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We have read the university regulations relating to plagiarism and certify that this report is all our own work and does not contain any unacknowledged work from any other source. We also declare that we have been under supervision for this report herein submitted.

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<td>Osei Tandoh</td>
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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the dissertation were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision laid down by Christian Service University College.

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Head of Department’s Name

| Kwaku Ahenkora (Dr.)           |           |            |
ABSTRACT

The main objective of the research is to contribute to body of knowledge in area of Customer Care in the financial institution. The use of quantitative and descriptive technique was used by the researcher. A survey and case study was also used by the researcher. The researcher targeted individual customers as well as management and staff of the bank within the municipality. In all, a sample size of fifty (50) was used for the study as regards the customers. For the staff and management, a sample of ten (10) employees was used for the study.

The researcher used convenience sampling to select the respondents. Primary sources were collected through structured questionnaires which were self-administered to retail customers and staff of the bank. Secondary sources of data included publications, libraries, individual works, journals; websites and company’s prospectus of Ecobank were collected. Tables, charts, graphs, percentages, frequencies and descriptive analysis were used to present and analyse the data collected through the questionnaire.

Findings from the research work indicate that Ecobank customer loyalty can be decline as customers do not know what constitute a good relationship, hence customers propensity to switch banks. It can be concluded that Ecobank is gaining competitive advantage within the industry from the relationships it develops and nurtures with its retail customers. The bank should devote more resources to the management of its relationships with customers in order to sustain the competitive advantage it currently enjoys.
DEDICATION

We dedicate this work to the Most High God.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are first and foremost thankful to the Almighty God for the wisdom, strength and sound mind granted us throughout the course of study to transform our dream into a reality.

We however want to acknowledge our supervisor Mr. Stephen Banahene for the way he fathered us throughout the project period. Indeed, We have come out with this work because of his patience, encouragement and guidance. To our supervisor, We want to say bravo for the good work done.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The study focused on customer care practices in Ecobank Ghana-Sunyani branch. Customer care refers to all activities and programmes by the seller to the customer in making their relationship stronger/satisfying. These activities and programmes add value to the customer’s relationship with the seller. The increasing competition in the banking industry is bringing up the importance of an effective marketing management of all banks in the economy. However, the most powerful way to prevail in global competition is still not too visible to many banks. As the banking industry change ever more quickly, targets are becoming elusive and temporary, although a few banks have proven themselves adept at market, entering emerging markets at a very fast pace. They are able to create services and products that customers need but have not yet imagined. Ultimately it requires radical change in the marketing management of the organization (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990).

This is where customer care comes in. It is imperative for banks to develop an effective customer care framework to survive in the current vibrant competition in order to gain a considerable portion of the market. This is because, customers have become more knowledgeable, sophisticated, and increasingly assert their right to high levels of service quality Tim (2007). Customers in recent times are well abreast with the fall in Treasury bill rates, as well as competitive interest and lending rates of the various banks and so keep making comparisons.

Other factors are considered extremely important when a customer decides to open an account, or better still transact business with a bank. The issues such as efficient customer service, bank charges, service or product range, turnaround time, proximity, corporate image, network branches, access to credits and even social responsibility are considered.
The reality is that customers are not interested in banks extending their banking hours; rather they should take a critical look at their relationship with customers or the way they care about their customers (E. Boachie, February 4, 2012). Customer care which is an interactive and value added activity through interdependence and collaboration between suppliers and customers has recently been put forward as a way of achieving sustained competitive advantage for firms because it enables the firms to know the needs of the customers and to work closely with them to be able to satisfy them better.

According to Lui et al. (2007), customer care has been receiving increasing attention by many organizations as they seek to focus their attention on retaining existing customers and attracting new ones. The retention should not be for the short-term but a long-term as described in Berry’s (1991) concept of customer care. Customer care according to the expert leads to higher customer satisfaction and retention rate and Payne et al. (1995) also argued that there is a strong positive relationship between customer retention and firm profitability and further went on to say that the substance in every good Customer Care effort lies in its ability to orient itself to change. Customer care in general, and with respect to financial services is undeniably a dynamic phenomenon. Organizations are competing seriously to capture a good share of the market. It can therefore be conceived as adapting to changes in the environment. Recently, there has been a shift from transactions to a Customer care focus. Customers now become partners and the firm must make long-term commitments to maintaining those customers with quality service and innovative activities.

Customer care has been accepted in most companies as a new marketing philosophy and practice, with some hailing it as a paradigm shift in marketing thought and practice (Gronroos, 1994), however, what it can contribute to companies is still being studied
especially in developing countries where the concept is now emerging. The idea is to understand the general phenomenon so that logical generalizations can be made out of the data that will be collected with particular reference to its Customer care practices and the kind of competitive advantages which emanate from them.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The quest for banks to attract and retain customer base is always shrinking due to intense competition in the Ghanaian banking sector. It involves each bank vying for its share or more of the financial service delivery market. In addition, competition among financial service organizations is growing steadily not only from those organizations within a particular country but also from the multinational institutions.

Furthermore, a greater number of non-banking financial institutions also provide some form of competition for the services offered by the banks as they extend credit and accept deposits as well.

The main problem is that customers are switching banks due to high bank charges, long turnaround times, and low interest payments, among others. The challenges posed by changing customer needs and preferences, sometimes in unpredictable ways impose costs and uncertainties about a bank’s future competitiveness and survival. Customers are now better informed, sophisticated in their demands, global in scope and value-conscious. Therefore, shareholders are demanding more value for their shares by way of increasing dividends.

Another major problem facing the bank is that, bank products or services are very easy to replicate when found to be successful, or when found to create a competitive edge for a bank over its competitors. For instance, Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) which were
introduced into the banking system by an international bank enabled it to gain an edge although it could not be sustained as other banks began copying this technology. In another instance is the “Akufo Loan” (farmers loan) which was introduced by the Ghana Commercial Bank in 1998 to help farmers during their off-peak season to meet their fertilizer application was copied by all the banks in the next season.

Bank products are similar, if not the same for all the banks, so the difference lies in the kind of Customer care the banks maintain. A current account in Bank (A) is the same current account found in Bank (B), most probably with different names. Therefore, in order for banks to withstand the pressures of competition in this dynamic market, it is imperative they channel their marketing activities to repositioning themselves relative to competition by exploiting the immense opportunities in customer care. The study therefore explores how customer care can help in this competitive environment.

