Relationship management, competitive advantage and performance of hotels: A resource-based view

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Relationship Management, Competitive Advantage and Performance of Hotels: A Resource-Based View

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ABSTRACT

The competitiveness and growth of the hotel industry have propelled a lot of interest by researchers. Premised on the resource- based view, dynamic capability and competitive advantage theories, this paper investigated the effect of managing supplier and customer relationships on the competitive advantage and performance of hotels. Questionnaires were distributed to managers of one-star rated hotels in the Central and Western regions, and data was analyzed with partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Analysis of the hypothesized relationships revealed that management of customer relationships had a significant and positive effect on competitive advantage; however, supplier relationship management did not. Again, both supplier relationship management and customer relationship management had no direct effect on the operational performance of hotels. Further, the study confirmed that competitve advantage influences the operational performance of hotels. A mediation test through the bootstrapping procedure revealed that competitive advantage fully mediates customer relationship management and operational performance relationship. The study contributes to the resource-based view and competitive advantage literature and draws implications for practice by hotel managers. It is recommended that the management of hotels maintain a balanced relationship with customers and suppliers.

KEYWORDS: Relationship management; competitive advantage; operational performance; hotels

Introduction

The competitive nature of the current business environment of which the hotel sector is not exempted has increased the challenge of making services available to consumers at competitive prices without losing out on value creation and profitability. Firms have established and integrated their supply chains to make them more competitive. Integration of the supply chain cannot be achieved without developing the right relationship with suppliers and customers alike. It is well recognized that for business organizations to stay competitive, it is not enough to focus only on improving internal business processes, but also on integrating suppliers and customers into the overall value chain.

In the hotel sector, firms develop long-standing relationships with clients who patronize hotel services on regular basis, as a way of getting continuous business and also maintaining customer loyalty (Zopiatis, Theocharous, Constanti, & Tjiapouras, 2017). From the perspective of the Resource-based View Theory, collaborative and partnership relationships with suppliers and hotel clients are resources, described as assets (Carr, Drennan, & Andrews, 2016).

Between 2010 and 2016, the hospitality industry in Ghana witnessed an increasing number of arrivals in the country. In 2010 the number of arrivals in the country was estimated at over 746,500. This number saw an increase of 77.2% to over 1,322,500 in 2016 (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2017). The increasing arrivals also meant an increase in demand for accommodation facilities. In response to the growing opportunities in the sector, the number of licensed star-rated hotels, budget hotels and guest houses increased over the last decade. By 2018, the total number of licensed star-rated hotels had reached 848 from 572 in 2012 (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2019). As the number of new hotels increased, possibly to take advantage of the rise, it also brought competition among industry players over suppliers and customers.

Consequently, hotels have moved from arms-length to collaborative relationships with key suppliers and outsource service providers (Su & Yang, 2017), and also continue to maintain existing relationships with their regular customers. The hotel sector procures both tangible and intangible goods to achieve its core business of providing value to its consumers. For instance, when a hotel provides its core service of accommodation, other supporting services are incidental to the service delivery. And most of these support services are provided by outsourced service providers, hence, providing timely and quality service to customers demands a coordinated and collaborative relationship among all the actors along the supply chain.

The Resource-based View Theory demonstrates how firms realize superior advantage through the acquisition and control of strategic resources either tangible or intangible. Firms' relationship with their suppliers and customers create tangible and intangible assets which are subsequently leveraged toward creating competitive advantage. The link between supplier relationship management and performance has been empirically observed in different industries including manufacturing (Hong, Zhang, & Ding, 2018; Nimeh, Abdallah, & Sweis, 2018), automotive (Han, Huang, & Macbeth, 2018) and construction (Sindiga, Paul, & Mbura, 2019). Also, the effect of customer relationship management on customer satisfaction which subsequently results in competitive advantage has been empirically tested in other sectors (Haislip & Richardson, 2017; Soltani, Zareie, Milani, & Navimipour, 2018). However, empirical research on the effect of relationship management on achieving competitive advantage and performance of hotels is still a debate in the hospitality literature (Vencataya, Seebaluck, & Doorga, 2016).

One perspective of the debate has been driven by the intangibility nature of customer experience. Perishability is one of the important characteristics of the hotel industry. Also, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has produced unparalleled difficulties for firms in the hospitality industry. Major actors in the hospitality supply chain have either downsized or even completely halted their production. As uncertainty in customer demand lingers, players in the industry must do well to satisfy customers with quality services, while staying competitive. Hotels, therefore, need to manage their supply chain effectively and efficiently to remain competitive and generate the expected profits. This study, therefore, sought to examine how the adoption of relationship management practices as a dynamic capability in the supply chain contribute to creating sustainable competitive advantage and performance of the hospitality sector in an emerging market context. The study contributes to marketing and supply chain literature by suggesting the role of relationship management as a resource that creates competitive advantage.

