

“UNDERSTANDING AND ENGAGING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE” (BMSW5103_LON)

**“Organisation’s quality systems and
customer relationship management”**

**Student: Denise Jillian Castro Pantaleon
Student ID: 1916143
Lecturer: Nandish Patel**

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1.Introduction

Most of businesses success depends on the customers satisfactions, this means customer experience is the centre of everything for the sustainable competitive advantage. It is vital the customers experience and the customer engagement to the businesses.

The chosen organisation is Uniqlo Co, LTD a Japanese clothing brand Fashion, a company subsidiary owned of Fast Retailing Ltd., as a current staff member of this company, I have been witnessed the pre-covid and post covid lockdown effects within the organisation. Changes has been adapted gradually by the staffs and customers. In the beginning it was difficult from wearing a mask, maintaining social distancing, fitting room policies and many more of store policies implemented from the governments guidelines.

The current situation right now with the global pandemic, has caused a big impact for many organisations, people was forced to quickly adapt with the situation, accept the changes and follow the rules.

Customer relationship management is based on the fundamental of marketing, which has been acknowledge as one of the reasons of improvement of modern marketing areas.(*Rahimi & Gunlu, 2016*). Retail businesses are one of the most affected industry by this crisis, therefore businesses were forced to think creatively, innovatively, and strategically how to improve their customer experience and the engagement. Customer relationship management must improve attitudes and processes thus organisational culture needs to encourage staffs the acceptance and implementations of these changes. To avoid CRM failure leaders must establish a good CRM environment to support all the process of implementation (*Rahimi & Gunlu, 2016*).

There are different types of characteristics of customer relationship management: strategic, operational, and analytical, with this characteristic or CRM, and by identifying the gaps between the customers and the management perception, managers will help to develop a new concept of marketing to win customers satisfaction, value and loyalty.

2. Conceptual background

2.1 Customer definition

Customer means the person or organization who purchase goods and services. Consumers expects to be given a correct a valid information about the goods and services, it is the main asset of an organization. Customer service is an organizational skill to recognize and provide customers desires and necessities. Customer needs means the problems that consumer try to solve by buying a product or services, it can be assessed by evaluating factors such as who are they, what they purchase and why they purchase it, the more

information we have from customer the more the marketing success will be. Businesses must be aware about, who are they, what they do, why they buy, when they buy, how they buy, how much money they have, what makes them feel good about buying it, what they expect from the company, what they think about the company and what they think about the company's competitors (*Rahman & P.K, 2016*)

2.2 Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is part of an individual's feelings of pleasure or displeasure in consequence of comparing of product published performance related to expectations, it can be referred to consumers fulfilment response and can be measured by consumers expectations (*Dastane & Fazlin, 2017*). According to *Rahman and P.K (2016)* can be defined as marketing term that calculates how products or services supplied an organization meet or exceed customer expectations, it can be used as criterion for businesses management and improvement.

2.3 Customer expectation

Consumer's expectations are consumption about the assistance delivered as standards or reference points, where work is judged. As consumers analyse their approach of performance with reference points when analysing quality of work through knowledge about buyers' assumption is critical to service marketers. Identifying consumer expectations is the first and possibly most critical step in providing good-quality service (*Wilson, et al., 2016*)

2.4 Customer behaviour

According to *Nguyen et al (2016)*. Customer behaviour can be defined as total decisions in regards of the acquisition, consumption and dispositions of products, service, time, and idea by individuals' decision-making units. Reviewing the literature on online customer behaviour, fulfilling the orders is one of the important aspects that has impact on customer behaviour, particularly it might affect loyalty and repurchasing behaviour.

2.5 Customer engagement

Customer engagement is also known as one of the keys to the success of virtual customer environments, by using customer relationship management tools, firms could gain systems to associate and engage with their present and future customers, such as using the marketing consciousness. Customer engagement behaviour is linked with interactive relationship with the engaged matter and is recognized in marketing (*Kasemsap, 2018*).