The following are the Statements of the Problem:

1. The quest for banks to attract and retain customer base is always shrinking due to intense competition in the Ghanaian banking sector.
2. Customers are switching banks due to high bank charges, long turnaround times, and low interest payments, among others.
3. Banks products or services are very easy to replicate when found to be successful, or when found to create a competitive edge for a bank over its competitors
1.3 Justification of the Study

- The study hopes to re-address customer care in the light of new trends.
- The study also hopes to re-address how customer care can improve the bank’s ability to elevate the bank’s profitability, lower bank operation cost and create greater customer loyalty.
- Moreover, the study hopes to justify customer satisfaction within the banking industry.

1.4 Research Objective

The objective is to contribute to the body of knowledge in the area of customer care in the financial institution.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine whether the individual customers perception of a good customer care, is in line with the customer care that is being practiced by Ecobank.
2. Make assessment of the extent to which Ecobank can gain competitive advantage through the use of customer care.
3. Determine the key attributes distinctive to the customer care practices of the bank.

1.5 Research Questions

This descriptive research is guided by the following research questions:

1. Does the resources Ecobank use enable them to gain competitive advantage via Customer Care?
2. Assuming the resources they are using are appropriate, are they practicing customer care? If yes how are they practicing customer care?
3. What is the effect of customer care practices?
4. What are the opportunities for improvement in customer care practices?
1.6 Significance of the Study

This research work could be of immense value as to its contribution to literature from a developing country’s perspective. Concepts of services and customer care seem to be a new development to some organizations in Ghana. The dynamics of their application to the marketing of banking services could present a lot of interest to the academia, the banking industry, marketing practitioners and students, and the public at large.

The suggestions and recommendations made from the research findings could provide managerial tools to assist Ecobank in the development of an effective customer care plan, as well as strategies to develop customer care with retail as well as corporate customers and offer personalized services to gain customer loyalty. Furthermore, it could enable Ecobank in particular and banks in general to obtain the right resources to develop and manage a technology-enabled relationship and the right products to sustain customers and improve profitability thereof.

To the economy, the study could provide better understanding of customer care practices and provide bases for reformed customer care policies.

To the academia, this study and the recommendations made thereof could be tested pragmatically and perhaps a further empirical work could be conducted to confirm their relevance to managing customer care in the banking industry.

It could also serve as a source of reference material for future researchers.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study was focused on the operations of Ecobank Ghana Limited- Sunyani Branch. It covered a period of one year, from May 2011 to May 2012.
Customer care programmes focus on gaining deep knowledge of the customer and aim to identify their needs and improve the services provided for them. Customer care is the outcome of this process; however, a “satisfied customer” is the focus of customer care programmes. This is described as an ultimate tool and critical factor in the process of differentiating product or service to develop a competitive edge.

A key element of customer care is finding out what customers think and want to be satisfied with. The areas are essential and it is worth bearing in mind that marketing research often concentrates on new products, while existing customers are in fact the bread and butter of the organization.

Customer care is a subset of service marketing a discipline of marketing which have been perceived as a product; the service package and value - laden is viewed as a way of putting the customer at an additional satisfaction and this call for customer care programmes. Customer care is aimed at closing the gap between customer’s expectations and their experience.

Customer care is characterized by the following;

a. The image of the company or the perception customer has about the company.

b. The interaction between a company and its customers.

c. Gathering information on customer needs and fulfilling them.
1.8 Limitations of the Study

Cognizance needs to be given to the possible limitations of this study, which may affect the extent to which generalizations and conclusions can be drawn. Financial and time constraints effectively reduced the size of the sample and this provided a snap-shot of views.

Some staff and customers of the bank were reluctant to cooperate or participate in the study, as previous studies carried out had not been used to address unsatisfactory employee and customer care issues. The issue of non-response is likely to be encountered in the study resulted in a limited sample size of the employees of the bank thus making generalizations across the whole banking market difficult.

The sample was based on a group of respondents (customers and employees) from Sunyani branch due to time limitations, a broader cross-section of respondents from all the branches of the bank may have made the findings more robust.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The study was organized into five chapters as follows:

Chapter one includes introduction, brief background to the study, the problem statement, the research purpose, study objectives, the research questions, significance of the study, the scope and limitation of the study and the general organization of the work.

Chapter two contains the reviews of existing literature on the subject of customer care. The reviewed literature resources helped develop a good understanding of relevant previous research done in the area under study and trends that had emerge. A rich insight of the context of the research was gained to carry out a customer care analysis. It consists of theoretical and empirical review.
Chapter three details how the research was carried out to achieve the research objectives. It describes the sampling technique used, the population, design, and data analysis method.

Chapter four details the presentation and discussion of results.

Chapter five contains the summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations that were made from the research findings.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the development in the banking sector, theoretical review and the empirical review on relevant articles.

2.2 Developments in the Banking Industry in Ghana

Commercial banking in Ghana dates back to 1894 when Bank of British West Africa (now Standard Chartered Bank Ghana) was established. It was followed with Barclays Bank in 1917 and the Bank of Gold Coast (now Ghana Commercial Bank) in 1953. After Ghana’s independence in 1957, the government established various commercial and development banks to meet the country’s financing needs.

Reflecting the general economic trends over several years, most Ghanaian banks had become weak, financially distressed and insolvent by the mid 1980’s, with significant non-performing loan books (Brownbridge& Harvey, 1998). To address this problem, the Government with the assistance of the World Bank, launched the Financial Sector Adjustment Programme (FINSAP) in the late 1980’s to restructure distressed banks, clean up non-performing assets and restore banks to profitability. These efforts led to the establishment of new private banks such as Ecobank Ghana.

Ghana Commercial Bank (GCB) became the largest bank in Ghana with total bank deposits of 36% in the late 1980s (Brown bridge & Harvey, 1998). The Social Security Bank, currently the Société General-Social Security Bank (SG-SSB), set up in 1977, grew rapidly to become the second largest at that time. In subsequent years, other merchant and development
finance institutions joined the banking system with the emergence of financial liberalization. New financial institutions, including several merchant banks with private sector participation were licensed and the latest phase of liberalization involved the privatization of government-owned banks. Banks are now re-focusing on extending their reach into commercial and corporate banking, mortgage financing, commercial loans, and lending to SME’s with increasing efficiency (Acquah, 2007) with the advent of Universal Banking.

