

Customer Service Effects on Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty: A Field Research in Shopping Centers in Izmir City - Turkey

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze the customer service effects on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The field study is applied by using survey method on a face-to-face and electronic mail basis as interview methods including four hundred shopping mall customers who live in Izmir city, Turkey. The research model is formed for measuring customer service effects on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The research model is tested by three hypotheses via regression analyses. According to the research results, customer services which comprise 8 factors can explain 13.9 % of variance in customer satisfaction, 12.5 % of variance in customer loyalty and also customer satisfaction can explain 43.2 % of variance in customer loyalty. As a result, customer services can explain both customer satisfaction and customer loyalty and it must be improved by retailers.

Keywords: Customer Service, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty, Shopping Centers, Retailing.

1. INTRODUCTION

Retailers are units that communicate with customers as the last chain of distribution channel. Establishing good relationships with customer, satisfying customers and gaining loyal customers are too important in retailing. In the competition condition today, creating customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in retailing provides sustainable competitive advantage and differentiation from rivals for retailers. There are many factors that create customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Customer service is one of the factors that creating customer satisfaction and loyalty.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Customer Service

Customer service is all of the retailer activities that increase the value received by consumers when shopping (Levy, Weitz; 599). According to this definition; customer service is an activity that increase the value. Customer service is identifiable, but sometimes intangible, activities undertaken by a retailer in conjunction with the basic goods and services it sells (Berman, Evans, 2007; 647). Intangibility, one of the main characteristics of services, is valid for customer service, too.

According to another definition, customer service is the sum total of what an organisation does to meet customer expectations and produce customer satisfaction (Institute of Customer Service). Customer satisfaction can be provided by meeting customer expectations. To meet these expectations, retailers must provide excellent customer service.

Customer service is activities and benefits that directly or additionally related with products sold (Tek, Orel; 681). Customer service is defined as service that support the provision of the company' s core products (Pettigrew; 257). Customer service can be related with products directly such as product guarantee, product delivery etc. Also customer service can be facilitating service which is not related with products directly such as parking area, children play area, call center etc.

Customer service can be defined by the researcher in the framework of definitions above: Customer service is tangible or intangible value increasing activities that related with products or services directly or indirectly to meet customer expectations and so provide customer satisfaction and loyalty.

2.2. Customer Satisfaction

In the sense of the customer, the satisfaction is a meeting the needs degree at the end of a purchase (Oliver; 34). The satisfaction is an evaluation about how much could the retailer meet or exceed customers' expectations (Levy, Weitz; 105). The comparison of expectation and performance in post purchase stage determines the satisfaction level of customers.

Customer satisfaction is a result of the comparison process between expectations and perceived service performance. Customer satisfaction is measured by “Disconfirmation Theory”. Disconfirmation theory is the comparison of the performance level after using the product or service with the expectation level before using the product or service as better or worse. If the product or service is worse than expected (Expectation>Performance) “negative disconfirmation”, if better (Expectation<Performance) “positive disconfirmation”, and if as expected (Expectation=Performance) “confirmation” must be occurred (Oliver, Rust, Varki; 315).

Customer satisfaction occurs in the situation of “confirmation” and “positive disconfirmation”. In “negative disconfirmation” situation there is dissatisfaction. Customer satisfaction will be provided if a product or service meets the customers’ expectations. This is the situation of “positive disconfirmation”. If the perceived performance of a product or service is under the customers’ expectations, a product or service can not satisfy the customer. This is the situation of “negative disconfirmation”. If the perceived performance of a product or service and the expectations before using a product or service are equal there is formed customer satisfaction. This is the situation of “confirmation”.

The companies make various studies to measure the customer satisfaction. They acquire some data with these studies, about the reason why their customers prefer them and in which criteria they give importance when purchasing and whether they can meet their customers’ needs or not. For example; one cargo company has performed the customer satisfaction questionnaire through its website. The questionnaire slogan is “Participate Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire, state your satisfaction or dissatisfaction and win a prize.” The company has sent ten percent discount code to every consumer as well as giving special presents to the fifth, the fiftieth, the two hundred fiftieth consumer participated in the questionnaire. By this way, via the win-win strategy both has provided that the consumers has won the prizes and the discount, and has increased the consumer number of answered the questionnaire with these professional activities.

