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### RELATIONSHIP MARKETING PRACTICES AND CUSTOMER REPURCHASE INTENTION OF ONLINE RETAIL FIRMS IN LAGOS, NIGERIA.

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#### Abstract

In the online retail industry, customer repurchase intention is strategic for business survival. As a result of high competition in the industry, firms are challenged to ensure customer repurchase intention through relationship marketing practices RMP. This study investigated the effect of relationship marketing practices on customer repurchase intention of online retail firms in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study employed a cross-sectional survey research design. Data were gathered from 1970 respondents. The response rate was 85.6%. Stratified random and proportionate sampling techniques were adopted in selecting the respondents. A validated questionnaire was administered to collect data. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found that RMP (website quality, trust, reliability, communication and personalization have positive significant effect on customer repurchase intention of online retail firms. The study also found personalization to be the major contributory RM variable affecting customer repurchase intention. The study recommended that the management of online retail firms should invest more in relationship marketing practices in order to increase customer repurchase intention.

#### Introduction

The infusion of internet into commerce has opened businesses to a wider reach of customers with an opportunity to operate at a global scale. The ecommerce industry has been described as the fastest growing commerce in history with a continued growth rate at a double digit in the next five years (Lavon & Tradon, 2017). Globally, e-commerce industry has recorded figures showing huge success in terms of customer acquisition and percentage increase in total sales. According to Statista (2020), retail ecommerce account for 14.1% of total retail sales worldwide with total sales increasing in value by 52.1% to reach \$3.5trillion in 2019 from \$1.8trillion in 2016. In Africa, ecommerce generated revenue of \$16.5billion in 2017 with a forecast of \$29billion in sales by 2022 (Kpalan, 2018). Despite the growth of online retailing across the globe and in Africa, with businesses taking advantage of the awareness, many businesses are yet to understand the appropriate strategy to drive customer repurchase intention within the industry.

Customer repeat purchase has been identified as one of the major determinants for success in the online retailing. According to Eid (2011), 35% - 40% of sales revenue from the e-commerce websites comes from repeat purchase. While customers have made initial purchase on online retail stores, issues such as product quality, order fulfilment, security of financial details and personal details and customer satisfaction have hindered customer from attempting a repurchase from the same website (Chiu, Wang, Fang & Huang, 2014; Pawlasova & Klezl, 2017). One of the widely acknowledged way of building repurchase intention points towards an intentional marketing effort to build long term relationships with customers. Building relationships have been implied to be more challenging for the online retail firms compared to their counterparts in the brick and mortar retail stores (Chen, Liang, Wang, 2008). As competition get stiffer with increasing number of retailers joining the online retailing train, it has become important for online retailers to develop strategy that would increase customer repurchase intention after the initial purchase. While there is existing literature in the business to business (B2B) and business to consumers(B2C) context on RMP, extant literature that link relationship marketing to online retailing still remain fragmented with a need for further scrutiny (Verma, Sharma & Sheth, 2014).



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Studies embarked on in South Korea, Turkey, South Africa, Taiwan and Malaysia on the factors that predict repurchase intention in the online context reveals that repurchase intention is limited by issues that dwell on security, trust, and customer satisfaction (Abdul-Razak, Marimuthu, Omar, & Mamat, 2014; Bulut, 2015; Chiu, et al., 2014; Chinomona & Dubihlela, 2014; Pawlasova & Klezl, 2017). However, the results from this previous research might vary in other countries such as Nigeria, having a different cultural and economic environment.

This study addresses this gap using sample drawn from an emerging African market (Nigeria). Customers repurchase intention of the online customers in Lagos, Nigeria has not been very encouraging and equally poor which is suggestive of ineffective relationship marketing practices of the online retail firms captured in terms of personalization, communication, reliability, trust and website quality. The main purpose of this study is, thus, to investigate the effect of relationship marketing practices on customer repurchase intention of online retail firms in Lagos State, Nigeria. The following section present a review of the literature conceptually, theoretically and empirically. This is followed by an outline of the methodology. The findings are thereafter discussed with the result and analysis. The final section outlays the conclusion and recommendations.

