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Customer Relationship Practices through Processes Automation and Customer Satisfaction. Service Industry Experience

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Abstract

Purpose: The Purpose of this study was to establish the effect of Customer Relationship Management practices through Process Automation and customer satisfaction at Koitaleel Samoei University College. Specifically, this study was anchored on the CRM practices through processes automation and how they influence customer satisfaction. The study was based on symbolic interaction theory which insisted on the codependence of individuals and ideologies and how customer satisfaction depends on the CRM practices. Customer relationship management theory, an accepted philosophy that is concerned with identifying, satisfying, retaining, partnering and maximizing the value of customers by effectively managing the relationship between parties.

Methodology: Descriptive design was used in this study. Data was collected by use of questionnaires and interview schedule. Data was presented by use of charts and tables. The target population was 150 individuals within KSUC. Strata of fifty (50) individuals was sampled comprising of suppliers, management and staff. The tools of data collection helped in ensuring the validity and reliability of the data that was collected. Ethical standards were considered where seeking permission before data collection from individuals was sought and the respondent's privacy was granted.

Findings: The study found out that CRM is a critical component in customer satisfaction and therefore can be highly applied.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study recommended provision of platforms for customers to leave reviews or even complaints and suggestions from their experience, Enhancement of Communication Channels and Implementation of clear and accessible communication channels for stakeholders to interact with the procurement department.

Keywords: *Customer Behavior, Satisfaction, Business Practices, Service Industries*

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INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic world, building long term client relationships through CRM methods is key to maintaining stability and increasing productivity. To achieve this, an organization must differentiate itself via exceptional services and provide consistent and convenient customer experience. This will ensure that each customer's needs are fully satisfied and employees within the organization understand what their customer need and work toward fulfilling their needs. All this can be achieved by having established CRM methods that best fit your customers and organization as a whole. Organizations recognize that if they don't keep their customers satisfied, someone else will (Judy Strauss & Frost, 2009). CRM is an aspect that existed since long ago in the 1960s and has been evolving with time to now systems which are being adopted by all organizations. Abdullateef and Salleh (2013) found that the real growth of CRM started at the beginning of the 1990s with the introduction of sales automation applications and the expansion of call centers. CRM also has strong ties to customer orientation and database management (Meadows & Dibb, 2012). Due to the pandemic that recently occurred, unlike many businesses that closed down their doors, those that were still performing well in business and carrying out their operations shifted their operations to online platforms, that is e-business and most of them were unsure of satisfaction of their customers due to limited interactions. The view of CRM as a technology afterwards is the key reason that many systems have failed. Many companies lost their focus on the customer as they sought new technology. The initial connection to database technology caused many users to concentrate more on the technology rather than how to enable improved customer relations (Frow et al., 2011). This study aimed at bringing clarity on the need to focus on CRM practices not only as a technology but also as a practical tool that organizations can put into place to ensure customers are fully satisfied.

Within the context of educational institutions, effective CRM implementation can significantly impact stakeholder satisfaction and operational efficiency. For universities and colleges, where internal stakeholders such as faculty, staff, and students interact with procurement departments for various goods and services, maintaining high levels of satisfaction is crucial (Kim & Han, 2014; Sin et al., 2005). A satisfied stakeholder base not only ensures smooth procurement operations but also contributes to a positive organizational reputation and effective resource allocation (Homburg et al., 2009). Research indicates that CRM systems can enhance communication, increase transparency, and personalize interactions with stakeholders, thereby improving satisfaction levels and operational outcomes (Kim & Han, 2014; Rigby et al., 2002). Understanding the specific effects of CRM on customer satisfaction within the procurement context at KSUC is essential for identifying effective strategies and optimizing procurement processes to better meet stakeholder expectations. A customer is deemed to be satisfied upon the experience weighted sum total produce a feeling of enjoyment when compared with the expectation (Choi & Chu, 2013). There is still considerable debate among researchers on the actual benefit of CRM practices (Verhoef et al, 2010). But at the same time, we have a number of benefits that CRM practices has employed to ensure customer satisfaction the key being building long term relationships with customers which enhances customer loyalty. The study aimed at bringing clarity on the effectiveness of processes automation, record keeping, suppliers' engagement from start to the end and lastly how customers feel satisfied by order processing of the procurement department. The sum of all these was able to help us understand how CRM relates with customer satisfaction which is a feeling of enjoyment that customers get when they utilize your products or services by focusing on the satisfaction of the customers at KSUC department.

