CUSTOMER ORIENTATION OF SALESPEOPLE OF TWO WHEELER INDUSTRY IN INDIA

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Abstract

Productivity is often linked to the job satisfaction of employees. Salespeople are the front line employees of a business firm. Their actions and decisions represent the business firm. Productivity is often linked to the job satisfaction of employees. Higher the level of customer orientation of salespeople, better will be the overall purchase experience of customers. Therefore, job satisfaction is an important criteria in order to make employees work at their full potential. The aim of present study was to study the relationship between customer orientation of salespeople and job satisfaction of salespeople of two wheeler industry in India. The data was collected from 103 respondents and statistical techniques used for analysis were correlation and regression analysis. The results of relationship between customer orientation of salespeople and job satisfaction showed that customer orientation of salespeople was found to be significantly impacting job satisfaction. The results of correlation analysis revealed that there is significant association between customer orientation and job satisfaction. The results of hypotheses testing revealed that H1 is supported and there is a significant relationship between customer orientation of salespeople and job satisfaction.

Keywords: Customer orientation, Job satisfaction, Two Wheeler Industry, India

1. Introduction and Review of Literature

Productivity is often linked to the job satisfaction of employees. Therefore, job satisfaction is an important criteria in order to make employees work at their full potential. The customer centric approach of marketing today makes it important to enhance the interaction between customers and salespeople. In fact, the concept of marketing has often been related to the behaviour of salespeople (Saxe & Weitz, 1982).

According to (Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000), three aspects, i.e. employee satisfaction, customer orientation, and strategy implementation/change management are very crucial for internal business processes and also for growth of employees and organisation. According to the concept of marketing, an organisation is required to determine the needs of its target customers and constantly keep working in the direction of satisfying its customers better than competitors. Customer oriented selling is a way of doing business on the part of salespeople.

(Saxe & Weitz, 1982) developed a measure of customer orientation of salespeople in an organisation. According to the authors, customer orientation refers to "the degree to which salespeople practice the marketing concept by trying to help their customers make purchase decisions that will satisfy customer needs". The earlier concept of selling focused on low levels of customer orientation. Whereas, the concept of marketing focuses on high levels of customer orientation. High customer orientation is associated with high concern for others and high concern for self but low customer orientation is associated with low concern for others and high concern for self. The authors also studied the relation between customer orientation and characteristics of sales situations (the degree of customer-salesperson relations and ability of salespeople to help customers satisfy their needs) and the impact of customer oriented sales behaviour on salesperson performance. The authors have postulated that customer oriented selling is most effective when salespeople possess the resources to be able to tailor their offerings to suit customer needs. Secondly, from the point of customers, they are most receptive to customer oriented approach in situations when they need help to solve a particular situation. The correlation results of the study support most of the relationships between customer oriented selling behaviour adopted and characteristics of sales situations. Thus, the authors developed the 24 item scale to measure customer orientation in salespeople.

(Lewis & Gabrielsen, 1998) studied the intra-organisational aspects involved in the implementation of service quality management. The study also included an empirical investigation in financial services in Norway. According to the authors, service quality became an area of concern for industries. Service quality became a competitive strategy which produces a sustainable competitive advantage over competitors. The marketing world was being guided by the concept of relationship marketing where the emphasis was on close relationships with customers. The process of developing close relationships with customers was aided by service quality. The author iterated that service quality being a subjective concept was experienced and judged by customers, therefore, there was a need for creating customer centric organisations and customer oriented cultures. The authors conducted the empirical study on a sample of 600 employees who were directly in contact with customers. The authors concluded that the quality of interaction between front line employees and customers was a prime determinant of customers' perceptions about the organisation.

(Green et al, 2007) conducted a study to examine whether market orientation was positively related to the delivery of high quality services to customers. The authors opined that an

organisation with high market orientation would try its best to know about the specific needs of customers and ensure customer satisfaction. The authors considered two dimensions of market orientation, i.e. customer focus and needs assessment and five dimensions of service quality, i.e. tangibility, reliability, assurance, responsiveness and empathy. Data for the study was collected from fifteen service organisations and the sample size was 534 respondents. The authors concluded that organisations should strive towards building a culture where employees focused on customers and worked towards responding to the changing needs of customers. Moreover, this commitment towards customer treatment should come from the top management's side to keep the employees working towards building a customer oriented culture.

(Farrell & Oczkowski, 2009) examined the relationship between service worker customer orientation and job response variables, i.e. job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and organisational citizenship behaviour-courtesy. The authors also examined the relationship between perceived organisational support and organisation fit within the service worker context. The data for the study was collected from 170 employees of a major fast food restaurant. The results of the study revealed that merely hiring customer oriented staff does not always guarantee job satisfaction of employees. The authors suggested that an organisation needed to stress the importance of outstanding customer services to attract the right pool of service oriented employees. This led to generating a sense of belongingness and commitment to the organisation in the minds of employees. The authors also iterated that hiring customer oriented employees for organisations which were themselves not committed to customer orientation led to high level of job dissatisfaction among employees. The results of the study strongly supported the relationship between perceived organisational support and customer orientation of service employees. Managers also iterated that customer orientation was a surface trait which reflected deeper personality traits.