### Literature review

#### Relationship marketing

Relationship marketing as an approach and viewpoint aligns with the marketing concept which is basically customer focused with its rationale not to necessarily achieve a larger share of the market but more of gaining a larger share of the customer (Gilaninia, Almani, Pournaserani, & Mousavian, 2011). In recent time, marketing definitions has been modified to incorporate relationship marketing management. The new definition launched in 2007 by American Marketing Association had a relational undertone with marketing defined as the activity, related institutions and the process for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that proffer value to customers, clients, partners and the society at large (Gundlach & Wilkie, 2010). This definition, compared to the previous one “Marketing is the process of planning and executing their conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of goods, ideas, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals” have shown the need to build and manage relationships in marketing practices (Wilkie & Moore, 2007; 269).

Relationship marketing had overtime been associated with helping firms build long term relationships with customers and facilitating customer retention. Customer retention have been argued to be less expensive for firms to manage as customer acquisition is five times costlier (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Kanagal (2009), explained that knowledge and the application of relationship marketing will help firm better understand customer needs, product customization, increase customer satisfaction, customer retention and customer acquisition, increased customer commitment, foster collaboration, increase profitability and develop new product.

The concepts and practices of relationship marketing have been established to be relevant and useful in building long term relationships in the online marketplace (Bendapudi and Berry, 1997). The difference in the offline and online retailing channel have been ascertained to have an influence on relationship formation (Kozlenkova, 2017). Also, the lack of physical contact in the online retailing have made consumers more vulnerable to opportunistic behaviour of the seller thereby increasing the need to build trust relationships. The higher the exposure of customers while shopping online compared to the offline shopping, the more pertinent it is for online retailers to build long term relationship with customers via relationship marketing practices (Wang & Head, 2005). This study would investigate how a combination of relationship marketing practices such as website quality (Maadi, Maadi & Javidnia, 2016), Trust (Vega, 2015), Reliability (Nguyen, Leeuw & Dullaert, 2018), Communication (Jain, Bhakar & Bhakar, 2014) and Personalization (Mpinganjira, (2014) in extant literature can effect customer repurchase intention in the online retail channel.

Abbaspour and Hashim (2015) have emphasized that part of the means to stay competitive in the online retail industry is for firms to start with quality website that would attract customers. Based on academic literature, the website quality has been identified as important in the online business (Lin, 2007) as such, continuous



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improvement of the website is important to attract and retain online customers. Addressed in terms of technical and service efficiency, factors such as customer experience, custom products, personalized web features, system quality, ease of use, perceived usefulness, and language options have been used to measure quality of website in the ecommerce industry (Safa & Ismail, 2013). According to Abdul Razak, *et al.*, (2014), trust is gained after customers have successfully initiated and made several purchases on the website. In the same vein, Mpinganjira (2015) buttressed that while the attributes to build initial trust is essential for purchase intention and the initial purchase, the ability to sustain the initial trust and build on this is more important as inability to achieve this can hinder repeat purchase. Kovac, Naletina and Kuvac (2017) have argued that reliability of order delivery is the most important aspect of e-commerce for the final consumer, as this is the stage that customers receive goods that are purchased online. Characterized with non-face to face interaction, online retail firms are challenged with how to effectively communicate with customers and other relevant stakeholders. Personalization has been identified as one of the key drivers in building relationship with customers, this is attributed to customers' acceptance of one to one relationship (Halimi, Chavosh, Choshali, 2011). Pappas, Giannakos and Chrissikopoulos (2012) posit that online personalization is a reliable means to influence customers to buy more often and assist firm to develop and long-term relationship with customers.

