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Intention to Continue Relationship in B to B Setting – Case of Guinness Ghana Breweries – Some Preliminary Findings

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ABSTRACT

Relationship marketing serves the purpose of building a long-term relationship with business partners in order to minimize switching behavior and increase intention to continue business. This study assessed the relationships between relationship marketing practices of trust, commitment, relative dependence, customer satisfaction and perceived value as drivers to intention to continue business relationships under a B2B setting of GGCL. Hypotheses based on the literature were formulated. The study was a descriptive survey, and using convenience sampling techniques, data was collected from 248 businesses who were distributors of GGCL using questionnaire. The study findings demonstrated that a positive and significant relationship exists between commitment and intention to continue business, relative dependence and intention to continue business, customer satisfaction and intention to continue business, and distributor perceived value and intention to continue business. However, trust was found not to be significantly related intention to continue business uniquely, unless it was joined to other variables. Based on the findings, relative dependence was identified as an important antecedent of intention to continue business. Key relationship marketing strategies used by GGCL were identified to include customer engagement, interactivity, online trust, customer loyalty, advocacy, affective commitment and personalization. Customer engagement was the most agreed strategy according to the respondents, which makes it possible for the company to provide helpful information on Guinness's social media link. The study recommends that GGCL should seek to increase distributors' dependence by improving communications and making some relationship-specific investments.

Introduction

Organization have had to resort to relationship marketing (Lim 2018) as away of curing customer defection due to increasing brand parity and the inability to compete with the marketing mix only (Anabila and Awunyo-Vitor 2013). In the business to business environment, the phenomenon of relationship marketing is even more essential because by trading in large quantities with a key partner, an organization benefits from the economies of scale, increased supplier competence (Biong and Ulvnes 2011) improved quality, on-going cost reductions and generation of uninterrupted supply (Mysen, Svensson, and Högevold 2012; Ulaga and Eggert 2005). Thus, firm partners who have an intention to continue a relationship would be valuable to any firm. Izquierdo, Cillan, and San Martín Gutiérrez (2005) posited that benefits and value of

a relationship can only be obtained if suppliers and customers have intentions to continue the relationship they consider as valuable and being loyal to each other.

Intention to continue relationship has been defined by many of previous researchers in term of recurrent purchasing, a positive disposition, extended commitment, loyalty, conveying positive word of mouth, unlikelihood of switching behavior, or any combination of these (Hammervoll 2009). With the adoption of several digital technologies that enable the building and maintenance of collaborative marketing relationships (Czepiel 2010), the intention to continue marketing relationship has become a major issue in the academic discourse in the consumer markets (Mahmoud, Hinson, and Adika 2018) as well as in the business to business market (Besson 2018). In this regard, Ndubisi (2007) posits trust, commitment,

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communication, and conflict to influence a firm's intention to continue relationship. Other studies (Wang and Sohal 2012; Sheth and Sisodia 2012; Panyne and Holt 2011) also propose trust and satisfaction of a relationship, supplier competence, communication, commitment, and conflict handling as necessary for an intention to continue a trading relationships.

In the Ghanaian beverage industry, Guinness Ghana Breweries Limited (GGBL) is among the largest beverage companies in the Ghanaian Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) market. Products of GGBL are sold directly to registered distributors. The distributors then sell to retailers. GGBL also has a register of companies that supplies its inputs. Suppliers are chosen based on ability to meet input quality, quantity, delivery, price, and services. It is evident in this case that the performance of the firm is significantly pivoted on its relationship with a network suppliers and distributors.

The beverages sector in Ghana has witnessed a massive influx of new products that threatens the market share of existing industry players. This phenomenon has resulted in a constant decline in the market share of GGBL. This, according to Akellasoore (2016) can be attributed to intense competition from competitors such as Coca cola, Accra Breweries Limited (Subsidiary of SAB miller), Blue skies just to mention a few, who have strongly made a claim to a chunk of the market share held by GGBL. To cure such a Ndubisi (2004), Ndubisi (2007) suggest that companies make investments to develop the relationship with loyal customers and suppliers. Cann (2008) also emphasizes that intention to continue the relationship is an efficiency way of having a loyal customer or supplier base instead of having to acquire new customers and suppliers frequently. An unanswered question however is what will make the current partners intend to continue the relationship with GGBL. There is the need therefore to examine the antecedents of intention to maintain the business to business (B-to-B) relationship at Guinness Ghana Breweries Limited, from both suppliers and distributors perspectives.

Extensive academic research on relationship marketing has been undertaken across the globe, but very limited studies have considered intention

to continue a business-to-business relationship, particularly in the Ghana. Mahmoud, Hinson, and Adika (2018) examined how customer satisfaction influences customer retention in the consumer market setting. The interest of customers in the consumer markets however vary from the interests of partners in the business to business market. This study therefore fills the research gap by examining relationship variables that influence intention to continue relationship in a B-to-B setting in Ghana, with evidence from suppliers and distribution firms of Guinness Ghana Breweries Limited. Specifically, the study examines the relationship variables that affect distributors as well as suppliers intention to continue a relationship with GGBL?

