



INCREASING STORE LOYALTY AND PATRONAGE: WHAT MATTERS?

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ABSTRACT

Retailing is a service industry. Customer satisfaction matters a lot while doing business with customers. The retailer has to understand the customer requirements to serve the customer properly. A store has several touchpoints which the customer comes across while shopping. A clear understanding of the customer requirements will help the retailer to address the problems and fill the gaps. Customers are interested in the products available in a store. The store environment and the customer service adds value to the products available. This enhances the level of customer satisfaction. Enhanced satisfaction helps in store patronage. The paper tries to measure the influence of product assortment, store environment, instore customer service, home delivery on customer satisfaction. Further it also probes the influence of customer satisfaction on loyalty.

Keywords: Product assortment, store environment, instore customer service, home delivery, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty

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1. INTRODUCTION

Retailing depends on the flow of customers to the store. The flow of traffic depends on the service they get from the store. Customer satisfaction and loyalty matters a lot to retailers for sustainable competitive advantage. With the mushrooming of retail outlets and products being available in most of the stores satisfying customers has become very difficult for the retailers. The importance of customer satisfaction has been discussed in several literature (Innis and La Londe, 1994; Levy and Weitz, 2007; Berman and Evans, 2010). Value and service quality is seen to influence satisfaction and loyalty (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Fornell et al., 1996; Pizam and Ellis, 1999; Sivadas and Baker-Prewitt, 2000; Cronin et al.,

2000; O'Neill and Palmer, 2004; Rod et al., 2009; Karjaluoto et al., 2012). The pre-sale and post-sale expectations result in customer satisfaction (Fornell, 1992). Customers' usually measure their preconceived expectations to the firm performance which results in positively or negatively influencing the satisfaction level. Understanding customer requirements and improving the quality of services help increase value which drives customer satisfaction (Bolton and Drew, 1991; Boulding et al., 1993; Siu and Cheung, 2001; Pizam and Ellis, 1999; Cronin et al., 2000; Athanassopoulos, 2000). The service provided by the retailer depends on the level of competition, the type of customers visiting the store, the value addition strategy adopted by the retailer (Lusch et al., 2011). A customer enters a store in anticipation that the required products will be available. A wide and deep product assortment will definitely lure the customer to visit the store. When the customer visits the store the store environment provides the necessary cues to excite the customer to browse and find the product. The customer services available eases the difficulty in locating the product and clarifying the doubts. This enhances the customer satisfaction. A delighted customer becomes loyal to the store. The researchers in the paper tries to find out whether product assortment, store environment, customer service and home delivery influences customer satisfaction and whether customer satisfaction influences customer loyalty.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Product Assortment

Consumers usually prefer a store with deep product assortment within each category (Huddleston et al., 2009). Wide range of assortment and product variety attract customers (Pan and Zinkhan, 2006) and has a positive influence on customer satisfaction and store patronage (Hoch et al., 1999). Product assortment is a key driver to satisfaction, purchase intentions and profitability (Erogluet al., 2011; Kahn, 2017; Mostelleret al., 2014). It is seen that grocery stores provide a wide range of products (Hsu et al., 2010) to attract customers. Wide and attractive product assortment influences customer satisfaction (Calvo-Porrall, C., & Lévy-Mangin, J. P., 2017). Based on the discussion the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1: Product assortment has a positive influence on customer satisfaction

2.2. Store Environment

A good store environment attract traffic flow to the store. Retail store environment is composed of the store design and layout, ambience and social interactions (Baker et al., 1992, 2002). Window displays, equipment, furnishings, flooring, decoration, design also includes the store environment (Puccinelli et al., 2009). Retail store environment provides cues to the customers (Baker et al., 1992). Consumers develop subjective impressions based on the store environment (Pan and Zinkhan, 2006). Store environment reflects positive or negative vibes based on the layout which influences the consumer behavior (Calvo-Porrall, C., & Lévy-Mangin, J. P., 2017). Conducive store environment help customers to evaluate products and services quality available in the store (Baker et al., 2002) and helps gain store patronage (Baker et al., 2002; Grewal et al., 2003). Store environment influences the selection of items (Sherman et al., 1997), evaluation of products (Wheatley and Chiu, 1977), sales (Milliman, 1982), satisfaction level and repeat purchases (Baker et al., 1994). Store environment is also seen to positively impact the purchase intentions (Baker et al., 1992). Based on the discussion the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2: Store environment has a positive influence on customer satisfaction

