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Impact of Relationship Marketing in Creating Customer Loyalty: A Study on Selected Super Shops in Bangladesh

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Abstract: Marketers are continuously seeking for weapon or strategy to create customer loyalty. Marketing experts have emphasized that relationship marketing is one of the best marketing efforts in order to create customer loyalty. The competitive structure of super shop industry in Bangladesh has forced the marketer of this industry to adopt relationship marketing. This study is focussed to measure the impact of relationship marketing in creating customer loyalty in super shop industry in Bangladesh. Both causal and exploratory research method have been used to conduct the study. Primary and secondary data have been collected to proceed with the study. The study revealed that one of the important factors of relationship marketing in super shop industry in Bangladesh is commitment of marketer of this industry to provide charming purchase experience to the customers. This study is aimed to investigate the impact of relationship marketing empirically on customer loyalty after taking evidence from super shop industry in Bangladesh.

KeyWords: Relationship Marketing, Super Shop, Customer Loyalty

1. INTRODUCTION

Initially every business organization makes a huge investment to set up a business which is usually called fixed cost. Variable cost is also got attached with the organization as the organization proceed with production. So business organization has to bear the burden of fixed cost in their lifetime. The length of time of bearing the fixed cost depends on the amount of investment made by the particular organization. Thus business organization is an entity who is bound to operate business in a way to cover the fixed cost in order to be profitable by applying some strategies. Therefore the primary focus of the organization is to make profit. But as a going concern, short term profitability does not make sense for the business organization. Consequently business organization focuses on long term profitability. Here comes the importance of relationship marketing.

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Long term profitability needs some careful planning to do by the organization. Relationship marketing focuses on giving attention to existing customers rather than searching for new customers. According to Ndubisi et al. (2009) [1], searching for new customers is always costly than serving the existing customer well. So relationship marketing helps business organization to make customer loyal to the organization. Customers become so loyal when they perceive that marketers are addressing and providing as per the need and expectations of customers.

That is to say, customer driven marketing activities can bring more positive result for the organization as a whole. In this regard, Sachro&Pudjiastuti (2013) [2] opined that building customer loyalty depends on maintaining a good relationship with the customers. Thus organizations will be able to understand customers' need, expectation and demand and deliver as per customers' desire which will be better than the competitors. A loyal customer of a business entity is highly interested to make a long journey with that organization. Thus long term profitability of the business is being ensured by loyal customers. A loyal customer provides benefit to the business organization by many ways. Loyal customer makes other customer loyal by spreading positive word of mouth.

Loyal customer barely switches the brand. Loyal customer provides resourceful information to the business which comes handy at time of making strategies. Loyal customers make a full association with the business organization. In the competitive business market, marketer often faces challenge in maintaining customer for a long period of time. Today's customers are much more knowledgeable as they have huge information available about the products. Now, they can make comparison quite easily. They can get feedback within seconds about their queries of the products. Various technological advancement has made it possible to reach and catch the customers quite easily. But keeping the customers has been a difficulty. Marketing experts believe that maintaining customers for quite a long period of time will be possible through proper implementation of relationship marketing. Super shop in Bangladesh is expanding so quickly. Most of the major cities in Bangladesh are indulged with super shop. Consumers find super shop handy because it provides huge collection of products displayed at the shelf. Consumers can roam around a super shop and they can pick few of their necessary brands from the shop. Consumers can choose from a collection of different brand of same products. Consumers are finding super shop useful and interesting. Therefore number of consumers in super shop is increasing day by day. On the other side, marketers are also finding this business lucrative in Bangladesh. As a result, so many business organizations are involved with super shop business. Competition is now a practical issue among the super shop owners in Bangladesh. With a view to understand the consumers of super shop more,

super shop owners are continuously using the strategy of relationship marketing which helps them to gather and examine valuable information to better identify the match between super shop in Bangladesh and consumers.

