

**RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AND ENTREPRENEURIAL MARKET DEVELOPMENT:
CONCEPTUAL DIAGNOSIS AND PRESCRIPTIONS FOR SALES ORGANIZATION**

Barr. Bernard Nwekeala, Ph.D¹ & Dick, Diepiriye I.J. Ph.D²

¹Department of Marketing, Faculty of Management Science, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, ²Department of Entrepreneurship & Marketing, Faculty of Management Sciences, Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

E-mail: benonyedi@yahoo.com, 08036663899

E-mail: dickdd@fuotuoke.edu.ng, 08033748452

ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between relationship management and entrepreneurial market development "The study employed content analysis as the method of investigation and the research study was anchored in the social exchange theory which serves as the foundation for relationship management and entrepreneurial market development. Relationship management concept is about cultivating, building and managing relationship within the company's value delivery chain. Entrepreneurial market development is the strategic efforts of companies in developing or growing their business and markets in terms of market share, sales and business expansions. Conceptual, theoretical and empirical studies were evaluated on this study. Studies in the literature revealed that, relationship management significantly improves entrepreneurial market development. We therefore conclude that, relationship management implementation buy management of sales organizations in varied sectors improves entrepreneurial market development of such firms. The study recommends that, management of sales organizations should exhibit the behaviours of trust, commitment to customers requirements, constant communication, cooperation and empathy with customers and partners. This will successfully drive customers' cultivation and exploration of new markets and significantly improve entrepreneurial marketing development.

KEYWORDS: Relationship management, Entrepreneurial Market Development, Conceptual Diagnosis, Prescriptions, sales organizations.

INTRODUCTION

Sales and selling of products and services permites all sectors of an economy, as the control focus is exchange of goods and services with financial rewards. Sales organizations operating in these multiple sectors; health care, food and beverages, building materials, wholesale and retail, food vendors, educational services, hospitality and financial services are confronted with intense competition in their various industries (Udovik et al 2018). It is expected that, a company's sales force should develop strategies and choices on how best to manage competition in their sectors or industries. Central to the competitive behaviour of firms in the market is the transition of customers from one company to another due to product and service offering differentials of companies in terms of product quality, price, service quality and general customer management (Nasir, 2018). Organization and their workforce are now working out ways on how best to retain their existing customers, cultivate new relationships in order to grow market share and sales and contribute to the bottom-line of the firms (Osuoha et al, 2023).

Pertinent to note that, due to the intense competition and low patronage of customers experienced by some sales organizations, market development to drive market share and sales becomes challenging in a market were customers transition and defection rates are high (Osuoha et al, 2023). This situation negatively affects company's profitability and shareholder's value. Therefore, a proactive strategy for market development is needed for organization's going concern

in the marketplace or industry. The concept of entrepreneurial market development is the strategic steps taken by companies or firms to grow their markets with the firms' products and services (Markin, 2002). According to Coleman (2020), market development could be defined as the enterprise ability to drive product or service purchase by cultivating and building existing and new relationship in different market segments. Thus, entrepreneurial market development is all about a company or an entrepreneur building market share and sales by penetrating existing market with new products on service and cultivating new markets with existing product and services (Osuoha et al, 2023).

Entrepreneurial market development efforts by organizations and entrepreneurs requires the combined behaviours of entrepreneurship and marketing which firms must exhibit to achieve success in the market place (Dzogbemiku & Keelson, 2019). These market development strategies and choices are multiple, including relationship management. The concept of relationship management is all about a company's or an entrepreneur's effort in cultivating, building and managing profitable relationships with the market or customer group (Kenton, Mansa & Rosenston, 2024). According to the authors, relationship management could be defined as the strategy and choices deployed by workplace management to maintain engagement with its business stakeholders within the firm's supply value chains. Thus, in today's markets and industries that are highly competitive with different products and services offerings in the market place, it is imperative for organizations and entrepreneurs to remain close to their markets. Hence, this study conceptually evaluate the relationship between relationship management and entrepreneurial market development from the diagnostic and prescriptive lens for sales organizations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The Social Exchange Theory

The social exchange theory was propounded on developed by George Humans in the 1950s, the theory was developed to address a wide range of social and economic relations in many fields of human organizations (Davlembayeva & Alamanos, 2025). Thus, people generally measure the benefits and cost associated with any relationship that they are in and will decide to stay, deepen or exit the relationship based on the variability of benefits and costs linking the transactions or relationships (Cook & Rice, 2006).

