

STUDYING THE EMPLOYEES PERFORMANCE FACTORS AFFECTING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN STORES OF KOHKILUYEH AND BOYERAHMAD

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ABSTRACT

Given the importance of the Refah department stores among customers, this study has been done to investigating the employees' performance factors affecting customer satisfaction in stores of Kohkiluyeh and Boyerahmad. Given the stated purpose, the main question of the researcher is that how employees' performances factors are affecting customer satisfaction. To test these hypotheses, 150 persons were selected as samples from the statistical community. Using simple random sampling, Survey questionnaires were distributed randomly. A total of 150 questionnaires were analyzed. To collect the data needed to test the research hypotheses, the researcher made questionnaire with 79% of the reliability and validity of provided by the experts was used. Data collected using spss software and using regression testing, independent t-tests were analyzed ks. The main hypothesis testing at 95% reliability showed that the performance factors affect customer satisfaction. Secondary hypotheses test suggests that trust, accountability, innovation and service affect customer satisfaction.

Keywords: *Service, Innovation, Trust, Accountability, Customer Satisfaction*

INTRODUCTION

Investigating the characteristics of the store that affect the customers desire to buy and resolve their needs has the utmost value. To succeed in this market, organizations are faced with several challenges. One of the challenges is creating a pleasant place to customers to be able to do their purchase in this place in psychological and financial calm. Store in a general sense, refers to the place in which purchase occurs. Due to the various socio-economic and cultural conditions among different countries factors that affect the choice of stores are different. One of the factors that encourage customers to enter a shop is related to mental image from the store (Kinz *et al.*, 2007). Customer mentality from the store has been studied by different people that one of them is store availability (Fisk, 1962). A product in stores, price, sales promotion, after-sales service, has been effective in creating the image of the store and the factors that affect customer satisfaction (Eksneft, 1975). Martino explains that a part of the image that is formed in the minds of buyers is related to tangible quality and characteristics and the other part is related to intangible characteristics of the store. Linoguit believes that the mental image of the shop is not only a set of subjective perceptions of the customer from the shop characteristics, but it is a process of the effect of all the features of a store. These features include matching decoration of the stores to new style, vendors' behavior, attractiveness of the stores and advertising. Another factor affecting the choice of store is the brand of retail. A shop's name is also a brand and all products available in any store advertise that brand (Dad and Lindly, 2003). In addition of mental image and the store brand, other factors can influence the preference of buyers in selecting stores including social factors, cultural factors, buying habits, factors such as the location such as the reason for the purchase, timeframe and volume of purchases. Marketers are trying to attract people to their stores; they influence customers' preferences by considering factors affecting their choice of stores. The research in this field identifies the characteristics affecting the choice of stores and analyzes these factors that in addition to expansion of the area of

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marketing science, it is a hope to help the authorities to identify this topic and adopt appropriate measures to store management.

Research Literature

The Concept of Customer Satisfaction

Different definitions of the concept of customer satisfaction have been provided by marketing theorists; Kotler, defines customer satisfaction as the degree to which a company's actual performance meets customer expectations. According to Kotler, if the company performance meets customer expectations, customer feels satisfaction and otherwise he feels dissatisfaction (Kotler, 2003).

Jamal and Naser define customer satisfaction as a customer feeling or attitude toward a product or service after using it. These researchers suggest that customer satisfaction is the main result of marketer activity that serves as a link between the various stages of consumer buying behavior. For example, if customers are satisfied with a particular service, they will likely repeat their purchase. Satisfied clients may also speak with others about their experiences and they are involved in positive mouth (verbal) advertising. In contrast, dissatisfied customers are likely to cut his ties with the company and they are involved in negative mouth advertising. In addition, behaviors such as repeat purchases and verbal advertising directly affect the viability and profitability of a company (Jamal and Naser).

Customer Satisfaction Measurement

A Measurement of the Initial and Final Satisfaction

Measuring customer satisfaction, just after the receipt of goods or services on the quality of the work done, is called the initial satisfaction. Sometimes the work done (goods and services received) and customer reviews measurement are not consistent. This means that Customer Reviews are not measured when they receive the goods or services and they do it later. This type of measurement is called final satisfaction.

(B) Objective and Subjective Measurement of Satisfaction

1- Subjective measurement: This type of measurement is related to the feelings and attitudes of customers that are measured using a questionnaire and a survey of customers.