The procurement department at KSUC drives most of the operations at the institution and this implies that their effectiveness is key to the management, students and their suppliers as their customers. Due to increase in number of students at the institution, procurement department operations are several compared to what was being done several years ago. This implies that the department has to check its CRM practices to ensure they are not missing out on their customers' satisfaction. This study sought to not only investigate the influence of CRM practices implemented by the department and its effectiveness to the institution regardless of continuous change in customers tastes and preferences but also to investigate the effect of; processes automation, record keeping, supplier engagement and order processing on customers' satisfaction. Since the success of CRM is determined by four main factors; technology, people, considering processes and knowledge and insight (Luke, 2011), this study was able to clearly outline how the factors influence CRM. A customer is deemed to be satisfied upon the experience weighted sum total produce a feeling of enjoyment when compared with the expectation (Choi & Chu, 2013). And this study was able bring to the light the effectiveness of the CRM practices at KSUC procurement department by focusing on the satisfaction of their customers. As technology continues to evolve, CRM automation will play an even greater role in shaping customer relationships and satisfaction in the service industry. With innovations like AI, machine learning, and predictive analytics, companies will be able to create even more personalized and efficient customer experiences. However, the key to success will be maintaining the right balance between automation and human engagement, ensuring data privacy, and adapting quickly to customer expectations and market dynamics. Ultimately, the integration of CRM practices through process automation will help service industries enhance customer satisfaction, drive loyalty, and improve overall operational performance.

Statement of the Problem

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems have been widely adopted across various industries to improve customer satisfaction and loyalty (Rigby et al., 2002; Payne & Frow, 2005). However, the specific impact of CRM on enhancing customer satisfaction within the procurement context of educational institutions like Koitaleel Samoei University College (KSUC) remains underexplored. Despite the recognized benefits of CRM in fostering better relationships with stakeholders (Chen & Popovich, 2003; Kim & Han, 2014), challenges persist in understanding how CRM implementation within procurement departments influences stakeholder satisfaction at educational institutions. KSUC's procurement department plays a critical role in supporting the university's operational needs by managing the acquisition of goods and services essential for academic and administrative functions. Ensuring high levels of stakeholder satisfaction within this department is crucial for maintaining operational efficiency and meeting the diverse needs of faculty, staff, and students (Feng et al., 2009; Sin et al., 2005). Customer Relationship Management is an important tool that companies use to gain strategic advantage and sustainability. They help organizations to work smarter by optimizing services to the customers for exceeding their expectations in maximizing their revenue (Zalem, 2018). Most organizations tend to focus on their productivity and forget the need to satisfy their customers which play a key role to ensure they are sustained in the market. Due to increase in number of students at Koitaleel Samoei University College there has been an increase in number of operations which means increase in procurement activities to meet organizational needs by ensuring they procure goods from the right suppliers at the required time so that daily operations of the institution may run smoothly. This means the department has to have reliable suppliers who will constantly provide goods when needed. The institution

has had several complains of delays in products requested by different departments. This might have been due to low customer satisfaction rate of suppliers who are slowly pulling out and not having great interest at cooperating with the institution. The aim of this study was to investigate the productivity of CRM practices to suppliers and organization as a whole on the case of procurement department at KSUC. This helped to ensure the institution's procurement department comes up with CRM practices that will ensure satisfaction and efficiency in the operations. The use of process automation at KSUC can lead to significant operational improvements in procurement, inventory management, and customer relationship management. However, if not properly integrated, it can cause delays and supplier dissatisfaction. It is evident that System errors and technical glitches, Poor integration between different automated systems, Lack of oversight for critical transactions or processes and Miscommunication between suppliers and automated systems have been identified as key disruptors of smooth operations at KSUC and serious considerations are required.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer Relationship Management Theory