2.3. Instore Customer Service

Service differentiation is essential for developing competitive edge. Excellent customer service helps is service differentiation (Grewal and Lévy, 2007). Customer service is an important factor in developing store patronage (Calvo-Porrá, C., & Lévy-Mangin, J. P., 2017). Customer service at a local level is more desirable and brings more customer satisfaction (Huddleston et al., 2009). Knowledgeable and empathetic staff helps to increase customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Gagliano and Hathcote, 1994). It is important how the front end staff deals with the customers to improve the customer association with the store (Solomon et al., 1985). The transaction time and accuracy helps increase customer satisfaction (Grewal et al., 2003). Service quality has an influence on customer satisfaction (Sivadas and Baker-Prewitt, 2000). Based on the discussion the following hypothesis is proposed.

H3: Instore customer service has a positive influence on customer satisfaction

2.4. Home Delivery

Home delivery is not a new service. It has been there from quite a long period. But home delivery is also not a common or popular service. Home delivery is a time consuming and expensive. Inefficient home delivery services increases the operational costs of the retailer (Kämäräinen, et al., 2001). The speed of delivery depends on picking up the ordered items and packing then faster for delivery. Picking and packing speed occurs only when the operations are specially designed for home delivery (Holmström, et al., 2000) Since most of the stores are not specialized for home delivery, there are times when the customer becomes frustrated due to the time taken for delivery and accuracy of the products delivered. Due to time constraints most of the customers would like their products to be delivered at home. Based on the discussion the following hypothesis is proposed.

H4: Home delivery has a positive influence on the customer satisfaction.

2.5. Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is the estimation of the level of fulfilment which may be pleasant or unpleasant and leads to customer loyalty (Oliver, 1997). The level of interaction which a customer encounters while he is in a store determines the degree to which he is satisfied or dissatisfied. This is enhanced by the store environment and the products available. A positive atmosphere increases the customer excitement and enhances the satisfaction level. Customer loyalty is the attitudinal and behavioral approach (Dick and Basu, 1994) and the relationship between customer attitude and repeat purchase patronage (Calvo-Porrá, C., & Lévy-Mangin, J. P., 2017). A positive attitude towards a store increases the chances of repeat purchase behavior. Employee capability enhances customer satisfaction and makes the customer loyal which in turn increases the firms' profitability (Morris, B., 1998). Customer satisfaction has a positive influence on customer loyalty (Chen and Quester, 2006; Gogoi, B.J., 2020) and store choice (Darden et al., 1983). Based on the discussion the following hypothesis is proposed.

H5: Customer satisfaction has a positive influence on customer loyalty

Based on the literature review a conceptual framework is developed as depicted in fig.1

Increasing Store Loyalty and Patronage: What Matters?

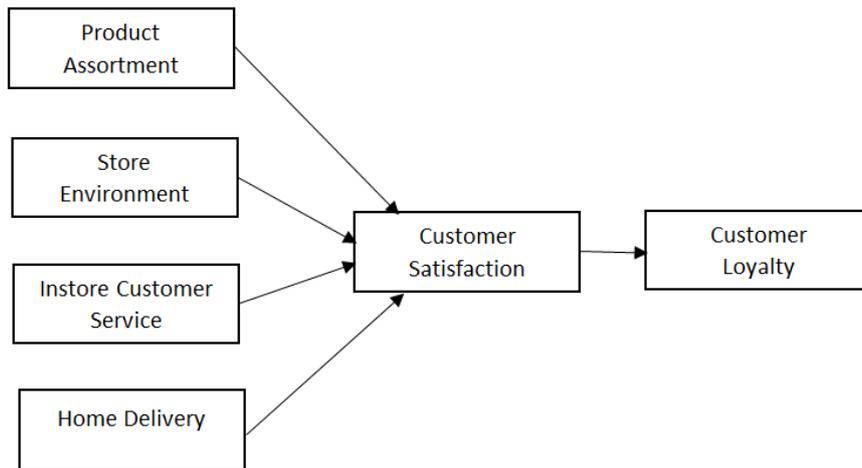


Figure 1 The Conceptual Framework

3. METHODOLOGY

A primary survey was carried out to collect data from customers who had visited an organized retail store. A structured interview was done to capture the responses. The sample size of the survey was 443. Random sampling method was used. All the variables were measured on a five point Likert's scale, 1 representing strongly disagree to 5 representing strongly agree. Data was analyzed using SPSS 22.

