



“I just like this e-Retailer”: Understanding online consumers repurchase intention from relationship quality perspective

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ABSTRACT

In an increasingly competitive market, retaining customers is essential for both e-retailers and online shopping platforms. This study focuses on relationship quality as it pertains to repurchase intentions in Ghana. The mediating role of price level is addressed. The results show that customer trust, customer commitment, and customer satisfaction affect price level. Customer trust and satisfaction affect repurchase intention, but customer commitment does not affect repurchase intention. Also, price level mediates the relationship between relationship quality and repurchase intention. Implications of these findings are discussed.

1. Introduction

The recent technological growth and innovations have made more companies come into the scene. For example, the government of Ghana's flagship program dubbed the One-District-One-Factory (1d1f), when completed, is expected to increase the country's number by at least two hundred and seventy (270). The effect of the risen number of companies (both online and offline companies) is that competition in the market will be high, so as customer retention.

Although e-commerce activities in Ghana are relatively low compared to the European, American and Asian countries, it is still essential for e-commerce companies to retain and grow their existing buyers while rolling out some strategies to attract new customers. Revenue from e-commerce activities in Ghana is projected at US\$453 in 2020, and the value for e-commerce activities is expected to reach US \$945 by 2025 (Statista 2020). According to Li et al. (2011), customer retention has become a major concern for e-commerce businesses. Acquiring and maintaining customers require more time and effort, but it becomes more difficult for an online retailer because of the absence of face-to-face interaction with online consumers.

As such, online retailers have to adopt ways to build a stronger relationship with their consumers to retain them. This conforms with Gilaninia et al. (2011), who posited that the increased competition in the market had forced businesses to create a stronger relationship with their customers. When online retailers build a stronger relationship with their customers, it is likely to influence their repurchase decisions. Thus, an online retailer building and maintaining a stronger relationship with

customers helps them (their customers) be loyal. To better explain this, Shin et al. (2013) pointed out that online buying behavior is in two folds; the first is encouraging consumers to purchase a product from an online retailer and then encouraging them to repurchase (from the same online retailer). According to Tsai and Huang (2007) Customer retention helps an online retailers compete more effectively than those in the same market or industry. It is critical if the firm wants to succeed in the market. In a typical Ghanaian offline market, consumers usually visit a seller business premises or place a call when they want to buy a product. This has made it easier and more convenient for the seller to keep track of their customers.

In recent years, many researchers and educators have conducted a study on what influences a customer's intention to buy from the same online e-retailer. Past studies have found out that feedback mechanisms, relationship quality, website quality, perceived expertise in order fulfillment, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, social commerce and reputation (Aren et al., 2013; de Cannière et al., 2010; Shang and Bao 2020; Shin et al., 2013; Sullivan and Kim 2018; Wang et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2011). In Ghana, however, no much work has been done on repurchase intention an e-commerce platform. The only work obtained was conducted by (Amoako et al., 2019) on repurchase intention in the hospitality industry. Consequently, this research seeks to find the effect of relationship quality on an intention to repurchase from an e-retailer in the Ghanaian context. The study is mediated by price level.

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2. Literature review

2.1. Relationship quality

Strong competition exists in an online shopping platform because most online retailers sell the same or similar product categories. Consequently, online retailers have to put in proper strategies to ensure that their customers continue to do business with them. Relationship quality is embedded in relationship marketing, which explains a business's attempt to build a deep and cost-effective relationship with their clients (Allaway et al., 2006). As such, Yang et al. (2010) opined it is an important factor when explaining a company's relationship with its customers. Relationship quality explains the closeness of a business and its customers (Hennig-Thurau 2000). The concept is a multi-dimensional construct with several components or variables. However, the most cited components are trust, commitment and satisfaction (de Cannière et al., 2010; Yang et al., 2010). Consequently, the relationship quality constructs used in this study are trust, satisfaction and commitment.