### A. Customer repurchase intention

The intention of a repeat purchase is of importance in marketing and especially online retailing as it is critical for business success and profitability (Abdul Razak, *et al.*, 2014). Repurchase intentions gives management of organization an insight that a customer will make a purchase in the future after the initial purchase or switch to competition (Mpinganjira, 2014). Repurchase intention is a consumer commitment formed after the initial purchase of a product or service. Chiu, *et al.*, (2014) described repeat purchase intention as a subjective possibility which varies from consumer that the customer would purchase from the same seller after the initial purchase. Whereas repurchase is the actual action, repurchase intention exhibits customer's decision to engage in future activities with the retailer or supplier (Hume, Mort & Winzar, 2007; Phuong & Dat, 2017).

Customer repurchase intention has been conceptualized in some studies based on two aspects namely the intention to re-buy (repurchase) and the intention to engage in positive word-of-mouth and recommendation (referral) (Phuong & Dat, 2017). In the online shopping, previous experience of the customer will determine whether there will be a repeat purchase intention. Repurchase intention is the likelihood that a customer will make a purchase from the same seller in the future. Extant literature has pointed an overall customer satisfaction with a firm's service to be associated with a behavioural intention of the buyer to return to the same seller for similar product (Kaveh, 2012). While customer satisfaction is a major factor that is associated with repurchase intention, other antecedents during the initial purchase also plays a major role.



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In the online context, evaluation of antecedents such as product offering, product information, website quality, online privacy, online security, convenience, monetary savings, accuracy of delivery, satisfaction, personalization, ease of communication and return policy are some of the determinants of a repurchase intention (Chiu, et al., 2014; Eid, 2011; Lopez, 2017; Mpinganjira, 2014; Mpinganjira, 2015).

### **B. Theoretical framework**

This study adopted the theory of Reasoned Action as the anchor theory for this study.

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) was propounded by Fishbein and Ajzen in (1975) and was subsequently build up in 1980. The fundamentals of the TRA model emanated from the social psychology field, with the social psychologist, known to study how and why attitude affects behaviour, among other things (Otieno, Liyala, Odongo & Abeka, 2016). The theory explicitly looks at the relationships between attitude, intentions and behaviour and how it affects consumers decision (Eid, 2011). TRA predicts behavioural intention based on two major factors; the individuals' attitude (personal factors) and subjective norms (social factors). The importance attached to the attitudinal and normative factors in determining intentions differs giving the behaviour, situation and the individual differences of the actor (Fishbein and Ajzen 1980 as cited in Vallerand, Pelletier, Deshaies Cuerrier & Mongeau, 1992). The theory of reasoned action stands on an assumption that, human beings makes rational decision based on the available information open to them, and the best determinant of such individual behaviour is the intent which explains the readiness to perform the given behaviour (Eid, 2011).

However, Sheppard, Hartwick and Warshaw (1988), criticized the theory of reasoned action for limiting the theory to behaviour and actions within the control of the actor with less attention given to outcome of the behaviour. Also, the theory was not extended to predict the behaviour of individual where alternatives options are available. The options to make a choice can change and readdress the intention formation process which may make the individual behaviour unpredictable.

Eid (2011), supported TRA model and applied this to purchase decision by viewing the quality of information provided by an online retailer on the website to have a great influence on the intention to purchase which is predicted to increase online satisfaction and consequently affect repurchase intention. Similarly, TRA have not only been suggested to predict consumer intention and behaviour but also effective in recognizing where and how to target change in customer behavioural (Sheppard, Hartwick & Warshaw, 1988).