2.6 Customer value

Customer value creation often refers to consumption experience as experience value, emerging it from experiential use as “value in use” which is a system where customer become better off well-being. The notion emphasizes the customer experience, logic, and skills to extract value out of products and other resources used (Malone, et al., 2017). It has been acknowledging that aggregating behaviours of consumers can be understood as a product of economic and socio-psychological forces. Consumer behaviour is a part of an interaction process with consumers, mass media, advertising agencies and other organisations which all practically linked to one another, it is also the heart to understand the structure and functioning of societies. It may be seen in two ways; the first is concerned with basic needs satisfactions and therefore in this point it can be related to “natural” and “legitimate” though it is a normal matter, not linked to other-world activity, in the second aspect consumption may be recognized as a satisfying desires and want within luxury and irrelevant needs, that is consumerism. (Kaufmann & Ruediger, 2017).

2.7 Customer relationship management and relationship marketing

Customer relationship management has been adopted from information technology to create new customers and retain old ones, therefore, to maintain long-time customer relationship with the aim of improving customer relationship and helps increasing customer loyalty. Customer loyalty is repeat customers with intentionally buying products and services from a certain firm (Kasemsap & Rajabhat, 2018).

Customer relationship management has been developed from principles of relationship marketing, which is informed as one of the key developmental parts of modern marketing. Back around 1990s, relationship management was used as a way for marketing departments to know consumers intimately by understanding their desires and hence increasing the difference of retaining them (Rahimi & Gunlu, 2016). It links to strategy, managing dual creation of value, using the data technology wisely, obtaining customer beliefs and dissemination of this beliefs to stakeholders, developing relationship with consumers, and integrating process within several areas of the organisation to make customer value (Wanga & GonKim, 2017). The success of marketing depends on its capability on sustaining meaningful and engaging experiences for customers. Advances in technology and communication, promoted by social media has contributed greatly to consumers making experience easier (Mishra, 2018).

2.8 Customer relationship management components

According to Al-Homery et al., (2019) customer relationship management's main components are company's processes, technology and people, it is not a technology, relatively it is a firm's process made strategically which incorporates the management of consumer's relationship. Additionally it refers to strategic approach which links technology with business processes to work together for constructing a lifelong profitable relationship with consumers. Mainly it is related to the CRM components and profitability of the firm, hence integrating the CRM components properly secure successful adoption results. The success of CRM is based on the management, integration and control of CRM components, its components are categorized as follows;

- a. **Technology:** It has been the basic key to accomplish CRM objectives and an important factor/element for saving, collecting and classifying customer data. The integration of the technology makes firms realize and informed of the customer's behaviours. This integration means the organisations required to have internet software, help desks, call centre, data warehouse, software customisation and process automation as complete process integration for organisations and system.
- b. **People:** It is recognized that employees or staffs in businesses are one of the keys to success as they are the one who manage the customer relationship management and the organizational readiness. CRM technology has a significant part of employee's success as it helps increasing employee's efficiency and effectiveness.
- c. **CRM business process:** The business strategy develops philosophical foundations of marketing. The triumph of CRM requires a sharp shift of all the organisations' processes to customer-oriented processes; the evaluation and assessment of all the organisations' processes must be customer-centric.
- d. **Knowledge:** Today organisations are mostly dependent upon knowledge for sustaining competitive advantage in building relationships with buyers. Consumer knowledge is divided into three groups; knowledge from consumers, knowledge to consumers and knowledge about consumers.