2.3. Customer Loyalty

The loyalty is defined by Richard L. Oliver as a commitment forming profoundly about being a steady customer (patronizing) or purchasing again in the future the preferred product or service. So loyalty will provide a repetitive buying of the same product or service despite the marketing efforts or situational effects (Oliver; 392). If a customer without being under the marketing efforts such as the influence of applications by the rival companies and the situational affects, the stimulants directing to purchase, great communication activities, purchase recurrently and always from the same manufacturer, that customer would have been the loyal customer of the retailer. Customer loyalty is defined under three approaches such as behavioral loyalty, attitudinal loyalty, and composite loyalty in the marketing literature (Bowen, Chen; 213).

In the *Behavioral Approach*, loyalty is defined as a way of behavior. The consistent and repetitious purchases are the indicator of the loyalty. The continual product or service buying from the same retailer so being the steady customer of that retailer, purchase frequency are examples for behavioral loyalty. However, these steady and repeat purchases may be originated from the situational affects (Hartmann, Ibanez; 2662). The problem with behavioral approach is that steady and repeat purchases do not always arise as a result of the psychological loyalty toward a product, service or retailer. The factors such as the price and the proximity may be influence the buying decision of the consumer. Therefore not every buying is a loyalty.

Attitudinal Approach is the psychological and sensation oriented. In this approach, the loyalty is a personal attitude. Different emotions form the general loyalty of the consumer toward a product, service or retailer. These emotions determine the loyalty degree of the person. Even if the consumer does not purchase from said retailer, being positive his/her feelings, although he/she could not purchase steadily because of the distance between the retailer and the consumer or high prices etc., his/her advising the retailer to other consumers and the positive discussions about said retailer (word of mouth) are the examples for the attitudinal loyalty. The behavioral aspect of the loyalty is about repeat purchase from retailer and the attitudinal aspect of the loyalty is about even if the customer does not repeat purchase activity his/her positive discussion about the retailer, advising the retailer to the other customers and convincing other people to purchase from the retailer.

Composite Approach is a synthesis of the attitudinal and the behavioral approach. It measures the loyalty through the customer’s product preferences, propensity of brand switching, frequency of purchase, recency of purchase, and total amount of purchase. Using of this two-dimensional combine approach increases the anticipated power of the loyalty. This approach is often used in the retailing sector, recreational sector and airways and hotel enterprises (Bowen, Chen; 214).

Customer loyalty is formed by four steps (Oliver; 35-36). *Cognitive loyalty* is originated from the information taken from the past experiences or information. *Affective loyalty* is about the degree of approval or liking the product, brand or company. In the *Conative-behavioral loyalty*, the consumer repurchase as a result of the recurrent events originated from the positive emotions about the product, brand or company. In the *action loyalty*, consumer is ready to purchase in all cases and in the situation of being the steady customer or purchasing again without being influenced by the rivals' marketing activities or the situational affects in the market.

According to Dick and Basu, there are four types of loyalty (Dick, Basu; 101). *No Loyalty* is occurred when both the relative attitude and repeat patronage are low. Low relative attitude may be arise because of the new entry in the market, the unannounced to the consumers the different advantages, the market dynamics in which many competitive brands are considered to be same. To increase the low relative attitude may be seen impossible. However, improving the repeat patronage can be passed from the no loyalty dimension to the spurious loyalty dimension. *Spurious Loyalty* is occurred when the relative attitude is low and the repeat patronage is high. Although in respect to the attitude the consumer does not feel powerful emotions about product, brand or retailer, he/she carries on the repeat patronage. In the *Latent Loyalty*, the consumer is related potently to the product, brand or retailer (relative attitude is high) but it is weak in respect to the behavioral (repeat patronage is low). Therefore the repurchase attitude of the consumer is low. *Loyalty* is occurred when both relative attitudes are powerful and the repeat patronage is high. So the consumer both has positive feelings for the retailer and is the steady customer of retailer and often purchase repetitive.

In the loyalty model formed by Rowley and known as 4C of customer loyalty, the customers were separated into four categories (Rowley; 576). *Captive Customer* continues being the steady customer of that product, brand or retailer because of having no other choice. *Convenience- Seeker Customer* determines the loyalty situation according to the conditions of the availability such as the physical proximity of the retailer, working hours of the retailer, the portability of the packet sizes. *Contented Customer* is the customer with a positive attitude but with the passive behaviors. Customers in this type of are the customers of a product or retailer but they do not benefit from other products or services which are related to that product or retailer. *Committed Customer* is positive as to both attitude and behaviors. These kinds of customers always purchase from the company and praise the company to the people around him/her and other customers by positive word of mouth. There is a positive affect of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty. In time the satisfaction is changed into the loyalty. Only the most satisfied customers stay as the loyal customers in the long term (Berman, Evans; 38).

