

Impact of customer service to achieve customer delight

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Abstract:

The purpose of this research paper is to understand the extent to which customer service can be used as an effective tool to retain customers by creating customer delight. According to various studies, customers' expectations to be proactively met and monitored in such a way that they feel valued. Customers distinguish through different brands according to their memorable experiences. This study helps customer service support team & marketing executive to realise that new ideas & overwhelming customer experiences work well with customers and customer delight can also lead to customer loyalty and attract new customers. This also provides an understanding of how much customer delight is important to draw the customer's attention which in turn enhances brand loyalty, increase the repurchase intention of customers and simultaneously help growth in company's revenue. Companies need to redefine their strategy from time to time and equip their customer service team to resolve customers' query in a timely manner and even proactively anticipating their need and expectations. However, it is challenging depending upon the target customers. The research paper highlights the impact which customer service support team on customer satisfaction and delight and also focuses on how customer service team delight plays a vital role in today's competitive market and suggests measures that the companies can use to delight their customers. When customer service which is the face of the product/ service provides something "unexpected and memorable experience" to the customer, it creates a positive and emotional impact in the minds of the customer regarding the product or service. This differentiates a company from its competitors and helps in company's growth. Companies and their customer service team need to take extra mile to retain them in the long run by creating a delightful customer & consumer. This is where a strong and proactive customer service team comes into picture which can turn a customer's bad experience to a memorable experience.

Keywords:

Customer Service, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Delight, Customer retention, repurchase intention, word-of- mouth, Surprise & Delight Marketing

1. Introduction:

In today's multi-touch point, Omni channel, and hypercompetitive markets, customer support service is a vital touch point for business success (Sheth et al., 2020). Customer support and service functions contribute to the overall customer experience and sustainable competitive differentiation (Albrecht et al., 2021, Bueno et al., 2019). Excellent customer service is flexible as it entirely depends on the level of expectations that customers have from the brand such as product quality, price, and performance of the product and pre & post sales service. Customer service experience is the key factor in deciding whether the customer perceive your product or brand to be great or horrible. This will impact on purchase decision made by the customer pertaining to your product. A delighted consumer will surely become a repeat customer. Customer support team plays an integral part in shaping customer experience on a day-to-day basis. Proactively taking care of customer's needs & expectations helps in turning a bad experience to a memorable & overwhelming customer experience which in turn leads to

customer/ consumer delight. Building an effective customer experience means going extra mile in creating customer satisfaction which in turn will give rise to customer delight.

1.1 Customer Service

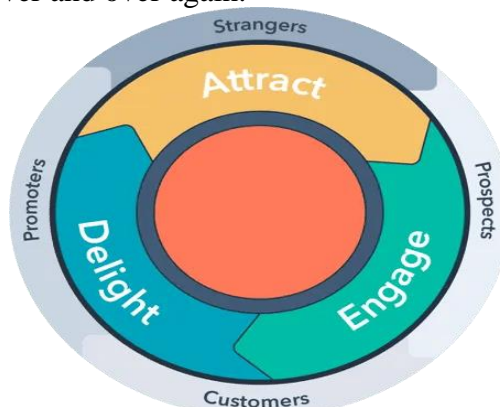
Customer service is the assistance that company offers to its customers both prior & post purchase of their product or services. It is the direct one-on-one interaction between a consumer/customer making a purchase and a representative of the company. Customer service representative are responsible for answering customer's query and going above and beyond to ensure their satisfaction. They are the face of your brand and consumer focused service is a successful differentiating strategy. Offering amazing customer service is important to retain customers and grow business revenue. When customer service support team moves beyond just reacting to problems and towards anticipating customers' problems, they create winning experiences that help companies stand out from the competition. When a company empowers service team to go above-and-beyond with customers, or have a help desk solution that makes it easy for them to upsell or cross-sell relevant services, customers feel valued and appreciated, and are more likely to become loyal to the business. It's one thing to talk about excellent customer service and another to apply it in the companies. Few examples of customer service from companies that go beyond to achieve customer/ consumer.

1. Tesla – It's strategy to own the entire customer relationship, that is, from start to end. The company sell car directly to its customers without involvement of third party. They meet their customers at their place and fixing issues on their car. This give ease to customers that they can schedule on their time. Customers don't have to fix appointment with the showroom for car related issues.

