 3 from Holland, 3 from Singapore, 3 from Malaysia and 2 from China. All returned questionnaire were considered valid and used for empirical analysis- a valid response rate of 71 percent. Although there were only 32 questionnaires, each of the questionnaires represented a company, so sampling representativeness was high. Europe represented 75% of the respondents and Asia 25% of the respondents. For data analysis, K-S test, Cross tabulation and Chi-square tests were conducted.

Results and Discussions

Descriptive Statistics: The analysis of descriptive statistics is presented in the Table (*Refer table 1*) where a very low Standard Error of Means (SEM) was observed for all constructs. This implies that the means of the constructs used for analysis were more accurate reflections of their respective actual population means. Additionally, all constructs except for social value (with an S.D = 1.218) have low standard deviations, which indicates that observations of the constructs are not far away or not highly dispersed from their respective sample means. Also, except for social value, all constructs reveal low variances, which further confirm that observations of the constructs are not far away or not highly dispersed from their respective sample means. The results referred to above indicate that the distribution is right-skewed for customer perceived sacrifice, CRM performance, social value, customer value, emotional value and brand loyalty. The skewness statistics show some extremes which may be due to the differences in cultures in different markets that formed the sample for the study. "*The cultures of the food retailers in the west, represented by Europe, and in the east, represented by Asia, are different*" (Giles, 2010:13) which could probably explain the extremes in the skewness. In kurtosis, all constructs display a platykurtic distribution flatter than a normal distribution, with a wider peak. The probability for extreme values is less than three (Kurtosis < 3) for a normal distribution, and the values are wider-spread around the mean.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

	CRM performance	Customer value	Social value	Functional value	Emotional value	Perceived sacrifice	Customer satisfaction	Brand loyalty
N Valid	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	2.62	2.75	2.75	2.53	2.81	2.06	2.72	3.50
Std. Error of Mean	.098	.078	.215	.090	.095	.062	.129	.127
Median	3.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	3.50
Mode	3	3	2ᵃ	3	3	2	3	3ᵃ
Std. Deviation	.554	.440	1.218	.507	.535	.354	.729	.718
Variance	.306	.194	1.484	.257	.286	.125	.531	.516
Skewness	.076	-1.212	.057	-.131	-.179	.985	-.035	.000
Std. Error of Skewness	.414	.414	.414	.414	.414	.414	.414	.414
Kurtosis	-.848	-.570	-1.436	-2.119	.265	5.688	-.186	-.080
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.809	.809	.809	.809	.809	.809	.809	.809
Range	2	1	4	1	2	2	3	3
Minimum	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	2
Maximum	4	3	5	3	4	3	4	5
Sum	84	88	88	81	90	66	87	112

a. There are multiple modes that were ob:
The smallest value are therefore showr

In the next step, Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) one sample test was conducted to test the nature of distribution (Tustin et al, 2010). From the results shown in the Table (*Refer table 2*), it is indicated that all p values of Kolmogorov–Smirnov are greater than 0.05 hence the distribution is normal.

Table 2. One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		CRM performance	Customer value	Social value	Functional value	Emotional value	Perceived sacrifice	Customer satisfaction	Brand loyalty
N		32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
Normal Parametersᵃ	Mean	2.62	2.75	2.75	2.53	2.81	2.06	2.72	3.50
	Std. Deviation	.554	.440	1.218	.507	.535	.354	.729	.718
Most	Absolute	.345	.465	.262	.354	.387	.476	.275	.257

Extreme Positive Differences	Positive	.277	.285	.262	.321	.301	.476	.225	.257
	Negative	-.345	-.465	-.254	-.354	-.387	-.399	-.275	-.257
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1.950	2.631	1.483	2.001	2.189	2.695	1.557	1.453
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.000	.025	.001	.000	.000	.016	.029
a. Test distribution is normal.									