Literature review

Relationship marketing

Relationship Marketing (RM) is a marketing activity of setting up, growing, and continuing successful long-term relational exchanges (Gronroos 2010), or attracting, sustaining, and enhancing customer relationships (Berry 2013). Relationship marketing involves forecasting and monitoring of customer satisfaction, building and sustaining customer loyalty, and customer worth management (Doyle 2012). Industrial firms leverage relationship marketing tools to nurture long-term mutually beneficial distributor relationships (Hunt, Arnett, and Madhavaram 2006). Even though relationship marketing has both acquisition and retention strategies, retention strategies gain more attention over acquisition.

Conceptualization of relationship marketing

Early industrial marketing had emphasized the marketing mix as the basis of marketing strategy (Grönroos 2009). This marketing mix focus projected a transactional marketing orientation of customer acquisition over retention. This orientation has been questioned in contemporary service marketing literature (Ashnai et al. 2019; Berry 1995; Grönroos 2009). The relationship marketing concept consequently, took a center stage since the seminal work of Berry (1995) who reintroduced the concept into academic discourse. Berry (1995)

argued that customer retention is far more profitable than customer acquisition, even though acquisition is relevant in initiating a relationship.

Berry (1995) and Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh (1987) presented a model that illustrates relationship marketing processes, starting from benefits triggered relationship development, building trust through continuous communication and acquaintance, interdependence and establishment of loyalty and commitment. Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh (1987) and Zhang et al. (2016) reported that a relationship may cease at an early stage. Trust and commitment to the relationship by both parties however can mitigate customer defection through enhanced customer satisfaction and friendship. The primary basis of Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh (1987) model therefore are trust and commitment between both parties in relationship marketing activities. Morgan and Hunt (1994) also presented a model in which they argued trust and commitment are critical for a healthy relationship, by promoting mutual cooperation between partners and encouraging long-term beneficial outcomes of a relationship instead of short-term gains.

Theoretical bases of relationship marketing

Trust–commitment theory. The Trust–Commitment Theory of relationship marketing (Morgan and Hunt 1994) posits that the presence of commitment and trust is critical to a successful relationship, and not the power to condition others as proposed by the political economy orientation of keeping relationship (Sherman 1992). In the view of this theory investments into trust and commitment motivates firms to keep relationship investments, seek long-term benefits and avoid attractive short-term goals.

The social exchange theory. The Social Exchange Theory (Homans 1958) of relationships proposes that human relationships are designed through a cost-benefit analysis. This theory proposes a relationship between relationship marketing and customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, and perceived value (Homans 1958). The theory further argues that the more people give out, the more they expect to receive from others. The more people receive, the more they come under pressure to give out to others. The social exchange theory shows that individuals will keep a relationship if the relationship will still be rewarding.

Relationship marketing in industrial markets

Relationship marketing in industrial marketing is tailored toward strong, lasting relationships between one business and another (Jackson 2015). For long-term relationship with channel members, Anderson and Weitz, (1989) confirms that trust and communications are critical.

Different models on the stages of RM development have been suggested in literature. One model posed by Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh (1987) suggests that relationship marketing goes through awareness, exploration, expansion, and commitment. Another second model proposed by Payne (1995) suggests that relationship marketing goes through a process of treating customers as prospects, customers, clients, advocates, members, and partners. Yet another model proposed by Kotler (1997) suggests that relationship marketing treats customers as suspects, prospects, first time customers, repeat customers, clients, advocates, members, and finally partners. Irrespective of the model, there are variables that must propel a business customer from a transaction relationship into a brand partner through an intention to continue the relationship.

Relationship marketing dimensions

Relationship marketing dimensions include Trust (Grönroos 1996), Commitment (Wilson, 1995), Communication (Schiffman and Kanuk 2007), complaint handling (Andreasen and Best 1977), Order Handling (Shapiro, Rangan, and Sviokla 1992), Relationship Quality (Levitt 1986), and Social bonds (Anderson and Narus 2010).

Trust. Trust conceptualized as the confidence in the reliability and integrity of an exchange partner (Morgan and Hunt 1994), or the readiness to rely on the confidence of an exchange partner (Moorman, Deshpande, and Zaltman 1993), is fundamentally required for a successful relationship development (Medlin, Aurifeille, and Quester 2005).

Commitment. Commitment is the enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship (Moorman, Deshpande, and Zaltman 1993) and to make it mutually satisfying and beneficial (Morgan and Hunt 1994). Like trust, commitment is also an important variable in understanding the intensity of a marketing relationship, and useful

antecedent of customer loyalty and future purchases (Morgan and Hunt 1994).

Communication. Communication is a two way process of transmits stimuli to between two parties or more, in order to influence behavior (Schiffman and Kanuk 2007). In this context, communication refers to the ability to provide timely and trustworthy information on delivery, quality, and fulfilling promises (Ndubisi and Chan 2005).

