

## Research Article



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## Effect of relationship marketing concept of reciprocity on customer satisfaction among foreign owned supermarkets in Kenya: A case study of Carrefour Supermarket

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**Abstract**

The study sought to examine the effect of reciprocity on customer satisfaction among foreign owned supermarkets in Kenya. A positivist paradigm research philosophy guided the study with deductive research approach employed in order to allow for the development of hypotheses by use of existing theories. Quantitative research techniques were employed to analyze data. Data for the study was collected from a sample size of 384 customers from Carrefour supermarket outlets. A response rate of 85.68% was attained translating to 329 valid questionnaires. Descriptive statistics was used to summarize data and show meaningful patterns while inferential statistics (correlation and regression analysis) were employed to test the study hypotheses. The models were deemed fit due to significant F statistics at 0.05 level of significance. From the attained R<sup>2</sup>, the results revealed that reciprocity variable was significant in affecting customer satisfaction among foreign owned supermarkets in Kenya if other factors are held constant. Based on the significant beta coefficient attained, the study rejected the null hypothesis H<sub>01</sub> (reciprocity has no significant effect on customer satisfaction among foreign owned supermarket in Kenya). The correlation analysis at 0.01 level of significance revealed reciprocity had a moderate positive correlation with customer satisfaction. The study recommends that supermarket management should focus on enhancing relationship marketing practice of reciprocity through training of staff on the same as a means of sustaining customer satisfaction.

**Keywords:** customer satisfaction, equivalence, immediacy, reciprocity, relationship marketing

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**Public Interest Statement**

The study filled a knowledge gap concerning relationship marketing concept of reciprocity by theorizing the concepts facets of equivalence and immediacy based on social exchange theory in addition to contributing to existing literature by including elements of equivalence and immediacy in the supermarket customer relationship model. The study findings shall also be used to improve customer management policy decisions by retail organizations and marketing practitioners. The findings and recommendations can be used to form a basis for future research by scholars and researchers even in other sectors of the economy.

**Introduction**

Reciprocity is a relationship marketing concept that is considered a norm of human social behaviour which holds that people owe one another duties because of their prior actions (Hoppner, Griffith, & White, 2015). Very few scholarly papers on reciprocity have been published in recent years. A lot of literature on the subject is attributed to the period (1930-1965) and mostly done by anthropologists like Smith and Malinowski (2018). Reciprocity as found in most of relationship marketing (RM) literature resides at the general level. Thus, conceptualizing reciprocity as a unidimensional construct (Hoppner et al., 2015). At this level reciprocity can be defined as involving the mutual exchange of favours or the making of allowances for one's exchange partner, in return for similar favours or allowances to be received later. Reciprocity borrows a lot from the relationship marketing research stream that looks at relationship marketing as relational exchange. According to this school of thought, the emphasis is on partnering relationships (Fontenot & Wilson, 1997). The concept of relational exchanges focuses on continuous long-term relationships between various parties (Zhang, Watson IV, Palmatier, & Dant, 2016).

The world retail industry is experiencing radical changes owing to the rapid evolution of consumer needs (Kasemsap, 2018). The ability to go global has become a competitive necessity for many retailers irrespective of their size, this is in order to ensure that they access larger markets for their survival just like SMEs (Dutot, Bergeron, & Raymond, 2014; Hosseini, Fallon, Weerakkody, & Sivarajah, 2019). Emerging economy retail firm's internationalization process is involving a shift from exports to foreign direct investment and this is measured through both exporting and foreign purchasing (Gaur, Kumar, & Singh, 2014; Kasemsap, 2018). Despite of the above trends, there has been little consideration of how global retailers may implement retail marketing strategies abroad, or of how these may compare with those domestically implemented. It is worth noting that the major distributors of household goods in Kenya are the retail outlets. According to Oxford Business Group, Kenya's retail market is Africa's second most developed after South Africa, and the fastest growing sector within the continent. Kenyans still dominate the \$7 billion sector with 25 key players controlling 98.1 per cent of the market share, while foreign firms have a 1.79 per cent (Kanoga, Njugana, & Bett, 2015; Muturi, 2018; Tanui, 2018).

