A STUDY ON CREATING A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE AT NAMIBIA WILDLIFE RESORTS THROUGH CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

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BY

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APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have read and recommended to the University of Namibia; a research project entitled: A study of creating a competitive advantage at Namibia Wildlife Resorts through customer relationship management in accordance with the requirements of the Master of Business Administration in management strategy.

………………………………….

SUPERVISOR

DATE………………………………

DECLARATION

I, Niita Ndeshipanda Evaristus declare that this thesis is my original piece of work and

to my knowledge has not been submitted for a similar degree in any other university

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Signature   Date

DEDICATION

First and foremost, I give thanks to the Almighty for having blessed me with a supportive family (my husband, daughters, mom, dad and my brothers) to whom I am dedicating my thesis. A special feeling of gratitude goes to my loving husband Evaristus Evaristus who supported me throughout the process. Our daughters, Celia-Joy and Rose-Jean were a great source of strength and motivation knowing that I am doing it for them.

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on examining the creation of competitive advantage at Namibia Wildlife Resorts through customer relationship management. The purpose of this proposed study is to investigate the extent to which the practice of customer care relationships contributes to occupancy levels in the travel and tourism industry with specific reference to Namibia Wildlife Resorts. The overall objective of the proposed study is to understand how customer relationship management strategy, as a marketing intervention, can be used to maintain and create relationships in order to improve occupancy. Specifically, the study aims to investigate the impact of customer relationship management and occupancy in the travel and tourism industry, particularly NWR. The study also aims to find out the perception of NWR management and staff on how they see the relationship between CRM and occupancy.

The research adopted the qualitative approach and is explorative in nature. Collected data was analyzed by reading through the interviews and discussion transcripts and identifying main themes that emerged. The researcher also looked at similarities and differences in different sets of data to see what different groups or key informants have said. All in all, the information collected was summarized and synthesized to obtain the results of the study.

The major findings that emerged from the research are that NWR does not have a performance management system; a clear strategy of handling customer needs. The major recommendation for this study is that; the NWR should introduce performance management system so as to appraise employees. It also emerged that NWR should

establish a clear strategy of handling customer needs. Overall, it is satisfying to know that a good CRM strategy can create a competitive advantage in the marketplace because the research results prove that the relationship between CRM and occupancy does exist.

Due to the limited literature available on CRM in the tourism industry, the researcher had to rely on the CRM concept in general and also relied on the research results especially on occupancy related information. In addition, there are vacancies within the top management level and thus middle management and supervisory level employees were included.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Orientation of the proposed study

From the literature reviewed, numerous researches have already been done on how to implement the management of customer relationships. Indications are that most of these strategies fail (Osarenkhoe and Bennani, 2007; Oztaysi, Sezgin and Ozok, 2011). It thus raises questions on whether there is sufficient understanding on the CRM best practices. To this end, this study aims to explore more on CRM development in hospitality companies for the purpose of increasing competitiveness by implementing an effective customer relationship management strategy with specific reference to Namibia Wildlife Resorts. As per Vogt (2011, p. 360) "customer relationship management has not yet been a well-researched topic by tourism researchers and despite the gap in tourism literature on CRM, many travel behaviorists have contributed to the understanding of customers or consumers of travel experiences".

Companies tend to invest heavily on customer relationship management technology which becomes a waste of resources when it fails. Peppers and Rogers (2010) mentioned that, too many firms have jumped on the bandwagon of CRM without proper preparation (as cited in Nguyen and Mutum, 2012). It is thus important to know what needs to be done before any decision is made on implementing customer relationship management strategy at Namibia Wildlife Resorts (NWR). Tsiotsou and Ratten (2010, p. 533) mentioned that "as the global population ages and travelling becomes cheaper and quicker than it is today, tourism will continue to be a cornerstone

of the global economy. The increased emphasis on sustainability and lifestyle decisions will also heavily influence tourism and the way it is marketed in the future."

Sin *et al* (2005), cited in Nguyen and Mutum (2012) are of the view that both relationship marketing and customer relationship management do not have universally accepted definitions, and so often, both are used interchangeably which has caused much confusion. The literature therefore, outlines that relationship marketing is a predecessor to customer relationship management. It can be concluded that there is a bit of inconsistency in the literature with regards to the subject of customer relationship management hence it is worth clarifying the usage of the terms 'relationship marketing' and 'customer relationship management' at the beginning.

Buttle (2004) said that "many studies have been conducted on CRM in various industries in the past 20 years but there are still significant disagreements on the definition and meaning" (as cited in Lo, Stalcup, and Lee, 2010). Nevertheless, it is important to note that, as customer relationship management increases in exposure, many scholars tend to emphasise the need for a holistic approach and view customer relationship management as a process reflecting integration of market orientation and information communication technology.

Therefore, it may be concluded that relationship marketing suggests that instead of the traditional approach, marketing should strongly emphasize on building relationships that are beneficial between the organisation and its markets and stakeholders.

According to the NWR Strategic Marketing, Sales and Communication Work Plan (2012), the main aim of the plan is to "increase occupancy at all facilities and to reach

a minimum of the breakeven occupancy for each facility that has not yet reached breakeven, and to increase the occupancy and profit margin for those facilities that have already exceeded breakeven point".

Therefore, the assumption of the proposed study is that customer relationship management can help an organisation to create a competitive advantage. In addition, the purpose of the study is to offer a theoretical explanation of customer relationship management as a means of creating and maintaining long-term relationships with customers in order to create a sustainable competitive advantage.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The economic crisis that emerged during 2008 caught the world unprepared. As per the Namibia Wildlife Resort's annual report 2008/2009, "it is estimated that the recession could result in a reduction in tourist arrivals to Namibia by 20%". In the absence of a CRM strategy, the decline of tourist arrivals can have a damning impact on the occupancy at NWR camps. The estimated decline of tourist arrivals in the country is a worrying situation. It is not known how customer relationships can contribute to the levels of occupancy at Namibia Wildlife Resorts. It is therefore necessary to explore customer relationship management as a marketing intervention to maintain and improve occupancy in order to gain a competitive position in the marketplace. Ivanovic, *et al* (2011, p. 62) says that CRM has become one of the most important strategy in attracting and increasing tourist arrivals, in filling the tourist facilities and in satisfying the needs of guests".

Companies in tourist destinations would have soon to adopt the practice of successful international companies that have recognized the importance and benefits of CRM as a key strategy in achieving success and the foundation for building a sustainable competitive advantage (Ivanovic *et al,* 2011). The purpose of this proposed study is to investigate the extent to which the practice of customer care relationships contributes to occupancy levels in the travel and tourism industry with specific reference to Namibia Wildlife Resorts.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The overall objective of the proposed study is to find out how customer relationship management strategy, as a marketing intervention, can be used to maintain and create relationships in order to improve occupancy. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. To investigate the impact of customer relationship management and occupancy in the travel and tourism industry, particularly NWR and

2. To find out the perception of NWR management and staff on how they see the relationship between CRM and occupancy.

1.4 Significance of the study

The study will contribute to the management of Namibia Wildlife Resorts because it will investigate the effectiveness of customer relationship management as a marketing intervention tool to gain a competitive advantage; and thereby improving occupancy at the camps.

The study is also important to service organizations in Namibia and more specifically to organizations offering accommodation in the various tourist destinations of

Namibia to understand the benefits of customer relationship management. In addition, the study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge and practice in the tourism industry in Namibia as there was no study that the researcher came across.

1.5 Limitations of the study

The most limiting factor is that the study is limited to the tourism industry although it also relates to any service organization in any industry. More specifically, the study was limited to Namibia Wildlife Resorts, a State-Owned Enterprise (SOE) that is solely mandated to provide accommodation inside the prime tourist destinations (national parks). Therefore, other establishments or organizations offering accommodation outside the national parks have been omitted.

The proposed study was more of a desktop review and this is due to limitations of time and resources. Nonetheless, Windhoek is where the head office of NWR is located with relatively all the information required for the study. It would have been great to include the Camp Managers of all camps managed by Namibia Wildlife Resorts but it is not possible because the camps are geographically scattered across the country.

In addition, there is unfortunately limited literature available on CRM in the tourism industry and one of the reasons attributed to this lack of literature is that "CRM has been adopted primarily by large corporate firms who typically have not partnered with academic researchers in travel and tourism program" (Vogt, 2011, p. 361). Therefore, the researcher relied heavily on the results from the interviews with key informants especially on bed occupancy. Furthermore, another limitation is that the company has no latest financial reports; the latest financial report available is for the year

(2008/2009) and thus the lack of this information posed a challenge with regards to factual information on the occupancy and strategic orientation on the company.

There is a revised organizational structure; unfortunately, it has not yet been implemented and thus the study will be based on the current structure. In the current top management, there are vacant positions and thus middle management and supervisory level employees were also considered. With regards to the FGDs, the participants for each group were not homogenous due to the unavailability of staff members because of unavoidable circumstances.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Brink (1996) indicated that a review of the literature is an essential part of an academic research project. Denzin & Lincoln (2005) define literature review as a careful examination of a body of literature pointing toward the answer to the research question. Marshall and Rossman (1998) indicated that literature reviewed typically includes scholarly journals, scholarly books, authoritative databases and primary sources. Sometimes it includes newspapers, magazines, other books, films, and audio and video tapes, and other secondary sources.

The main theme of this study is to look at how customer relationship management could enhance and create a better strategy for the Namibia Wildlife Resorts in order to attain a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

2.1 The evolution of customer relationship management

Relationship marketing evolved from the marketing concept which was conceptualised in the 1950s by marketing writers such as Peter Drucker, who viewed marketing as a whole business that is seen from the point of view of its final result, which is the customer's perspective (Brink and Berndt, 2009). The marketing concept is known to be that of understanding customer needs and wants and thus making the customer as the main focus. Therefore, Brink and Berndt (2009, p. 3) mentioned that "if a company offers goods and services that satisfy the needs of and create value for the customer – providing customer satisfaction and the right customer-perceived quality – the company stands the best chance of maximising profitability".

As marketing entered the 20th century, the relationship marketing concept represented a new marketing paradigm, which led to a shift in business thinking and also became regarded as the biggest change in 50 years (Brink & Berndt, 2009, p. 2). Furthermore, the same authors stated that relationship marketing philosophy, through its implementation in customer relationship management became the battle cry of the 1990s. With the above, it is evident that marketers somehow know the importance of customers and customer retention for the long-term sustainability and profitability of their organisations.

The paradigm shift that has been referred to in the marketing function relates to the change from transactional marketing to relationship marketing which entails building long-term relationships with customers (Brink and Berndt, 2009; Osarenkhoe and

Bennani, 2007; Payne, Christopher, Clark, and Peck, 1998; Smith and Chang, 2010; Varey, 2002).

2.2 Customer relationship management

As mentioned earlier, there are many definitions on customer relationship management and from the definitions reviewed below; customer relationship management is mainly related to building and maintaining long-term relationships with customers, getting to know their needs, wants and behaviours, for survival of an organisation in a competitive environment. The following are some of the definitions of customer relationship management:

Vogt (2011, p. 357) defines CRM as "a business strategy that involves the combinations of people, processes, and technology across all customer touch points, including marketing, sales and customer service"

Customer relationship management (CRM) is the key competitive strategy that firms need in order to stay focused on the needs of their customers and to integrate a customer-facing approach throughout the organization (Smith and Chang, 2010).

CRM is a strategy used to learn more about customer's needs and behaviours in order to develop stronger relationships with them (Osarenkhoe and Bennani, 2007).

Knox *et al,* (2003, p.19) defines CRM as "a strategic approach designed to improve shareholder value through developing appropriate relationships with key customers and customer segments. CRM unites the potential of IT and relationship marketing strategies to deliver profitable, long-term relationships."

Therefore, customer relationship management becomes an element of keeping ahead of the Namibia tourism industry and this is confirmed by Vogt (2011, p. 356) saying that "CRM is widely used in the tourism industry, with loyalty programs keeping customers returning and travel websites yielding a large volume of e-transactions". By building relationships, organizations are able to obtain competitive advantage in the marketplace over their competitors, thus increasing their overall profitability and success (Brink and Berndt, 2009). Varey (2002, p. 13) says that "increasing competition turns manager's minds to keeping profitable customers trading, rather than making new customers connections". Therefore, many leading organisations have already begun exploring ways to face the competitiveness situation and also realised the importance to gain and maintain their competitive positions in their marketplace.

Tsiotsou and Ratten (2010, p.539), argued that consumer relationship marketing constitutes a contemporary strategic orientation of travel and tourism businesses and a research framework for retaining customers. This strategic approach is taken by travel and tourism firms as a response to fierce competition and consumer's reduced loyalty to tourism providers. They further went on to say that travel and tourism firms develop loyalty programs in an effort to create strong customer relationships and also to achieve sustainability.

With regards to loyalty programmes, one can deduce that relationship marketing somehow attempts to explain consumer's decision-making processes taking into account emotional state of reasoning, which brings in variables such as trust, commitment, attachment and loyalty as cornerstones of relationship marketing

(Tsiotsou and Ratten, 2010). Brink and Berndt (2009) and Osarenkhoe and Bennani (2007) also strongly concur on trust and commitment as key concepts in relationships. In addition to trust and commitment, Osarenkhoe and Bennani (2007) also mentioned cooperation and satisfaction. Dagger et al (2011, p. 275) mentioned that "customer commitment is recognised as being crucial to long-term relationships". They continued to state that committed customers are likely to continue being loyal to organizations.

Namibia Wildlife Resort's annual report (2009, p.43), "the economic crisis that emerged during 2008, and the subsequent global recession was largely unforeseen and therefore caught the world unprepared. Although difficult to predict with any certainty, it is estimated that the recession could result in a reduction in tourist arrivals to Namibia by 20%. If not properly managed, this reduction could be even greater, but with careful marketing interventions and strong partnerships, cost reduction measures and improved efficiency within the company the effect might be mitigated". It is a clear indication that NWR has acknowledged that the recent economic crisis will have a negative impact on the occupancy and therefore an intervention of any kind was deemed necessary. Therefore, NWR needs to use CRM as a marketing intervention that includes building and maintaining good relations with new and existing clients.

All in all, in order to be successful, organizations need to re-think how they do business and how they service their customers so that their business models can evolve from a product-centric to a customer orientation, capable of delivering customer value. This is confirmed by Knox *et al* (2003, p. 18), who say that "CRM is not a product; it

is a discipline, a framework, an integrated approach to managing relationships with customers, which requires continuous improvement. It is a strategy not a tactic, and in most cases involves changing the focus and culture of the organization from a product, to a customer-orientation".