### **C. Relationship Marketing Practices and Customer Repurchase Intention**

The concept of repurchase intention is of importance of online retailers as it serves as a pointer towards gaining competitive advantage (Abdul Razak, et al, 2014). Considering the increased cost association with customer acquisition, management of retail firms now rely on the repurchase intention to predict future sales and increase profit (Chinomona & Dubihlela, 2014). There are divergent studies on the link between relationship marketing practices and customer repurchase intention. Researchers such as Sfenrianto, Wijaya and Wang (2018); Pawlasova and Klezi (2017) and Safa and VonSolms (2016) found a clear link between relationship marketing practices and customer repurchase intention. Their study empirically revealed that online trust, customer satisfaction, product reliability and fulfilment significantly affect customer repurchase intention. This is consistent with the studies that showed trust have positive and significant effect on online repurchase intentions (Tirtayani & Sukaatmadja, 2018).



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In a study on the effect of trust and brand image on repurchase intention in online shopping, Wijaya and Astuti (2018) found that trust and brand image had a positive influence on repurchase intention. This is in line with the findings of Hsu and Vui (2019) and that revealed website informativeness, security, and interaction influence customer's trust in online shopping which further exerts repurchase intention. Relatedly, Bulut (2015) examined the determinants of repurchase intention in online shopping from the Turkish consumer's perspective and the result revealed that e-satisfaction, e-trust and e-loyalty have positive influences on intentions to repurchase in online stores. In addition, it was also found that trust in an online store is the key determinant of online repurchase intention and followed by e-satisfaction and e-loyalty. In addition, Duy-Phuong and Dai-Trang (2018) reported a significant positive effect of perceived service quality and customer satisfaction on repurchase intention. Mosavi and Ghaedi (2012) conducted a study on the role of perceived value as it relates to trust and repurchase intention in online shopping context and found trust to significantly affect repurchase intention. Collectively, the findings of the authors revealed the significance of trust in customers online repurchase intention. Contradictorily, the study of Wen, Prybutok and Xu (2011), showed that trust have no significant effect on customers purchase intention.

The empirical work of Kaveh (2012 and Mollah (2014) buttressed the relevance of communication to customer repurchase intention. Kaveh (2012) in their study found communication have a major influence on trust which further influences customers future behavior. In the study of retail industry in UK, Mollah (2014) emphasized face communication and customer service to be most paramount for the success of the retail industry. The importance of communication to online repeat purchase is however contradicted by Hasouneh and Alqeed (2010) in their study of email direct marketing and its impact on building customer relationships that found email direct marketing has a rare influence on repeat purchase. And compared to other relationship marketing dimensions such as ease of use, skill & experience, information quality, payment methods and assurance, Aghdaie, Piraman, and Fathi (2011) found promotion showed less relevance to customer repeat purchase.

Consistent with the findings of Moeeni and Fard (2014) that revealed perceived value to be an important variable motivating product repurchase is the work of Mollah (2014) in a study of UK retail industry that found product quality to be more significant for repeat purchase than other relationship marketing dimensions. Bojang, Medvedev, Spasov and Matvevnina (2017) empirically revealed that perceived security has the greatest influence on online trust. Wahab, Elias, Al-Momani and Noor (2011) found a positive relationship between trust and customer relationship management. Harris and Goode (2014) confirmed that e-trust positively affects customer repurchase intention and e-satisfaction. These authors surmise that trust in the service and product by firms influences the customer's future behavior towards the firm. This was substantiated by the study of Mpinganjira (2015) that showed a correlation between online customer satisfaction, trust and repeat purchase intentions. Similarly, Abdul-Razak, Marimuthu, Omar and Mamat (2014) reviewed the concepts of trust and online repurchase intention in the online tourism and found that e-marketing sector stimulates online trust with the intention to increase repurchase in tourism services.

On their part, Chiu, Wang, Fang and Huang (2014) carried out a study in the B2C context and revealed that repeat purchase intention is influenced by utilitarian and hedonic value while risk showed a weak effect on experienced buyers. Relatedly, there is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and consumer trust, a positive relationship is also found in consumer confidence in online repurchase intention (Bojei & Abu, 2014; Mpinganjira, 2015). However, the study of Srivastava (2014) found that customer satisfaction does not mediate the relationship between e-service quality and intention to repurchase.