2- Objective measurement: This type of measurement is done through the actual data collection, and surveying organization documents. Some of objective indicators to measure customer satisfaction include: general complaint volume, market shares, the activity level and so on (Office of the comptroller, 2002)

Generally measuring of customers' satisfaction is a process including these steps and procedures:

- 1- Determining some factors and index for customer satisfaction
- 2- Selecting the method and how to measure method
- 3- measuring and evaluation of customer satisfaction
- 4- Report of customer satisfaction
- 5- Data analysis (Todorov, 1999)

Indicators of customer satisfaction in the public sector: There are major differences between indicators of customer satisfaction in the public sector and the private sector (business). Expectations and demands of the customers from the offered products in the private sector, include some expectations such as low cost, high quality, timely delivery, durable products, after sales service, appearance, and function, but indicators of satisfaction in the public sector, can have many different dimensions and these dimensions are beyond the customer's perspective in the private sector to a commodity or a type of good (Riahi, 2002).

In Ziethamel view the customer satisfaction index in the public sector, include:

- 1- Tangible and intangible: the physical and simple display of equipment, personnel and communication elements
- 2- The reliability of the staff and organization
- 3- Accountability of employees
- 4- Competence: having knowledge and skills to serve
- 5- Courtesy and politeness and respect in dealing with customers
- 6- Reliability: credibility and legitimacy of service providers

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- 7- Safety: having enough peace and being away from danger
- 8- Availability: being available and the ease of contact and communication with staff
- 9- Appropriate communication: the language that they understand and listen to notify customers
- 10- Understanding: the effort to understand the customers' needs and demands

From another perspective, indicators of satisfaction of clients in the public sector, include:

- 1- Humility: Welcoming the customer, paying attention to the customer, speaking with an open face and a pleasant talk, being polite and helpful, ending the meeting in a friendly manner;
- 2- Being concise: having a rapid reaction, providing agendas and concise explanations, focusing on the business;
- 3- Completeness: providing services fully, providing directions and complete responses;
- 4- Cleanness: having clean and tidy appearance, maintaining clean and tidy and safety working environment;
- 5- Resolution: speaking and asking clearly, providing clear agendas, providing transparent and understandable explanations, not using specific technical and unintelligible words.
- 6- Paying attention to customer: listen to customers with full attention to the words and listen to the clients (Riahi, 2002).

Ways of satisfying customers: listening to customers is a prerequisite for customer satisfaction. Paying attention to customer complaints, recommendations system, quality assurance, inspection and evaluation are some methods that may provide the voice of customer (Rahnavard, 2003).

But only moment evaluation when the customer receives the product or service is not enough. Organizations should be aware of the customers' current and future needs recognize customers' reactions and to know what they like (Jensen, 2001).

In today's turbulent environment, not expressed customers' needs should also be considered. Some characteristics of a product or service that have an impact on customer satisfaction have been classified as follows:

- 1- Basic expectations: characteristics are considered obvious by customers and in case of removing; they can lead to customer dissatisfaction.
- 2- Expressed needs: characteristics demanded by customers.
- 3- Unexpressed needs: characteristics not expressed by customers because of their forgetfulness or inattention, but they are important for customers.
- 4- Stimulating: features that are relevant to the future needs of customers and, if offered, will be rapturous for customers.

Factors Affecting Customer Satisfaction

Creativity

Creativity and innovation is something that is constantly felt in the organization. Therefore, it should be institutionalized and become a part of the work and culture of the organization. If managers and policy-makers of the organization don't believe in creativity and innovation as essential activities, no activity in this area last long. Creating research and innovation in the organization can be used to facilitate and accelerate innovation. Establishing common principles for innovation to be seen as a common norm in organizations requires education. In Toffler's opinion the main activities and ways to deal with the huge developments and future life to accept changes is education and training. Effective and rich teaching helps people to be able to grow and achieve sufficient capability in their career and to operate more efficiently. Managers need to know that one of the main goals of education in today's turbulent and variable environment, is learning creativity and innovation methods (Hassan).

Creativity and innovation will lead to the fulfillment of the following:

- Talents growth and blossoming and driving to the self-actualization;
- Individual, occupational and social success;
- The emergence of the organization;
- Products and services;
- Increasing the quantity, variety of products and services;

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- Increasing the quality of products and services and success in competence;
- Reducing costs, waste and waste of resources;
- Increasing the work motivation of organization employees;
- Promoting mental health and job satisfaction of staff;
- Improving the efficiency of the organization;
- The success of the organization management and staff;
- Development of the organization;
- Encourage a sense of competition;
- Reducing administrative bureaucracy "reducing working at desk and encouraging activism
- Providing and stimulating production factors.