The social exchange theory is one of the theories highly respected in the body of social sciences and has implications for all human organizations or activities. The philosophical focus of this theory is that people will naturally stay and continue in relationships that are more beneficial than the costs, in contrast, individuals will exist relationship exchanges in which the costs are far higher than the benefits (Omar & Amal, 2025). The social exchange theory is a psycho-sociological premise which gives explanations to social dynamics and stability as a way of bargained relationships between two or more individuals. The theory opined that relationships involving people are consummated on the basis of non-objective cost-benefit analysis and the comparative analysis of options (Cook, Cheshire, Rice & Nakagawa, 2013). Thus, this theory draws extensively from the subjects of economics, sociology and psychology and finds its roots from these descriptive making social exchange theories an eclectic theory.

The relevance on implication of the social exchange theory to the concepts of relationship management and entrepreneurial market development is that, relationship management in business transaction involves transaction exchanges between organization and customers involving exchanges of values. Again, entrepreneurial market development also deepens transaction exchanged between the firm and the market. Hence, the social exchange theory or the communication social exchange theory is appropriate for this study.

The Concept of Relationship Management

The concept of relationship management is about cultivating, building and managing profitable relationships between two or more individuals, organizations and individuals and between business organizations. This implies that, relationship management encompass both social, domestic and business situations of human organizations and society can optimally function in deepening effective relationship management is the key to driving successful business and marketers in a fast paced competitive global market environment.

According to Mustapha et al (2023), relationship management could be defined as building and managing relationship with customers within the company's business value chain. This simply means, an organization's ability to manage profitable relationships with all stakeholders; suppliers, distributors, agents, customers, employees and the publics (Mustapha et al, 2023). Thus, relationship management in today's evolving business world is imperative, it is an important strategy to ensure customers' loyalty and retention in the face of intense industry's competition, customers' changing needs and wants, preferences and brands' switching in the market. Therefore, relationship management is one of the keys to successfully managing customers and markets and improving organizations' sales, market share to business profitability and enhanced shareholders' wealth (Mathew, Uwa & Baridam, 2024).

Relationship management in business is highly loadable and should be practiced by all entrepreneurs and business owners in their chosen industries. Entrepreneurs and business managers in managing their markets should interface with stakeholders by exercising behaviours such as trust, commitment, communication, cooperation and empathy (Prakoso, Hurriyati & Hendrayati, 2024). Thus, these behavioural characteristics should be operationalised by entrepreneurs and business in engaging customers and the markets in order to remain in business. Relationship management practice is important and very relevant to all sizes of business functioning in different industries. The benefits of relationship management to the firms, industries and the market are numerous and practitioners are expected to make optimal investments in relationship management in the market place.

The Concept of Entrepreneurial Market Development

The concept of entrepreneurial market development is the strategic steps taken by companies or organization to grow their markets with the firm's products, services or ideas (Markin, 2002). According to Coleman (2020), market development could be defined as the enterprise ability to drive product or service purchase or patronage by cultivating and building existing and new business relationships in different market segments. Thus, entrepreneurial market development is about an organization or an entrepreneur building market share and sales by penetrating existing market with new products or service and cultivating new markets with existing products and services (Osuoha et al, 2023).

According to Osuoha et al (2023), entrepreneurial market development is the strategic focus of a firm in cultivating new customers and markets with existing products or service offerings. Again, it also involves ensuring continuous patronage of the products/service by existing markets or customers while cultivating new business and relationships in the market place (Osuoha et al, 2023). Thus, for entrepreneurs or business organizations in developing their markets, they should craft different strategies or choices on how best to increase their customer bases in the market segments they serve (Kakeesh, Al-weshah & Alalwan, 2024). Hence, market development choices such as sales management, business development, customer experience management should be mediated with competitive aggressiveness in the industries by entrepreneurs and business organizations. This will successfully drive market development of firms.

Entrepreneurial market development encompasses both the service of existing customers/markets and the creation of new markets or clients (Hollensen & Saeidi, 2023). This involves guiding the market in creating the necessary superior values of goods and services and attracting the market development advantages of market share growth, sales growth customer cultivation new market exploration (Hollensen & Saeidi, 2023). Thus, entrepreneurial market development is a laudable construct that drives growth and development of entrepreneurs and business organizations.

