THE EFFECT OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING COMPONENTS THROUGH CUSTOMER GRATITUDE ON CUSTOMER BEHAVIORAL LOYALTY IN RETAIL MARKET

Seyed Amir Hossein Hejazian[1] and Fereshteh Lotfizadeh[2]

[1] Master of Business Administration, Department of Business Management, Zanjan Branch,

Islamic Azad University, Zanjan, Iran

[2] Assistant Professor of Marketing, Department of Business Management, Zanjan Branch,

Islamic Azad University, Zanjan, Iran (Corresponding Author)

ABSTRACT: *Relationship marketing is seeking to establish relationships with target customers to shopping again from it in the future and encourage others to do so. Crating the great satisfaction in customers and focus on what they are worth to be considered, are the best approach to keep (retain) customers and as a result their loyalty to the company will be stronger. The study population were supermarket customers in Zanjan city and 384 samples were selected according to Cochran formula. Data collection was carried out using a questionnaire and through simple random sampling. In this study, Cronbach's alpha with the amount of 76/0 was used to assess. And also, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data and all statistical analyzes were performed using SPSS software. The results of this study showed that which of the component of relationship marketing through customer gratitude had a significant impact on Customer Behavioral loyalty.*

KEYWORDS*: relationship marketing, Customer gratitude, Customer Behavioral loyalty, Retail market*

INTRODUCTION

In today's world , accelerating wave of changes in various aspects such as world politics, competition, technological, social, economic and especially the needs, wants and expectations of customers both in terms of volume and in terms of the type and quality are much broader than decades, and these changes in turn , would cause to change the style and way of management practices , organizational structure as well as the attitudes and behavior of staff , and these changes will call improved forecasts, and cause to learning and adapting to the external environment (Leonard Berry, 2008). In today's perspective, the marketing involves promoting the customer, means the attention to customer satisfaction and quality from the customer's perspective and their loyalty and effective communication with them. As a result, organizations are trying to have loyal customers ,Since the service provider are directly in contact with customers , As a result, a large part of customer loyalty is created , through this power line (Murgan & Hunt, 2003, P.16).

Gratitude is also another important factor that improves the quality of relationships and also will bring positive results for the seller. If customers are kept satisfied, never will leave the organization. This use the monitoring of a number of factors such as the availability of equipment, customer satisfaction, reliability and quality of services provided, be seriously considered. Customer are very sensitive to relations. Detailed study about past experiences, expectations and intentions, shows good idea of the customer's future behavior (Hue, 2014, p.21). In this case, relationship marketing easily collect information according to which companies can identify their loyal customers and keep them.

In fact, relationship marketing is a tactical which realize this and attract the trust and customer satisfaction and subsequently increase the profitability of the company. In the modern economy, the customer gratitude and loyalty towards the seller , requires that ,the seller comply with customers thoughts and establish joyful atmosphere with good morality and suitable clothes and create health and safety and security to all customer. the various goods or products, quality and after-sales services and reasonable prices , shows that this was one of the demands of customers and if easily shopping of customers ,Such as the integration of goods and commuting easily in that environment, be important or in another word be in under consideration, that customer Confidently , Will take an action to all of the above examples, and this makes gratitude and sustainability of people and thus loyalty in the next buy will be in that store.

Today, each customer has his/her own value ,and companies should try and fight to gain more market share, so the cost of attracting new customers is increasing . gratitude , the emotional evaluation of benefits which are received , consider as a mediation of relations between investment in marketing relationship of seller (vendor) and seller performance results. Especially , investment in relationship marketing of Seller , which increase the gratitude feeling of customers and that applies Seller Performance benefits based on transactional behavior related to gratitude of customer (Anderson and Gerbing, 2008, P.28).