However, unlike the results of research conducted by Wen, Prybutok and Xu (2011), trust has no significant effect on customers' purchase intention. Hidayat, Saifullah and Ishak (2016) in their study reveals that a positive impact exists among interface quality, information quality, customer service, security and privacy on online customer satisfaction and online trust with Pawlasova and Klézl (2017) emphasizing trust and satisfaction as a key indicator for customer repeat purchase.





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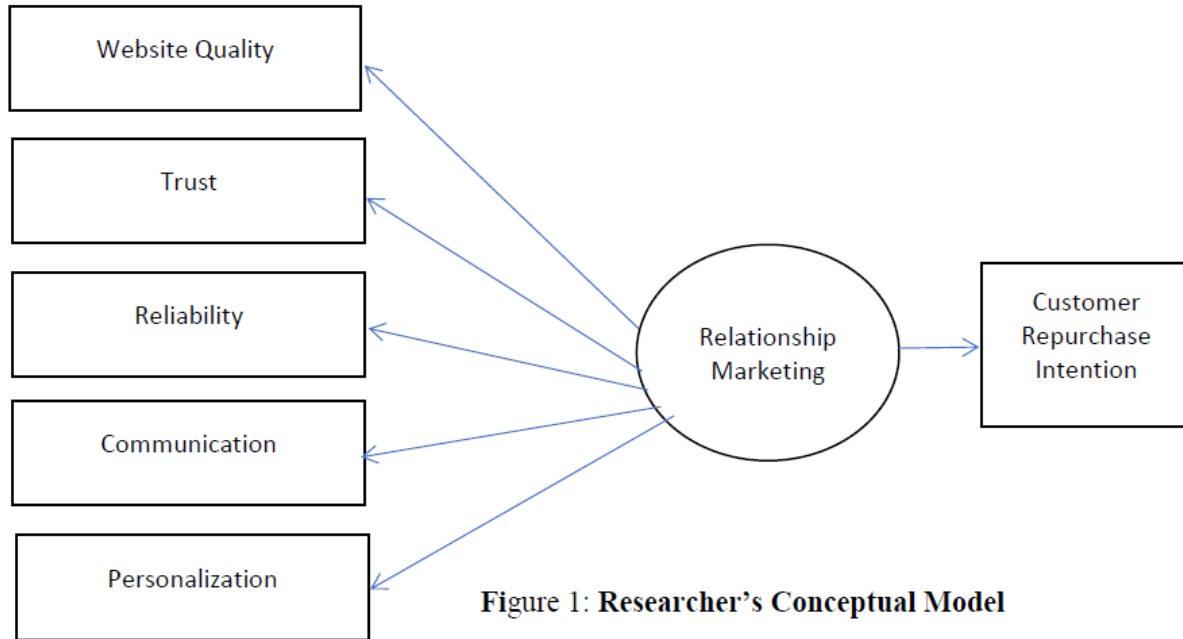


Figure 1: Researcher’s Conceptual Model

**Methodology**

This study adopted a cross sectional survey research design. The study population were students of government owned tertiary institutions who patronized the major online retailers in the country (Jumia and Konga). The two firms (Jumia and Konga) were chosen as they have been identified as the market leader not only in Nigeria but also in the continent (Economist, 2017). The study was conducted in Lagos State, Nigeria. Stratified random and proportionate sampling techniques were adopted in selecting the respondents.

A validated questionnaire was administered to collect data. The study adopted closed-ended questions with the quantitative section of the instrument utilizing Likert type scale. The questionnaire instrument used to collect data on relationship marketing practices (independent variable) measured by web quality, trust, reliability, commitment and communication and the dependent variable (customer repurchase intention). Trained research assistant helped with the distribution and collection of the research instruments. At the end of the data collection, 1687 questionnaires were returned usable out of the 1,970 administered. This represented a response rate of 85.63%.