CRM was proposed by Berry (1995) and is rooted in relationship marketing theory proposed by Berry in 1983. It is one of the most globally accepted philosophies that focus on long lasting engagement between firms and their customers for the mutual benefit of all parties (Buttle, 2004; Gronroos, 1994). As a business philosophy, CRM is a comprehensive strategic process concerned with identifying, satisfying, retaining, partnering and maximizing the value of customers by effectively managing the relationship between parties (Reichheld & Sasser, 2003). Management of relationships between firms and their customers is critical to the survival of firms and all activities should focus on value creation as opposed to transactions. This theory was able to clearly bring out the relationship between CRM and customer satisfaction since the theory explains the CRM practices implemented in organizations and how they influence customer satisfaction. This was of great help since it was able to provide a platform for us to be able to measure the influence of the CRM practices implemented at KSUC department. Organization's CRM entails shaping the organizational structure and business processes and functions in order to deliver value to customers (Ryals & Knox, 2001). Using this theory was able to help us understand how the study practices were influencing customer satisfaction. This theory supported the independent variables; and which enabled us during the study to be able to measure the effect of our study practices to customer satisfaction. This theory was considered important because it supports the application of CRM variables which influences satisfaction of KSUC customers. It majorly relies on customer-centric focus, and technology enablement.

In summary, Customer Relationship Management theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how organizations can systematically manage and optimize relationships with customers to achieve mutual benefits. By integrating CRM principles and practices into their operations, organizations can enhance customer satisfaction, loyalty, and profitability in competitive markets.

The Concept of Process Automation and Customer Satisfaction

Procurement departments are under pressure to reduce costs while maintaining timeliness and quality. Procurement process includes processes that will help to ensure that products needed in an organization are made available. All of these processes are tiresome when done through papers. Processes automation helps to ensure the whole processes including sourcing suppliers,

comparing bids and all communications are done online and over the phone. Automation of the procurement process which will be done online through e-procurement which will provide solutions to safeguard procurement activities in an organization, Validya and Callendars, (2004). According to Croom and Brandon, (2004), e-procurement entails the use of internet in communication techniques to conduct various procurement activities in organizations and business enterprise. Practices like electronic tendering which is an online process that manages the tendering cycle from the advertisement of the notice straight through to the issuing of an award. It provides a centralized process to help organizations improve efficiencies and accountability while reducing traditional tendering costs and increasing supply chain performance (Chen, 2004). According to Palmer, (2003) instead of being forced to browse the internet to find this type of content, the customer only need to complete a single, simple web-form and let the supplier to handle the rest. This will help to reduce the use of hard-papers. This CRM practice will be able to help the procurement department to reduce errors associated with manual data entry and to save time. It will also be able to promote trust and reliability in supplier relationships because of the clarity and communication. This practice is to done through cloud based procurement software and data analytics which enhances the speed and accuracy of the process. By eradicating repetitive manual processes and removing the need for paperwork, EDI electronic ordering solution enables the business to reduce costs, increase productivity and improve customer service thus improved supply chain performance (Bello, 2002). Procurement Automation has become a key trend in many organizations, including universities, as a way to streamline processes, reduce costs, and improve operational efficiency. The University of California system, which included multiple campuses (UC Berkeley, UC Los Angeles, UC San Francisco, etc.), is one of the largest higher education systems in the U.S. It faced challenges in managing the complexity of procurement across its many campuses, which involved large-scale purchasing of supplies, equipment, and services. The UC system implemented a procurement automation solution through a platform called SciQuest (now part of Jaggaer). The system was designed to automate purchasing requests, vendor communications, and invoice processing across the entire university system. The goal was to centralize procurement, reduce administrative burden, ensure compliance with purchasing policies, and improve supplier engagement. UC's procurement automation led to significant cost savings. The University of Manchester also needed to modernize its procurement systems to keep up with growing demand and to streamline processes for a wide range of services, including research equipment, lab supplies, and administrative services. The University of Manchester implemented an automated procurement solution called e-marketplace, which was integrated with their Oracle ERP system. This platform enabled both internal stakeholders and suppliers to engage in electronic order processing, invoicing, and contract management. The system was designed to automate everything from supplier selection to invoice approvals, eliminating paper-based processes and reducing the risk of errors. The university was able to streamline procurement operations, reducing administrative overhead and increasing purchasing efficiency. Automation allowed staff to place orders, track deliveries, and process invoices with minimal manual intervention. These case studies provide insights into the practical benefits, challenges, and outcomes of procurement automation in academic institutions.

