RELATIONSHIP MARKETING AND CUSTOMER PATRONAGE: MODERATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES: A Study of May and Baker Pharmaceutical Company, Ota, Ogun State

BY

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ABSTRACT

This article critically examined Relationship Marketing and Customer patronage deploying organizational policies as the moderating variable. The paper used May and Baker pharmaceutical company as the focus of the study. So far, it has not been clear whether or not relationship marketing is a potent factor driving successful marketing programme in an organization. The objectives of the study were to ascertain the extent to which customer service influences customer satisfaction and to find out the degree to which organizational policies moderate customer purchase decision-making. The instrument used for gathering data for the study was copies of questionnaire administered to respondents that were customers of May and Baker. A total of 200 copies of questionnaire were administered and 174 were correctly completed and returned for analysis. Descriptive research method was adopted. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and regression analysis. The results of the hypotheses tested validated the point that effective relationship marketing serves as a potent factor for achieving superior customer patronage and boosting business bottom-line. Nevertheless, organizational policies are to be streamlined in such a way that they do not adversely affect customer patronage. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that modern organizations should devote more time and attention to training employees to equip them with both hard and soft skills to deliver excellent relationship marketing in order to enhance business performance.
Key words: Customer relationship management, profitability, patronage, moderating role

1. INTRODUCTION

Corporate organizations operating in today's digital dispensation are finding innovative ways of reaching out to their customers. Firms do not just want to remain need satisfiers and profit makers but to be seen as valuable friends and solution providers to their customers. This calls for effective relationship Marketing. The ability to properly understand and come up with the best way to manage customer relationship has become a very interesting topic to both marketing practitioners and the academia (Gronroos, 2017). Organizations have discovered the importance of customers to the success and survival of an enterprise. Thus Vavra (2018) studies a group of pharmaceutical and toiletries enterprises in Lagos State with a view to finding out how their marketing policies affect sales. It was established that organizations are moving away from product and brand centered approach to customer centered concern and friendly organizational policies in their marketing practices. The study also found that cheerful customer service with courtesies and pleasantries on the part of marketing personnel produce customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Customer Relationship Management, on the other hand, calls for investment in software by organizations and development of sound and productive relationship with customers, shareholders and employees (Nwokah, 2015). For the purpose of this paper, relationship marketing and customer relationship management are used interchangeably since both of them are two friendly eagles in pursuit of one prey –the customer. The main objective of this study is to establish the extent to which relationship marketing influences customer patronage in an organization with organizational policies serving as the moderating variable.

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

(i) To ascertain the extent to which customer service influences customer satisfaction
(ii) To find out the degree to which organizational policies moderate customer purchase decision-making

Hypotheses of the study (stated in null form)

Ho$_1$: Customer service has no significant influence on customer satisfaction

Ho$_2$: Organizational policies have no significant moderating effect on customer patronage

2. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Marketing can be defined simply as a social and business process by which an organization creates and delivers value to its customers (Thompson, 2015). Kotler (2010) also viewed marketing as satisfaction of human needs at a profit. From these definitions, one can see clearly that "satisfaction of customer needs" is the foundation on which marketing is built. There is the need for modern corporate organizations to become customer-centric as this is the only way they can adequately identify and satisfy the needs of their customers. Many pharmaceutical companies do not make it a point of duty to carry out their customer relationship activities on a continuous basis. It is not enough to attend to the needs of customers at the point of purchase and end the effort there. Follow-up customer care and service must be employed to achieve the best of marketing outcomes. Pharmaceutical firms and toiletries enterprises must have continuous training programme to equip personnel with skills and experience to carry out this all-important task of customer relationship management due to the fact that today's customers have become sophisticated and knowledgeable. New strategies should also be devised and deployed to sustain customer interest and attention in order to improve customer patronage and loyalty.

