The Relationship between Customer Service Quality and Customer Loyalty among Retail Pharmacies in Western Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The sought to establish the effect of relationship quality on customer loyalty among registered pharmaceutical firms in Western Kenya. The study used descriptive research design in which multistage sampling technique was employed to select a sample size of 52 from the targeted population of 60. A self administered structured and semi structured questionnaires were used to collect primary data. The findings revealed that there is a positive relationship between relationship quality dimensions and Customer loyalty as was shown by R^2 of 62.7% of the regression model. The study provided empirical evidence on the significant effect of relationship quality on customer loyalty. It also contributed to the academic field by in cooperating and testing service quality as relationship quality dimension as suggested by other researchers in relationship marketing. It further recommended that Pharmaceutical firms should focus on those activities that would ensure maximum service quality, customer satisfaction, trust and commitment to achieve competitive advantage.

Key words: *Relationship quality, Customer Loyalty, pharmaceutical firms, Western Kenya.*

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In a business to business environment, it is important to have strategic relationship management between supplier and business customers, as this is a crucial factor in building business success in the market There is a general agreement in the relationship marketing literature that the quality of the relationship between the parties involved is an important determinant of the permanence and intensity of the relationship and the consequent success of the relationship marketing practices (Reuben et al 2007). In marketing literature, loyalty has been

widely recognized as being of the utmost importance with positive effect on profits of having a loyal customer base. Loyalty reduces marketing costs, generates positive word of mouth recommendation, and greater resistance among loyal consumers to competitive strategies from rival suppliers (Reuben, 2007).

1.1   Background of the Study
1.1.1   Pharmaceutical Business
The earliest drugs stores was opened by Arabian pharmacists in Baghdad in the year 754 (Hadzovic, 1997).Soon after more stores began operating throughout the Islamic world and eventually in Europe. By 19th century, many drugs store in Europe and North America eventually developed into larger stores with mass distribution. The pharmaceutical business has been the most profitable of all businesses in   2006 in the US (John 2007). Retail sales in the US was estimated at US dollars 250billion in 2006 (John 2007). Pharmaceutical companies spend a large amount of money on advertising and lobbying in the US. Due to the introduction of generic medicine competition has increasingly stiffened with some manufacturing firms closing down. Many experts agree that relationship marketing should be a natural for the pharmaceutical industry as this leads to long term business loyalty.

The pharmaceutical industry in Kenya consists of three segments namely the manufacturers, distributors / wholesalers and retailers. All these play a major role in supporting the country's health sector both socially in improving the quality of life, and economically in contributing to the country's economic growth and overall job creation.

The market for pharmaceutical products was estimated at US$240million in 2008, (Kenya economic survey, 2009), excluding the donor funded purchases. There is an increasing demand for medicine driven by a number of factors such as disease incidences, need for more procurements by the government, export growth in the COMESA market and the recent introduction of the health insurance scheme is expected to increase the demand. The drug distribution in Kenya can be classified into public through KEMSA, non governmental organizations for example MEDS, and distribution by private Channels. The private sector is served by distributors distributing both imports and locally manufactured goods and by the local manufactures themselves. There are many distributors and wholesalers registered by the pharmacy and poisons board, and a large number of unregistered outlets. An estimate of the Kenyan pharmacy market by Business Monitor International (BMI) shows that the expenditure on prescription medicines in 2008 was Khs10.8billion (US$158million) and that this constituted 68.7% of the total market. (Prescription medicine includes generics, branded generics and original brands). The over the counter market component was estimated at Khs4.9billion (US$72million). OTC medicines are usually low priced and sales volume needs to be high attracting high competition. The liberalization of the market by the Government has opened up stiff competition between the locals and between the local and the emerging importers especially from India.