2.3 Customer relationship management capabilities

Landroguez, Castro, & Cepeda-Carrión (2011, p. 141) say that "a firm's external and internal organizational capabilities are of vital importance for increasing the value created for the consumer. Thus, a firm should focus on improving those capabilities which view the customer as its key component, in order to maximise the value created for them". Therefore, Brink and Berndt (2009, p.18) states that "before embarking on CRM, a company must know who its customers are, their value, what they buy, where they are located and through which channels they want to interact with the company".

Some companies primarily view CRM as an investment in technology and software, while others treat CRM more expansively and are aggressive in developing productive relationships with customers (Smith & Chang, 2010; Knox *et al*, 2003). However, it is important to note that CRM comprises of 3 major functional areas namely, marketing, sales and services and support (operations) and it is thus important to note that the successful implementation of CRM requires not only technology but a strong people related component; any firm that only exert their efforts on the technology aspect are doomed to fail in implementing CRM (Smith & Chang, 2010). This then leads to conclusion that there is somehow a relationship between technology and management perspectives of CRM. Smith & Chang (2010) supported this premise in their study of improving customer outcomes through the implementation of customer

relationship management and also Knox *et al* (2003) in their definition which implies that CRM can unite the potential of IT and relationship marketing supported the premise too.

However, the study on customer relationship management for hotels in Hong Kong by Lo *et al* (2010) argues that the success of CRM depends on strong leadership, customer-oriented culture, capable and passionate people with strong enthusiasm on their job, streamlining of processes to deliver value to customers as well as computer systems to collect and process customer's information; and thus, having tools for CRM will not guarantee successful implementation and achievement of goals without the above mentioned capabilities. The finding of customer-oriented culture capability by Lo *et al.* (2010) does tie in with the core values of Namibia Wildlife Resorts, excellence, passion, integrity and customer centric.

Furthermore, Brink and Berndt (2009) have also identified capabilities that are required before implementing CRM and they include top management support, processes, excellent customer service and technology. From the above authors, it is clear that the foundation needs to be laid with regards to the capabilities required in implementing customer relationship in the organisation. Henceforth, one need to then determine and evaluate on whether NWR meet the requirements; and thus making this as a basis for embarking on implementing customer relationship management (Brink and Berndt, 2009).

Landroquez *et al*. (2011), argue that in order to maintain competitiveness, it is not sufficient for firms to be in possession of valuable resources and capabilities because firms still requires dynamic capabilities to develop and renovate their organisational

resources and capabilities. Therefore, their study on creating dynamic capabilities to increase customer value is based on the assumption that firms possess the capabilities of Market Orientation, Knowledge Management and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and each allows creating value. They further says that some firms concentrate only on one aspect of the three dynamic capabilities mentioned but the main key in their findings is that for increased customer value, the interaction of the three proposed capabilities is of utmost importance when seeking new ways to achieve and maintain a competitive advantage that is sustainable and also imitable by other organisations.

2.4 CRM Implementation, benefits and practices

In order to implement CRM, organizations need to be customer-driven and have a strategy which outlines the type of customers that the organization wants to target. Knox *et al*, (2003) states that "Organizations sometimes implement CRM in the belief that it will help them achieve 'one-to-one marketing', but fail to consider issues of organization structure and marketing effectiveness".

Brink and Berndt (2009, p.176) states that, "up to 80 per cent of all CRM initiatives fail to deliver on their promises. The main reason for this failure is not CRM itself, but lack of planning, and the absence of clear goals and strategies". A study by Bull (2003) highlighted other issues that led to failure in the implementation of CRM as per the ELMS Limited case study and it included lack of knowledge pertaining to the CRM concept, the sales and marketing team lacked knowledge of the full implications of CRM in relation to their business requirements and that the IT department failed to research CRM or to develop a software solution. In addition to implementation

failures, Ivanovic *et al* (2011) says that causes of failure in implementation of CRM are different but are mostly caused by poor quality of organizational changes, wrong company policies, poor planning and many others. However, he further mentions that the key reasons for failure can be incorrectly defined strategy, incorrect implementation and inadequately trained staff (Ivanovic *et al* 2011). The lack of understanding of CRM and financing problems also proves to be a cause of unsuccessful implementation of CRM system.

It is thus important to have sound understanding on what CRM entails and how it can be successfully implemented by studying the best practices. Ivanovic *et al* (2011, p. 62) mentioned that "application of CRM in the tourism sector is in its infancy of development and requires a certain period of time in which companies will recognize the power and importance of its application in tourism". The success of any strategy is determined by whether the organization achieves its objectives or not. Nguyen *et al* (2007, p. 114) states that "in order to have a successful implementation of CRM, organizations should evaluate how RM fits into their overall business strategy, evaluate its current CRM capabilities, and have a business reason for implementing CRM".

The implementation of a CRM system offers great benefits to any organization. From the cases reviewed, there is evidence that improving customer relationship through CRM increases revenues from current customers as well as increasing retention rates and customer lifetimes (Knox *et al*, 2003). In addition, CRM can also enable companies improve customer service by tailoring their product offer to their customers and thereby providing convenience including efficiency and ease of access. In return,

the resulting growth in customer retention and/or increased purchases can create shareholder value (Knox *et al*, 2003).

According to the article on creating a competitive advantage through customer relationship management by Toor (2008), retaining and enhancing relationships with current customers is a priority business issue followed by attracting new ones. The best practices for improved customer relationship management includes reaching more customers and markets, keep scores and feedbacks, building partnerships, the importance of customer profitability, manage customer experience and make customers inside. Ivanovic *et al* (2011, p. 67) mentioned that the "benefits of CRM in a hotel company is that at the center of the business process puts the customer who has become an indispensable part of "living" processes through which the company achieves a great competitive advantage. CRM provides efficient and measurable attracting new guests and promotes loyalty and satisfaction of existing reviews". Therefore, in order to improve bed occupancy, there is a need to pursue the suggested practices and find suitable sales solutions targeted towards improving customer relationship in order to achieve revenue growth.

Brink and Berndt (2009) suggests that to successfully implement CRM in an organisation, there should be commitment from top management. They further identified the following factors determining CRM success:

- Customer-centricity – developing a service culture is a means of creating and enhancing good interactive marketing performance needed for implementing a relationship marketing strategy.

- System Resources – the alignment and integration of all related business processes that relate to customers, from customer service to order fulfillment.

- Information Resources – two important resources namely customer information and knowledge which, refers to information on the organization's existing customers from the database; and acquiring a CRM software system which, refers to the technology to assist the organization in using CRM successfully.

Therefore, Bull (2003) states that CRM strategies are only effective if they deliver positive outcomes and in addition, it is no longer good enough to say you are customer focused, but what really matters is what you do. From successful CRM case studies reviewed by Bull (2003), the fundamental CRM goal is to improve organizational profitability through efficient and effective customer relations. He further stated that where a CRM strategy is not succeeding in influencing profitability after a reasonable period of time, it shows that the organization is failing and thus should adopt alternative strategies.

A study by Colgate and Danaher (2000), suggests that before an organization embarks on a customer relationship program, management should ensure they commit enough resources to make the program successful and to carefully consider implementation issues.

Some of the lessons learned through the study on methodology for customer relationship management by Chalmeta (2005) includes an important aspect of integrating existing business processes which, both management and employees must

understand and also assimilate the strategic business value of the CRM project. In addition, in the study by Bull (2003), it is highlighted that the implementation of CRM requires effective leadership, sourcing, targeting and evaluation strategies. Furthermore, Ivanovic *et al* (2011) advocates on setting measurable, achievable and guided goals towards the company's business strategy, strategic management commitment where executive managers are responsible for the implementation and also providing training and professional development to all relevant staff.

2.5 Customer service

The above related literature on customer relationship management capabilities shows that it is evident that customer service is an important aspect of customer relationship management. As per Brink & Berndt (2009), they pointed out that excellent customer service is one of the important elements necessary for the implementation of CRM strategy and that customer service can also be used to differentiate a company from its competitors. This implies that a company with excellent customer service can create a competitive advantage over its competitors.

According to Knox *et al* (2003), there are sustainable long-term customer, business and technical trends emanating from CRM investments and they predict that "customer-centric organizations will continue to develop into the foreseeable future" Knox *et al* (2003, p.15). Therefore, no company can even think of implementing CRM if it does not offer excellent customer service, which requires training of employees including those that do not have direct contact with customers.

Brink and Berndt (2009, p.56) says that "customers usually have expectations of how they think a service will be provided". Therefore one can conclude that the

expectations that clients have are based on their past experiences, word of mouth and also media exposure. Furthermore, it is then important to note that it is not the actual service that is of importance but rather the perceptions that a customer has of the service (Brink & Berndt, 2009). It can be concluded that the perception is created with each succeeding contact with the customer. Therefore, outstanding customer service helps an organization to keep its current customers and at the same time attract new ones to become satisfied customers, subsequently leading to satisfied customers.

Knox *et al* (2003, p. 272) said that, "customers expect better and better service, and companies without CRM systems will struggle to manage more than a few customer relationships effectively and profitably". Therefore, CRM has an impact on the entire organization and not just on the marketing department and customer management strategies.

2.6 Customer Relationship Management and the hotel industry

The tourism industry is undoubtedly one of the fast growing industries and it is recognized as a global industry, which has become an integral part of a good lifestyle. According to Jaipuria (2006, p. 32), "demand for and supply of hospitality services beyond that of the traditional services intended for travelers have escalated the growth of the hospitality industry globally, leading to intense competition in the market-place. One of the greatest challenges facing hotel organizations today is the ever-growing volume and pace of competition. Competition has had major implications for the customer, providing increased choice, greater value for money and augmented levels of service". It is thus imperative that hotels or any type of accommodation

establishments to gain a competitive advantage because there is little to differentiate hotel products and services from one another.

The Namibian National Development Plan IV (NDP4) has included the tourism industry as one of the focal industries for national development and that is testimony that there is great potential. A study on Customer Relationship Management (CRM) practices, a case of Hotels in Ashanti Region of Ghana by Abdallah and Assabil (2011, p. 59), recommended that "the government of Ghana should consider a policy that will encourage management of hotels to practice CRM". Therefore, Jaipuria (2006, p. 32), states that "there are two strategies most commonly used by hotel managers in order to gain a competitive advantage, which are low-cost leadership through price discounting and developing customer loyalty by providing unique benefits to customers". The same author continued to mention that the low-cost leadership strategy poses a negative effect on the medium and long-term profitability of an organization and thus, it is the quality of service rather than price that has become the key to a hotel's ability to differentiate itself from its competitors and to gain customer loyalty. Therefore, the preferred strategy would be to pursue CRM to create a competitive advantage, which will then have a positive effect on the profit sustainability of the organization.

Minghetti (2003, p. 141), mentioned that "increasing occupancy rates and revenue by improving customer experience is the aim of modern hospitality organizations". She further stated that it can only be achieved when hotel managers have a deep knowledge of customers' needs, behaviour, and preferences and are aware of the ways in which the services delivered create value for the customers and then stimulate their retention

and loyalty. Therefore, this can be achieved through customer relationship management, however, according to Sahoo (2011), it is important to note that it is impossible to retain all customers and thus sound knowledge of those customers that are profitable is a necessity. Furthermore, Sahoo, (2011) states that "In hotel industry, hotels make efforts to define what it takes to satisfy their guests and spend time and money on comment cards, questionnaires, focus groups or talk with customers to measure how well they have done at delivering what their customers expect".

2.7 Customer Relationship Management Dimension and Effect on Customer Outcomes

Customer relationship management (CRM) has been called an inevitable literally relentless movement because it represents the way customers want to be served and offers a more effective and efficient way of conducting business (Peppers and Rogers 2004, p. 6). Underpinning the paradigm of CRM is the basic belief that customer relationships, like other important assets in an organization, can be effectively developed and managed. By better customizing product and service offerings for individual customers, customer retention enhances an increase in profitability (Stefanou, Sarmaniotis, and Stafyla, 2003). Interest in CRM is gaining momentum among academicians and businesspeople (Gruen, Summers, and Acito, 2000; Rigby and Ledingham, 2004; Srivastava, Shervani, and Fahey, 1999; Thomas, Blattberg, and Fox, 2004), and progressive companies, such as IBM and Boise Cascade, are placing greater priority on their CRM investments (Kennedy, 2004).

According to a survey of nearly 1,000 chief information officers (CIOs) conducted by Gartner Executive Programs (EXP), two in three CIOs consider CRM efforts to be a

high priority Frederick Hong-kit Yim (Ph.D. Candidate), LeBow College of Business, Department of Marketing, Drexel University, hong. Kit. Yim@ drexel.edu. Rolph E. Anderson (Ph.D., University of Florida), Royal H. Gibson, Sr. Professor of Marketing, LeBow College of Business, Department of Marketing, Drexel University, rolph.e.anderson@drexel.edu. Srinivasan Swaminathan (Ph.D., University of Texas at Austin), Associate Professor of Marketing, LeBow College of Business, Department of Marketing, Drexel University, srinivasan.swaminathan drexel.edu (Compton, 2004). Moreover, the CRM software market is expected to produce at least a 5 percent compound annual growth rate through the next several years (Kumar *et al*., 2003). CRM solutions are deemed to be so critical that investments in them continue to be funded despite shriveling information technology (IT) budgets (Brohman *et al*., 2003).

To achieve superior performance a growing number of companies are developing elaborate CRM systems and making creative use of sales force automation (SFA), data ware- housing, data mining, push technology, and other query tools to better understand and serve customers (Speier and Venkatesh, 2002). CRM programs are helping sales managers identify and target their most valuable customers, as pressures mount to make more effective and efficient allocation of resources to achieve company goals (Dorsch *et al*., 2001). Many salespeople are leveraging the use of CRM (Widmier, Jackson, and Mccabe, 2002) in enhancing their relationships with customers to improve sales forecasting, lead management, bid and quote management, and personalization (Rigby and Ledingham, 2004).

Operating at the frontier of the customer- organization interface, salespeople are essential in providing added value for customers (Beverland, 2001) while creatively

managing the buyer- seller relationship (Reynolds and Arnold, 2000). With their empowerment via telecommunications technology, many salespeople have become more like "relationship managers", "procreators", or "directors of customer relations", implementing CRM at the customer level (Guenzi, 2002; Periatt, LeMay, and Chakrabarty, 2004). Salespeople generally have the greatest influence in reducing customer defection (Johnson, Barksdale, and Boles, 2001), and their success vis-à-vis customers largely determines the effectiveness of CRM implementations. Since discrepancies or even disconnects between marketing strategies and their tactical implementation in sales activities exist, it is paramount for salespeople to thoroughly understand how CRM can facilitate negotiations with customers, and how CRM expands the role of salespeople as "relationship managers." Although claims about the favorable effects of CRM on business performance are commonly espoused in the CRM literature (Crosby and Johnson, 2001; Gruen, Summers, and Acito, 2000; Kennedy, 2004), actual results in the business world remain controversial with respect to the benefit- cost trade-offs (Payant, 2004; Rigby, Reichheld, and Schefter, 2002). Widespread application of CRM programs has not led to substantially higher customer retention rates (Thomas, Blattberg, and Fox, 2004).