Accountability

Today, organizations who are seeking success, are seeking ways that can lead the market in their control. One of the most important success factors is customer orientation in the organization. In this context, many organizations have mentioned the word and have considered it less practically. Key of practical implementation of customer-oriented concept lies in the strategy of the organization. This strategy should be based on problem solving by identifying customer overt and covert needs now and in the future. Product markets are increasingly competitive in the global and national level. Additionally, the product life cycle due to constant changes in technology and the needs of customers is shorting. In such an environment, therefore, an organization will have no choice. The organization must anticipate the future needs of the customers and try to meet them. Meeting the needs of the customers is not enough, because companies have been successful in providing new products that have been able to understand the future needs of customers.

Work Capabilities (Confidence)

Work capabilities require special skills and necessary knowledge to understand the needs and expectations of the customers to be able to provide expected services at all levels of the organization.

Physical Evidence

The physical and tangible evidence means modern banking equipment, attractive physical features, beautiful accessories, items, forms, forms and documents as well as the clean and tidy appearance of staff; in this case, the majority of customers were satisfied (Alerdo, 2000).

Trust

Trust is continuous self-learning process in any relationship that is non-negotiable, like trust in children in acceptance of a responsibility. Robbins (2003), defines trust as follows: explicit expectation from others avoiding opportunism, in words and in deeds and decisions. Attention to the following points is necessary in this definition: "Explicit expectation ", this definition assumes knowledge of the other party. Trust is a process based on history and relies on examples related to the previous but limited experiences. Formation of trust takes time and its emergence has a gradual process. For many of us, the immediate trust to someone who we do not know him, if not impossible, is so difficult. When we do not have complete information we cannot trust. As we gradually know a person the relationship gets maturity, we will ensure that we have a clear expectation.

Customer Service

The new concept of serving customers include new definitions and no more a small part in the headquarters has been for providing services, but the entire organization from top management to regular employees, all play a role in meeting the needs of existing and potential customers. Even if a person in a position not to directly support the customer, she can support employees who serve clients. Occupations traditionally are called "customer service", are more complex than the order, products returns, or respond to claimants. According to this view, serving clients includes all affairs the company does in order to attract customer's satisfaction and to help them get the most value of products or services that they have purchased.

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In general, the simplest form of a company can differentiate its products from competitors through supplying the products with superior quality, superior services, or both (Mohammedi, 2003).

Production is not in order to simply create physical products and sell them in the market; but today, there are many services with a successful product, (Noori, 2004). By getting the organization more customer-oriented, market default of "good service" is also changing. Organizations can use services as a strategic element to provide excellent service to their customers (Noori, 1974). Basis of a differentiation strategy is based on superior service, meeting customer expectations of service and may be acting beyond his expectations as well as doing this important issue in the most stable form and better than the competitors (Hourvitz, 2001).

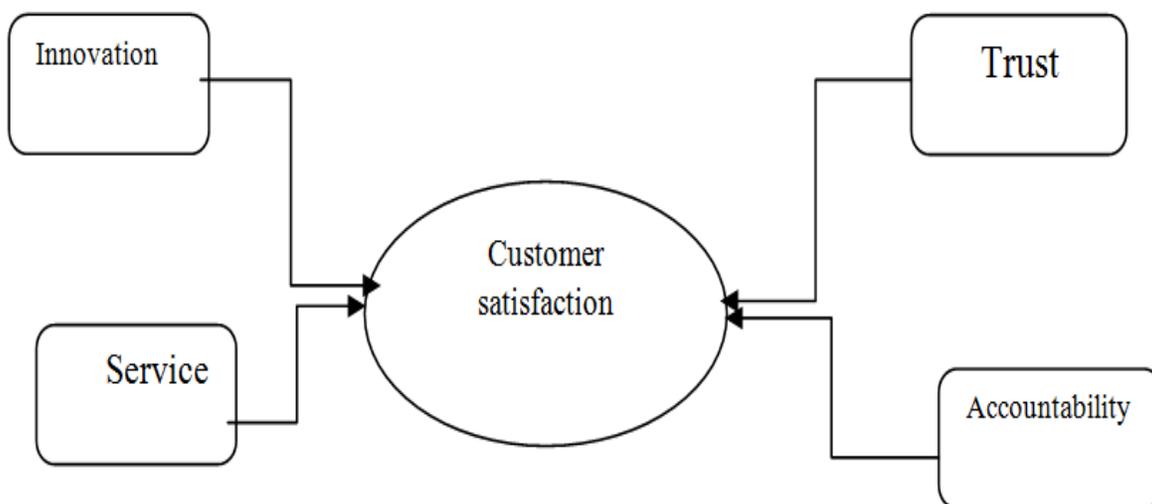


Figure 1: Research conceptual model

Research Hypotheses

The Main Hypothesis

Employees' performance affects customer satisfaction in department stores of Kohkiluyeh and Boyerahmad.