This principle is considered as a very important factor in this study , because different methods of customer relationship marketing can change the feelings of gratitude behavior of customers. The aim of this study is to answer this question " what are the effect of the components of relationship marketing (direct mail, tangible rewards, interpersonal communication, and preferential treatment) on the customer gratitude and on loyalty of customers ?Thus, the effect of different methods of relationship marketing on feelings gratitude of customer can provide effective tools for marketing managers to make the investment in marketing relationship. The aim of this study is to investigate this question " whether investing in components of relationship marketing through customer gratitude on customers behavioral loyalty has significant impact on the retail market or not? "

LITERATURE, THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Relationship marketing

Relationship marketing is the art of today's business and was raised for the first time in 1980 by Leonard Berry. But the foundation of this branch of marketing, which closely linked with consumer behavior, Came out of research on the relationship between the buyer and seller in

medium and large businesses. To maintain key existing customers (profitable), good communication skills with customers is essential. Classical marketing theory, mainly focused on trades and did not care to retain customers. But with the expansion of competition and saturation of many markets and continuous changes in the environment and demographics, companies were faced with the fact that they are not facing with a growing economy and growing markets , like past times . Relationship marketing not only provide and offer services in place, time and price demanded by the target market, but also wants to make such relationship with the target market , which cause to buy again from it in future and encourage others to do so. Relationship marketing is looking for maintaining more customers and losing fewer customers (Murgan and Hunt, 1994, P.16).

  Over the past few decades, the business philosophy of marketing was transferred from marketing orientation to relationship marketing. Service-oriented organizations, such as stores, are increasingly adopted actions of relationship marketing to enhance the management methods in their brand , such as in brand loyalty and brand image. Relationship marketing with a focus on marketing trends , have had many factors such as customer orientation (customer care) to keep loyal customers (Taleghani et al., 2013, P.15). Relationship marketing focused on maintain long-term and mutually beneficial relationships between buyers and sellers (Spekman etal., Alrubaiee and Al-Nazer, 2010, P.15-16). In this context, the term "mutual benefit" means that both parties to a transaction (client and agency) try in order to achieve their goals . Hur et al. (2010) said that the main objective of relationship marketing is to increase customer equity. In this context, De Wulf et al. (2002) named retail investors in four-way relationship marketing including: direct mail, tangible rewards, interpersonal communication, and preferential treatment.

Above all, these four methods theoretically has classified into three types of relationship marketing (real, symbolic, and hybrid) (Kuropanzav & Michel, 2002, P.28-29). For example, retailers using direct mail and tangible rewards, provide real benefits, while retail employees may improve their interpersonal communication with customers and provide symbolic benefits. Provide preferential treatment to loyal customers in the retail market is also considered as a combined strategy that includes both real and symbolic method. Relationship marketing investments are the investments with the intention that they increase competitive advantage with increased support for frequent customers by marketers (Bolton, 1989, P.196).

  In terms of marketing literature the researchers found that, the investment relationship have been expressed in various forms such as Client bonds, and exchange mechanisms, benefits provided, and various functions (Hakansson and Esnehota, 2000, p.14). Commonalities among various mechanisms of the above factors, are the result of similar intrinsic intent which are done to enhance the bond between the buyer and seller.

The effect of relationship marketing orientation on the brand value in stores
 Relationship marketing in customer relationship focuses on relations between buyer and seller in bilateral and longitudinal way. And also attempts to divide participate in customer loyalty and products with a long-term bonds between the consumer and the organization. In this context, the product includes both tangible (e.g. design, features and packaging) and the intangible (e.g. brand, perceived quality and reputation) aspects. Among the intangible aspects, the brand is seen as an important factor (Mudambi, 2002). Aslo, relationship marketing cause to re-engineer in the brand management methods (Hugan et al., 2002, p.42

3

). Sweeney (2001) showed that the interaction between customer relationship management and the formation of brand identity is established in the Services-oriented institutions. And relationship marketing is a subject of great interest for stores that have been associated with increased competitive strength. Hence, many stores based on relationship marketing practices, helping to establish their identity which is well known among consumers (Pasulomo & Runtis, 2006, p.12). Stores tend distinctly benefit from relationship marketing methods which creating competition and differentiation will manifest in them (Dobisee, 2007, p.19).

It is important that stores face with adopting relationship marketing approaches to provide services to their customers, with a good brand name , which can prevent them from competition. This factor makes it possible to manage increasingly the realiziation of the value of relationship marketing practices in achieving its identity, its brand names.