Too often, company investments in CRM projects are made in an uncoordinated manner (Jeffery and Leliveld, 2004). Unrealized expectations for CRM implementations, however, are not causing many firms to terminate their CRM efforts. Instead, executives are endeavoring to learn from their mistakes and refine their CRM activities and objectives (Sheth, 2002). Review of the CRM literature reveals that ambiguous results often may be attributed to disagreement and confusion regarding

the exact domain of CRM (Rigby, Reichheld, and Schefter, 2002). CRM is mainly viewed as a technology-focused database management approach to gathering and analyzing information about customers in order to more fully satisfy them (Krauss, 2002). Others think of CRM in terms of initiatives such as call centers, loyalty programs, Web sites, or personalized e-mails to implement one-to-one marketing. Broader perspectives tend to see CRM as an overall mix of marketing strategy, organizational structure and processes, and technology - all revolved around customer data that enable executives to better manage their companies (Hair, Bush, and Ortinau, 2003).

CRM, as an emerging discipline, urgently cries out for theoretical assistance (Gummesson, 2002) if it is to be properly embedded within organizational strategy (Langerak and Verhoef, 2003). There is an argument that, without prompt conceptual and measurement attention, CRM could be largely abandoned and perhaps experience a premature death. According to Peppers and Rogers (2004, p. 7) "CRM, like most initiatives that are poorly understood, improperly applied, and incorrectly measured and managed, may suffer and struggle to survive". Yet, despite its problems to date, CRM offers great potential for improving long-term customer relationships and enhancing profitability (Rigby and Ledingham, 2004; Zikmund, McLeod, and Gilbert, 2003). Thus, the present research was undertaken specifically (1) to provide more conceptual clarity to the domain of CRM and (2) to investigate the effect of CRM implementation on important business performance metrics, such as customer satisfaction, customer retention, and sales growth.

2.8 Managerial Implications

The essence of CRM thinking originates from three concepts in marketing management: (1) customer orientation, (2) relationship marketing, and (3) database marketing. With the advancement of information and communication technology (ICT), these three marketing tenets have come together in the paradigm of CRM (Langerak and Verhoef 2003). As customers became more difficult to reach with mass advertising, CRM emerged to more accurately target customer segments on a one-to-one basis. But, exactly what is CRM? At present, in the universe of marketing management, multiple definitions abound. For instance, Kotler and Armstrong (2004, p. 16) regard CRM as "the overall process of building and maintaining profitable customer relationships by delivering superior customer value and satisfaction.

This assertion seems to include the broad-based essence of marketing, wherein value and satisfaction are prominent. Zikmund, McLeod, and Gilbert (2003, p. 3) provide a more technology-oriented perspective of CRM as "a business strategy that uses information technology to provide an enterprise with a comprehensive, reliable, and integrated view of its customer base so that all processes and customer interactions help maintain and expand mutually beneficial relationships". Numerous other definitions of CRM might be cited ranging from very narrow interpretations to very broad ones - with no two being the same. Lack of consensus on the meaning of CRM not only impedes academic discourse on the subject, but also adds to business practitioner skepticism and indecisiveness in establishing CRM systems. In view of the wide variance among CRM definitions, Yim (2002) attempts to provide more conceptual clarity of CRM by synthesizing the relevant marketing, management, and

IT literature to identify four key areas necessary for successful CRM implementation: (1) strategy, (2) people, (3) processes, and (4) technology (Crosby and Johnson, 2001; Fox and Stead, 2001; Ryals and Knox, 2001). Despite the fact that each of these components are relatively straightforward, it is only when all four work in unison that a superior customer-relationship capability is developed (Day, 2003; Kotler and Armstrong 2004, p. 60).

Based on analyses of the CRM literature and in-depth interviews with experienced marketing managers, CRM implementations usually involve four specific ongoing activities: (1) focusing on key customers (Vandermerwe, 2004), (2) organizing around CRM (Homburg, Workman, and Jensen, 2000; Langerak and Verhoef, 2003), (3) managing knowledge (Stefanou, Sarmaniotis, and Stafyla, 2003), and (4) incorporating CRM- based technology (Bhaskar, 2004; Chen and Ching, 2004). The four dimensions of CRM implementations focusing on key customers, a customer-focused structure, culture, policy, and reward system should permeate any organization that strives to implement CRM successfully (Ryals and Knox, 2001; Sheth, Sisodia, and Sharma, 2000). All interactions with key customers, who are often identified by "lifetime value computations," must fully reflect this company-wide CRM focus (Jain and Singh, 2002). The ultimate goal is to achieve deep customer relationships through which the seller organization becomes indispensable to its most profitable customers (Vandermerwe, 2004). Equipped with company- wide understanding and internal support for key customer relation- ships, the sales force generally is better enabled and motivated to cultivate long-term customer relationships

by offering more personalized products and services (Armstrong and Kotler, 2003, p. 514; Srinivasan, Anderson, and Ponnavolu, 2002).

Organizing around CRM with a strong focus on key customers deeply embedded throughout its CRM system, the entire company should be organized around cultivating these valuable relationships. The organizational structure needs to be flexible and, if necessary, reconstructed to generate customer-centric values (Homburg, Workman, and Jensen, 2000) and improve coordination of customer-focused, cross-functional teams (Brown 2000; Sheth and Sisodia, 2002). For CRM success, there also must be an organization wide commitment of resources. With concerted efforts by all organizational functions to continuously provide a stream of value-rich actions and customer outcomes (Ahmed and Rafiq, 2003), the company and its sales force are assured that they can satisfy customers' needs and enhance customer relationships. Managing Knowledge Strongly related to knowledge management, successful CRM is predicated on effectively transforming customer information to customer knowledge (Freeland, 2003; Peppard, 2000; Plessis and Boon, 2004; Stefanou, Sarmaniotis, and Stafyla, 2003; Stringfellow, Nie, and Bowen, 2004). Specifically, to enhance customer profitability, information about customers should be gathered through interactions or touch points across all functions or areas of the firm (Brohman *et al*., 2003), so that a 360-degree customer view is established, maintained, and continually updated (Fox and Stead, 2001). Customer knowledge thereby generated needs to be shared and disseminated throughout the organization (Peppard 2000; Ryals and Knox, 2001) to address customers' current and anticipated needs. Salespeople are then equipped with a wealth of valuable customer knowledge

to meticulously adjust marketing offers to fit the idiosyncratic needs of each customer (Armstrong and Kotler, 2003, p. 514).

Incorporating CRM-Based Technology to many CRM-oriented activities, such as knowledge management, cannot be optimized without leveraging the latest technology. Indeed, most CRM applications take great advantage of technology innovations, with their ability to collect and analyze data on customer patterns, develop prediction models, respond with timely and effective customized communications, and efficiently deliver personalized value offerings to individual customers (Peppard, 2000; Vrechopoulos, 2004). With the development of sophisticated information management tools, such as database marketing, data warehousing, data mining, and push technology, companies are striving to seamlessly incorporate the latest technology into their CRM systems. In particular, salespeople frequently depend on continually updated software programs to better respond to their customers and build enduring customer relationships (Kotler 2004, p. 141). CRM technology helps companies and their salespersons' collect, analyze, and distribute information for enhanced prospecting, improved communication and sales presentations, and tailored product configurations. It also facilitates cross-referencing of customers within divisions of a company for greater sales opportunities (Widmier, Jackson, and Mccabe, 2002). Among the major outcomes sought by incorporating CRM-based technology are enhanced customer satisfaction, higher customer retention, and more profitable long-term customer relationships (Butler, 2000). In summary, successful CRM implementations depend on combining the four aforementioned dimensions, focusing on key customers; organizing around CRM;

managing knowledge; and incorporating CRM-based technology into an effective overall CRM strategy. Deficiencies in any of these areas can render the firm's CRM endeavors attenuated or even ineffectual. Having provided more conceptual clarity to the CRM domain by exploring the critical aspects of successful CRM implementation, we now turn our attention to the desired consequences of adopting a CRM orientation within the selling and sales management organization - customer satisfaction, customer retention, and sales growth. Customer satisfaction is a vital CRM variable that must not evade our empirical scrutiny. Indeed, customer satisfaction is central to successful application of the marketing concept. Many company mission statements and marketing plans are designed around the goal of increasing customer satisfaction (Fournier and Mick, 1999). Customer satisfaction can be defined as "the extent to which a products perceived performance in delivering value matches a buyer's expectations" (Armstrong and Kotler, 2003, p. 10).

Through the implementation of CRM, a firm seeks to establish and maintain a long-term relationship with customers based on cumulative full customer satisfaction as opposed to transaction-specific customer satisfaction (Reinartz and Kumar, 2002). More specifically, successful CRM implementation requires a dedicated company-wide focus on key customers in one-to-one marketing efforts to fully understand and satisfy their needs and wants on an ongoing basis (Sheth, Sisodia, and Sharma, 2000). The sellers entire organizational structure should be centered on customers, often with customer focused teams (Sheth and Sisodia, 2002) designed to create fully satisfying customer experiences (Ahmed and Rafiq, 2003). By making creative use of the customer knowledge acquired and by leveraging CRM-based technology, an

organization can provide customized offerings to its valued customers, which should boost customer satisfaction (Anderson and Srinavasan, 2003; Johnson and Seines, 2004).

Successful CRM activities must cultivate customer satisfaction (Stefanou, Sarmaniotis, and Stafyla, 2003) by continuously adapting to the evolving needs and wants of customers (Stringfellow, *et.al,* 2004). One of the primary goals of CRM is customer retention or customer loyalty (Anderson and Srinivasan, 2003; Aspinall, Nancarrow, and Stone, 2001; Verhoef, 2003). Continuous advances in IT are enabling organizations to more efficiently and effectively direct their CRM efforts at retaining customers (Butler, 2000). By making skillful use of customer knowledge gathered over a series of interactions or touch points and applying CRM-based technology, companies can more effectively respond to the changing needs of customers with customized offerings. This personalization of products and services serves to further lock customers into long-term relationships by adding to customer switching costs (Burnham, Frels, and Mahajan, 2003; Vandermerwe, 2004). Furthermore, by organizing their CRM operations around customer groups, companies can assign direct accountability, keep abreast of changing customer expectations for different segments, and obtain early warnings from customers who may be on the verge of leaving. With this CRM knowledge net- work, timely remedial actions can be taken to address the specific problems or expectations of discontent customers, thereby increasing the retention rate. Providing monetary and recognition incentives to motivate a CRM orientation can help keep salespeople focused on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Johnson, 2004). All in all, a variety of CRM

activities can work together to enhance customer retention (Pfeifer and Farris, 2004).

In several models of customer retention, satisfaction has been explored as a key determinant in customers' decisions to continue or terminate a business relationship (Bolton, 1998). In fact, Reichheld (1996) finds that satisfaction measures account for up to 40 percent of the variance in models of customer retention. High levels of customer satisfaction generally are considered essential to customer retention. Kotler (2003, p. 41) expresses it succinctly: "The higher the customer satisfaction, the higher the retention". Sales growth according to Reichheld and Sasser (1990, p. 110), reducing customer defections by 5 percent can boost profits by 25 percent to 85 percent. This impressive finding has been advocated as a strong justification for increased investments in CRM systems (Pfeifer and Farris 2004). Recently, Gupta and Lehmann (2003) estimated a less dramatic increase of 22 percent to 37 percent in customer lifetime value or revenue, for a 5 percent increase in customer retention.

CRM technology helps companies and their salespersons' collect, analyze, and distribute information for enhanced prospecting, improved communication and sales presentations, and tailored product configurations. It also facilitates cross-referencing of customers within divisions of a company for greater sales opportunities (Widmier, Jackson, and Mccabe 2002). Among the major outcomes sought by incorporating CRM-based technology are enhanced customer satisfaction, higher customer retention, and more profitable long-term customer relationships (Butler 2000).

In conclusion, the tourism industry is one of the fast growing industries and with increasing competition in the industry, it is imperative that hotels gain a competitive advantage and thus CRM can be used to create and maintain long-lasting and

sustainable relationships for increased sales revenue. In order to implement CRM, an organization needs to embrace a customer-service culture and to be successful; establishments are encouraged to embark on proper planning and to have clear goals and strategies. Some of the benefits of implementing a CRM system include revenue increases from current customers as well as increasing retention rates and customer lifetimes.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the methodology of the study and thus highlighting the steps that was followed in conducting the research. The chapter consists of the research design, population, sample and sampling technique, research instruments, and procedure of data collection and data analysis.

3.1 Research design

According to Kumar (2011, p. 94), he argued that a research design is a procedural plan that is adopted by the researcher to answer questions validly, objectively, accurately and economically. The research adopted the qualitative approach and is explorative in nature. The research method was seen to be important for the case study because the aim of the study is to explore and investigate. Kumar (2011, p. 94) mentioned that a case study is a very useful design when exploring an area where little is known or where you want to have a holistic understanding of the situation, phenomenon, episode, site, group or community.

3.2 Population

According to Blanche, *et al*., (2006), they argued that the population selected should be those to whom the research question or objectives applies. Therefore, the study population for the research was the NWR employees in Windhoek. The total number of employees in the study population is 67.

3.3 Sample

Bless, *et al*., (2006), state that a sample is a subset of the whole population which is actually investigated by a researcher and whose characteristics will then be generalised to the entire population. In a case study, you usually use purposive sampling technique (Kumar, 2011). According to Kumar (2011, p. 207), he argued that the primary consideration in purposive sampling is your judgement as to who can provide the best information to achieve the objectives of your study, and therefore, purposive sampling method was used to select participants in the research study.

The participants for the research study were senior management, middle management and supervisors as well as consultants and marketing staff from the Strategic Marketing, Sales and Communication and Operations Department, purposively selected because of their knowledge and experiences on customer relations and customer service as well as experience on business management strategies in addressing client's concerns.