Complaint handling. Complaint is how an undesired outcome in the relationship is resolved (Day and Landon 1977). Andreasen and Best (1977) reported that, a good number of customers who are dissatisfied during a service delivery fail to complain. Organizations therefore find it difficult to track actual complaints by customers who are dissatisfied. Effective handling of complains however produces higher intention to keep a relationship (Berry 2013)

Order handling. Order handling involved all activities that ensure that the transaction buyer takes custody of purchased items (Shapiro, Rangan, and Sviokla 1992). This includes meeting the customer, as well as order planning, generation, receipt, entry, scheduling, and fulfillment. Cunningham and Roberts (1974) as well as Banting (1984) for instance found out that delivery reliability, a dimension of handling process, is of immense relevance to industrial customers. This is particularly relevant in the case of GGBL which undertake direct delivery to key distributors.

Relationship quality. Relationship quality is a bundle of intangible values that augments products or services, resulting in an expected interchange between the relationship parties (Levitt 1986), or the overall health of a relationship (Johnston and GAO 2009). Gummesson (1987) listed two forms of relationship quality as professional relationship and social relationship. High quality relationship in any of the categories enhances buyer's trust, relationship satisfaction, and confidence in service provider's integrity (Bejou 1996).

Social bonds. Social bonding is the mutual personal friendship and liking shared by the relationship parties (Wilson 2015). Generally, social bonds involve familiarity, friendship, social support,

keeping in touch, self-disclosure, or any other interpersonal interaction (Price & Arnould, 1999).

Theory development and propositions

For the purposes of this study, relationship marketing was conceptualized as being composed of trust, commitment, and relative dependence.

Trust, commitment, relative dependence, and intention to continue a relationship

Intention to continue a business to business relationship is expressed as the durability of a client-firm's relationship with a product and/or service provider (Menon and O'Connor 2007). Trust and commitment (Morgan and Hunt 1994), in addition to relative dependence (Kanyan et al. 2015; Roberts-Lombard 2011) have been identified as the basic building blocks of relationship marketing that influence intention to continue relationship. To trust is to have confidence in the exchange reliability and benevolence of an exchange partner (Chai and Dibb 2014; Morgan and Hunt 1994). This promotes commitment to long-term relationship performance (Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987; Johnston and GAO 2009). Thus, trust and commitment have high impact on intention to continue relationship, particularly through customer-firm satisfaction.

Roberts-Lombard (2011) describes commitment as the belief by the parties in a relationship that the relationship is worth the effort, and to ensure that the relationship endures for the foreseeable future. It is a positive attitude toward the continuation of a relationship with a business partner (Rauyruen and Miller 2007). Commitment has been found in various studies as essential to intention to continue relationship in a business-to-business (Moorman, Deshpande, and Zaltman 1993; Tu, Liu, and Chang 2015; Wang and Sohal 2012).

Relative dependence is the degree to which business partner essential resources to which there are few alternatives (Buchanan (1992)). Where business partners are dependable with regards to deliver capability and performance satisfaction, the purchase outcome is likely to be more positively predictable, less uncertain (Kull, Oke, and Dooley 2014). Thus, dependability can lead to intention to continue the relationship.

From the discussions above, we therefore propose as follows:

P1a: There is a direct relationship between trust and intention to continue relationship in a business-to-business setting.

P1b: There is a direct relationship between commitment and intention to continue relationship in a business-to-business setting.

P1c: There is a direct relationship between relative dependence and intention to continue relationship in a business-to-business setting.

Trust, commitment, and customer satisfaction

Satisfaction has been recognized as the primary goal of marketing, since the core role of marketing is to satisfy customers (Mahmoud, Hinson, and Adika 2018). Business customer satisfaction is a complex phenomenon in a B-to-B setting (Zhang et al. 2010), which is only successful when a product of successful marketing strategies is used to create value for buying firms (Bloemer and Odekerken-Schroder 2012). Customer satisfaction according to Gengler and Leszczy (1997), not only help firms to gauge the customers' attitudes, but can be also enable marketers to manage the relationship with their customers. Thus, satisfaction could lead to intention to continue a relationship.

As an antecedent to satisfaction, a high level of trust in an exchange relationship has a positive impact on satisfaction of the relationship (Hutchinson et al. 2011). Several studies (Lee, Lee, and Feick 2011; Svensson, Mysen, and Payan 2010) also hold the position that trust is an antecedent to satisfaction. This suggests that satisfaction could mediate between trust and intention to continue a relationship.

Ndubisi (2007) reported that customer satisfaction with the organization will depend on the firm's commitment toward the relationship. In this regard, Skarmas et al. (2008), posit that satisfaction represents the fundamental expectation of the buyer-seller relationship. Satisfaction however may not lead to future purchases if there is no commitment. This is partly supported by Farrelly and Quester (2005) who argues that commitment leads to customer satisfaction in an exchange relationship. Thus commitment could lead to satisfaction, as well as intention to continue a relationship.

