

Investigating the Customer Commitment of the Sports Stores in Golestan Province Based on Customer-Orientation

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study was to investigate the customer commitment of the sports store sports stores in Golestan province in 2017 that according to the Cochran's formulas, 384 people were selected by stratified random sampling and finally, 370 questionnaires were returned. To collect the data, Customer-Orientation Questionnaire of Danavan et al (2004) and Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Mayer & Allen, 1990) were used. The internal consistency of the questionnaires was obtained by Cronbach's alpha for organizational commitment $\alpha = 0.84$ and for customer $\alpha = 0.87$. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The results showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between the commitment of the customers and customer-orientation. Also, variable components of the customer-orientation with a regression coefficient of $\beta = 0.59$ could predict the customer commitment of the sports stores in Golestan province.

Keywords: Customer-Orientation, Sports Stores, Customer Commitment, Golestan Province.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, paying attention to the needs of customers and responding to their demands, both in the manufacturing sector and in the services sector, are one of the most important and essential tasks and goals of the organizations (Almasi et al., 2015). The customer plays a key role in the survival of the stores. Therefore, orienting all goals, strategies and resources goes around the customer acquisition and maintenance chain. Maintaining and enhancing the commitment of the customers to the store which are concerned about maintaining and developing their competitive position in the market are considered to be a strategic challenge (Bellou et al., 2009). Today, the business world is based on the customer and customer loyalty, so that the expansion of services and even the provision of it without considering this principle is not only a problem but also impossible. The activists in the realm of economics and those who think forever in this field know well that oxygen breathing in the world of business is the principle of a customer-oriented, and the understanding of this word, which is always right to the customer, is considered as the head of their plans (Brogi et al., 2013). Meanwhile, with the increase of knowledge and information technology, the customers have become more accurate and have more expectations. Therefore, it is necessary for the sports store to develop their skills and abilities and their employees to answer and manage their

needs and wishes. Generally, the customer-orientation and proper response to their demands have a special place. Therefore, establishing a proper relationship with the customers while obtaining their satisfaction leads to more dynamism and success of the company. The commitment of the customers is the guarantee of gaining competitive advantage and profitability of the organization, and the benefits of the customer loyalty and commitment are greater sales volume, ability to raise prices and maintain a previous customer that is easier than searching the new customer (Derakhshandeh & Kazemi, 2014).

Since the customer-orientation can play an important role in the success of organizations, identifying effective factors on the customer-orientation will help executives and employees of the organization approach the customer and quickly meet their needs better and better. In this regard, the staff of the organization has a very important role in the field of customer service. According to the researchers, paying attention to the needs of the staff and their training can improve customer orientation in the organization (Elahi & Heydari, 2005).

What is the customer-orientation? According to the definition of the customer-orientation, it is a kind of organizational culture that creates the necessary behaviors to value customers in the best possible way. Also, according to another definition of the customer-orientation, the customers are understood to meet their expectations and expectations. So, firstly, in the customer-orientation is that "Who wants the customers?" If we can find a perfect answer to this question, then we will have the customer satisfaction and loyalty (Garry Smith & Roy, 2011).

Nowadays, the customer-orientation is the key to customer loyalty to the organization, and consequently the acquisition of sustainable competitive advantage and survival of organizations. Understanding the market by planning and adopting appropriate strategies for the customer loyalty and increasing their loyalty create the long-term benefits to the sports stores (Jalali Farahani et al., 2013).

Commitment and loyalty are a kind of positive attitude to a product that is caused by frequent use of it, which can be explained by psychological processes. In other words, the repetition of purchases is not just an optional response but a result of psychological, emotional and normative factors (Kim & Trail, 2010).

The commitments of the customers of the sports stores help determine the flow of sales and increase profits. Additionally, the customers who are committed to the sports store are highly recommended to their friends and relatives, and they influence the feedback and product feedback cycle, and these are vital in today's environment and business (Larson & Steinman, 2009).

With the advent of the competitive economy, concepts such as customer-orientation and customer commitment are the underlying foundations of the business and those companies that are ignorant of these issues are excluded from the market. In fact, the role of the customers has changed from the mode of follow-up to the sole producer to the directing of investors, producers, and even researchers and innovators. In this way, many of the concepts and theories are written based on the "customer-orientation". In these markets, all economic activities are to meet the needs of the customer and to achieve its satisfaction and commitment. The success or failure of an economy in a store depends on the customer's behavior of the store. He is studying his needs and the vast market and the diverse range of goods he possesses (Mahmoudi et al., 2015).