The Sub Hypotheses

- 1- It seems there is a positive relationship between the levels of customer satisfaction with the services provided by employees.
- 2- It seems employees' accountability in doing their occupational duties affects customers' satisfaction.
- 3- It seems organization's trust in employees leads to better performance of the organization and customer satisfaction.
- 4- It seems that employees with creativity and innovation, leading to more satisfied customers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is an applied research and in terms of method it is descriptive-survey. The statistical population of this study consisted of Refah stores in kohgiloyeh in 2014. The minimum sample size achieved by 95% reliability and 8% error is 150 persons. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to assess the normality of the data distribution. Then, in order to know the current status of the staff in terms of customer satisfaction and factors affecting customer satisfaction, one sample t-test was used. To determine the presence or absence of relationship between variables of customer satisfaction and factors affecting customer satisfaction, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used. Then the researcher-made questionnaire of evaluating performance effective factors was used. This questionnaire consists of 24 items that are rated on a Likert five-point scale.

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To measure customer satisfaction, researcher-made customer satisfaction questionnaire was used. As noted in the study, questionnaire included two parts of questions on demographics (gender, age, education, and work experience) and specialized questions.

Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire which has been obtained 0.86 and 0.75 respectively.

Data Analysis

Normal Distribution of Research Data

Table 1: Results of the test Kolmogorof - Smirnof for research variables

Sig	Z KS statistic	Statistical indicators	Variable
0.59	0.467	Customer satisfaction	
0.48	0.633	Factors affecting customer satisfaction	

As it can be seen, for all research variables, the probability is greater than 0.05 that the data normality assumption is confirmed.

The Customer Condition in Terms of Customer Satisfaction

- What is the status of the respondent in terms of customer satisfaction?

$H_0 = \text{Customer satisfaction} = 3$

$H_1 = \text{Customer satisfaction} \neq 3$

The results of this analysis are presented in Table (2). As can be seen, the null hypothesis that customer satisfaction is equal to 3, has been confirmed. It means significance level is smaller than 0.05 that indicates Customer satisfaction in respondents is desirable and it is greater than 3.

Table 2: Results of the one-sample t-test for non-productive work behavior

Sig	FD	T	SD	number	Mean	Variables	Index
0.000	149	69.481	0.12	150	4.36	Customer satisfaction	

The First Sub-hypothesis

- There is a significant relationship between customer satisfaction and the services provided to them.

$$\begin{cases} PH_0 = 0 \\ PH_1 \neq 0 \end{cases}$$

Table 3: Correlation coefficient between the variables of customer satisfaction and the type of services provided

samples	Probability	Correlation coefficient	Statistical indicator	Variable
			Predictive variable	
150	0.012	0.204	Type of provided services	Customer satisfaction

According to Table (3), we see that the correlation coefficient is equal to 0.204 and significant level is 0.012 that is less than significance level of the test (0.05), so we reject the test null hypothesis and we conclude that the test was significant and there is a linear relationship between two variables. Also observe that the correlation coefficient is positive that it shows there is a direct relationship between customer satisfaction and the provided service.

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The Second Sub-hypothesis

- There is a significant relationship between customer satisfaction and accountability to them.

$$\begin{cases} PH_0 = 0 \\ PH_1 \neq 0 \end{cases}$$

Table 4: The correlation coefficient between the variables of customer satisfaction and accountability

Samples	Probability	Correlation coefficient	Statistical indicators	Variable
			Predictive variable	
150	0.007	0.930	accountability	Customer satisfaction

According to Table (4), we see that the correlation coefficient is equal to 0.930 and significant level is 0.007 that is less than test significance level (0.05), so we reject the null hypothesis of the test and conclude that the test is significant and there is a significant linear relationship between the two variables. Also we observe that the correlation coefficient is negative, indicating that there is an inverse relationship between accountability and customer satisfaction.