3.4 Research Instruments

The main instrument used in the process of the research is open-ended questions, which served as interview and group discussions schedule. Kumar (2011, p. 145)

defines an interview schedule as "a written list of questions, open ended or closed, prepared for use by an interviewer in a person-to-person interaction (this may be face to face, by telephone or by other electronic media)". According to Bless, *et al.*, (2006, p. 130), he argued that open ended questions leave the participants completely free to express their answers as they wish, as detailed and complex, as long or as short as they feel appropriate.

The semi-structured interviews questions focused on the following themes:

- Respondents' occupation, gender and level of education.

- The understanding of customer relationship management.

- Current practices or ways to attract and retain customers.

- Handling of customer complaints and feedback

- The way in which CRM practices creates a competitive advantage.

- Factors that may possibly influence client's choice when choosing accommodation.

- Benefits of customer relationship management.

The focus group discussions mainly focused on issues related to the general opinions of the employees/consultants with regards to customer service; such as:

- The understanding of what customer service entails.

- Current practices that leads to customer satisfaction

- To analyse the status of customer service at NWR.

- Benefits of good customer service.

- To understand whether management support is critical in customer service.

3.5 Procedure

Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The questionnaires for the key informants was administered in the form of an interview except in cases where the participants were not available due to unforeseeable circumstances and such respondents were given copies of the questionnaires to complete.

Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions are deemed to be appropriate for the study. With semi-structured interviews, a researcher is able to get exact information that is being sought for in the study. Focus group is defined by Kumar (2011, p. 94), as a form of strategy in qualitative research in which attitudes, opinions or perceptions towards an issue, product, service or programme are explored through a free and open discussion between members of a group and the researcher. Therefore, they are useful because they provide a platform in which people get together and create meaning amongst the participants rather than individually.

The semi-structured interviews participants consisted of top and middle management as well as supervisors; and focus group discussions comprised of employees that directly deal with the management of customer relations and reservations. Table 3.1 below, depicts the total number of respondents that were interviewed.

Table 3.1: Summary Interviewees

N **14**

Designation	Work Experience	Number Interviewed	

Acting Managing Director	>10 years	1	
Senior Manager Operations	>10 years	1	
Senior Manager Marketing	>10 years	1	
Senior Manager Finance	>10 years	1	
Acting Senior Manager Risk and Audit	-	0	
Acting Manager ICT	2 years	1	
Manager Sales and Marketing	>10 years	1	
Manager Marketing & Research	7 years	1	
Area Manager	>10 years	1	
Branch Manager	>10 years	1	
Management Accountant	>10 years	1	
Supervisor Sales Consultant	3 years	1	

Supervisor Supply Chain	>10 years	1	
Supervisor Financial Accountant	>10 years	1	

Source: Survey Data

The focus group discussion was conducted with the Marketing Assistant, Sales and Assistant Sales Consultants in the MICE & Tour Planning and Reservations' divisions. The total number of participants for the focus group was 17 participants. Prepared questions were read out and then the discussions followed, question by question.

3.6 Data Analysis

In order to make sense out of the qualitative data collected and get meaningful information, the research notes were typed and consolidated in one document where all answers to each question followed each other question by question. The data was analyzed by reading through the interviews and discussion transcripts and identifying main themes that emerged. The researcher also looked at similarities and differences in different sets of data to see what different groups or key informants have said. All in all, the information collected is summarized and synthesized to obtain the results of the study.

3.7 Research Ethics

In line with research ethics, permission was first sought by the researcher to do the study at Namibia Wildlife Resorts through the office of the Acting Managing Director. The researcher observed ethical issues such as explaining the academic purpose of the

study to the participants, confidentiality of the information that the researcher may be exposed to during the process of literature review or data collection; and also to utilize information to be collected for the intended academic purpose. To ascertain the authenticity of the study to the respondents, the researcher provided an introduction letter stating the purpose of the research study.

CHAPTER 4 DATA PRESENTATION & RESULTS ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This study focused on creation of competitive advantage at Namibia Wildlife Resorts through customer relationship management. This chapter focuses on the presentation analysis and discussion of data collected based on the research objectives. Literature reviewed in chapter two is compared to the findings of the study with a view to identify similarities and departures from the knowledge gained from other authors.

4.1 Objectives of the Research

The overall objective of the proposed study is to understand how customer relationship management strategy, as a marketing intervention, can be used to maintain and create relationships in order to improve occupancy. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. To review literature around customer relationship management and occupancy in the travel and tourism industry

2. To solicit views of NWR management and staff on how they perceive the relationship between CRM and occupancy.

4.2 Primary Data Analysis

The aim of collecting primary data was to establish the respondents' views on the strategy implemented by the Namibia Wildlife Resorts through customer relationship management and use the data gathered to determine patterns and ultimately draw conclusions on the research problem.

4.3 Sample Description

The respondents were characterized and code named. Table 3.1 above depicts interview respondents who participated in this research.

4.4 Themes and Sub-themes Interpretation

A summary of the overall analysis of the themes and sub-themes of the collected data is discussed under this section. Discussion of the findings is based on the respondents output and the integration of the researcher's interpretation and meanings derived from relevant literature and theories reviewed. The findings either confirm historical results or refute it. At times, the findings suggest new questions that could be asked, derived from the analyzed data. The inter-connectedness of the findings is discussed in the next chapter five of the study.

4.5 Summary review of focus group discussion questions

Group 1

Table 4.1 Categorization of responses: Customer service

Summary Data: Sub Questions	
1. What is your general understanding of customer service?	
Inductive categories	**Responses**

Meeting customer's expectations	- Meeting customer's expectations by rendering excellent service throughout the process - Meet your customers' expectations - Meeting client expectations - Provide service or products in the way that it has been promised - Serving and making sure the client's demands are met and clients are satisfied
Providing service 'throughout the process'	- Rendering excellent service throughout the process - Service to a customer before, during and after they have purchased something.
Effective and cordial communication	- It's about how you present (speak or communicate) yourself - Deliver the message and understanding of your sales to customers in a good friendly way.
Fosters client retention	- Good customer service leads to client retention.

Value for money	- value for their money
Making customers feel welcome	- Meet and greet them to make them feel welcome
General customer service	- It is the type of service that you render out to clients not necessarily in work related but somewhere else to.

Table 4.2 Categorization of responses: Customer service

Summary Data: Sub Questions	
2. What guides you in terms of performing your duties?	
Inductive categories	**Responses**
Work instructions	- Work instructions x2 - instructions from supervisors - working on instructions from my supervisor and managers
Job description	- Job description x4 - My job description

	- According to the job description that I was given
Company policy	- Customer service policy x2 - Company policy
Customer feedback	- Positive feedback from clients
Personal motivation and enthusiasm	- The knowledge and enthusiasm I have to perform my duties - Motivation; the urge and drive
Inspirational leadership	- Leadership and team work. - My supervisors hard work
Positive work environment	- The environment, support from fellow colleagues
Incentives	- Rewards

Table 4.3 Categorization of responses: Customer Service

Summary Data: Sub Questions
3. Do you think that management support is critical in customer service delivery? If yes, why do you say so? Do you get this support?

Inductive categories	Responses
Yes	- 7
No	- 1
Yes and no	- 1
Policy is available but not effectively implemented	- Service policy is available but not well explained and it is impractical (not being used)
Management decline involvement in solving customer related queries	- they do not want to be involved so no support
Training provided for staff	- We are always having training for customer service. - They have to make sure that employees are well trained, motivated and well equipped
Directions provided for staff	- Give directions

Support enhances job performance	- Support gives the subordinates faith, honesty and job satisfaction...... the support thus it highly motivates me - Upgrading customer service delivery - This will definitely lead to good customer service

Table 4.4 Categorization of responses: Customer service

Summary Data: Sub Questions 4. Do you put in effort in finding out what your key customers need? Please motivate your answer.	
Inductive categories	**Responses**
Yes	- 8
No	- 1
Insufficient time to find out customer needs	- there is no sufficient time to study our customers due to administration work

Engaging with clients who utilize services	- going out and meet customers so we create good relationships, - For walk-in clients, yes we do because we build up relationships with regular clients - Engage with your clients to get more information on their needs. - requesting if there is anything that they would like me to do for them
Create forum to interact with customers	- Arranging open day discussions with key customers/clients. - Networking - invite our clients to trade fairs and shows
Requesting feedback from customers	- By requesting them to give feedback on the service received.
Communicating views to management	- giving views to Manager
Meeting customer needs	- I give them alternatives either to book them in a four bed chalet or book them into our other nearest resort

Updating knowledge	- by reading books about what is going on in the industry, keeping myself informed

Table 4.5 Categorization of responses: Customer service

Summary Data: Sub Questions	
5. Does the relevant department make effort to respond accordingly to your clients' needs? If so, how is it done?	
Inductive categories	**Responses**
Yes	- 4
No	- 2
Not sure	- 1 (I am not sure if there is such a department at NWR)
No answer	- 2
Response is not prompt	- The sales department responds quicker than the Operations department - There is a lack of prompt internal communication and helpfulness - Not always.

Try to respond promptly	- we give the customers what they expect from us, or at least we try to

Table 4.6 Categorization of responses: Customer service

Summary Data: Sub Questions	
6. Is your work performance measured and rewarded based on meeting customer needs and successfully serving them? Please motivate your answer.	
Inductive categories	**Responses**
Yes	- 1
No	- 7
Undecided	- 1
No performance management systems in place	- No performance management system in place and only rely on supervisor feedback - The company is currently busy implementing performance appraisal systems - Currently there is no work performance measures and rewards at NWR

	- So far my work performance was never really measured and thus I also did not receive any reward. - Not even a job well done
Performance is measured	- my work performance is measured based on meeting customer needs
Rely on feedback from supervisors	- We only rely from the supervisor's feedback. - no compliments from management but they are quick to point out mistakes - Not from the organization but yes from my supervisor.
Receive compliments from clients	- Almost nearly every day, I receive compliments from my clients

Table 4.7 Categorization of responses: Customer service

Summary Data: Sub Questions
7. What do you do to increase occupancy at the resorts?

Inductive categories	Responses
Convincing clients to confirm bookings	- By convincing the client and offering alternatives - Keeping a waiting list when we are unable to confirm accommodation at the time of booking - Keeping waiting lists - Making last minute booking discounts - Make sure that every request coming through should definitely confirm
Creating good relationships with clients	- Creating good relationships with our clients
Active and creative marketing and advertising	- Cross-selling of products - We advertise our products in the newspapers for each and every person to read. - Ensure that clients are informed about specials by marketing i.e. sending emails to family and friends. - by advertising - Marketing the resort; create a great image

	- By offering seasonal specials and advertising.
Competitive pricing and incentives	- We always run a special rate if we see that our beds are not full - giving special packages and discounts
Grid management	- do grid management - I make sure there is no open space on the grid.
Improving the facilities and service provision	- create a harmonious environment; offer fun interesting activities

Table 4.8 Categorization of responses: Customer service

Summary Data: Sub Questions	
8. List some of the benefits associated with good customer service.	
Inductive categories	**Responses**
Customer retention	- Customer retention - Customers will come back when they get good customer service

	- When a customer is happy they always come back - customer loyalty - retain customers - retain its current customers
Increased bed occupancy	- higher number of visitors - Increase occupancies
Increase in referrals	- Word of mouth spreads like fire - marketing and advertising via Namleisure to attract people; telling families and friends about our resorts through word-of-mouth and brochures - Also tell more people about the good service thus leading to profit maximization - positive word of mouth - attract new customers
Company growth	- Increase in sales revenue which may lead to good company growth - Higher Sales revenue means paying dividend to our shareholder

	- Your business will go higher on a map for every client to be interested in - repeat customers ads to increase revenue - High sales - high profits
Competitive advantage	- creates a competitive advantage - survival in terms of competition
Beneficial to customers	- Good rewards to customers - We give discount to our clients especially during low season. - By giving my customers a good service as much as I could.
Yield management	- Grid management
Relationship	- Clients come in and want to see the person that has been dealing with their bookings; clients send gifts and thank you emails.
Excellent brand	- it helps develop a reputation that encourages customers

Increase staff motivation and ownership	- Increase employee pride and motivation.

Table 4.9 Categorization of responses: Customer service

Summary Data: Sub Questions
9. **What is your understanding on customer relationship management?**

Inductive categories	Responses
Used to develop and maintain relationships with customers	- Used by companies to interact with current and prospective clients - we need to build a good relationship with our clients - Interacting between yourself and your customer - Used to manage company's interactions with its current and future customers

	- It can also be a wellbeing between the customers and the employees in terms of doing business with each other - It's the kind of relationship you build with your customers. - The way in which we learn about customers need and behaviors.
Used to improve customer service	- Strategies to offer good customer service - Used by a company in order to increase customer satisfaction.
Used to develop database of clients	- Having an updated database of your clients
Training staff to deal with customer complaints	- staffing and training of employees on how to handle and escalate complains and to be aware of customer service aims

Table 4.10 Categorization of responses: Customer service

Summary Data: Sub Questions	
1. Is there a system or guideline on how customers' complaints should be handled at NWR?	
Inductive categories	**Responses**
Yes	- 3
Committee responsible for dealing with complaints	- There is a committee set to handle all the complaints. - Analyzed and dealt with - Training manuals provide information
No	- 6
Handled at staff's discretion	- Complaints are handled based on own initiation/discretion. - Mostly handled on the ground and in most cases we refer to Head Office further consideration.
Customer care e-mail	- customer care e-mail to where complaints should be forwarded

Non-response to complaints	- Client feedback especially from operations are not responded

Table 4.11 Categorization of responses: Customer complaints

Summary Data: Sub Questions	
2. Is the complaint handling system or guideline effective in terms of providing feedback? Please motivate your answer.	
Inductive categories	**Responses**
Suggestions for effectiveness	- Complaints should be handled centrally at the Central Reservations Office.
No system for handling complaints	- no guidelines or a system for handling complaints
Not effective	- I do not think it is effective because I never got feedback
Not sure	- I am not sure
Effective	- we do apologies in our emails or call the clients to apologies and provide a good solution

No answer	- 4

Group 2

Table 4.12 Categorization of responses: Customer service

Summary Data: Sub Questions	
1. What is your general understanding of customer service?	
Inductive categories	**Responses**
Meeting customer's expectations	- Meeting customer's expectations - When customer's needs are met and they feel valued by the company - How an organization handles customers to meet their needs and wants - used to learn more about customers' needs and behaviors - the act of serving a customer - Has to do with how satisfied the clients are - A way of servicing customers

	- Customer satisfaction occurs when the customers' needs are met - How an organization handles the customers to meet their needs and wants.
Providing service 'throughout the process'	- Service provided to customers before or during purchasing of goods or services - Delivery of service to customers during or before or even after purchase. - The service that is provided to the clients before and after the service has been provided. - The service provided to customer before, during and after purchasing and using goods and services.
Value for money	- value for their money
Making customers feel welcome	- Meet and greet them to make them feel welcome
Builds relationships with customers	- In order to develop strong relationships with them.