Relationship Marketing and Customer Relationship Management

What a business owner does to build and maintain smooth relationship between marketing and management is called 'Relationship marketing', and how a business keeps records of customer interactions is called 'Customer Relationship Management'. These two customer-centric methods are two of the most common marketing strategies used by business owners to grow their businesses and remain competitive in the digital marketing environment. Understanding how to use these methods can help a business keep happy customers and increase sales volumes. By implementing both of these concepts, a business owner can establish mutually beneficial relationships with customers leading to long-term repeat purchases.

The terms relationship marketing and customer relationship management are still being used interchangeably in many marketing texts. As pointed out by Nevin (2017), these terms have been used to show a variety of perspectives and themes. Some of these themes offer a rather narrow functional marketing perspective while others gives abroad approach and orientation. Database

management represents a limited orientation towards customer relationship management Bikert, 2016)

According to Kotler (2014) customer relationship management is a very important concept and even perhaps the most important in modern marketing. The author defined Customer relationship management as the total process of building and maintaining customers' touch-points that are profitable to the organization. Vavra (2018) took a narrow but relevant, view of customer relationship management (CRM). The author is of the opinion that CRM helps an organization to achieve customer retention through the use of a variety of after marketing approaches and tactics that lead to customers staying in touch and bonding further with the organization after a purchase is made.

McKenna (2017) defined CRM in a more strategic way as putting the customer first and shifting the role of marketing from controlling the customer (expressive and selling) to honest participation with the customer (communicating and sharing knowledge). The core theme of all CRM and relationship marketing is the focus on an ever-growing cooperative and collaborative relationship between the firm and its customers.

Atul and Jagdish (2016) expressed strong view that Customer Relationship Management should be seen as a broad strategy and process of gaining, retaining, and partnering with segmented customers to provide superior value for the firm and also to the customer. It has to do with the integration of customer service, marketing, sales, and the supply-chain functions of the firm to achieve efficiency and effectiveness when delivering value to customers.

Relationship Marketing

Over the years, the definition of marketing has continuously switched emphasis from being transaction-driven to being process-driven. This process approach brings together both transactional (which relates to fast-moving consumer goods) and relational (connected to services) qualities, which attempts to create, preserve, and improve jointly advantageous relationships with customers in order to fulfill the intentions of all parties. This new meaning of marketing grasps the value of the lifetime customer and the significance of avoiding defections on the part of customers. Consumers are asking for more and for this reason, marketers have the responsibility

to take it upon themselves to live up to expectation. Upholding consumers' demand means the formation of strong relationships which breeds trust, respect, and long term commitment. Marketers then must be ready to ascertain and meet the needs of each buyer as an individual component in the buying process Vavra (2018).

For Relationship Marketing system to be effective in an organization, some key components need to be implemented. They include; trust and responsiveness to consumers' needs. Trust is a vital component of an effective relationship marketing program. Trust manages the capacity of the organization to actualize a security strategy that illuminates customer about what the firm wants to do with the individual information needed (Kania 2018). In this era of fraud and dishonesty, customers are exceptionally uncertain of the capacity of organizations to guarantee the secrecy of their information. Along these lines a marker must devise a method of guaranteeing the client that her information is secure and that any data that the client gives will really be kept secret.

Customer Relationship Management and Customer Patronage

Richard (2017) postulated that courtesy and pleasantries serve as the lubricants that lubricate the friction points in human relations. In the same vein, superior customer relationship management penetrates the heart of the customer and triggers new buying decisions. Parvatiyar and Sheth (2014) observed that the history of customer relationship management in developing nations dates back to pre-industrialization period. At that time, direct interaction started growing between manufacturers of agricultural products and their consumers. Artisans also began to make customized products for their customers. As time went on, other factors such as the growing process of intermediation in many industries, the advent of computers and advanced telecommunication technologies influenced the development of customer relationship management in both manufacturing and service industries. Specifically in industries such as the airline, banking and insurance the intermediation process is fast changing the process of marketing thereby increasing the popularity of customer relationship management. Integrated marketing tools such as Databases and direct marketing have given these industries the resources to individualize their marketing management effort and to attract more customer patronage (Buttle, 2014).