**Foreign owned retailers in Kenya**

A lot of changes have been experienced in Kenya's retail sector. Many new foreign as well as local investors are establishing retail chains or supermarkets in Kenya (Demmler, Klasen, Nzuma, & Qaim, 2017; Njoroge, 2015). In recent years international retailers like Carrefour, Choppies, Massmart, Shoprite and Game have been entering the Kenyan market imposing new competitive pressures in the industry's companies, which in turn has created the necessity for competitiveness to acquire and retain customers and market share (Muturi, 2018). Carrefour has 12,300 stores in over 30 countries. Carrefour retail chains consider themselves the third largest retail chain in Kenya. The retail chain is owned by the Majid Al Futtaim retail which was established in 1992. Majid Al Futtaim is the leading shopping mall, retail and leisure pioneer across the Middle East and North Africa

(MENA). The retail chain company entered the Kenyan market in 2016 and has since opened 8 supermarkets in Kenya. Most of Carrefour Kenya's stores are located in shopping malls, in outlets vacated by two struggling retailers, Nakumatt and Uchumi (David, 2015; Herbling, 2013; Miriri, 2019; Wainainah, 2019).

### **Problem statement**

The wholesale and retail sub-sector is the 5th largest contributor to Kenya's GDP and the 3rd largest contributor to private sector employment (Mbatia & Wanjiku, 2020). With increased competition and less product and service differentiation experienced in the retail industries the players are experiencing more challenges of preventing customers from switching. Research firm Deloitte in their African powers of retailing report of 2015 indicate that East Africa's shopping environment is undergoing an evolution as supermarket firms and private equity firms appear eager to cash in on the region's consumer markets by investing in multibillion malls and centers thereby increasing competition (Muturi, 2018). In Kenya, foreign companies have been increasing their footprint through foreign direct investments, mergers, and acquisitions (Catherine, Kamau, & Mbithi, 2019). This has seen many local supermarket chains closing shop owing to majorly competition and poor marketing strategies. These foreign supermarkets have had a success story for majority of them. The success of such foreign supermarkets has been attributed to their adoption of better marketing strategies however some of the relationship building concepts like reciprocity have had little consideration in the Kenyan supermarket context. Consequently, this study looks at the effect of reciprocity on customer satisfaction among foreign owned supermarkets in Kenya.

### **Literature review**

#### **Theoretical framework**

The choice of reciprocity as an important construct in relationship marketing model is informed by deductions from social exchange theory. The theory as propagated by Homans (1958), states that human relationships are formed by the use of cost-benefit analysis and comparisons of alternatives (Homans, 1958; Karimi, 2014). According to Karimi (2014) Social exchange theory indicates that individuals are willing to maintain relationships because of the expectation that to do so was rewarding. The expectancy disconfirmation theory was used to explain the customer satisfaction constructs. The model was developed by Oliver (1977) and explains post purchase or post adoption as a function of expectations, perceived performance, and disconfirmation of beliefs. when customers perceives the performance is worse than what they expected or desired about the quality of specific product or service, the negative disconfirmation will happen (Gillison & Reynolds, 2018). Positive disconfirmation leads to the customer's satisfaction and negative disconfirmation means perceived performance of products or services couldn't attract the customer satisfaction (Sharma & Srivastava, 2018).

#### **Conceptual framework**

##### **Review of variables**

##### **Reciprocity**

Reciprocity can also be understood as the expectation that people will respond favourably to each other by returning benefits for benefits (Hoque, Awang, & Salam, 2017; Lee, Kim, & Pan, 2014b; Lou & Koh, 2018). From this general level, it's clear that reciprocity in relationship marketing context has had very little research (Geiger & Germelmann, 2015; Hoppner et al., 2015; Kwan & Carlson, 2017; Pervan, Bove, Johnson, & Lin, 2011). At the heart of reciprocity is also the concept of customer advocacy which has been popularized by scholars like Roy and Chakraborti (2015); Urban (2015) who have discussed the topic and its influence on several marketing relationships.

The school of thought emphasizes taking the best interest of the customer at heart. The argument is that if companies advocate for their customers, customers will reciprocate by advocating for the company by not only buying the products but also referring other prospective customers as well as helping to produce better products and services (Moliner, Monferrer, & Estrada, 2018; Urban, 2015)

As a relationship marketing construct the importance of reciprocity is based on three assumptions. First, that marketing activities exist within the realms of exchange. Secondly that all individuals are fundamentally motivated by self-interest where without a norm of reciprocity no one would exchange. Third, that individuals desire to achieve excellence in moral behaviour and are therefore motivated to develop and maintain exchange where a norm of reciprocity is upheld (Pervan, Bove, & Johnson, 2004; Pervan & Johnson, 2003). Reciprocity as outlined in several literatures should be universally applicable. However scholars like Alejandro, Kowalkowski, Ritter, Marchetti, and Prado (2011); Gouldner (1960) acknowledged that despite of its application in all national cultures, the uniqueness of time and place means that it might function differently across different cultures or by large it will function differently in different regions and organizations.