While CRM systems can significantly improve the customer-centric approaches in universities, resource-constrained educational institutions face a range of challenges that need to be addressed to ensure successful adoption and implementation. These challenges include limited financial resources, inadequate IT infrastructure, resistance to change, data management

difficulties, and concerns around privacy and security. However, by leveraging cloud-based CRM solutions, focusing on user-friendly interfaces, investing in training and change management, and prioritizing data governance, educational institutions can mitigate these challenges. With careful planning and execution, CRM systems can help universities foster more personalized and effective relationships with students, improving both student satisfaction and institutional efficiency.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Descriptive research design was employed which was able to help ensure both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. A descriptive research design involves a smaller group of respondents that can be reached fully (Sarah, 2012). A descriptive study refers to determining the frequency with which something occurs or the relationship between variables (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). This research design was appropriate for the study because it offered a narration of the current state of events without alteration. (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2011). This was able to help bring out the effect of CRM practices to the customers of KSUC. Phil (1996) says that descriptive research studies are designed to obtain information concerning the current situation and other phenomena and wherever possible to draw valid conclusions from the facts discussed. According to Zinkmund (2000), “descriptive research studies are based on some previous understating of the nature of the research problem”

Target Population

According to Trochim (2006), a Target population refers to the entire group of individuals or objects to which researchers are interested in generalizing the conclusions. Population as characterized by Kothari (2004) is an explicit group of individuals, amenities, fundamentals, events, or things examined. Target demography refers to the explicit population from which data is gathered. The study comprised 150 individuals comprising of suppliers and employees within the organization. The information was derived from the institutions website and the procurement department. Since the unit of study was KSUC as an organization, even the suppliers were able to be targeted together with people within the organization.

Sampling Technique and Sampling Size

Sampling is the process of selecting a number of study units from a defined study population (Zikmand, 2010). The study used stratified random sampling technique to select a sample fifty (50) individuals to represent the entire organization and suppliers. This technique ensured there was limited biasness when choosing the samples. A sampling frame is the list of elements from which the sample is actually drawn (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2003). The technique was able to ensure that an individual was picked only once and all the people had a chance to be picked. The strata are listed below together with the sample size which was described below.

Data Collection Methods

The study relied on primary data which was collected through administering a structured questionnaire comprising closed and open-ended questions, developed in line with the objectives of the study. As suggested by (Creswell, 2009), administering questionnaires allows the researcher to collect data with low cost even when the universe is large and is widely spread geographically, it is free from the bias of the interviewer; answers are in respondents' own words, respondents have adequate time to give well thought out answers. The questionnaire was divided into two parts including; their level of satisfaction from the recent CRM practices

at the department and the second part, their thoughts on what developments should be made on the CRM practices and any other new CRM practices they think will be able to enhance their level of satisfaction. There were 50 questionnaires which were administered through drop and pick method. And a total of 38 questionnaires were collected back for data analysis

Validity of Research Instruments

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) strictly confirm that validity can be exemplified as the exactness, the accuracy, and significance of conclusions derived from review findings. Accuracy of a research instrument have significant influence on quality of research findings (Fidel, 2009). Orodho (2005) describe validity as a test involving decisions whether the information assortment instrument provides data applicable to the review's expressed objective. It is the level of confidence to which variants in examining tool results mirrors the exact differences in the tested components. It also refers to the data that is not only reliable, but also true and accurate. The instruments were subjected to appraisal and amendment by use of simple language, peers review, supervisor whose recommendations were taken and amendments done which improved the face and content validity.