Based on these arguments, we propose

P2a: There is a positive significant relationship between trust and business satisfaction in a business-to-business setting.

P2b: There is a positive significant relationship between commitment and business satisfaction in a business-to-business setting.

Trust, relative dependence, and perception of value

According to Xie, Peng, and Zhao (2013), while a buyer with high relative dependence on the producer may promote its own long-term orientation toward long-term relationship, suppliers may not exhibit equal keenness to commitments (Xie, Peng, and Zhao 2013). As a result, the buyer's perception of value from the producer could be undermined. From the discussion above, we argue here that buyer's relative dependence may not have a significant effect on its perceived value. Therefore, we propose the following:

P3a: A purchasing firm's trust in a producer has a positive effect on the buyer's perceived value.

P3b: A purchasing firm's relative dependence on the producer has no significant effect on the buyer's perceived value.

Business satisfaction, Buyer's perceived value and intention to continue relationship

Researchers (Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler 2009) suggest that customer-firms relationships can be preserved by offering higher levels of satisfaction. In the view of Ranaweera and Prabhu (2013) also, business satisfaction prevents relationship dissolution and consolidates intentions to continue relationship. Similarly, Jones, Mothersbaugh, and Beatty (2002) argued that customer satisfaction is an important factor that influences customer retention. Thus, business satisfaction can be considered as an antecedent of intention to continue relationship.

Buyers' perceived value also represent a primary basis for all marketing efforts due to the need for marketers to create superior value for the customers in order to engender patronage and loyalty (Holbrook 2014; Woodruff 2007). Purchasing firms' perceived value signify the organizational buyer's general assessment of the value of

amarketing offering made (i.e., perceived benefits) versus value expended (i.e., perceived costs) (Ulaga 2011) marketing studies on perceived value constantly view perceived value as a leading basis of purchase decisions (Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal 1991; Lee and Allaway 2012). Drawing on the mental accounting theory, Gupta and Kim (2010) noted that the relevance of perceived value in predicting customer buying decision could be clarified by the efforts customer spend in seeking to maximize value in the buying decisions. This impacts their decision to continue relationship with the producing company. Based on these arguments above, we propose that

P4a: There is a positive significant relationship between business satisfaction and intention to continue relationship in a B2B setting in Ghana.

P4b: A purchasing firm's intention to continue relationship with a company is positively influenced by the buyer's perceived value

The conceptual framework below summarizes the proposition development above.

Conceptual framework

Methodology

Data were purposively collected with a survey questionnaire from top officers of 60 suppliers and business buyers of Guinness Ghana Breweries Limited (GGBL), yielding 120 responses.

The constructs adapted from various studies and measured in this study are trust, (John & Weitz 1988; Narteh 2013), commitment, (Anderson and Weitz 2012; Ndubisi and Wah 2005), relative dependence (Gao 2017), customer satisfaction (Gao 2017; Martín-Consuegra, Molina, and Esteban 2007), perceived value (Heide and John 1988), intention to continue relationship (Narteh 2013). Data were analyzed quantitatively using SPSS.

Analysis

The demographic description of respondents is shown in Table 1 below.

Descriptive statistics

For the antecedents of intention to continue business relationship, an average mean of

Table 1. Background information of respondents.

| Variable | Frequency | Percent |
|---|------------|------------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 142 | 57.3 |
| Female | 106 | 42.7 |
| Age | | |
| 18–30 years | 7 | 2.8 |
| 31–40 years | 56 | 22.6 |
| 41–50 years | 128 | 51.6 |
| 51–60 years | 57 | 23 |
| Educational level | | |
| Primary Level | 4 | 1.6 |
| Secondary level | 82 | 33.1 |
| University level | 162 | 65.3 |
| Number of employees your company has: | | |
| Less than 15 | 16 | 6.5 |
| 15–30 | 42 | 16.9 |
| 30–50 | 56 | 22.6 |
| 50–80 | 92 | 37.1 |
| More than 80 | 42 | 16.9 |
| Number of years your company have been doing business with Guinness Ghana Limited: | | |
| 1–3 years | 6 | 2.4 |
| 4–8 years | 58 | 23.4 |
| 9–14 years | 82 | 33.1 |
| 15–20 years | 65 | 26.2 |
| Over 20 years | 37 | 14.9 |
| Total | 248 | 100 |

Source: Field Data (2019)

approximately 4 (Agree) was obtained for trust, commitment, relative dependence, distributor/customer satisfaction, distributor perceived value, and intention to continue business. This implies that there is the existence of trust, commitment, relative dependence, distributor/customer satisfaction, distributor perceived value, and intention to continue business in the business to business relationships of the distributors.

Table 2 shows the correlation between the six constructs of study including trust, commitment, relative dependence, distributor/customer satisfaction, distributor perceived value, and intention to continue business were all positive and significant.