Impact of Relationship Marketing in Creating Customer Loyalty: A Study on Selected Super Shops in Bangladesh

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Relationship refers to the way people or things are connected. In today's business world, organization is striving to make relationship with customers. Business organizations are trying to catch the customers for longer period of time which is termed as relationship marketing.

Alet (2000) [3] stated that the fierce competition and advancement in technology has made it difficult to manage business successfully. So, marketing activities should be more focussed to the customer itself.

Kotler (1994) [4] advocated a service marketing triangle with three features of marketing relationships i.e. external marketing, internal marketing, and interactive marketing. Whereas external marketing focuses on relationship in between customer and organization, internal marketing emphasizes the relationship in between company and its employees. And finally interactive marketing refers to a relationship between company's employee and its customer. So it is clearly derived from the marketing triangle that relationship is primary focus for being successful in business.

Being customer centric means adopting relationship marketing. In this regard, Rowley (2005) [5]rightly pronounced that relationship marketing emphasizes on steady customer base who is considered to be the asset of the business.

In the year 1983, Berry first introduced the idea of relationship marketing in the service organizations perspective. Berry (1983) [6]also explained relationship marketing as a business strategy which build and expand customer relations by means of technology advancement.

Gronroos (1999) [7]defined that relationship marketing is a practice of finding, constructing, keeping, reinforcing, and if necessary terminating relationship with customers in order to benefit the mutual interest.

Kotler et al. (1999) [8] referred relationship marketing as a way to establish, uphold, and improve durable relationships with the target audience and stakeholders. They firmly believe that marketing is accelerating its pace in building relationships with consumers than focusing on individual transactions. They further pointed out that organization has to provide superior customer value over a long period of time in order to create long term satisfaction among the customers. Thereby they defined relationship marketing a long term process.

In supporting the statement of Kotler et al. (1999), Abdul-Mauhmin (2002) [9] regarded modern marketing is fully dependent on customer satisfaction. So the primary task of the business organization is to bring out the customer needs properly to create customer satisfaction. He also noted customer satisfaction can create loyalty which paves the way to spread positive word of mouth about the business organization.

Zeithaml and Bitner (2008) [10] defined that Relationship marketing is more about protecting and cultivating relationship with existing customers rather than focusing on searching new customers. They further added that this philosophy is based on the idea that consumers and business customers are more likely to have a continuous relationship with an organization rather than switching to other organization.

Gummesson (2008) [11] believe that relationship marketing symbolises a new marketing pattern and it is a new concept made upon relationships as well as relationship marketing can be mixed with old-fashioned marketing management to yield better outputs.

Emphasizing the importance of relationship marketing, Abdullah et al. (2014) [12]stated that in an era of huge competition and challenge, many of the company focus mainly on building long term relationship with the customers in order to be benefitted mutually.

Lindgreen (2001) [13] believe that marketing is transforming from transaction to relationship. It has been observed that the statement of Lindgreen (2001) has also been supported by Gummesson's (1991) [14]statement that transaction marketing follows the rules of selling and then forgetting whereas relationship marketing focuses on continuous interaction, making relationships and having a good network.

Business organizations are using many strategies to hold their customers. Experts believe that one of the finest tactics of retaining customers is to use relationship marketing. Therefore, Raza&Rehman (2012) [15] indicated that relationship marketing is playing the major role in many industry, particularly it plays a very significant role in service sector.

Relationship marketing provides benefit to the organization by not only creating a strong customer base for long period of time but also it provides the organization with the opportunity of creating a database to formulate market strategies for the target market. Relationship marketing helps organization to increase profitability and market share as well it reduces the cost of serving customer. It has been told that the catching a new customer is more costly than serving a loyal customer, Ndubisi et al. (2009).

In the highly competitive business market, the success of the organization is dependent on the ability of the organization to develop a long term customer relationships by offering unforgettable customer experience. Earlier research exposed that having loyal customer base often paves the way to increased sales, market share, customer share and the share of customer's mind as well. Thus these all contributes to the profitability of the organization, Rusbult et al. (1988) [16]; Anderson et al. (1994) [17]; and Reinartz& Kumar (2000) [18].

