

THE ROLE OF SALES PERSONNEL IN DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS WITH CUSTOMERS

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Abstract

The paper studies the role of sales personnel in order to promote developing relationships with customers. The main focus of the research is directed to study of the different views about the main challenges of sale. Personal communication has a great importance in selling. This is directed towards, that the seller should assist and convince potential customers to buy the product (service). Trading personnel practically helps people make the right choice. Nowadays customers' attitude toward selling methods and trading personnel is very interesting issue. The consumers requirements were improved and developed in Georgia. It is very important to step forward aspects of relationships marketing by companies in trade field. Relationship Marketing means creation of customer loyalty. In this case, companies are making products, prices, distribution, stimulation and service in order to unite their efforts for achieving this goal. Relationship marketing is based on the idea that the company needs to pay considerable and special attention to the important customers for the company. The methodology of the paper is based on marketing research. The final part of the article presents the main results and recommendations.

Keywords: relationship marketing, selling, sales personnel, trade

INTRODUCTION

The development of trade in Georgia has its history. Tbilisi (the capital of Georgia) has always did the function of the economic center of the Trans Caucasus. The main shopping center was the Tatars Square and the Middle Market. There traders and workshops were located. Small shops (so called “dukani”) were around the Tatars Square. Every shopping district had its name. “Karvasla” was a big shopping and guest house. In the 19th century there were more than twenty “Karvasla” in Tbilisi (Trading in old Tbilisi). And now, trade plays an important role in the development of Georgia’s economy. In 2017, the total volume of retail floor space in Tbilisi, Batumi, and Kutaisi amounted to 1.42 million sq.m., reflecting a 12% increase when compared to 2016. The largest portion (79%) is in the capital city (Retail Market in Georgia, 2017).

Local trading companies will not be able to profitable function, if they do not pay serious attention to the basic aspects of selling. There is a great competition in the field of trade. The number of retail trade companies in Georgia is quite numerous. Inside the country are functioning hypermarkets, retail stores and supermarket chains, small shops, etc. It should be noted that in the recent years in Georgia significantly increased number of employees in wholesale and retail trade. Compared with 2013 volume turnover of wholesale and retail trade (at current prices, mln.GEL) in 2017 it increased by 44%. Annual average number of the employed compared with 2013 in 2017 increased by almost 54% (Statistical Yearbook of Georgia, 2018).

The professional activity of the sales personnel is difficult and requires great effort. Also, sometimes people have negative attitudes and opinions towards the sales personnel. However, such attitude is not groundless. It effects on the customers negatively when sellers mislead customers. For example, in many US states accepted sales laws, in which is given what is not permissible; sellers should not deceive customers, they should not mislead them (Kotler P., Armstrong G., 2015).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The seller's stereotype is as follows: quickly speaking, always a smiling seller, who "stinks" on a certain area to impose his goods to a stubborn buyer. Such stereotype is already outdated. Today most professional sellers are educated and well-trained men or ladies, who works for a long-term, useful relationship with the buyer. Their success is not the deceit of the buyers. They are supported by their assistance, which is reflected in the assessment and satisfaction of consumers' needs (Kotler P., Armstrong G., 2015).

People employed in sales play an important role in the country's economic system, because practically on them depend how well and quickly will be sold produced products. The efforts of salespeople have a direct impact on such diverse areas as these: the success of new products; keeping existing products on the retailer's shelf; constructing manufacturing facilities; opening businesses and keeping them open (Charles M. Futrell, 2011).

Various personnel involved in the sale have a relationship with potential buyers. Therefore, they in many case, know the needs of customers and have information about buyers. Trading staff perform a great role in creating customer satisfaction. The seller should listen to the potential buyer when he (or she) asks the question, or when wants to specify some aspect of the product before buying.

Trading personnel should have knowledge, mood and desire for listen to consumers, consider their needs and help them. This is the most pressing issue for shop trade today, because it has a great deal of competition with modern electronic forms of selling. Similar to the processes ongoing in the world, the number of Internet users is growing in Georgia as well and hence, the limits of its use for business are expanding as well. More and more users have access to the wire Internet. In addition, the number of wireless internet users increases as well (Mghebrishvili B., Seturi M., 2015).