Table 4.13 Categorization of responses: Customer service

Summary Data: Sub Questions	
2. What guides you in terms of performing your duties?	
Inductive categories	**Responses**
Work instructions	- Supervisors to ensure all tasks are performed
job description	- job description
Company policy	- Company policy
Positive work environment	- Team work - Necessary tools such as computer system

Table 4.14 Categorization of responses: Customer service (Group 2)

Summary Data: Sub Questions
3. Do you think that management support is critical in customer service delivery? If yes, why do you say so? Do you get this support?

Inductive categories	Responses
Yes	- 7
No	- 6
Policy is available	- Customer service policy.
Low support received from management	- managers spend no time on training about customer service and the work environment becomes unusual and stressful - We do not get that support always.
Training provided for staff	- Training – to achieve customer satisfaction. - Sending customer/sales representatives to trainings. - This is done by training workers
Directions provided for staff	- management gives direction to employees - Organizational procedures

	- Job description and supervisor instructions; necessary tools such as computer systems etc. Things that make it possible for one to carry out tasks. - Job description is my guidelines and I even go beyond that if it's necessary. - The organizations policy and objectives. - Management gives direction to the workers on how to deliver services.
Support enhances job performance	- Leadership roles, goals and team dynamics. - Top management needs to become so obsessed with high quality customer service
Complaints are not promptly dealt with	- complaints that need management interventions are not attended to speedily - They do not respond to queries on time.
No consistency	- no consistency

Table 4.15 Categorization of responses: Customer service

Summary Data: Sub Questions	
4. Do you put in effort in finding out what your key customers need? Please motivate your answer.	
Inductive categories	**Responses**
Yes	- 11
No answer	- 1
Engaging with clients who utilize services	- by contacting or engaging with clients to get more information on their needs - it's an issue of delivering the marketing promise - To need to understand your customer needs and solves them - Needs of customers are generally happier and enjoy a greater sense of fulfillment in their jobs - in finding out what customers really want - I will go an extra mile for them to be accommodated at any NWR camps.

	- customer needs have to be understood in order to make it easy for the organization to meet them and make the customers happy
Create forum to interact with customers	- They need relevant information. What you advertise is what they expect to see.
Requesting feedback from customers	- - stay in contact with clients after they travel so you get feedback and better understanding on what they need.
Consultations with other roles players in the industry	- We ask the tour leader what s/he thinks should be done in their next trip to improve on our services.

Table 4.16 Categorization of responses: Customer service

Summary Data: Sub Questions
5. Does the relevant department make effort to respond accordingly to your clients' needs? If so, how is it done?

Inductive categories	Responses
Yes	- 6
No answer	- 1
Response is not prompt	- The sales department responds quicker than the Operations department - There is a lack of prompt internal communication and helpfulness - Not always.
Try to respond promptly	- By measuring and managing customer satisfaction; by solving problems on time - There is substantial flexibility in meeting the need of the customer - focus on problem solving - All the needs of the clients are sent to the Head of Department who will then take it up with the head office.
Sometime promptly, sometimes not promptly	- Not always positive or negative. - Sometimes they do, sometimes they don't and the response is sometimes positive and on other times negative.

	-
Excellent Service offered	- We come up with other alternatives - by responding on time and satisfying the client - The department will make an effort on how to deliver or respond to the clients' needs.

Table 4.17 Categorization of responses: Customer service

Summary Data: Sub Questions	
6. Is your work performance measured and rewarded based on meeting customer needs and successfully serving them? Please motivate your answer.	
Inductive categories	**Responses**
No answer	- 1
No	- 8
No performance management systems in place	- Company needs to introduce a performance management system - NWR still needs to introduce a performance system for measurement.

| Incentives for employees | - When you are rewarded (ex. Employee of the month), it motivates you to do better. |
| | - There should be measurements implemented to encourage employees e.g. employee of the month. |

Table 4.18 Categorization of responses: Customer service

Summary Data: Sub Questions	
7. What do you do to increase occupancy at the resorts?	
Inductive categories	**Responses**
Good customer service	- Offer good customer service
	- Satisfied customers become loyal customers who continue to use the product/service. This results in repeating business.
	- Providing services and products that are exactly what customers want; helping sales staff close deals faster; retaining existing customers and discovering new ones.

Active and creative marketing and advertising	- - Ensure clients are aware of specials (advertising/marketing) - Sending e-mails to all I know and to pass on to others on what we are offering. - Promoting the company at trade shows; educational;
Competitive pricing and incentives	- Introducing discount cards i.e. Namleisure; offering discounts to locals; offer better rates on off seasons; other specials. - there is a discount that can be given to clients
Grid management	- Grid management (replacing due bookings with confirmed ones) - Keeping a waiting list

Table 4.19 Categorization of responses: Customer service

Summary Data: Sub Questions	
8. List some of the benefits associated with good customer service.	
Inductive categories	**Responses**

Customer retention	- Attracting customers
	- Customer-retention by always coming back
	- Good relationships develops between employees and customers
	- customer loyalty
	- Customers who are well treated will always come back
	- Retain and keep customers.
	- Attract customers
	- A good relationship develops between customers and the company.
Increase in referrals	- A satisfied customer tells 5 people……
	- Good publicity from clients comes from great customer service.
Company growth	- Lead to increased revenues
	- Increase sales x3
	- Increase revenue; increase sales
Competitive advantage	- Sustainable competitive advantage

Beneficial to customers	- It helps you to focus on problem-solving - Respecting customers - Use your customer names - By giving my customers a good service as much as I could.
Excellent brand	- enhance public image - good company image
Increase staff motivation and ownership	- promote effective workforce - more effective work force - Focus on problem solving; technical excellence; response on time; respectful treatment.
Prompt feedback from clients	- Giving feedback on time

Table 4.20 Categorization of responses: Customer service

Summary Data: Sub Questions
9. What is your understanding on customer relationship management?

Inductive categories	Responses

Used to develop and maintain relationships with customers	- The way in which customers and management/employees relate - Interaction between or with your current and prospective (future) customers which leads to new products being launched - CRM refers to the interaction with your internal and external customer relationship in an organized way. - Customer relationship management is the relationship between employees and the client. - It's a model for managing a company's interactions with current and future customers. - behaviors in order to develop stronger relationships with them - How management build the bond between them and the clients or customers.
Used to understand customers' needs	- It is about understanding the customers' needs and suggesting on how to improve current products - It is a strategy used to learn more about customer needs and behavior in order to develop strong relationship with them.

	- Customer relationship management is a strategy used to learn more about customers' needs and behaviors in order to develop stronger relationships with them. - used to learn more about customer needs and behaviors
Used to develop database of clients	- Involves using technology to organize, automate and synchronize sales, marketing, customer service and technical support.
No answer	- 2

Table 4.21 Categorization of responses: Customer Complaints

Summary Data: Sub Questions	
1. Is there a system or guideline on how customers' complaints should be handled at NWR?	
Inductive categories	**Responses**
Yes	- 3

Keeping record of incidents	- Customer complaints are handled by a system in which the client writes down the complaint which should include the date and resort where the incident happened.
No answer	- 1
No	- 4
Handled at staff's discretion	- By apologizing, recovering with style and demonstrating your concern.
Non-response to complaints	- Customers still complain on feedback that they did not receive from management.
Referred to management or appropriate department	- referring complaints that we cannot handle to relevant managers - By solving the problem were you can refer the customer to the right department.

Table 4.22 Categorization of responses: Customer Complaints

Summary Data: Sub Questions

2. Is the complaint handling system or guideline effective in terms of providing feedback? Please motivate your answer.

Inductive categories	Responses
Suggestions for effectiveness	- It's high time to realize the importance of customer service - We are recommending a representative to take care of customer complaints and have a system in place to empower employees to tackle issues at hand. For example, offering a meal or anything to remedy the situation at hand as long as the employees can account for - Management should give feedback to clients on time - Reservations related complaints are currently handles timeously.
No system for handling complaints	- There is no proper system handling customer complaints. Managers fail to attend to clients complaints on time.
Not effective	- There is a procedure/system but it is not effective.
Effective	- 2
No answer	- 4

Suggestion	- A company representative at all levels maintains a courteous and responsive attitude toward customer and wants to be of real assistance to them.

Based on the above, the summary is as follow:

- The respondents showed a general understanding and appreciation of what customer service is all about.

- The respondents showed that they are guided by company policy; job description; leadership and team work in performing their duties.

- The respondents felt that management support is critical in customer service delivery mainly because their support gives the subordinates faith, honesty and job satisfaction and motivates employees.

- The respondents agreed that the relevant department make effort to respond accordingly to clients' needs by giving clients what they need (better services).

- 80% of the respondents agreed that there is no performance appraisal system at the company and that their work performance is not measured and rewarded based on meeting customer needs and successfully serving them.

- All the respondents agreed that they put more effort in finding out what the customers need. The respondents agreed that they promote customer needs through trade fairs, making promises, ensure perfect delivery of services, by requesting customer needs and providing feedback.

- To increase low season turn out, about 70% of the respondents indicated that they come up with specials. The respondents indicated that they launched a new product on the market, the Namleisure card. The advantage of the card is that it gives 50% discount to all customers.

- About 80% of respondents agreed that there is a system or guideline on how customers' complaints are handled. The respondents indicated that there is a customer care e-mail to which complaints are forwarded even if there are no particular guidelines on customer complaints. They also indicated that there is a committee set to handle all the complaints although this seems to be not effective.

4.6 Semi-structured Interviews

4.6.1 Participants profile

Coding	Gender	Occupation	Management level	Department	Education
A	male	Operations Manager	Senior	Operations	n/a
B	Male	ICT Manager	Middle	ICT	Bachelors' degree

C	Female	Sales & Marketing Manager	Middle	Marketing	MBA
D	Female	Marketing Manager	Senior	Marketing	PHD
E	Female	Branch Manager	Supervisory	Marketing	National Diploma
F	Female	Procurement Supervisor	Supervisory	Operations	Diploma
G	Male	Finance Manager	Senior	Finance	MBA
H	Male	Marketing & Research	Middle	Marketing	MBA
I	Female	Management Accountant	Middle	Finance	Diploma
J	Male	Area Manager	Middle	Operations	Postgraduate Diploma

| K | Female | Acting Managing Director | Senior | Managing Director | Postgraduate qualification |
| L | Female | Senior Sales Consultant | supervisory | Marketing | BA degree |

Source: Survey Data

4.6.2 Summary review of Semi-structured Interviews

Customer relationship management strategy

1. **What is your understanding/perception on customer relationship management (CRM)?**

   (a) An important function in sales and marketing department that has to do with managing the relationship between the company and its clients and potential clients, under which a customer records or database is managed.

   (b) This is the relationship between clients and an organization. CRM refers to the way this relationship is managed and how an organization can use this tool to optimize their opportunities in the market and to study the needs of their customers and potential customers.

   (c) Taking care of customer's systematically by applying customer relationship management system in order to understand customers' needs so that they can be served at the best of the company's ability that will lead to customer retention.

(d) CRM is the conscious and planned process through which customer relationships are built and customer satisfaction is nurtured at every point of contact, by personalizing interactions, and paying particular attention to individual needs. CRM is enhanced and facilitated through the use of technology – using databases to facilitate storage and retrieval of customer information.

(e) CRM is a program that interacts with the customers, helping the company better understands of what their customers really need. This information is very useful to improve sales revenues, reduce the number of complaints received, and gives new ways of how to attract new customers as well as new or better ideas of how to retain the existing customer.

(f) Includes following up on clients once they have left the resorts. After sales services does not exist in NWR thus that being my understanding on CRM.

(g) CRM is the orientation to always put the needs of the customer first. The desire to always understand what the customers want so as to create happiness for him/her by meeting her needs.

(h) CRM is related to how we manage customer interactions. I believe that CRM is a big part of all areas of the company from sales, marketing and operations.

(i) CRM – is a management tool used for interactions with current and future customers.

(j) Customers are king and have the must key to an organization's success. Customers can only be referred or compared to a lawn that needs fertilizer to keep it green. Without proper management, your business will die.

(k) This term is very broad, it can be used in different scenarios and in NWR's case, we use marketing department for marketing tracking and measure campaigns over many different channels such as face book, e-mail, search telephone and our direct company mails.

(l) To ensure on-going relationships are maintained on a trade and consumer level. The facilitation process of obtaining information from clients and using it to put effective strategies in place. Need to know what market needs are as well as expectations.

Categorization of responses

Inductive categories	Responses
A management tool used for Managing relationships between clients and an organization	- Managing the relationship between the company and its clients and potential clients. - Relationship between clients and an organization. - Customer relationships are built and customer satisfaction is nurtured. - A management tool used for interactions with current and future customers.

	- Ensure on-going relationships are maintained on a trade and consumer level.
Keeping and managing client database	- Customer records or database is managed.
A tool used in Optimizing market opportunities	- Use this tool to optimize their opportunities in the market.
A tool useful in studying customer needs	- To study the needs of their customers and potential customers. - Taking care of customers........to understand customers' needs so that they can be served at the best of the company's ability. - Paying particular attention to individual needs. - better understand of what their customers really need - always put the needs of the customer first

	- to know what market needs are as well as expectations
Aids the organization to attract and retain customers	- attract new customers as well as new or better ideas of how to retain the existing customer
It is facilitated by use of technology	- Using databases to facilitate storage and retrieval of customer information.
Includes after sales services	- Includes following up on clients once they have left the resorts.
Part of other company services	- A big part of all areas of the company from sales, marketing and operations.
It is useful in Monitoring the marketing through different media	- Tracking and measure campaigns over many different channels such as facebook, e-mail, search telephone and our direct company mails.

2. **Do you have clear business goals or management strategies related to attracting and retaining customers? If yes, please mention them.**

(a) Yes, we do as built in the approved 3 year strategic plan of the company. This include programs such as customer loyalty programs; introduction of

Namleisure card which offers discounts to individual clients directly. Secondly, NWR has a commission structure for the trade clients (tour operators) serves as an incentive.

(b) Yes, we use brochures and website. Website can be used to analyse the products being searched by customers. This information is then collected and determines the interest of the customers.

(c) Yes, Namleisure card recently introduced and special discounts.

(d) Due to system challenges, it has not yet been possible to implement a comprehensive CRM system, however some initiatives are in place to acknowledge and nurture particular groups of clients – such as the 25% discount for Namibians, 35% discount for Namibian pensioners, and more recently the introduction of the Namleisure card, which is an annual membership card that confers certain discounts to categories of members. Equally, Business to Business relationships with operators is managed through business partner agreements.