Relationships among customer value, satisfaction, loyalty and tangible customer behaviour based-CRM performance:

These relationships (associations) were examined using five main hypothesis (H1, H2, H3, H4, H5 and H6) and twelve sub hypothesis (H1a-H1d, H2a-H2d and H3a-H3d). For the purpose of hypothesis testing, Cross Tabulation was used which was followed by Chi-square tests. Cross tabulation tests provide a basic picture of how two variables sets inter-relate and helps to detect patterns of interaction (Tustin, Ligthelm, Matins and Van Wyk, 2010). Chi-square tests examine the degree of confidence to either accept or reject the null hypothesis of association among given variables (Malhotra, 2010). In a summarised form results of Chi square tests were complied (*Refer table 3*) as under:

Table 3. Main findings

Hypothesis	Proposed relationship	Chi-square test	Result
1	Customer value and tangible customer behavior-based CRM performance	0.638< 4.605	No significant relation
1a	Functional value and tangible customer ehavior-based CRM performance	1.573< 4.605	No significant relation
1b	Social value and tangible customer behavior-based CRM performance	8.050< 13.362	No significant relation
1c	Emotional value and tangible customer behavior-based CRM performance	16.087> 7.779	Significant relation
1d	Perceived sacrifice and tangible customer behavior-based CRM performance	13.773> 7.779	Significant relation
2	Customer value and Customer satisfaction	3.273< 6.251	No significant relation
2a	Functional value and Customer satisfaction	1.951< 6.251	No significant relation
2b	Social value and Customer satisfaction	8.542< 18.549	No significant relation
2c	Emotional value and Customer satisfaction	14.303> 4.605	Significant relation
2d	Perceived sacrifice and Customer satisfaction	3.890< 10.645	No significant relation
3	Customer value and Brand loyalty	6.095< 6.251	No significant relation
3a	Functional value and Brand loyalty	3.030< 6.251	No significant relation

3b	Social value and Brand loyalty	10.057< 18.549	No significant relation
3c	Emotional value and Brand loyalty	13.818>10.645	Significant relation
3d	Perceived sacrifice and Brand loyalty	5.551< 10.645	No significant relation
4	Customer satisfaction and Brand loyalty	4.260< 14.684	No significant relation
5	Customer satisfaction and tangible customer behavior-based CRM performance	10.192< 10.645	No significant relation
6	Brand loyalty and tangible customer behavior-based CRM performance	16.527> 10.645	Significant relation
Note: Significant at $p<0.10$			

The results indicate absence of any significant relationship between overall value, functional value and tangible '*customer behaviour-based CRM performance*'. Moreover, a significant relationship was identified between perceived sacrifice and tangible '*customer behaviour-based CRM performance*'. These results were different than the finding by Wang et al, (2004). Some possible reasons of this difference may be (a) Adaptation and use of a framework which was originally developed for B2C market (b) *"The study is done in an international market and the sample consist of retailers from Asia which represent eastern and Europe which represents western culture and in both market different value dominate customers behaviours"* (Giles, 2010:13). Similar to Wang et al., (2004) no significant relation was identified between social value and tangible customer behaviour-based CRM performance. The results also indicate that emotional value and perceived sacrifice were the only customer value dimensions that have significant relationships with tangible customer behaviour-based CRM performance. Moreover, relationships between emotional value and intangible indicators like customer satisfaction and brand loyalty were also identified significant. These findings gather support from the study by Ulaga and Eggart (2006) that found that companies just like individuals are greatly influenced by the existence of emotion, feeling and sensations that affect their final buying decisions. Other researchers including Liljander and Strandvik (1997) have also found a direct effect of emotions and commitment on a relationship with a company. In addition, in a B2B market, Sweeny and Souter (2001) suggested that emotional value is the strongest predictor of consumer purchase intention. The results of this study also show that emotional value has a significant relationship with both customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Emotional value has been found to be especially important for satisfied customers, and helps build further close emotional links with those customers whom a company wants to keep a close relationship (Butz and Goodstein, 1996). Wang et al., (2004) also found that emotional value has a direct and positive relationship with customer satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction was found to have no significant relationship with brand loyalty. This is not surprising since it is known that satisfied customers sometimes do switch to competitor suppliers. As indicated by Jones and Sasser (1995), the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty is not simple and is not always predictable. They also indicated that it is highly influenced by time and circumstances. To understand why customer satisfaction does not have a significant relationship with brand loyalty will require further investigation as to why food retailers in Europe and Asia do not make substantial investments in programmes that increase the depth and breadth of their relationships with South African suppliers, such as collectively designing and implementing their fresh fruit marketing plans with their suppliers.