Customer gratitude

Gratitude is a cognitive in which retailer , with the benefits of its products attract customers and build a mutual relationship (Rajio et al., 2013, p.25). Customers help to maintain and improve investment on relationship marketing programs (De Wulf et al., 2001). These efforts including policies adapted, unique discounts or offers, which will be provided to customers by retailers to strengthen customer-retailer relationship. The perceived value of the relationship between the cumulative value of all tangible and intangible rewards of the customer in relation to retailing, is established (Hugan, 2006, p.42-43). Customer loyalty has been recognized for many competitive organizations and for retail firms, as an investing to establish and maintain loyal relationships with their existing and potential customers (e.g. loyalty programs). However, little focus is on the mechanisms that the investment relationship established to achieve customer loyalty (Fredrickson and Lonsen, 1998, p.62). Thus, gratitude is the modifier impact of important component (Morales, 2005) in which provide potential insights into the mechanisms that covers customers' perceptions of relationship marketing investments and may increase their perceptions of the quality of the relationship with a retailer.

Direct mail

Direct mail Referring to the customer's perception about regularly electronic direct mail to retailers for getting information. It is also one of the aspects of communication and knowledge of loyal costumers , which it will pass through retailers to consumers and it can be considered as a structured process and maintaining customer relationships through online activities so that making it possible to exchange goods and services that will satisfy both parties (De Wulf et al., 2001; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; p.132). Thus,

H1. Direct mail is positively affects customer gratitude**.**

Tangible reward

Reward in principle, means wages and in terms of the delightful and willing to make. And also in the form of cash or non-cash awarded to people to compensate for their efforts over the task assigned , through which they are encouraged to continue activities, and while creating a suitable platform to expedite subject to other staff, facilitate the realization of the objectives of the organization (Nickpoor, Farrokh, 1389, p.117). Tangible reward deponds

4

on the relative impractical level. Difficult tangible benefits, including monetary incentives (e.g. discount, coupons) , While intangible, or normal rewards is provider of psychological, relational, emotional feelings and there are practical or functional benefits (for example, preferential treatment, high sense of status, services, special events, entertainment, review priorities) for it. Many programs are now considered as a tool for customers transaction , which contains such an intangible reward. Evidence suggests that the tangible rewards are preferred than intangible rewards and entails creating higher goals of loyalty in customers. Tangible rewards referred to the customer's perception about providing tangible benefits by retailers , like free gifts and discounts coupons. Customers, those who widespread their relationship with retailers, expect also receive some relational Benefits from retailer. So in second hypothesis, we have:

H2. Tangible rewards positively affect the customer gratitude.

Interpersonal relationships

Interpersonal relationships are customer perception in which retailers interact with their customers on a regular basis and in friendly and personal way forward". Here the interpersonal relationship is different from personal sales, It can be said that an employee of retail , is trying to convince its customer to purchase. For example, employees are not responsible for sales in the Retail Information Centre (Guenzi & Pelloni, 2004, p.367). Empirical researches has emphasized the importance of interpersonal communication in the development of relationships of retail –customer . For example, Beatty, Coleman, Reynolds, and Lee (2005) showed that, the personal relationships between customers and retailers of social processes in the natural world, is like friendship and intimacy, personal affection and a sense of familiarity. Stone (2008) stated that interpersonal communication plays an important role in social relationships at a time when people are buying from a retail store , in this situation buyer realize interpersonal communication in a retail store.Therefore, relation communication should increase the feeling of gratitude in customers (Barnes, 1997, p.227).

H3. Interpersonal communication positively affect the customer gratitude.

Preferential treatment

Preferential treatment refers to the perceptions of customers about regularly service of retailers to buyers. Preferential treatment shows that, regular customers receive a higher level of service than non-regular ones. Accordingly , having the specific attitude with customers, allow them to meet their basic needs, so customers will be satisfy from seller (Paterson, 1995, p.18). Guner et al. (1998) showed that the preferential treatment ,offer two types of customer relationship benefits which includes: 1. economic benefits and 2. Custom interests.In general, preferential treatment is the most common type of relationship marketing practice of companies that negotiate with some customers better than others.preferential treatment mainly cause to gratitude which increase the feeling of individual ,including power relationships and behavior choices. Guner et al. (2002) demonstrated that there was interaction between power relations and benefits .customer feeling from gratitude cause to mutual behavior, which can increase a long-term relationship quality and customer profitability (Morales, 2005). So,

H4. Preferential treatment positively affect the customer gratitude.