(e) Not 100% sure, but I think so. The Namleisure card is one such strategy.

(f) Not sure

(g) No, attracting/retaining customers means understanding what the customer needs/wants. This is normally done through customer surveys which I did not yet see. Failure to understand the needs of customers means inappropriate response which results in poor service delivery.

(h) Yes we have, a marketing strategy and a communications plan

(i) Client feedback form in our rooms which is analyzed and feedback given back to the client and other action for improvements are implemented.

(j) On-going value addition and marketing strategy confine the business in the area that is very strong, research on the competitor and be alert and keep the head above the water.

(k) Yes of course, a successful direct marketer as we are should work constantly to find out what our clients wants and develop products accordingly. When clients are happy they don't only return but also tell others. Customers are the lifeblood of NWR so it is crucial to maximize customer satisfaction. It costs us about 10 times more to bring in a new customer than to keep an existing one. Record complaints and analyze them periodically to determine trends, offer quality products, be willing to change and cultivate good people skills.

(l) Yes, product training for operators to ensure they are up to-date and confident in selling the product. Visibility in the market place i.e. Consumer and trade fairs.

Categorization of responses

Inductive categories	Responses
Part of company strategic plan	- Built in the approved 3 years strategic plan of the company.

	- Relationship between clients and an organization.
	- Built in the approved 3 year strategic plan of the company.
	- Relationship between clients and an organization.
	- Customer relationships are built and customer satisfaction is nurtured.
	- A management tool used for interactions with current and future customers.
	- Ensure on-going relationships are maintained on a trade and consumer level.
The company has various programs to attract and retain clients	- Include programs such as customer loyalty programs; introduction of NAMLeisure card which offers discounts to individual clients directly. - NAMLeisure card recently introduced and special discounts.

	- 25% discount for Namibians, 35% discount for Namibian pensioners, and.....the introduction of the NamLeisure card. - NamLeisure card is one such strategy. - Marketing strategy and a communications plan. - Marketing strategy.......research on the competitor. - Product training for operators.......Visibility in the market place.
Various media are used to communicate information to potential clients	- We use brochures and website.
Incentives	- NWR has a commission structure for the trade clients (tour operators) serves as an incentive.

Challenges hindering implementation	- Due to system challenges, it has not yet been possible to implement a comprehensive CRM system.
Business partner agreements are also utilized	- Business to Business relationships with operators is managed through business partner agreements.
Unsure	- Not 100% sure. - Not sure.
This is dependent on knowing customer needs	- No attracting/retaining customer means understanding what the customer needs/wants. This is normally done through customer surveys which I did not yet see. - Failure to understand the needs of customers means inappropriate response which results in poor service delivery. - Client feedback form in rooms which is analyzed.

	- We should work constantly to find out what our clients wants and develop products accordingly.

3. Does NWR maintains and manage a database of customers for the purpose of improving relationships and also to increase sales revenue? If so, how?

(a) At the moment only the maintenance of the database, however, the mining of such is to follow as from November 2013 with the appointment of the relevant positions to perform these dedicated tasks.

(b) Yes, there is a database of customers that can be used for this purpose in the system. NWR website provides a platform where customers can make comments and suggestion and or complaints where improvements of services can be made.

(c) Partly but a lot still need to be done. The focus has been more on trade customers – tour operators discounts, special arranged – contracts and strategic partnership agreements.

(d) Although the reservation system does maintain a database of clients, this information is not yet actively and proactively used to improve and nurture relationships – especially with independent travelers – except where such relationships are nurtured by individual sales consultants.

(e) No.

(f) In my opinion, they don't maintain and manage the database of customers. NWR does not have the system of after sales services.

(g) Not sure, the reliability of ICT systems is still a concern in NWR. However, basic infrastructure is there to improve relationship.

(h) NWR has a database of all tour operators through the Business Partnership Agreements. The tour operator's sales figures also reflect on the innkeeper reservation system which helps in negotiating new terms with the operator.

(i) Yes, but not up to standard.

(j) The database is there, the question is on the follow-up that does not exist.

(k) Yes, our booking system is developed in such a way to keep customer database for future references and marketing purpose. However, the system is not being fully utilized yet but we are conducting in-house trainings to maximize all the functions of the system. We venture in new promotional products such as the introduction of the Namleisure which offers 50% discount to local clients and a further discount to foreign nationals.

(l) Data is available on Innkeeper but does not get utilized by marketing effectively. Facilities such as mass mailing are available but not put to use to introduce new products, updates and specials.

Categorization of responses

Inductive categories	Responses
Existence/Maintenance of database	- Partly but a lot still need to be done….focus has been more on trade customers.

	- No.
	- They don't maintain and manage the database of customers.
	- The reliability of ICT systems is still a concern in NWR..... However, basic infrastructure is there.
	- NWR has a database of all tour operators.
	- Yes, but not up to standard.
	- Yes, our booking system is developed in such a way to keep customer database for future references and marketing purpose. However, the system is not being fully utilized yet.....
Database is a forum to receive customer feedback	- website provides a platform where customers can make comments and suggestion and or complaints where improvements of services can be made
Management and utilization of database	- At the moment only the maintenance of the database, however, the mining of

is not actively being done	such is to follow as from November 2013. - The database is there, the question is on the follow-up that does not exist. - The database is there, the question is on the follow-up that does not exist. - Information is not yet actively and proactively used to improve and nurture relationships.
Use of database	- Basic infrastructure is there to improve relationship.

4. Does the organization have the right technical staff to provide technical support for the use of computer technology in building relationships?

(a) Yes, NWR have able ICT function

(b) Yes, the ICT personnel maintain the technical system NWR has.

(c) Yes, talent within is there but not discovered or developed yet.

(d) I believe that the company has staff with the required skills – however due to the changeover of systems and data challenges experienced in the process, it has not been possible to focus on the component of CRM.

(e) Yes.

(f) I doubt because we could have been seeing changes on our website. I don't see any innovation from the technical staff responsible for that specific division.

(g) No, reliability of data from system, i.e. data from HansaWorld and Innkeeper is still questionable. Therefore, ICT is not yet providing support required for CRM.

(h) No, not yet. A lot more technical people are needed to be capacitated at points of engagement with clients. A birthday reminder, important date's database is needed. At the moment, the company does not have the technical expertise.

(i) Yes

(j) In terms of human resource, the company is well equipped. The issue is on the tools that the staffs are equipped with. The investment on IT has not been up to standard due to lack of resources. It is in a fast move and one has to catch-up and not to rely on old/outdated system.

(k) Yes, the young and dynamic team is getting self-confidence and more training is being made available to equip the team with more needed qualities and know-how to train every user of the system.

(l) Yes, the technical staffs are there but a designated person is required to handle the website and face book.

Categorization of responses

Inductive categories	Responses
Sufficient technical staff to support ICT	- NWR have able ICT function. - The ICT personnel maintain the technical system NWR has. - Yes, talent within is there but not discovered or developed yet. - The company has staff with the required skills. - Yes x2. - The company is well equipped. - The technical staff is there but a designated person is required to handle the website and Facebook.
There are staff but there is need for development of capacity	- Yes, talent within is there but not discovered or developed yet. - A lot more technical people are needed to be capacitated at points of engagement with clients..........At the moment, the company does not have the technical expertise.

	- More training is being made available to equip the team.
Systems	- However due to the changeover of systems and data challenges experienced in the process, it has not been possible to focus on the component of CRM.
Staff demonstrate lack of innovation and data not reliable	- I don't see any innovation from the technical staff responsible. - No reliability of data from system. - No, reliability of data from system, i.e. data from HansaWorld and Innkeeper is still questionable.
Insufficient resources/financing is a problem	- The issue is on the tools that the staffs are equipped with. The investment on IT has not been up to standard due to lack of resources.

5. Is your organizational structure designed around your customers?

Please motivate your answer.

(a) The organogram has been adjusted for implementation on 1ˢᵗ November 2013. This structure is designed around the market or responding to the needs and demands of customers.

(b) Yes the structure includes research people that are responsible for the marketing of the organization as well as researching better ways of maintaining the current clientele.

(c) NWR is customer centered; feedback from customers is encouraged or provided through voice of the customer form.

(d) This has to be considered at every point of contact. At the reservations level – provision is made to service both the operator clients and the individual clients. The trade teams dealing with operators are divided into four, each handling specific operators – in an effort to ensure a better relationship and service. The reservations team dealing with FIT clients also has systems in place which should facilitate service deliver - however the speed of service and quality of communication is dependent on the skills and motivation of the Sales Consultants, and in general terms, the level of service has not yet reached levels offered by the private sector.

At camp level – customer centricity depends on the type and size of camp. The eco-collection generally is structured to provide a more personalized service. Bigger camps are less personal, and service standards are not consistent.

(e) n/a

(f) Yes and no, but there is room for improvement. Yes because we are currently having four trade divisions in the marketing department.

(g) No, Marketing and Sales Departments are chronically understaffed. Currently, no Senior Manager Marketing for 3 months. No PRO position on the structure.

(h) No, it is not at the moment. The structure is at the moment only functional in order to accommodate the various functions. The structure does not fully accommodate customer expectations or built to capture experiences and how to react to them.

(i) No, we don't have a customer relation manager nor do we have such section in NWR.

(j) Yes, the organization is designed around customer focus. The question is on application of the design that is not consistent or not uniformity.

(k) Yes, coordination with all role players. No conflicts in the team, we have one focus – to serve client and all staff know their roles. We focus on hiring, training and best practice sharing.

(l) Not currently especially for consumers; lack of standards at resort level, inconsistent levels of service. Website is not informative enough to meet client's expectations.

Categorization of responses

Inductive categories	Responses

Designed to meet the needs of the market	- Structure is designed around the market or responding to the needs and demands of customers. - Includes research people that are responsible for the marketing of the organization. Yes, talent within is there but not discovered or developed yet. - NWR is customer centered. - Yes because we are currently having four trade divisions in the marketing department. - The organization is designed around customer focus. - Yes, coordination with all role players.
Customer needs are not accommodated in the structure	- Not at the moment. ….The structure does not fully accommodate customer expectations. - Nor do we have such section in NWR. - Not currently especially for consumers........ Website is not

	informative enough to meet client's expectations.
Feedback is encouraged	- Feedback from customers is encouraged or provided through voice of the customer form.
Need for development and improvement	- The speed of service and quality of communication is dependent on the skills and motivation of the sales consultants, and in general terms, the level of service has not yet reached levels offered by the private sector. - There is room for improvement. - Application of the design that is not consistent or not uniformity.
Insufficient staffing or the lack of certain personnel	- No, Marketing and Sales Departments are chronically understaffed. Currently no Senior Manager Marketing for 3 months. No PRO position on the structure. - we don't have a customer relation manager

All role players are involved in the structure	- Coordination with all role players.
Various Strategies are in place to incorporate customers in organizational structure	- No conflicts in the team. …One focus – to serve client…..focus on hiring, training and best practice sharing. - Having four trade divisions in the marketing department. - Researching better ways of maintaining the current clientele. - Feedback from customers is encouraged or provided through voice of the customer form.

6. **Customer complaints handling is part of CRM, are there proper channels identified for handling customer complaints and feedback; and how effective is this?**

(a) NWR has a guest feedback system that is being revised and simplified. At this moment, it is not 100% satisfying.

(b) Yes there is as we have a dedicated e-mail address for the customer complaints. This address is monitored by dedicated set of people including the senior manager of marketing.

(c) Not at moment − handled via operation department. There is customer service e-mail but cannot say it has been effective as such.

(d) Regrettably this is still a very weak area in NWR. There is no central client service center that deals with complaints - and no standard guideline followed. Customers with complaints do not consistently get an acknowledgement or response, and if it comes, it could take a very long time. In addition, complaints are seldom actually acted on internally to ensure that service weaknesses are addressed, and that sub-standard service is accounted for at the appropriate level.

(e) Yes, there are proper channels of handling customer complaints and feedback. It is not effective, due to a number of issues such as at times the assigned person to response is not available/out of office and no provision made for an alternative person to assist. Secondly, the feedback time is too long; months could go by with no response from the relevant camp or Area/Operations Manager. Thirdly, complaints are sometimes expected to be resolved by a department that has no idea what transpired, this leads to the problems not being solved on time and as it should have.

(f) Not sure.

(g) Not effective, there should have been a dedicated position or through IT to handle customer complaints. In addition, the public relations officer might have been helpful with customer complaints.

(h) A number of propositions were suggested and tried but none worked because there is no dedicated customer care representative that only monitors customer interactions. Customer complaints are addressed centrally which results in late correspondences and eventually loss of interest in the brand.

(i) Not effective at all.

(j) The channels are not there because there is no focal point. It is however something of the past, currently we have introduced the involvement communication and with that, complaints are handled and dealt with.

(k) Currently NWR is in the process of establishing a dedicated customer complaints function due to the fact that consumer/customer and company interactions are part of everyday exercise. Currently, NWR uses line managers to cover these issues.

(l) There are channels and processes but unfortunately ineffective. Complaints will reach the resort but often no feedback is given to the client. Client will receive acknowledgement of complaint but no further responses. Refund process also not quick and efficient.

Categorization of responses

Inductive categories	Responses

Mechanism for handling complaints	- NWR has a guest feedback system that is being revised and simplified. - We have a dedicated e-mail address for the customer complaints. - Handled via operation department. - There are proper channels of handling customer complaints and feedback. - Currently we have introduced the involvement communication and with that, complaints are handled and dealt with. - Currently NWR is in the process of establishing a dedicated customer complaints function....... Currently, NWR uses line managers to cover these issues.
Effectiveness of customer complaint mechanism	- At this moment, it is not 100% satisfying. - There is customer service e-mail but cannot say it has been effective. - Regrettably this is still a very weak area in NWR. There is no central client service

	center that deals with complaints - and no standard guideline followed. - It is not effective, due to a number of issues - Not effective. - A number of propositions were suggested and tried but none worked - Not effective at all. - There are channels and processes but unfortunately ineffective.
Reasons for ineffectiveness of customer complaint mechanism	- At times, the assigned person to response is not available/out of office and no provision made for an alternative person to assist….the feedback time is too long…complaints are sometimes expected to be resolved by a department that has no idea what transpired. - There should have been a dedicated position or through IT to handle customer complaints.

	- There is no dedicated customer care representative that only monitors customer interactions......Customer complaints are addressed centrally which results in late correspondences and eventually loss of interest in the brand. - No feedback is given to the client..... Refund process also not quick and efficient.