2.2.1 Profile of Ecobank Ghana Limited

EBG was incorporated on January 9, 1989 as a private liability company under the Companies Code to engage in the business of banking. EBG was initially licensed to operate as a merchant bank by the Bank of Ghana on November 10, 1989. EBG has grown consistently over the years to become one of the leading banks in Ghana and a well-recognized brand in the Ghanaian banking industry. (E. Boachie, personal communication, April 4, 2010)

2.3 Theoretical Review

This concern the theories underlying the research study. It involves the theories and concepts in the study area. There are many theories, concepts, and constructs in customer care in financial institution. Some of them are review in this section.

2.4 Definition and concepts of Customer Care

According to Furtrell, (1994), customer care refers to the activities and programmes provided by the seller to the customer to make their relationship satisfying for the customer. These activities and programmes add value to the customers’ relationship with the seller. For
instance warranties, credit, speedy delivery, financial statement, computer - to - computer ordering, are services designed to satisfy customers.

According to Palmer (1997), customer care may be interpreted as a long term commitment to customers and suppliers. This implies that banks just as other organizations have the capacity to practice customer care. In addition, customer care is to establish, nurture and enhance relationships with customers and other partners, at a profit, so that the objective of the partners involved are met. From the above definition, it is worth noting that customer care is achieved by a mutual exchange and fulfilment of promises. Customer care has its root in the concept of marketing. The marketing concept is essentially customer orientation. The growth and survival of every business depends on customers, therefore without the need to satisfy them, there will be no justification to be in business. Since customer makes the decision to buy or not to buy, there is the need on the part of the business to understand the customer if the marketing strategies formulated and implemented are to be successful. This gives more insight to customer care which is the main tool to gain, attract and retain customers.

One can look critically at what customer care really entails. Most analysts distinguish between the concept and the scope of customer care activities. Many authors have expressed their understanding on the phrase, customer care. Among some of the noble authors are (Kotler, 1988, Lovelock, 1988, Keith, 1988).

According to Kotler and Keith (1988), customer care is “a relatively intangible produce and consumed simultaneously and often standard than goods”.
Lovelock (1988), work brought to realisation that customer is “a thread that links the logistics and marketing process because in the end the out of the logistic system is customer care”.

Clutterbuck (1995) however viewed customer care as “a fundamental approach to standard of service quality which lowers every aspect of a company’s operations from the design of the product or service to how it is packaged, delivered and serviced”.

Summation of the various definitions assigned to customer care by the named scholars portrays that there are many activities that are captured under the function. The researcher will therefore endeavour to uncover various activities needed under customer care by tackling areas such as the scope of customer care.

2.5 Scope of Customer Care

Clutterbuck’s (1995) definition of customer care emphasized on the need to be mindful in all the elements in the exchange process right from production to delivery and using of the service. Lovelock also viewed customer care from two folds the marketing side and the logistics side. He pointed out that there is the need to be skilful to manage the two arms in such a way that value adding is both maximized and efficient. Despite obvious examples and emerging opportunities, customer care is still tactically viewed without much enthusiasm.

Conventional wisdom is that, products are more important than service and that service is in general, not very profitable, because it is labour intensive and lacks economies of scale. Service to the customer is viewed as a necessary evil; keep the customer happy through a positive approach, courtesy and a willingness to serve, so long as it can be done with a fixed budget Clutterbuck’s (1995).
Customer care programmes focus on gaining deep knowledge of the customer and aim to identify their needs and improve the services provided for them. Customer care is the outcome of this process; however, a “satisfied customer” is the focus of customer care programmes. This is described as an ultimate tool and critical factor in the process of differentiating product or service to develop a competitive edge Clutterbuck’s (1995).

A key element of customer care is finding out what customers think and want to be satisfied with. The areas are essential and it is worth bearing in mind that marketing research often concentrates on new products, while existing customers are in fact the bread

Customer care is a subset of service marketing a discipline of marketing which have been perceived as a product; the service package and value - laden is viewed as a way of putting the customer at an additional satisfaction and this call for customer care programmes. Customer care is aimed at closing the gap between customer’s expectations and their experience Clutterbuck’s (1995).

According to Clutterbuck’s (1995) customer care is characterized by the following:

a. The image of the company or the perception customer has about the company.
b. The interaction between a company and its customers.
c. Gathering information on customer needs and fulfilling them.

2.6 Customer Expectations and Satisfaction

According to Swan and Combs (1976), there are two dimensions to take into consideration when it comes to customer expectation- these are “instrumental expectation” and “psychological expectations”. The instrumental expectation as they said, relates to the
tangible facilities in this case in the bank, which could be quantified in terms of performance reliability, example is service package and service charge. The psychological expectation is considered to be in relation to those intangible properties experienced or noted in the bank’s hall, example courtesy, easy contact, responsibilities of staff, behaviour, security, staff attitude, perception etc. The seed of Customer Care and satisfaction are planted during the pre-purchase phase when customer develops “expectation” about what they expect to receive from the service. These expectations are activated during the time of consumption. It will therefore be of a great interest for the organisation to know whether the customer is satisfied or not on an offer. Customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction leans against the relationship between the customer’s expectation and perceived performance from the service. If the service falls short of expectation, the customer is disappointed, if it meets expectation, the customer is satisfied and if the expectation is exceeded, the customer is delighted.

Moreover, a satisfied customer or a delighted customer is likely to order again and speak in favour of the company but, however, the dissatisfied customer response could be of great threat to the company. Customer expectation can be measured by scaling and with respect to the study, the likert scale was used. Research have it that, whereas an average satisfied customer tells three (3) people the service experience, a dissatisfied customer tells as many as ten (10) which represent about 67% increase.

It is an inevitable fact that bad word of mouth travels faster than good word of mouth which can change the reputation of the company quickly thereby changing customer attitude. Quality programmes direct the process constituting the service which the customer is experiencing and to which they are responding. Technical quality relates to whether the service provides the appropriate technical attributes, what the user receives- the material
content of the service (e.g. a clean building) functional quality has to do with how the service
is rendered; the way in which the service is provided (e.g. how often an ATM is repaired
when it breaks down).

