

Perception of customer on customers' orientation factor on service quality of salespersons

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Abstract -This purpose of the study is to analyze the association between customer profile variable and their perception on customers' orientation factors regarding the salespersons service quality of retail outlets in Thoothukudi District. The objective of this research is to examine the customer perception on COFs and its association between profile variables of the customer. This research is purely based on primary data. The data has been collected by 800 respondents by using structured interview schedule.

Keywords: Retail outlets, Customer Perception, Customer Orientation Factors

I. INTRODUCTION

The growing recognition of perceived service quality as a significant determinant of business performance in terms of economic returns has generated considerable interest in the strategic value of service quality from academics as well as retail practitioners (Anderson et al.,1994; Buzzel and Gale, 1987; Jacobson and Aaker, 1987; Reichheld and sasser, 1990; Rust et al.,1995)¹. Service quality is often regarded as a global judgement, or attitude, relating to the superiority of the service (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry,1988)².As customers demand ever-increasing levels of quality and service at lesser costs, a superior customer value creation requires innovative solutions to customer problems, proactive attempts to address customer concerns, and a willingness to take risks-bevahiours termed as entrepreneurial behaviour(Kreiser and Davis, 2010)³ . Although salespeople are not entrepreneurs per se, scholars argue there is a natural fit between the roles of entrepreneurs and salespeople (Sengupta et al., 2000)⁴.Traditionally, service quality has been conceptualized as the difference between customer expectations regarding service to be received and perceptions of the service being received (Grönroos, 2001)⁵.

II. NEED OF THE STUDY

It is essential to avail the differential advantage in today's competitive retail environment. It seems however, that retailers often offer the same assortments at comparable prices (Hombeng et al., 2002)⁶ and the location is clearly not as important as it used to be (Hummel, and Savitt, 1988)⁷. As a result, retail service quality and service quality of sales persons, whose importance is undisputed as means for retailers to differentiate (Merrilees, et al., 2007; Sparks 1992)⁸ is attaining more relevance. Despite their importance, service aspects in retailing have been addressed relatively seldom in research.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

If the salespersons are trained and experienced to enrich their customer’s satisfaction, it will result in customer loyalty. But in reality, the retail outlets do not know the importance of the service quality of sales persons. They are considering only the payment of high salary to the salespersons. Hence, the creation of customer loyalty at the retail outlets is an untouched phenomenon. It is essential to examine the service quality and quality gaps in the service quality of sales persons in the retail sector for future policy implications.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the association between profile variable of customers and their customer perception on customers’ orientation factors.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since the present study describes the characteristics of the customer at retail Outlets and their view on various aspects related to the antecedents service quality of salesperson and its consequences, it is descriptive in nature. Apart from this, the study has its own confined objective and methodology to fulfill the objective of the study.

VI. SAMPLING DESIGN

By Judgment Sampling 800 respondents were selected from Thoothukudi district from the view of customers both in Urban and rural areas. The sample size of this study is 800. A well-structured interview schedule was used to collect the relevant data. Interview schedule were distributed among the customers’ acquiring salespersons’ service quality from retail outlets in Thoothukudi District.

VII. DATA COLLECTION

The required data for the present study is mainly based on the primary data. Hence, a special care has been undertaken to prepare an interview schedule with the help of review of previous studies and view of experts.

VIII. FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS

In order to analyze the data collected from the customers, the appropriate statistical tools have been selected on the basis of the objective of the study and the nature of data. Salespeople focus on generating sales and also reaching out to customers and engaging there in long term relationship (Denize and Young, 2007¹¹). This relationship with customer is the basis for understanding and sustaining customer value creation in exchanges in the hyper competitive market (Tournois, 2004¹²). The potential role of salepersons’ behaviour is inevitable in retail sector (Sengupta, et al, 2002¹³). The salespersons behaviour is usually measured by their service quality (Kveiser and Davis, 2010¹⁴). It consists of various behaviours of salesperson to deliver better services to their customers (Fairox et al., 2010¹⁵). It is essential to generate customer trust, commitment, satisfaction and loyalty.