Reliability of Research Instruments

Reliability of the data collection Instrument involves the consistency of the result obtained with the instrument. The reliability test is conducted to measure whether the research instrument provides the same results each time the instrument is used among the sample respondents. Reliability is assessed by the consistency of results. (Kimberlin and Winterstein, 2008). The common method for testing the reliability of a research instrument is by using the Cronbach's Alpha. The Cronbach's alpha allows for estimating the internal consistency within the research instrument (Wise, 2013). Reliability of instruments was assured by use of this method. Pilot Testing: Before full implementation, the researcher did a pilot test the survey instrument with a small sample of stakeholders within KSUC's procurement department. Clear Instructions: the researcher provided clear instructions to participants on how to complete the survey to ensure consistency in responses. By rigorously addressing reliability and validity concerns in the research instrument design and implementation phases, the study produced credible and robust findings, contributing meaningful insights to both academic literature and practical applications within the institution.

Data Analysis

Data analysis method refers to examining what has been collected in a survey or experiment and making deductions and inferences (Kombo & Tromp 2013). The process of data analysis involved several stages: the completed questionnaires were then be edited for completeness and consistency, checked for errors and omissions and then they were coded. Collected data was analyzed using descriptive analysis such as descriptive statistics mean scores and standard deviations frequencies distributions and percentages. The results were presented in tables, and charts. This data analysis framework provides a structured approach to analyzing the effects of CRM on customer satisfaction at the procurement department of KSUC, combining quantitative rigor insights to derive meaningful conclusions and actionable recommendations.

Ethical Consideration

Seeking permission from the administration to do study as well as seeking Ethical practices and considerations were regarded during the study. Permission from the procurement department to conduct this study. According to Saunders (2007), researchers must be

conscientious in their approach to data collection by allowing respondents to participate in a survey of their own free will. The respondents who were used for the study were assured of privacy and safety of the information they provide. They were also to be conducted prior to beginning of the research to have their consent. They were asked not to indicate their details including name, telephone number or even emails to guarantee their privacy when responding to the questionnaires. No photos of them were taken or published. Respondents who were still hesitant to participate in the research opinions were respected and removed from the study. Lastly, the researcher did not make any citations that might have compromise the respondent's confidentiality.

RESULTS

Response Rate

Out of the 50 questionnaires distributed to the listed individuals at Koitaleel Samoei University College, 38 research instruments were completely filled and recollected by the researcher. Hence the response rate stood at 76% and this was in line with Mugenda (2003). The data on responses are as shown below.

Table 1: Response Rate

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Response	38	76
Non response	12	24
Total	50	100

Demographic Information

The data collected on demographic information of respondents include; gender, age bracket, highest level of education and period worked in the institution.

Gender of Respondents

Respondents were asked to indicate their gender and is represented below.

Table 2: Gender of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Male	20	53
Female	18	47
Total	38	100

Age of the Respondents

Respondents were asked to indicate their age bracket. The findings are shown in the table below.

Table 3: Age of the Respondents

Response	Frequency	Percent
18-25	11	29
26- 35	18	47
Above 36	9	24
Total	38	100

The study showed that majority of the respondents are over 26 years which covers a larger percentage of 64.

Level of Education

The findings in the levels of education of respondents are shown below.

Table 4: Level of Education

Variable	Frequency	percent
Secondary certificate	2	5
College diploma	6	16
Bachelor's degree	18	47
Postgraduate degree	12	32
Total	38	100

As shown above, respondents had a larger percentage of people holding a bachelor's degree having a percentage of 64%.

Period Been Within the Institution

The years of experience of responses with Koitaleel Samoei University College is whom below.

Table 5: Period Worked at the Institution

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Less than 2 years	30	79
Above 3 years	8	21
Total	38	100

Customer Relationship Management Practice

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction by the application of customer relationship management system at the department. The findings were reported in form of Likert scale of 1-5 where, 1= no extent, 2= little extent, 3= moderate extent, 4= large and 5= very large extent. The results are shown in the table below.