Literature review

Resource-based view of a firm

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory according to Penrose (1959) is a resource-based (tangible and intangible) perspective firms adopt to attain a sustainable competitive advantage over other competing firms and also to achieve performance. Wernerfelt (1984) further noted that the focus of the RBV of the firm is to describe and forecast the journey of how firms realize a superior advantage through the acquisition and control of strategic resources. It explains and predicts how a firm can achieve a competitive advantage through the acquisition, and overall control over its resources (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1991). Firms, thus, acquire such resources and exert control over their usage to achieve a competitive advantage in the industry. Further development and analysis of the theory yielded three distinguished areas or views of firms' resources which propel the firm's competitive advantage, namely: knowledge-based, nature-based and capabilities- based views (Grant, 1996; Hart, 1995; Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). Empirically, extant literature (Hansen & Wernerfelt, 1989), among others have found the impact a firms' resources has on its performance. And these resources comprise capabilities (Nelson & Winter, 1982), tangible (physical assets) and intangible (culture, process knowledge etc) assets which aid in the production and delivery of goods and services (Grant, 1991). Winter and Nelson explained capabilities as those unique set of skills and knowledge a firm possesses, and these capabilities can be operational and or dynamic. Firms operational capabilities refer to those routine practices a firm performs over time using the same technique and scale in its value creation (Helfat & Winter, 2011), while the dynamic capabilities refer to those abilities a firm possesses to manage and adjust to changes that occur in the dynamic business environment (Teece et al., 1997).

These dynamic capabilities that form the basis of a firm's competitive advantages are the major forces driving its performance in an intensively competitive environment (Wilden, Gudergan, Nielsen, & Lings, 2013). The RBV of the firm has been an appropriate theory especially in explaining how the firm can transform and control its unique resources and capabilities into an organizational process that will help achieve sustainable competitive advantage and performance. The hospitality sector is a highly competitive industry that requires certain capabilities to survive in the dynamic environment (Dwyer, Cvelbar, Edwards, & Mihalic, 2012). Consequently, relationship management along the hotel supply chain cannot be left out in this dynamic and competitive business environment. Negotiating agreements, product developments and management of information among partners in the supply chain could be a strong capability toward achieving competitive advantage. Rather than seeing it as a procurement and delivery process, the supply chain is an integral part of the value chain, which extends from the acquisition of materials to after-sales services. Relationship management is thus, very crucial, especially due to the industry's ever-dynamic business environment.

This study thus adopts the RBV of the firm in tandem with Teece et al. (1997) dynamic capability because it recognizes the interactions and relationships of the supply chain as a valuable resource and a dynamic capability that hotels can possess uniquely to achieve a competitive advantage over others in the industry and subsequently achieve abovenormal profits. Additionally, extant literature (Rungtusanatham, Salvador, Forza, & Choi, 2003) have used the RBV theory to explain that developing relationships among suppliers and customers alike promote not only efficiency and effectiveness, but also increases resource utilization and productivity while ensuring supply chain collaborations and stakeholder satisfaction.

Theory of competitive advantage (CA)

According to Porter (1980b; 1985), the theory of competitive advantage refers to the positional advantage (low-cost advantage, differentiation and focus strategy) a firm has in the market which leads to superior performance by creating value and offering the same to customers in comparison to other competing firms. Competitive advantage encompasses all those unique firm features and resources available to achieve superior performance (Hayes & Wheelwright, 1984). Therefore, the theory holds that firms can only achieve a competitive advantage if they can identify and use their valuable resources and dynamic capabilities (Day, 1994; Porter, 1985). Porter (1991) further asserts that differences that exist among firm performances in an industry are directly linked to their competitive advantage.

Extant literature has listed data, cost, quality, flexibility, delivery, and time-based competition as vital competitive capabilities. Thus, if a firm has a higher economic profit as compared to the average rate of profit in the industry, that firm is considered as having a competitive advantage. In supply chain studies, competitive advantage is considered as an outcome of the effective and efficient management of the value chain (Walters & Helman, 2020). Arguably, a firm's competitive advantage is dependent on the firms' valuable resource and dynamic capabilities (relationship management) which in turn helps the firm to achieve beyond normal profit. This causal link has been investigated and confirmed in varied context (Khan, Yang, & Waheed, 2019; Parnell & Brady, 2019). Hotels can develop a competitive strategy through active interactions among entities along the supply chain which according to the RBV theory can provide a competitive advantage (Penrose, 1956).