IX. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 1 shows that from a total of 800 respondents, the representation was noted higher of female respondents (58 per cent),who were married (82 per cent), Higher Secondary (45 per cent), in the age group of 46-55 years (53 per cent) and 36-45 years(49 per cent), belonging to personal income 20,001-30,000 (20 per cent), earn more above 60,000,Number of earning members are one (49 per cent).

Table 1

Demographic profile of the customers

Basic Classification		No of Respondents		Total
Gender		Rural	Urban	
		Male	177(44)	159(40)

	Female	223(56)	241(60)	464(58)
Age	Up to 25	35(9)	32(8)	67(8)
	25-35	44(11)	64(16)	108(27)
	36-45	108(27)	89(22)	197(49)
	46-55	103(26)	110(28)	213(53)
	56-65	54(14)	71(18)	125(31)
	Above 65	56(14)	34(9)	90(23)
Level of Education	Up to 10 th standard	73(18)	29(7)	102(26)
	Higher Secondary	141(35)	39(10)	180(45)
	Certificate course/ Diploma	39(10)	42(11)	81(20)
	Under Graduation	109(27)	201(50)	310(39)
Occupation	Post-Graduation	38(10)	89(22)	127(32)
	Students	43(11)	58(15)	101(13)
	Private employees	95(24)	94(24)	189(24)
	Government employment	69(17)	83(21)	152(38)
	Business	81(20)	73(18)	154(19)
	Housewives and others	112(28)	92(23)	204(26)
Marital status	Unmarried	72(18)	75(19)	147(18)
	Married	328(82)	325(81)	653(82)
Family Size	Up to 2	21(5)	34(9)	55(7)
	Three	123(31)	114(29)	237(30)
	Four	148(37)	134(34)	282(35)
	Five	60(15)	77(19)	137(17)
Personal Income	Above 5	48(41	89
	Less than 10,000	48(12)	24(6)	72(9)
	10,001-20,000	78(20)	36(9)	114(14)
	20,001-30,000	102(26)	57(14)	159(20)
	30,001-40,000	76(19)	74(19)	150(19)
	40,001-50,000	58(15)	83(21)	141(18)
	Above 50,000	38(10)	126(32)	164(21)
No of earning members per family	One	214(54)	181(45)	395(49)
	Two	114(29)	184(46)	298(37)
	More than two	72(18)	35(9)	107(27)
Family Income per month	Less than 20,000	4 (1)	24(6)	24(3)
	20,001-30,000	75(19)	28(7)	103(13)
	30,001-40,000	106(27)	42(11)	148(20)
	40,001-50,000	88(22)	73(18)	161(20)
	50,001-60,000	67(17)	98(25)	165(21)
	Above 60,000	60(15)	139(35)	199(25)
Average monthly expenditure of the customers	Less than 10,000	25(6)	16(4)	41(5)
	10,001-20,000	35(9)	22(6)	57(7)
	20,001-30,000	44(11)	43(11)	87(11)
	30,001-40,000	114(29)	74(19)	188(24)
	Above 40,000	182(46)	245(61)	427(53)
Average monthly expenditure at the store among the customers	Less than 3,000	78(20)	25(6)	103(13)
	Rs.3,000-6,000	196(49)	51(13)	247(31)
	Rs.6,001-9,000	76(19)	49(12)	125(16)
	Rs.9,001-12,000	33(8)	128(32)	161(20)
	Above Rs.12,000	17(4)	147(37)	164(21)

Furthermore, out of 800 respondents, above 40,000 (53 per cent) are spending monthly expenditure, monthly expenditure spend at store (31 per cent) were the participants in the final survey.