**Result, analysis and discussions**

Table 4.1a: Model Summary of Effect of Relationship Marketing Practices on Customer Repurchase Intention of Online Retail Firms in Lagos, Nigeria

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
3	0.847 <sup>a</sup>	0.717	0.716	2.237
a. Predictors: (Constant), Personalization, Website Quality, Communication, Trust, Reliability				
<b>b. Dependent Variable: Repurchase Intention</b>				

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey Results, 2020



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The table 4.1a in the model summary, shows the amount of variance in the dependent variable, customer repurchase intention that is explained by the model such as Website Quality (WQ), Trust (TR), Reliability (RT), Communication (CM), and Personalization (PR) which is expressed as R Square. In this model, the value is 0.717 and when expressed as a percentage, it is 71.7 per cent. This means that the econometric model which includes the website quality, trust, reliability, communication, and personalization explain 71.7 per cent of the variance in customer repurchase intention. Considering that the sample for this study was large as well as the predictor variables, the *Adj. R2* will provide a better estimation of the population value hence in this case; the *Adj. R2* is 0.716. This shows that the econometric model which includes website quality, trust, reliability, communication, and personalization explain 71.6 percent of the variance in customer repurchase intention. This indicates that there were factors that were not studied in this survey which contribute to 28.4 per cent of customer repurchase intention of online retail firms. Further research should be carried out to determine the rest of the 28.4 per cent that has not been explained on of customer repurchase intention of online retail firms.

**Table 4.1b: ANOVA for Relationship Marketing Practices and Customer Repurchase Intention**

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	21295.745	5	4259.149	851.329	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	8409.940	1681	5.003		
	Total	29705.685	1686			

a. Dependent Variable: Repurchase Intention

**b. Predictors: (Constant), Personalization, Website Quality, Communication, Trust, Reliability**

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey Results, 2020

The table 4.1b shows the statistical significance (ANOVA) of the results. It is used to test the null hypothesis. The model in this study has reached statistical significance (Sig=0.000; meaning  $p < 0.0005$ ) and F value of 851.329. This means that the model is statistically significance in explaining the effect of independent variables, website quality (WQ), trust (TR), reliability (RT), communication (CM), and personalization (PR) on the dependent variable, customer repurchase intention (RI) online retail firms in Lagos, Nigeria. Hence at 95% confidence level, relationship marketing practices significantly affect customer repurchase intention.

**Table 4.1c. Regression Coefficients of Effect of Relationship Marketing Practices on Customer Repurchase Intention Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.790	0.318		2.484	0.013
	Website Quality	0.134	0.024	0.129	5.647	0.000
	Trust	0.155	0.025	0.157	6.170	0.000
	Reliability	0.120	0.031	0.109	3.932	0.000
	Communication	0.255	0.026	0.247	9.870	0.000
	Personalization	0.281	0.024	0.291	11.888	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Repurchase Intention

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey Results, 2020

Table 4.1c presents the coefficient results of relationship marketing practices and customer repurchase intention. The results reveal that positive significant effects were reported for all the relationship marketing practices: website quality ( $\beta = 0.134, p < 0.05$ ), trust ( $\beta = 0.155, p < 0.05$ ), reliability ( $\beta = 0.120, p < 0.05$ ), communication ( $\beta = 0.225, p < 0.05$ ), and personalization ( $\beta = 0.281, p < 0.05$ ). The results reveal that relationship marketing



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practices have a significant positive effect on customer repurchase intention of online retail firms in Lagos, Nigeria. Based on the results, the predictive model for customer repurchase intention was formulated as:

$$RI = 0.790 + 0.134WQ + 0.155TR + 0.120RT + 0.225CM + 0.281PR \dots\dots\dots \text{Eq. (iii)}$$