Supplier relationship management (SRM)

Supplier relationship management describes the management systems a buying firm implements to manage its relationships with its suppliers (Amoako-Gyampah, Boakye, Adaku, & Famiyeh, 2019). Supplier relationship management also acts as an avenue to achieve competitive advantage (Lii & Kuo, 2016). Activities usually undertaken as part of the SRM process include material selection, negotiations, information sharing, monitoring supplier performance, conflict management and supplier development initiatives (Amoako-Gyampah et al., 2019). Due to competition, firms invest resources to select the best performing suppliers who become part of the supply chain (Zhang & Cao, 2018). And although SRM takes time to yield results, there is empirical evidence that establishes the benefits of SRM in the long term (Tseng, 2014). One way to achieve supply chain resilience is by leveraging the value inherent in the buyer-supplier relationship (Hingley, Lindgreen, & Grant, 2015; Teller, Kotzab, Grant, & Holweg, 2016). And in the hotel industry, for example, popular SRM techniques include the involvement of suppliers in product development and customization of hotel supplies.

Customer relationship management (CRM)

The hospitality industry is touted as a vital part of tourism where customers who have experience in traveling and using accommodation services determine the kind of services they want and how the same should be presented to them (Pizam, 2012). Pizam further stipulated that customers cannot claim ownership of services rendered by hotels and so it is important to develop a service strategy that considers (1) service as tasks given to employees during their training, and (2) service as a process integrated into the operations of the service provider to the customer. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2004), CRM refers to a business's overall strategy of building and maintaining collaborations that are beneficial and advantageous with customers through the provision of superior value and service. The process of developing close relationships with customers demands the identification of what the customer requires (the need or value) and creating a feedback system

with customers. Thus, as travelers have become sensitive to the prices of hotel accommodation and other services, a close relationship with customers will result in gathering quality and relevant information which can help improve customers' needs and value creation.

Hypotheses development

Supplier relationship management and operational performance
Relationship with suppliers thus provides firms with an advantage and competitive edge over their competitors. Due to their nature, hotels predominantly react to the ever- changing demands of consumers, thereby providing new products and services to satisfy the consumers' needs and expectations. If hotels can achieve this effectively and efficiently, it partly depends on their suppliers. Accordingly, hotels that encourage quality relationships with suppliers could enhance their competitive advantage and improve their performance. Extant literature supports the indirect role supplier relationship management play in enhancing competitive advantage and firm performance (Al- Abdallah, Abdallah, & Hamdan, 2014; Gandhi, Shaikh, & Sheorey, 2017; Tseng, 2014; Yang, Zhang, & Xie, 2017). For instance, the findings of Paiva, Phonlor, and D'avila (2008) confirms the importance of mutual information exchange as a significant part of the buyer-supplier relationships.

Hastings, Howieson, and Lawley (2016) examined some practices that result in achieving value in supply chains including sharing of vital information, alignment of goals and incentives, bringing together decisions, sharing of resources and knowledge, and enhancing collaborative communication. The study revealed that the implementation of a successful supply chain collaboration translates into a synergistic advantage and superior performance. A study by Prajogo, Chowdhury, Yeung, and Cheng (2012) further tested the impact of a long-term relationship, logistics integration and supplier evaluation on a firms' quality, delivery, flexibility, and cost. Their findings proved that diverse supplier management practices result in positive effects on different measures of performance.

On the contrary, some studies show that the level of performance due to the buyer- supplier relationship may depend on how firms structure their supplier relationships. For example, literature (such as Kim & Choi, 2015) distinguish among cooperative-adversarial relationships dichotomy. However, since relationship growth is characterized by opportunities that accrue to both parties over time, it is expected that conscious effort to manage and sustain relationships with suppliers will yield benefit for both firms. Therefore, this study hypothesized that;

H₁: SRM has a positive effect on operational performance.

H₂: SRM has a positive effect on competitive advantage.

Customer relationship management and operational performance

CRM remains an important business strategy in supply chain management. Its focal point is on identifying and achieving the current and prospective customers by integrating them into the overall business strategy. Because of the contribution CRM can bring to the bottom-line, Kunz et al. (2017) describe how the integration of data-driven strategies such as big data facilitates customer relationship management, which potentially benefits both the firm's bottom-line and the customer. Evidence provided by Martinaityte, Sacramento, and Aryee (2019) has shown that satisfied customers stay loyal to the company, purchases other products of the firm, and refers other buyers to the firm as well as relaying positive feedbacks for the firms' image and products. In the hotel industry, CRM is vital in attracting, retaining and increasing patronage (Sigala, 2005).