2.9 Types of Customer relationship Management

- a. **Strategic CRM:** is based on enhancing consumer-centric business culture devoted to keep, win, and develop profitable customer by designing and providing better value proposition and consumer's experience than rivals. Focusing on customers competes with other business logics, Philip Kotler has

diagnosed three business logics or orientations; product oriented, buyers choose products with best design, quality and functions; production oriented: firms focuses on perfect operation, they pursue to provide the consumers the best value for time, money and effort, therefore they aim to maintain managing cost low and establish standardized offers and routes to market; sales oriented organisations make the belief that if they invest enough in selling, advertising, public relation and sales promotion, buyers will be motivated to buy. Most of the time a sale orientation follows a production-orientation, the company makes low-cost goods and then promotes it heavily to shift inventory, it is a make and sell approach (*Buttle & Maklan, 2019*).

- b. **Operational:** Technology is used to computerized consumer-facing business processes. Customer relationship management software application that makes automatic marketing, selling and service processes, it effects not only in productivity and gains efficacy but also enhances consumer engagement and experience (*Buttle & Maklan, 2019*).
- c. **Analytical:** Also known as analytic CRM, it is consisted in customer related data's caption, storage, extraction, integration, process, interpretation, distribution, and report to improve both consumer and company value. Analytical CRM depend on consumers-related information. Consumers- related data can be seen in several organisations- wide repositories: financial data, sales data, marketing data and service data. To these internal data can be joined to external sources including firms' partners with whom organisations have a data sharing agreement and other third-party organisations like research firms that offers geo-demographic and life-style data (*Buttle & Maklan, 2019*).

3.Uniqlo Background

Uniqlo is a fashion brand and manufacturer from Japan, it is a company owned subsidiary of Fast Retailing Co. Ltd. since November 2005. It has been established in May 1984. The company continues growing by producing high quality casual wear through the entire process form its productions, product planning, distribution, and marketing at well known to be at affordable prices. Following the private Global strategy made famous Uniqlo began manufacturing and providing their clothes. A big part of the success of Uniqlo was providing high quality of products in an affordable price. Uniqlo administers Shun and Kinobi concepts in making its clothing lines. Shun means best timing and the same time popular, by explaining it in other way; it is something that it is "IN ", not early neither late. The firm produces not only basic clothing but what it is trending now in art and design. Kinobi can be

defined as beauty and function; the apparel is represented in a rational and organized manner that every firm and nationality produce an artistic pattern and rhythm. Determining characteristic of modern Japanese culture and modern Japanese reflected all these aspects (Mirza & al, 2020).

Uniqlo continues to grow worldwide as global consumer relate keenly to Life wear philosophy. Life wear is a little bit pricy as it is designed for longer use. It is not a single or twice used clothes. It offers highly finished designs and quality material with carefully detailed items (Retailing, 2019).

Lifewear are made for everybody regardless of ethnicity, gender, nationality, or age. Individuals worldwide can choose and buy Life wear easily to suit their personal lifestyles. Today, the company is recognized as a global brand, main factor of Uniqlo success all over the world is due to mainly people relate to life wear concept. UNIQLO is making a variety of amazing unique products as the firm model merge the whole clothes-making process--from the plan and designing through production, distribution, and retail. The company's market share is increasing all over the world as it promotes profound new textile together with the world's finest innovative technology and plan basic ideas using superior natural materials. Uniqlo LifeWear is high-quality, innovative clothing that is designs universally and comfort. It is made for everybody, everywhere. Today Uniqlo is using digital world to communicate directly with buyers and quickly transform their needs into actual products. (Retailing, 2020).

4. Servqual model review

Satisfying customer became a main factor in many marketing strategies in today's business environment. Exploring consumers satisfaction through several service quality research has turned into a key tool in developing marketing strategies. Quality of service is an analytical parameter in forming the service providers superior organisations work in a highly competitive environment. Service means action or process which contain economic activities, whose output is intangible and provides value to its buyers in the form of satisfying them, entertaining them, comforting them, etc. Service quality can only be given to consumers by seeing the service from customers perspective and eventually meeting their expectation. Concentrating in service quality, often helps businesses to team up with its consumers and achieve competitive edge (Rahman, et al., 2017).