2.1.1. Customer trust

Trust is a critical factor for an e-commerce business's success because of the absence of the transacting parties' physical presence. Trust helps foster a personal relationship between an online consumer and an online retailer (Hess and Story 2005). Trust is willing to rely on an exchange party who has confidence in another party (Ki and Hon 2012). Thus, an individual believes that the other individual or party's behavior will be in line with his/her expectations. Trust is made up of two dimensions; soft trust and hard trust (Hillman and Neustaedter 2017). While soft trust focuses on customer privacy and Quality of services provided by an online retailer, hard trust focuses on secure interactions between the parties and technology solutions, including encryption and firewalls that are mostly used to protect customer information.

Trust has been found by Zboja and Voorhees (2006) to be a leading factor of a consumer intention to repurchase. The finding conforms to Qureshi et al. (2009), who also found trust to be a dominant factor in customer intention to repurchase. It is seen as a crucial antecedent of online behavioral intentions because of the uncertainties attached to online transactions (Chiu et al., 2010). Other researchers such as Liu et al. (2011) and Zhang et al. (2011) also affirm that trust can influence online consumer repurchase intentions. The study also finds out the relationship between trust and price level. Hence:

H1. Customer trust will have a significant effect on price level

H5. Customer trust will have a significant effect on repurchase intention

2.1.2. Customer commitment

Commitment is defined by Ogba and Tan (2009) as an emotional sense and a drive to have a friendship with a retailer rather than merely a repeated purchases. The definition implies that it leads to a repurchase intention, although it goes beyond that. Roberts et al. (2003) acknowledge that commitment helps differentiate a successful relationship quality from the unsuccessful one. Commitment leads to loyalty, and these customers tend to purchase from the same online retailer other than switching to different online retailers. Consequently, an online retailer should ensure that their customers are always satisfied to be committed to them. Suh and Han (2003) support this claim by indicating that a customer committed to a retailer or a brand tends to establish a strong bond with them. Ballantyne et al. (2006) claim that satisfied customers will be committed to the retailer and will continue to buy their products or brand in the same vein. Literature available suggests a customer commitment influence their intention to repurchase. For instance, Balla et al. (2015) in their research found out that a customer commitment has an influence on their repurchase behavior. A similar conclusion was arrived by Amoako et al. (2019). To Mukherjee and Nath (2007), commitment tends to influence a customer behavioral intention.

In contrast to these findings, Chiang (2018) found out that commitment does not have an influence on a customer repurchase intention. The research also finds the relationship between a commitment and price. Hence:

H2. Customer commitment will have a significant effect on price level

H6. Customer commitment will have a significant effect on repurchase intention

2.1.3. Customer satisfaction

Before online consumers buy a product from an online shopping platform, they usually expect how the product may be or how the product will solve his/her needs. As such, satisfaction in online shopping refers to the level of satisfaction or disappointment an online consumer experienced compared to the actual performance of a product to his/her perceived performance. Consequently, most business employs satisfaction of their customer as a basis for measuring the products' performances and to estimate the future of their business (Anisimova 2013). Yap et al. (2012) see it as a customer's overall attitude towards a product. Commitment influences an online consumer intention to repurchase. This is evident in past literature (Chiu et al., 2012; Elbeltagi and Agag 2016; Fang et al., 2011; Hsu et al., 2014; Shang and Bao 2020; Zheng et al., 2013). The research also finds the relationship between customer satisfaction and price. Therefore:

H3. Customer satisfaction will have a significant effect on price level

H7. Customer satisfaction will have a significant effect on repurchase intention

2.2. Price level

A price is the money that a customer has to pay for an item on an online shopping platform. A price comprises the item cost plus the shipping cost and any additional fees. In an online shopping platform, online consumers prefer price fairness. Thus, the price on a product offering a product should be acceptable, fair or reasonable (Xia et al., 2004). Customers usually compare prices between two or more items they intend to buy and then make a decision. Hence, a decision to build a relationship with an online retailer may be influenced by their products' pricing level. Besides, their decision to purchase a product from a brand or an online shopping platform may be affected by the price. Thus, a consumer's choice to buy from an online retailer is based on assessing how expensive or cheap their products are (Hamilton and Chernev 2013; Lourenço et al., 2015). Consumers often regard price as a central factor to product quality assessment (Rao and Monroe 1989). The level of pricing can destroy or maintain an online retailer relationship with their customers. To Chang and Wang (2014), pricing is a crucial issue for retailers. At the same time, Dodds et al. (1991), in their research, found a relationship between pricing and repurchase intention. Similarly, Graciola et al. (2018) found out that price influences a customer repurchase intention. Hence;