With their ability to collect and integrate customers' information, hotels can easily implement CRM strategy as an opportunity to improve their relationship which will subsequently improve customer satisfaction and loyalty. This will accordingly increase the hotels' profitability. The effect of CRM on improved services and profitability of a firm cannot be overemphasized as a lot of studies have empirically tested this relationship extensively in different industries (Chang, Park, & Chaiy, 2010; Kasemsap, 2019). There is a lot of evidence in the service industry as well to prove the importance of CRM on competitive advantage and performance. CRM strategy enhances hotels' service innovation which impacts the capacity to achieve superior customer performance. This superior performance by customers translates to positive financial achievements by hotels (Diffley, McCole, & Carvajal-Trujillo, 2018).

Therefore, this study hypothesized that;

H₃: CRM has a positive effect on competitive advantage.

H₄: CRM has a positive effect on operational performance.

Competitive advantage and operational performance
Firms are directing significant attention and investment into working closely with supply chain partners to achieve coordination and integration, and the development of a meaningful relationship that creates value for the customers while achieving a competitive edge over other players in the industry. There is a strong link between competitive advantage and firm performance (Kubickova & Smith, 2019; Ramirez, Dieguez-Soto, & Manzaneque, 2020; Wilke, Costa, Freire, & Ferreira, 2019). Therefore, this study hypothesized that;

H₅: Competitive advantage has a positive effect on operational performance.

The mediating role of competitive advantage

This study uses the dynamic capability under the RBV and competitive advantage as the underlying theory supporting the mediating role of competitive advantage. Dynamic capabilities, according to Teece et al. (1997), are directly linked to the achievement of competitive advantage. Additionally, the theory of competitive advantage holds that a firm's positional advantage over other competitors in the industry enhances performances (Porter, 1980a). Further, Li and Liu (2014) and Day (1994) asserts that firms capabilities are crucial for its sustainable competitive advantage which subsequently influences performance. Meaning a firms ability to harness and utilize supplier and customer knowledge and competencies by using relationship marketing, for example, creates a competitive advantage (differentiation) between the firm and other firms in the industry (Nandakumar, Ghobadian, & O'Regan, 2011).

In their quest to explore a causal link between dynamic capabilities and performance, Correia, Dias, and Teixeira (2020) found that competitive advantage is a mediator in this relationship. In examining the relationship between intangible resources and capabilities and the firms' performance, Khan et al. (2019) found a competitive advantage to mediate this relationship. Also, Tan and Sousa (2015) found a competitive advantage as a significant mediator between a firm's dynamic marketing capabilities and export performance. However, it is worthy to note that competitive advantage is a strategy more targeted at creating offerings (low-cost advantage, differentiation and focus strategy) for customers to enhance the value creation and increase customer patronage subsequently. Hence, the study hypothesized that;

H$_{6a}$: Competitive advantage mediates the relationship between CRM and operational performance of hotels.

H$_{6b}$: Competitive advantage mediates the relationship between SRM and operational performance of hotels.

Based on the empirical evidence and associated hypotheses, the relationship among the constructs is shown in the conceptual framework in **Figure 1.**