2. American Express – AmEx gives customer benefits that can be used widely in the U.S. It gives its customers incredible benefits along with impressive rewards.

1.2 Customer Delight

Customer delight is the process of exceeding a customer's expectations to create a positive experience with your product or brand. It brings many long-term benefits to the brand. Satisfied customers may or may not purchase from the brand again, especially if they receive the same level of satisfaction from another brand. Customer satisfaction is about meeting expectations whereas customer delight is about exceeding expectations and make a lasting impression. Businesses benefit from customer delight as they will be dependable and guarantee word- of- mouth advertising. It is the positive emotional response which the customers have when you exceed their expectations and create personalized attention, genuine care and a memorable experience. So, it is crucial to know what customers' expectations are and work to exceed them over and over again.



(Source – <https://images.app.goo.gl/M1vzrnYEGTL4bJkx8>)

A framework that helps explain the concept of Customer Delight is provided by the zone of tolerance (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1993). Customers have ranges at which they are dissatisfied (performance falls well below expectations), satisfied (performance meets expectations) and delighted (performance far exceeds expectation).

Service quality and customer satisfaction are important aspects of business since a company's growth is largely dependent on how well it maintains its customers through service and how well they keep their customers satisfied (Edward and Sahadev, 2011).

According to Chang et al. (2017); customer satisfaction is expected to result from good service efficiency, which will improve customer engagement and interrelationship. González et al. (2007) asserted that customer satisfaction is linked to high service quality, which makes businesses more competitive in the marketplace.

Recognizing and meeting customer expectations through high levels of service quality help distinguish the company's services from those of its rivals (Dominic et al., 2010). Customer delight is beneficial for referrals.

2. Customer Service And Business:

Satisfied and delighted customers are less price sensitive and are willing to pay premium price for the product or service instead of switching to another brand. When the consumers feel valued and appreciated, they are likely to spend more for the product or service than the new customers. Loyal customers make repeat purchases and are more likely to spread awareness and positive reviews through word-of-mouth. This results in brand awareness and increase in new customers. A great customer service reduces customer churn i.e. the number of customers who leave. Acquiring new customer is more expensive than retaining existing customer, hence, reducing customer churn reduces overall cost to the company. Bad customer service gives rise to customer churn as customer service support team is the key driver of company's growth. Prioritising customer service team helps in attracting new customers through word-of-mouth and retain existing customers. An excellent customer service influences purchase decision of the customer as well as the consumer. In today's scenario where social media is extensively used, a customer can share negative experience faced while pre/post purchase of the product or service online, and this will damage the reputation of the company. It will even influence the target market and purchase decision of another customers. Customers gain confidence when their queries are attended and resolved for good. This builds strong & ongoing relationship with the product or service of a company. An excellent customer service is putting the customer first and creating a memorable experience for them. A company can timely measure customer service through surveys and feedback wherein analysis can be done with respect to response time, resolution and customer retention rate. Poor customer service is the reason behind discontinuation of doing business with a company. In a highly competitive business environment, a customer service can either ruin or boost a company's bottom line. Hence, it is critical to a company's success or failure.

3. Objectives

1. To study the impact of customer service.
2. To study impact of customer service on purchase decision.

3. To study the causes of customer delight.

4. Review Of Literature:

The study comprises of review of Literature wherein theses/ articles are reviewed which are related to the research topic and are recent ones. They are briefly discussed as follows:

i. Kushagra Kulshreshtha (Kulshreshtha, Tripathi, & Bajpai, 2018): The study involves the relation of quality/ quantity and the related customer satisfaction as well as delight. As per this study a consumer always looks for quality as a means to satisfy the level his/ her need/want/ desire. If the quality is to the level of satisfaction, then it results in the overall pleasure, contentment, cheerfulness or glee; in other extreme level it reaches to Consumer Delight. In competitive world all companies are trying to inculcate the quality in the product/ service as well in the services related to the service/ product. Most of the time the quality aspects of the product/ service are conveyed to the customer through the integrated marketing communications (IMC) so that customers are aware of them. Design is not an attribute of the product/ service only. It needs to be there in every aspect of it including product-design, its specifications, its packaging, its availability, related services and the price thereof. All these parameters put together create the quality perception of the product/ service. Customer buying behaviour is been influenced by the information sought by him/ her in terms of reading about it, feeling it, looking at physical evidence, getting a trial of it etc. All these behaviours create the quality perception in his/ her mind which drives the actual purchase. Another aspect of the positive quality perception is it enhances the loyalty amongst the customers as well as it allows the provider company to charge a reasonable premium on the price of the product.

