

Identifying How Customer's Loyalty and Retention Influences Relationship Marketing in a Hotel Industry

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Abstract

In today's diverse global marketplace, relationship marketing has been recognized as an excellent way to develop an exclusive long-term relationship with their clients. Many organizations, on the other hand, struggle to systematically measure and monitor customer retention and the factors that influence it. Personal connection and service quality are becoming increasingly important to a growing number of businesses. The aim of this research is to emphasize the significance of personal connection and service quality in the service industry. This research was conducted using a questionnaire that was distributed to 200 hotel guests in urban areas such as Georgetown and Penang. It can be concluded that customer loyalty and customer retention play an important role in relationship marketing. As a result, the higher the degree of personal connection and service quality, the more likely it is that a customer will return to the hotel and recommend it to others.

Keywords: *Relationship Marketing, hotel, industry, customer, personal connection, service quality, retention*

1. Introduction

Company is no longer about manufacturing, selling, and supplying products in today's major industries, as it once was (Gilbert & Choi, 2003). Advocates of the traditional 4Ps marketing approach, which focused on twiggling one or more marketing mix components, have had bad experiences treating customers as a "bunch" of homogeneous market segments (Ahmad, 2000). Dutch Bank used its reputation to draw new customers by offering cash rewards. After the minimum stay period had elapsed, the bank discovered that the same customers had left. As a result, traditional marketing falls short of capturing the essential elements that must be emphasised in order to build and sustain long-term relationships.

Relationship marketing, according to Gilbert and Choi (2003), is focused on the premise that satisfying and retaining customers makes financial sense because the intensity and length of the relationship are directly proportional to the resulting profitability. Furthermore, it will be difficult for competitors to replace an agency that builds and maintains positive customer relationships, offering a long-term competitive advantage. Effective marketers, according to Zineldin (1999), see a first-time sale as the start of a relationship with a customer, rather than the end of a process. He goes on to say that a company needs to create and maintain long-term customer relationships in order to protect added value.

Overview of Hotel Industry

The management of a hotel service is considered a major business operation. Larger hotels may have a management structure similar to that of a large corporation, with a CEO, department heads overseeing various departments, middle managers, administrative staff, and line-level supervisors. Hotel management research, a business degree, and/or certificate programmes are all designed to train hotel managers for careers in the industry. (2016, Fukey.L, Kumar.J, Pathil.J, Kandappan.B)

The Ritz Hotel in London, United Kingdom, is one of several hotels that have become popular as a result of their association with Irving Berlin's song "Puttin' on the Ritz" The Algonquin Hotel in New York City is known for hosting the literary group the Algonquin Round Table, and the Hotel Chelsea, also in New York City, has been the subject of many songs and was the site of Nancy Spungen's stabbing" (allegedly by her boyfriend Sid Vicious). The Waldorf Astoria and Statler hotels in New York City are named after the Muppets' Statler and Waldorf. (Udunuwara.M, 2015)

According to Previndran Singhe of the Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH), there are strong signs of the hotel and resorts industry's potential growth in Asia, with 1.6 billion foreign travellers expected in the area by 2020, nearly double last year's estimates. However, much of this is contingent on the type of programmes that are consistently provided to clients. When customers notice a lack of quality service in a hotel, they have the choice of moving on to another hotel, which has an impact on the original hotel's business. (Krataithong. J &Rakrachakarn. P, 2020)

Objective of this study

- (1) To highlight how personal connection and service quality lead to customer retention.
- (2) To present a detailed critique on how personal connection and service quality lead to customer retention.
- (3) To evaluate how relationship marketing is important in increasing customer retention in the hotel industry

2. Literature Review

Relationship Marketing

Relationship marketing is focused on the concept of intensifying relationships with consumers in order to create long-term and long-lasting relationships. The conventional disconnected concepts of customer management are being altered in order to enable improvements. Relationship marketing is concerned with the management of a longer customer relationship. This situation has shown the factual importance of character, demonstrating that relationship marketing will play a critical role in certifying potential marketing decisions. Relationship marketing was first proposed by Berry (1983) as a long-term and long-lasting marketing strategy. It stressed the importance of a long-term approach centred on customer retention. It is primarily concerned with retaining customers who can have long-term value. Relationship marketing prioritises customer retention over new customer acquisition. (Congram,1987).