Table 6: Satisfaction from CRM Usage

CRM Practices	Mean	Std. Dev
Processes automation		
The process of sourcing suppliers	3.342	1.169
The process of tender evaluation	3.368	1.217
How communication is done	3.631	0.942
Records management	3.026	1.150
Storage of tender after evaluation	3.079	1.100
Storage of purchase invoice records	3.447	1.224
Storage of suppliers contacts		
Suppliers engagement	3.526	1.246
In the acquisition of goods and services	3.263	1.267
During evaluation and award of tenders	3.132	1.277
Transparency through the entire process		
Order processing	3.289	1.037
Clarity of their procedures throughout	3.237	1.324
Duration taken right from acquisition to award of tenders	3.368	1.149
How efficient are their payment methods and duration		

From the findings in Table 6 on process information, the study established that the process of supplier sourcing affects customer satisfaction ($M= 3.342$ $SD= 1.169$). The process of tender evaluation affects customer satisfaction ($M= 3.368$ $SD=1.217$). Communication process during the entire process affects customer satisfaction ($M=3.631$ $SD=0.942$). Stoklasa, Pellesova and Starzyena (2017) revealed that adoption of CRM system had a significant effect on level of customer satisfaction. On records management, the storage of tenders after evaluation affects customer satisfaction ($M= 3.026$ $SD=1.150$). The storage of purchase invoice records affects customer satisfaction ($M=3.079$ $SD=1.100$). The storage of suppliers contacts affects customer satisfaction ($M=3.447$ $SD=1.224$). The findings is supported by Kotler (2006) who noted that CRM systems enable institution to analyze its relationship with its customers with the aim of coming up with products and services that are best suited to their needs.

On suppliers engagement, the acquisition of goods and services affects customer satisfaction ($M= 3.526$ $SD= 1.246$). Engagement of suppliers during evaluation and award of tenders affects customer satisfaction ($M= 3.263$ $SD= 1.267$). Transparency through the entire process with suppliers affects customer satisfaction ($M= 3.132$ $SD= 1.277$). This is supported by Heydari and HadisehAbaszadeh (2015) whom established that all appropriate behavior and customer satisfaction with service received there is a positive relationship. On order processing, clarity of their procedures throughout affects customer satisfaction ($M= 3.289$ $SD= 1.037$). Duration taken from acquisition to award of tenders affects customer satisfaction ($M= 3.237$ $SD= 1.324$). Efficiency of payment methods affects customer satisfaction ($M= 3.368$ $SD= 1.149$). This is in agreement with Rahiminik and Shamsadini (2014) who indicated that CRM systems had a direct significance on customer satisfaction.

Discussion

The study found out that the use of CRM had a positive influence on customer satisfaction. The study established that majority of the respondents were satisfied with CRM, offered during their interactions with the institution due to the use of process automation, proper records management supplier engagements and also through order processing. The study established that most of the processes at the procurement department were automated beginning with suppliers sourcing which makes it easier for them to access needed information like tenders without utilizing much funds since the information is always published on the institution's website. Records of the department are properly managed which allows future references both on websites and also on hard copies. Suppliers are also fully engaged right from their acquisition to when tenders are awarded by consistently updating them during the entire process. Order processing is done in accordance with the law and payments are also done on time which keeps most suppliers motivated and engaged. This is in agreement with Rahiminik and Shamsadini (2014) who indicated that CRM system had a direct and significant influence on customer satisfaction. The study pointed out that CRM had a positive influence on customer satisfaction at Koitaleel Samoei University College. The study also established that their customers had become consistent and were delighted to serve the institution by providing their goods and services and they were willing to come back when other tenders are posted. A study by Heydari and HadisehAbaszadeh (2015) established that all appropriate behavior and customer satisfaction are related to with service received there is a positive relationship.