H4. Price Level will have a significant effect on repurchase intention

2.2.1. Mediating role of price level

The study further proposes that price level will mediate the relationship between relationship quality constructs and online consumers intention to repurchase. No much work has been done on customer repurchase intention using price as a mediator. This calls for more research to be done. Hence, we propose that;

H8. Price level will mediate relationship quality construct and repurchase intention

2.3. Customer repurchase intention

Repurchase intention is crucial in predicting the success of an online retail business. Without loyal customers, an online business's future sustainability may be in danger because of the market's competitive nature. Fang et al. (2014) reported that it is easy for a firm to keep their old customers than getting new ones. Repurchase intention measures the probability that an online consumer may buy from the same online retailer when the needs arise. Seiders et al. (2005) see a customer repurchase intention as a likelihood of a customer engaging in the same behavior in the future. When online consumers are satisfied with the same online retailer, they become loyal to them and do not consider switching to a different retailer.

2.4. Conceptual framework

This study discusses relationship quality and repurchase intention among Ghanaian online consumers. The framework proposes that customer trust, customer commitment, and customer satisfaction will influence price level. At the same time, relationship quality construct will influence a customer repurchase intention. Also, the price level will influence repurchase intention. Price level will mediate the relationship between the relationship quality construct and intention to repurchase (see Fig. 1).

3. Research methods

3.1. Measurement items

The study used a questionnaire to collect data from the participants. This instrument's choice was appropriate because it allowed a large amount of data to be collected from a respondent at a faster rate and a lower cost. The questionnaire was made up of two sections, with the first section dedicated to the respondents' background information. The second section addressed the research hypothesis formulated for the study. Customer trust and commitment had four measurement items each, whereas customer satisfaction had three measurement items. The mediator, the price level, was made up of four measurement items and the dependent variable, repurchase intention, comprised of three measurement items. The measurement items were adapted from past studies (Chiang 2018; Chung and Shin 2010; Graciola et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2014) and were modified to suit the study's purpose. To ensure the content validity, it was reviewed by four Doctoral students. The feedback received from the them were used to modify the research instrument before it was accepted as a final instrument.

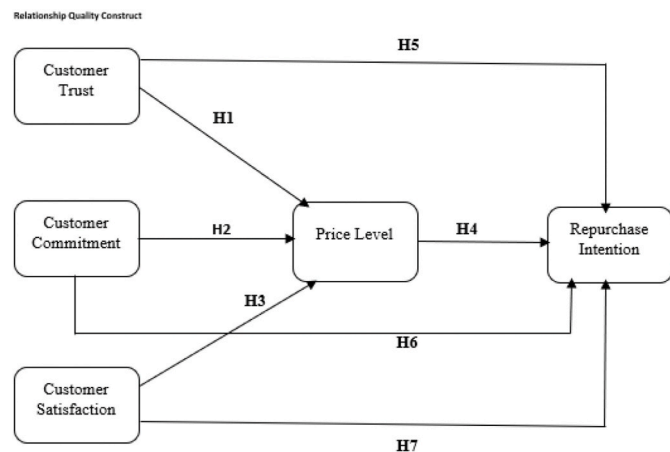


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.

3.2. Data collection

The data collection period lasted for about five weeks (December 20, 2020 to January 24, 2021). This was to ensure that a large amount of data can be collected from the participant. To solicit responses from the participants, the researcher employed an online survey. This was done with the help of Microsoft Forms. A message containing the link to access the questionnaire and the purpose for which the study was undertaken was sent to the participants via an SMS, Email and WhatsApp Messenger. All the participants voluntarily participated in the study. A total of three hundred and thirty-eight responses were received.

