

The Effect of Interpersonal Relationships with Customers` Loyalty in Soccer Schools in Tehran- Iran

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Abstract

The present study examined the impact of interpersonal communication on Customers` loyalty (trainees `parents) in soccer schools in Tehran. It was descriptive – correlation study. Statistical population were trainees` parents in soccer training schools in Tehran. Out of 33 is a soccer school in Tehran, 12 schools were selected through cluster sampling method from six different districts and a total of 285 trainees were chosen . We applied Guenzi & Pelloni (2004) Questionnaire whose validity was confirmed by a panel of sports management professors and reliability was confirmed through Cronbach' s alpha coefficient ($\alpha = 0.83$). We used both descriptive and inferential tests (ks, multivariate linear regression). The multiple correlation coefficient results showed that a significant linear relationship existed ($R = 0.659$) between interpersonal communication, interpersonal communication with customers and employees together with customers` loyalty . Results of multiple regression coefficient showed that communication between individual employees and customers ($t = 4.54$, $p = 0.001$) and interpersonal communication with clients ($t = 3.57$, $p = 0.001$) are eligible to predict customer loyalty. As a result, the soccer school officials should emphasize on a good communication with parents and create a friendly climate in training school environment in order to maintain and attract more customers.

Keywords: interpersonal communication, customer loyalty, soccer school

Introduction

Attracting and retaining customers in today's world has led entities to the development of relationship marketing strategies to attract and retain customers and service providers take advantage of relationship marketing and the profitability and competitiveness in the world to survive. In such a competitive environment, it is the loyalty of customers which can retain previous customers and, also, attract new customers. Research has shown that a 5% increase in retaining customers may increase 35 - 90 % in customer lifetime value

In view of relationship marketing, customer is a valuable asset with a value that should be created in the future to increase the frequency and amount of the purchase and use of services. Interpersonal communication is one of the most important factors in the behavioral sciences. Undeniably, there is always communication between the individuals and there are many aspects that affect individual and social life. The role of interpersonal communication can take customers away from companies and organizations or help them to get closer to them. Thus, interpersonal communication can be a good strategy to build up customer satisfaction and loyalty.

In a study, Heidarzadeh (2006) found a positive and significant correlation between individual service employees communication with customers' relationships and loyalty. Rezaee (2009) in his research showed that communication between individual employees and customers together impacted customers' satisfaction and loyalty. Guenzi & Pelloni (2004) in their research on health and fitness clubs concluded that customer loyalty only would be affected through close relationships between customers and employees. Bojei (2010) indicated the quality of the relationship including interpersonal dimensions (close relationships, communication quality and attention) and organizational dimensions (commitment, trust and satisfaction) influence customer loyalty.

Given the ever increasing school soccer and entering the private sector in this section, the school administrators should be looking for ways to attract and retain customers in order to remain competitive in this market. Hence, this study sought to examine the interpersonal relationships between individual staff with customers and customers together in terms of the loyalty of customers in soccer schools in Tehran.

Methodology

It was descriptive – correlation study. Statistical population were trainees' parents in soccer training schools in Tehran. Out of 33 is a soccer school in Tehran, 12 schools were selected through cluster sampling method from six different districts and a total of 285 trainees were chosen. We applied Guenzi & Pelloni (2004) Questionnaire whose validity was confirmed by a panel of sports management professors and reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha coefficient ($\alpha = 0.83$). 300 questionnaires were distributed to schools of which 285 questionnaires were returned. We used both descriptive and inferential tests (ks, multivariate linear regression).

Results

Table 1. Multiple regression results of the study variables

Model	Standardized coefficients are not		Standardized coefficient	t	p
	Coefficient B	Coefficient standard errors	Coefficient β		
Constant	0.87	0.246		3.55	0.001
Interpersonal relationships with employees, customers	0.46	0.10	0.39	4.54	0.001
Interpersonal communication with clients	0.33	0.09	0.30	3.55	0.001

Discussion

The study considered interpersonal relationships impact on customers` loyalty (trainees` parents) in soccer schools in Tehran.

The results of multiple regression analysis showed that interpersonal communication between employees with customers and communication between individual customers together (predictor variables) can explain the loyalty of customers (criterion variable).

It can be said that the close relationship between parents and staff as well as coaches increases their loyalty to the soccer schools. The results are consistent with the findings of Heidarzadeh (2006) , Rezaei (2009), Guenzi & Pelloni (2004) and Bojei (2010). Soccer school administrators should provide the necessary context to increase customer loyalty. For this purpose, acquainting school staff with positive results of close relationship with their parents will encourage them to establish and build up their relationship with parents.

Results showed that the relationship between trainees `parents increase their loyalty to the soccer schools. The results are consistent with the findings of Heidarzadeh (2006) And Rezaei (2009). Consequently, to maintain parents `loyalty to the school, authorities can work together on strengthening and expanding relations between parents and guarantee their loyalty. Therefore, they can hold short-term camps for parents, holding meetings with invited players and coaches pave the way for a better interpersonal relationship between parents and among families.

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