SURVEY ANALYSIS OF FACTORS MAKING UP THE CUSTOMER VALUE

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Abstract: In this paper we present partial results obtained from the survey that was aimed on identification of the factors constituting the value that is perceived by customers. We clarify the concepts of marketing, relationship marketing, value, that has crucial content importance in the context of relationship marketing. In the end of the article we point out, where are the strengths and weaknesses of the selected commercial enterprise in the provision of value and we define recommendations.

Keywords: (quality) value, marketing, business, price of a product, quality of a service

JEL Classification: M31

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, there is a new attitude toward marketing, because customers are more experienced and their requirements for companies and their products are getting more demanding. There is a great competition among companies, so customers are more sensitive about the prices, their requirements of services are strict and their loyalty to companies is decreasing. Lifestyle is becoming difficult and that requires more comfort in marketing. Companies are trying hard to get new customers, instead of keeping the existing customers satisfied. They are trying to gain profit from every single transaction, instead of investing effort into providing value to customers during the whole period of cooperation. These facts inspire us to think about the priorities of companies. We consider them to be the customers´ needs and fulfilling requirements of the customers. It is good for companies to create relationship with customers based on trust and communication. Each company should know the value they provide to their customers and what makes this value the most effective.

There are many ways how to provide this value and how to keep the relationship with customers. Based on these ideas, our contribution brings some suggestions for companies, how to provide value for customers, how to build and keep a good relationship with customers.

2. MARKETING, RELATIONSHIP MARKETING

Marketing influences all the activities of companies. Its main purpose is satisfying needs and requirements of the customers. The development of products, research, communication, distribution, pricing and service are the main marketing activities. The basic role of marketing is revealing new opportunities hidden in new products or markets (Kmecová, 2013).

Marketing is focused on customers and satisfying their needs. In consideration of the importance of marketing we can claim, that long term success in business is determined by a convenient marketing strategy of the company. It is necessary to find the target customer, discover their needs, present a proper product and advertise it, so as the customer accepts its price. It is important to remember the market risks causing loss of profit.

Šolc (2013) writes about marketing: „Marketing is a science helping companies with finding new customers and keeping the existing key customers. It is a science enabling businessmen to explore the market, form it, support the customers and interact with them flexibly".

Every enterprise subject is influenced by the market, in other words, it is a part of the market system. Zamazalová (2009) says, that companies have to solve issues dealing with key decisions to whom, what, where, when and for what price sell. Therefore, companies have to select, depending on specific situation, one of the enterprise philosophies: production, product, selling or marketing concept.

Relationship marketing

At present, only those companies can be successful at the highly competitive market, which desist from the product and selling philosophy and lead to the marketing and customer philosophy.

Kotler (2007, p. 549) defines relationship marketing as "the process of building, maintenance and spreading the strong valuable relationships with customers and other people involved". As the author writes further, the relationship marketing is more focused on results. Its goal is providing long term value to the customers. Success of the relationship marketing depends on long term satisfaction of the customer.

3. VALUE IN COMMERCE

Value has the key position in relationship marketing. It is necessary to distinguish between the value of customer and the value for customer. We will try to clarify this difference. Providing higher value to the customers is the source of competitive advantage. There is not a general definition of this basic term in economical science. "Value" is the term describing the most probable price.

Value (Franková, Oreský, 2010, p. 70-71) is what the customer obtains in exchange for the price they pay. The term value, as the authors say, may be understood as the difference between the costs for getting the product and value obtained by owning or using the product.

Value, from the customer´s point of view (Kita & Co., 2010, p.383): "ability of a product to satisfy a set of needs.

Values are an unthinkable part of life and they may be understood as conviction, that some goals, activities and relationships are necessary for life of an individual and the whole society."

In order to satisfy the set of needs the customer requires and gain profit, it is necessary for a company to focus on the quality of products and services. The quality, provided by the whole value chain, contributes to the higher effectiveness and, thereby, profitability of companies.

4. THE RESEARCH ON PROVIDING VALUE IN COMMERCE

The research is worked up according to Kmecová (2012).

Goal of the research

Identifying factors creating value perceived by the customer. Suggesting some recommendations for companies how to provide value for customers in the most effective way.

Methodology and organization of the research

The research was carried out in January-February 2012 by the method of standardized inquiry with a questionnaire about the value for customers. There were 150 respondents of a random choice (regardless of their age, occupation, education and their hometown) in the research sample. The questionnaire consisted of 17 units and was fully anonymous.

Hypotheses

H_1 The most common value for customers are offered products (quality/price)

H_2 At least 40% of the respondents know the term TQM and have seen it used in practice

H_3 At least 50% of the respondents consider the quality of the product to be the most important factor in the process of deciding

H_4 At least 50 % of respondents have a bad experience with a purchased product or service

Results of the research

Out of the research results, we select the most related information with the confirmation/rejection of the hypotheses mentioned above.
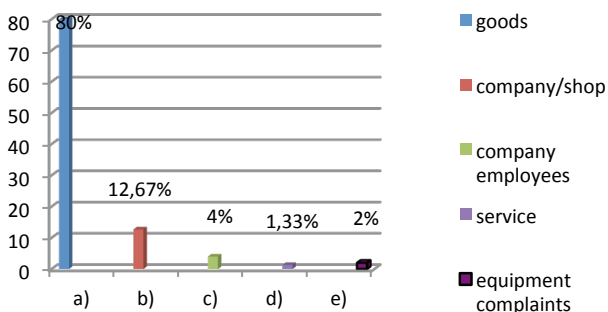