The respondents were also asked to indicate their recommendations on updates to be done on the CRM systems and they suggested that the institution should provide a platform for them to write their suggestions and not relying on word of mouth. This will help to ensure that they rate

the services they have received and also leave recommendations. The findings on process automation and customer satisfaction will provide a framework for shaping both institutional policies and CRM training programs in a way that enhances operational efficiency and strengthens relationships. Key policy implications will include integrating automation across departments, fostering personalized engagement, and ensuring privacy compliance. CRM training will be focusing on system functionality, data-driven decision-making, and fostering a customer-centric culture will help customers effectively use the CRM system to improve their experience. Also by leveraging these findings, educational institutions can design policies and training programs that not only address the immediate operational needs but also cultivate a long-term, sustainable commitment to enhancing student satisfaction and engagement through CRM tools.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The study strived to determine a link between customer relationship management and the level of customer satisfaction at the procurement department of Koitaleel Samoei University College. A typical response rate from an Internet questionnaire is between 6-15 percent (Yin 2009). The study sought to establish the application of CRM at the procurement department of KSUC, to clearly illustrate how CRM practices influence the level of satisfaction of customers. The primary objectives of the research are to explore the implementation of CRM practices within KSUC's procurement department, analyze the extent to which these practices affect various dimensions of customer satisfaction, and identify opportunities for improving CRM strategies to enhance overall stakeholder relationships. The study was anchored on the relationship symbolic interaction theory and customer relationship management theory. A descriptive design was employed in the study which helped to reach out to respondents who provided valuable information.

The study established that CRM practices applied at the institution are worth it since they have helped the procurement department to attract more suppliers every time they do post a tender on their website. A factor loading of 0.5 or better is considered being a strong loading (Costello and Osborne 2005). Preliminary findings suggest that effective CRM practices significantly contribute to higher levels of customer satisfaction within KSUC's procurement operations. Key factors influencing satisfaction include personalized customer interactions, efficient complaint resolution, and transparency in procurement processes. Previous research within the subject area indicated that CRM are important for the relationship to the customer (Kim et al. 2012; Nguyen 2007; Garbarino and Johnson 1999). The research highlights the importance of tailored CRM strategies in fostering positive stakeholder relationships and improving operational efficiencies. Furthermore, the study found out that procurement processes are being automated, records are managed properly both on hard copy and softcopy through cloud on their websites. Suppliers feel satisfied with procurement processes since they are fully engaged and feel appreciated every time and also order processing is effective and efficient including payments to suppliers after purchases are made. As the literature have indicated, it is important that both parties in a relation are able to trust each other (Grönroos and Helle 2012; Payne and Frow 2006). The study's outcomes offer practical implications for KSUC and similar educational institutions. Recommendations include enhancing CRM training programs for procurement staff, implementing feedback mechanisms to gauge stakeholder satisfaction regularly, and leveraging technology for more streamlined communication and service

delivery. This has increased loyalty and brand recognition in the market being a young institution.

In conclusion, this research underscores the critical role of CRM in enhancing customer satisfaction within the procurement department of educational institutions like KSUC. By understanding and implementing effective CRM strategies, institutions can cultivate stronger relationships with stakeholders, thereby optimizing procurement outcomes and contributing to overall organizational success. CRM is not the only factor, but an important part to keep the customers satisfied, which can be supported by previous studies as well (Garbarino and Johnson 1999; Morgan and Hunt 1994; Theron et al. 2008). This summary encapsulates the research's focus on investigating how CRM practices influence customer satisfaction within KSUC's procurement context, providing actionable insights for improving stakeholder relationships and operational effectiveness.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research project explored the pivotal role of Customer Relationship management (CRM) in enhancing customer satisfaction within the context of higher education procurement. Through a comprehensive review of literature and a mixed-methods approach involving surveys and interviews, this study aimed to investigate the impact of CRM strategies on customer perceptions and satisfaction levels. The findings of this research underscored the significant influence of effective CRM practices on improving customer satisfaction within the university procurement department. Quantitative analysis revealed positive correlations between perceived CRM effectiveness and customer satisfaction metrics, highlighting the importance of tailored CRM strategies in meeting the unique needs of stakeholders in educational procurement settings. Qualitative insights from interviews provided nuanced perspectives on the operational dynamics of CRM implementation and its implications for service quality and customer interactions.

