

THE RELATIONSHIP MARKETING APPLICATION IN SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES

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Abstract: The paper presents the importance of relationship marketing, the communication between customers and romanian small and medium-sized enterprises, analyzing also how are investigated and resolved the complaints received from the customers.

In the paper, I made a study through I analyzed if the small and medium-sized enterprises undertake investigations about the reasons which they have lost customers.

The study was conducted during january - february 2016, the main research methods used in the study were observation, documentation, analysis and market survey. Also, I chose the study questionnaire as research tool.

From this study resulted that 79,31% of companies surveyed, were concerned and investigated the reasons they lost customers. Customer satisfaction is very important to business success, so it is recommended that companies must pay attention to the customers reactions and customers dissatisfaction consequences.

Keywords: relationship marketing, relationship with the customers, customers complaints

JEL Classification: M31

Introduction

The communication between customer and small and medium-sized enterprises must represent an important part of the marketing activity in a small and medium-sized enterprise.

Communication is important because it increases efficiency and improves engagement and motivation.

The paper presents the importance of relationship marketing in small and medium-sized business, communication between customers and romanian small and medium-sized enterprises, analyzing also how are investigated and resolved the complaints received from the customers.

For understanding the customer better, the company must answer to some important questions, such us:

- How do I keep the customers?
- How do I increase and sustain the value of each individual customer?
- How do I recruit new customers?
- Who are my profitable customers?
- How can I understand how my customer make buying decisions?
- What are the maximum discounts/improvements in customer service that the company can offer during the next round of negotiations with each customer?
- Upon what tipe of customer should the company new business development efforts be concentrates?
(Sabou F, 2005)

The author O'Dwyer M., think that small and medium-sized enterprises have a very good relationship with the customers, in the market environment, if:

-make the high quality products/services;

-apply active management of complaints, a special rapid response to customer requests;

-apply a strong motivating employees (O'Dwyer M., 2009).

In this context of communication between customer and company, we must keep in mind the importance and the role of relationship marketing, as well as customer relationship management. In the opinion of Balan C., orientation toward relationship marketing organizations brought in foreground the three concepts, whose importance has increased significantly in the last decade: attracting, maintaining and regaining the lost customers (Balan C., 2007).

Literature review

In the conception of the author Carmen Balan, the appearance relationship marketing, both conceptually and operationally, has determined the reconsideration of relationship with the clients (Balan C., 2007).

The importance of relationship marketing is highlighted by Pop N.A. in his paper "A new paradigm in contemporary marketing: relationship marketing", which mentioned the integrative role of marketing function, in the other functions of the company and also the fact that in relationship marketing customer becomes the center of interest marketing efforts (Pop N.A., 2006).

An important role in development of relationship marketing have had the authors Henning-Thur Thorsten and Hansen Ursula, who speak in their paper "Relationship marketing" about the seven key principles of relationship marketing, namely: the intention of creating a unique relationship, the interaction with trading partners, the selectivity to various categories of customers, the customers integration in the assessment, information about customers, investments in customers and customer individuality.

About customer dissatisfaction, Bolog A. mentions in his paper "The consequences of consumer satisfaction" that there are several types of consumer reactions to dissatisfaction, namely: do not take any action, change the product / brand, change the supplier, make a complaint to the seller, manufacturer or to a third person, tell others about the product that displeased.

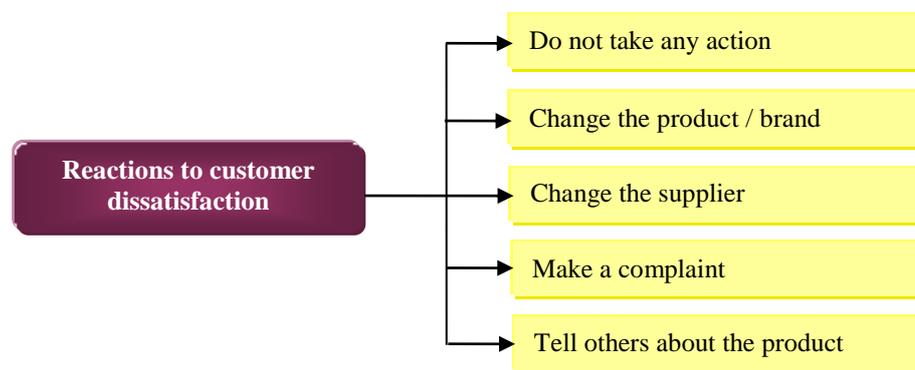


Figure 1. The reactions to the customer dissatisfaction

Source: Bolog A., The consequences of consumer satisfaction, International Session „European integration - new challenges for Romanian economy”, University of Oradea, 2006, p.662.