To examine the relationship between trust, commitment, relative dependence, distributor/customer satisfaction, distributor perceived value, and

Table 2. Descriptive statistics.

| Constructs | N | Min | Max. | Mean | S.D |
|-----------------------------------|-----|-----|------|-------|------|
| Trust | 248 | 3 | 5 | 4.108 | 0.44 |
| Commitment | 248 | 3 | 5 | 4.019 | 0.54 |
| Relative Dependence | 248 | 2 | 5 | 3.966 | 0.53 |
| Distributor/Customer Satisfaction | 248 | 3 | 5 | 4.022 | 0.45 |
| Distributor Perceived Value | 247 | 2 | 5 | 3.968 | 0.47 |
| Intention to Continue Business | 248 | 3 | 6 | 3.972 | 0.57 |

Source: Field Data (2019)

intention to continue business, we utilized structural equation modeling technique of partial least squares (PLS-SEM) (Ringle *et al.*, 2015). PLS is neither affected by sample size (Chin 1998; Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2011) nor distribution of data (Chin and Newsted 1999). The significance of each path was tested using bootstrap t-values (5000 sub-samples) (Tortosa, Moliner, and Sánchez 2009), a procedure available in PLS.

Measurement model analysis

The measurement model involved trust, commitment, relative dependence, distributor/customer satisfaction, distributor perceived value, and intention to continue business. All the constructs were modeled reflectively. The model’s quality criteria were assessed following purification: Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted estimates all meet the minimum of 0.7, 0.7, and 0.5, respectively, recommended by Hair *et al.* (2016) as shown in Table 4. Also, each of the item loadings was statistically significant using bootstrap t-values (5000 sub-samples) (Tortosa, Moliner, and Sánchez 2009). The results imply that convergent validity has been adequately met. Table 3 is Correlation Matrix for Research Constructs.

The data show that the square root of the average variance extracted estimates for each of the six constructs is greater than the inter-construct correlations between them (Barclay, Higgins, and Thompson 1995; Fornell and Lacker 1981). Furthermore, the hetero-trait-mono-trait ratio (HTMT) of correlations performed using a specificity criterion rate of 0.85 (HTMT0.85) shows that none of the correlations exceeded 0.85, as a result the six-construct model demonstrates discriminant

validity (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2015). Thus, discriminant validity has been met. See Table 5 for details.

Structural model

An examination of the predictive accuracy (R^2) of the structural model showed that the antecedents’ intention to continue business explained about 70% of the variance in intention to continue business. In addition to the R^2 this study utilized cross-validated redundancy (Q^2), ablinfolding procedure as a criterion for predictive relevance (Chin, 2010) of the endogenous variables. Q^2 – values of 0.461 was obtained for intention to continue business, which is greater than 0 showing predictive relevance (Chin, 2010). Finally, the effect sizes (f^2) computed for the exogenous variables showed that commitment, relative dependence, customer satisfaction, and perceived value all had small effect sizes on intention to continue business whereas trust had no effect size. The results of predictive accuracy (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2) test, and effect sizes (f^2) are presented in Table 6.

Propositions ‘testing’

The results of structural model are presented in Figure 1, 2 and Table 7. Four of the five paths were statistically significant as a result propositions **P2**, **P3**, **P4**, and **P5** are confirmed in the present context. Specifically, a positive and significant relationship exists between commitment and intention to continue business, relative dependence and intention to continue business, customer satisfaction and intention to continue business, and distributor perceived value and intention to continue business. **P1** was however, not supported in the present context. Table 8 is Descriptive Statistics of Business to Business Relationship Variables.

Results on business to business relationship strategies between Guinness and distributors

Table 6 provides a summary of special business-to-business relationship between Guinness Ghana Limited and its distributors. The categories investigated include engagement, interactivity, online trust, customer loyalty, advocacy, collaboration, trust, affective commitment, and personalization. For instance, in the area of engagement, the

Table 3. Correlation matrix.

| Constructs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|
| 1. Trust | 1.00 | | | | | |
| 2. Commitment | 0.68** | 1.00 | | | | |
| 3. Relative Dependence | 0.59** | 0.72** | 1.00 | | | |
| 4. Distributor/ Customer Satisfaction | 0.65** | 0.67** | 0.70** | 1.00 | | |
| 5. Distributor Perceived Value | 0.56** | 0.58** | 0.64** | 0.67** | 1.00 | |
| 6. Intention to Continue Business | 0.62** | 0.72** | 0.76** | 0.75** | 0.68** | 1.00 |

Note: **significant at $p < 0.01$

Table 4. Reliability and convergent validity of reflective constructs.