The process of intermediation and the consequent breakthrough of Customer relationship management are also due to the emergence and rapid growth of the service industry. Since most services are produced and delivered by the same institution, the role and use of middlemen is minimized if not entirely eliminated. An emotional bond develops between the provider of the service and the customer thereby creating the need for nurturing and developing the relationship. The expectation of customers is also rising with the popularity of customer relationship management. This is facilitated by new technology, innovation of existing processes and the growing access to advanced product features and services. Expectations of customers are highly dynamic even on daily and short-term basis. In the world of continuous change in customer expectations, building superior relationship with customers has become essential to enable an organization to keep track of customers changing needs and preferences in order to influence their buying decision (Parvatiyar & Sheth, 2014).

It is the aspiration of every business organization to attain greater and higher economic results and this can be achieved through creating a higher value through effective business interaction with their customers and the adoption of superior relationship management tactics. Competition is more intense in the market place today and therefore companies must devise more effective ways of serving their customers better. Mendoza (2014) identified the following as the major advantages of superior customer relationship management in an organization: (i) provides the capability for selling extra products, (ii) optimizes the cost of communication, (iii) facilitates gathering and use of marketing tools, (iv) enhances high quality of business interactions with customers and enables a firm to make more accurate forecast.

Moderating Effect of Organizational policies on Customer patronage

A corporate entity usually puts in place policies guiding its business activities and its relationship with customers. Such policies, among others, include policy on trade discount, cash discount, commission allowed distributors and wholesalers. Even though superior customer relationship management enhances customer patronage, policies put in place may also have some effect on the level of patronage on the company's products and services. By means of maintaining good relationship with customers, patronage may be increased provided organizational policies are encouraging to customers. It has been proven that it is cheaper to serve an existing customer than

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trying to win and retain the new ones (Ndubisi, 2016). However perfect customer relationship management and good company policies will close this gap between old and new customers. Companies may additionally shrink uncertainty of demand through constructing excellent relationship with consumers.

Social penetration concept states that companies will continue to deepen customer relationship so long as anticipated advantages exceed predicted cost (Altman and Taylor, 2017). If a firm is able to build trustworthy business-customer relationship, the result will be reduced uncertainty thus enhancing smooth relationship. Effective customer relationship management serves as facilitator of customer patronage and customer retention. Essentially, the success of an offering is dependent on customer willingness to assist the delivery of the product through smooth relationship. The potential of an institution to advance and preserve a relationship with its customers is dependent on the ability of the company to put in place sound trade policies that would interest customers, sustained continued business and enhance patronage.

Customer Relationship Management cycle with Moderating Factor

According to Gordon and Archer (2018) customer relationship management is an overall company business technique which is designed to optimize profitable relationship and enhance customer satisfaction. To achieve the best of results, there is the need to closely monitor customer interactions with the organization. Brown (2018) pointed out that customer relationship management is not as simple as it sounds. It is an exercise that calls for care, patience and understanding. Even though customer service is part of the CRM overall process, it is only a small fragment of the integrated approach that is holistic to building relationships with customer. CRM is often times seen as an enclosed system that builds strong relationships with customers. The diagram below, illustrates a cycle of customer relationship process beginning from the initial establishment of customer relationship management and terminating in dissemination of customer information containing feedback to improve further cycle of customer relationship management.