The results of the studies by Almasi et al (2015) showed that the managers of the halls and sports venues should pay more attention to the customers in order to understand the quality of the service, and even to anticipate the needs of the customer before the customers themselves (Ming & Patterson, 2013).

Vazifehdoust and Memarian (2014) in a research entitled determining the level of commitment and loyalty of customers using a quick response organization model concluded that there was a positive and significant relationship between a quick response to the customers and the loyalty of the customers (Rafiee et al., 2012). Also, the results of the research of Ranjbarian (2012) showed that in the chain stores, the quality of the perceived service by the customers affected the perceived value and also the satisfaction of the customer and the intention to re-selling (Ranjbarian, 2012). The results of the research of Ming and Patterson (2013) showed that the customer-orientation had influenced the service-orientation and the value created for the customers of the companies (Ranjbarian et al., 2010). Also, the results of Garry Smith and Roy (2011) in the sports organizations indicated that creating a good framework for the customer-orientation at sports venues could improve the performance and commitment of these organizations (Schneider & White, 2004). The results of the research of Bellou et al (2009) regarding factors affecting the customer orientation showed that learning had a very important role in the customer-orientation and providing appropriate services to the customers (Sutton & Klein, 2003). Larson and Steinman (2009) stated that sports organizations faced many challenges due to various reasons, such as the rapid change in the needs of their customers, the exceeding expectations of the customers from the services of sports organizations and the diverse needs of the customers. Also, the results of the research of Kim and Trail (2010) showed that sports organizations, with the aim, the program and the capable systems, in addition to overcoming their challenges, could gain competitive advantage in this way (Vazifehdoust & Memarian, 2014).

In such circumstances, the adoption of customer-centric policies and strategies by the sports stores can reduce the gap and distance between service providers and their consultants and ensure customer satisfaction and loyalty, which the long-term success of the sports stores is guaranteed. Nevertheless, the customer-orientation and its related and effective factors have been considered in the sports stores of the country. Most of the researches done on the customer-orientation and its factors affecting the non-sports sectors and services are performed and it is necessary to determine the status of customers and its effective and related factors in the stores, organizations and sports facilities of the country, which will reveal the necessity of this research. Also, this research can help the managers of these organizations to improve decisions regarding the improvement of their employees' working conditions based on their organization's capabilities and conditions and thus this research results in improving the performance and increasing the efficiency and returning the store financial asset. Therefore, in this research, the relationship between the customer commitment of the sports stores in Golestan province based on customer orientation will be investigated.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodology of the present study is applied in terms of purpose and a descriptive-correlational method in terms of collecting data and is carried out as a field study. The population of the research consisted of the customers of the sports stores in Golestan province in 2017. The sample size was 386 people using Cochran's formulas. Due to the fact that the number of customers in all cities of Golestan province was not equal, a stratified random sampling method was used for selecting subjects. To collect data, organizational commitment questionnaire (Meyer & Allen, 1990) and customer-orientation questionnaire Danavan et al (2004) were used. The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire has 24 items with Likert 5-point Scale (completely agree to completely disagree) and Danavan et al Customer-Oriented questionnaire has 13 items with Likert scale (very low to very high). To determine the content validity of the research questionnaires, the opinions of five sports management professors were used. Then, to determine the reliability of the questionnaires, a preliminary study (completed by questionnaires by 30 people) was conducted and the reliability of the questionnaires was calculated using Cronbach's alpha for organizational commitment of $\alpha = 0.84$ and for customer Orientation $\alpha = 0.87$ which was indicative of the stability of the measuring instrument. Also, in another part of the questionnaire, demographic information of clients such as age, gender and referral history were collected. After determining the validity and reliability of the measurement tools, the questionnaires were distributed among the clients who referred to the sports shops and finally 370 questionnaires were collected.

In this research, descriptive statistics were used to organize, summarize, categorize and describe the data including frequency, averages and standard deviation. In inferential analysis of the data, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to test the Normal distribution of data, Pearson correlation coefficient to determine the relationship between different dimensions of organizational commitment and customer orientation and multiple regressions to predict the level of customer orientation based on dimensions of different organizational support. All data were analyzed at the significance level of $P \leq 0.05$ and analyzed using SPSS software.

RESULTS

As shown in Table 1, 67.2% of the subjects were male. Also, 47.7% of the subjects are in the age group less than 30 years old and 41.7% of the subjects have a bachelor's degree. Also, the highest percentage of purchasing history of the subjects is related to the purchase history of less than 5 years with a frequency of 40.6 (Table 1).