2.7 Assessing Quality of Customer Care

According to Gronros (1994), the total quality of service is a function of three (3) components: Corporate image, technical quality and functional quality. The corporate image is the overall image of the organisation and its overall attractiveness (Example is Bank’s friendless). Technical quality relates to whether the service provides the appropriate technical attributes, what the user receives- the material content of the service (Example is a clean building). Functional quality has to do with how the service is rendered; the way in which the service is provided (Example is how often an ATM is repaired when it breaks down). The issue of service quality is of paramount importance to all service providers. The assessment of service quality is made during the service delivery process, which usually occurs when there is an encounter between a customer and a service contact person. Customer satisfaction with service quality can be defined by comparing perceptions of the service received with expectations of the service desired. When expectations are exceeded, service is perceived to be of exceptional quality and also of a pleasant surprise. When expectations are not met, however, service quality is deemed unacceptable. When expectations are confirmed by perceived service quality, satisfaction is the outcome. Therefore, to successfully pursue a differentiation strategy based on quality, then, a business must understand what dimension or cues its potential customers use to judge quality, and it should pay particular attention to some of the less concrete but more visible and symbolic attribute of the products.
2.8 Dimensions of Customer Care

Parasuramon et al. (1985, 1988) offered the most widely reported set of service quality determinants by customers as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangible in order of importance. These are explained below:

Reliability: The ability to perform the promised service both dependable and accurately. Reliable service performance is a customer expectation and means that the service is accomplished on time in the same manner and without errors every time.

Responsiveness: The willingness to help the customer and to provide prompt service. Keeping customers waiting, particularly for no apparent reason, create unnecessary or negative perception of quality by the customers. If a service failure occurs, the ability to recover quickly and with professionalism can create very positive perception of service quality or good Customer Care.

Assurance: The knowledge and courtesy of employees as well as their ability to provide a service that can be confided in and trusted. The assurance dimensions include competencies to perform the services, politeness and respect for the customer, effective communication with the customer and the general attitude that the customer’s best interest is at heart.

Empathy: The provision of caring, individualized attention to customers – this include approachability, sensitivity and effort to understand the customer’s needs.

Tangibles: The appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials. The condition of the physical environment/surroundings (Example is cleanliness) is tangible evidence and attention to detain that one exhibited by the service provider.
A further contribution on case quality dimension came from Johnson et al. (1990) and Silvestre (1990) who identified 15 dimensions of service quality which they categorised as hygiene, enhancing and dual threshold factors.

In conclusion, customers use their dimension to form their judgement of customer care quality, which are based on a comparison between expected and perceived service quality; satisfaction is either negative or positive.

2.9 Empirical Review

There are many empirical works on customer care practices in financial institutions. Some of these studies are reviewed in this section.

2.9.1 Customer Care in the Banking Industry

Financial service retailers such as banks are beginning to find that their established Customer Care are inadequate for the new market conditions as levels of customer defection in the sector grow (Porter, 1990, Dawes & Brown, 2000). It has been found that financial services firms characterized by superior marketing effectiveness demonstrate higher levels of performance than their relatively less marketing effective counterparts (Appiah-Adu et al., 2001). The importance of building a good Customer Care relationship with customers and the use of other customer-specific strategies are clearly discussed by Gilbert and Sumner (2004). Alexander and Colgate (2000) note that financial services provide retailers with the opportunity to use database marketing; interaction marketing; and network marketing (being areas of customer care) more effectively. Brooks (1989) examined the forces driving change in banking, insurance and securities, likely future trends and strategies, and what they mean to the marketing professional. The major issues and challenges of product management
systems in large commercial banks were examined and it was found that the development and management of financial services is improved when product management system is well implemented and managed.

2.9.2 Customer Care Practices and its Competitive Advantages

Perreault and McCarthy (2002) assert that competitive advantage occurs when a firm has a marketing mix that the target market sees as better than a competitor’s mix (Turnbull & Moustakatos, 1996). It is a basis for superior performance (Ma, 1999) and may result from efforts in different areas of the firm in pursuing an opportunity. Whatever the source, an advantage only succeeds if it allows the firm to provide superior value and satisfy customers better than some competitor.

Barney (1991) examined the attributes that customer care must possess in order to be sources of sustained competitive advantage. Barney (1991) therefore asserts that for a firm to hold the potential of sustained competitive advantage, it must have the following attributes:

I. It must be valuable;
II. It must be rare;
III. It must be imperfectly imitable; and
IV. It must not be easily substituted.

V. In addition to the above criteria, Balmer and Gray (2003) have added that a firm resource must be durable.

I. Value

A good Customer Care of value is a mutually satisfactory relationship which makes it possible for customers to avoid significant switching costs (Anderson et al., 2006). Thus, in a valuable
Customer Care, the objectives of the parties involved are met and it enables the service organisation stay profitable over time. A valuable Customer Care commences at the time of transaction with a focus on problem solving and frequent dialogue between the client and the service provider.

Customer Care of value is maintained and enhanced when there is mutual fulfilment of promises. When this is done, it becomes an important means of achieving customer satisfaction, retention of the customer base, and enhances long-term profitability. The bank adds value to the Customer Care when good supporting services are offered in addition to the core product or service to increase the benefits to the client. In addition, services guarantees are provided to generate immediate and relevant feedback from customers, reduce their sense of risk and build their confidence in the organization (Zeithaml&Bitner, 2000). There is however one thing to make promises and another thing to meet the promises.

A recent survey conducted by Social Security Bank (SSB) bank in Ghana indicated that a higher percentage of banking customers of which Ecobank is no exemption indicated however that, most customers have become loyal to their banks not because the bank is providing anything unique or what they term as universal quality of services but because of ‘‘whom you know services’’ which is not based on one’s credit standing in the bank at all. Customers are therefore prepared to switch banks if they lose the favour or preferential treatment they get either through a staff or those in managerial positions. If this can lead to competitive advantage is also another pertinent question. (SSB banking survey, September, 2007).
II. Rarity

In an uncommon relationship, the customer base is managed with a real time customer feedback information system. The Customer Care proceeds in an interaction process where various types of contacts between the service firm and the customer occur over time (Tim, 2007). A stable profitable Customer Care is very rare in a highly competitive banking industry which requires efficient management. Corporate banking Customer Care is considered to be stable when service firms transact regular volumes of trade over time, which typically evolve in the line with the client’s turnover (Proença& de Castro, 2005).

A good banking Customer Care is said to be unique when service firms treat customers as partners and implement business strategies together with them Proença and de Castro, (2005). Again, it is expected that firms welcome and encourage complaints as a component of a service recovery strategy by designing customer research through satisfaction surveys. The understanding here is Customer Care can give a firm sustained competitive advantage because they are unique to the firm and all the rudiments of a specific care, which cannot be easily copied by a competitor.