The Third Sub-hypothesis

- There is a significant relationship between customer satisfaction and trust.

$$\begin{cases} PH_0 = 0 \\ PH_1 \neq 0 \end{cases}$$

Table 5: Correlation coefficient between variables of customer satisfaction and trust

samples	Probability	Correlation coefficient	Statistical indicator	variable
			Predictive variable	
150	0.023	0.123	Trust	Customer satisfaction

According to Table (5), we see that the correlation coefficient is equal to 0.123 and significant level is 0.023 that is less than test significance level (0.05), so we reject the null hypothesis of the test and conclude that the test is significant and there is a significant linear relationship between the two variables. Also we observe that the correlation coefficient is positive, indicating that there is a direct relationship between trust and customer satisfaction.

The Forth Sub-hypothesis

- There is a significant relationship between customer satisfaction and creativity.

$$\begin{cases} PH_0 = 0 \\ PH_1 \neq 0 \end{cases}$$

Table 6: Correlation coefficient between variables of customer satisfaction and creativity

samples	Probability	Correlation coefficient	Descriptive indicators	Variable
			Predictive variable	
150	0.040	0.466	creativity	Customers satisfaction

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According to Table 10.4, we see that the correlation coefficient is equal to 0.466 and significant level is 0.040 that is less than test significance level (0.05), so we reject the null hypothesis of the test and conclude that the test is significant and there is a significant linear relationship between the two variables. Also we observe that the correlation coefficient is positive, indicating that there is a direct relationship between creativity and customer satisfaction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the testing research hypotheses suggest that all functional factors affect customer satisfaction. According to the results of the regression analysis for the data, this claim can be verified. The results of this research are consistent with the results of Shahsavari research (2010). He concluded in his study that the factors of quality of services providing, financial issues and answering the complaint have been proven and these factors have an impact on customer satisfaction. Also, Naser *et al.*, (2008) concluded in their study that customer satisfaction is dependent on the performance of any organization or entities based on providing the best care and service. Banks and institutions are trying to get complete customer satisfaction through modern style method and indirect services and through a variety of tools. Shamdasany and Balakersinan (2000) adapted a communicative perspective for studying the interaction of customers with service personnel, physical environment and the customer's environment and its impact on the quality of the relationship that are trust and satisfaction, and consequently loyalty. These two researchers' findings showed that although the physical environment is an important determinant factor of trust and satisfaction, but the environment only influences the customer satisfaction. The customer service staff collaboration and the customers' knowledge strongly influence the quality of relationships and skills affect similarities and Outspokenness affect trust. It has been found that both trust and satisfaction affect loyalty to the service provider's significantly.

Kellogg (2000) found that the degree of interaction a customer has with a service provider system is an important construct of services management research. Contact with customer, customer interaction, customer facing, customer engagement, customer relations and customer impact are the words used in this structure in literature for services management. There are three ways to contact with customer service management system: Directly, in the form of physical presence; indirectly, through electronic devices or paper; Or without communication or level of customer calls, even when the customer has only indirect interaction, s/he affects designing process of service management, quality management, location and layout, capacity planning and scheduling. Using this structure, several models have been proposed as follow.

Recommended Actions

- 1- To increase customer satisfaction, we need an effective information system to continuously meet the information needs of customers in stores and undertake duty to create an ongoing relationship with the customer and send all the information necessary to the customers. This task is mainly the responsibility of public relations.
- 2- Since performance dimension is one of the most important aspects from a customer's perspective, it is recommended to stores to pay more attention to this dimension to provide more customer satisfaction and thereby their loyalty.
- 3- To reduce the gap between customers' expectations and perceptions from the motivational dimensions it is recommended to managers to pay special attention to the incentive activities, for example, they can give one point for every 10 purchases or they can record the person's name to draw that the store itself held.
- 4- Related to the main hypothesis it is proposed to improve employee performance and thereby provide more customer satisfaction through rewards and penalties.
- 5- According to confirming the hypothesis 1 based on employees' accountability it is suggested that more order rule affairs and rules and regulations have been revised and customer complaints are handled more to cause more customer satisfaction.

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6- According to confirming hypothesis 2 it is proposed to store to attract more customer satisfaction through using qualified and branded products.

7- According to the hypothesis 3 based on services it is recommended to stores to advertise their products via text messaging or television ads.

8- According to confirming hypothesis 4 based on creativity, it is recommended the store to be creative by needed support and encourage its employees and thereby provide better performance and more customer satisfaction.

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