ii. Prince Dubey (Dubey, Bajpai, & Guha, 2018): The study deals with the behavioural aspects of the customers as a reaction to the various customer engagements, including the advertising form the service/ product provider. Any excitement in the form of vocal/ non-vocal exclamations is treated as arousal. This stimulus is different for different persons and different products/ services. These differences are due to personal feeling, maturity out old-age or as a family trait. There can be some vocal reactions like wows, aaha's, cool etc. and they come out as a positive reaction towards the user experience like first exposure to the product, event or a service. The videos, ads can lead to a typical to psychological mood of the person leading to a purchase decision. If the mind-set perception and the physical experience match then that can lead to the customer satisfaction and delight.

iii. Kulshreshtha (Kulshreshtha, Tripathi, & Bajpai, 2017): In the study how the emotional state of the customer gets created by the customer engagement in terms of exposure to the brand's marketing communication. Integrated marketing communication creates various emotions in the customers' mind-space. Some emotions can be just normal and not too extensive while some are very strong and create lasting impacts on them. The similar strong emotions in the form of excitement and stimulations range from state of attentiveness and vigour on one end or extreme agony on the other end. As stated by the authors in this study, they call this state of Arousal that has either encouraging or adverse emotions which creates the right or wrong preferences towards the product/ service. Arousal is the spur towards certain product or service by the customer which is needed to fulfil the motives getting delighted from the product. If arousal is committed towards certain product or brand; customer safeguards it. High brand commitment consumer's experience greater arousal

compared to low brand commitment consumers when presented with negative brand information.

iv. Harrison-Walker (Harrison-Walker, 2019): This study deals with the sentiments of the customers about the product after they have various engagements with a brand. These sentiments generate various types of behavioural patterns in the customers, which in turn affect the outcome of the behaviour in the form of a buy or a no buy decision for that brand. A few customers showcase their emotions in form of complaints against the failed service encountered by them and switch from one brand to another in case they do not get an appropriate response from the service providing firm, which needs to be attended to and solved promptly. On the contrary customers carry positive emotions also and along with them carry additional feelings about the product/ service. They develop a series of emotions with the product in the form of liking the product and express their delight towards that brand by becoming loyal customers of that brand and advocating the brand to their fullest capabilities. So, the study states that even most of the service providing firms concentrate on the outcome of these emotions as purchase, a very important aspect of positive word of mouth with Consumer Delight needs to be considered.

v. Agnihotri D (Agnihotri, Kulshreshta, & Tripathi, 2020): The study is from the service industry where the provider has to understand the perception of the customers related to delivery of service. In the case of there exists the difference between the expectation and the delivery, the customer then also expects that the service recovery to be non-biased and with neutrality. The study outlines the necessity of handling such situations with great care and make the customer engagement a smooth process without much attention to bureaucratic approach and aim should be to achieve the customer satisfaction. This is what minimum expectation to stop the further damage is. In the subsequent customer engagements, we may look towards the Consumer Delight.

vi. Silva G. M. (Silva, Coelho, Lages, & Reis, 2020): The study deals in the effectively handling the customer's dissatisfaction on the delivery (service recovery). If taken in right spirit and handled well, it can be used to change the mind-set of the customer from negative to positive and can make customer buy your services again, leading to brand-loyalty, positive word-of-mouth and thus benefits to the service provider. The study further emphasises that a few times service recovery is inevitable, but if you plan well that can be turned to your benefit with proper attention. The first and foremost point is to employ a very energetic and competent person to handle such recovery. Ask him/ her to handle the situation promptly with an empathetic view. This positive behaviour will bring a change and the customer can develop resonance from dissonance leading to customer satisfaction with a probable intention to buy the said services again-and-again. So, handling service recovery in a positive way can result in positive outcome leading to customer satisfaction and delight, reversing the downgraded position of the business.