In the past periods, the retailers were making long-term friendships with their consumers and by this way they were providing customer satisfaction. Present-day the modern retailers instead of creating relation-based values, they are trying to provide customer satisfaction by creating price-based values. The importance of entering into long-term relationships with the customers is being forgotten. A company can provide the customer satisfaction reducing the prices or raising its services. However this satisfaction will be low profitable and temporary. For this reason; the marketers must raise the customer value and the customer satisfaction. Creating the long-term relationships between the retailers and the customer must be provided the customer satisfaction. They must be freed from the disadvantages such as the rareness of the relationships between the modern retailers of today and the consumers and try to obtain the customer satisfaction and loyalty (Odabaşı; 11-12).

3. RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

There are several factors that create customer satisfaction and so customer loyalty. One of these factors is customer service. This study aims to reveal that whether customer services explain customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. And also if customer services can explain customer satisfaction and loyalty, how much customer services' explain power on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty is the other aim. The reserach model is shown below.

Insert Figure 1 here

According to the research model, customer services affect both customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. And customer satisfaction also creates customer loyalty. The important thing is to find that how much percent can customer services explain of the variance in customer satisfaction and loyalty. As linked with the research model; the hypotheses are below which analyze that how much percent can customer services explain of the variance in customer satisfaction.

Insert Table 1 here

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Scale

To measure customer services’ effects on customer satisfaction and loyalty, two scale were used in this study. One of them is “American Customer Satisfaction Index” (Fornell et al). The original scale consists of three questions and ten point Likert type scale. Having considered Turkey’ s demographic structure, ten point Likert type scale was converted to five point Likert type scale (1: Strongly Disagree, 5: Strongly Agree). Also the statement that “customer services offered by shopping centers” was added to the beginning of the original scale’ s questions. The other scale is “Customer Loyalty Scale” which was developed by Oliver in 1997 (Nijssen et al., 46-60; Oliver 1997; Sirdeshmukh et al., 15-37; Spreng et al., 15-32). This scale includes four questions, the last question was not used in this research. As customer satisfaction scale, customer loyalty scale was converted to five point Likert type scale from ten point Likert type scale, too (1: Strongly Disagree, 5: Strongly Agree). Also the statement that “due to customer services offered by shopping centers” was added to the beginning of the original scale’ s questions. The all questions about two scale were shown in **Table 2** below.

Insert Table 2 here

The other parts of the questionnaire were constituted by customer services which were found from marketing literature, questions about shopping centers such as the most favored shopping centers, the reasons of customers’ shopping center preferences and demographic questions about customers. Customer services which were found from marketing literature consist of fifty one item and five point Likert type scale (1:Very Unimportant, 5:Very Important). Pilot survey was done with fifty customers and the value of Cronbach’s Alpha was calculated % 81,7. This value is a proof about the survey’s reliability.

4.2. Sampling

The city of Izmir has thirty districts. However, only the eleven of these districts take part inside the border of Izmir City. The population of research comprises the shopping center customers who live in these eleven districts’ urban parts: Konak, Karşıyaka, Buca, Bornova, Gaziemir, Narlıdere, Balçova, Çiğli, Güzelbahçe, Bayraklı, Karabağlar. The sample size was estimated with the formula below.

$$n = \frac{z^2 \cdot p \cdot q}{e^2}$$

n = Sample Size
 z = Percentage point for the Standard Normal Probability Distribution at the specific confidence interval (1.96 for 95% Confidence Level)
 p = Percentage picking a choice
 q = Percentage not picking a choice (1-p)
 e = Margin of Error (%5)

The researcher has utilized from the pilot survey results to calculate “p” and “q” value. “p” value is the percent of customers who are satisfied by customer services offered by shopping centers and “q” value is the percent of customers who are unsatisfied by customer services offered by shopping centers. According to z,p,q,e value (z= 1,96, p=0,8, q=0,2, e=0,05), the formula was calculated and sample size was found 245. So, two hundred forty five customers were enough for this research’s field study. However, the survey comprises four hundred consumers instead of two hundred forty five customers to reach more accurate results

After defining sample size, the “Random Stratified Sampling Method” was used as a sampling method and it was shown in **Table 3** below.