| Construct | Initial, final number of scale items | Item code | Loading | t-value (Bootstrap) | Cronbach's Alpha | Composite Reliability | AVE |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Trust | 6,5 | TR1 | 0.807 | 28.626 | 0.880 | 0.912 | 0.675 |
| | | TR3 | 0.764 | 21.377 | | | |
| | | TR4 | 0.830 | 29.774 | | | |
| | | TR5 | 0.869 | 44.009 | | | |
| | | TR6 | 0.834 | 34.352 | | | |
| Commitment | 4,4 | COM1 | 0.919 | 66.258 | 0.925 | 0.946 | 0.816 |
| | | COM2 | 0.907 | 49.012 | | | |
| | | COM3 | 0.908 | 58.038 | | | |
| | | COM4 | 0.878 | 52.190 | | | |
| Relative Dependence | 5,3 | RD1 | 0.904 | 76.078 | 0.848 | 0.908 | 0.768 |
| | | RD2 | 0.857 | 48.189 | | | |
| | | RD5 | 0.866 | 44.670 | | | |
| Customer Satisfaction | 3,3 | CS1 | 0.913 | 62.702 | 0.885 | 0.929 | 0.813 |
| | | CS2 | 0.920 | 53.267 | | | |
| | | CS3 | 0.871 | 37.589 | | | |
| Distributor Perceived Value | 4,4 | DPV1 | 0.899 | 48.502 | 0.920 | 0.944 | 0.808 |
| | | DPV2 | 0.927 | 70.238 | | | |
| | | DPV3 | 0.905 | 47.978 | | | |
| | | DPV4 | 0.863 | 37.766 | | | |
| Intention to Continue Business | 5,5 | ICB1 | 0.804 | 32.173 | 0.898 | 0.925 | 0.711 |
| | | ICB2 | 0.876 | 50.006 | | | |
| | | ICB3 | 0.821 | 32.279 | | | |
| | | ICB4 | 0.864 | 43.461 | | | |
| | | ICB5 | 0.849 | 36.099 | | | |

Note: All t-values are significant at 0.01 level of significance;
Source: Field Data (2019)

Table 5. Discriminant validity of reflective constructs (square root of AVEs in diagonal-bold).

| Construct | Fornell-Larcker Criterion | | | | | | Hetero-trait-Mono-trait Ratio (HTMT) inference criterion | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|---|--|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | |
| 1. Trust | 0.822 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Commitment | 0.679 | 0.903 | | | | | 0.743 | | | | | | |
| 3. Relative Dependence | 0.571 | 0.709 | 0.876 | | | | 0.641 | 0.797 | | | | | |
| 4. Distributor/Customer Satisfaction | 0.666 | 0.675 | 0.674 | 0.902 | | | 0.748 | 0.744 | 0.772 | | | | |
| 5. Distributor Perceived Value | 0.561 | 0.576 | 0.612 | 0.674 | 0.899 | | 0.621 | 0.623 | 0.689 | 0.746 | | | |
| 6. Intention to Continue Business | 0.623 | 0.708 | 0.741 | 0.750 | 0.676 | 0.843 | 0.690 | 0.773 | 0.846 | 0.839 | 0.743 | | |

Source: Field Data (2019)

Table 6. Predictive accuracy (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2) and effect sizes (f^2).

| Constructs | R^2 | Q^2 | f^2 (Intention to Continue Business) |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|--|
| Trust | – | – | 0.00(None) |
| Commitment | – | – | 0.04(Small) |
| Relative Dependence | – | – | 0.11(Small) |
| Distributor/Customer Satisfaction | – | – | 0.10 (Small) |
| Distributor Perceived Value | | | 0.05(Small) |
| Intention to Continue Business | 0.702 | 0.461 | |

Source: Field Data (2019)

statement the distributors agreed with the most was the fact that other customers provide helpful information on Guinness's social media link such

as Facebook page. In the area of personalization, the statement the distributors agreed with the most was the fact that Guinness identifies their business' unique issues and deals with them. See Table 6 for details.

Discussion of study results

The study revealed a positive and significant relationship between relative dependence and intention to continue business. This result confirms Xie, Peng, and Zhao (2013) report that when a trade partner provides important and critical resources for which there are few alternative sources of supply, there is a higher level of intention to continue business with such trader partner. The results

Table 7. Structural path results.

| Propositions | Structural path | Path coefficient | t-value (Bootstrap) | Tentative Results |
|--------------|---|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| P1 | Trust Intention to Cont. Bus. | 0.050 | 0.881 | Not Supported |
| P2 | Commitment Intention to Cont. Bus. | 0.176* | 2.370 | Supported |
| P3 | Relative Dependence Intention to Cont. Bus. | 0.286** | 4.072 | Supported |
| P4 | Dist./Cust. Sat. Intention to Cont. Bus. | 0.284** | 3.456 | Supported |
| P5 | Dist. Perceived Value Intention to Cont. Bus. | 0.180** | 3.305 | Supported |

show that relative dependence is the most important driving variable that influence distributor’s intention to continue business with GGCL.

Similarly, a positive and significant relationship was found to exist between commitment and intention to continue business in the B-to-B setting of GGCL. This corroborates the report of Evanschitzky et al. (2006) that commitment is an essential antecedent to intention to continue relationship; as well as Wang and Sohal (2012), that a higher level of a firm’s commitment in the relationship will impact positively on intention to continue relationship with its distributors.