1.2   Statement of the Problem
The number of distributors of pharmaceutical products in Western Kenya has continued to rise.   New distribution shops are being established   triggering intense competition among local wholesalers and between local and emerging wholesalers.   The cost of marketing through promotional activities has increased. Fluctuating and unpredictable patterns of monthly revenues and reducing profit margins are recorded. The increasing cost of marketing is evidenced by increasing bonus schemes offered on some products. Low pricing in line with market competition is an indication of reducing profitability which may impact on overall revenue. Reports show inconsistent business trends which can partly be attributable to customers' behavioral patterns. So much is being done in terms of promotion and other forms of marketing. However the effects of these marketing activities are unpredictable. There is need for paradigm shift in the marketing package that should include considerable efforts towards relationship marketing. This translates to customer loyalty.

The importance of customer loyalty is emphasized, with the positive result of increased business profitability, low costs incurred for the purpose of marketing, and resistance among loyal customers to competitive strategies adopted by rival firms (Reuben et al, 2003). Empirical studies on the drivers of business loyalty should be carried out in this industry segment in line with recommendations by Hennig-Thurau et al (2002) and other researchers in relationship marketing. It is for this reason that this study sought to investigate the effect of relationship quality on customer loyalty among pharmaceutical firms.

1.3 Conceptual Framework
The conceptual framework of this study examined how relationship quality affects customer loyalty. The relationship quality aspects included customer perceived service quality, trust, satisfaction and commitment. However customer loyalty is not attributed to relationship quality alone. There are intervening variables

classified into three variables as shown in figure 1.1 below. This model proposed a positive relationship between commitment and loyalty. Commitment was conceptualized to mean both   the psychological feelings the retailer has towards the wholesaler and the calculated risks of leaving the relationship. Measurement items were developed and   modified based on the definition and items developed by Moorman et al, (1992), and items developed by Zineldine et al, (2000).
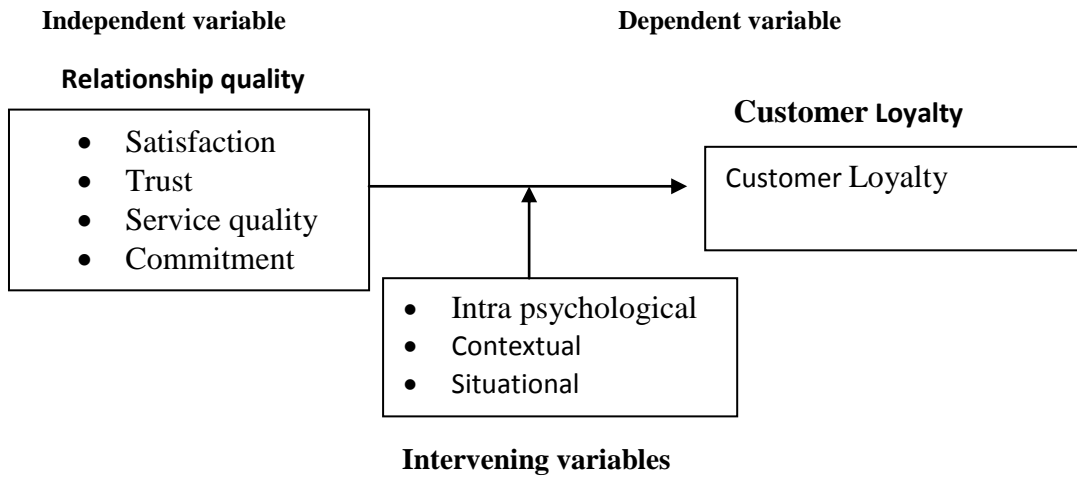
Independent variable   **Dependent variable**

Relationship quality

• Satisfaction • Trust • Service quality • Commitment

Customer Loyalty

Customer Loyalty

• Intra psychological • Contextual • Situational

Intervening variables

Figure 1:1   Relationship quality and loyalty variables
Source: Self conceptualization (2011)

From the figure 1.1 above, Satisfaction was conceptualized as the summarizing construct that contained an evaluation of the quality of all the previous interactions with the supplier. Research findings had demonstrated a link between customer satisfaction and business loyalty (Ruben2007). This model proposed a positive relationship between satisfaction and loyalty. Measurement items were developed and modified based on the definition and items developed by Civilai et al, (2007).Commitment referred to the motivation to stay with the supplier (Moorman et al., 1992). Previous research demonstrated Trust to be positively related to loyalty and is a major determinant of commitment. Trust was defined as the willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence which means that there has to be belief in the other partner's trustworthiness that results from the expertise, reliability or intentionality of the partner (Ha et al, 2004).