Relationship marketing was not always effective, according to Barbara Jackson (1985). It would be spectacularly fine in the opposite situation. Emily Chien, rewards business development, said, "The assertiveness of supporting a bond with customers is at the core of nearly everything we do." Brand superiority, labelling, customer service, and identification and compensation are all variables in relationship marketing, according to her. Ms. Chien said, "We do our utmost to ensure that the services and products are tailored to who you are and what you want, using expertise to earn consistent interaction and customer feedback." (Cara, 2001).

The operation of relationship marketing, according to Aderson and Narus (1991), is to distribute resources based on individual client preferences. Certain consumers need robust coverage and plan to stay with their providers for a long time. Furthermore, some customers switch service providers due to unfavourable circumstances. In this case, the company will be able to assist the customers by approving lower prices if the consumer is willing to tolerate less service. As a result, the customer could be retained as an original partnership's operating base. Well-organized relationship marketing yields major long-term and long-lasting benefits. Improved earnings, according to So and Speece, lead to increased customer loyalty, fidelity, incentive to use more and different services, increased productivity, and more recommendations (2000). In addition, relationship marketing refers to the mutually beneficial relationship that can be established between customers and hotels.

In order to achieve the Bashes Convoluteds objectives, relationship marketing (RM) seeks to sustain and improve relationships with customers as well as other revenue-generating activities. Mutual transactions and commitment fulfillment complete the picture. (Gronroos,1994).

Harker (1999, p. 16) looked at 117 different references from the RM literature and recommended that an agency's presence be positive. Creating, sustaining, and growing loyal, collaborative, and successful partnerships with individual customers who are actively engaged in relationship marketing. Additional study in the field of RM strategy has been conducted (Harker, 1999); this article attempts to achieve the typical situation by analysing the theoretical literature in the areas of RM. Improved RM studies were the product of this initiative. The report also includes a comprehensive appendix that will be helpful to both researchers and experts.

Relationship marketing is a strategy for attracting, retaining, and improving consumer relationships (Christopher et al., 1991; Gummesson, 1991; Lindgreen et al.,2004). Berry (1983) according to the theory of partnership marketing, which occurs in the fields of services marketing and industrial marketing. Managing interfaces, relationships, and processes, according to Gummesson (1993), is crucial. The aim of relationship marketing, according to Gronroos (1994), is to determine, sustain, and create profitable relationships with customers and other followers, which is why the events planned were convened. It is the aim, according to Rapp and Collins (1990), to create and maintain long-term relationships between businesses and their customers that benefit both margins. Following that, there is associated association and obligation fulfillment (Ndubisi, 2006).To put it another way, the main goal is to achieve temporary customer reliability, which Oliver (1999) described as a long-term commitment to repurchase or patronize a desired product or service. Situational conditions and marketing efforts have the potential to cause behavioral switching in either case. Blomqvist (1993) suggested the following basic characteristics of relationship marketing: each customer is evaluated as

an individual's person or Units; firms' practices are primarily focused on current customers; The business will seek to achieve effectiveness by reducing customer purchases and consolidating customer relationships, and operations will be focused on touch and dialogue.

Customer Retention

In recent years, vendors' concern about customer retention has grown. It is widely assumed that keeping existing customers is less expensive than acquiring new ones. The lifetime cost of a consumer should be considered, according to existing marketing literature. According to Torres and Shery (2006), companies understand that missing a customer means missing more than a single action; it means missing the entire rivulet of transactions that consumers would like to make over the course of a lifetime of purchases

As a result, the emphasis of this study will be on how the use of services as a relationship marketing tool affects customer retention. They've spoken about how customer retention trainers can't be noticed, but their willingness to stay, salary, suitability, and other factors can help them be found. As a result, the rate factor is one of the most important influences they want to keep as a business. In order to retain loyal customers, the company struggles to maintain a "value for money" concept. The results of this study were determined using customer satisfaction as a criterion, and the duration of stay as a criterion.