4. Data analysis and results

The respondents' demographic data were analyzed using SPSS version 26 while the measurement and the structural model were analyzed using SmartPLS 3.2.9.

4.1. Respondents demographic information

Table 1 reveals that, majority of the research respondents were males (55.3%), while the remaining were females (44.7%). Regarding age, most of them were between the age range of 20–30 years (55.3%), followed by 31–40 age range (32.2%) and then to above 40 years (8.6%) and the remaining were below 20 years (3.8%). Concerning online shopping experiences, most of the respondents had 1–3 years of experience (34.6%), 4–6 years of experience (29.0%), 7–10 years of experience (16.6%), below a year experience (10.7%) and finally above 10 years of the shopping experience (9.2%). On occupation, most of the respondents were private sector-employed (31.1%), followed by students (26.3%), and then self-employed (20.7%), public sector-employed (17.8%) and the remaining were unemployed (4.1%). With regards to their educational level, majority of them had a Degree (57.7%), Diploma (19.2%), Masters (14.8%), Senior High School Certificate (5.3%) and the remaining, PhD (3.0%).

4.2. Measurement model

This section dealt with the validity and reliability of the data. First, we assessed the composite reliability (CR), Cronbach alpha (α) and the indicator loadings of the instrument. As shown in Table 2, the composite

Table 1
Descriptive measurement of demographic variables.

Variables	Items	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	187	55.3
	Female	151	44.7
Age	Below 20	13	3.8
	20–30	187	55.3
	31–40	109	32.2
	Above 40	29	8.6
	Below 1	36	10.7
Online Shopping Experience (years)	1–3	117	34.6
	4–6	98	29.0
	7–10	56	16.6
	Above 10	31	9.2
	Below 1	36	10.7
Occupation	Student	89	26.3
	Public Sector-employed	60	17.8
	Private Sector-employed	105	31.1
	Self-employed	70	20.7
	Unemployed	14	4.1
Level of Education	Senior High School	18	5.3
	Diploma	65	19.2
	Degree	195	57.7
	Masters	50	14.8
	PhD	10	3.0

Table 2
Reliability and variability constructs (confirmatory factor analysis).

Latent Variables	Loadings	CR	AVE	α
Customer Trust				
CT1	0.891			
CT2	0.875			
CT3	0.885	0.932	0.777	0.904
CT4	0.875			
Customer Commitment				
CC1	0.897			
CC2	0.873			
CC3	0.864	0.930	0.769	0.900
CC4	0.875			
Customer Satisfaction				
CS1	0.906			
CS2	0.876	0.922	0.797	0.872
CS3	0.895			
Price Level				
PL1	0.900			
PL2	0.873			
PL3	0.875	0.932	0.774	0.903
PL4	0.871			
Repurchase Intention				
RPI1	0.906			
RPI2	0.824	0.911	0.774	0.854
RPI3	0.907			

reliability and the Cronbach alpha of the constructs exceeds the benchmark of 0.70 (Fornell and Larcker 1981; Nunnally and Bernstein 1994).

Regarding the convergent validity (Hu et al., 2004) suggested, the average variance extracted (AVE) should be larger than 0.50. Further, as shown in Table 2, all the constructs' AVEs are above 0.50, indicating an adequate convergent validity. All the indicator loadings were statistically significant, ranging from 0.824 to 0.907; hence, accepted for the study. For discriminant validity, the square roots of the AVE's were above all other cross-correlations (see Table 3), thus indicating good discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981).

4.3. Structural model

To determine the significance of the hypothesized relationships, we assessed the path coefficients and the indirect effects of the constructs using the bootstrap re-sampling function embedded in the Smart PLS. The original sample (OS) or the path coefficients of the constructs are standardized between -1 and 1. The closer the estimated path coefficients to 1 the stronger the relationship and the closer it is to 0, the weaker the relationship. Observations of the original sample or the path coefficient in Table 4 reveal a positive relationship among or the constructs although their magnitude of effect varies.