X. Analysis and Discussion

Association between the Profile of Customers and their Expectation on COFs

The profile of customers may be associated with their level of expectation on customer orientation factors among the sales persons. Hence, the present study has made an attempt to find out the association between these two items with the help of one way analysis of variance. The included profile variables are gender, age,

marital status, level of education, occupational background, other business and personality index. The factors in customer orientation are to be taken as the dependent variable, a one way analysis of variance has been administered to find out such association. The resultant ‘F’ statistics are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Sl.No	Profile variables	F-statistics in		
		Customer care	Communication	Handling customer complaints
1.	Gender	3.1143	3.9093*	4.2342*
2.	Age	2.8017*	1.8642	2.9197*
3.	Level of education	2.3617	3.2108*	3.5182*
4.	Occupation	2.3884*	2.5089*	2.6993*
5.	Marital Status	2.1708*	2.9697*	2.5371*
6.	Family Size	2.0991	1.8684	2.5891*
7.	Personal Income	3.9979*	3.3308*	3.2161*
8.	Number of earning members per family	3.5068*	3.7108*	3.1144*
9.	Family Income	2.6672	2.6332*	1.9181
10.	Average monthly expenditure	2.4144*	2.6708*	2.8608*
11.	Average monthly expenditure	2.4962*	2.5508*	2.7141*
12.	Shopping frequency	2.6842*	2.7033*	2.6774*

*Significant at five per cent level.

The significantly associating profile variables regarding the perception on communication are level of education, occupation, personal income, number of earning members per family, average monthly expenditure at store and shopping frequency whereas in the level of perception on handling customers complaints are occupation, personal income, number of earning members per family, family income, average monthly expenditure at store and shopping frequency.

The levels of perception on the COFs among the rural and urban customers are differing from each other. It is imperative to exhibit the discriminant perceived COF among the rural and urban customers for some policy implications. Initially, the mean differences in each COF and its statistical significance have been computed. The discriminant power of each COF has been estimated with the help of Wilk’s Lambda.

Customers’ Perception on COFs

The level of perception on each COF among the customers has been measured by the mean score of the variables in COFs. The mean score of all the variables in COFs. The mean score of all these COFs among the rural and urban customers have been computed separately along with it’s ‘t’ statistics. The results are given in Table 3

TABLE 3

Customers’ Level of Perception on Customer Orientation Factors (COF)

Sl. No.	Customer Orientation Factors	Mean score among customers in		‘t’ statistics
		Rural	Urban	
1.	Customers care	3.1175	2.7345	2.2646*
2.	Communication	3.2456	2.5088	2.6088*
3.	Handling customer complaints	3.2084	2.5173	2.7184*
	Overall	3.1827	2.6049	2.7313*

*Significant at five per cent level.

The highly perceived COF by the rural customers are communication and handling customer complaints since it's mean scores are 3.2456 and 3.2084 respectively. Among the urban customers, these two are customer care and handling customer complaints since their mean scores are 2.7345 and 2.5173 respectively. Regarding the perception on COFs, the significant difference among the rural and urban customers have been noticed in their perception on all three COFs since their respective 't' statistics are significant at five per cent level. In total, the level of perception on COF is higher among the rural customers than that among the urban customers since their respective mean score are 3.1827 and 2.6049 respectively.

XI. CONCLUSION

There are studies conducted on general retail outlets in Thoothukudi, but they do not attempt to draw a connection between the service quality perceived by Thoothukudi customers and their perception on salespersons service quality. Although service quality and customer perception is linked through mediating the influence of customer satisfaction, this relationship cannot be taken for granted in the context of different countries since culture and background differ across countries. As a result, our interpretation on the service quality perceived by customers and the factors that influence the perception on customers' orientation factors is somehow narrow view. The level of perceptions on the Customers' Orientation Factors among the rural and urban customers for some policy implications. The highly perceived Customers' Orientation Factors by the customers are communication, customer care and handling customer complaints.

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