Personal Connection

It has to do with the quality of the entire employee complex in terms of distributing services, especially staffs, managers, and temporary workers. Personal relationships indicate facilities where customers can expect responsiveness, dependability, kindness, honesty, and capability. Employees who are friendly and considerate are able to change customers' minds about the hotel. The use of assurance, empathy, and responsiveness to show the standard of staff was completed by (Padma & Lokachari, 2010). Andaleeb (2006) identified three of the five dimensions of customer-staff interaction: "staff competence," "behaviour," and "communication," all of which return the importance of the customer relationship. In their studies on healthcare, Hasnin (2001) and Sower (2001) used the words "courtesy" and "valued and loving" to reflect personal efficiency. According to Otani and Kurz (2005), "employee" was more important than other factors in improving customer satisfaction.

Customer retention is often aided by informal relations, or Guanxi. According to So (2000), personal relationships, also known as Guanxi, are a significant aspect of business in Chinese unions. Strong confidence dependencies are one division of Chinese business society. Guanxi is thus important as an ethnicity factor in many East Asian cultures, such as Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia; wherever there is significant Chinese inspiration; and in (superior) China, including Hong Kong. She went on to say that Guanxi relationships are essentially personal and social, and that "the preservation of close Guanxi involves constant social contact...", which includes group visits, dinner or lunch invitations, and gifts (Tong and Yong,1998,P.81).Daily entertainments were cited by Buttery and Wong (1999) as one of the elements in building strong relationships among the Chinese in Hong Kong. Pornpiakan

(1999) went so far as to say that acknowledging demands for drinks and lunch was one of the acts that guided cultural revision in Asian (Japanese and Thai) business styles.

This research will look at how Guanxi is used in the Malaysian context. Along with personal relationships, the standard of all personnel involved in providing care, such as physicians, nurses, paramedical, and support staff, is essential. Customers expect customers' service providers to be attentive, dependable, kind, truthful, and competent. Customers expect customers' service providers to be attentive, dependable, kind, truthful, and competent. The hospital's impressions of the patients are developed thanks to the staff's friendliness and politeness.

Service Quality

As a general measure of service by consumers, service quality has been well articulated in service marketing literature. The relationship between customers' prior perceptions of services and their findings after actual encounters with service performances is thought to be the source of service quality (Ganguli & Roy, 2010). In the service literature, the perception of service quality has been debated as one of the most contentious issues. This is because it necessitates agreement (Babakus & Boller, 1992; Gupta, 2005) in the manner mentioned.

Overall, service quality has been viewed as both a characteristic and an attitude (Rust & Oliver, 2003). (Cronin & Taylor, 2005). Service quality, on the other hand, is described as consumers' specific evaluative judgments based on the service output they experience, according to the literature (Dabholkar, Shepherd, Thorpe, Fetsu & Maxwell, 2006).

3. Methodology

A total of 200 hotel customers in Malaysia were chosen for this analysis. Penang is the subject of this research. The data for this study will be collected by providing questionnaires to customers of hotels in urban areas, such as Georgetown. The reason for selecting this location is that these are commercial centres with hotels as a primary activity.

4. Survey Finding

Respondents' Demographic Information

Table 4.1: Socio demographic backgrounds of respondents (n=200)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years)		
≤ 30	92	46
31 to 35	40	20
36 to 40	31	15.5
41 to 50	34	17
> 51	3	1.5
Mean ± S.D.	33.21 ± 7.29	

Minimum	22	
Maximum	51	
Sex		
Male	98	49
Female	102	51
Ethnicity		
Malay	75	37.5
Chinese	74	37
Indian	39	19.5
Others	12	6
Marital status		
Single	76	38
Married	112	56
Separated/Divorced	7	3.5
Widow/Widower	5	2.5
Occupation		
Managers	21	10.5
Assistant Managers	25	12.5
Officers	83	41.5
Sales Staff	43	21.5
Admin Staff	28	14
No. of years using this hotel		
≤ 1	33	16.5
2 to 3	56	28
4 to 5	50	25
6 to 10	46	23
. > 10	15	7.5
Mean ± S.D.	1.38 ± 0.62	
Minimum	1	
Maximum	22	

According to Table 4.1, the majority of respondents are under the age of 30. (46%) Between the ages of 31 and 35, 20% of those polled fall into this category. Just 1.5 % of those 51 and older responded to the poll. Females make up the majority (51%) of the population, followed by males (49 %). Malays make up 37.5 % of the population, followed by Chinese (37 %), Indians (19.5 %), and other races (6 %). When it comes to marital status, married people make up the majority (56 %), followed by singles (38 %).

