



IMPORTANCE OF CARE FOR THE CUSTOMERS PARTICULARLY IN THE SERVICE SECTOR

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Abstract

This paper aims to study the Importance of Customer Care Management (CRM) in the Service Sector. The study is conducted through a literature review, data collection from industry experts and customers and also data publicly accessible on related authentic websites including GOI websites. The paper covers the inputs on the current state of CRM in the Service Industry, the challenges, and the benefits of effective CRM. The results of the study indicate that while the industry has recognized the importance of CRM, there are still significant challenges in implementation, particularly in terms of technology adoption and employee participation. Care for the customer and effective implementation of CRM can lead to increased customer satisfaction, loyalty, and profitability to the Service Industry. In essence, this scholarly endeavor not only scrutinizes the current state of CRM in the Service Sector but also unveils a roadmap for overcoming impediments. By accentuating the symbiotic relationship between customer care and CRM proficiency, it endeavors to illuminate a path towards a future where the Service Industry can not only surmount challenges but thrive through a harmonious integration of customer-centric principles and strategic CRM implementations.

Keywords: CRM, Indian Customer Satisfaction, CSI, Brand Loyalty, Profitability

INTRODUCTION

We find that normally all families have their fixed shops for groceries, shoes, sweets, garments, medicines and doctors. There may be many options available to them in the locality but generally they do not prefer to explore until and unless some issues of dissatisfaction erupt in the transactions. The Importance of care for the Customers particularly in the Service Sector is obvious because of its high desirability in public and immediate impact on reputation, customer confidence and revenues. The Service Industry generally includes Hospitality Sector, Health Care, Taxi and Logistics, Food and Beverages Supply, Couriers and Parcel Services, Household Packers and Movers, Cable TV providers Internet Service Providers, Porters, Security Service Providers, Event Managers, Caterers, Tours & Travel Services and Household Maintenance and Repair Service providers etc. These are the services that immediately affect our life and comfort, underscoring the importance of prioritizing customer satisfaction.

CUSTOMER NEEDS

Customers do have apprehensions; it is natural. They feel the need of an umbrella of trust. They need to be guaranteed about the quality of the product, value for their money and the reassurance of availability of services, whenever required in future. Brand image, word of mouth, past experience and

delivering what was promised, are the key factors in closing a sale or retaining customer loyalty. Promptness of service, genuine concern for customer inconvenience and positive attitude of the service staff play a major role in creating a good perception about the product and the company. A company that intends to improve its Customer Base, Customer Satisfaction Index, Brand Image, Turnover and profitability has to strategically work hard to relentlessly sustain and enhance Customer Delight. This is achieved through monitoring the inputs gathered through CRM (Customer Relationship Management) Tools and proactively acting upon them. In the realm of customer dynamics, it is intrinsic to recognize the innate reservations that customers naturally harbor. These reservations necessitate the establishment of a reliable trust infrastructure, where customers seek assurances not only in the product's quality but also in the substantial value they derive from their investment. The enduring promise of accessible services in the future adds another layer to this tapestry of trust. The decision-making process for customers is a nuanced amalgamation of diverse factors, with brand image holding a pivotal role. It intertwines with the echoes of positive word-of-mouth, reflections from past experiences, and the critical element of delivering on promised commitments. These factors collectively act as architects, either culminating in a successful sale or weaving the intricate threads of customer

loyalty. In the choreography of customer interactions, the spotlight falls on the timeliness of service, coupled with a genuine dedication to alleviating any customer inconvenience. The demeanor exhibited by the service staff transcends the bounds of professionalism, becoming a transformative force that sculpts the perceptual landscape surrounding both the product and the company at large. For any company aspiring to ascend the echelons of customer-centric success, strategic commitment is not an option but a necessity. The pursuit of broadening the Customer Base, elevating the Customer Satisfaction Index, fortifying Brand Image, and amplifying Turnover and profitability demands an unwavering dedication to sustaining and enhancing Customer Delight. This isn't a passive pursuit but an active, ongoing endeavor, driven by the discerning use of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tools. It involves not just the passive monitoring of customer inputs but a proactive engagement that responds adeptly to the rich insights gleaned through these tools. This approach weaves a sophisticated tapestry of customer satisfaction and loyalty, where each touchpoint becomes a pivotal note in the harmonious symphony of sustained success and enduring customer delight.

KNOW YOUR CUSTOMER PREFERENCES TO ENHANCE BRAND IMAGE AND IMPROVE SALES

We share here below some data¹. Study and action on this input can help us grow our business:

Feedback sharing by customers:

- 50% customers share their experiences on social media,
- 72% talk about them in person.