The results from Table 4 reveals that customer trust (CT) have a significant positive effect on price level (PL) as (OS = 0.163, t-value = 2.420 and p-value < 0.05). Both customer trust (CT) (OS = 0.147, t-value = 2.098 and p-value < 0.05) and customer commitment (CC) (OS = 0.307, t-value = 3.772 and p-value < 0.01) were found to have a significant positive influence on repurchase intention (RPI). Despite this, customer satisfaction (CS) did not have a significant positive effect on repurchase intention (RPI) as (OS = 0.075, t-value = 1.148 and p-value

Table 3
Fornell-Larcker Discriminant validity test.

Variables	CT	CC	CS	PL	RPI
CT	0.881				
CC	0.874	0.877			
CS	0.834	0.863	0.893		
PL	0.739	0.778	0.749	0.880	
RPI	0.762	0.799	0.750	0.787	0.880

Note: Values in bold are square root of AVE.

Table 4
Path Coefficients Specific Indirect Effect of the structural Model Constructs.

Constructs Effects	OS	SM	STDEV	T-Value (O/STDEV)	P-values	Conclusion
CT - PL	0.163	0.158	0.068	2.420	0.016**	Supported
CT - RPI	0.147	0.148	0.070	2.098	0.036**	Supported
CC - PL	0.419	0.423	0.076	5.488	0.000***	Supported
CC - RPI	0.307	0.310	0.081	3.772	0.000***	Supported
CS - PL	0.251	0.250	0.074	3.378	0.001***	Supported
CS - RPI	0.075	0.072	0.066	1.148	0.251	Not Supported
PL - RPI	0.383	0.382	0.071	5.401	0.000***	Supported
CT - PL - RPI	0.063	0.061	0.029	2.136	0.033**	Supported
CC - PL - RPI	0.160	0.162	0.043	3.722	0.000**	Supported
CS - PL - RPI	0.096	0.096	0.035	2.715	0.007***	Supported

Note: ***p-value < 0.01, **p-value < 0.05, OS = Original Sample, SM = Sample Mean, STDEV = Standard Deviation.

> 0.05).

We performed a mediation analysis of price level on relationship quality constructs and repurchase intention. Table 4 further revealed that price level positively mediates the relationship between relationship quality constructs and repurchase intention. For example, price level (PL) mediates the relationship between customer trust (CT) and repurchase intention (RPI) as (OS = 0.063, t-value = 2.136 and p-value < 0.05).

5. Discussion and implications

5.1. Discussion

The research sought to examine the effect of relationship quality on customer repurchase intention among Ghanaian online consumers. Our findings confirm a significant positive effect of customer trust (CT) on price level (PL). At the same time, customer trust (CT) had a significant positive effect on repurchase intention (RPI). A possible explanation is that Ghanaian online consumers would buy from the same online retailer if they trust the vendor. Trust is built over time, and consumers' past shopping experience and other activities would be a significant factor in building trust. Our findings are similar to the works of (Chiu et al., 2010; Liu et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2011).

Customer commitment (CC) had a significant positive effect on price level (PL) and repurchase intention (RPI). This is not surprising as a customer commitment to a particular online retailer or e-commerce platform tends to make them loyal customers and continue to buy from the same retailer. The finding supports Suh and Han (2003), as they clearly stipulated that customers who are committed to a retailer tend to establish a strong bond with them. Other supporting findings are Amoako et al. (2019) and Mukherjee and Nath (2007). Nonetheless, Chiang (2018) found commitment not to positively and significantly affect repurchase intention (see Fig. 2).

As for customer satisfaction (CS), it had a significant positive effect on price level (PL) but not on repurchase intention (RPI). Thus, the satisfaction that online consumers have do influence the price level but not on repurchase intention. This implies that Ghanaian online consumers intention to repurchase from the same online retailer or e-commerce platform has nothing to do with the satisfaction derived from their past orders. A possible explanation for this is a satisfactory post-delivery service on the online retailer or e-commerce platform. Our findings contradict the early works of (Elbeltagi and Agag 2016; Hsu et al., 2014; Shang and Bao 2020).