Insert Table 3 here

In column A, Izmir City was divided into eleven stratas according to districts inside the border of Izmir City. In column B, urban population of each district was showed. In column C, urban population of each districts were divided total population of districts (2.727.968) one by one. So the percentage value which shows that how many customers participated the research from each district was gained. In column D, the number of customers to survey in each district were calculated and the rounded values were shown in column E. Column E shows that how many customers participated the research from each district. After the estimating in **Table 3**, the field survey was done with four hundred consumers with the technique of face to face and electronic mail interview methods between the dates October 2010-December 2010.

5. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The results of demographic variables were presented below in **Table 4**.

Insert Table 4 here

Table 5 below shows the descriptive statistics. The average age of customers who participated in the questionnaire is 32.9 and the average of household size is 3.

Insert Table 5 here

One Sample T Test was applied to fifty one customer services. “Payphone service” was excluded from the other analysis because of its significance value is higher than 0.05 ($p=0.431>0.05$). Exploratory factor analysis was applied to remaining fifty customer services. Confirmatory factor analysis was not applied because of there is not a theory based on the classification of customer services since customer services are classified in various ways by different authors. Eight main factors arised as a result of exploratory factor analysis. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure is 0.895 and it is an indicator that reaching enough sample size. Bartlett’ s test is 0.000 and it shows that the existence of a relationship among the criteria.

After that, multiple linear regression analysis was performed to find customer services’ explain power on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Independent variable is customer services which comprised eight factors (x) and dependent variables are customer satisfaction (y_s) and customer loyalty (y_l).

$$y_s = f(x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4, x_5, x_6, x_7, x_8)$$

$$y_l = f(x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4, x_5, x_6, x_7, x_8)$$

The effects of independent variables on dependent variable are shown in **Table 6**.

Insert Table 6 here

As a result of the F statistics H_{10} and H_{20} are rejected owing to p values are smaller than 0.05 ($p=0.000<0.05$). So customer services can explain of the variance in customer satisfaction and also customer services can explain of the variance in customer loyalty. Customer services can explain 13.9 % of the variance in customer satisfaction. The remaining 86.1 % part is explained by the other variables which affect customer satisfaction such as service quality, perceived value etc. Customer services can explain 12.5 % of the variance in customer loyalty.

Simple linear regression analysis was performed to find customer satisfaction effects on customer loyalty. Independent variable is customer satisfaction and dependent variable is customer loyalty.

Insert Table 7 here

According to **Table 7**, as a result of the F statistics H_{30} is rejected owing to p value is smaller than 0.05 ($p=0.000<0.05$). Customer satisfaction can explain 43.2 % of the variance in customer loyalty.

6. CONSTRAINTS

There are four constraints in this research due to time and cost constraints. The first of the constraints is the research was conducted in the districts which are inside the border of Izmir City. The nineteen districts which are outside the border of Izmir City were not included in the research.

Second constraint is that only urban population of districts inside the border of Izmir City was included in the research. The rural population of districts inside the border of Izmir City was not included in the research.

The third constraint is that the research only was executed in Izmir City. In the following days, this research can conduct different cities of Turkey such as Istanbul, Ankara etc. for comparing the results.

The last constraint is that the research was implemented only in the shopping centers as a retailer. Perhaps the results may be different in other retailer types like supermarket, department stores etc.

7. CONCLUSION

Customer service is only one of the tools which are used for creating customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Except customer service, there may be stronger tools than customer service like service quality, product variety, product quality, perceived value etc. in creating customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Customer services can explain 13.9 % of the variance in customer satisfaction and 12.5 % of the variance in customer loyalty. Customer service is influential when creating customer satisfaction and loyalty however its effect on customer satisfaction and loyalty is not so powerful. Although its unpowerful impact, retailers must improve customer service to improve customer satisfaction and customer loyalty since customer service is one of the tools that creating customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 1. Research Model