Data further showed a positive and significant relationship between distributors’ satisfaction and intention to continue business, and between perceived value and intention to continue business. These findings resonate with the findings of Ranaweera and Prabhu (2013) and Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler (2009) where both company satisfaction and perceived value were found to be positively associated

with intention to continue business. In marketing literature, perceived value has consistently been viewed as a leading determinant of purchase decisions and intention to continue business (Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal 1991; Lee and Allaway 2012).

It is interesting to note however that trust was not found to significantly affect distributors’ intention to continue. This result is inconsistent with several research findings such as Narteh (2013), Roberts-Lombard (2011), and Sauers (2008). Meanwhile, in the descriptive statistics, trust was the construct with the highest mean value of 4.108, portraying a high level of trust by distributors for GGCL. The correlation analysis also found a positive significant relationship between trust and the other five constructs of the study. This means that trust, as an individual variable, does not uniquely affect intention to continue business, although it may contribute to intention to continue business when paired with other factors. From the current result, it can be inferred that the distributor enterprises trust GGCL to offer them the desired product at a fair price, but that quality may not be unique to GGCL, as other brands in the alcoholic beverage industry may possess similar quality. In other words, distributors are willing to continue relationship with GGCL not uniquely because GGCL is honest in offering distributors the desired products at fair price, but rather for other reasons which GGCL might have an upper hand in as compared to other competitors.

Per the findings of the study, GGCL engages in some relationship marketing strategies in attempt to facilitate and maintain the relationships it has with its distributor enterprises. These strategies were categorized to include engagement, interactivity, online

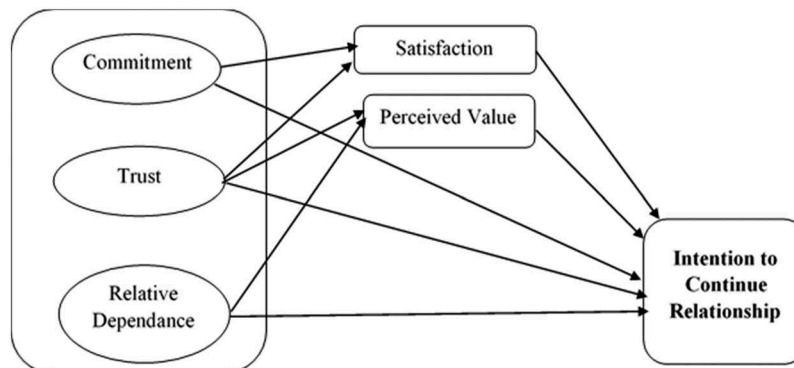


Figure 1. Research Model (Source: Researcher’s Construct).

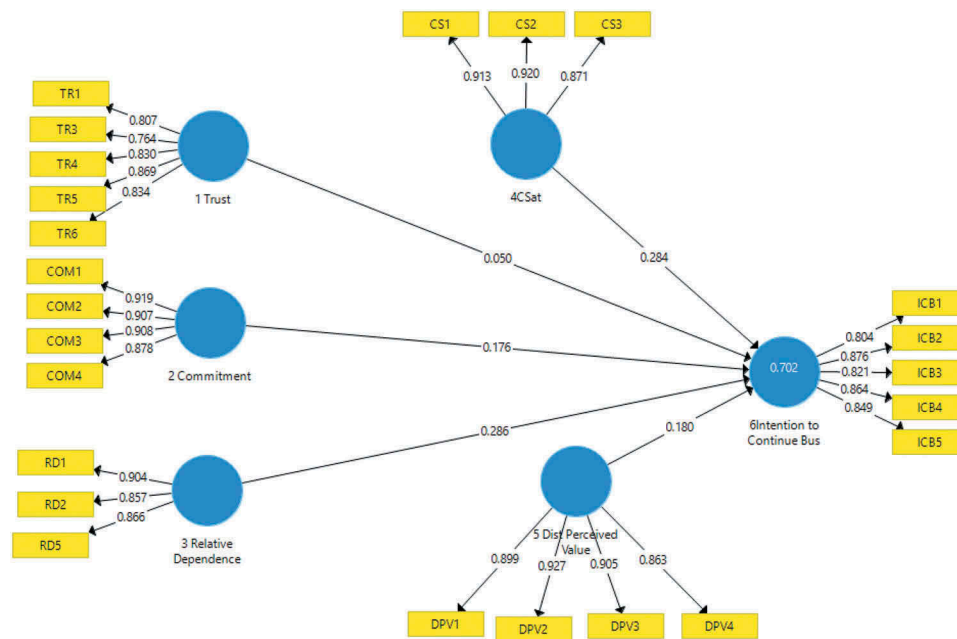


Figure 2. Structural paths showing regression weights and item loadings.

Source: Field Data (2019)

trust, customer loyalty, advocacy, collaboration, trust, affective commitment, and personalization.