What is actually unique? According to Zeithaml and Bitner, (2000) almost all the front line staffs as well as those in managerial positions in the banking industry are prepared to offer quality services to customers but at a price (bribe) this is what is termed by Zeithaml (1985, p.47) as “‘the disparity between expectation and performance’”. This means customers are always left as “prospective customers” and are never moved through the customer loyalty ladder.
III. Imperfect Imitability

A rare and valuable Customer Care in which internal marketing as a process is integrated with the entire marketing function is not easily imitated. Customer value and satisfaction is delivered by the entire service organization and not by one function alone as the responsibility of those with a direct customer contact. For an imperfectly imitable Customer Care, there exist a personalized interactive process between account managers and customers in which these managers have thorough knowledge of the customers and their needs (Proença & de Castro, 2005).

IV. Substitutability

Customer Care cannot be easily substituted when it is strengthened by expertise and reliability of the service firm which cannot be copied easily. A non-substitutable Customer Care does not involve uncertainty and vulnerability on the part of the customer and reduces stress in the banking relationship. When the client perceives the benefits of the Customer Care as important, beneficial and unique, service firms are likely to derive competitive advantage from that Customer Care (Abratt & Russell, 1999).

Customer Care becomes much more difficult to substitute or imitate when banks build long term relations with customers through social and interpersonal bonds. Service firms seek to understand the individual needs and wants and customize services to meet those needs through little effort on the part of their customers. A firm can go a long way toward retaining individual customers by showing appreciation for their business. The service firm prevents switching by providing the customers with convenient operating hours and location; avoiding core service failures; being knowledgeable and competitors. The only unfortunate thing prevailing in the banks in Ghana is that even the well-established foreign banks in the country
are not prepared to transfer their good customer practices from their country of origin into Ghana. In fact, what is seen is banks readiness to deduct their commission at the start of a contracted loan, managers taken bribes for loans granted and frontline staffs demanding for their share of a loan granted to a customer’s not forgotten about the high interest rate it attract (Zeithaml&Bitner, 2000).

V. Durability

The extent of the return a firm can obtain from a competitive advantage, however, depends upon the sustainability of the competitive advantage which the resources and capabilities confer upon the firm (Colgate, 1998). A durable Customer Care is a long term relationship between the customer and the service provider in which both parties over time learn how to best interact with each other (Grönroos, 1997). It leads to decreasing relationship costs for the customer as well as for the service provider, and ultimately sustained competitive advantage.

A long term Customer Care has a planned communication process supporting the development and enhancement of that Customer Care. The service organization regularly communicates with its customers personally and on phone. In addition, successful continuing Customer Care is characterized by mutual trust, commitment and respect. As Customer Care progresses, trust, friendship and functionality determine the strength and likely continuation of Customer Care (Abratt& Russell, 1999).

VI. Inappropriability

Customer Care as a resource enable a service firm to capture major profits as a stable well managed Customer Care becomes profitable over time (Kim &Mauborgne, 2004). This has been supported that a good Customer Care building and management make sense from the
profitability point of view (Grönroos, 1997). Clients usually prefer to do business with firms they know and trust due to the complex and commercially sensitive nature of financial services (Clulow et al., 2003).

For an inappropriable customer care, it provides mutual benefits for both the firm and the customer. The key issue is the extent to which firms go to internalize the benefits obtained from the customer care. Within customer care, firms have mechanisms for determining the profitability of each customer such as customer lifetime value analysis. Thus, customer profitability analysis is a key so that Customer Care is not practiced with every customer; rather the benefits of customer care should be enjoyed by only profitable customers (Barney, 2001).

Surprisingly, the researchers’ understanding is that profits are meant for the business in question but do we call monies that go into individual pockets from bribes instead of the business coffers as profits?

2.10 Structure of the Ghanaian Banking Industry

The banking industry in Ghana can be said to be the largest contributor to Ghana’s financial sector. Currently, the industry comprises twenty-seven (27) major banks (Bawumia et al., 2005), this has fostered a more competitive banking system. At the time of Ghana’s independence, the banking industry consisted of only three (3) banks but this has grown over the years with a network of about six hundred branches (Acquah, 2007). Bawumia et al., (2005) believe that the concentration of the banking system appears to be diluting slowly, with the emergence of new entrants into the industry as well as the introduction of universal banking. Prior to the introduction of Universal Banking in 2003, banks in Ghana were restricted in their roles, which fell into three (3) insulated segments: Merchant; Commercial; and Development Banks.
CHAPTER THREE
THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction
This chapter contains several procedures, processes and techniques used in collecting and analysing data for the purpose of the study.

3.2 Research Design
Qualitative technique was used in identifying relationship between variables which are in form of perceptive views. This data approach will allow the researchers to assess the contextual understanding and analyse data in respect to the responses of the dependant variables on the independent variables. Descriptive technique was also used to describe data and the characteristics about the study.

3.3 Research Format
A combination of survey and case study was used for the research work. Survey involves the collection of data from a given population for the purpose of analysis of a particular issue in relation to thought and behaviour of people. The reason behind this was that, high reliability can be obtained from the study.

The case study used provided an in-depth investigation of a single individual, group, incident or community. This approach was chosen because it has the ability to enable the researchers to gain a thorough understanding to find out what Ecobank resources are, and how effective are their customer care practices.
3.4 Target Population

The target population are; retail and corporate customers, management and staff of the bank within the municipality. The target population was selected because the researchers think they were informative in enabling them to answer the research questions and meet the stated objectives.

3.5 Sample Size and Sample Selection Method

The researchers used convenience sampling to select the respondents. This is a type of non-probability sampling which involves the sample being drawn from part of the population which is close to hand. The reason being that, it is readily available and convenient. In all, a sample size of fifty (50) was used for the study as regards retail customers. For customers, only retail customers of Ecobank Ghana were used for the study. For the staff and management, a sample of ten (10) employees was used for the study. The researchers selected respondents who were particularly informative in enabling the researchers to answer the research questions and meet the stated objectives.

3.6 Data Type

To start with, permission was sought from the management of Ecobank Ghana in writing to enable the researchers carry out the study of the bank.

3.6.1 Primary Data

Primary data is gathered and assembled specifically for the project at hand. Primary sources were collected through structured questionnaires which were self-administered to retail customers and staff of the bank. Although there are several ways of collecting primary data, amongst them are observation, survey (questionnaires) and interviews as forwarded by
Ghauri et al. (2002), there is no hard and fast rule as to which one is convenient but what was predicted by Fowler (1995) is that, the choice of data collection mode is usually influenced by the sample frame, the research topic characteristics of the sample together with the available staff and facility. This, he highlighted that the choice has implications for the rate of response, the form the question takes as well as the cost of the research.