The Servqual tool was created in 1985 by Parasuraman et al., the basic model contains five service quality dimensions called as Responsiveness, Assurance, Tangibility, Empathy and Reliability (RATER). Applying this dimension, the model analyses the interval between the perceived consumers expectation of services and consumer actual experience. After recognizing the gap, the service supplier tries to reduce the gap to enhance the service quality (*Rahman, et al., 2017*). According to Afridi et al (2017) the service quality comes from customers expectation, consumers having expectation from the organisations, and they compare these expectations with the received service quality, if this service quality service meets or exceeds expectations consumer will be happy, but if in the contrary, consumers will be disappointed. For such purposed the Gap model presenting 5 different types of gaps might happen between the company and customers.

These are the five gaps (*Afridi, et al., 2017*):

- a) Gap between customer expectation and management perception.
- b) Gap between management perception and service quality perception.
- c) Gap between service quality specification and service delivery.
- d) Gap between service delivery and external communication.
- e) Gap between expected service and perceived service.

5. The seven Ps marketing model review

In the marketing mix theory for service, seven instruments (7P) can be acclaimed, firms use this to make impact on consumers behaviour. For of them which are product, promotions, place, and price belong to classical marketing theory, which was improved by Booms and Bitner (1981) and reckon up three novel instruments which are people, physical, evidence and process. Various investigators have realized that those elements of marketing mix have good impact in satisfying customers (*Gocłowska & Piątkowska, 2020*).

The seven Ps model focuses on the marketing implications. Analysing different marketing strategies, we draw the seven Ps of the marketing mix, it includes the four conventional of the four conventional Ps of marketing: Product, Processes and Physical Evidence. These seven Ps usually are highlighted in services marketing: People, Processes and Physical Evidence (*Das, et al., 2021*).

The seven Ps elements (*Noormoradia & Mozafarib, 2017*):

- a) **Production** or product is factoring that market expose for attention, use, shop, and consumption, it may full satisfaction needs and can include physical things, place, service, firm or even a thought or an idea. It may also include components that necessary for giving a service and making value for consumers. Leader should

evaluate aspects of main products and its accessories thinking in fact of advantages of the customer and the competitors.

- b) **Price** is a marketing strategy that can be used as permanent or non-permanent tactic, is the price that customers pay for the product or service.
- c) **Place**: The concept of mixing people of place or where activities are distributed, or where the firm transfers the products
- d) **Promotion** in marketing mix involves activities such as recognition, motivation and efficiency, communication with consumers and effect on his opinion and behaviour by seller, deliver production to customer and direct shopping
- e) **People** (Employee): It includes all the people that provide service to consumers.
- f) **Process**: It is vital this role in service marketing. The type and the frequency of performance identity of service operation systems. Process shows a method and from that is base for systems. The main goal of marketing is analysing the needs and faults of the market making it to use service for removing the needs. This goal includes service mechanism design.
- g) **Physical evidence**: It includes environment that a few services and firms, and customers cooperate and administrate tasks.

6. Model selection to solve CRM problem

The fashion retailer Uniqlo has recently apologized due to online operations failure; customer was frustrated as they were waiting months for refunds due to failed orders. Loyal customers who have used the firm for many years have described burst to tears after trying to get a refund for Christmas presents lost as it was sent to wrong address. The company's inability to deal with refunds for items returned as back as October 2020 has left some customers around 600£. Sarah Isle (customer) have spent two months trying to get 284£ refund from Uniqlo as the product failed to arrive and items that she had returned on November. She tried to call the company no one answered neither on emails. A spokesperson from Uniqlo said that the company had experienced problems on orders a refund process at e-commerce warehouse over the Christmas time which it results an increase in inquiries to its customer service team (*Brignall, 2021*).

The seven Ps model focuses on the marketing implications of these four macro forces. Analysing different marketing strategies, we draw the seven Ps of the marketing mix, it includes the four conventional of the four conventional Ps of marketing: Product, Processes and Physical Evidence. These seven Ps usually are highlighted in services marketing: People, Processes and Physical Evidence (*Das, et al., 2021*).