Study Conceptual Model

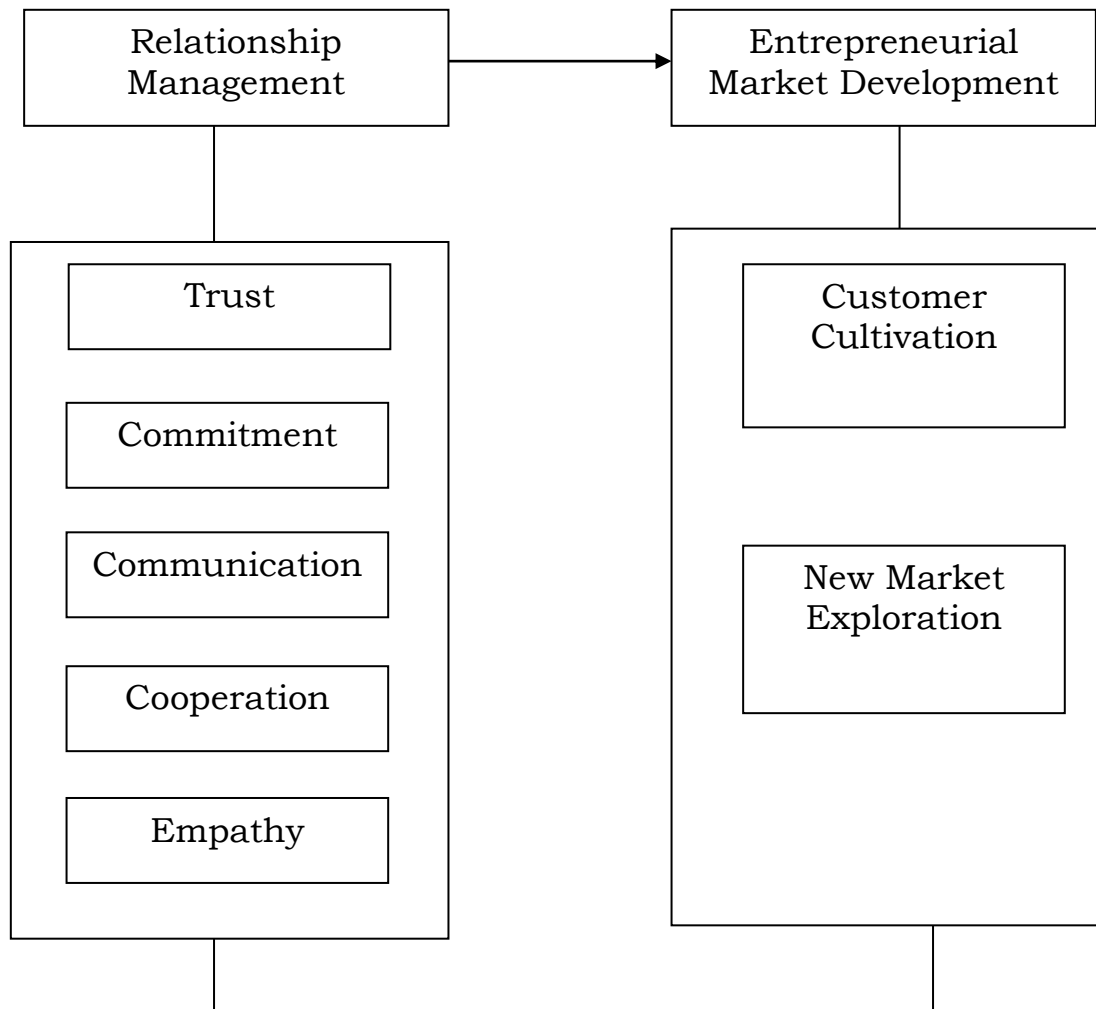


Fig. 1 Conceptual Framework of the Relationship between Relationship management and Entrepreneurial Market Development

Source: Researcher's Conceptualisation from Review of Literature, 2025

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

The implementation of successful management in a work organization usually improves entrepreneurial market development among other business outcomes. Thus, Mathew, Uwa & Baridam (2024), examined the relationship between customer relationship management and organizational growth in a contest specific of fast food firms in Uyo Metropolis of Akwa Ibom State. The study employed a quantitative research method with the Pearson product moment correlation and the findings revealed a positive and significant correlation between customer

relationship management and organizational growth of fast food companies in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, customer knowledge as a proxy of customer relationship management significantly improves customer satisfaction as a measure of organizational growth. The study concludes that, customer relationship management enhances workplace growth of fast food companies.

Furthermore, relationship management has been found to improve entrepreneurial marketing venture activities. This is associated with the works of Guerola-Navarro et al (2024), the scholars examined the impact of customer relationship management on entrepreneurial marketing. The study made use of qualitative research method with systematic literature review. Covering the period 2015-2019. Findings from the study revealed that, customer relationship management positively and significantly impact entrepreneurial marketing ventures. The study concludes that, customer relationship management significantly improves organizations' entrepreneurial marketing efforts. These findings are consistent with the empirical study of Martinho, Farinha & Ribeiro (2025), the scholars investigated the influence of customer relationship on business performance in the context of Portuguese work organizations. The study made use of quantitative research design with structural equation modeling. The findings of the study revealed that, customer relationship management positively and significantly influence business performance of Portuguese small and medium scale work organizations. The study concludes that, customer relationship management significantly improves business performance.