3.6.2 Secondary Data

Secondary Sources of data included publications, annual reports, brochures, journals, websites and Company’s Prospectus of Ecobank.

Extensive research was conducted in the libraries for valuable data from various texts, individual works, journal articles, and newspapers. Saunders et al, (2007) hold that secondary data refers to data collected for a specific purpose which include qualitative and quantitative and could be either descriptive or explanatory. The advantageous part of the use of secondary data is that, this data is collected at a faster rate and relatively lower cost. The major problems of the sources of data are that, it demands the consultant of lots of tests to solicit for relevant information.

3.7 Data Collection Method

For purposes of gathering meaningful data, two (2) questionnaires were developed for both customers and staff of the bank. The questionnaire for the staff was given out for two weeks before collection but that of customers were administered as customers enter and leave the banking premises. To obtain the full participation of respondents, self-administered questionnaires were conducted in which the respondents were assured of their confidentiality. Respondents were then asked to answer and return the completed questionnaires before they left the banking premises. In designing the questionnaire, Likert-style scale questions were
mainly closed-ended, respondents were asked how they agree or strongly disagree with series of statements. The range was between 1 (agree) and 5 (strongly disagree).

3.8 Data Analysis and Presentation
The raw data were captured and edited to ensure consistency as well as accuracy. Tables, charts, graphs, percentages, frequencies and descriptive analysis were used to present and analyze the data collected through the questionnaire. This was done by grouping similar responses from a defined sample and converting the outcome into percentages. Opinions that were having the highest percentages were considered the general view of the respondents.

3.9 Validity
The validity of the research was achieved by giving the questionnaires to an expert for assessment.
CHAPTER FOUR
PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results and interpretation obtained from the analysis of data on field. The results have been presented showing frequencies and percentages of the profile of staff and customers of Sunyani branch of Ecobank Ghana Limited who participated in the study. It also provides an in-depth statistical analysis in order to know whether the customer care practices of Ecobank are giving it competitive advantage. A sample size of fifty (50) individual customers and ten (10) staff were used for this study.

The research is operationalized in a framework adapted from Barney (1991). The conceptual logic is that for a good customer care relationship to give a bank competitive advantage, that relationship must be valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, non-substitutable, durable and in appropriable. These variables were examined in relation to Ecobank relationship with individual customers.

4.2 Results – Management and Staff

This section gives an overview of the responses of the staff who participated in the study. First, it discusses the profile of the respondents and how it builds good customer care relationships with its customers.

4.2.1 Gender Distribution of Respondents

There was almost a gender balance as regards the staff of the bank who participated in the study and this is shown in Table 4.1:
Table 4.1 Gender Distribution of Respondents of Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field research (April 2012)

It is therefore clear from the above table that, male respondents constitute a large percentage of staff of Ecobank (Sunyani branch).

4.2.2 Age Distribution of Staff

Most of the respondents representing 30% were between the ages of 21 to 25. About 20% were between the ages of 26 to 30, 31 to 35 and above 40. Only one respondent was between the age of 36 and 40 representing 10%. The results are shown in the table 4.2 below:

Table 4.2 Age Distribution of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field research (April 2012)
The above table shows that, staff and management between the ages of 21-25 form a large percentage of the age distribution.

4.2.3 Job Profile of Respondents

Samples of ten staffs were used for the study. 30% of the respondents were Relationship officers, 40% were Customer Service Persons and 20% Operations Officers. Additionally, Credit Analyst represented 10%. Table 4.3 below shows the job profile of the respondents. The respondents were mostly from the Marketing Department, Customer Service Department and Operations Department. The results are shown in table 4.3 below:

Table 4.3 Job Profile of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship officers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service persons</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation officers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit analyst</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field research (April 2012)

It is clear from the above table that, customer service person constitute a large percentage of Ecobank staff- Sunyani Branch.
4.2.4 Level of Education of Respondents

Most of the staffs who participated in the study were first degree holders representing 50%, followed by Polytechnic graduates representing 30%. While the rest, representing 20% had their postgraduate degrees. The results are shown in the figure 1 below:

![Level of Education of Respondents](image)

**Figure 4.1: Level of Education of Respondents**

Source: Field research (April 2012)

It is clear from the above diagram that, First Degree holders constitute a large percentage of Ecobank staff- Sunyani Branch.

4.2.5 Length of time Staff have been with the bank

When respondents were asked how long they have been working with the bank, most of them stated that they had been with the bank for less than a year which represented about 40%. About 30% had been with the bank between 1 and 3 years, 10% had been with the bank for a
period between 4 and 6 years, while the rest had been with the bank for a period between 7 and 9 years. The results are shown in the figure 2 below:

![Figure 4.2: Length of time Staff have been with the bank](image)

**Figure 4.2: Length of time Staff have been with the bank**

**Source: Field research (April 2012)**

The above diagram clearly shows that, most of staffs have been with the bank for less than a year.

### 4.2.6 Customer Care

The respondents were asked to express their opinions of the relationships they build with their customers with regard to the variables of customer care.
Substitutability

As regards whether Ecobank’s relationship with customers could easily be substituted, (40%) agreed to the response while (60%) strongly agreed that the bank provides unique customer care benefit which prevent the customer’s from switching to other banks. The rest expressed no opinion on the other issues. This is shown in table 4.4 below:

Table 4.4 Substitutability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field research (April 2012)

It is therefore clear from the table that, most of the staffs strongly agreed that Ecobank-Sunyani Branch customer care cannot be substituted.

Durability

This sought to examine how durable Ecobank customer care was, however (30%) agreed to the response and (70%) strongly agreed that the bank’s customer care is usually long term. The rest expressed no opinion on the other issues. This is shown in table 4.5 below:
Table 4.5 Durability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field research (April 2012)

It is therefore clear from the above table that, most of the staffs strongly agreed that Ecobank customer care is durable.

Rarity

(50%) of the staffs indicated from their response that they agreed while (30%) strongly agreed and the rest representing (20%) neither agreed nor disagreed to the issue as to how the bank treat customers as partners. This is shown in table 4.6 below:

Table 4.6 Rarity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field research (April 2012)
It is therefore clear from the table above that, most of the staffs agreed that Ecobank customer care is rare.