Behavioral loyalty

Behavioral loyalty is defined as a customer commitment to the product (or service) and common purchase in future (Oliver, 1999, p.262). In a transactional relationship, consumers recognize the investment of some retailer in relationship marketing, For example, (direct mail, tangible rewards, interpersonal communication, and preferential treatment), which should create the feeling of gratitude in customers and lead to buy and spend money in stores (Palmatier et al., 2009, p.263).

Accordingly, gratitude will play the mediating role and explains why marketing investments related retailers may lead to behavioral loyalty (wetzel et al., 2014, p.264)? According to different marketing activities, the feeling of customer gratitude, should be able to create different behaviors based on mutual gratitude which positively affects customer loyalty. Customer loyalty is one of the most important factors to be considered, that affect the performance of service companies and as a result lead to declining of market share and profit of organizations. Customer loyalty leading to repeat purchase of specific production or use of services. Customer loyalty for a company need to improve this factor that, loyal customer increase revenue and productivity of the organization (Richald, 2006). According to different relationship marketing activities, the gratitude feeling of customers should be able to create different behaviors based on mutual gratitude that positively affects customer loyalty. Thus,

H5. Behavioral loyalty positively affect the customer gratitude.

Figure 1, shows the research framework of this study. The theoretical foundation of this conceptual framework is based on theory of exchanges/ social (Bella, 2001; Humans, 2003). Mutual norms of social exchange theory, indicates that the customer gratitude is considered as an important intermediate structure , which can explain that why relationship marketing investments of retailers may increase and improve behavioral loyalty (Palmatier et al., 2009).
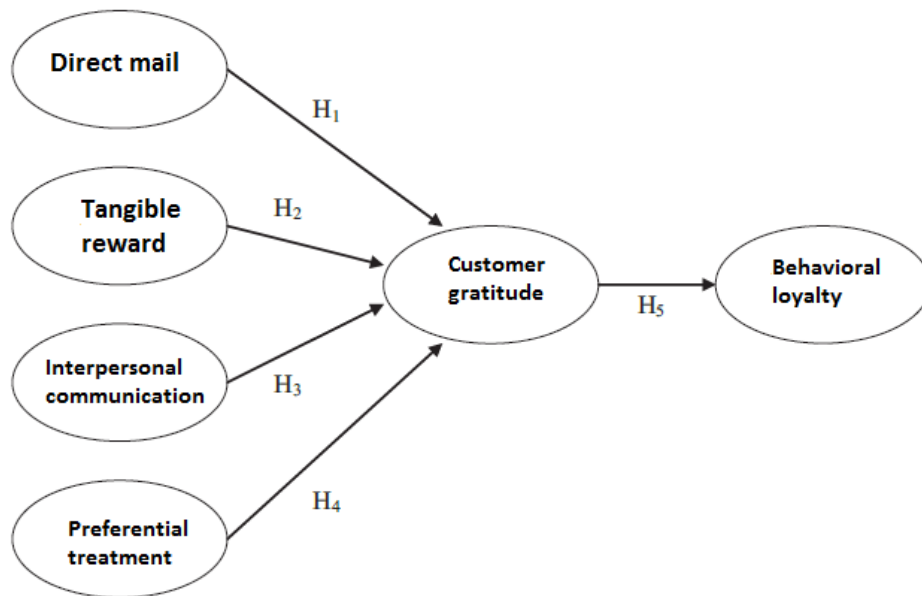
Figure 1. Conceptual model

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The population of this study were Zanjan's supermarket customers, so in this study, for unlimited population, Cochran formula was used to estimate the sample size.