vii. Martensen (Martensen & Grønholdt, 2015): The study on word-of-mouth impacting the customer behaviour. A customer is a social being having strong ties like friendships, family-ties, near-vicinity neighbours etc. The customer also had feeble (weak) ties like not-known or infrequently contacts like merchants, firms, travellers etc. The customers pursue word-of-mouth methods to share their knowledge among these social ties about products/ services, people, problems and events. The study states that in feeble ties chances of finding

impartial great value information if persons have a greater expertise as it includes contact and relations with strangers. In strong ties chances of finding dependable, truthful, individual and tailored information as family and friends are more known about consumers' likings and favourites (Martensen & Grønholdt, 2015).

viii. Kageyama and Barreda (2018) is a research paper which examines customer delight and compares how customer delight can be proven constructive as compared to customer satisfaction, it also focuses on positive word of mouth and how customer delight causes a positive effect on the customers mind. The study implies that once positive word of mouth is introduced it leads to new customers drawing towards the brand and repurchase intention of the customers.

ix. Barnes and Krallman (2019) states the meaning of customer delight and how it plays an important role in the competitive market. The study talks about the antecedents of customer delight and how customer delight can be measured. It also briefly explains customer satisfaction and the outcomes of customer delight. Although, the study can be used as a great source, there are certain weaknesses and aspects that haven't been examined. The study utilizes few theories in order to reach a conclusion and suggests that more outcomes could have been evaluated. The study suggests that the domain of customer delight can be expanded from joy and surprise and other emotions can be taken into consideration while measuring the level of customer delight.

x. Sun (Sun, Murali, Sheopuri, & Chee, 2014): The study deals with developing loyalty amongst consumers. They suggested that to achieve the Consumer Delight customer should get paybacks and perks along with superior value product and service, fair amount of concessional price, better customer engagements. Study concludes that the consumer perception of quality of product/ service has positive influence on Consumer Delight. Apart from quality, fairness in the transaction also satisfies the consumer. The fairness in transaction refers to the fair price, good and healthy negotiations of terms & conditions. Thus, both these points add to Consumer Delight.

xi. Yang (Yang, Chen, & Chien, 2014): Consumer has a commitment for the product/ service which gets determined by the extent of the excitement he/ she has towards it. The study refers to this excitement as arousal which defines the consumer's understanding of the product/ service in the form of Consumer Delight. The customers' knowledge about the product/ service makes them capable of handling the analysis about the same.

xii. Merlo (Merlo, Eisingerich, & Auh, 2014): Engagement with the customer is a very important aspect of the concept of customer citizenship. Customer engagement and feedback are also carrying a great weightage as it helps in improvising the product/ services in a better way. The aspect of the inculcating the empathy in the design of the product/ service can be achieved through this customer expertise and engagement.

xiii. Confente (Confente & Russo, 2015): The study is related to the automobile industry where warranties, technical support, repairs and related documentation is been dealt with. There can be problems related to the technical aspects of warranty such as problems due to product-design or the production process. Other type of warranty problems can be commercial

in which selling promises and service-related problems can occur in the entire process of handling the warranties. The warranty promises are time bound where there can be short term, long term or life time warranties are involved. As against the warranties on the products, there can be problems of repairs of the parts not covered in the warranty. Let it be warranty or repair, two important aspects of technical support capability and the terms and conditions of the warranty/ repair are important. The study states that the technical support becomes augmentation to the product services. If handled properly customers can be confident about these post purchase services and will create a good impression about the product, leading to purchase decision and customer loyalty and delight. The example of Maruti Suzuki in Indian auto industry confirms the conclusions of the study.

xiv. Whitten (Whitten, Hightower, & Sayeed, 2014): The study deals with the utility value of the product as the basic need of the customer satisfaction. Very basic aspects of the satisfaction from a brand are its proper working for the designed purpose, charged a reasonable price and providing the trust in the brand for its sustainability. The utility value is the most rational expectation from a brand that leads to further satisfaction and hence the customer-delight.