In line with the study objectives, customer perceived quality was conceptualized to mean the process of service delivery. The assumption was that the wholesaler performs in a highly competitive environment and that there is uniformity in product quality (Gronroos, 1997). Service quality was conceptualized, as the reliability of the service provider, assurance by the service provider, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness of the service provider as developed by Parasuraman et al, (1985).Two aspects of loyalty are the attitudinal and behavioral loyalty as defined in the literature below. Retailer perceptions was sought and analyst on there willingness to continue repurchasing and recommending other customers to the wholesaler. Both aspects of loyalty were measured by items   modified from the work of   Woo, (2004) and Zineldine *et al.* (2000). The conceptual framework above   showed in general the effect of intervening variables that can be intrapsychological, contextual and situational in nature. One major variable among the intrapsychological variable was the customer predisposition to variety seeking. The customers' inherent need for diversity may evoke switching behavior despite perception of high quality. Contextual factors encompass a variety of different factors such as the social context, for example influence by peer, and legal restrictions to suppliers. Situational factors include time pressure and distance from supplier, temporary budget restrictions, and lack of availability of certain desired products or service.

2.0   METHODOLOGY
2.1Research Design
This study used a descriptive   sample survey in design. This approach enabled the researcher   to collect adequate data from retail pharmacies in western Kenya to help answer research questions. For effective analysis and inferences, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used.

2.2 Study Population and Sampling Techniques

The population of interest was registered retail pharmacies in Western Kenya, who are customers to HL pharmaceuticals. Kisumu (10), Kericho (7), Kisii (12), Eldoret (23), Kakamega (8). This study adopted multistage sampling technique. Area sampling technique was employed with ratio of sample size to size of area population emphasized to ensure proportionate representation of the subjects in the sample. Random sampling was used to pick actual retail firms to be interviewed from the clusters. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents from the selected retail firms. The sample size was derived as follows;

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{d^2}$$

Where:

> n = the desired sample size (if target population is greater than 10,000)
> z = the standard normal deviate at the required confidence level.
> P = the proportion in the target population estimated to have characteristic
>   Being measured.
> q = 1-p
> d = the level of statistical significance set.

Assuming 50% of the population have the characteristics being measured, q=1-0.5
Assuming we desire accuracy at 0.05 level. The Z-statistic is 1.96 at this level
Therefore n= $(1.96)^2(.5)$ $(.5)/(.05)^2$ =384.
Because the population is less than 10000
Adjusted sample size

$$nf = \frac{n}{1 + (n/N)} = 384 \div \{1+(384/60)\} = 52$$

Where

> nf = the desired sample size when population is less than 10,000
> n = the desired sample size when population more than 10,000.
> N = the estimate of the population size (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003)

2.3 Data type, Collection Methods and Instruments

Both primary and secondary data was used in this study. Secondary data was gathered from the relevant print and electronic documents to refine the problem and objectives, review literature, methodologies employed in previous work and also to support the findings. Self administered semi structured Questionnaires   was used to collect primary data. Questions   were developed in various themes in line with the various dimensions of the variables under study. Measurement items were developed from relationship marketing literature, modified according to objectives of the study. The researcher consulted with the supervisor to improve the reliability of the measuring instrument accordingly. The questionnaires   were pretested for reliability. Non response error was estimated and adjusted to improve reliability and internal validity of the study results.