Customer satisfaction and experience is important in businesses to success, with the given CRM problem of Uniqlo, the Servqual model tool is adequate to use in this kind of problem situation. The problem publicised in the news is associated with the customer service relationship management, therefore the Servqual model is recommended to use as this tool helps us to identify the gaps between the customer expectations and the company's perception of customers expectation. The given problem can be analysed in the following gaps:

- a) Gap between consumer expectation and management perception: Customer have expected to receive the refund of the online order as it has not arrived at the delivery address and items that the customer has sent it by post to be refunded. It is expected to have been refunded with no more than fifteen days.
- b) Gap between management perception and service quality specification: Management must have perceived what customer wants, which in this case to have the money get refunded in time but management did not have specifically given time to resolve the issue.
- c) Gap between service quality specification and service delivery: Staffs might have a poor training of customer service as it may not have met standards. This case, staffs should have been helpful to the customers such as investigating where is the parcel as customer service call centres should implement a First call resolution.
- d) Gap between service delivery and external communications: The problem was a refund due to fail order; the customer did not receive the parcel on a delivery promised time and failed it to refund, the website usually states three to five days for standard delivery.
- e) Gap between perceived and expected service: The perceived service was a total failure from the parcel delivery to a refund, customer expected it to be delivered in three to five days. The perceived service was not acceptable for the customer as it has been already there months without receiving the refund, not just the refund but the service when the customer was calling the customer service, he/she was not given the proper attention.

Customer expectations was just to receive the order placed in the selected delivery address, the company should be careful in distributing the parcels, the problem may be the driver of the delivery as it might have dropped to the wrong address and people have accepted it. one of the reason of the delayed might have been affected of the several lockdowns occurred back in 2020. Uniqlo should improve customer service, it should plan a better communication to customers via telephone calls inquiries, staff should have a better training on this aspect such as training them to resolve issues quicker and hire more staffs as many customers have

been trying to dial the phone and it takes long to get connected. Uniqlo should set, communicate, and reinforce this standard with customer-oriented idea for all over the work units. Each staff in the customer service must be evaluated after the training to improve their performance by providing them feedback. To provide a good customer service performance, staffs must be motivated, and to motivate them, one of motivate them is by acknowledging their hard work by rewards system.

Uniqlo offers training from the bottom, but sometimes it might be insufficient time that company gives to staff member. Employees may need more time to apply all in the information given, especially in this case, taking calls in the customer service call centres takes more time to learned all about the company. Mainly the problem was with the agents, the call have taken so long to get connected to a staff, Uniqlo in this case should hire more agents to attend the calls, secondarily appropriate training for agents is vital, relating to this case, the agents should have contacted driver or the company who deliver the parcels to further investigate the problem, and the company who delivers the parcel should have had like signing proofs of receiver of the parcel or a picture of it.

7. Recommendations

Customer satisfaction is one the key to business success, Covid -19 pandemic has dramatically impacted businesses globally, relating to the case problem, it is advisable to Uniqlo to improve their customer service especially in call centres as it is often harder to solve issues only by phone, by hiring more staffs and offer extensive training, these issues could have been avoided. By using the Servqual gap model, it helps the organisations to figure out the root of the CRM problems.

8. Conclusion

Customer relationship management goals are simple, to improve businesses relationships with customers to make its firms grow. By analysing customer needs or desires will helps the businesses to identify what product or service suitable to provide to specific customers. A customer relationship management solution helps businesses relationships to focus with people including its buyers, consumers, staffs or providers, this tool helps to identify the gaps or what is the company's missing to provide or failing to deliver. In relate to the Covid-19 pandemic, customer relationship management should be well organized even better than before, businesses should think about a better marketing strategy to compete with its competitors and hit the target.

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