The study based the assumptions of reciprocity on the work of Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) who examined reciprocity as an interdependent exchange where something has to be given by one party and in response something returned by the other party. This study focuses on two important dimensions of reciprocity, thus equivalence and immediacy as advocated by (Hoppner et al. 2015).

### **Equivalence**

Equivalence which is the first operationalization dimension for reciprocity prescribes what should be exchanged. Reciprocity stipulates that partners should repay any action received and that repayment should be almost equivalent to what has been received (Hoppner et al., 2015; Liu, Deligonul, Cavusgil, & Chiou, 2018)B. What actions a party considers to be roughly equivalent will determine the form of equivalence dimension one will take (Hoppner et al., 2015; Lee, Johnson, & Tang, 2012). There is divided opinion on the kind of equivalence that firms and businesses should perform. Some researchers are of the opinion that the reciprocal action should be equal to the action the firm received (homeomorphic equivalence) while other researchers are of the contrary opinion. They posit that a reciprocal action undertaken by a firm can be different in form from the action that was received (heteromorphic equivalence) (Gouldner, 1960; Hoppner & Griffith, 2011). The ability to assess people's agendas improves the efficiency of equivalence reciprocity (Pervan et al., 2004). For example, an industrial customer who receives a sample gift from a prospective retailer could return with a gift of their own. However, through an understanding of the motive or agenda of the retailer, a more appropriate return would be the setting up of a meeting with a senior sales officer.

### **Immediacy**

is the second dimension of reciprocity for the study and it prescribes when the exchanges should occur or when the return action should occur (Samina, Karim, Jonathan, Ali, & Imran, 2018; Zhiyong, Narayan, Mehdi, & Douglas, 2018). According to Hoppner et al. (2015 "The form that the immediacy dimension takes determines what exchange partners view as the proper time frame in which to alleviate their indebtedness." The repayment may be made in the short term (immediately or after a short period of time) or in the long term (after some time lag) (Hoppner & Griffith, 2011). Technology has helped many companies to solve the crisis of immediacy. For example, Amazon with the help of "mayday" a video chat solution was able to have an average customer care representative response time of 9.75 percent (Parise, Guinan, & Kafka, 2016).

### **Customer satisfaction**

Satisfaction can be defined as the post purchase evaluation of the overall service or product experience by consumers where the needs and expectations have been met or exceeded (Solate, 2018). Other definitions have also been given. For example, Vesel and Zabkar (2010) define customer satisfaction as an emotional state of mind that a customer attains when his or her expectations are met. It is also a measure of relationship quality (RQ) (Ndubisi & Natarajan, 2018). From the work of Hennig-Thurau and Klee (1997), scholars noted that RQ reflect the degree of appropriateness of a relationship to fulfill the needs of the customers (Pervan et al., 2011). Customer satisfaction is a very important concept that has been analysed extensively in marketing research (Koklic, Kukar-Kinney, & Vegelj, 2017). According to Suhaniya and Thusyanthy (2016) while looking at the work of Hunt (1977) noted that more than 500 studies on the subject were conducted in the 1970s. The EDT theory helps to understand several elements of satisfaction (Au & Tse, 2019; Richard, Felix, Innocent, & Sylvie, 2018). Through the work of Moraru and Duhnea (2018) we observe that some marketing researchers view customer satisfaction as a process while others consider it an outcome. In recent time, customer satisfaction has gained attention within the context of the paradigm shift from transaction marketing to relationship marketing (Hoppner et al., 2015).

Customer satisfaction is also a dimension of multiple items evaluated as satisfaction measurement, which can vary from business to business (Adikaram & Khatibi, 2016). Business success and profitability is also determined by improving customer satisfaction (Luu, 2019; Ryu & Lee, 2017). Satisfied customers will most likely re-purchase the product or service, engage in positive referrals and above all enhance brand loyalty (Lee et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2018). Despite the effort to give constructs that can truly measure customer satisfaction, it should be noted that there is also a problem with how questions are asked. Different results can be achieved with the same satisfaction survey dependent on how it was operationalized (Joan & Joseph, 2000). In retailing, it's believed that the success of an organization or business entity like a supermarket is pegged on customer satisfaction (Al-Ali, Bazin, & Shamsuddin, 2015). There are several indices that are used to measure customer satisfaction (Banwari, 2016). The ones adopted for this study were derived from Lee et al. (2012) and Liu et al. (2018) and reflect a shift from the traditional constructs which scholars like Linda and Judith (2015) criticized for reporting overly positive results. In the study, the researcher operationalized customer satisfaction by looking at its four facets. Thus; repeat patronage or product repurchases, positive reviews, referrals, and positive word of mouth.