2.4 Reliability and Validity of the research instruments

The questionnaire was refined then pretested in other group other than the actual respondents. This reduced the risk of misunderstanding and misinterpretation by the actual respondents thus improving internal validity of the research instrument. The construct validity was improved through thorough review of literature to ensure that the measurement items conform to theoretical assertions of the concept under study. R-squared was used to assess the reliability of the measuring items in the questionnaire. It is important to emphasize that the study focused on the dynamics of the variables under study to support the theoretical assertions   of the concepts under study in line with recommendations by other researchers.

2.5 Data Analysis

The study used descriptive and inferential statistics. Responses for all questionnaires except for demographic profiles were captured in Likert scale of 1 to 5. Data computation was performed by input of 5-point data loaded into a statistical software package (SPSS). Correlation and regression analysis was used to determine the relationship between variables. Pearson's correlation was used to describe how the variables are related and the strengths of the relationships. Multiple regression model was used to determine whether the sets of independent variables together predict the dependent variable. The regression model was in the form:
$Y=\beta o+\beta_1 X_1+\beta_2 X_2+\beta_3 X_3+\beta_4 X_4+\varepsilon$

Where;

β_o –Is the constant or intercept

β_{1-4} – Are the regression coefficients or change induced in Y by each X

X_1- Independent variable customer satisfaction

X_2- Independent variable customer trust

X_3- Independent variable customer perceived service quality

X_4- Independent variable customer commitment

Y- Dependent variable- customer loyalty

ε- Is the error component.

Data analysis included the establishment and presentation in tables of the central tendency measures and measures of dispersion to show expected statistics. Correlation matrices and narrations were also applied.

3.0 Results and Discussions
3.1 Relationship between quality dimensions and Customer loyalty

Table 3.1 Model summary for regression and correlation matrix

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.792(a)	.627	.440	2.40554

a Predictors: (Constant), TRUST, SATISFACTION, COMMITMENT, SERVICE QUALITY

The reliability of the constructs was assessed using R-squared coefficient**.** The suggested model indicated and explained that 62.7% of the change in one variable is explained by a change in the related variable. In customer loyalty variation, depending on the relationship quality level, the reliabilities of the studied variables were therefore above the acceptable standard (at least .60 or 60%) prescribed by Nunnally (1978).

Table 3.1.1 ANOVA (b)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	58.276	3	19.425	3.357	.096(a)
	Residual	34.720	6	5.787		
	Total	92.996	9			

a **Predictors**: (Constant), trust, satisfaction, commitment, service quality
b **Dependent Variable**: customer loyalty

Table 3.1.2 Regression Coefficients (a)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	8.459	4.068		2.079	.083
	TRUST	.405	.245	.466	-1.650	.150
	SATISFACTION	.014	.183	.019	.074	.943
	COMMITMENT	.006	.098	.004	.059	.954
	SERVICE QUALITY	.827	.082	.847	10.121	.000

a **Dependent Variable**: customer loyalty

From table 3.1.6c the unstandardized parameters tell the difference in Y per unit change in X whereas the standardized tells the difference in Y in standard deviations per standard deviation difference in X. The Beta coefficients are the estimates resulting from an analysis performed on variables that have been standardized so

that they have variances of 1. The Standard Error is the square root of the Residual Mean Square. It is the standard deviation of the data about the regression line, rather than about the sample mean. The Standard Errors of the estimates are more subject to sampling variability. In a perfect scene where all the predictors are measured with the same degree of reliability and there are no outliers or overly influential data points, this might be true but it rarely is the case. In addition, the standardized estimates are more subject to sampling variability.