In addition, managing relationships in business and marketing by organizations help improve customers' bonding with the firms and successfully drives corporate success. Nwakanma, Jackson and Burkhalter (2007), studied the role of relationship marketing and marketplace success of workplace organization. The study employed qualitative research method with a systematic review of literature. The findings of the study revealed that, relationship marketing is a valuable tool for business success in the marketplace. It was concluded that, relationship marketing implemented by firm's management successfully drive marketplace success factors such as sales growth, market share, profit growth and business expansion (Nwakanma, Jackson & Burkhalter, 2007). These findings are consistent with the works of Udeh et al (2024), the authors evaluated the impact of customer relationship management on financial performance in the context of banks in Sierra Leone. The study employed a quantitative research method with the regression analysis. The findings of the study indicate that, customer relationship management significantly improves financial performance of banks in Sierra Leone. The study concludes that, customer relationship management enhances financial performance of organizations.

Moreso, relationship management is driving business and market development, has significantly influenced customers' brand loyalty in the marketplace. Arinzechukwu et al (2024), studied the role of relationship marketing on customers' brand loyalty in a context specific of intercontinental distillers company limited in the Jos North LGA of Plateau State, Nigeria. The study specifically investigated the influence of customer relationship on customers' brand loyalty. The study made use of quantitative research method, the study made use of quantitative research method, the regression analysis statistic was employed for the analysis of data, and findings revealed that, the dimensions of relationship management, trust, commitment, communication and service quality have positive and significant influence on customers' brand loyalty of intercontinental distillers company in Jos. It was concluded that, customer relationship management significantly improves customers' brand loyalty. From the expositions above, the implementation of successful customer relationship management programmes by sales organizations will enhance their entrepreneurial market development.

METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study was context analysis with indept literature reviews. The study made use of conceptual and empirical literature of previous works carried out by scholars in recent journals, online, materials and books of readings. Emphasis was placed on more of recent works by scholars' in line with exclusion and inclusion of research works criteria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study examined the relationship between relationship management and entrepreneurial market development. From the empirical literature survey, it was revealed that, relationship with entrepreneurial market development. This is validated with previous research studies (Mathew, Uwa & Baridan, 2024; Guerola-Navono et al, 2024; Martinho, Farinha & Ribeiro, 2025; Arinzechukwu et al, 2024). Thus, relationship management significantly improves prioties of business performance such as, customers' brand loyalty, customer retention, firm's profitability, financial performance including business and market development. Hence, relationship management improves entrepreneurial market development of sales organizations.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between relationship management and entrepreneurial market development from the lens of conceptual diagnosis and prescription. From the empirical literature survey we conclude that, relationship management significantly improves market development of sales organizations. The management of relationship management programmes by management of sales organizations will enhance their market development's efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made;

- i. Management of sales organizations should exhibit behaviours of honesty and integrity in all transactions with the market or customers. This will built the companies' reputation capital and trust at the instance of the market and significantly improve entrepreneurial market development.
- ii. Sales management and sales force should be committed to serving the customers through personalized or customized solutions to customers' needs and wants. This will cultivate relationships in existing and new markets and significantly improve entrepreneurial market development of the firms.
- iii. Management of the sales organization should constantly communicate with their customers. This will help resolve customers' complaints and challenges in product and service purchase, use and disposal. This will significantly enhance entrepreneurial market development.
- iv. Sales organizations should ensure that, they always work in cooperation and collaboration with customers and clients within their value delivery chain. This will significantly improve their entrepreneurial market development.
- v. Management and employees of sales organization's should empathies with customers in all transaction exchanges by going the extra-mile to provide customers' support services and solutions. This will significantly improve their entrepreneurial market development.

PRACTICAL/MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The practical and managerial implications of this study are that sales practitioners in all sectors of a nation's economy will fund this study as a valuable document that will practically enhance their customer management skills and knowledge. It will also help in improving their competencies in the areas of business and market development. Thus, relationship management and

business/market development skills, knowledge and competences are significantly driven by this research effort.