### **Research Designs and Methods**

The study follows a Positivists or the scientific paradigm or philosophy which views reality as being objective and knowable (Mack, 2010). It therefore means that the effect of relationship marketing practices on customer satisfaction among foreign owned supermarkets in Kenya is knowable. The purpose of research in this paradigm is to prove or disprove a hypothesis (Aliyu, Bello, Kasim, & Martin, 2014; Mack, 2010). The research design adopted by this study was descriptive research design because the design describes things, character and state of affairs as they exist at a particular point in time (Dawson, 2019). Cooper and Schindler (2014) on their part postulated that descriptive research study is concerned with finding out who, what, where, when, how much or how often is the problem situation. The study also employed a survey research strategy since it supports descriptive research design as it allows the researcher to collect quantitative data, using questionnaires that can then be analysed quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistics (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, & Bristow, 2015).

**Population and sample size**

Since carrefour supermarket falls under the tier one supermarket category according to the competition authority of Kenya classification, The target population of the study are foreign owned supermarket customers in Nairobi county. Proctor and Gamble report of 2017 on Kenyans retail spending indicated that 30% of Kenyans purchase their household consumables from formal retail outlets (Brian, 2017). Based on the 2019 Kenya population and housing census results that put the Nairobi County resident population at 4,397,073 million people, The presumed retail customers are 30% of 4,397,073 million residents of Nairobi County which gives approximately 1,319,122 presumed supermarket customers. The case study focused on carrefour supermarket customers who constitute 22% of the total formal market share in Nairobi (Njoroge, 2019). This gives (22% of 1,319,122) which gives 290,207 customers. By applying the formula as proposed by Daniel and Cross (2018) for attaining sample sizes from large population sizes, a sample size of 384 people was attained and proportionately allocated to the different constituencies where the supermarket has outlets table 3.1 below

**Table 3.1: Distribution of sample size to each geographic location based on number of outlets**

Constituencies (strata)	Number of outlets	Customer sample size based on percentage of outlets	Percentage of total customer sample size
Western Constituencies (Westlands, Dagoretti North, Dagoretti South)	15	186	48.43%
Eastern Constituencies (Kasarani, Embakasi East, Embakasi Central)	0	0	0%
Southern Constituencies (Langata, Kibra, Embakasi South)	8	99	25.78%
Northern Constituencies (Roysambu, Ruaraka, Mathare, Embakasi North)	7	87	22.66%
Central Constituencies (Starehe, Kamukunji, Embakasi West, Makadara)	1	12	3.13%
Totals	31	384	100%

Likert-type scaling was used for all the data that needed to be subjected to statistical processes through content analysis. Krosnick and Presser (2010) posited that when designing a rating scale, a researcher must specify the number of points on the scale.

**Variable operationalization framework**

the researcher operationalized customer satisfaction the dependent variable by looking at its four indices derived from Saad and Shahbaz (2018) and Tomas et al. (2018) in their studies. Thus; repeat patronage or product repurchases, positive reviews, referrals, and positive word of mouth. The study tailored some of the Westbrook and Oliver (1981) statements of consumers measure of their degree of satisfaction to suite the study. reciprocity was operationalized by two important dimensions proposed by Hoppner et al. (2015), thus equivalence and immediacy. A 5-point Likert scale (with 1=Never, 2=Seldom, 3=Sometimes, 4=often, and 5=Always) was used for each statement corresponding to each customer satisfaction construct.

**Table 3.2: Operationalization framework**

Variable name/Type of variable	Operationalizing indicators of Variables	Likert Questions
Customer satisfaction (dependent variable)	Post purchase evaluation of the overall service or product experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repeat patronage/ re-purchase</li> <li>• Positive reviews</li> <li>• Referrals</li> <li>• Positive word of mouth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My supermarket stimulates me to buy repeatedly</li> <li>• I give advice about this brand to other people</li> <li>• My experience with the supermarket has always been good</li> <li>• I comfortably share my personal experiences about the supermarket to others</li> <li>• I would recommend the supermarket to my family and friends</li> <li>• I would recommend the supermarket to colleagues</li> <li>• I talk positively about the services of my supermarket to my friends and relatives</li> <li>• I do not have a strong intention to switch to other supermarkets even if I face a small problem with my current supermarket</li> <li>• I intend to remain with the same supermarket even if there is an increase in price or charges.</li> </ul>
Reciprocity (independent variable)	An interdependent exchange between the customer and the supermarket. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equivalence</li> <li>• Immediacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The supermarket works to return any assistance I accord them in kind</li> <li>• The supermarket works to return any favours extended to them by me as quickly as possible</li> <li>• The supermarket believes that any favours I extend to them shall even out over time eventually</li> <li>• The supermarket makes effort to strengthen my loyalty</li> <li>• The supermarket always sees things from the customers view</li> <li>• The supermarket makes time and effort to maintain our relationship</li> <li>• The supermarket makes and constantly tries to fulfill promises</li> </ul>