Dick &Basu (1994) [19] stated customer loyalty as the enthusiasm which creates an attitude in the customer to make repeat purchases.

Impact of Relationship Marketing in Creating Customer Loyalty: A Study on Selected Super Shops in Bangladesh

Likewise, Czepiel& Gilmore (1987) [20] remarked customer loyalty as a positive aspiration of the customer to continue the connection with an organization for a long period of time.

A relationship creates loyalty. Therefore Oliver (1999) [21] has explained that loyalty creates commitment to buy a preferred product repeatedly in the future.

Customer loyalty can be referred as a commitment to keep connection with an organization on an on-going basis. According to Uncles et al. (2003) [22], Loyalty is a kind of behaviour or expression of something that consumers can express while purchasing brands or services, visiting a store, examining product categories and activities.

According to Reichheld (2003) [23], Loyalty makes a customer or an employee or a friend so much wise that make them charmed to make an investment or personal sacrifice for strengthening relationship. Loyal customers make repeat purchases and make positive word of mouth to friends and family.

Butcher et al. (2001) [24] recognised four different aspects of customer loyalty other than the repeat purchase which are favourable word of mouth statement; reluctant to shift for opponents' offerings; being involved well with the organization's service; and affection for specific service provider.

In this regard, Maghsoudi (2003) [25] suggested organizations should consider customer loyalty management and customer management separately for making profitability. Loyal customers are regarded as the asset of the organization as they play the role of great marketers and they occasionally become great resource for selling.

Abtin and Pouramiri (2016) [26] found that Business institution should produce quality products at a fair price relative to those of competitor in order to create customer loyalty through customer satisfaction which helps in implementing relationship marketing across the organization.

Few other researchers have found relationship between customer loyalty and relationship marketing. Raza&Rehman (2012) [27] found that relationship marketing helps marketers to adopt the right strategy in order to create customer loyalty. Likewise Morgan & Hunt (1994) stated relationship marketing enable the business firm at building trust and commitment with external stakeholders to create loyal customer relationships.

Feedback mechanism may come handy while implementing relationship marketing across the business institution. In connection to this Hirschman (1970) [28] opined that when there are real alternatives and cost of shifting to other brands are low, business organization can bring out the reason of dissatisfaction among the customers through two feedback mechanism: exit and voice.

However one way to attain relationship marketing in the organization is to have customer relationship management in the company. In consideration of this,

Richards & Jones (2008) [29] opined that Customer relationship management (CRM) provides the organization with few opportunities like influencing

customer profitability, accelerating the productivity of sales force, sending personal marketing messages to individual customers, giving customized products and services.

Odekerken-Schroder et al. (2003) [30] explained that customer personality has its own contribution along with relationship marketing tactics to bring a strong relationship outcome (loyalty).

Raza & Rehman (2012) also found that strategies used in relationship marketing are positively correlated with quality of the relationship and loyalty of the customer. The important issue for any business organization is to maintain a long term profitable relationship so that customer loyalty can be ensured at utmost level.

3. CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Various literature have been analysed and focus group interview have been conducted in order to develop the constructs or factors which have influence in building customer loyalty in the super shop industry in Bangladesh. Finally conceptual model gets the shape as under.

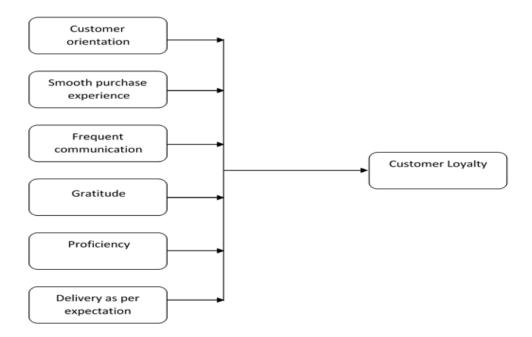


Figure: Conceptual Model

Impact of Relationship Marketing in Creating Customer Loyalty: A Study on Selected Super Shops in Bangladesh

4. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The main hypotheses of the study were as follows:

- H1. Being Customer centric has a significant impact on the customer loyalty in super shop in Bangladesh.
- H2. Providing Smooth and charming purchase experience has a significant impact on the customer loyalty in super shop in Bangladesh.
- H3. Frequent communication has a significant impact on the customer loyalty in super shop in Bangladesh.
- H4. Expressing Gratitude has a significant impact on the customer loyalty in super shop in Bangladesh. H5. Proficiency has a significant impact on the customer loyalty in super shop in Bangladesh.
- H6. Delivering as per expectation has a significant impact on the customer loyalty in super shop in Bangladesh.

5. RESEARCH GAP

Consumers of this country are showing very positive response toward super shop from the very beginning of the introduction of super shop in Bangladesh. In particular, the city dwellers are very much dependent to super shop. Realizing the business potential, many marketer are stepping toward doing super shop business. A good success story is related with super shop business in Bangladesh. Relationship marketing plays a great role in helping the super shop to come up with a good success story. Now it requires measuring the impact of relationship marketing on customer loyalty in super shop in Bangladesh.

6. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The broad objective of the study is to find out the impact of relationship marketing on customer loyalty in super shops in Bangladesh. The following objectives will also be fulfilled while achieving the broad objective.

- To measure correlations among different probable impacts of relationship marketing on customer loyalty over super shop in Bangladesh.
- To measure the relative importance of each probable impacts of relationship marketing on customer loyalty.

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A combination of both causal and exploratory research techniques have been used to conduct the study. Exploratory research helps us to get a very in depth insights about the research topic. Beside causal research helps us to identify the impacts of relationship marketing on customer loyalty. For developing factors responsible for creating customer loyalty, focus group interview have been conducted along with examining various literature. In this study, both primary and secondary data have

been utilized. The sources of secondary data are internet, journals, newspaper and web-sites. Secondary data were utilized to get ideas about the research gap and to determine the variables of the study. By providing respondents with a structured questionnaire, Primary data was collected. The population of our study are consisted of those people who visit the nearby super shop once or twice in a week. In this study, judgemental sampling technique was used to collect the data by administering personal interviewing method. Dhaka city was selected to conduct the study. Super shops near to residential area like Gulshan, Banani, Dhanmondi, Mirpur, Malibagh, Mohammadpur were selected to get prospective respondents for collecting primary data in order to conducting the study. A 7 point likert scale was used to conduct the study. 120 respondents have been surveyed through this study. The responses were taken by the researchers in person. The respondents were asked to give their feedback against the statements provided with 7 point likert scale. This research has been conducted only in prominent residential place in Dhaka city.

8. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

8.1 Multiple Regression Analysis:

Multiple Regression analysis (MRA) is a very useful statistical method used to find out relationship in between several independent variables and one dependent variable and this method helps in quantifying impact of several independent variables upon a particular dependent variable. In this study, Multiple Regression Analysis have been conducted in order to finding impact of relationship marketing on customer loyalty on super shop in Bangladesh. In this study, customer loyalty was considered as dependent variable and customer orientation or centricity, smooth purchase experience, frequent communication, gratitude, proficiency and delivery as per expectation were considered as independent variable. The estimated multiple regression model is like the below mentioned equation.

$$Y = a + b_1 x_{1+} b_2 x_{2+} b_3 x_{3+} b_4 x_{4+} b_5 x_{5+} b_6 x_{6+} e_i$$
 Where.

Y signifies Customer loyalty;

The a coefficient signifies the intercept;

X₁, X₂, X₃, X₄, X₅ and X6 represents various hypotheses of relationship marketing.