Data collection

To collect information basis of this subject field, research method was used. So in this study required data were gathered in two ways including: library (articles, Internet, books) and also questionnaire. In which, through the simple random sampling, each member was selected and then 384 distributed questionnaires were analyzed. The questionnaire consist of 20 questions about five variables that main questions of it have been prepared based on a 5-point Likert .The first part of the questionnaire, assess demographic characteristics of the designed community ,which include four questions. These questions related to personal characteristics, including gender, age, marital status, and education. The second part includes questions that measure variables. Given that spatial domain of this research is zanjan , so in this study population is assumed to be infinite and therefore Cochran formula (for unlimited society) have been used to estimate the sample size.

Table 1. Questions related to the research variables

Variables	questions	average	median	standard deviation	Source
Direct mail	1-2-3	3.16	3.33	0.9	Anderson and Gerbing (2005)
Tangible reward	4-5-6	3.55	3.66	0.88	Hu & Bentler (2008)
Interpersonal communication	7-8-9	3.28	3.33	0.8	(Bentler, 2007; Staiger, 2000)
Preferential treatment	10-11-12	3.24	3.33	0.71	Nunnally (2001)
Customer gratitude	13-14-15	3.62	3.66	0.62	Bagozzi & Yi, (2010)
Behavioral loyalty	16-17-18-19-20	4.26	4.20	0.44	Fornell & Larcker (2011)

STATISTICAL FINDINGS

Measurement model evaluation
Following Anderson and Gerbing (1988), the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was first estimated to assess the measurement model. Results of the confirmatory factor analysis show that all factor loadings exceed 0.50, and each indicator t-value was significant as shown in Table 2. Results of the confirmatory factor analysis further indicate that the χ2 statistics is 354.38 with 120 degrees of freedom (p < .001). The comparative fit index (CFI) is 0.97. The nonnormed fit index(NNFI) is 0.96 (Hu & Bentler, 1995). However, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is only 0.09.

Table 2. Confirmatory factor analysis, reliability, and validity.

Constructs	Factor loadings	t-values
Direct mail (α = .89, CR = .89, AVE = .74)		
This store often sends mailings to regular customers.	0.88	16.54
This store keeps regular customers informed through mailings.	0.92	17.96
This store often informs regular customers through brochures.	0.77	13.81
Tangible rewards (α = .86, CR = .86, AVE = .67)		
This store rewards regular customers for their patronage.	0.84	15.42
This store offers regular customers something extra because they keep buying there.	0.84	15.51
This store offers discounts to regular customers for their patronage.	0.78	13.73
Interpersonal communication (α = .92, CR = .92, AVE = .80)		
This store takes the time to personally get to know regular customers.	0.88	16.86
This store often holds personal conversations with regular customers.	0.91	17.96
This store often inquires about the personal welfare of regular customers.	0.90	17.59
Preferential treatment (α = .81, CR = .84, AVE = .65)		
This store makes greater efforts for regular customers than for nonregular customers.	0.56	9.15

This store offers better service to regular customers than to nonregular customers	0.90	17.25
This store does more for regular customers than for nonregular customers	0.91	17.52
Customer gratitude (α = .77, CR = .76, AVE = .52)		
I have bought products based on my gratitude for the extra effort of this store.	0.79	14.15
I have spent more money to this store because I owed it to them.	0.59	9.85
This store has received opportunities to sell additional products as payback for past efforts.	0.76	13.42
Behavioral loyalty (α = .85, CR = .85, AVE = .66)		
I would recommend this store to any of my friends	0.82	14.58
I am likely to say positive things about [the store] to other people.	0.78	13.53
I am likely to say positive things about [the store] to other people.	0.84	14.88
I consider [the store] my first choice to buy the appropriate products.	0.78	14.63
This store is my preferred choice	0.86	14.78

DESCRIPTION OF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

In this section, data related to respondents, has been analyzed. These data are relevant to the questions which at first part of the questionnaire entitled as a respondent specifications.

The total number of people who participated in this study were 384, of which 251 were male and 132 were female. In this section, respondents were divided on the basis of age. This means that out of 384 respondents, 17 respondents were in the age range below than 20 , 230 of whom were in the age range between 20 and 40 years, 126 people between the ages of 40 to 60 and finally 11 older than 60 years old. Respondents also been investigated on the basis of their education level. Of the 384 respondents, 20 people have lower levels of diplomas, 80 students in diploma, 36 of them have Associate degree, 146   have Bachelor and 102 have a Master. Marital status of people who have participated in this study were 384 of which 57 were single and 324 were married.