## Research findings and discussions

### Response rate

The study sought to collect data from 384 respondents and managed to collect 336 questionnaires. During the data cleaning and editing process, 329 questionnaires were found useful for the study since all questions were completely answered, this translated to a response rate of 85.68%. Though Wright (2015) have made it clear that researchers should not base the entire quality of their study on the rate of response, Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) makes it clear that in business research a response rate of 70% rate or above is considered very good justifying why our study's response rate was excellent.

### Research data's suitability tests

#### Reliability test of constructs

The rule of thumb as proposed by George and Mallery (2016), was that each of the constructs is supposed to have Cronbach's Alpha greater than 0.7 in order to be unquestionable and highly reliable. Their assumption was adopted as the cut off point for this study. The results as summarized in the table 4.11 below indicate that all the study variables were highly reliable since the respective Cronbach Alpha were greater than 0.7.

**Table 4.1: Main Study reliability results (Cronbach's Alpha)**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Reciprocity	0.859	7
Customer satisfaction	0.874	9
Overall questionnaire	0.936	16

#### Tests on assumptions of classical linear regression model

In order to determine whether the study variables meet the assumptions of classical linear regression model. Several diagnostic tests were undertaken for the regression model among them; normality test, linearity test, and heteroscedasticity test as discussed below respectively.

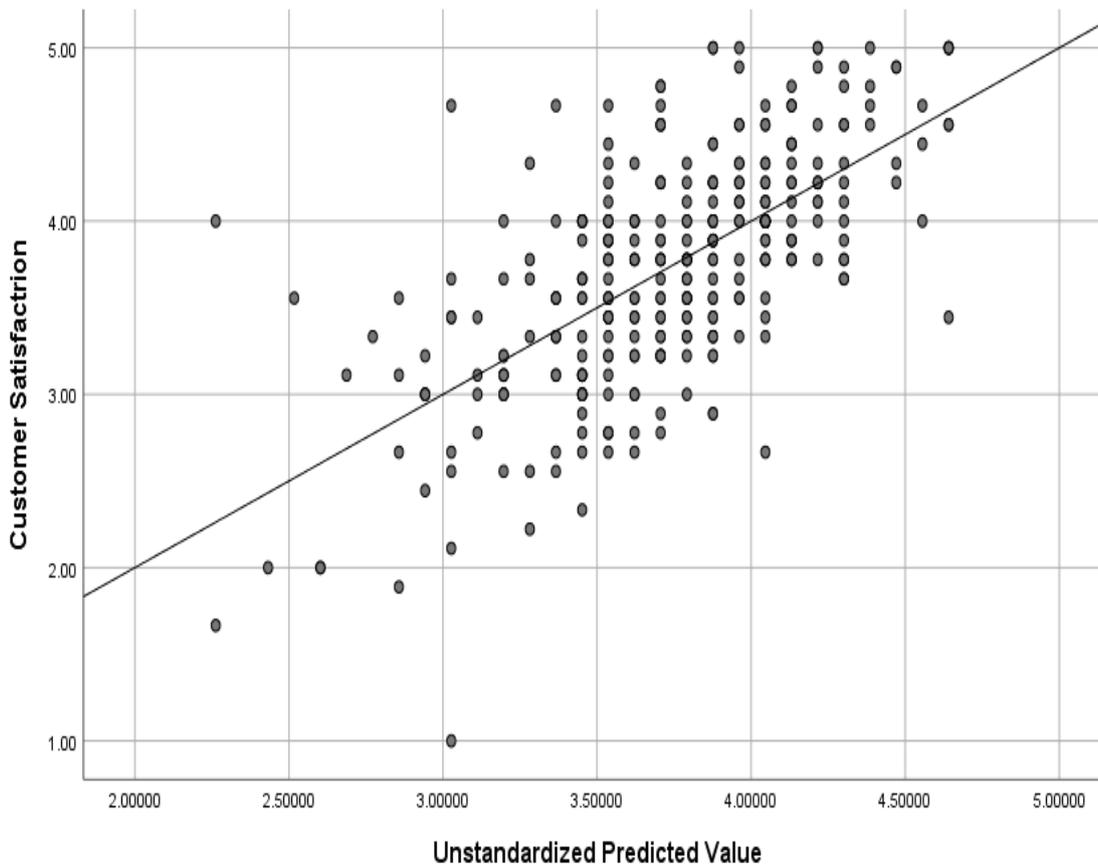
**Table 4.2: summary of test of assumptions of classical linear regression model**