Table: Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	0.763	.583	.556	.33387		

In multiple regression analysis, R measures predictability of independent variable about the dependent variable. In this study, the value of R (R = 0.763) suggests a high degree of relationship between the hypotheses of relationship marketing and

Impact of Relationship Marketing in Creating Customer Loyalty: A Study on Selected Super Shops in Bangladesh

customer loyalty. The value of R^2 (R^2 = .583) defines the amount of variation in dependent variable explained by independent variables. In our study, 58.30% variance in dependent variable is explained by independent variables. R^2 gives details about the strength of association. Value of R^2 is equal to .3 or above signifies a good model in case of multiple regression analysis. The value of adjusted R^2 is .556.

Table: ANOVA and F statistics								
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.		
1	Regression	14.474	6	2.412	21.641	.000 ^b		
	Residual	10.366	93	.111				
	Total	24.840	99					

With 6 and 93 degrees of freedom, the value of F is 21.641, which is significant at 0.05 level. It indicated the goodness of fit of the multiple regression model. The model applied is good enough to forecast the dependent variable. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. That is to say, that independent variables do not influence the dependent variable (customer loyalty) is rejected. However, the regression model gets the shape of the following after using the value from the coefficients table given below:

Customer loyalty = 8.607 + .293 (Customer orientation) + .424 (Smooth purchase experience) + .291 (Frequent communication) + .079 (Gratitude) + .233 (Proficiency) + .376 (Delivery as per expectation) + e_i

Table: Coefficients ^a							
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
		В	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	8.607	.575		14.964	.000	
	Customer Orientation	.293	.047	.535	6.248	.000	
	Smooth Purchase Experience	.424	.066	.477	6.431	.000	
	Frequent Communication	.291	.058	.379	5.002	.000	
	Gratitude	079	.047	116	-1.666	.099	
	Proficiency	.233	.045	.445	5.114	.000	
	Delivery as per expectation	.376	.056	.458	6.719	.000	

Unstandardized B coefficients have been taken to develop the equation of the multiple regression analysis. The above table shows that customer orientation, smooth purchase experience, frequent communications, proficiency, delivery as per expectation are significant at 5% level. The positive sign of the beta coefficients signifies that level of customer loyalty increases with the given importance to relationship marketing constructs. Among all the relationship

marketing constructs, "smooth purchase experience" which can also be termed as "commitment of the marketer of super shop" has the highest beta coefficient value of .424. Consequently, this construct is the most important in describing customer loyalty. According to the multiple regression analysis, marketer of the super shop can create customer loyalty whenever they can ensure commitment to customer by providing smooth or charming purchase experience along with delivery of products as per expectation of the customer, prioritizing the customer by being customer centric, making communication with customers on regular basis and being proficient in helping customer finding products quickly to facilitate quick depart.

9. CONCLUSION

A very good prospect exists for the marketer doing business in super shop industry in Bangladesh. Super shop is so popular in the city areas of the country. Due to the busy nature of the society, people of this country are getting dependent to the super shop day by day because they can get a huge collection of products at one place. Currently, there are many super shop are being operated in the country. Few of the super shop is breaking the ground in terms of having good business record. But there are many new and unidentified super shop which is just falling behind in terms of keeping the consumers for so long a time. Under such circumstances, adopting relationship marketing may help them creating customer loyalty. Creating customer loyalty by adopting relationship marketing is one of the best ways to be profitable in the long run. Multiple regression analysis have identified important constructs of relationship marketing in super shop industry like customer orientation, smooth purchase experience, frequent communication, proficiency, delivery as per expectation. Therefore it can be said that customers of super shop in Bangladesh have a tendency to be loyal to those organization which are committed to provide smooth and charming purchase experience, determined to deliver the product as per the expectation of the consumers, dedicated to prioritize their consumers by being consumer focussed, devoted to communicate with the consumers quite frequently and enthusiastic to help consumers in finding their products so that busy consumers can have a quick depart. Thus marketer related to the super shop industry in Bangladesh should focus on the above mentioned constructs while formulating strategies to build customer loyalty. However as this research has been conducted only in prominent residential place in Dhaka city, therefore future research can be conducted in some other major divisional cities in Bangladesh.

Impact of Relationship Marketing in Creating Customer Loyalty: A Study on Selected Super Shops in Bangladesh

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