Normal distribution of samples

In this section by using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, normality assumption of samples have been investigated.

Kolmogorov-Smirnov test

$$\begin{cases} H_0 : \text{The sample has a normal distribution} \\ H_1 : \text{The sample has not a normal distribution} \end{cases}$$

Decision: If the probability value Sig is smaller than 0.05, The null hypothesis assuming normal distribution of the sample at the level of 5 percent is rejected. Otherwise null hypothesis is confirmed, which means that the distribution of the sample is normal.

Table 3. Normality tests of research variables

Variables	Value of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test	sig	Hypothesis result	Test result
Direct mail	0.88	0.41	Confirmed H0	Normal distribution
Tangible reward	1.11	0.16	Confirmed H0	Normal distribution
Interpersonal communication	0.98	0.28	Confirmed H0	Normal distribution
Preferential treatment	1.12	0.15	Confirmed H0	Normal distribution
Customer gratitude	0.8	0.54	Confirmed H0	Normal distribution
Behavioral loyalty	0.83	0.48	Confirmed H0	Normal distribution

Data analysis

Path analysis

Path analysis technique is based on a set of multiple regression analysis and is based on the assumption of the relationship between independent and dependent variables. It has a particular emphasis on innovative use of visual diagrams that known as a diagram of the path. The aim of this study was to examine the relationships between variables, direct mail, tangible rewards, interpersonal communication, preferential treatment, customer appreciation and loyalty behavior. To determine the path and calculate the direct and indirect effects of variables using regression techniques , first direction or paths should be separate based on the chart . This separation is done based on an origin of arrows which represents independent variables and end of arrows that indicate the dependent variable. In this process at every stage one of the variables consider as the dependent variable and variables related to the origin arrows ending in this variable use as an independent variables in the regression analysis. So that the coefficients Beta obtained which indicates the direct effects of independent variables on the dependent variable.

The first stage

In the first stage, factors such as direct mail, tangible rewards, interpersonal communication, preferential treatment is considered as the independent variable and customer gratitude is considered as dependent variable . After this step beta coefficients were determined for 4-path which these paths and their coefficients are provided in the table given below.

Table 4. The first phase of path analysis of paths and coefficients

Directions	Beta coefficient
Direct mail ⟶ Customer gratitude	- 0.02
Tangible reward ⟶ Customer gratitude	0.18
Interpersonal communication ⟶ Customer gratitude	0.14
Preferential treatment ⟶ Customer gratitude	0.09

The second stage

At this stage , customer gratitude factor is considered as an independent variable and loyalty behavior is considered as the dependent factor . By using beta coefficient obtained at this stage , indirect impact of direct mail, tangible rewards, interpersonal communication, preferential treatment on behavioral loyalty through customer gratitude factor , Can be calculated . In the following table ,Beta coefficient of these path is mentioned.

Table 5. The Second phase of path analysis of paths and coefficients

Directions	Beta coefficient
Customer gratitude ⟶ Behavioral loyalty	0.35
Direct mail ⟶ Customer gratitude ⟶ Behavioral loyalty	-0.007
Tangible reward⟶ Customer gratitude ⟶ Behavioral loyalty	0.06
Interpersonal communication ⟶ Customer gratitude Behavioral loyalty	0.04
Preferential treatment⟶ Customer gratitude Behavioral loyalty	0.03

The following results were obtained based on path analysis, are a summary of the results of testing hypotheses.

Table 6. Final results of hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Statistics	Statistic value	Sig	Results
Hypothesis 1	t	-0.54	0.58	Rejected
Hypothesis 2	t	3.50	.001	Confirmed
Hypothesis 3	t	2.75	.006	Confirmed
Hypothesis 4	t	1.83	0.06	Rejected
Hypothesis 5	t	7.49	.000	Confirmed

Finally, we can conclude that among the five hypotheses in the research, three hypotheses is confirmed and 2 of them is rejected. as shown in Table 4-18 , The t-statistic of confirmed hypotheses has been larger than 1.96 and since their Sig amount was equal to .000 or smaller than 0.05, Hypotheses have been confirmed with a confidence level of 99 or 95 percent. From these Hypothesis the maximum value of obtained t is dedicated to hypothesis 5 with the value of 7.49 and the minimum value of obtained t with the value of 7.49 is dedicated to third hypothesis .