Assumption	Test Used	Remarks
Test of Normality	Skewness and Kurtosis as postulated by Garg and Kothari (2014) – (-3 and +3 acceptable range - table 4.3.	The assumption of normality was not violated, thus, the data is normally distributed.
Test of Linearity	Residual scatter plots(Kothari & Garg, 2014) - figures 4.1.	Reciprocity vs customer satisfaction scatter plots proved existence of linear relationship.
Test of Heteroscedasticity	Used scatter plot of residuals (Osborne & Waters, 2002) – figure 4.2.	Data points were scattered with no clear pattern (homoscedastic)

Table 4.3: Skewness and Kurtosis normality test

	N	Mean	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Reciprocity	329	24.3313	-.491	.134	.663	.268
Customer satisfaction	329	33.6109	-.477	.134	.755	.268
Valid N (listwise)	329					

Figure 4.1: Linearity scatter plots for Reciprocity Vs Customer satisfaction





### **Results of reciprocity descriptive statistics**

The study sought to establish the method used by Carrefour to communicate to its clients. Results indicated that the supermarket uses SMS as the main communication media accounting for 48% of total respondents. Facebook was the most used social media while WhatsApp was the least used means followed by phone calls.

### **Descriptive statistics from the Likert scale questions**

Further, results from Likert scale are presented in table 4.4 below. The results as supported by their respective means and standard deviation indicate that majority of the respondents agreed that the supermarket works to return any assistance they accord it in kind. Concerning the second statement on the supermarket returning favours extended to it as quickly as possible a measure of immediacy dimension, though a majority were not sure rating it at 3 in a scale of 5, a good number still agreed. The same trend was observed for the statement on whether the supermarket believes the customer efforts extended to them shall even out over time. Majority agreed with the statements that the supermarket makes effort to strengthen customer loyalty, the supermarket always sees things from the customers view, the supermarket makes time and effort to maintain customer relationship and also the statement on the supermarket making and constantly trying to fulfill promises.

These questions raise the issue of trust and commitment of carrefour supermarket to the relationship with its customers which are attained through reciprocal actions of immediacy and equivalence. According to Mamusung, Kusumawati, Nimran, and Suharyono (2019) in retailing, relationship marketing involves developing bonds with customers which is done by meeting their needs and honouring commitments. Fulfilling promises builds customer trust in the relationship and acts as an indicator of relational quality (Sugandini & Wendry, 2017). This means that any

relationship that doesn't have trust is likely to be judged as being of low quality. Furthermore, the importance of maintaining trust has been emphasized by Muafi (2016) who noted that trust is very difficult to nature and can easily be shaken and if indeed its shaken, it is very difficult for the parties to rebuild it.

**Table 4.4: Descriptive statistics from the Likert scale questions on reciprocity**

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev
The supermarket works to return any assistance I accord them in kind	14	37	113	124	41	3.43	0.99
The supermarket works to return any favours I extended to them as quickly as possible	12	59	133	100	25	3.20	0.95
The supermarket believes that any favour I extend to them shall even out over time eventually	19	46	140	96	28	3.21	0.98
The supermarket makes effort to strengthen my loyalty	8	30	84	160	47	3.63	0.92
The supermarket always sees things from the customers view	14	29	79	150	57	3.61	1.01
The supermarket makes time and effort to maintain our relationship	12	26	79	158	54	3.66	0.97
The supermarket makes and constantly tries to fulfill promises	16	24	97	139	53	3.57	1.00

### Regression analysis and test of research hypothesis

#### Study models

Model 1 lacks the moderating variable while model 2 has incorporated the moderating variable.

$$\text{Model 1: } \gamma = \alpha + \beta_1 V + \epsilon$$

Where

$\gamma$  = Customer satisfaction;  $\alpha$  = Constant;  $\beta_i$  = variable coefficients;  $\epsilon$  = Error term;  $V$  = Reciprocity;

**H<sub>0i</sub>: Reciprocity has no significant effect on customer satisfaction among foreign owned supermarkets in Kenya.**

**Table 4.1: Model Summary for Reciprocity Regression**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson statistics
1	.652 <sup>a</sup>	.425	.423	.49671	1.827
a. Predictors: (b. Constant), Reciprocity					

From the model summary table above, the model had a coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of 0.425 which implied that 42.5% of the variations on customer satisfaction among foreign owned supermarkets in Kenya are explained by reciprocity. The  $R^2$  attained is sufficient as a measure of goodness of fit and hence can be used for future forecasts. The results agree with the findings of Kyei and Narteh (2016) who also attained an appropriate  $R^2$  in addition to other statistical measures

concluded that reciprocity directly influences customer satisfaction. In addition, Friedman and Rahman (2011) in their study observed that retail outlets reciprocal actions among them gifts and verbal appreciatory comments proved to increase consumer spending and satisfaction.