Fig. 1 Factors influencing respondents´ decision making, such as products, company, employees of the company, services, complains
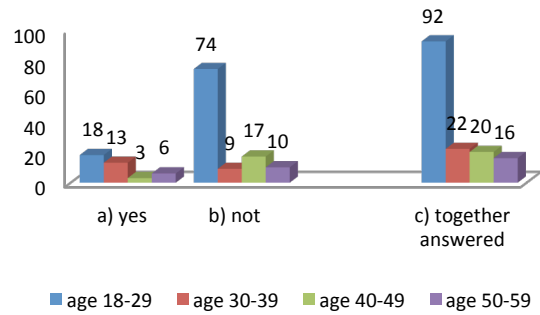

Fig. 2 Statements of the respondents – whether they know the term TQM and if they do, in what area/activity, yes, no, the number of respondents, age
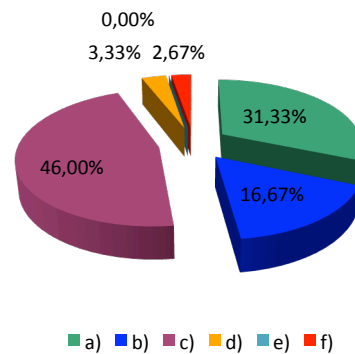

Fig. 3 Statements of the respondents – what order they use when they select a product, trademark of the product, quality of the product, shop they prefer
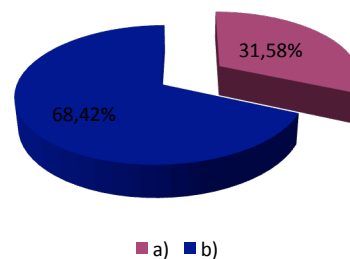

Fig. 4 Statements of the respondents – whether they would come back to a company they were not satisfied with

Interpretation of the results of the research

As we can see in Fig. 1, 80 % out of 150 respondents (120) consider offered products to be the most valuable factor when they have to make a decision (quality/price). Only two respondents (1,33 %) value services the most (e.g.: product delivery, customer service), three of them (2 %) stated, that they value those companies the most, which handle complaints promptly, 19 respondents (12,67 %) considered the most important value to be the company/shop (they expressed their satisfaction with a particular trademark), 6 respondents (4 %) wrote that nice employees who are always willing to help are the main reason why they decide for a particular shop/company. Based on the facts above we can confirm the hypothesis H1 - the most important fant value for customers are the products offered by the company (quality/price). In Fig. 2, we can see that most of the respondents, divided into age categories, answered that they did not know the term TQM. There was one exception – age category 30 – 39, where, out of 22

respondents, 13 respondents (59, 09 %) knew this term. Age category 18-29 was a negative surprise, even 74 respondents (80, 43 %) could not identify the term TQM and only 18 of them (19, 57 %) knew it. The respondents, who answered positively, wrote down in which field/activity they heard about TQM. They name following characteristics: TQM is related to the field of quality control, Total Quality Management – the quality of products, from production to demand, they understood TQM as services, improving the quality of production, etc. On the basis of these statements, we allege that the hypothesis H2 claiming that at least 40 % of the respondents know the term TQM and have seen it used in practice, was rejected. In Fig. 3, we can see the opinions of all the respondents on the factor, which influenced their choice of a particular product. 46 % (69 respondents) think that the quality of the product is the most important, 31, 33 % (47 respondents) consider price to be the main factor in deciding. None of the respondents (0 %) think that the most relevant attribute is the influence of marketing communication.

The hypothesis H3, that at least 50 % of the respondents consider the product quality to be the most important factor was rejected. Fig. 4 shows the statements of 114 respondents, who experienced buying a low quality product or service, and their opinions, whether they would or would not be willing to come back to the company they were disappointed with. 68, 42 % (78 respondents) would not come back. 31, 58 % (36 out of 114 respondents) would be willing to come back. These people mentioned following ways how a company could persuade them and, therefore, they would be willing to come back: over-all behavior of the seller to the customer, willingness of the staff, service, bringing new product on market, quickly and positively handled complaints, instant refund, offering discounts, discount coupons. Or, if the product is very specific and cannot be bought in other nearby store, they would continue buying it, in spite of their discontent.

Conclusions of the results of the research and recommendations

The research confirmed, that the most valuable factor in deciding what product to buy is the product itself. It is necessary for the product to fulfill the requirements of the customers in the relationship quality/price. Men and women of all age categories expressed the same opinion. This implies that when customers are deciding, they are not influenced by the trademark of the shop, but by the products or services the company offers. But the impact of advertisement, sales promotion, helpful staff, additional services, etc. has supportive relevance, besides quality and price. These attributes raise the value in customers´ minds. The whole process of providing value in commerce depends on the quality of the products and creating and maintaining long term relationships with customers.

From the partial results above, gained from the research and analysis, we allege a couple of recommendations:
- build relationships first and then concentrate on sale
- show references and recommendations from the satisfied customers
- inquire customers about their opinions on provided value by the company
- use surveys and discussions of the staff with the customers to explore the needs and requirements of the customers
- if it is possible, accept the requirements and implement them into practice

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