Media Reviews:

- 87% customers read online reviews
- 94% customers will recommend a company whose service they rate as “very good.”
- 67% of customers report a terrible customer experience as the reason for switching businesses.
- 13% of customers tell 15 or more people if they have a negative experience.

Handling Customer irritation and anger

- 21% of patients went to other pharmacist because they had to wait too long.
- 70% of customers reported high irritation when their call is transferred from one department to another.
- 33% got frustrated for having to wait on hold
- 33% got frustrated having to repeat themselves to multiple support reps.
- 70% complainants were willing to shop with a business again after their complaints were resolved.
- 78% customers gave up on a transaction because of a negative customer experience.
- 67% customers end a call in frustration when they cannot reach a customer service representative.
- 60% of consumers deserted a brand and switched to another because of poor customer service.

Phone Support:

- 75% consumers prefer phone calls to reach customer support.
- Very few use text messaging.
- Rest use mobile apps for communicating with the company.

What the customer wants:

- 75% consumers choose to interact with a real person.
- 33% consumers consider having their problem solved in one single interaction as best service.
- 95% consumers say that customer service is essential for brand loyalty.

UNETHICAL BUSINESS PRACTICES AND ITS DISADVANTAGES

We often observe certain business malpractices as trends. Some cooking gas agencies insist upon a new consumer to buy the stove and accessories also from their dealership. Such activities ultimately result in creating a negative image, that of an unethical practitioner.

In life whether personal or public, the importance of value system, morality and ethics can never be disregarded for short term benefits; else we pay the price. A business house, tempted to make an easy buck, if not backed up with a value system, can buckle under slightest enticement. Today we see this happening, not only with individual persons but renowned business houses. Examples of unethical business practices are: harm to environment, kickbacks, fraudulent accounting, unfair competition, tax evasion, hidden clauses in user agreements, false product claims, fine-prints in T&C etc, all of which ultimately resulting in loss of prestige, loss of credibility, legal battles, losing customer base and financial losses.

Misguiding, misrepresenting, fleecing, and overcharging has become so common that the government of India has come up with a Notification in September 2023 as ‘Guidelines for prevention and regulation of Dark Pattern 2023.’ This step has been taken by the government to educate the consumers and penalize the offenders. Such practices have been termed at ‘Dark Patterns’ in business dealings especially in ‘On-line’ transactions. These are being summarized below:

Specified Dark Patterns: *N1

- I. **False Urgency:** Creating a false scarcity (deceptive messages like “only two seats left” etc.) to mislead and pressurize the consumer into immediate purchase.
- II. **Basket Sneaking:** Inclusion of additional costs like Insurance, Convenience, Charity etc. at the time of checkout from e commerce platform.
- III. **Confirm Shaming:** By forcing user to press buttons having captions like “I don’t care for the poor” if the user does not want to pay for induced charity.
- IV. **Forced action:** Website force a user to buy any additional goods, subscriptions or services in order to buy the wanted product.
- V. **Subscription trap:** They make cancellation process of a paid subscription either impossible or complex or they hide the cancellation option button.

VI. Interface interference: They highlight certain specific information and change the color of the 'No' button so that it is not easily visible.

VII. Bait and Switch: They advertise a low cost but at the time of payment a higher cost is demanded. Frivolous reasons are then shown e.g. "The discount period is already over".

VIII. Drip pricing: The elements of prices are not revealed upfront. Post confirmation of purchase, higher amount is shown at the time of checkout. E.g. After buying an air ticket, they demand extra payment for seat selection even if the customer does not want any choice.

VIII. Disguised advertisement: Misleading, masked advertisements e.g. pure juice even though the product is synthetic.

VIII. Nagging: Seller insists upon getting credit card details, phone no, email id and then bombarding them with unwanted messages and calls.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After having known our Customer preferences, we need to start working on enhancing Brand Image and improve sales. Apart from providing quality service to the customer in a prompt manner, market studies show that following points are essentials for providing excellent services:

1. A Toll free customer contact number
2. A Help Desk – providing polite and prompt response.
3. Live Interactive website
4. FAQs listed on the portal
5. Display status of customer order
6. Providing easy and multiple choice modes of payments to the customer
7. Customer contact details like email id, phone number
8. CRM Tool to capture and manage customer data.
9. Generate ticket number to customer for registered complaint and its current status
10. Provide 'Personalized Services' where expected and is possible to provide.
11. Rather than having a multichannel Customer Contact Service, have an integrated Customer Contact Service so that complaint once registered shall not be repeated and same response shall be rendered from all the channels.

We hope that with such efforts business is bound to grow and customers shall be delighted with the care provided to them. The business house shall get more and more General Referrals, better Customer Retention, Competitive Advantage over rivals, enhanced Brand Image and larger revenues.

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