7. **What practices do you think creates a competitive advantage for NWR and are these being put to use?**

(a) Experienced and loyal staff. They are now being trained thoroughly in various areas of focus to sharpen their skills.

(b) The fact that NWR is the only company allowed to operate within the national parks of Namibia gives then a competitive advantage, however, I don't feel this is being explored to the maximum.

(c) CRM – to an extent.

(d) NWR's competitive advantages lie in the prime positioning of the camps, within the protected areas of Namibia. Some advantage is taken of this positioning, by offering supplementary activities such as guided drives and walks. However more could be done to enhance the value addition through availability of information to clients and consequently the guest experience – and to work more closely with the park management and research

component of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism – in a synergistic manner – to project a more professional and environmentally conscious image. Much could be learnt from the SANParks model of South Africa.

(e) Special discounted rates, Standard Tour Operator rates, improving the standard of the camps (improvements/renovations), well trained employees. Of late, all of the above is being put to use.

(f) Facilities on offer; training; affordable rates, customer services, cleanliness, location.

(g) Exclusive rights in Namibia national parks which competitors do not enjoy. Not being put to use due to inadequate response to customer needs – poor customer service.

(h) Marketing on the positioning of NWR in the most used competitive aspect of NWR. It works in most parts but poor service lets down the company.

(i) Night game drives in Etosha, sundowner at the vlei. Yes, is being used.

(j) Location being inside the national parks, classification of the products gives client a wide range of choices.

(k) Pricing practices, NWR provides lower prices while providing greater benefits and services that justify higher price tag. Advantages in being in national park, NWR provides services not readily offered by competitors such as night game drives in the national parks.

(l) The brand name needs to be associated with excellence of service and quality accommodation and facilities. The branding is inconsistent on many levels.

Categorization of responses

Inductive categories	Responses
Practices that provide competitive advantage	- CRM – to an extent - Yes, is being used.
Sub-categories: Staff experience and training	- Experienced and loyal staff.....trained thoroughly in various areas of focus to sharpen their skills.
-Exclusive access to national parks	- NWR is the only company allowed to operate within the national parks of Namibia. - Location being inside the national parks.......gives client a wide range of choices.
Wide variety of services/activities	- Exclusive rights in Namibia national parks which competitors do not have.

Low rates Excellent services facilities and brand name	- NWR's competitive advantages lie in the prime positioning of the camps, within the protected areas of Namibia......offering supplementary activities such as guided drives and walks. - Special discounted rates, Standard Tour Operator rates, improving the standard of the camps (improvements/renovations), well trained employees. - Facilities on offer; training; affordable rates, customer services, cleanliness, location. - Marketing on the positioning of NWR. - Night game drives in Etosha, sundowner at the vlei. - Pricing practices, NWR provides lower prices...... Advantages in being in national park, NWR provides services not readily

	offered by competitors such as night game drives in the national parks. - The brand name needs to be associated with excellence of service and quality accommodation and facilities.
Utilization of competitive advantage	- Trained thoroughly in various areas of focus to sharpen their skills. - NWR is the only company allowed to operate within the national parks of Namibia gives then a competitive advantage, however, I don't feel this is being explored to the maximum.- Regrettably this is still a very weak area in NWR. There is no central client service centre that deals with complaints - and no standard guideline followed. - Special discounted rates, Standard Tour Operator rates, improving the standard of the camps (improvements/renovations), well trained employees. Of late, all of the above is being put to use.

	- Not being put to use due to inadequate response to customer needs - Night game drives in Etosha, sundowner at the vlei. Yes, is being used. - The branding is inconsistent on many levels.
Improvement of current status	- Much could be learnt from the SANParks model of South Africa.
Problems with utilization of competitive advantage	- Due to inadequate response to customer needs – poor customer service.

8. What do you think is required to successfully implement CRM?

(a) A dedicated portfolio with at least 2 to 3 trained staff to manage the function. Develop further incentive programs to different clientele.

(b) A good and effective training to users on the use of the system; sufficient use of hardware for the system; support of the management; the right CRM based on the operation of the business.

(c) Commitment from management, employees, board members (high level to lower level).

(d) The most important would be a culture of service and recognition of the value of making <u>every</u> client feel special. Technology facilitates large databases, but this does not mean that CRM cannot be practiced without it.

(e) Training of the relevant employees and training for management on what CRM is all about. Ensure that all technical support is available, with the software program in place.

(f) I would suggest NWR to have a customer help desk.

(g) Understand first what our customer want – do not assume we know what they want but ask them; re-organize departmental structure to respond to what the customer wants; drive company-wide philosophy of customer service starting with senior management commitment to customer service and then the rest of the staff.

(h) CRM should be implemented at all levels of customer-engagement from marketing to sales and reservations to camp level hospitality and restaurant. Refresher training is needed.

(i) Good technology to organize, automate and synchronize activities

(j) Commitment is the key to a successfully implementation of CRM, understanding of the entire team within the organization and set a dedicated team to monitor and evaluate the process with a mandate to report back frequently.

(k) Operational requirements, how much revenue can be spent on implementation and sustaining the CRM, knowledge of your clientele culture and possible responses.

(l) Customer feedback forms at resort level and for the reservation process. This needs to be maintained and data captured to ensure feedback leads to proactive service levels.

Categorization of responses

Inductive categories	Responses
A specific unit/employees to handle this function	- A dedicated portfolio with at least 2 to 3 trained staff to manage the function. - I would suggest NWR to have a customer help desk. - Re-organize departmental structure to respond to what the customer wants.
Incentives for clients	- Develop further incentive programs to different clientele.
Training for users	- A good and effective training to users on the use of the system. - Training of the relevant employees and training for management on what CRM is all about.

	- Refresher training is needed.
Appropriate technology	- Sufficient use of hardware for the system; the right CRM based on the operation of the business. - Technology facilitates large databases. - Ensure that all technical support is available, with the software program in place. - Good technology to organize, automate and synchronize activities.
Commitment from staff and management	- Support of the management. - Commitment from management, employees, board members. - Commitment is the key to a successfully implementation of CRM.
Positive attitude to service delivery	- The most important would be a culture of service and recognition of the value of making every client feel special. - Drive company-wide philosophy of customer service starting with senior

	management commitment to customer service and then the rest of the staff.
Customer engagement	- Understand first what our customers want. - CRM should be implemented at all levels of customer-engagement. - Knowledge of your clientele culture and possible responses. - Customer feedback forms.
Adequate financing	- how much revenue can be spent on implementation and sustaining the CRM.

Bed occupancy

1. **On a general basis, what is the status of the bed occupancy across NWR resorts?**

(a) 37% on average for the year

(b) Depending on the season and time of the year. There are high seasons and low seasons. In high seasons all camps are fully booked and on low season camps are half to 2/3 booked.

(c) Fair and seasonal

(d) NWR is a company of contrasts – with some camps showing higher than average occupancies in the Namibian industry – and others way below

average occupancy. High occupancies can generally be equated with the positioning in prime tourism destinations and significant situational advantages – such as in Etosha National Park and in the Sossusvlei area, where particular access (Etosha at night, Sossusvlei at dawn and dusk) are restricted to NWR facilities.

In other camps, occupancies are more equated to the level of service delivery.   Renovation/redevelopment does not necessarily lead to improved occupancies if the level of service delivery is not also addressed.

(e) Bed occupancy is more than 100% in most of the major camps during high season and then it drops to about 40% during the low season.

(f) Not applicable.

(g) May be 50% - confirm with real statistics.

(h) Occupancy at NWR follows a seasonal trend of high occupancy during the May to October season which is characterized by the European high season holiday and a low season (Nov to April).

(i) 80%.

(j) The high season has a high occupancy. The challenge is the low season where the occupancy drops to its lowest 25 to 35%.

(k) Our resorts are considered a slow time during the summer of is referred to as off season. Occupancy has been around 70 to 80%.

(l) High degree of seasonality at many resorts. Occupancy could be increased it current systems are managed effectively.

Categorization of responses

Inductive categories	Responses
Average bed occupancy	- 37% on average for the year. - May be 50% - confirm with real statistics. - 80%. - Occupancy has been around 70 to 80%. - Bed occupancy is more than 100% in most of the major camps during high season and then it drops to about 40% during the low season. - In high seasons all camps are fully booked and on low season camps are half to 2/3 booked. - Occupancy at NWR follows a seasonal trend of high occupancy during the May to October season which is characterized by the European high season holiday and a low season.

	- The high season has a high occupancy..... The low season where the occupancy drops to its lowest 25 to 35%.
Variability of bed occupancy Sub-categories - Seasons and time of year - By camp/position	- Depending on the season and time of the year. - Fair and seasonal. - Occupancy at NWR follows a seasonal trend of high occupancy during the May to October season which is characterized by the European high season holiday and a low season. - The high season has a high occupancy. - Our resorts are considered a slow time during the summer of is referred to as off season. - High degree of seasonality at many resorts.

- By service delivery	- Some camps showing higher than average occupancies in the Namibian industry – and others way below average occupancy.
	- Occupancies are more equated to the level of service delivery.
	- Occupancy could be increased it current systems are managed effectively.

2. **What key factors (internal and/or external) do you think contributes to good bed occupancy?**

(a) Effective marketing and sales activities; effective CRM system; effective customer feedback system would be built with CRM system; customer experience related to good service at lodging units (camps).

(b) The professional service that NWR provides; the skills that NWR staff has; the exciting view NWR has; the good adventurous feeling clients experience during the stay of the camp.

(c) Internal commitment to provide quality service through quality service management system. Loyalty intensive to both customers and employees. External – trust – believe in product quality/brand - word of mouth.

(d) No response.

(e) Competitive rates across the board, excellent customer service, proper pre-planning.

(f) Neat rooms, tea-station in the rooms, welcoming gifts.

(g) Marketing (customer needs = marketing promise); price; activities.

(h) Favorable economic conditions in source market, favorable rates and value-add deals, good customer experiences and references.

(i) Prime locations.

(j) Location of the resorts, reputation of the location, excellent wildlife viewing and scenery, weather (sunshine), security to our clients. People – Namibians are known for a sense of humor that contributes a lot.

(k) Primary, I will say the low currency against all the international currencies; peace and stability in the region and Namibia in particular with its good foreign policy. Service and customer relationships, exceptional activities which are unique.

(l) Good pricing, quality standards, good management systems especially with tour operators to ensure provisional bookings are released in a timely manner. Yield management to maximize sales.

Categorization of responses

Inductive categories	Responses
Effective marketing and sales activities	- Effective marketing and sales activities. - Proper pre-planning.

	- Marketing. - Yield management to maximize sales.
Effective CRM system	- Effective CRM system.
Effective customer feedback system	- Effective customer feedback system.
Good/professional service	- Customer experience related to good service. - The professional service that NWR provides the good adventurous feeling clients experience during the stay of the camp. - Internal commitment to provide quality service. - Excellent customer service. - Neat rooms, tea-station in the rooms, welcoming gifts. - Good customer experiences and references.

	- Service and customer relationships. - Quality standards, good management.
Skilled staff	- The skills that NWR staff has.
Infrastructure, setting and location	- The exciting view NWR has. - Activities. - Prime locations. - Location of the resorts, reputation of the location, excellent wildlife viewing and scenery, weather (sunshine) - Exceptional activities which are unique.
Quality of NWR brand	- External – trust – believe in product quality/brand.
Competitive rates	- Competitive rates. - Price. - Favorable rates and value-add deals. - Good pricing.
Economic conditions	- Favorable economic conditions in source market. - Low currency against all the international currencies.

Security	- Security to our clients.
	- Peace and stability in the region and Namibia in particular with its good foreign policy.
Attitude of locales	- People – Namibians are known for a sense of humor that contributes a lot.

3. What factors may possibly influence client's choice when choosing accommodation?

(a) Various activities that give value for money; destination; price; referrals; satisfying post experience with service delivery.

(b) Prices; products and services that are provided at the camps; the beautiful views of the camps.

(c) More as in no. 2 – bed occupancy; competitive rates; freebies and incentives.

(d) There are some basic requirements that clients would be looking at, once they decide their destination:

- Comfort and practicality of accommodation and/or camping

- Cleanliness and state of repair of facilities

- Quality of services and food

- Friendliness and efficiency of staff,

- Value for money.

HOWEVER, now more than ever before, word of mouth is playing a huge role. Information on other client experience is readily and abundantly available on the internet − so first-hand experiential information on the factors above is easily accessible. In addition, ease of making a booking plays a role. Clients expect to have responses to queries handled quickly and efficiently, and bookings confirmed quickly (even immediately in the case of online)

(e) Location, type of service provided, type of product, price

(f) Unfriendly staff, cleanliness

(g) Price compared to service received; options available at establishment; customer service (staff that delivers service expected).

(h) A favorable reference and rating on social media sites, e.g. trip Advisor; price and rates; value for money (special deals, value adds)

(i) Good service/excellent facilities and attractive activities

(j) Budget as most of the rooms are different, location of the accommodation plays an important role as well as the proximity of rooms to water holes.

(k) Value for money, customer service and activities on offer, reviews on web such as Trip Advisors, weather and seasons, special events such as world gatherings.

(l) Availability, online booking facility which must be effective and fast, location, reliable and up-to date product information.

Categorization of responses

Inductive categories	Responses
Price/value for money	- Value for money; price. - Prices. - Competitive rates. - Value for money. - Price. - Price compared to service received. - Price and rates; value for money (special deals, value adds). - Budget as most of the rooms are different. - Value for money.
Incentives	- Freebies and incentives.
Quality service delivery	- Satisfying post experience with service delivery. - Products and services that are provided at the camps. - Quality of services and food. - Customer service.

	- Good service and attractive activities. - Customer service and activities on offer.
Location and type of services provided	- Destination. - The beautiful views of the camps. - Location, type of service provided. - Options available at establishment. - Location of the accommodation. - Location.
Referrals from previous clients	- Referrals. - Word of mouth is playing a huge role. - A favorable reference and rating on social media sites, e.g. trip Advisor.
Comfort and practicality	- More as in no. 2 – bed occupancy. - Comfort and practicality of accommodation and/or camping.
State of facilities	- Cleanliness and state of repair facilities. - Cleanliness. - Excellent facilities.
Staff efficiency and attitude	- Friendliness and efficiency of staff. - Unfriendly staff.

Marketing efforts	- Reliable and up-to date product information.

4. What strategies are in place to avoid decline in bed occupancy at NWR resorts?

(a) Market and attract such clients that travel during "now low season"; development of domestic market; development of SADC market; putting in brochures and systems that mention service levels and standards; targeted marketing to "database" clients – those that have already visited NWR facilities before.