REFERENCES

- Arinzechukwu, O.J., Moude, I.J., Nwobi, H.H. & Micah, A.D. (2024). Role of relationship marketing on customers' brand loyalty of intercontinental distillers company limited products in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State. *Research Journal of Business and Economic Management*, 7(1), 1-15.
- Coleman, W. (2020). Business Strategy and development. Retrieved online at <http://www.rocketrich.com> 20-06-2025.
- Cook, K. & Rice, E. (2006). Social exchange theory. *Social forces*, 68(2), 53-76.
- Cook, K., Cheshire, C., Rice, E. & Nakagawa, S. (2013). Social exchange theory. Retrieved online at <http://www.researchgate.net> 10-7-2025
- Davlembayeva, D. & Alamanos, E. (2025). Social exchange theory: a review. Retrieved online at <http://www.open.nd.ac.uk/ISBN>. 30-06-2025.
- Dzogbenuku, R.K & Keelson, S.A. (2019). Marketing and entrepreneurial success in emerging markets: the nexus. *Asia Pacific Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurial*, 13(2), 168-187.
- Guerola –Navarro, V., Gil-Gomez, H., Oltra-Badenes, R. & Soto-Acosta, P. (2024). Customer relationship management and it's impact on entrepreneurial marketing: a literature review. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 20(2), 508-538
- Hollensen, S. & Seidi, S. (2023). Exploring the influence of entrepreneurial marketing on business performance: based on spontaneous order. *American Journal of Industrial and Business Management*, 13(10), 1079 – 1093.
- Kakeesh, D., Al-weshah, G. & Alalwan, A.A. (2024). Entrepreneurial Marketing and business performance in SMEs: the mediating role of competitive aggressiveness. *Journal of Marketing Analytics*, 10-27.
- Kenton, W., Mansa, J. & Rosenston, M. (2024). Relationship Management: definition, types and importance. Retrieved online at <http://www.investopedia.com> 26-06-2-25.
- Mancin, O. (2002). The Ansoff matrix and market development. Retrieved online at <http://www.businessperspectives.com> 26-06-2025.

- Martinho, D., Farinha, J. & Ribeiro, V. (2025). The impact of customer relationship management systems on business performance of Portuguese SMEs. *Sustainability*, 17(12), 17-35.
- Mathew, I.T, Uwa, K. & Baridam, D. (2024). Customer relationship management and organizational growth of fast food industries in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa-Ibom State. *IIARD International Journal of Economics and Business Management*, 10(11), 221-234.
- Mustapha, R., Kareem, O., Adeniyi, O. & Abdulwasiu, A.A. (2023). Customer relationship management and organizational performance of selected banks in Ogun State, Nigeria. *African Journal of Management and Business Research*, 11(1), 213-288.
- Nasir, S. (2018). Marketing strategies in a competitive markets and challenging times. Retrieved online at <http://www.researchgate.net> 25-06-205.
- Nwakanma, H., Jackson, A. Burkhalter, J.N. (2007). Relationship Marketing: an important tool for success in the marketplace. *Journal of Business and Economics Research*, 5(2), 55-64.
- O Mar, R. & Amal, M. (2025). Revealing the impact of social exchange theory on financial performance: a systematic review of the mediating role of human resource performance. *Cogent Business and Management*, 12(1), 15-32.
- Osuoha, I.J., Azugama, M., Ekeruo, C. & Nnamdi, S.C. (2023). Market development strategies and firm's performance: a study of selected product organizations in Enugu State. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, 10(3), 11-14.
- Osuoha, I.J., Azugama, M., Ekeruo, C. Nnamdi, S.C (2023). Market development strategies and firm's performance: a study of selected product organizations in Enugu State. *International Journal of Multi disciplinary Research and Development*, 10(3), 11-14.
- Prakoso, B. Hurriyati, R. & Hendrayati, H. (2024). The effective customer relationship management of business to business in improving customer satisfaction and customer retention. Retrieved online at <http://www.doi.org>. 14-07-2025.
- Simeon, B. & Dick, D.I.J., (2025). Cross-functional relationship management and marketing performance of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria. *AKSU Journal of Management Sciences*, 10(1), 105-120.
- Smmyth, H. (2014). Relationship Management and the Management of projects. Retrieved online at <http://www.researchgate.net> 10-7-2025.

Udeh, E., Duramany-Lakkoh, E.K., Bockarie, M.F. & Kollie, J.I. (2024). The impact of customer relationship management on the financial performance of banks in developing countries. *European Journal of Economics and Financial Research*, 8(2),45-69.

Udovik, E.E., Kuzina, M.N., Shkuratova, M.V., Malinovskaya, N.V. & Ugrimova, S.N. (2018). World Market Competition: tendencies and development features at the present stage. *Gerencia Gestao Management*, 39(31), 169-208.