**Imperfect Imitability**

This sought to examine the unique inter-personal bond that exist between Ecobank and their customers that cannot be copied. (30%) agreed to this statement and (60%) strongly agreed while (10%) neither agreed nor disagreed. The rest did not express any opinion on the other issues. This is shown in table 4.7 below:

**Table 4.7 Imperfect Imitability**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source: Field research (April 2012)**

It is therefore clear from the table above that, most of the staffs strongly agreed that Ecobank customer care cannot be imitated.

**Value**

In relation to how valuable Ecobank personalised value-added services were, (50%) agreed and (50%) strongly agreed to the response. The rest did not express any opinion on the other issues. This is shown in table 4.8 below:
Table 4.8 Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field research (April 2012)

It is therefore clear from the table above that, most of the staffs believed that Ecobank customer care is valuable.

Inappropriability

This sought to examine Ecobank high reputation. (40%) agreed to this statement while (60%) strongly agreed. However, the rest did not express any opinion on the other issues. This is shown in table 4.9 below:

Table 4.9: Inappropriability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field research (April 2012)
It is therefore clear from the table that, most of the staffs strongly agreed that Ecobank customer care is appropriate.

4.3 Results – Individual Customers

This section discusses the profile of the customers who participated in the study. It further conducts a comparative study of customers’ opinion of the elements of a good banking relationship and the actual customer care practices of Ecobank.

4.3.1 Age Distribution of Respondents

Most of the respondents thus fifteen (15) were between the age of 31 and 35 years, representing (30%). This is followed by fourteen (14) respondents, thus those between 26 and 30 years, representing (28%). Next are thirteen (13) respondents, thus those between 36 and 40 years, representing (26%), also, seven (7) respondents thus those between 21 and 25 years, representing (14%) and 41 years and above thus two (2) representing (2%) respectively. The results are shown in the figure 4.3 below:

Figure: 4.3: The Age Distribution of Individual customers of the bank

Source: Field research (April 2012)
The diagram above clearly shows that, customers between the ages of 31-35 constitute a large percentage of Ecobank-Sunyani Branch customers.

4.3.2 Gender Distribution of Respondents
Most of the customers, thus twenty-nine (29) representing 58% were males, the rest were females representing 42% thus twenty-one (21). The results are shown in the figure 4.4 below:

![Gender Distribution of Respondents](image)

**Figure 4.4: The Gender Distribution of Respondents**

*Source: Field research (April 2012)*

It is therefore clear from the above diagram that, males constitute a high percentage of Ecobank customers than females.

4.3.3 Job Profile of Respondents
A variety of job profiles were indicated by the respondents. About 4% were marketing or sales officers, 30% were students, 8% were either accountants or accounts clerks, 6% were
HR officers, 6% were finance officers, another 6% were secretaries, 4% were civil servants and another 4% were media practitioners. The results have been showed in Table 5.0 below:

Table 4.10 Job Profile of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government Workers</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Workers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field Research (April 2012)*

The above table shows that, students constitute a large percentage of Ecobank customers.

4.3.4 Level of Education of Respondents

Most of the respondents representing 48% were Polytechnic HND holders. This is followed by those with First Degrees (20%), Master’s Degree (10%), Secondary (10%) and those with professional certification (12%) respectively (See Figure 5). The results are shown in the figure 5 below:
The above diagram shows that polytechnic HND holders constitute a large percentage of Ecobank customers.

4.3.5 Length of time customers have been saving with the Sunyani branch of Ecobank

Ghana

Most of the customers representing 46% have been saving with Ecobank for a period between 1 and 3 years. About 28% of the customers indicated that they have been saving with the bank for less than 1 year, 24% for a period between 4 and 6 years, and the rest between 7 and 9 years. This is shown in figure 4.6 below:
It can be deduced from the above diagram that, most of the customers have been with Ecobank from 1 to 3 years.

4.3.6 Customer Care and Competitive Advantages

This section examines how Ecobank’s customer care is giving the bank competitive advantage. From the results obtained, it has been established that value-laden relationships with customers can be created, maintained and enhanced by a service firm to gain competitive advantage. The section discusses the results of the comparative study of variables of competitive advantage and Ecobank’s customer care relationship.
Durability

This examined how durable Ecobank customer care was over a long term period. (42%) agreed, (50%) strongly agreed and (6%) neither agreed nor disagreed while (2%) disagreed. This is shown in table 5.1 below:

Table 4.11 Durability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGES (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field research (April 2012)

It can be deduced from the table that most of the customers strongly agreed that Ecobank customer care is durable.

Value

In relation to how valuable Ecobank’s personalised value-added services were, (40%) agreed to the response and (46%) strongly agreed while (10%) neither agreed nor disagreed, (4%) also disagreed to the response. This is shown in table 5.2 below:
Table 4.12 Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field research (April 2012)

It can be deduced from the table that most of the customers strongly agreed that Ecobank customer care is valuable.

**Rarity**

(44%) indicated from the response that they agreed, (34%) strongly agreed, while (16%) neither agreed nor disagreed and (6%) disagreed to the statement on how Ecobank treat customers as partners. This is shown in table 5.3 below:

Table 4.13: Rarity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGES(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field research (April 2012)
It can be deduced from the table that most of the customers agreed that Ecobank customer care is rare.

**Imperfect Imitability**

This examine the unique inter-personal bond that exist between Ecobank and their customers that cannot be replicated. (52%) agreed to the statement and (30%) strongly agreed, while (14%) neither agreed nor disagreed. However, (4%) disagreed to the statement. It has been argued by Tzokas and Saren (2004) that customer relationships help create unique knowledge for firms that are difficult to imitate and are required for competitive success. This is shown in table 5.4 below:

### Table 4.14: Imperfect Imitability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGES(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field research (April 2012)*

It can be deduced from the table that most of the customers agreed that Ecobank customer care is not imperfectly imitable.
Substitutability

This examines whether the unique customer care benefit that Ecobank provides for its customers could easily be substituted. (50%) agreed to the response posed, (40%) strongly agreed, (6%) neither agreed nor disagreed, while (4%) disagreed. Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) believe that such benefits should include convenient locations and operating hours, being customer-responsive, and avoiding core service failures. This is shown in table 5.5 below:

Table 4.15: Substitutability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGES(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field research (April 2012)

It can be deduced from the table that most of the customers agreed that Ecobank customer care cannot be substituted.