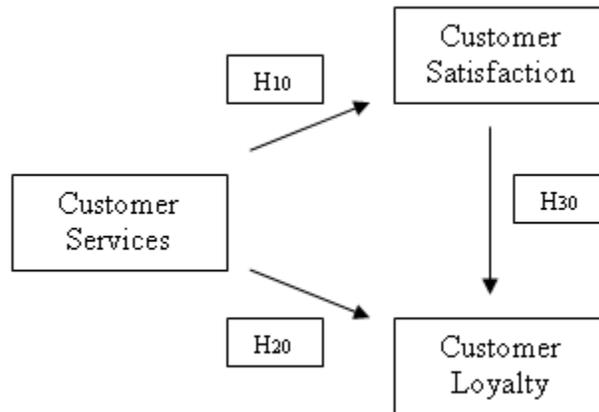


Table 1. The Research Model Hypotheses

H_{10} : Customer services can not explain of the variance in customer satisfaction.
H_{11} : Customer services can explain of the variance in customer satisfaction.
H_{20} : Customer services can not explain of the variance in customer loyalty.
H_{21} : Customer services can explain of the variance in customer loyalty.
H_{30} : Customer satisfaction can not explain of the variance in customer loyalty.
H_{31} : Customer satisfaction can explain of the variance in customer loyalty.

Table 2. Scales and Their Questions

Customer Satisfaction Scale	Customer Loyalty Scale
* Overall satisfaction	How likely are you to:
* Expectancy disconfirmation (performance that falls short of or exceeds expectations)	* do most shopping for items at this store?
* Performance versus the customer's ideal product or service in the category	* recommend this store to friends, neighbors, and relatives?
	* shop at this store the very next time to buy items?
	* spend more than fifty percent of your budget at this store? (not used in this research)

Table 3. Choosing The Sample With The Random Stratified Sampling Method

	A	B	C	D	E
	Districts inside the border of Izmir City	Urban population of districts inside the border of Izmir City	Urban population of each districts inside the border of Izmir City /Total population of districts inside the border of Izmir City (%)	The number of customers to survey in each district	The number of customers to survey in each district – Rounded Value
1	Konak	411.112	15.07026475	60.281059	60
2	Bornova	402.453	14.75284901	59.01139604	59
3	Karşıyaka	304.220	11.15189034	44.60756136	45
4	Buca	412.639	15.12624048	60.50496192	60
5	Balçova	77.915	2.856155204	11.42462082	11
6	Gaziemir	121.255	4.444883518	17.77953407	18
7	Narlıdere	65.714	2.408899225	9.6355969	10
8	Bayraklı	306.427	11.23279305	44.9311722	45
9	Karabağlar	448.846	16.45349212	65.81396848	66
10	Çiğli	154.397	5.659780467	22.63912187	23
11	Güzelbahçe	22.990	0.842751821	3.371007284	3
	TOTAL	2.727.968	100	399.99	400

Table 4: Frequency of Demographic Variables

	Frequency	Percentage		Frequency	Percentage
Gender			Marital Status		
Female	235	58.8	Married	198	49.5
Male	165	41.2	Single	202	50.5
Total	400	100.0	Total	400	100.0
Districts			Working Type		
Karabağlar	66	16.5	Private Sector	159	39.8
Konak	60	15.0	Public Sector	51	12.8
Buca	60	15.0	Student	71	17.8
Bornova	59	14.8	Retired	29	7.2
Karşıyaka	45	11.2	Housewife	38	9.5
Bayraklı	45	11.2	Inoccupied	8	2.0
Çiğli	23	5.8	Self-employment	44	11.0
Gaziemir	18	4.5	Total	400	100.0
Balçova	11	2.8	Monthly Income		
Nalıdere	10	2.5	Under 999 TL	49	12.2
Güzelbahçe	3	0.8	1.000 – 1.999 TL	119	29.8
Total	400	100.0	2.000 – 2.999 TL	80	20.0
Education			3.000 – 3.999 TL	61	15.2
Nonliterate	1	0.2	4.000 – 4.999 TL	39	9.8
Elementary Shool Graduate	40	10	5.000 – 5.999 TL	25	6.2
High School Graduate	154	38.5	6.000 – 6.999 TL	9	2.2
Bachelor	153	38.2	7.000 – 7.999 TL	7	1.8
Post Graduate	52	13	Over 8.000 TL	11	2.8
Total	400	100.0	Total	400	100.0

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	18	73	32.9575	11.07802
Household Size	1	12	3.3050	1.27909

Table 6: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results of H_{10} and H_{20}

	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F Change	df1	df2	p
$y_s = f(x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4, x_5, x_6, x_7, x_8)$	0.156	0.139	9.055	8	391	0.000
$y_l = f(x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4, x_5, x_6, x_7, x_8)$	0.142	0.125	8.107	8	391	0.000

Table 7: Simple Linear Regression Analysis Results of H_{30}

	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F Change	df1	df2	p
Satisfaction-Loyalty	0.433	0.432	304.276	1	398	0.000

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