Officers are the most common occupation among respondents (41.5%), followed by sales employees (21.5%) and administrative staff (14%). When asked how many years of business experience they have with a specific hotel, the majority of respondents claim they have two to three years (28 %). Just 15 people (7.5 %) have worked at the same hotel for more than ten years.

Correlation Analysis

Table 4.2: Correlation Coefficients between selected variables and Customer Retention

Variables	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Age	-.005	.939
Service Quality	.376*	.0001
Personal Connections	.612*	.0001

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.3: Zero-order correlations between Service Quality, Personal Connections and Customer Retention

Variables	Y	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃
Y Customer Retention	1			
X ₁ Service Quality	.376*	1		
X ₂ Personal Connections	.612*	.298*	1	

Notes: zero-order coefficients $p < 0.01$; Bonferroni adjusted alpha = 0.01 (0.05/3).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Regression Analysis

Table 4.4: Results of Multiple Linear Regressions on Customer Retention (Stepwise Method)

Variables	<i>b</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	-1.022	-	.451
Personal Connections	.505	.509	.0001
<i>F</i> = 92.02		<i>R</i> = .691	
<i>Sig-F</i> = .0001		<i>R</i> ² = .478	

This section summarises the study's results in relation to the theories proposed in Chapter 3. The results show that the r value between Service Quality and Customer Retention is .376 ($p = .001$) and that the relationship is positive, meaning that as Service Quality improves, so does Customer Retention. As a result, H1 is approved for this review. The theory states that when consumers are satisfied with the service quality, their expectation of service quality rises, which increases the customers' level of retention in relation to the services rendered.

Personal Connections and Customer Retention have a substantial positive relationship ($r = .612$, $p = .001$), according to the results. This suggests that the higher the number of personal connections, the higher the customer retention rate. As a result, the study's H2 is also accepted. This theory states that in order for a customer to be satisfied, there must be some level of Personal Connections between the customer and hotel employees. As a result, the study's H2 is also accepted. This theory states that in order for a customer to be satisfied, there must be some level of Personal Connections between the customer and hotel employees. Customer relationship growth is viewed as a critical factor in a variety of markets, especially in the organisational and service sectors.

A customer's estimation of the nature of a partnership is often influenced by the quality of encounters with employees of a specific organisation; in this case, the hotel's employees. A salesperson is thought to be the secret to determining customer satisfaction levels. The degree to which a customer trusts a salesperson would be positively influenced by the belief that the salesperson is acting in the best interests of the customer (customer-oriented), and negatively influenced by the belief that the salesperson is acting in his own best interests (self-centered) (sales-oriented).

Finally, loyal clients, according to Guru et al. (2000), will stay with a company for a long time. The customer's assumption or impression that the quantity of service earned from one organisation is greater than that available from other organisations will lead to loyalty behaviours such as relationship continuation or scope, and referral to others. He went on to say that loyal customers who see an abundance of value in the company's service offering would almost definitely be pleased. As a result, the higher the excess quantity of value perceived by the customer in the purchase of the organization's goods or services, the higher the degree of Personal connection and Service Quality and, as a result, customer retention.

5. Conclusion & Discussion

The quality of interactions with employees of a particular organisation, in these case hotel employees, has a significant impact on customers' perceptions of the value of a relationship. When it comes to determining Personal Connection and Service Quality, a salesperson is thought to be the key. Customer confidence in salespeople is positively influenced by the belief that the salesperson is acting in the customer's best interests (customer-oriented), and negatively influenced by the belief that the salesperson is acting in his own best interests (self-centered) (sales-oriented).