Customer Relationship management cycle with moderating Factor
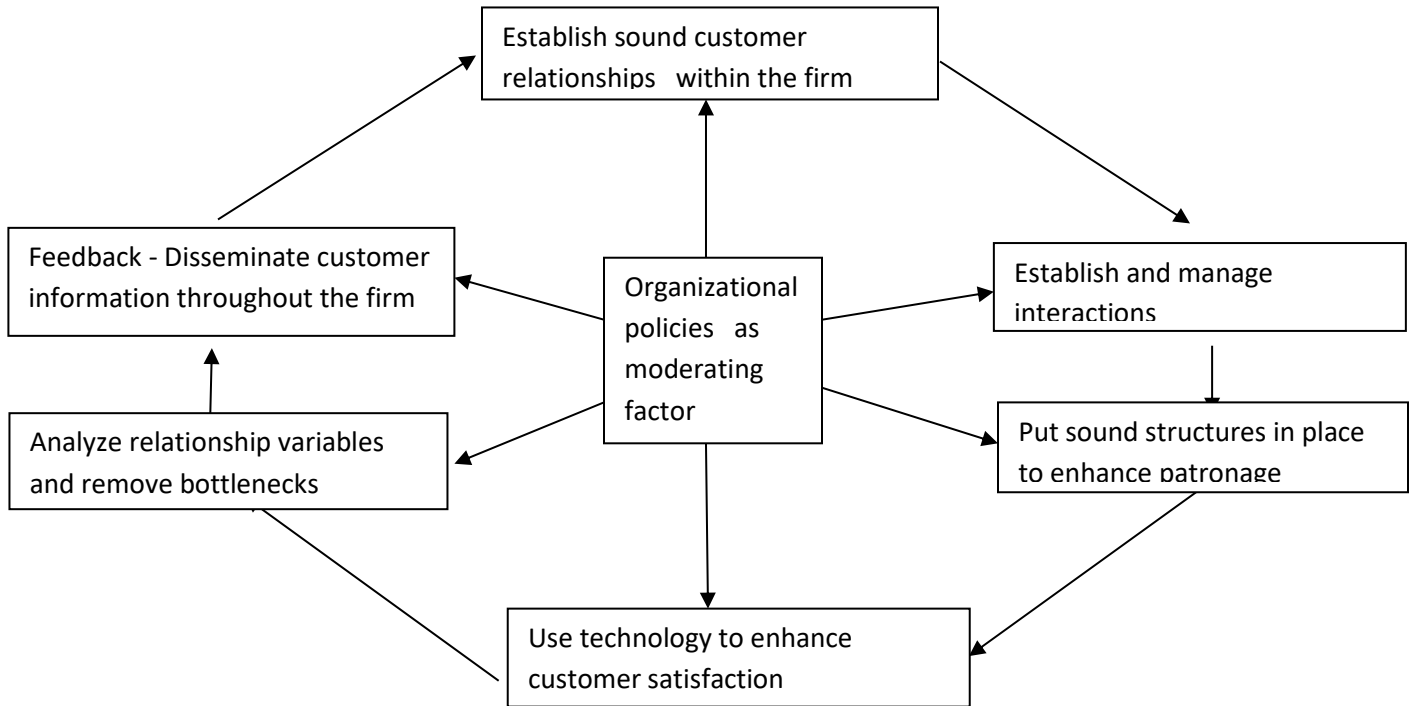
Source: Gant and Kimber Model of CRM Process (2015).

To start the CRM cycle, a company must:

(i) Establish relationships with customers within the organization. This may simply consist of learning who the customers are or their location geographically, or it may require more advanced information on the various products and services they are currently using.

 (ii) Once the company identifies its current customers and its popular products and services, it then tries to determine the degree of interaction between each customer and the organization.

(iii) Based on its information through knowledge of the customer and his or her level of interaction with the organization, the organization can then get all relevant data about the customer, which includes their measures of satisfaction, their response to promotions directly targeted at them, changes in their account activity, up to even movement of assets. According to Goutain (2013) technology is a major key in the success of any CRM system. It is used not only to speed up the gathering of data of customers, but also for storage and proper data integration of customers throughout the company. Data from customers are the firsthand or primary responses that are

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gotten from customers via surveys or asking straight forward questions. These firsthand data, which usually consist of individual responses on survey instruments such as; questionnaires, warranty cards, or even lists of purchases recorded by electronic cash registers that have been not analyzed yet or interpreted.