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Relationship marketing, has implemented request to investigate the concept of gratitude of customers in different cultures and also consider customer gratitude as a reflection of the emotional core mutual, which plays a key role in developing and maintaining successful exchanges of seller – buyer .The aim of this study was to evaluate whether the various methods of relationship marketing provided by retailers, has a distinct impact on customer gratitude and loyalty behavior or not? At the end of this chapter that's present the end of research, the researcher should provide results after testing the hypothesis.

The results of the following hypothesis are the base foundation that suggestions take place. So one of the important aspects of any investigation is conclusion, that this conclusion is turning ideas into action according to statistical analysis and theoretical foundations. Based on descriptive analysis that was conducted in each of the variables, the average values of all the independent variables in this study are greater than the theoretical mean. This means that respondents tend to choose item which show agree and totally agree. The highest mean with value of 3.55 is allocated to tangible reward variable and the lowest with a value of 3.16 is assigned to the direct mail variable. Also among the independent variables, the highest variance in the amount of 0.81 is assigned to direct mail item and the least variance with the amount of 0.51 is assigned to preferential treatment. The statistical results obtained from the questionnaires shows that, this study used structural equation modeling to find the relationship between the components of effective relationship marketing through customer gratitude on behavioral loyalty of customers in the retail market. This study presented three share contribution intended to implement differentiated marketing. First, it showed that relationship marketing investment has a distinct impact on customer gratitude resulting in behavioral loyalty to the place. Second, preferential treatment provides more effective methods of relationship marketing , because it will run out, the greatest impact on customer gratitude , followed by interpersonal communication and tangible rewards. In other words, provide new insights in order to manage customer appreciation and loyalty marketing behavior and increased it by the influence of relationship marketing through various methods. Finally, arise the first attempt to extend the investigation of customer gratitude and improve the current understanding of different investments on relationship marketing.

Suggestions and limitations of the study

Practical suggestions

According to the study, and based on the assumptions outlined, we present suggestions in two categories that include practical suggestions and recommendations for future research. Practical suggestions included proposals that will be presented to administrators and official, and in the second group, we present guidance to researchers and students in this field to further investigate this issue in other industries and with more and newer dimensions.
 Due to the impact of tangible rewards on customer gratitude, It is suggested that:

 • By allocation of rewards (discounts) to customers who introduce new customer into the store, we can run special programs for them.
 • To each of the store's customers , Provide a membership card (eg welfare card),which special issue devoted to it, and these members receive scores for their purchases, and therefore according to their total scores and history of their buying , benefit from the services and special discounts for members.
 • Due to the impact of interpersonal relationships on customer gratitude it is suggested that :
 • We can deal with each customer according to gender, identity and mentality and favorites and offer differentiated services, and create customer database and information system and marketing research and develop the products in the store separately.
 • Also by allowing them to have indirect communication with authorities of stores (Via phone, SMS, e-mail and through the website poll) can make the relationship be stronger.
   Due to the impact of behavioral loyalty on the customer gratitude it is suggested that :

• Given that customer confidence to shop (store) , have a positive impact on customer loyalty, it is recommended to store fulfill its obligations in order to boost confidence, more seriously.

• And with regard to action of customers and meet their wants and needs and respond to them , they should assures customers that they are important for this store. And show that they are committed to the customer and while they attention to their profits also focuses on their profit and satisfaction too.

This study conducted on zanjan supermarkets customers , so for future research we suggest that :

• Do the research on large stores with homogeneous products and high diversity, because the seller has a lot of time to communicate with customers. Such as department stores of clothing and essential items or furniture for the home. We recommend that, compare the analyzes of this paper based on gender, income, age, education, marketing methods of every store with another store and separately consider their relationship with the customers' purchasing behavior.