xv. Fatma (Fatma, 2014): The study looks towards the price as the basic cost from customer's point of view. The customer is paying the price to receive some perceived value from the product/ service, and thus it becomes a psychological factor for the customer. Customer always tries to differentiate the needs he/ she has, the alternatives to satisfy these needs, and all other alternative / substitute products available to him/ her. Finally what price he/ she pays for the product/ service as per the perception of what product experience and performance received, drives the customer satisfaction or delight.

xvi. Souza (Souza, 2014): The study discusses the concepts of 1) Kotler's 5 levels of core benefit, generic product, expected product, augmented product, potential product 2) the Kano Model where product or service attributes are placed into specific groups such as: basic factors, delight factors and performance factors and 3) Füller and Matzler three-factor theory of satisfaction, that includes: Necessity factors (dissatisfaction generators), Enthusiasm factors (satisfaction generators), and Performance factors (hybrids).

5. Recent Trends In Global & Indian Business Sector:

A company is developing its customer service support team as a strategic partner sales & marketing along with product development. Transformation is done by service team in order to deliver value across every touch point from i.e. from customer experience till service operations. Companies are delivering personalised support with AI (Artificial Intelligence). In 2023, key trends in the business sector include personalised customer experience, Artificial Intelligence Integration, self-service options, social media, messaging apps, Omni channel interactions and proactive support. Predictive analytics, customer empowerment and data privacy will also be focus areas for the companies. The 5 R's (response, recognition, relief, resolution and removal) of customer service are often challenging in today's competitive business environment. Consumers expect consistent interactions with the company across all channels. Businesses are investing in their resources for creating personalised customer experiences based on customer's preferences and giving importance to wonderful and unique experiences to build loyalty. AI- powered chatbots are increasingly used in banking

telecommunication and e-commerce sectors. The consistent customer service across all platforms are ensured through social media, chats, phone and email in order to offer a seamless omnichannel experience. Companies are aligning themselves to meet the diverse ways in which customers prefer to interact. Use of data analytics tools plays a crucial role in gaining insights into customer preferences and behavioural patterns enabling them to provide personalized services and also enhance their product accordingly to meet customer expectations. These trends reflect towards a more customer-centric approach to elevate customer service globally as well as in Indian business environment.

5.1 Significance And Importance

The research paper aims to provide information regarding customer service and how customer service can help in achieving customer delight. The research paper is useful to students, research scholars, marketing professionals and customers as it focuses on how customer service plays a vital role in achieving customer satisfaction and customer delight. In the competitive environment, it is essential to satisfy the customers and retain them for reducing company's cost which company would incur while acquiring new customer. Customer delight helps marketers in contributing company's growth by exceeding customer's expectations. In case of not meeting customers' expectations, they are more likely to switch brand.

6. Limitations Of Study

The study is based on secondary data from journals, books, websites, etc. which can be a limitation of the study.

7. Findings And Suggestions:

When a marketer surpasses customer expectation, it builds a long term relationship and a memorable customer experience. Customer becomes loyal to the product or service. In a highly competitive market, companies have realised that simply satisfying customers are not enough to make them loyal to the brand. Companies are now focussing on personalized customer service support by leveraging on digital platform such as remote customer service set up, messaging apps along with AI integration and emails. Companies are even adding a surprise variant and joy to the customer beyond their expectation out of the product or service. For example, Starbucks, the renowned US coffee giant, effectively utilises Surprise and Delight Marketing by providing customer with complementary cookies with every order they placed. This worked as a surprise quotient for the customer as it was unexpected. Surprise and delight marketing can take various forms such as gifts like coupons, discounts and certificates are used and even brands can get creative. This approach foster brand awareness and affinity as it creates memorable moments with customers. Some companies practice this approach as a retention strategy and thus influencing customer repurchase intention. Customer satisfaction is all about customer's want whereas customer delight goes beyond customer expectation and hence differentiates itself from the other products or services in the market. Customer delight works as a magnet in bring back the customer and eventually retaining them. It spreads positive word-of-mouth, retains existing customer and invites new customer.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, it can be concluded that customer service is playing a crucial role in the company and thus contributing in company's growth. An excellent customer service is a key driver which creates positive impact of the company, its products and services. Customer service as well as customer delight can be very challenging at times as the expectation

increases from time to time and to overcome this situation marketers need to come up with surprise and delight marketing along with creative ideas to draw their customer's attention.

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