Measurement scale for product assortment is referred from Hoch et al. (1999), Bauer et al. (2012); for store environment from Yoo et al. (2000), Burt and Carralero-Encinas (2000), Baker et al. (2002); for instore customer service Burt and Carralero-Encinas (2000), Semeijn et al. (2004); for customer satisfaction Oliver (1997), Yoo et al.(2000) and for customer loyalty from Oliver (1997), Zeithaml et al. (1996).

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Demographics

Out of 408 respondents surveyed 47.2% were male respondents and 52.8% were female respondents.

13.8% of the respondents have an annual household income of less than INR 4 LPA, 29.6% of the respondents have an annual household income INR 4 LPA to less than 7 LPA, 30.5% of the respondents have an annual household income of INR 7 LPA to less than 10 LPA, 12.6% of the respondents have an annual household income of INR 10 LPA to less than 13 LPA and 13.5% of the respondents have an annual household income of more than 13 LPA.

4.2. Factor Analysis

Table 1 Rotated Component Matrix

	Component						Chronbach's Alpha
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
PA1						.804	.570
PA2						.702	
PA3						.428	
SE1		.783					.769
SE2		.817					

	Component						Chronbach's Alpha
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
SE3		.594					
SE4		.644					
CS1				.606			
CS2				.741			
CS3				.745			.790
CS4				.538			
HD1	.662						
HD2	.748						
HD3	.799						.806
HD4	.656						
SAT1			.689				
SAT2			.750				.772
SAT3			.741				
SAT4			.654				
LTY1					.656		
LTY2					.681		.742
LTY3					.603		
LTY4					.668		
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Equamax with Kaiser Normalization.							
a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.							

Cronbach's Alpha value of the overall reliability is 0.894

1.03% of the variance is explained by the 6 factors in table 1. KMO test value of 0.888 signifies sample adequacy. Bartlett's test of sphericity shows high significance level of 0.00001. This shows the adequacy of factor analysis test. The 23 items are all distributed properly under the 6 respective constructs. Thus all the items under each construct are able to define the constructs well. The Cronbach's alpha reliability of all the individual constructs are 0.570 and above. The overall Cronbach's alpha reliability is 0.894. This meets the reliability requirement for the scale adopted.

4.3. Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is conducted to test the relationship between

- 1) SAT and (PA, SE, CS, HD)
- 2) LTY and SAT

Hence Regression is done twice as shown below: Regression Model 1 and Regression Model 2

The results of the regression analysis is shown below.

4.3.1. Regression Model 1

Table 2. Model Summary^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.463 ^a	.215	.208	.603	1.877
a. Predictors: (Constant), HD, PA, SE, CS					
b. Dependent Variable: SAT					

Table 3 ANOVA^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	43.629	4	10.907	29.949	.000 ^b
	Residual	159.515	438	.364		
	Total	203.144	442			
a. Dependent Variable: SAT						
b. Predictors: (Constant), HD, PA, SE, CS						

Table 4 Coefficients^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.930	.203		9.528	.000		
	PA	.131	.050	.127	2.598	.010	.744	1.343
	SE	.136	.042	.158	3.249	.001	.754	1.326
	CS	.201	.050	.229	4.038	.000	.559	1.790
	HD	.085	.049	.092	1.718	.086	.628	1.593
a. Dependent Variable: SAT								

R square from table 2 is 0.215 and standard error of the estimate is 0.603. The F test from table 3 shows high significance. The tolerance and VIF values from table 4 is well within limits. There is no sign of multicollinearity. Durbin Watson value from table 2 shows no sign of autocorrelation. This shows that the model is fit.