2. Research Methodology

The research design of the study was descriptive. The relationship between customer orientation of salespeople and customer satisfaction was measured using two constructs, i.e. customer orientation of salespeople (SOCO scale) and job satisfaction. The customer orientation of salespeople construct was conceptualised by (Saxe & Weitz, 1982) and job satisfaction construct was conceptualised by (Macdonald & MacIntyre, 1997). Self administered questionnaire was designed to collect data from salespeople and respondents were

selected on the basis of systematic sampling from the various dealership stores in and around tricity of Chandigarh, i.e. Chandigarh, Panchkula (Haryana), Mohali (Punjab) and Zirakpur (Punjab) as per their availability. Data was collected from 103 respondents. The statistical techniques used for analysis included correlation analysis and regression analysis. Prior to analysis of the results, the research instrument was tested for its reliability. Internal consistency was estimated using a reliability coefficient called Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951). The results of reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha are as shown in Table 1. The reliability indices for two constructs, i.e. customer orientation of salespeople and job satisfaction have been shown in Table 1. The 24 items of customer orientation of salespeople construct had reliable value of Cronbach's alpha. In case of salespeople's job satisfaction, the six items were found to have reliable values of Cronbach's alpha.

Table 1: Reliability indices for customer orientation of salespeople and job satisfaction

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Customer orientation of salespeople	0.80
Job satisfaction	0.503

2.1 Research Objective

The research objective of present study was to study the relationship between customer orientation of salespeople and job satisfaction of salespeople of two wheeler industry in India.

3. Findings and Analysis

To explore the relationship between job satisfaction and dimensions of customer orientation of salespeople, two statistical techniques were used, i.e. correlation and regression analysis followed by hypothesis testing. Job satisfaction was the dependent variable and dimensions of customer orientation of salespeople were the predictors for regression analysis.

3.1 Correlation analysis

The relationship between dimensions of customer orientation of salespeople and job satisfaction was first investigated using Pearson correlation. Table 2 shows the results of correlation analysis. Preliminary analysis revealed that there were no violations of the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity, and the association was found to be significant at 99 per cent level (r=0.334, p<0.01).

Table 2: Correlation of job satisfaction and dimensions of customer orientation of salespeople

	Customer orientation of salespeople
Job satisfaction	0.334**

1) Pearson Correlation

2) **Correlation significant at 0.01 level

3.2 Regression analysis

To explore the relationship between job satisfaction and dimensions of customer orientation of salespeople, linear regression model was applied. To examine the fit of the regression model and to discover the best predictors of job satisfaction, regression analysis was applied with dimensions of customer orientation of salespeople as the predictors. In terms of the relationship between customer orientation of salespeople and job satisfaction, the adjusted $R^2=0.103$ was found to be statistically significant. As shown in Table 4, customer orientation was statistically significant ($p<0.05$).

Table 3: Regression model summary: Job satisfaction and dimensions of customer orientation of salespeople

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. error of the estimate
	0.334	0.111	0.103	2.574

1) Independent variable : Customer orientation of salespeople

2) Dependent variable: Job satisfaction

3) R^2 refers to the coefficient of determination that measures the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables.

Table 4: Regression analysis: Job satisfaction and dimensions of customer orientation of salespeople

Variable	Constant	Beta	t-value	Significance value
Constant	32.825	-	20.082	0.000
Customer orientation of salespeople	-	0.334	3.560	0.001

1) Beta co-efficient is the standardised regression co-efficient which allows comparison of the relatives on the dependent variable of each independent variable.

2) t-statistics help to determine the relative importance of each variable in the model.

The values of the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance value (TV) for the linear regression model are presented in Table 5. As indicated in Table 5, the value of VIF, which served as an indicator of multicollinearity was 1.000. The value was far below the cut-off value of 10. In addition, it could be seen that the tolerance value for independent variable is 1.000 which indicates there is no evidence of multicollinearity. In other-words, there is no significant evidence of multicollinearity problem in the regression model as presented.

Table 5: Multicollinearity statistics: Dimensions of customer orientation of salespeople

Dimension	Tolerance value (TV)	Variance inflation factor (VIF)
Customer orientation of salespeople	1.000	1.000

Dependent variable: Job satisfaction

The mathematical representation for above regression model of relationship between job satisfaction and customer orientation of salespeople as predictor is as follows:

Job satisfaction = 32.825 + 0.334 (Customer orientation of salespeople)

3.3 Hypothesis testing

The measurement of relationship between job satisfaction and dimensions of customer orientation of salespeople included the testing of following hypothesis.

> H1: There is significant relationship between job satisfaction and customer orientation of salespeople

Table 2 shows the results of hypothesis testing. The results indicate that the hypothesis H1 is supported. It shows that job satisfaction had significant relationship with customer orientation of salespeople.

4. Conclusion and Managerial Implications

The results of relationship between customer orientation of salespeople and job satisfaction showed that customer orientation of salespeople was found to be significantly impacting job satisfaction. The results of correlation analysis revealed that there is significant association between customer orientation and job satisfaction. The results of hypotheses testing revealed that H1 is supported and there is a significant relationship between customer orientation of salespeople and job satisfaction.

5. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Research has its limitations and this study is no exception. Although an attempt was made to be as scientific as possible while designing the study, but the present study has got some

limitations. The limitation concerns the nature of the measures used. The measures included in this research were all based upon the perceptions of the participating respondents. Therefore, the potential for data inaccuracies due to item misinterpretation or predisposition to certain responses on the part of the participant does exist. The survey responses have been solicited from the respondents in area of tricity of Chandigarh and adjoining areas. The perception of people in the area may vary from those of the rest of India.

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