The next aspect of Personal Connection, Service Quality and retention is that, according to the study goal, the higher the level of customer satisfaction, the greater the likelihood of customer retention in the same hotel. Customer satisfaction in the hotel can be measured using the following criteria: For

starters, a satisfied customer is more likely to stay at the same hotel again. Second, the more time a customer spends at a hotel, the more amenities it offers. Finally, acquiring a new customer is more costly than keeping a current one, and a satisfied customer is less likely to switch locations. Customer satisfaction and retention are inextricably linked. The higher a customer's level of satisfaction, the more likely they are to return and recommend the hotel to others. Employee engagement, productivity, and profitability are all boosted by customer satisfaction. You must first win your customers' confidence before you can boost customer loyalty (Reichheld and Schfter, 2000 as cited in Luck and Lancaster, 2003).

As a result, based on the study's goal, it can be deduced that customer satisfaction and customer retention have a positive relationship. According to the study's target, there is a clear positive relationship between customer satisfaction and customer retention, which backs up previous findings (Mitroff & Denton, 1999); (Cronin,Taylor ,2006).As a result, according to estimates, consumer loyalty is one of the most important results of all marketing practices in business firms. It is well understood that satisfying a company's customers necessitates growing the business, acquiring a greater market share, and cultivating repeat and referral business, both of which lead to improved profitability (Kandampuly, 2005).

Suggestion and Recommendation

Relationship marketing in the hotel industry motivates and encourages customers to continue with the hotel for a long time, according to this report. Customers who are satisfied with their inner needs are more likely to be creative because they have more time to focus on and share their satisfaction with the hotel as well as their desires with others. More importantly, hotels have more time to evolve or expand instead of constantly thinking about their turnover and attracting new customers. The hotel manager or any lower-level workers should order this crucial transition, just like any other. Without a question, they are the most important variables. Customers cannot be retained in a short period of time by mistake, just as they cannot be retained in a short period of time by experts. As a result, experts should train new and even experienced staff. Psychologists and sociologists, as well as seasoned executives, may be invited to participate. Rather than attracting and retaining customers, they can assist and give various guidance to staff.

Relationship marketing may be a promising field of research for some researchers interested in the food industry or the food industry in halal restaurants, according to the findings of this study. Managers should regularly review their data and share it with others without being envious or optimistic. It encourages system-wide teamwork and encourages people to come up with new ideas. Managers can be more patient when dealing with customer problems and ask employees to handle them.

Instilling a sense of dignity, trust, and reverence in the hotel will help to reduce conflict, turbulence, and aggression. A few monthly fights in a hotel seem common in the short term, but long-term hateful behaviour is a different storey. This finding would help managers understand how to interpret consumer expectations, especially in terms of customer loyalty and retention. Training and

assessment are also needed for crisis management. For hotels with a high customer retention rate, this is a critical topic.

Limitation of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research

This thesis took a lot of time and effort to complete, but it has drawbacks, just like any other study. Any flaws or limitations in the study should be addressed. There are some deficiencies in this study. Despite the fact that Malaysia has a large number of hotels, only eight were chosen for the study. The study's greatest mistake was collecting data from these hotels. It was difficult to get into some of the hotels, particularly well-known hotels, let alone gather information. For example, G Hotel and Evergreen Laurel each have their own set of rules. Obtaining approval from the human resource department is needed and takes time. Despite the fact that hotels provided 200 questionnaires, the sample size reflects just a small portion of the overall population of the organisations. The study would be more robust if the sample size was increased. Another important factor to consider is the age of the respondents, with the majority (46%) being under 30, meaning that they lacked experience. In addition, 28 percent of respondents reserved or used hotels in the Penang city, according to the work experience table. Despite my best efforts, only a few surveys were sent to informed business customers as part of a sample of my findings. Since they were preoccupied with their business ceremony and meeting for a few days and didn't have much time to directly address any of the questions, most hotel customers were in a rush to answer all of the questions. The cross-sectional architecture has some drawbacks in this study. A more complete picture would emerge from more research based on triangulated data from different sources and data collection methods. Using several methods at the same time may also improve the test's reliability.

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