4.3.2. Regression Model 2

Table 5 Model Summary^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.560 ^a	.314	.313	.543	2.144
a. Predictors: (Constant), SAT					
b. Dependent Variable: LTY					

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	59.562	1	59.562	201.914	.000 ^b
	Residual	130.088	441	.295		
	Total	189.650	442			
a. Dependent Variable: LTY						
b. Predictors: (Constant), SAT						

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.724	.153		11.263	.000		
	SAT	.541	.038	.560	14.210	.000	1.000	1.000
a. Dependent Variable: LTY								

R square from table 5 is 0.314 and standard error of the estimate is 0.543. The F test from table 6 shows high significance. The tolerance and VIF values from table 7 is well within limits. There is no sign of multicollinearity. Durbin Watson value from table 5 shows no sign of autocorrelation. This shows that the model is fit.

4.3.4. Hypotheses Test results

From the Regression Model 1 and Regression Model 2 analysis, the summary of the hypotheses test is given in Table 8 below.

Relationship	Coefficient (β)	t value	p	Results
PA \rightarrow SAT	.131	2.598	.010	Accept H1
SE \rightarrow SAT	.136	3.249	.001	Accept H2
CS \rightarrow SAT	.201	4.038	.00001	Accept H3
HD \rightarrow SAT	.085	1.718	.086	Reject H4
LTY \rightarrow SAT	.541	14.210	.00001	Accept H5
Note: β = standardized beta coefficients; * $p < 0.05$ (tested at 5% significance level)				

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis it is seen that product assortment has a positive influence on customer satisfaction. Customers prefer stores with wide and deep assortment of products. Customers make their product choices within seconds while shopping (Judd et al., 1989). A good collection of products with proper displays will definitely help in fulfilling the customer requirement.

Store environment has a positive influence on customer satisfaction. A good store environment sends positive cues to the customer making him enjoy shopping in the store. Store environment is a key differentiator in enhancing customer experience (Hu and Jasper, 2006). Multiple store environment cues increase the perceived value of the customer thereby influencing satisfaction and purchase intention (Baker et al., 2002).

Instore customer service has a positive influence on customer satisfaction. Most of the time customer needs assistance to find and choose their products. At times customers are confused in choosing their brands. This is due to a large number of stimuli existing in a store (Underwood et al., 2001). Efficient customer service helps out sort the problems faced by customers and help in increasing satisfaction. A proper instore customer service captures customers' attention and helps smoothen decision making (Silayoi and Speece, 2004).

Home delivery do not have a positive influence on customer satisfaction. Though home delivery is desirable yet it seems customers are interested in picking up the products from the shop themselves. Quite often it is seen that the product and brand varies from that ordered. Also due to inefficient operations the goods are not delivered on time and are mostly overpriced.

Customer satisfaction has a positive influence on customer loyalty. A satisfied customer becomes loyal to the store as it provides comfort and confidence in shopping. Customer loyalty reflects the attitude of the customer to patronize the store in terms of repeat purchase and store recommendation (Chebat et al., 2009, p. 54).

Overall it is seen that product assortment, store environment and customer service has an influence in customer satisfaction. Retailers should focus on increasing the productivity of these elements to increase loyalty and store patronage.

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APPENDIX

Parameters	Statements
PA	Product Assortment
PA1	I like stores with variety of brands
PA2	I like stores with neat product arrangement and presentation
PA3	I like stores with deep and wide assortment of products
SE	Store Environment
SE1	I like good layout and organization of the store
SE2	Decoration and atmosphere of the specialty store appeals to me
SE3	Cleanliness of the store appeals to me
SE4	Aroma and smell of the store drives me
CS	Instore Customer Service
CS1	Staffing levels of a store matters a lot
CS2	Lines and wait time should be shorter
CS3	Speed and accuracy appeals a lot to me
CS4	Service policies and practices should be transparent
HD	Home Delivery
HD1	I like stores with home delivery facilities
HD2	I would like all my products to be delivered at home
HD3	I prefer home delivery to visiting the store
HD4	Overall home delivery facilities increases my option of increase in purchase
CS	Customer Satisfaction
CS1	I am satisfied with the store service delivery
CS2	The store provides me with good value for money
CS3	I am satisfied with the products offered in the store
CS4	Overall I am satisfied with the store
LTY	Customer Loyalty
LTY1	I speak favorably about the store
LTY2	I will make next product purchase at this store
LTY3	I would recommend this store to relatives and friends
LTY4	I will only purchase at this store exclusively