Figure 1. Conceptual framework.
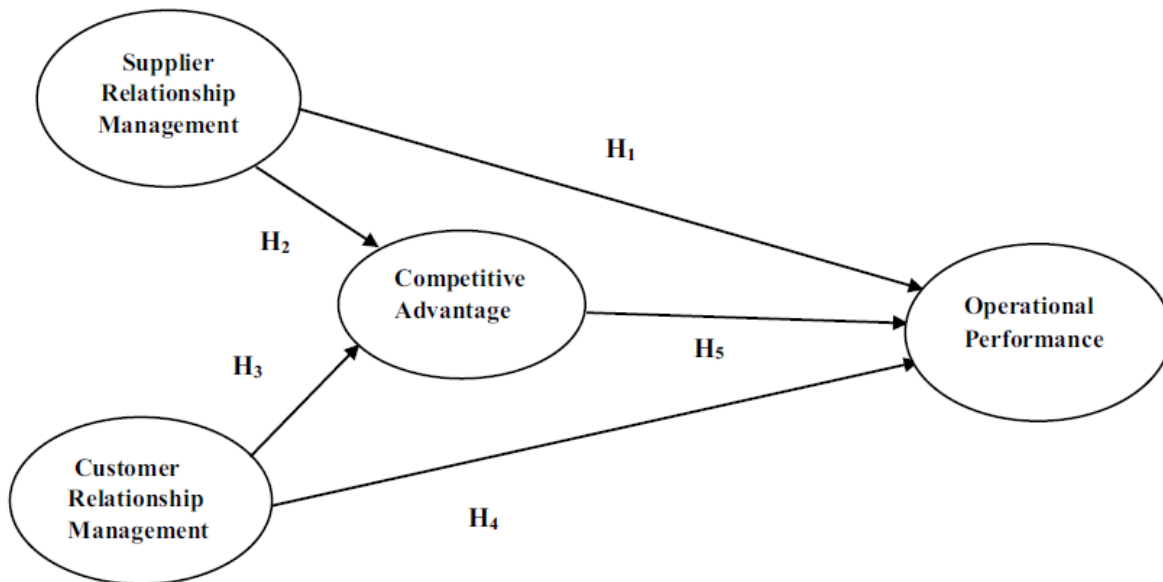
Methods

The assumptions underlying the study and the research objectives required the adoption of the quantitative research approach. Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) have noted that the nature of study objectives is an important determinant of an appropriate study design and analytical technique. On that note, a quantitative approach was used because the study involves the development of testable hypotheses from theoretical and empirical arguments on the relationship between supplier relationship management, customer relationship management, competitive advantage and operational performance of hotels. Accordingly, data collection procedures were guided by quantitative methodology for knowledge enquiry, which requires an objective and noninterventionist assessment of a phenomenon through the use of questionnaires and other objective assessment methods (Fowler, 2013).

Population and sampling

The population comprised one-star-rated hotels in the Central and Western Regions. The Central region, for instance, houses the Cape Coast Castle and the Kakum Canopy Walk. This serves as a tourist attraction for travelers both within and outside the country. As of 2018, Ghana Tourism Authority lists 27 and 83 one star-rated hotels in the central and western regions respectively. One star-rated hotels were surveyed because the nature of facilities, pricing and service offerings place them in a position to serve low to middle-income clients. Again, competition is keener among hotels

in the one-star category because that is where most hotels fall as far as statistics from the Ghana Tourism Authority is concerned.

One star-rated facility usually offers a place for comfortable sleep and services are usually not varied, but basic. They offer modest rooms which have ensuite bath or shower rooms and a designated eating area. They are usually owned by a sole proprietor who may delegate responsibility to a manager overseeing all operations. Census sampling was used and so 110 questionnaires were distributed to managers of all one star-rated hotels; however, 102 were complete and hence, used for analysis. The managers were surveyed during a workshop in Cape Coast so the response rate was very high. The breakdown of the 102 is as follows: in the Central Region, a total of 25 valid questionnaires were retrieved, while 77 were retrieved from managers in the Western Region making a total of 102.

Measurement

Structured questionnaires, adapted from literature, were self-administered. Measures of the variables - supplier relationship management (Giannakis, Doran, & Chen, 2012; Moeller, Fassnacht, & Klose, 2006), customer relationship management (Kumar & Reinartz, 2006; Morgan & Hunt, 1994), competitive advantage (Flynn, Schroeder, & Sakakibara, 1995; Hooley, Beracs, & Kolos, 1993), and Operational Performance (Kaplan & Atkinson, 1998; Kaplan & Norton, 1992) were adapted from scales that have been validated by extant research. All constructs were reflectively measured for three reasons. First, the scales were adapted from literature. Second, the content of each scale primarily reflects the underlying construct, and finally, the items adequately covered the conceptual domain of the construct such that deletion does not cause changes in the underlying construct. Again, Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2006) mention that the choice of formative or reflective should be grounded on content, parsimony and criterion validity. The questions were measured on a five (5)-point Likert-type scale ranging from weak to strong agreement.

Data analysis

The study employed partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze the hypothesized relationships (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015). Through its bootstrapping procedures, a non-parametric approach, PLS-SEM performs relatively well and more robust when a study is limited by sample size and data fails to meet normal distribution, which is required in covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB- SEM) (Hair, Hult, Ringle, Sarstedt, & Thiele, 2017). Again, the assumption underlying our approach was to explore patterns in data and draw meaningful conclusions for policy considerations in the hospitality industry, and not to confirm or test theoretical constructs and associated relationships. However, as noted by Ali, Rasoolimanesh, Sarstedt, Ringle, and Ryu (2018), PLS-SEM should not be the cure for badly designed study. Consequently, principles and best practice of research were adopted to ensure results could be generalized across one star-rated hotel. Accordingly, we used a sampling technique that met the required power of the test, significance and the minimum required r-square.

Results

Reliability and validity of measurement model

PLS-SEM method is a variance-based approach that employs linear composites of observed variables as proxies for unobserved constructs to estimate path relationships (Ali et al., 2018). The strength of these path relationships can be meaningfully interpreted if the reliability and validity of the measurement model are achieved. **Table 1** presents the results of the reliability and validity tests

conducted on the model. Also, cross-loadings (**Table 2**) and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (**Table 3**) are presented to provide further support for the validity of the model.