Bruhn Manfred, mention in his paper "The customer orientation - the foundation of business success" that complaints are the expression of oral or written dissatisfaction that was caused by the difference that can occur between performance and product characteristics expected by the client and what customer actually receives. In the same paper M. Bruhn, points out that "complaints may relate to a variety of possible situations - complaints about the characteristics of a nonconforme product (validity term, defects etc.) compared to those who are expected customers, complaints about employees behavior in the store, complaints related to the products service, complaints about the lack or inadequate quality level of services throughout the store (especially in the case of hypermarkets). Each type of claim requires a certain protocol for an efficient solution and should be integrated into a complaints management system to enable to the company a prompt answer with maximum effect. Claims management can be defined as all measures of analysis, planning, implementation and control that a company adopts to resolve customer complaints or other important reference groups for the organization" (Manfred Bruhn, 2001).

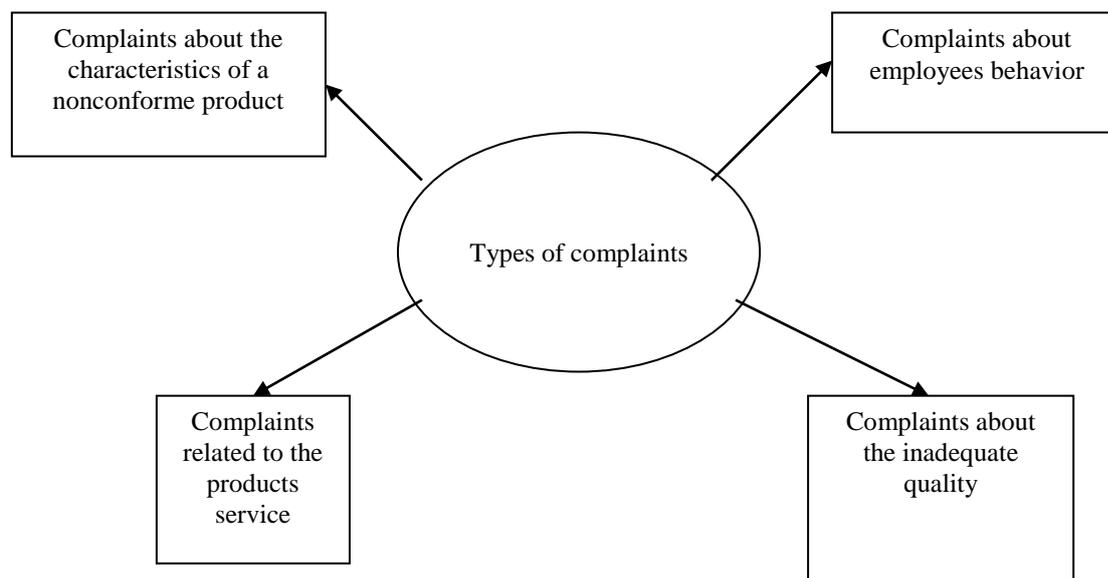


Figure 2. Types of complaints

Adaptation after: Bruhn M., The customer orientation - the foundation of business success, Economic Publishing, 2001, p.161.

In the author's opinion Bruhn M., the main strategies to regain customers are:

- a. Compensation strategy – reimbursement the value of defects products, which generated customer dissatisfaction, replacement of defects products;
- b. Improvement strategy - repair of defects products;
- c. Stimulation strategy - providing discounts and resuming the relationship with the client;
- d. Persuasion strategy – the promise of the supplier to meet the requirements and customer expectations (M. Bruhn, 2003).