Table 3.1.6d   Correlations

		TRUST	SATISFACTION	COMMITMENT	SERVICE QUALITY
TRUST	Pearson Correlation	1	.681(*)	.112	.675(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.030	.759	.032
	N	35	35	35	35
SATISFACTION	Pearson Correlation	.681(*)	1	.084	-.470
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.060	.	.817	.171
	N	35	35	35	35
COMMITMENT	Pearson Correlation	.112	.084	1	.118
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.759	.817	.	.745
	N	35	35	35	35
SERVICE QUALITY	Pearson Correlation	.675(*)	.470	-.118	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.032	.171	.745	.
	N	35	35	35	35

* **Correlation** is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The hypothesis were confirmed and validated in all cases, both within quality dimensions and Customer loyalty, positive correlations being observed within each pair of relationship quality and Customer loyalty components. Nevertheless, these correlations were not similar in intensity. Trust, satisfaction, commitment and service quality had (0.681, $p=0.03$), (0.112, $p=0.759$) and (0.675, $p=0.032$). Thus, on satisfaction, the strongest correlations were identified between Customer satisfaction and trust ($r=0.681, p=0.060$) where as satisfaction and commitment had a correlation of (0.084, $p=0.817$). However, Customer satisfaction and service quality correlated at r=0.084 significant at $p=0.817$. On commitment, the dimensions of trust had the strongest significance level (0.112, $p=0.759$), followed by satisfaction, and service quality had (0.084, $p=0.817$) and (0.118, $p=0.745$) respectively.

The result of correlation analysis depicted that the independent variable, relationship quality, is positively and significantly related with Customer loyalty (r = .40, p<.05). The result of regression analysis shows that Customer satisfaction is statistically significantly related with Customer loyalty (β = 0.342, p<.05). Collectively the two variables explained 35.9% of the variance.
The regression model was in the form:
$Y=\beta o+\beta_1 X_1+\beta_2 X_2+\beta_3 X_3+\beta_4 X_4+\varepsilon$

Where;

        Y-Dependent variable Customer Loyalty

        β_o –Is the constant or intercept

        β_{1-} – Are the regression coefficients or change induced in Y by each X

        X_1- Independent variable customer satisfaction

        X_2- Independent variable customer trust

        X_3- Independent variable customer perceived service quality

      X_4- Independent variable customer commitment

Thus, the linear function transformed to adopt the form of:
$Y=8.459+.014X_1+0.405X_2+.827X_3+0.006X_4+4.068$

The β statistics interpreted ranking measures of these independent variables, whereby the higher magnitude of the β values, the more influence the variables has on the overall model. The β statistics measured indicated that service quality with β statistics of .827 had the most influence in the model followed by customer trust at .405.

3.2   Discussions

The existence of significant relationship from the findings of Pearson correlation and multiple regression between relationship quality dimensions and customer loyalty is supported by the concept of relationship suggested by Civilai et al.,(2007), Ruben et al., (2007).

3.2.1 Relationship between service quality and customer loyalty

As a critical measure of organizational performance, service quality remains at the forefront of both the marketing literature generally and the service marketing literature specifically (Jensen and Markland1996). Both practitioners and academics are keen on accurately measuring perceived quality in order to better understand its essential antecedents and consequences and, ultimately, methods for improving quality to achieve competitive advantage and build customer loyalty (Palmer and Cole, 1995). De Ruyter and Wetzel (1998) further suggest that it is important to determine the nature and strength of the relationship between perceived service quality and loyalty for a firm and/or different industry levels. Firm- and industry-level assessment of the quality-service loyalty link provides useful information to shareholders on the viability of future performance.

Previous research has confirmed that the relationship between perceived quality and customer loyalty exists and is positive (Ruben *et al.*, 2007). The result of the current research study was also in support of the previous findings by Ruben *et al*. (2007). The results demonstrated a positive correlation between service quality and customer loyalty. From the result model service quality had the strongest contribution at β levels of .827. Therefore for firms to achieve competitive edge they need to improve much on their service quality as this will ensure customer trust and long term business success. In the case of HL ltd, the firm needs to improve on the various dimensions of service quality that would ensure reliability, high responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibility. The tables 3.1.1a to 3.1.1e shows near neutral averages on the service quality aspect therefore the company should consider working towards improving its service quality.