Table 1. Reliability and validity assessment.

Construct	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Competitive Advantage		0.918	0.919	0.694
CA3:	0.909			
CA4	0.864			
CA5	0.794			
CA6	0.848			
CA7	0.739			
Customer Relationship Management		0.878	0.879	0.550
CRMP1	0.711			
CRMP4	0.755			
CRMP9	0.836			
CRMP10	0.640			
CRMP11	0.834			
CRMP12	0.626			
Operational Performance		0.904	0.897	0.641
OP3	0.998			
OP4	0.874			
OP5	0.792			
OP6	0.636			
OP7	0.644			
Supplier Relationship Management		0.891	0.892	0.627
SRM1	0.778			
SRM2	0.601			
SRM3	0.785			
SRM4	0.936			
SRM5	0.821			

Table 2. Cross loadings.

Measures	CA	CRM	OP	SRM
CA3	0.909	0.767	0.531	0.650
CA4	0.864	0.709	0.539	0.569
CA5	0.794	0.661	0.498	0.486
CA6	0.848	0.650	0.590	0.510
CA7	0.739	0.544	0.525	0.483
CRMP10	0.512	0.640	0.357	0.674
CRMP11	0.725	0.834	0.382	0.642
CRMP12	0.491	0.626	0.365	0.391
CRMP1	0.581	0.711	0.380	0.524
CRMP4	0.588	0.775	0.480	0.572
CRMP9	0.653	0.836	0.491	0.573
OP3	0.651	0.534	0.998	0.384
OP4	0.555	0.505	0.874	0.343
OP5	0.500	0.470	0.792	0.325
OP6	0.414	0.345	0.636	0.311
OP7	0.424	0.330	0.644	0.290
SRM1	0.508	0.613	0.318	0.778
SRM2	0.387	0.445	0.254	0.601
SRM3	0.496	0.593	0.348	0.785
SRM4	0.612	0.672	0.382	0.936
SRM5	0.547	0.657	0.318	0.821

Table 3. Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT).

	CA	CRM	OP	SRM
Competitive Advantage (CA)				
Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	0.800			
Operational Performance (OP)	0.631	0.540		
Supplier Relationship Management (SRM)	0.646	0.760	0.407	

These reliability and validity tests contribute to evaluating the model's goodness of fit because PLS-SEM does not produce global good- ness-of-fit indices like CB-SEM does (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011; Henseler & Sarstedt, 2013).

Almost all the factor loadings were above 0.7. However, since our research approach was to explore, we considered factor loadings of 0.6 to be appropriate (Hulland, 1999). The threshold value for composite reliability is 0.7 while that of the average variance extracted (AVE) is 0.5 (Hair, Sarstedt, Pieper, & Ringle, 2012; Latan & Ghozali, 2012). The adequacy of the indicators measuring the constructs was assessed and the results presented in Table 1. The Composite reliability values were above the threshold of .70, showing how all the measurement construct's indicators jointly measure the constructs. Also, the AVE values in the model were higher than the estimated threshold of 0.5 depicting that the measured constructs could be explained by more than 50% by their corresponding indicators.

According to Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015), cross-loading determines discriminant validity by proving additional exploratory analysis of relationships between items and their constructs. By this approach, items are expected to show a weak correlation with other constructs as compared to the constructs to which it is theoretically related. **Table 2** depicts high loadings of indicators to their theoretical constructs as compared to other constructs, proving discriminant validity.

In addition to cross-loadings, Henseler et al. (2015) suggest a more robust test of discriminant validity that is based on a multitrait-multimethod matrix. Henseler et al. (2015) recommend that the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT) value above 0.9 depicts the absence of discriminant validity. Table 3 depicts that there is discriminant validity as all the values are below 0.9.

Assessment of the structural model

In assessing the structural model, the model's ability to predict the dependent variables are tested via a process recommended by Hair et al., (2017). First, we assess the structural model for collinearity **(Table 4)** issues and then establish the significance of the path coefficient. Thereafter, the predictive power of the model (coefficient of determination, R^2), effect size (f), predictive relevance (Stone-Geisser (Q^2)) and the effect size (q^2) are subsequently analyzed.

Table 4. Collinearity statistics.

	CA	OP
CA		2.856
CRM	2.359	3.883
OP		
SRM	2.359	2.385

The structural model assessment procedure proposes a check for collinearity. If correlations of satisfactory magnitude jointly predict a higher percentage of the variance in the dependent variable, then there is multicollinearity. Subsequently, the inner VIF values were examined for collinearity issues. From Table 4, VIF values were found to be below the threshold level of 5. Thus, there was no collinearity issue in the structural model.