The implications of this research extend beyond Koitaleel Samoei University College, offering valuable insights and practical recommendations for other educational institutions aiming to optimize their CRM frameworks. Much knowledge is needed for organizations to know how to use CRM to strengthen the relationship to their customers (Chang et al. 2010; Kim and Kim 2009). By fostering stronger customer relationships and improving service delivery through CRM initiatives, universities can better align their procurement processes with stakeholder expectations, ultimately enhancing overall satisfaction and loyalty. In summary, this research contributes to both theoretical knowledge and practical applications in the field of CRM within higher education, emphasizing the transformative potential of CRM strategies in cultivating positive customer experiences and sustaining institutional success. On the use of CRM practices by Koitaleel Samoei University College at the procurement department, the study concludes that; process automation is applicable, records are properly managed, suppliers are engaged throughout the process and order processing is efficiently done. On the relationship of CRM practices implementation and customer satisfaction, the study concludes that customer satisfaction largely relies on the CRM practices for their satisfaction. Customers also provided constant feedback about CRM practices at the procurement department of KSUC and they are always happy to come back for other tenders and even share with their colleagues in the same market.

Recommendations

In view to suggestions given by customers on implementation of a website or even a book for them to give reviews and suggestions rather than giving word of mouth reviews, the study recommends that the department works on always providing platforms for customers to leave reviews or even complaints and suggestions from their experience. Enhance Communication Channels: Implement clear and accessible communication channels for stakeholders to interact with the procurement department. This could include dedicated email addresses, online portals for inquiries and feedback, and regular updates on procurement processes and timelines.

Transparency and Accountability: Ensure transparency in procurement decisions and processes. Maintain clear documentation of procurement activities, including vendor selection criteria, bidding processes, and contract management. Establish accountability measures to uphold ethical standards and compliance with regulations. Continuous Improvement Culture: Foster a culture of continuous improvement within the procurement department. Encourage staff to propose innovative ideas, participate in process reviews, and collaborate across departments to identify and implement efficiency gains and service enhancements. The study further recommends that CRM practices employed ought to improve or reduce the probability of prone to errors in procurement departments. The procurement department at KSUC ought to improve its CRM practices regularly to reduce bad reports and reduced number of bidders and suppliers and also secure enough funds that will enable the same to be apprehended.

Further Studies

Building upon the findings and limitations identified in this research, several avenues for future studies are recommended; Customer Segmentation Strategies: Explore the effectiveness of customer segmentation strategies within procurement CRM frameworks. Investigate how personalized approaches influence customer satisfaction and loyalty across different customer segments. Cross-Industry Comparative Analysis: Compare the effectiveness of CRM practices in procurement departments across different departments within the institution. Further, there are several other key areas of further study that can deepen understanding and contribute to both theoretical knowledge and practical application in institutions or other service industries. These areas of further study are vital for uncovering new insights, and refining approaches to CRM, automation, and customer satisfaction. some recommended areas for further research include; studying on Long-Term Impacts of CRM Automation on Customer Loyalty and Retention. Understanding of the long-term effects can guide institutions in measuring the sustainability of customer satisfaction, helping to adjust strategies to foster long-lasting, loyal relationships with customers. Customization and Personalization Through AI and Machine Learning in CRM. AI and ML offer opportunities for more sophisticated predictive analytics, anticipating customer needs and tailoring experiences, which can greatly improve satisfaction and service delivery in highly individualized sectors like education or healthcare. Integration of CRM Systems with Other Organizational Systems. Effective integration can create a more holistic view of the customer, enabling better service delivery and decision-making, while also improving the automation of processes across departments. Customer Experience and Emotional Engagement in CRM Automation. Understanding the balance between efficiency and emotional engagement will help service industries design automated systems that not only improve satisfaction but also foster a deeper emotional connection with their customers, leading to stronger brand loyalty.

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