(iv) An important component of a CRM system is the adaptation of the right technology to store and coordinate customer data. The worth of customer data is dependent on the system that keeps the data and the level of consistency and precision of the data realized. Companies can go an extra mile to improving their process of collecting data through the use of data accuracy software such as validity integrity software and also data cleansing software. Data cleansing software has the responsibility of checking for inconsistencies and removes them. It then goes a little further to streamline the data. The key factor in a CRM system is to obtain data of high-quality and actionable from several sources that are complementary. Hurley (2002) pinpointed that, every company wants to be customer centric, yet not every customer is seen as equally important in any business. This is because some customers are in segments that are very much profitable for the company than others.

(v) Thus, the company carries out data mining to help it determine its different profitable and also unprofitable segments. By definition, data mining is an analytical process that puts together data that are personal, material and actionable about the buying behavior of a firm's customers both current and potential. The main duty of data mining is to transform customer data into valid and usable information, which in totality is made up of data that have been interpreted. Customers could be split into segments as highly profitable, unprofitable, high risk, or low risk, and these segments may depend highly on the customer's association with the business.

(vi) According to Lautsch (2015), once the customer data have been analyzed, they are thereby transformed into information and spread throughout the entire organization. As depicted in the customer relationship circle shown above, organizational policies have moderating effect on all the elements of the relationship circle. Gant and Kimber (2015) used this model to drive home the point that wrong organizational policies adversely affect customer relationship management in every organization.

3. METHODOLOGY

The researcher study proposes a framework to investigate Customer Relationship Management and Customer Retention on the platform of survey research design. Total population of the study was 500 from which 200 was derived as sample size using Yamane's formula. The instrument used for data collection is questionnaire which was carefully designed by the researcher. Two hundred (200) copies of questionnaire were administered on employees of the company in various departments, sections and units. One hundred and seventy four (174) were correctly completed and returned for analysis.

Face and content validity were established through subjecting the questionnaire to experts in the field for careful study and corrections before the instrument was put into use. To further strengthen validity of the instrument, the researcher ensured that all items presented in the questionnaire were in line with the research hypothesis, research question, and research objectives.

Reliability deals with the extent to which a research instrument used produces related consistent result. The reliability of the data source is established based on the fact that the consistency of data may be addressed due to its permanent state that can be repeated with little or no differences. The work done on this research has been focused towards meeting the requirement of adequate consistency in data and information. Hence, data obtained were subjected to Cronbach alpha test which recorded 0.8 results. It therefore means that the instrument is reliable as demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics:

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.901	20

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Based on the Cronbach Alpha table above, we can declare that the research instrument (questionnaire) is very reliable, with a value of 0.901, which is within the range of acceptable values for reliability statistics using Cronbach Alpha analysis. The data are analyzed through the presentation of percentage distribution, frequency Tables, Measures of central Tendency and

standard deviations. The data presented here are the answers to questions posed to the respondents through the use of the questionnaire administered, analysis and hypothesis testing was done by using the Linear Regression which was conducted through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) after which the results obtained were carefully analyzed and interpreted in Tables 2 and 3 respectively.

4. ANALYSIS

Table 2: Analysis of Bio-data

Demographic Characteristics					
Gender		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	74	42.5	42.5	42.5
	Female	100	57.5	57.5	100.0
	Total	174	100.0	100.0	
Age		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	14-17	38	21.8	21.8	21.8
	18-21	126	72.4	72.4	94.3
	22-25	10	5.7	5.7	100.0
	Total	174	100.0	100.0	
Educational Qualifications		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	WAEC/SSCE	165	94.8	94.8	94.8
	OTHERS	9	5.2	5.2	100.0

To complement the demographic characteristics, the two (2) research hypotheses were tested using linear regression.

Ho: Customer service has no significant influence on customer satisfaction

H_1: Customer service has significant influence on customer satisfaction

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.580[a]	.337	.333	.75613

a. Predictors: (Constant), Customer service

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	47.067	1	47.067	82.322	.000[b]
	Residual	92.622	162	.572		
	Total	139.688	163			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer satisfaction
b. Predictors: (Constant), Customer service
Source: Field survey 2022

The Model summary gives information concerning the overall goodness fit of the model being tested, with *R=.580* which shows that 58.0% of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable. The F-test statistic provides the test of the overall significance of the regression model. A test of the overall significance of the model shows an F value of 82.322 with a 0.00 significant level. This implies that the model is statically significant (sig=0.00) at 5% level of significance.