Customer satisfaction was found to have no significant relationship with customer behaviour-based CRM performance. This was a bit surprising as the relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase intentions is both theoretically and empirically justified. Moreover, Wang et al., (2004) found that customer satisfaction has a positive effect on customer behaviour-based CRM performance. Although the same probable reason discussed in earlier paragraphs can be used but this finding need further exploration.

Brand loyalty was found to have a significant relationship with customer behaviour-based CRM performance. This result is consistent with numerous studies that have found a positive relationship between profit and a loyal customer base. Wang et al., (2004) also found that brand loyalty has a positive significant effect on customer behaviour-based CRM performance. Dick and Busa (1994) found that brand loyalty produces positive word of mouth recommendations. Espejel, Fandos and Flavian (2008) found that loyalty has a positive influence on buying intentions.

Discussion and implications

From a strategic point of view, the study points to a number of potential areas for competitive advantage development. Emotional value is the only value that has a significant relationship with customer behaviour-based CRM performance, customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Since emotional value is important in customer perceptions, it may be used in shaping the South African fruit export industry's competitiveness and has influence on both brand loyalty and customer satisfaction. Any strategy to develop long-term relationships with customers in the South African fruit export industry should therefore be based on emotional value. The relationship between perceived sacrifice and customer behaviour-based CRM in Europe and Asia is significant, which highlights the fact that price and discounts are still important factors influencing the buying behaviour of retailers. The South African fruit export industry invests over R5 million per year in promotion campaigns in both Europe and Asia that aim to position the country as a supplier of quality fruit with a lower carbon footprint compared to other southern hemisphere suppliers, with the view of increasing sales of our fruit (NAMC, 2010: 37).

The results show that social value has no significant relationship with customer behaviour-based CRM performance. Retail organizations in Europe tend to focus on being socially responsible under pressures of media and civil society organisations (NAMC, 2011). Therefore, it may prove an opportunity for South African fruit industry to develop social values to implement programmes that will publicise its achievements in addressing the social and environmental challenges that society faces. This focus is more important now with the fruit industry's image and reputation suffering from the negative publicity it is receiving from the on-going farm workers strike (NAMC, 2013).

A surprising result is that functional value has no significant relationship with customer behaviour-based CRM performance, customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. This means that the South African fruit export industry cannot simply rely on consistently delivering high quality fruit and superior service to increase sales, satisfaction and loyalty. One of the reasons for this could be that functional values are minimum expectations in the fruit export industry, or act as basic satisfiers which, if not provided, will dissatisfy buyers, but if they are provided, will delight them (Giles, 2010). Other functional values, such as added packaging services and professionalism, might increase the ability of the industry to increase customer value through functional value.

Suggestions for future research

The study was conducted for partial fulfilment of master's degree and was done under several limitations. These limitations and the findings of this study point to the need for further inquiry into a number of areas:-

The research framework adopted for this study was originally developed for a B2C market. This framework was adapted for B2b market and was used. The future researcher may decide to use a construct specially developed for B2B markets.

Various customer behaviours, namely word of mouth, cross-buying and retention were integrated into tangible *'customer behaviour-based CRM performance'*. A study to investigate the effect of four dimensions of customer value on different customer behaviours would help the South African fruit industry to develop targeted marketing strategies. This is important in light of the fact that the South African fruit industry is currently facing social challenges with farm workers strikes (NAMC, 2013). A better understanding of the effect of social value on each of the customer behaviours may help the fruit industry better measure buyers' perceptions of how farm workers' pay and working conditions on farms impact on each of the tangible customer behaviour-based CRM performance aspects.

Owing to limitations of time, a cross-sectional data collection method was used. A follow up study could collect longitudinal data to ascertain whether there is any difference over a period of time.

The study covers two largely diverse markets Europe and Asia which may have impacted its results. Future researchers may look at doing a comparative study in these two markets.

Another suggestion is that this line of research might be advanced by bringing other major export destinations for South African fruit into study and by then comparing the results in different regions, allowing for cross-region validation. In this way, South African fruit exporting companies will be able to understand how best to develop strategies that focus on main regions of the world.

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