Where: RI = Repurchase Intention

WQ = Website Quality

TR = Trust

RT = Reliability

CM = Communication

PR = Personalization

0.7902 = Constant when independent variable is equated to 0

According to the regression equation established, taking all relationship marketing practices constant at zero, customer repurchase intention of online retail firms in Lagos was positive at 0.790 implying a surplus. The results indicate that when website quality, trust, reliability, communication, and personalization are improved by one unit, customer repurchase intention will increase by factor of 0.171, 0.072, 0.270, 0.220, and 0.184 respectively. In order to compare how the different independent variables, relationship marketing practices have contributed to predicting the dependent variable (customer repurchase intention), the standardized coefficients were used. The largest Beta under the standardized coefficients was personalization with 0.291 as its value. This means that personalization contributes the most and provided the strongest unique contribution in explaining customer repurchase intention of online retail firms in Lagos followed by communication. Based on the findings, it can be stated that relationship marketing practices significantly affects customer repurchase intention of online retail firms in Lagos. Thus, the null hypothesis which states that relationship marketing practices has no significant effect on customer satisfaction of online retail firms in Lagos, Nigeria was rejected ( $Adj.R^2 = 0.716$ ;  $F(5, 1681) = 851.329$ ).

### Discussion of findings

The empirical result supported the notion that relationship marketing practices has significant effect on customer repurchase intention of online retail firms in Lagos, Nigeria. Extant literature has buttressed the relevance of customer repurchase to account 35% - 40% of sales revenue in the ecommerce industry (Eid, 2011). The result is in line the with the assertions of Mpinganjira (2014) that reiterates the need for online firms to give attention of aspects of relationships marketing practices such as personalization, ease of communication and online privacy for satisfactory business relation online which have an effect on customer repurchase intention. .

In this study, personalization is the prominent contributor to customer repurchase intention. This is in line with the study of Pappas, Giannakos, Chrissikopoulos (2012) which described personalization as a major tool that can be tactically used to encourage customer to buy more and assist firm develop long term relationship with customers. The findings relating to website quality agree with the result of Hsu and Vui (2019) on the positive influence of website informativeness, security, and interaction on customer's trust which further exerts repurchase intention in online retailing. The findings on the importance of communication is consistent with the arguments of Kaveh (2012) that emphaized the influence of communication on trust which affect customers future behavior. In the study of retail industry in UK, Mollah (2014) stressed communication and customer service as the most paramount for the success of the retail industry.

However, the finding of the study is in contrast with the study of Wen, Prybutok and Xu (2011) who showed that trust have no significant effect on customers purchase intention. Also, a study by Srivastava (2014) found that customer satisfaction does not mediate the relationship between e-service quality and intention to repurchase. Conclusively, majority of previous empirical findings have deduced that relationship marketing practices has a significant effect on customer satisfaction. Based on these findings and supporting empirical literature of positive and significant effect of relationship marketing practices on customer repurchase intention, this study asserts that relationship marketing practices has significant effect on customer repurchase intention of online retail firms in Lagos, Nigeria.





### Conclusion and recommendation

The study concluded that relationship marketing practices affected customer repurchase intention of online retail firms in Lagos State, Nigeria. Hence Management of online retail firms should aim to increase repurchase intention by investing in relationship marketing practices (website quality, trust, reliability, communication and personalization). The study also revealed personalization followed by communication as the strongest contributing variable to customer repurchase intention in online retailing. Hence, to further maximize the benefit of RM, it is recommended that Management of online retail firms personalized services and treat each customer uniquely. Also, a two-way communication channel should be created to better understand customer alongside other relationship marketing practices.

Previous empirical work on repurchase intention identified trust as a major contributory factor affecting customer repurchase intention, it is suggestive that the demography of the research population may have an influence on the different result from this study. For purpose of generalization, future research should be carried out in other African countries using same population to ascertain this finding. Also, this study is directed towards customer, further study should be directed to management and staff of online retail firms. This would give an insight to the relationship marketing practices emphasized by the firm in order to increase repurchase intention.

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