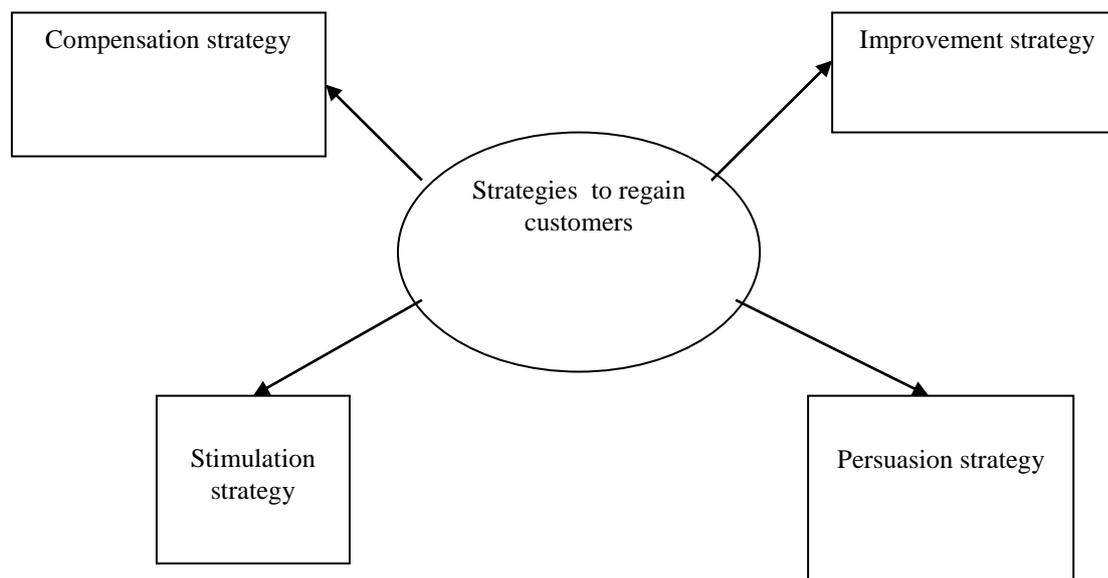


Figure 3. Strategies to regain customers

Source: Bruhn M., Relationship Marketing. Management of Customer Relationship, Pearson Education Limited Publishing, 2003.

Methodology and data

The paper present the relationship with the customers in resolving the customers complaints and the communication between customers and romanian small and medium-sized enterprises.

In the paper, I made a study through I analyzed if the small and medium-sized enterprises undertake investigations about the reasons which they have lost customers.

The study was conducted during january - february 2016, on a sample of 29 romanian small and medium-sized enterprises from Maramures County, having as research tool - a questionnaire. The main research methods used in the study were observation, documentation, analysis and market survey.

Result and discussions

Through this paper I analyzed how relational marketing is applied in small and medium-sized enterprises as well as communication between customers and small and medium-sized enterprises from Maramures County. I also analyzed how are investigated and resolved the complaints received from the customers.

From the study conducted results that 79,31% of small and medium-sized enterprises from Maramures County surveyed, were concerned and investigated the reasons they lost customers.

To the question "Do investigations on why you lost customers?" 79,31% of small and medium-sized enterprises from Maramures County answered YES, the remaining 20,69% answered NO (Fig.4.).

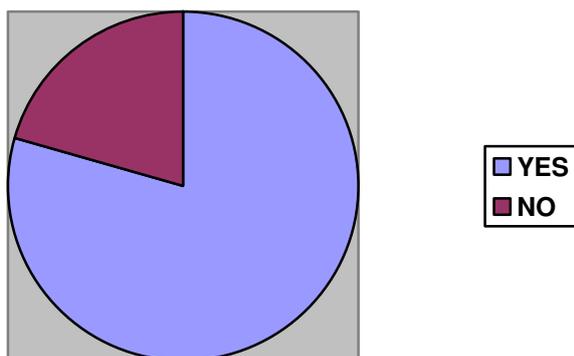


Figure 4. The answer to the question "Do investigations on why you lost customers?"

If we compare this study from 2016 with another study, with the same subject, made in 2009-2010 in Maramures County, we observe the improving of the situation, meaning that increased the concern for customer dissatisfaction.

In the study made in 2009-2010, the answer to the question “Are you interested in customers complains ?” was YES from 78,54% small and medium-sized enterprises and NO from 21,46%.

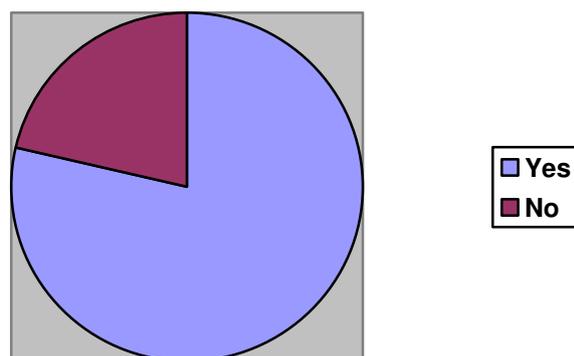


Figure 5. Customers complains

Source: Sabou F., The relationship with the customers in the marketing environment, ANNALS of the Oradea University, Fascicle of Management and Technological Engineering, Volume X (XX), Oradea, 2011.

Concluding remarks

From the study, results that the number of small and medium-sized enterprises which were concerned and investigated the reasons they lost customers is quite high (79,31%), but not enough, in my opinion.

Customer satisfaction is very important to business success, so it is recommended that companies must pay attention to the customers reactions and customers dissatisfaction consequences.

Following the analysis, I recommend to the managers of small and medium-sized enterprises, the following:

- To have in mind that it is not enough to be interested in customer dissatisfaction, it is very important to solve these complaints;
- To apply active management of complaints, a special rapid response to customer requests;
- An adequate employee motivation;
- To make the high quality products/services;

- Practical application of relationship marketing, constantly having regard to attracting, maintaining and regaining lost customers.

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