Table 1. Frequency and percent of frequency of subjects by age, grade and grade.

Variable	Variables	F	P of F
Gender	Female	126	32.8
	Male	285	67.2
Age	Less than 30 years	183	47.7
	to 40 years 30	116	30.3
	to 50 years 41	36	9.4
	years old 51	49	12.8
degree of education	Diploma	134	35.7
	Associate Degree	46	12
	Bachelor	160	41.7
	Masters	40	10.4
	P.H.D	1	0.3
Purchase history of the subjects	Under 5 years old	156	40.6
	to 10 years 6	146	38.0
	to 15 years old 11	50	13
	years and older 16	32	8.3

As shown in Table 2, among the dimensions of organizational commitment, the rational commitment has the highest average (3.68) and the emotional commitment with the lowest mean (3.22). Meanwhile, the mean value of customer orientation is (3.89), which is also higher than the average level (Table 2).

Table 2. Description of the variables of the research.

Variable	N	M	SD
Emotional commitment	370	3.22	0.94
Rational commitment	370	3.68	0.94
Normative commitment	370	3.37	0.89
Customer-Orientation	370	3.89	0.62

The results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that the distribution of data was normal. Therefore, Pearson correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationship between customers' commitment dimensions and customer-orientation in the staff of the sport stores. The results indicated that there was a positive and significant relationship between commitment and customer-orientation in the sports stores (Table 3).

Table 3. The relationship of dimensions of the commitment of the customers to the sports stores and customer-orientation of the staff of the stores.

Predictive variable	Criterion variable	The correlation coefficient	Sig.
Customer-orientation	Emotional commitment	0.51	0.001
	Rational commitment	0.59	0.001
	Normative commitment	0.45	0.001

Regression test was used to predict the level of customer commitment based on the customer-orientation of the staff of the sports stores of Golestan province, the results of which are presented in Tables 4 and 5. Since the value of the Watson-Durbin test (error independence test) is 1.5 to 2.5 (1.59), the assumption of the absence of correlation between errors is not rejected, and since the distribution of data is normal, regression can be used.

Table 4. Squared r (R) adjusted.

Model	R	Squared R	Squared R set	SD	Sig.	Watson-Durbin test
	0.64	0.41	0.37	0.48	0.01**	1.59

The results of regression analysis to predict the level of the commitment of customers in the sport stores of Golestan province based on the customer-orientation variables showed that the customer-orientation of the staff of the sports stores with a regression coefficient of $\beta = 0.59$ could predict the level of the commitment of the customers in the sports stores of Golestan province (Table, 5).

Table 5. Common variances between predictor variables and criterion variables.

Criterion variable	Predictive variables	B value	Beta coefficient	T value	Sign.
Commitment of customers	Customer-orientation	0.517	0.596	14.494	0.001

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of the research showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between the customer-orientation and the level of the commitment of the customers in the sports stores in Golestan province. This result is consistent with the results of Almasi et al (2015), Ming and Patterson (2013) and Gray and Smith (2011). Today, vendors have truly appreciated the importance of focusing on customers to grow their organization and business. At the same time, customer-orientation and customer satisfaction are now a widespread belief that many sports outlets benefit from this approach. Nevertheless, in spite of the efforts made by the customer-centric focus of sports stores, the most relevant results are achieved. The main reason is a superficial understanding of the true meaning of customer focus. There are few sports stores that focus on the customers through new methods, products and services through extensive and comprehensive changes. According to Derakhshandeh and Kazemi (2014), considering the importance of the customer in the environment of the sports stores as well as the consequences of customer commitment, the sports stores are trying to provide a ground for their success by using various methods while satisfying customers. Attention to the needs of sporting goods store customers can affect many of their behaviors, including their emotional, normative and legal commitment. Considering the above-mentioned issues can ultimately improve sales in sports stores, which is one of the most important goals of today's sports stores (Zahrazadeh Mohammad & Aqaseyyeaqa, 2011).

Also, the results of regression analysis showed that the customer-orientation in the sports stores could predict the level of customer commitments compared to the sports stores in Golestan province. Also, the results of this research are consistent with the results of the research of Vazifehdoust and Memarian (2014), Ranjbarian et al (2010) and Bellou et al (2009). However, it is suggested to managers of the sports stores in Golestan province to pay special attention to their the customer-oriented programs (to specify the duties and authority of employees, staffing enrichment, support for innovations and innovation of employees, and optimize processes and working methods), and bonus management (taking into account the material and non-remuneration rewards, the suitability of rewards with the performance of individuals, and the use of rewards to create a healthy competition among employees).

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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