3.2.2 Relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty to the supplier Kotler (1994) importantly stated that "the key to customer retention is customer satisfaction". There is much theoretical and empirical evidence that shows the link between satisfaction and customer loyalty.   In consumer marketing, there is consistent evidence that satisfaction contributes to repurchase intentions, behavioral intentions, customer retention and customer loyalty (Roberts et al.,2003).

In business-to-business research, several authors showed that a link between satisfaction and loyalty exists. For example, Eriksson and Vaghult (2000) found that satisfied customers stay with the firm. Their results showed that as relationship satisfaction increases so does customer loyalty.

Their findings indicated that long lasting and deep relationships are the result of the parties involved being satisfied with the outcome of their work. The current research findings demonstrated that customer satisfaction significantly influences customer loyalty.

3.2.3 Relationship between trust, commitment and customer loyalty.

The construct of trust has been particularly associated with the development of interest in relationship marketing in general and particularly in the context of business markets (Blois, 1999). Understanding the nature of trust and the importance of its contribution to loyalty will leave a major impact on how business relationships are developed and managed. Several authors regard trust as a central construct to the development of successful service relationships in the market and for the achievement of customer loyalty. Parasuraman et al. (1985) introduced trust as a critical success factor in successful service relationships. The authors suggest that customers need to feel safe in dealings with suppliers and need to be assured that their interaction is confidential in that they are able to trust their suppliers. Berry (1995) suggested that "relationship marketing is built on the foundation of trust". In relation to customer loyalty, Reichheld and Schefter (2000) highlighted the importance of trust in that "to gain loyalty of customers, you must first gain trust". In addition, trust is an important feature or aspect in the development of quality relationships built through a process of making and keeping promises (Dwyer et al., 1987; Gronroos, 1990; Hewett and Bearden, 2001). Past research has shown a link between trust and customer loyalty. Some studies have shown customer loyalty to be a consequence of trust. Empirically, there is evidence of direct effects of trust on loyalty. A direct link between trust and loyalty has been demonstrated in several research studies. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) demonstrated that trust plays an important role in the brand domain in that they link (brand) trust to brand performance through brand loyalty. The proposed hypothesis too reflected the idea which is supported in hypothesis 1 in this study. The results of the table 3.1.4 on trust indicate an average score of 3.422 on the level of trust the customers have on their supplier. The supplier needs to work towards improving his services by improving in areas such as keeping promises (mean 2.876), improving integrity among other areas to ensure trust. Commitment correlated

positively with trust at (0.112,p=0.759).this shows that strong customer trust ensures commitment to the relationship and this supports the work done by previous researchers such as Ruben et al., (2007).

The construct of commitment is regarded as the central construct in relationship marketing (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999) The concept of commitment stems from industrial and organizational psychology and has been viewed as an intention to continue a course of action or activity such as maintaining a relationship with a business partner (Fehr 1988). In the buyer-and-seller relationship literature, commitment is defined as an implicit or explicit pledge of relational continuity between exchange partners (Dwyer et al. 1987).

In simpler terms, commitment refers to the motivation to stay with a supplier or supplier (Moorman et al. 1992). In a business relationship, commitment is a psychological sentiment of the mind through which an attitude concerning continuation of a relationship with a business partner is formed (Wetzel's, de Ruyter and Birgelen. 1998).

In terms of the relationship between commitment and loyalty, Dick and Basu (1994) suggested that potential consequences of commitment may include word of mouth communications- an important aspect of attitudinal loyalty. Customers who have high commitment in a product or service will buy more. In other words, commitment leads to behavioral aspect of loyalty. In support of this notion, Pritchard, Havitz and Howard (1999) found a significant path from resistance to change (commitment) to loyalty. This link was particularly strong in their airline sample with more than half of loyalty variance accounted for by this path. Other authors such as Fullerton (2003) Garbarino and Johnson (1999), Geysken, Steenkamp, Scheer and Kumar (1996), Gilliland and Bello (2002), and Wetzel's, de Ruyter and Birgelen (1998) also provided empirical evidence that the relationship of customer commitment to future purchase intentions and intention to stay in the relationship exists.