It is impossible for trade staff to establish positive relations with consumers if they only care about their own interests. It is also important that the seller does not deceive the buyer, tell them truth about the product. Among the modern theories about sales is worth mentioning "Golden Rule". According to this approach, customer's interests are the most important for the seller. Sales personnel serve and help consumers as to dear persons. Sales personnel can't be successful in his (her) case if does not like this job and relationship with people. Sales personnel should be sure that products for sale are useful for consumers (Charles M. Futrell, 2011). Vendors serve other people in a good mood, and the customer likes purchased products. Thus, the sales staff makes a great contribution to the welfare of people. If we compare this approach with what we see in real life, we will see that only a small number of companies use this approach (Todua N., Vashakidze B., 2018).

To ensure the effectiveness of marketing activities, it is very important to consider such aspects as, missing buyers, number of unsatisfied buyers, number of new customers, etc. (Seturi M., 2013). Therefore, the effectiveness of marketing activities to some extent related to the results of the sales staff. People engaged in retailing should gain a thorough understanding of the theoretical knowledge in this area. Of theoretical principles of retailing, the sales personnel should primarily understand its functions and perform them properly. These are the functions that demonstrate the substance of retailing and if they are performed, the objectives of retailing will be solved and this sphere would play its role in the economy as required (Mghebrishvili B., Urotadze E., 2016).

As the transition to global economy more and more accelerated, consumers are increasingly demanding high quality, including their relationships with sales representatives, paying more and more attention to reliability, durability, ease of use and after-sales services. This trend has led to the emergence of the modern concept of caring for the consumer. Consumer care is a philosophy that ensures that goods and services, including after-sales, are associated with the demands of the served consumers, at least meet the expectations of the latter, and in most cases exceed them (Jobber D., Lancaster J., 2002).

Good service creates loyal buyers, that is, users who buy the most of the company's products and influence other users to buy them too. Loyal customers are satisfied with the purchase of this

company's product (service). Loyal buyers constantly bring income in the company, because they pay a fixed amount in favor of this company during the rest of their life.

Nowadays the task of finding client and its subsequent maintenance is becoming more individualized. Under the strict competition, it is of great importance to know and constantly learn about your client; not only to show its advantages, to guess the hidden wishes, but also to understand the reasons why some of the clients are going to our competitor company (Seturi M., 2009).

Those companies, which consider it important to create the facilitating conditions for buyers' satisfaction, have to clarify the meaning of the value perceived by the buyer. The following helps us figure out what we mentioned above: We have to ascertain the difference between the benefit the buyer gets and the price the buyer pays for the product. The buyer's satisfaction index is obtained by the balance between one's expectation and perception towards the product. When the quality of value, received by the process of using the product does not meet the expectations, the buyer gets dissatisfied (Seturi M., Urotadze E., 2017).

Factors influencing customer loyalty formation can be divided into material and non-material factors. Material factors are traditional and software factors. Traditional material factors can be attributed to: deployment of trade points; assortment of goods (existence of basic and necessary goods), its quality, etc. These factors provide consumers with the so-called "Pseudo-loyalty", when repeated purchases are not based on emotional loyalty but make "automatically". Loyalty factors, defined by the program, are quite expensive. So it is necessary to determine them correctly and efficiently. These Factors include: discounts, specialty loyalty programs (discount cards, certificates, vouchers, bonuses, club cards). Intangible factors should provide the client's emotional satisfaction with high quality services and outstanding attention to the buyer (Kochlamazashvili L., Kandashvili T., 2011).

Contemporary marketing theorists provide much attention to customer satisfaction assessment issues. They take into account the customer-perceived value. It is the difference between the prospective customer's evaluation of all the benefits and all the costs of an offering and the perceived alternatives. Total customer benefit is the perceived monetary value of the bundle of economic, functional, and psychological benefits customers expect from a given market offering because of the product, service, people, and image. Total customer cost is the perceived bundle of costs customers expect to incur in evaluating, obtaining, using, and disposing of the given market offering, including monetary, time, energy, and psychological costs. Many companies are systematically measuring how well they treat customers, identifying the factors shaping satisfaction, and changing operations and marketing as a result. Wise firms measure customer satisfaction regularly, because it is one key to customer retention. A highly satisfied customer generally stays loyal longer, buys more as the company introduces new and upgraded products, talks favorably to others about the company and its products, pays less attention to competing brands and is less sensitive to price, offers product or service ideas to the company, and costs less to serve than new customers because transactions can become routine. The link between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty is not proportional (Kotler P., Keller K., 2012).