• The study is available in the stores which use relationship marketing tactics such as bonuses, preferential treatment, by noting that ,prices for the store's customers not be an important factor in decision making.

• Here the components of relationship marketing was examined, where four methods adapted to the retail environment force this research uses the compared effects of each of relationship marketing approaches across different cultural areas. However, limitations of this method are failure to register a relationship marketing tools, for example, today's retail environment is changing rapidly, so retailers may use of the new technologies, including the use of mobile devices and the Internet as different operating systems to provide the benefits of relational and increase customer appreciation. Further research may involve these new technologies, and explores how these technologies and methods of behavioral loyalty are shaped . Other limitations of the study may be related to data and features. The data used in this study, surrounded a high proportion of respondents with a university degree (71%). At the same time, the audit credibility between customer gratitude and tangible rewards using restriction did not receive support. In addition, this study used the ross-sectional study designs and no longitudinal study, which examines the issue of whether the effects of relational marketing, can change customer gratitude over time or no? further research should collect longitudinal data to examine the effects of relationship marketing methods dynamically, on gratitude feeling of customer.

REFERENCES

Anderson, J.C., & Gerbing, D.W. (1988). Structural equationmodeling in practice: A review and recommended two-step approach. Psychological Bulletin, 103(3), 411–423.

Anderson, J.C., & Narus, J.A. (1990). A model of distributor firm and manufacturer firm working partnerships. Journal of Marketing, 54(1), 42–58.

Berry, L.L. (2008). Relationship marketing of services-growing interest, emerging perspectives. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 23(4), 236–245.

De Wulf, K., Odekerken-Schröder, G., & Iacobucci, D. (2001). Investments in consumer relationships: A cross-country and cross-industry exploration. Journal of Marketing, 65(4), 33–50.

Hu, L.T., & Bentler, P.M. (2014). Evaluating model fit. In R.H. Hoyle (Ed.), Structural equation modeling concepts, issues, and applications (pp. 76–99). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Komter, A.E. (2004). Gratitude and gift exchange. In R.A. Emmons, & M.E. McCullough

(Eds.), Psychology of gratitude (pp. 195–213). New York: Oxford University Press.

Krapfel, R.E., Salmond, D., Spekman, R., 2000. Managing buyer– seller relationships. European Journal of Marketing 25, 22–37.

Kumar, N., Scheer, L., Steenkamp, J.-B.E.M., 2007. The effects of supplier fairness on vulnerable resellers. Journal of Marketing Research32, 54–65.

MacKenzie, S.B., & Podsakoff, P.M. (2012). Common method bias in marketing: Causes, mechanisms, and procedural remedies. Journal of Retailing, 88(4), 542–555.

Morgan, R.M., & Hunt, S.D. (2003). The commitment–trust theory of relationship marketing. Journal of Marketing, 58(3), 20–38.

Palmatier, R.W., Jarvis, C.B., Bechkoff, J.R., & Kardes, F.R. (2009). The role of customer gratitude in relationship marketing. Journal of Marketing, 73(5), 1–18.

Peterson, R.A. (1995). Relationship marketing and the consumer. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 23(4), 278–281.

Podsakoff, P.M.,MacKenzie, S.B., Jeong-Yeon, L., & Podsakoff, N.P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. Journal of Applied Psychology, 88(5), 879–903.

Raggio, R.D., & Folse, J.A.G. (2009). Gratitude works: Its impact and the mediating role of affective commitment in driving positive outcomes. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 37(4), 455–469.

Sheth, J.N., & Parvatiyar, A. (1995). Relationship marketing in consumer markets: Antecedents and consequences. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 23(4), 255–271.

Steiger, J.H. (2000). Point estimation, hypothesis testing, and interval estimation using the RMSEA: Some comments and a reply to Hayduk and Glaser. Structural Equation

Modeling, 7(2), 149–162.

Stone, G.P. (1954). City shoppers and urban identification. Observation on the social psychology of city life. American Journal of Sociology, 60(July), 36–45.

Wetzel, H.A., Hammerschmidt, M., & Zablah, A.R. (2014). Gratitude versus entitlement: A dual processmodel of the profitability implications of customer prioritization. Journal of Marketing, 78(2), 1–19.