Implication and decision rule: reject the null Hypothesis with the implication that customer service has significant influence on customer satisfaction.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.453	.243		1.866	.064
	Customer service	.822	.091	.580	9.073	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customers' satisfaction
Source: field survey 2022

From table above, the beta co-efficient of 0.580 implies that 58.0% of the dependent variable is explained by independent variable (relationship marketing). The results show a unique contribution of relationship marketing to reporting for customer satisfaction. Therefore the utilization relationship marketing will affect the satisfaction of customers. The significant value is 0.00, which is less than 0.05, this shows that customer service is making a significant unique contribution to the prediction of the level of reporting for customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2

Ho: Organizational policies have no significant moderating effect on customer patronage

Hi: Organizational policies have significant moderating effect on customer patronage

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.437[a]	.191	.186	.60684

a. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational Policies

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	14.115	1	14.115	38.331	.000[b]
	Residual	59.657	162	.368		
	Total	73.772	163			

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.158	.218		5.312	.000
	Organizational Policies	.537	.087	.437	6.191	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Patronage

The Model summary gives information concerning the overall goodness fit of the model being tested, with *R=.437* which shows that 43.7% of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable. The F-test statistic provides the test of the overall significance of the regression model. A test of the overall significance of the model shows an F value of 38.331 with a 0.00 significant level. This implies that the model is statically significant (sig=0.00) at 5% level of significance.

Implication: the implication is that organizational policies have significant moderating effect on customer patronage. From table above, the beta co-efficient of 0.437 implies that 43.7% of the dependent variable is explained by independent variable (organizational policies). The results show a unique contribution of organizational policies to reporting for customer patronage. Therefore the utilization organizational policies will affect customer patronage. The significant value is 0.00, which is less than 0.05, this shows that organizational policies is making a significant unique contribution to the prediction of the level of reporting for customer patronage.

5. CONCLUSION

The paper examined relationship marketing and customer patronage with organizational policies playing moderating role. In today's competitive environment, customer relationship management, customer service and customer satisfaction are directly linked to profitability hence they play important role in the success of an organization. However, organizational policies must be in good shape for smooth relationship between the customers and the business to flourish. The objective of any organization does not stop at winning new customers to patronize the company. It also includes making effort to retain the patronage of the existing customers through ensuring excellent customer satisfaction. It was also found that smooth long relationship with customers brings down relationship costs and generates higher profit figures. Obviously, the subject of customer relationship management, customer satisfaction and retention are critical factors that determine the profitability of a company. Thus, modern corporate organizations must devise new tactics and strategies for enhancing customer relationship management and achieving organizational business bittom-line. According to a study undertaken by Roberts-Lombard (2015), close relationship between the organizations and its customers calls for harnessing the use of relevant information

technology to guarantee smooth customer relationship management and continued customer patronage.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

This article recommends that businesses should stand up to the challenge of ensuring that they perfectly tailor products and services to meet customers' needs, desires and expectations in order to gain customer satisfaction. Regular positioning and reinforcement of information technology (IT) facilities ought to be used as means of sustaining and handling customer relationships, retention and creation of superior customer values. Customer Relationship Management is human intensive and the fact that customer taste and preference change with time should be considered so that necessary changes can be made to satisfy these changing needs, Sound organizational policies should be put in place to facilitate relationship with customers and other stakeholders of the business. Any company that wants to be ahead of its competitors should invest significantly in harnessing the information provided by their customers that would be valuable in improving customer service and achieving long-term customer patronage.

7. CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

This paper has been able to shade light on the fact that relationship management when properly handled does not produce automatic customer patronage. For strong customer patronage to be achieved, organizational policies must be adequate to attract and sustain customer patronage in the organization.

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