(b) Maintenance on the beds; continuous growth in number of rooms as per demand; regular advertisements; special offers on products e.g. discounted seasons.

(c) Prices = low season/high season; special offer – seasonal; special strategic partnerships; joint marketing strategy, e.g. NWR? Sun Karros – recently amended.

(d) On paper, NWR is committed to providing an outstanding service, and providing value for money and professional experiences. The words do not always translate into reality due to individuals in the system who has not embraced the company values. Nonetheless, over time and in some camps, service delivery levels are of a high standard, which reflects in sound occupancies.

The introduction of the Namleisure card, offering 50% discounts to Namibian members, and 25% discounts to SADC residents is also a strategy to maintain or grow bed occupancy. However, the full impact of this card will not be realized whilst there is an absence of communication with members. [I say this from first-hand experience – having bought my card end of June, and to date not once received any communication as a member.]

Sound win-win relationships with operators

Aggressive yield management approach to reservations

(e) Only in the recent months are there strategies being implemented to avoid decline in bed occupancy. Such as the introduction of the Namleisure card, offering discounts to the domestic and regional market.

(f) Not sure if there are any

(g) Namleisure card

(h) Low season special packages, domestic campaigns and specials; mice and tour planning.

(i) Change management model to convert resorts into independent business units to improve on service delivery and cost savings.

(j) Going local, regional and international, specials targeting different markets and the Namleisure card targeting locals.

(k) NWR turn-around strategies, specials and packages offered, introduction of discount innovation with Namleisure and seasonal discounts for the local markets.

(l) The introduction of the Namleisure card to encourage more local visitors, coaching at resort level to ensure quality desired level of service.

Categorization of responses

Inductive categories	Responses
Scale-up on marketing efforts targeting a wide variety of clients	- Market and attract such clients that travel during "now low season"; development of domestic market; development of SADC market; putting in brochures and systems that mention service levels and standards; targeted marketing to "database" clients – those that have already visited NWR facilities before. - Regular advertisements. - Domestic campaigns and specials. - Going local, regional and international, specials targeting different markets.
Improvement and proper maintenance of facilities	- Maintenance on the beds; continuous growth in number of rooms as per demand.

Competitive Pricing and Incentives	- Special offers on products e.g. discounted seasons. - Prices = low season/high season; special offer – seasonal - Value for money. - NamLeisure card, offering 50% discounts to Namibian members, and 25% discounts to SADC residents - NamLeisure card, offering discounts to the domestic and regional market. - NamLeisure card. - Low season special packages. - NamLeisure card. - NWR turn-around strategies, specials and packages offered, introduction of discount innovation with NamLeisure and seasonal discounts for the local markets. - The NamLeisure card.
Strategic partnerships	- Special strategic partnerships; joint marketing strategy, e.g. NWR & Sun Karros.

	- Sound win-win relationships with operators.
High quality service	- NWR is committed to providing an outstanding service.
A good experience for clients	- Professional experiences.
Efficient administration	- Aggressive yield management approach to reservations. - MICE and tour planning.
Management strategies	- Change management model to convert resorts into independent business units to improve on service delivery and cost savings.
Staff training	- Coaching at resort level to ensure quality desired level of service.
Not sure	- Not sure if there are any.

5. **Do you think that there is a relationship between CRM and occupancy? Motivate your answer.**

(a) Yes, there is. It is much easier and cheaper to market to clients that were already at your facilities then new customers. It is also important and appropriate to implement, correct, rectify what they (clients) have feedback and so done, feedback is easily given leading to much customer satisfaction rate.

(b) Yes, one can use Customer Relationship Management (CRM) to motivate more occupancy by studying the behaviors of the clients.

(c) Yes.

(d) Absolutely, good CRM creates loyalty, as well as word of mouth marketing advantages. At NWR, this was proven through the interventions at Terrace Bay. Occupancies increased dramatically when service delivery was improved and became more personal, but also because the then resident Area Manager made a point of providing a one on one personal service – including follow up. Once this intensive level of intervention was reduced and focus moved elsewhere, the occupancy whilst still higher than before did not reach the same levels as at its zenith.

Everybody wants to be recognized and treated as an individual. Good CRM also serves as a communication channel keeping the brand and opportunities within sight of clients. Little gestures such as sending out birthday greetings, or a personalized welcome letter, or a thank you note after a visit can make all the difference and leave a positive and lasting impression.

(e) Yes, when CRM is performed well, the occupancy will be high as both the customer and organization get what they want.

(f) Yes, because if there is no good customer relationship or if customers are not happy that will affect your occupancy. Once you have happy clients, you are assured they will come back.

(g) Yes, if people (customer) receive feedback on their concerns, and they see improvements, they will want to stay with the establishment. However, if what they want is not taken care of, they will stay away from resorts. Therefore effective CRM is needed to give feedback to clients to ensure that they do business with NWR.

(h) Yes, there is a direct relationship. Weak CRM leads to increased complaints and negative comments on the NWR camps. This leads to negative referrals which results in a low demand for NWR service.

(i) Yes, if customer feels that their complaints are heard and they see changes and interaction and they are aware of new activities surely they will be to fill our beds.

(j) Yes indeed, without the two, the business will collapse. Client database gives the opportunity to the company to derive market trends. CRM and occupancy determines the organization position in the market.

(k) Yes, a good CRM system will create positive occupancy at any given time. A compromised CRM will automatically negatively affect the occupancy at any given time.

(l) Most definitely as a good experience leads to word of mouth (advertising and repeat business. Customer satisfaction needs to be ensured at all levels.

Categorization of responses

Inductive categories	Responses
Relationship exists	- 100% response.
	- Ease of marketing to existing clients. - Feedback from existing clients helps to improve performance. - Increases occupancy due to understanding of client needs. - Creates loyalty and referrals. - Both the customer and organization get what they want. - Once you have happy clients, you are assured they will come back. - If people (customer) receive feedback on their concerns, and they see improvements, they will want to stay with the establishment. - Weak CRM leads to increased complaints and negative comments on the NWR camps.

	- Client database gives the opportunity to the company to derive market trends. CRM and occupancy determines the organization position in the market. - A compromised CRM will automatically negatively affect the occupancy at any given time. - A good experience leads to word of mouth advertising and repeat business.

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.0 Introduction

The chapter summarizes the steps taken in carrying out this qualitative research. This study focused on examining the creation of competitive advantage at Namibia Wildlife Resorts through customer relationship management. Critical thematic areas emerged in this study and are linked to literature review.

5.1 Summary of major Findings

Generally there is much that needs to be done in order to successfully make employees fully appreciate customer relationship management at NWR. The thematic themes that emerged in this research revolve around customer relations management.

The overall opinion of the respondents who participated in this research indicated that NWR does not have performance appraisal system for employees. It also emerged that there is no clear cut system of handling customers' needs. The respondents believed that if customer relationship management is improved, occupancy at the resort will improve. Majority of respondents' opinion supported the idea of customer relationship management and they showed a good understanding of the concept.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

The overall objective of the research was to understand customer relationship management strategy, as a marketing intervention, that can be used to maintain and create relationships in order to improve occupancy. It seems like there is a good general understanding on what CRM is all about as interviewee E provided the following definition: "CRM is a program that interacts with the customers, helping the

company better understands of what their customers really need. This information is very useful to improve sales revenues, reduce the number of complaints received, and gives new ways of how to attract new customers as well as new or better ideas of how to retain the existing customer". If one compares the above definition to respondents from the focus group discussions, there are definitely similarities in the responses. One of the focus group discussion respondents commented the following when defining CRM: "As a company, we need to build a good relationship with our clients, understand them and know them well. We need to advise each other, learn and then rectify the mistakes". Therefore on the general understanding of CRM, the emerging themes from both the interviews and group discussions are as follows:

- Develop and maintain relationships with customers

- Improve customer service

- Develop database of clients

- Training staff to deal with customer complaints

- Studying customer needs

- Attract and retain customers

- Facilitated by use of technology

- After sales services

- Monitoring the marketing through different media

The NWR management agrees that there is a relationship between customer relationship management and occupancy and some of the answers include the following categorized on one theme – relationship existence:

- "Increases occupancy due to understanding of client needs"

- "Weak CRM leads to increased complaints and negative comments on the NWR camps"

- "Client database gives the opportunity to the company to derive market trends. CRM and occupancy determines the organization position in the market"

- "A compromised CRM will automatically negatively affect the occupancy at any given time"

- "If people (customer) receive feedback on their concerns, and they see improvements, they will want to stay with the establishment".

By managing relationships, the following themes emerged on what can be done to increase occupancy and thereby increasing sales revenue:

- Good customer service

- Active and creative marketing and advertising

- Competitive pricing and incentives

- Grid management

- Effective CRM system

- Effective customer feedback system

- Skilled staff

- Favorable economic conditions

The company's recent initiative of the NamLeisure card is seen to have been well acknowledged as a strategy to increase occupancy and thereby retaining and

attracting customers. Other strategies mentioned includes a marketing strategy and communications plan, client feedback form, product training for operators, visibility in the market place i.e. consumer and trade fairs and record complaints and analyze them.

With regards to the proposed unit/employees to handle this function, the respondents mentioned the following:

"A dedicated portfolio with at least 2 to 3 trained staff to manage the function".

"I would suggest NWR to have a customer help desk"

"Re-organize departmental structure to respond to what the customer wants".

From the literature reviewed on successfully implementing a CRM system, amongst others, management support is crucial. However, from the focus group discussions, it emerged that management support is lacking and that complaints that needed management interventions are not attended to speedily.

In addition, the literature reviewed on customer relationship management and the themes derived from the research are in agreement to what customer relationship management is all about and the perception from management staff shows that there is a direct relationship between CRM and occupancy.

5.3 Conclusion

All in all, the results show that NWR management and staffs poses a fair general understanding on what customer relationship management is all about and have acknowledged that it is an important function in the sales and marketing department

and if used well, it can create a competitive advantage for the company. Most importantly, it also came out that management thinks that there is a relationship between CRM and occupancy because if CRM is performed well, then the occupancy at the resorts will increase. Unfortunately, it seems like the understanding of what CRM entails is not being put to practice and thus there is a need for coming up with a clear and understandable customer relationship strategy. With customer relationship management, it is important to keep and maintain a client database, which is currently available but not being used for the purpose of retaining its current customers. The research findings indicated that NWR does not have a performance management system and also a clear strategy of handling customer needs.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings and analysis, the following recommendations are aimed at creating a competitive advantage for NWR.

- Introduce performance management system so as to appraise employees and continuous monitoring and evaluation with an option of sending mystery guests to boost customer service which is an integral part of customer relationship management.

- Establish a clear strategy of handling customer needs and complaints.

- Invest in continuous training of employees such that they take ownership and appreciate that customer is the boss and is always right.

- Introduce a sub-division in the department looking at CRM and thus maintaining a database with meaningful information to be in touch with clients

and thereby create sustainable and profitable relationships. Alternatively, strengthen the Marketing Research division.

- Change the sales approach in order for the consultants to be active in conducting sales calls, achieving targets as set in the budget, develop strategies on how to achieve the set targets by doing monthly forecasting.

5.5 Directions for Future Research

- Research is a continuous process. This research study recommends that further research should be undertaken to determine new thematic areas that are not covered in this study especially revenue and yield management.

- Similar research may be conducted in areas not covered by this research which could involve the implementation of new strategy in the company.

- A further research with a change of methodology and widening of scope to cover a larger population would be recommended.

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APPENDIX 1

Title: A study on creating a competitive advantage at Namibia Wildlife Resorts through customer relationship management.

Key informant's (respondents) consent

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that I understand the purpose of this questionnaire, and have been informed that the information I have provided will only be used for follow-up purposes and that under no circumstance will any of my particulars be linked with any information that I provide. I also know that I can withdraw from participating at any time.

I, therefore, willingly consent to participate in the discussion on the above mentioned topic.

Participant's gender: _____

Participant's occupation: _____

Participant's highest level of education: _____

Signed at _____ on the _____ day of _____ 2013

Signature: _____

Customer relationship management strategy

1. What is your understanding/perception on customer relationship management (CRM)?

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2. Do you have clear business goals or management strategies related to attracting and retaining customers? If yes, please mention them.

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3. Does NWR maintains and manage a database of customers for the purpose of improving relationships and also to increase sales revenue? If so, how?

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4. Does the organization have the right technical staff to provide technical support for the use of computer technology in building relationships?

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5. Is your organizational structure designed around your customers? Please motivate your answer.

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6. Customer complaints handling is part of CRM, are there proper channels identified for handling customer complaints and feedback; and how effective is this?

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7. What practices do you think creates a competitive advantage for NWR and are these being put to use?

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8. What do you think is required to successfully implement CRM?

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Bed occupancy

9. On a general basis, what is the status of the bed occupancy across NWR resorts?

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10. What key factors (internal and/or external) do you think contributes to good bed occupancy?

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11. What factors may possibly influence client's choice when choosing accommodation?

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12. What strategies are in place to avoid decline in bed occupancy at NWR resorts?

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13. Do you think that there is a relationship between CRM and occupancy? Motivate your answer.

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APPENDIX 2

Title: A study on creating a competitive advantage at Namibia Wildlife Resorts through customer relationship management.

Focus Group Discussion participant's (respondents) consent

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that I understand the purpose of this questionnaire, and have been informed that the information I have provided will only be used for follow-up purposes and that under no circumstance will any of my particulars be linked with any information that I provide. I also know that I can withdraw from participating at any time.

I, therefore, willingly consent to participate in the discussion on the above mentioned topic.

Participant's gender: _____

Participant's occupation: _____

Participant's highest level of education: _____

Signed at _____ on the _____ day of _____ 2013

Signature: _____

Introduction

- Greet participant and self-introduction, allow questions if any

- Explain the purpose of the discussion and the ethical issues

- Obtain written consent

Customer service

1. What is your general understanding of customer service?

2. What guides you in terms of performing your duties?

3. Do you think that management support is critical in customer service delivery? If yes, why do you say so? Do you get this support?

4. Do you put in effort in finding out what your key customers need? Please motivate your answer.

5. Does the relevant department make effort to respond accordingly to your clients' needs? If so, how is it done?

6. Is your work performance measured and rewarded based on meeting customer needs and successfully serving them? Please motivate your answer.

7. What do you do to increase occupancy at the resorts?

8. List some of the benefits associated with good customer service.

9. What is your understanding on customer relationship management?

Customer complaints

1. Is there a system or guideline on how customers' complaints should be handled at NWR?

2. Is the complaint handling system or guideline effective in terms of providing feedback? Please motivate your answer.