Conclusion

This study assessed the relationships between relationship marketing practices of trust, commitment, relative dependence, customer satisfaction, and perceived value as drivers to intention to continue business relationships under aB-to-B setting of GGCL. The study findings demonstrated that commitment, relative dependence, customer satisfaction, and distributor perceived value, influences intention to continue business relationship with GGCL. The influence of trust however was found not significant in determining an intention to continue business relationship with GGCL, unless it was joined to other variables. The data also showed that relative dependence was an important antecedent of intention to continue business. Therefore, it is paramount for companies in Ghana to offer their business partners unique services or qualities that yield to high level of dependence. Such unique services must be such that other competitors are unable to offer, and would therefore unable business partners perceive greater benefits or profits from doing business with the firm as compared to the competitors. Key relationship marketing strategies used by GGCL identified in this study include

customer engagement, interactivity, online trust, customer loyalty, advocacy, affective commitment, and personalization.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made in this study.

The most unexpected result realized in this study is that trust did not significantly affect intention to continue a relationship, which is inconsistent with several research findings such as Narteh (2013), Ndubisi and Wah (2015), Roberts-Lombard (2011), and Sauers (2008). We recommend further studies. This could be as a result of the other factors it was measured with in the model. In order to lay more emphasis on this insignificant relationship, we recommend a replication of this study, using our model in other business to business settings. Such study may also involve alarger sample.

Given that relative dependence was identified to be the most important antecedent to intention to continue business and trust had no significant relationship, we recommended to industry practitioners that other than promoting trusting relationships, GGCL should seek to increase distributors' dependence. Methods of achieving

Table 8. Business to business relationship.

| Variables | Percent |
|---|---------|
| Engagement | |
| Iretweet comments posted on Guinness's Twitter handle | 4.8 |
| Guinness website has hotlinks to their Twitter/Facebook pages | 13.7 |
| I"like" content posted on Guinness's Facebook page | 29.8 |
| Other customers provide helpful information on Guinness's social media link such Facebook page | 70.2 |
| Interactivity | |
| Guinness has site navigation tools on their website | 13.3 |
| 24-hour live chat/help is available on Guinness's website | 13.7 |
| Guinness's website is user friendly | 23 |
| Guinness's online platforms provide mechanisms that help me to evaluate and select appropriate products and services | 24.2 |
| I get the desired answers to my online enquiries | 49.6 |
| Online trust | |
| I can count on Guinness to ensure that transactions carried out on its website are without error | 18.1 |
| I think that the information presented on Guinness's website is reliable | 22.2 |
| I feel like my privacy is protected while transacting with Guinness online | 25.4 |
| I think that Guinness would not do anything intentional on their website that would be unfair to customers | 34.7 |
| Guinness keeps customers' best interests in mind | 40.3 |
| Customer loyalty | |
| Guinness is the best business partner for me | 16.5 |
| I would consider Guinness as my first choice for doing business | 20.2 |
| I would be willing to defend Guinness in the face of any controversy | 23.4 |
| Our firm would be willing to commit more for business partnership with Guinness over others | 46.4 |
| I prefer Guinness to its competitors | 51.2 |
| Advocacy | |
| I recommend Guinness to other customers online/social media who need information | 19.8 |
| Our firms will continue to use any application that Guinness will roll out | 23 |
| I will continue to communicate with Guinness online into the foreseeable future | 32.7 |
| I say positive things about Guinness to other customers online/Social media | 37.5 |
| Collaboration | |
| Guinness social media and online platforms provide several mechanisms that help me to evaluate and select appropriate products and services | 12.5 |
| Guinness social media and online platforms allow me to upload information and feedback with regard to their products and services. | 27.8 |
| Other customers provide helpful information on Guinness group WhatsApp's and other online platforms | 27.8 |
| Guinness welcomes all distributors on their social media like What App | 41.5 |
| Trust | |
| Guinness's e-mail address is a secure medium for conducting financial transactions | 21 |
| E-Mail from my bank is a reliable medium for banking information and support services | 34.3 |
| I feel secure in my communication with Guinness online | 38.7 |
| E-Mails from Guinness are trustworthy– provide identification information, logos and artifacts to enhance my trust | 66.1 |
| Affective Commitment | |
| I feel an emotional attachment to Guinness brand | 14.1 |
| Guinness has a great amount of personal meaning to me | 23.8 |
| I am proud to do business with Guinness | 40.7 |
| I feel a strong sense of belonging with Guinness | 46.4 |
| Personalization | |
| My name and personal information is always used by Guinness in online communication with me | 19 |
| Guinness makes me feel special in their communication | 22.6 |
| Guinness uses e-mails to send me personalized account information | 24.6 |
| Guinness identifies our business unique issues and deals with them | 70.6 |

this can include limiting the company's B-to-B customer base, selling more products to the limited group of trusted distributors, and improving the communication among the contact persons from the exchange parties. GGCL can harness the relationship it has with its business partners by making some relationship-specific investments in their exchange relationships to meet the customer situation-specific needs. An example can be

assisting distributor enterprises to expand their business through fund investment, knowing that such relationship specific investments will pay off. The study showed that, to distributors, it is not enough for them to trust that GGCL would provide better product at fair price. The management body, particularly the marketing department may adopt strategies to integrate relationship marketing activities with offering quality products.

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