Table 5 presents the hypothesized relationships results among constructs. Examination of the coefficient shows a positive relationship among all the constructs except SRM -> OP. The bootstrapping procedure was used to test how significant the path coefficients are. Generally, the path coefficients describe the effect of the exogenous constructs on the endogenous construct. The findings show that out of seven hypotheses, four of them: H_1 (-0.074, p > 0.05), H_2 (0.096, p > 0.05), H_4 (0.153, p > 0.05), and H_{6b} (0.055, p > 0.05) were rejected, whiles H_3(0.569, p < 0.05), H_5 (0.730, p < 0.05) and H_{6a} (0.416, p > 0.05) were not rejected.

The coefficient of determination (R^2) in **Table 6**, measures how accurate the predictive power of the regression model is, and it is calculated for variables with arrows pointing at them. With adj. R^2 of 0.643, proves that supplier relationship management and customer relationship management jointly explained 64.3% of the variance in competitive advantage. Again, supplier relationship management, customer relationship management and competitive advantage jointly explain (adj. R^2 of 0.403) 40.3% of the variance in operational performance.

While p-values show that an effect exists, effect size f^2) tells the magnitude of this effect of the exogenous variables on the endogenous variable (Chin, 2010). Accordingly, values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 show weak, moderate and strong effect, respectively (Cohen, 1988). In **Table 7**, the effect of CRM on CA (0.646) is considered large, followed by CA on OP (0.196).

Table 8 presents the outcome of the blindfolding procedure. In the table, SSO shows the total of squared observations, and SSE depicts the sum of squared prediction errors and the final column shows the Q^2 values. In this study, CA has a Q^2 value of 0.375 and

Table 5. Results of hypotheses testing of structural relationship.

Path relationships (Hypotheses)	Path coefficient	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T values	P values	Significance (p < 0.05)?
SRM -> OP (H_1)	−0.074	0.166	0.447	0.655	No
SRM -> CA (H_2)	0.096	0.162	0.597	0.551	No
CRM -> CA (H_3)	0.730	0.152	4.816	0.000	Yes
CRM -> OP (H_4)	0.153	0.232	0.658	0.511	No
CA -> OP (H_5)	0.569	0.203	2.807	0.005	Yes

Table 6. R Square.

	R Square	R Square adjusted
CA	0.650	0.643
OP	0.420	0.403

Table 7. F Square.

	CA	OP
CA		0.196
CRM	0.646	0.010
OP		
SRM	0.011	0.004

Small (0.0 < effect size < 0.15); Medium (0.15 < effect size < 0.35); Large (effect size > 0.35).

Small (0.0 < effect size < 0.15); Medium (0.15 < effect size < 0.35); Large (effect size > 0.35).

Table 8. Construct cross validated redundancy.

	SSO	SSE	Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)
CA	510.000	318.585	0.375
CRM	612.000	612.000	
OP	510.000	395.865	0.224
SRM	510.000	510.000	

Small (0.0 < Q2 < 0.15); Medium (0.15 < Q2 < 0.35); Large (Q2 > 0.35).

Small (0.0 < Q2 < 0.15); Medium (0.15 < Q2 < 0.35); Large (Q2 > 0.35).

OP had 0.224, respectively. This shows large and medium effect sizes, respectively. Since the values of Q^2 are all above zero, there is predictive relevance.

Table 9 presents results from the mediation test. Based on the theoretical justification from dynamic capabilities and competitive advantage theories, competitive advantage (CA) is expected to mediate relationship management constructs and operational performance. First CA did not mediate the relationship between SRM and OP, both a direct effect on OP and an indirect effect through CA were not significant. Although the direct effect of CRM on OP (0.153, $p > 0.05$) was not statistically significant, the indirect effect through CA was significant (0.416, $p > 0.05$). This means that CA fully mediates the CRM and OP relationship.

Discussion

The results showed that SRM had a negative and insignificant (β = -0.074, $p > 0.05$), effect on operational performance of hotels, hence Hj was rejected. A possible explanation is that supplier relationship management as a practice is perceived as an activity that adds to operational costs without corresponding benefit from suppliers especially among one-star rated hotels who usually see repeat patronage by clients as the key to survival. In some cases, the potential benefits of such a move are long term in nature. Hotel managers generally believe that supplier relationships are only necessary for other operational issues including quality supplies at a reasonable cost. This is evident in the observation made on managers of the various hotels about their interest in gaining a larger bargaining power in the supplier-firm relationship. This result is consistent with findings from Aboelmaged (2018) who found that supplier collaboration has no relationship with hotel performance.