**Table 4.2: ANOVA table for Reciprocity regression model**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	59.523	1	59.523	241.257	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual					80.677	
					327	
					.247	
	Total	140.200	328			
a. Dependent Variable: Customer satisfaction						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Reciprocity						

The study further tested the significance of the model by use of ANOVA technique. The findings are tabulated above. From the ANOVA statistics, the study established the regression model had a significance level of 0.000 a value that was less than the value of significance (p-value) of 5%. This is an indication that the model fit and significant and the data was ideal for making a conclusion on the population parameters. Furthermore, the calculated F value was greater than the critical value 241.257 > 3.8415) hence we reject the null hypothesis and infer that reciprocity has a statistically significant effect on customer satisfaction among foreign owned supermarkets in Kenya. The results mirror the work of who reported that customer satisfaction in supermarkets is predicted primarily by supermarkets reciprocal actions. Khandabi, rezaee Klidbari, and Fadayi (2014) also observed that reciprocity has a strong effect on customer satisfaction though not as strong as trust which was another construct in his study. They also noted that reciprocity advocates for customers to be treated in a way that they feel special which in turn will lead to a happy customer who shall enhance his/her repurchase intentions. Personalized notes have been used to address selected customers which has also proven to make them happy (Shamsudin, Esa, & Ali, 2019). It should be noted that one of the indicators of customer satisfaction in different industries is when the customer feels happy (Bordalo, Gennaioli, & Shleifer, 2016).

**Table 4.3: Coefficients of regression for Reciprocity**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.668	.136		12.276	.000
	Reciprocity	.595	.038	.652	15.532	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Customer satisfaction						

The study further used the coefficient table to determine the study model ( $Y = \alpha + \beta_4 V_4 + \epsilon$ ) and test hypothesis. The findings are presented in the Table above. With the resultant regression model as follows:

$$Y = 1.668 + 0.595V_4 + e$$

From the coefficients of regression model obtained, a unit increase in reciprocity while holding the other factors constant at zero, customer satisfaction among foreign owned supermarkets in Kenya would be increased by a factor of 0.595. In addition, the results of the t statistics from the coefficient of regression as presented above were compared with the t critical from the t distribution table at  $\alpha = 5\%$  in order to test the study null hypothesis. The calculated t value of 15.532 was greater than the t-critical (1.96) and therefore the study rejected the null hypothesis that reciprocity has no significant effect on customer satisfaction among foreign owned supermarkets in Kenya. In light of this, the study accepts the alternative hypothesis that reciprocity has a significant effect on customer satisfaction among foreign owned supermarkets in Kenya. The outcome (positive beta) supports Hoppner et al. (2015) observation that reciprocity dimensions of immediacy and equivalence enhance relationship quality which in turn enhances customer satisfaction. The higher beta value is proof enough that reciprocity plays a bigger role in relationships especially since it goes both ways as per the social exchange theory assumption, i.e. the customers and the supermarkets have to create mutual benefits as propagated by the behavioral school of relationship marketing (Ranjan, 2017). In a similar study but in the banking sector, Kyei and Narteh (2016) attained a t value of 2.519 and a p value of 0.012 clearly indicating that reciprocity had a significant effect on customer satisfaction.

### Discussion of findings

The study attained a coefficient of determination of 65.2% indicating that reciprocity highly influences customer satisfaction. The results were statistically significant as represented by the appropriate F statistics. In addition, the appropriate t statistic meant that the study adopts the alternative hypothesis that reciprocity has a statistically significant effect on customer satisfaction among foreign owned supermarkets in Kenya. These results are consistent with the propositions of Mamusung et al. (2019) who asserted that relationship marketing in retailing involves developing bonds with customers which is done by meeting their needs and honouring commitments. The high effect of reciprocity on customer satisfaction attained as presented by a high  $R^2$  of 65.2% as well as the high beta of 0.595 might be attributed to customer advocacy through immediacy and equivalence constructs. According to Urban (2015), customer advocacy can be seen as a 3-layer pyramid where the bottom layer revolves around total quality management (TQM) and satisfied customers. Based on TQM and satisfied customers, the firm engages in relationship management whereby it gains an in-depth understanding of its customers, leading to customer advocacy as the goal on the top of the pyramid. Hoppner et al. (2015) in their study, tried to address the universality of reciprocity, with a cross cultural examination of the effect of reciprocity dimensions of equivalence and immediacy on relationship quality and satisfaction with performance, their results indicated that the effect of equivalence on relationship quality is similar across cultures while the effect of immediacy on relationship quality varies across cultures. This might explain why results from different studies in different cultural set ups or regions and industry still report a significant effect of reciprocity on customer satisfaction. The only difference might be the strength of the relationship owing to difference in immediacy and other unexplained factors.