METHODOLOGY

In our study we used marketing research methods. In the work there are used the concepts of marketing theories, statistic data, information existing on web-pages of certain Georgian organizations, etc. In the research process researcher can gather secondary data, primary data, or both. Secondary data are data that were collected for another purpose and already exist somewhere. Primary data are data freshly gathered for a specific purpose or for a specific research project. Researchers usually start their investigation by examining some of the rich variety of low-cost and readily available secondary data, to see whether they can partly or wholly solve the problem without collecting costly primary data. When the needed data don't exist or are dated, inaccurate, incomplete, or unreliable, the researcher will need to collect primary data. Our research was carried out in several stages. We have reviewed various theories about sales and sales personnel from literary sources. Then based on the

secondary data (information) _ internet sources, statistical data, information existed on Georgian company websites _ we studied the current situation in Georgia (Kotler P., Armstrong G., 2015).

FINDINGS

It is noteworthy that if the company's management is well aware that the business is developing rapidly, the competition on the market is growing, then it will rely on more fundamental aspects (and not just a bonus and promotions programs), in particular the intangible factors of loyalty. Attracting customers and further maintenance is provided by the satisfaction of their needs. The user will determine the quality of satisfaction. The satisfaction of the customer is not only the improvement of relations with it, but also the result of the entire enterprise activity.

Thus, the satisfaction of the buyer, the formation of relationships based on the trusts and its support, is very important. Also useful for maintain the buyers, if the company will create such conditions that will suspend the buyer's transfer to another seller. Consumers will not disconnect their connections with the company if it is related to the significant expenses.

CONCLUSIONS

We consider some of the main recommendations to improve customer service, on which depend the development of relationship marketing:

- Today goods and services become more complex, companies place greater emphasis on training their salespeople and on salespeople training themselves. Salespeople must be experts on everything involved with their products.
- When selecting the sales staff, companies should focus on whether the candidate has the ability to communicate. As it is known, good salespeople are good communicators. Great salespeople are great communicators, top salespeople speak the other person's language, both in verbal and nonverbal communication (Charles M. Futrell, 2011). It is of great importance to employ qualified people at selling work, who have personal characteristics (communication skills, etc.), which are essential for sales career. Salespeople should know how to place the customer's needs first, and can build a long-term relationship. People like to buy, not be sold. And they like to buy from people they trust. That is one reason today's salesperson needs to treat others. Today, special importance is given to keep the buyers, to ensure full satisfaction of consumers, to establish relationships with customers based on their trust which are known as relationship marketing.
- It is important to increase the salaries of those workers who are selling, which are in direct contact with the consumers. Because personnel serve other people, contributing to their well-being, helps consumers get the buying decisions. Unfortunately, the salary of such personnel in our country (in most cases) is very low. Only motivated sales personnel will be able take care of customers. As a salesperson, you can look forward to two types of rewards - nonfinancial and financial. Nonfinancial rewards sometimes called psychological income or intrinsic rewards, nonfinancial rewards are generated by the individual, not given by the company. The job has been done well - for instance, when you have helped the buyer through the purchase of your product. You realize your job is important. Everyone wants to feel good about their job, and a selling career allows you to experience these good feelings and intrinsic rewards daily. Salespeople often report that the nonfinancial rewards of their jobs are just as important to them as financial rewards (Charles M. Futrell, 2011).
- If salesperson loves his (her) work, trust his company and strongly convinced that the company products have great value for people, he will be more successful.
- The loyalty of clients does not reach only the sales personnel. But for this it is necessary to establish a customer oriented organization, which implies the following measures: create an attractive image of company for the client; improve the organization's system; to implement

quality service standards at all levels - starting from leaders to merchandizers; establish a corporate culture of buyers' services. If the company wants to maintain the buyer, he (or she) needs to fully satisfy the customer and provide high quality service. The buyer's satisfaction depends on the quality of service. Even when consumers get the products they want they may not be fully satisfied if the service level is low.

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