Again, price level (PL) had a significant positive effect on repurchase intention (RPI). Thus, a price change will directly impact the intention of

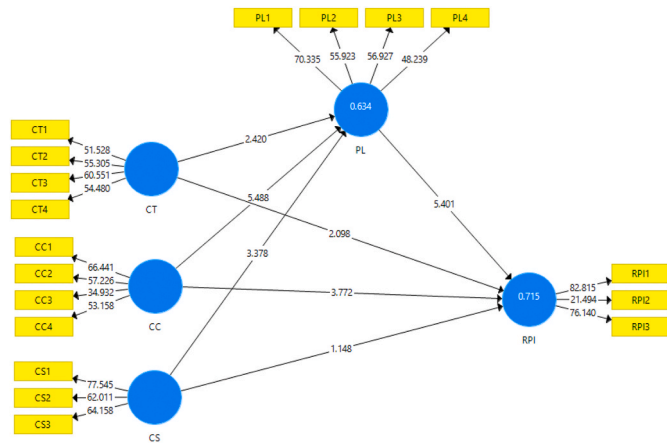


Fig. 2. Structural model.

Ghanaian online consumers to repurchase. Our findings are similar to the works of [Dodds et al. \(1991\)](#) and [Graciola et al. \(2018\)](#). Our findings further showed that price level significantly mediates relationship quality construct repurchase intention. Thus, the relationship between relationship quality construct and repurchase intention is significantly influenced by price level.

5.2. Implications for research

The study examined how relationship quality influence repurchase intention in an emerging economy. Our research offers a significant contribution to e-commerce literature by analyzing consumer behavior from the Ghanaian context. The study provides insight from the Ghanaian perspective as consumer behavior in advanced countries may not be the same as that in emerging economies. This is also one of the pioneer research that use the mediating effect of price level on relationship quality constructs and repurchase intention as limited or no studies have been explored in the area.

5.3. Implications for practice

Our research findings have practical implications for policymakers, researchers, and marketing managers interested in exploring the Ghanaian market. The findings suggest that customer trust will increase repurchase intentions among Ghanaian online consumers. Trust is one of the core issues of online shopping because of the absence of physical presence. Consequently, policymakers and marketing managers can target their effort to minimize the factors influencing online consumers' trust. Such include increased security and data privacy regulations of online consumers, effective customer service, provision of accurate product information and others. Customer commitment can influence online consumers repurchase intention. Commitment on the part of customers is essential for the success of online retailers or e-commerce platform. When customers are committed to a particular online retailer or e-commerce platform, they tend to purchase all their orders. A customer would be committed to an online retailer or e-commerce platform if their past dealings were successful. An online retailer or e-commerce platform can achieve customer commitment by addressing all customers' concerns and being honest with them. Although customer satisfaction did not influence repurchase intention, marketing managers need to pay critical attention to it. As the finding suggests, regardless of the level of satisfaction, Ghanaian online consumers may or may not repurchase. However, it will be in the best interest of an online retailer or e-commerce platform to ensure that their customers are satisfied. A customer who is satisfied with his or her order is likely to leave a positive online rating and recommend the product to others when the need arises. Furthermore, e-retailers or e-commerce platforms should be mindful

of their price as it influences customers' intention to repurchase from them. If possible, their price level should be reasonable and should be on the same level as other retailers or platforms they compete with.

6. Conclusion

This study investigates how relationship quality constructs influence online consumer intention to repurchase in the Ghanaian context. To achieve this, a conceptual framework was developed, and hypotheses were raised. The empirical findings provided some contributions. Despite this, the research has some limitations. The study area was Ghana, and as such, the findings may not apply to other geographical regions. Also, the study measured only the online consumers repurchase intention. Future research should measure the consumers' actual repurchase behavior to test our conceptual model. Lastly, the research variables were measured at one time. We suggest future studies should take a longitudinal technique into consideration to confirm if the findings would remain the same as consumers continue to repurchase from the same e-retailer or e-commerce platform.

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Declaration of competing interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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