The fact that reciprocity borrows a lot from business to business relationship marketing research stream which advocates for symbiotic marketing as explained by Arndt (1979) and Atul and Mona (2015) where long term mutual relationships are emphasized not only with the suppliers or other companies but also with the key customers, might also explain the significance of reciprocity in enhancing customer satisfaction.

Lastly, scholars like Lee, Kim, and Pan (2014a) observed that the causal relationship between satisfaction and reciprocity is only limited thus cannot be 100%. This they attribute to the fact that satisfaction is a wide spectrum or a broad state of construct and hence its role in

predicting reciprocal behaviour might not be complete. Therefore, some percentage (coefficient of non-determination) in this case  $100\% - 65.2\% = 34.8\%$ , cannot be explained by reciprocity.

### Correlation analysis

Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) of linear association between study variables was employed where the P value was compared to the appropriate level of significance (0.01). The study adopted the work of Mukaka (2012) in interpreting the sizes of correlation attained.

**Table 4.6: Correlation coefficients of study variables**

		Y	V1	M
Customer Satisfaction (Y)	Pearson Correlation	1		
Reciprocity (V4)	Pearson Correlation	.652**	1	
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).				

The study found a moderate positive correlation between reciprocity and customer satisfaction as shown by correlation factor of 0.652; this positive relationship was found to be statistically significant as the significant value was 0.000 which is less than 0.01. This was consistent with results attained by Kyei and Narteh (2016) in their research on relationship marketing practices and customer satisfaction in the Ghanaian banking sector.

### Conclusion

In this study reciprocity demonstrated the highest significant positive effect on customer satisfaction among foreign owned supermarkets in Kenya. Several factors might have contributed to this and from the descriptive statistics it is apparent that a substantive number of respondents confirmed that Carrefour supermarket was reciprocating the efforts they make to help the supermarkets. Supermarkets intending to enhance customer satisfaction should invest heavily on reciprocity. According to Hoppner et al. (2015), reciprocity constructs of immediacy (repayment made in the short run or in the long run) and equivalence (identical in form) support the social norms of many cultures, Kenya notwithstanding, where every good gesture is reciprocated with the only question being when and how. Gouldner (1960) asserted that a social unit or group will most likely want to contribute to another that provides it with more benefits than to the one which doesn't. That is a typical reciprocal behaviour that can also be exhibited by foreign owned supermarket customers in Kenya. Measures that supermarkets put in place like the supermarkets working to return any assistance accorded to them in kind, returning any favour customers extend to them as quickly as possible, supermarket making effort to strengthen customer loyalty, supermarket always trying to see things from the customers point of view and constantly trying to fulfill promises go a long way in enhancing relationships that eventually enhance customer satisfaction. The strength of reciprocity in enhancing customer satisfaction has also been experienced in other industries like banking industry. This clearly implies that reciprocity in creating a mutual exchange process enhances a sense of entitlement and if fulfilled customers feel satisfied. The findings also confirm the assumptions of the social exchange theory that human relationships are formed by the use of cost-benefit analysis and comparisons of alternatives (Homans, 1958; Karimi, 2014).

### **Recommendations**

More resources towards reciprocal efforts should be encouraged with more emphasize on reduction of time taken to reciprocate a customer's good act. Training staff on reciprocity initiatives like customer recognition and loyalty rewards are highly recommended since they appear to be most effective in enhancing emotional attachment and social exchange which can be translated to more purchases and loyalty. This study was limited to the effect of reciprocity on customer satisfaction among foreign owned supermarkets in Kenya and its findings have added meaningful contribution to knowledge, practice and theory in management and marketing. However due to the unique nature of foreign supermarkets, the study cannot be generalized to all supermarkets including local ones and also other service-oriented organizations and since empirical review un earthed that there are very few studies on Jua Kali industry and the manufacturing sector, this should be considered in future.

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