Inappropriability

This sought to examine Ecobank high reputation to the customers. (46%) agreed to the response, (38%) strongly agreed, (8%) neither agreed nor disagreed, while (8%) disagreed to the response. This is shown in table 5.6 below:
Table 4.16: Inappropriability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGES(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field research (April 2012)

It can be deduced from the table that most of the customers agreed that Ecobank customer care is inappropriable.

A comparative study of the customer care practices of Ecobank Ghana and was conducted. Generally, it can be inferred that customer care gives Ecobank competitive advantage and it is suggested that the bank should continue to enhance its customer care practices in order to improve and sustain this.
5.1 Introduction
This chapter contains the findings which sought to examine whether customer care practice could lead to competitive advantage in the banking industry, the conclusions and recommendations of the study which recommends to be extended to other segments of the financial sector such as non-banking institutions and the insurance industry.

5.2 Summary of Findings
The study sought to examine whether customer care could lead to competitive advantage in the banking industry. First, the customer care practices of Ecobank Ghana- Sunyani Branch with its individual customers were assessed. The perceptions and expectations of customers in banking relationship were further analysed. It was found that what the individual customers perceived as a good customer care relationship was not significantly different from the customer care that was being practiced by the bank.

It was established in the case of Ecobank, that customer care does lead to competitive advantage, thus customer care can serve as a tool for gaining competitive advantage in the banking industry. This was assessed using a framework that was adapted from Barney (1991). The results obtained from the customers and staffs were not significantly different and they all affirmed that Ecobank customer care relationship with customers, gives the bank competitive advantage.
The value-laden relationships that are created, maintained and enhanced by the bank with its individual customers were found to be valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, non-substitutable, durable and in appropriable. The characteristics of these key attributes were found to exist in the customer care relationships of the bank.

5.3 Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it can be inferred that Ecobank is gaining competitive advantage within the industry from the relationships it develops and nurtures with its individual customers. Customers’ expectations and perceptions of a good customer care relationship did not deviate significantly from the actual practice of the bank, therefore it can be inferred that most of the retail customers of the bank are satisfied with the service they are currently enjoying from the bank.

As it has already been established, the banking industry in Ghana is characterized by intense rivalry, and customers have become sophisticated and would not settle for average quality service. Therefore Ecobank does not compromise on its relationship with them if they have to retain these customers, satisfy them so they stay loyal. Moreover, the bank benefits from referrals of loyal customers.

Ecobank has a high reputation within the banking industry as it has won several banking awards to its credit since the year 2001.
5.4 Practical Recommendations

The bank needs to monitor customer satisfaction constantly to discern customers’ perception of their banking relationships. Grönroos (1994) believes that this can be assessed indirectly from a stable or rising market share. It must be noted that customers do not stay loyal forever. There is no doubt that the bank has a high reputation in the industry, it should however devote more resources to the management of its relationships with customers in order to sustain the competitive advantage it currently enjoys. Some of these resources should include but not limited to the following: personnel, knowledge, time and technology. With this, the bank should ensure that the benefits derived from its good customer care relationship are not easily appropriated.

It is also recommended that the attributes used to assess the customer care practice of Ecobank can be applicable to the other service providers.

5.5 Recommendation for Future Research

This study should be extended to other segments of the financial sector such as non-banking institutions and the insurance industry. It is also recommended that the concept of the customer care maybe explored in other sectors of the economy including manufacturing, hospitality and construction.
REFERENCES


• Furtrell, R. (1994). Sales Management, USA. ETID 1436282 Inc. muse right reserved.


APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRES FOR CUSTOMERS

Dear Sir/Madam,

The researcher, a student of Sunyani Polytechnic, is carrying out a study into CUSTOMER CARE PRACTICES and ITS COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES IN GHANAIAN BANKING SECTOR. This questionnaire is being administered as part of the research exercise. It would be deeply appreciated if you could spend some time to give your response. You are assured that this research is purely an academic exercise, and as such your responses will be treated with the strictest confidence.

Thank you.

1. **Type of customer:**
   Individual [1]

2. **Job profile:**
   - Government worker [1]
   - Private worker [2]
   - Self-employed [3]
   - Student [4]

3. **Highest level of education attained:**
   - Doctoral Degree [1]
   - First Degree [3]
   - Secondary/ Technical [5]
   - Masters’ Degree [2]
   - Polytechnic (HND) [4]
   - Professional [6]

4. **Age:**
   - 21-25 [1]
   - 26-30 [2]
   - 31-35 [3]
   - 36-40 [4]
   - 41 & above [5]

5. **Gender:**
   - Male [1]
   - Female [2]
6. What is the name of your bank ………………………………………

7. How long have you been banking with your bank?
   Less than a year [1]   1 to 3 years [2]   4-6 years [3]
   7-9 [4]

Please indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree with each of the following statements, with 1=Agree, 2=strongly agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=Disagree, 5=strongly disagree etc.

(Please kindly circle or tick only one response as appropriate)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. My bank Customer Care is usually long</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My bank has personalized value-added services for customers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My bank treats customers as partners</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Customer care with my bank provides a unique interpersonal bond</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. My bank provides unique customer care benefits</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. My bank has a high reputation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND PROMPT RESPONSE.
APPENDIX II

QUESTIONNAIRES FOR EMPLOYEES

Dear Sir/Madam,

The researcher, a student of Sunyani Polytechnic, is carrying out a study into CUSTOMER CARE PRACTICES and ITS COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES IN GHANAIAN BANKING SECTOR. This questionnaire is being administered as part of the research exercise.

It would be deeply appreciated if you could spend some time to give your response. You are assured that this research is purely an academic exercise, and as such your responses will be treated with the strictest confidence.

Thank you.

1. Name of bank...............................................................

2. Current position or job profile in the bank

...............................................................

3. Department / Unit

...............................................................

4. Highest level of education attained:


   Polytechnic (HND) [4]


5. Age;


6. Gender;

7. How long have you been working with the bank?

Please indicate the extent to which you agree / disagree with each of the following statements
With 1=Agree, 2=Strongly agree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Disagree, 5=Strongly disagree etc.

*(Please kindly circle or tick only one response as appropriate)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. Our bank provide unique Customer Care benefit which prevent them from switching to other banks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Our banks Customer Care is usually long term</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Our bank treats customers as partners</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Our bank Customer Care provides unique interpersonal bond</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Our bank has personalized value-added services for customers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Our bank has high reputation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND PROMPT RESPONSE