Table 9. Analysis of Mediation.

Direct Effect	Significance (p < 0.05)?	Indirect effect	Path coefficient	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T values	Significance (p < 0.05)?
CRM -> OP	No	CRM -> CA -> OP (H_{6a})	0.416	0.187	2.222	Full mediation
SRM -> OP	No	SRM -> CA -> OP (H_{6b})	0.055	0.100	0.550	No mediation

Again, SRM and competitive advantage had no significant relationship (P = 0.096, $p > 0.05$; Table 6). Hence H_2 was rejected. As discussed earlier, the literature on SRM had no direct relationship with a competitive advantage as a competitive advantage is regarded as a strategy geared toward the creating of value for and retention of customers by these hotel managers. This indicates that the supplier relationship was not considered as significant in contributing to competitive advantage in hotels. Thirdly, results show that CRM had a significant and positive relationship to competitive

advantage ($\beta = 0.730$, $p < 0.05$). Offering quality products, timely services, timely introduction of innovative products and advanced knowledge of the market would help put the hotels on top in the industry. Thus, managers who can relate positively with customers can generate relevant information to satisfy the customers and subsequently gain a competitive advantage in the industry. Therefore, H_3 was not rejected. The result also implies that managers of hotels can direct most of their resources and efforts at creating good relationships with their customers because it will eventually pay off through enhanced performance. Other studies (Wilke et al., 2019) also support this finding.

The fourth hypothesis was rejected ($\beta = 0.153$, $p > 0.05$; **Table 7**): CRM had no direct effect on operational performance. Additionally, the study found a significant and positive effect ($\beta = 0.569$, $p < 0.05$) of competitive advantage on operational performance; hence, H_5 was also not rejected. However, the study found that competitive advantage fully mediates the relationship between CRM and operational performance [$\beta = 0.416$, 95% CI: 0.134, 0.504]. An indication that competitive advantage is key to the survival of these hotels and one major contributor to competitive advantage was customer relationship management. Thus, provision of quality service, reliability and prompt attention to the needs of clients are of prime importance.

Conclusions, contribution and policy recommendations

The relationships were evaluated by ascertaining the relationships among supplier relationship management and competitive advantage; customer relationship management and competitive advantage; supplier relationship management and hotel operational performance; customer relationship management and hotel operational performance; and lastly competitive advantage and hotel operational performance. Finally, it tested for the mediation role of competitive advantage on customer relationship management and hotel operational performance. The findings indicated that customer relationship management facilitates competitive advantage among hotels and both constructs positively affect hotel operational performance. Nevertheless, hotel managers strive to maintain a collaborative relationship with their suppliers. The most interesting result was the insignificant relationship between SRM and hotel operational performance. Although there is much empirical evidence establishing the positive effect of SRM on performance; the result shows that service industries have unique supply chains of which the hospitality industry is no exempt.

The study contributes theoretically and practically to the supply chain literature in the hospitality industry. Theoretically, this study extends the existing literature on supply chain application in the hotel industry. It also provided the antecedents of competitive advantage and hotel operational performance in the supply chain in a developing economy context. The study also presents an initial empirical examination of the relationships among the constructs - supplier relationship management, customer relationship management, competitive advantage and hotel operational performance in a developing economy perspective. It further probed into practices that directly and indirectly impact hotel operational performance. Adopting the RBV, dynamic capabilities and competitive advantage theories, this research validated the research model empirically through the use of the PLS-SEM method using data from 102 managers of hotels in Ghana.

It is recommended that the management of hotels and policymakers maintain a balanced relationship with customers and establish policies and strategies which will subsequently improve their existing relationship. The nonexistence of managers of the supply chain in most of the hotels used for this study increases the uncertainty of their perception of the concept of supply chain issues posed in the questionnaire. Supply chain practices in Ghana is generally immature and lacks the needed capabilities to foster high- quality collaborations. We, therefore, recommend hotel managers work closely with suppliers to ensure effective collaborations as it can improve the quality

and timely delivery of supplies. Additionally, the results from the study offer further empirical inferences to managers of hotels in developing economies with a low understanding of the supply chain system. Managers of these hotels must ascertain an appropriate strategy that considers the roles of both suppliers and customers in its bid to achieve superior performance.

Limitations and directions for future studies

Future studies could examine size in terms of the number of stars on the adoption of CRM and SRM. Also, the scope could be expanded to cover other hotels in other regions because competition is keen in the capital city and of course the level of competition has been found to influence relationship management practices. Also, only non-financial performance metrics were used in measuring the performance of the hotels. Future studies could include other performance measures and if possible moderate the relationships with size, years in operation and may be the location of the hotel.

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