The current study results demonstrated strong positive correlation between trust and commitment, trust having highest correlation with customer loyalty. The results from this current research shows a number of respondents scoring high (mean 4.463) by certifying that they take pleasure in being the customers of the company. This demonstrates one aspect of commitment as the psychological sentiment of the mind. On the other hand on calculative aspect of commitment the scores were near neutral at 3.623 with higher standard deviation, showing that customers are divided on whether they gain or not in relating to the supplier. The supplier must consider working on those aspects that would ensure maximum commitment to the organization. Commitment showed strong correlation with loyalty.

The table 3.1.3 shows a higher score on customer loyalty with a mean of 4.32975 and standard deviation of .84675. Most customers were willing to stay with the supplier and also recommend other customers to the supplier. Without customer loyalty it is very difficult for any business to sustain itself. Achieving the desired results is frequently a result of customer loyalty. Relationship marketing theory also contends that organizations that deliver superior benefits will be highly valued and that partners will commit themselves to establishing, developing and maintaining relationships with such parties. Conversely when the performance of marketing function is inefficient, the customers will experience a decrease in relationship quality.

4.0   SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
4.1   Conclusions
In summary, the study had examined the relationships between relationship quality and customer loyalty. The study empirically incorporated and tested service quality dimension as an essential dimension of relationship quality as proposed by Hennig-Thurau et al., (1997).the research demonstrated the importance of investment in relationship quality to achieve greater customer loyalty. More particularly HL ltd should improve more in the areas where it was rated low in service delivery, satisfaction, commitment and trust.

The findings of this study indicated that relationship quality dimensions namely trust, service quality, satisfaction and commitment have significant positive effect on the ultimate outcome customer loyalty. Determinants of relationship quality have been widely accepted in the literature as an overall assessment of the strength of the relationship. The findings of the present study confirm the significant effect of all the components of relationship quality on customer loyalty.

Every supplier wants to create and retain a loyal customer who engages in continued profitable business with him. Customer Loyalty is the measure of success of the supplier in retaining a long term relationship with the customer. Thus customer loyalty is when a supplier receives the ultimate reward of his efforts in interacting with

its customer. It may be possible that the supplier may not have the best product or the customer may be having some problems with the supplier in respect of his supply of the product but the customer likes to ignore other options and prefers to continue with the same supplier as the customer thinks the supplier provides him more value and benefit than others.

4.2   Recommendations
4.2.1   Recommendation to Policy Makers
As a policy concern, future research should concentrate on issues that would ensure customer loyalty. Customer service managers are advised to focus their efforts in managing relationship quality because of its direct effect on loyalty. Marketing managers need to clearly define relationship development strategies, service provision policies and develop homogeneous service provision. From strategic point of view, this study showed potential areas of competitive advantage and relationship strategies development. Relationship quality can help firms achieve competitive advantage. In business settings, priority should be given for building strategies based on relationship quality leveraging it to detrimental customer reactions.

4.2.2   Recommendation for Further Research
The results of the study were based on the survey of customers of a single organization of the pharmaceutical sector. As such the applicability of the current findings to other industry contexts would need further research and should be extended to respondents from other organizations in the same industry. Because of time and cost, the study involved a cross sectional survey and not longitudinal study. This means that data was gathered at one point in time; as such it only offered a static view without taking into account the dynamic nature of the relationships. Instead, it would be possible to break down the research into chronological parts and for each part, to examine the variation in perceptions of customers over longer period.

Thirdly the study focused on relationship quality and loyalty, but it did not relate anything about successful relationships, that is profitability or strategic growth. Further research should address whether success results from high quality of relationship generated. To the academic field this research incorporated service quality as relationship quality dimension for empirical testing in current study set up as recommended by other researchers in relationship marketing and would contribute to support the literature. Further research is recommended in other industries.

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