

ROLES OF CUSTOMER CARE IN CONSUMER GOODS RETAIL MARKETING: EVIDENCE FROM VIETNAM

Cuong Hung PHAM
Foreign Trade University, Viet Nam
E-mail: pham.cuo@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT

The study is carried out to identify the role of customer care in consumer goods retail marketing using evidence from Vietnam. It is significant to write that through extending excellent customer care services; retail businesses report increased sales of consumer goods. Besides, sales are the lifeblood of retail businesses in Vietnam, and one of the primary means of increasing them is through extending exceptional customer care services. It is worth noting that sales are also one of the determinants of company success. Various articles and related studies were reviewed to help identify relevant information about the topic. A qualitative research model was embraced for the study to help meet its primary goal. The researcher chose this model because it helps gain an understanding of various underlying opinions about customer care in consumer goods retail marketing in Vietnam. To ensure that the entire selected population was entirely analyzed, the researcher considered a very small sample size of 30 participants. What is more, interviews and observation were employed to collect relevant information for the study. Data were analyzed using the SPSS software because of its accuracy capability. Following the collected data, it was revealed that customer care positively affects consumer goods retail marketing. The current research is very significant for academic purposes for a student at different education levels. For these reasons, with the help of research findings, it can be concluded that there is a very significant relationship between customer care and consumer goods retail marketing in Vietnam and other countries.

Keywords: *Consumer goods, customer care, company success, retail marketing.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Businesses in Vietnam ought to provide better customer care services to their customers to survive in the market. Dang and Huang (2014) assert that some companies that

deal in consumer goods in Vietnam consider customer care a significant marketing aspect; however, some do not. As such, the paper will help heighten the understanding of the role of customer care services in consumer goods retail marketing in Vietnam.

According to the British Business Group Vietnam (2016), Retail marketing is the process of communicating why consumers ought to choose specific consumer goods over those of their competitors. If a retail business is not doing that, they are not marketing. Dang and Huang (2014) add that the key aspect in marketing is allocating the most effective strategy as well as defining an excellent message to sensitize and influence their consumers. It is significant to note that many businesses make one mistake as they perceive that marketing entails only one aspect, although it is much broader.

Charlton (2017) postulates that retail marketing is everything that customers of consumer goods encounter when they purchase from retailers. For example, advertising, and most importantly, customer care services provided (Wadud, 2013). He further explains that customer care services include follow-up care provided after purchasing the products. For these reasons, customer care services are extended to attract customers for a given consumer good in Vietnam.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Hoang et al. (2016) explains that customer care is the individual encounter with customers either through emails, physical or telephones. The way retail marketers express personal experience determines whether or not they create loyal customers. It is also mentioned by Cuong (2014) that excellent customer care services make customers of consumer goods feel unique as well as special, and it is evident that this comes down to struggles made and exhibited behavior by the marketers.

More so, customer care services ought to aim at maintaining customers as well as creating loyalty (Ilieska, 2013). Excellent customer services lead to dedicated and loyal customers, which will undeniably lead to increased sales, which come with profits. It is evident that providing customer care in consumer goods retail marketing leads to the establishment of long-term customers. Given the above, customer care plays a significant role in consumer good retail marketing in Vietnam.

According to Ngo and Nguyen (2016), customer care plays a significant role in consumer goods retail marketing. The authors posit that it builds trust among potential

customers. Customers stay loyal to retail businesses for valid reasons. Otherwise, Vietnam has various competitors that consumers can buy from (Danziger, 2018). As such, retail businesses ought to move an extra mile and ensure that they work hard to keep their customers and build trust in their brand.

Furthermore, Kotler and Keller (2012) stipulate that extending excellent customer care during consumer goods retail marketing leads to trust increment. It is evident that gaining customers' trust is something that all retail marketers yearn for as it is a very significant step in marketing consumer goods in Vietnam, according to Dang and Huang (2014) and Tlapana (2017). Therefore, customer care in consumer goods marketing helps consumer goods retail marketers in Vietnam build trust amongst potential customers.

Customer care in consumer goods retail marketing in Vietnam, according to Hoang et al. (2016), helps build awareness. Excellent customer care extended to a customer plays a significant role in establishing awareness of an organization's brand. Profoundly, word of mouth, as mentioned by Ngo and Nguyen (2016), is the most powerful ally that businesses have on their side.

Words from customers to others can undeniably break or help enhance a given business. For example, businesses in Vietnam that do not extend customer care to their customers are made famous through word of mouth from one customer to another (Nguyen, 2017).

In other words, when one customer hears or experiences a case of ineffective customer care, they tell another person who later tells another; thus, discouraging them from buying from the business (Ehlert, 2021). Nevertheless, when a retail business in Vietnam extends, good customer care clients will talk about it and recommend others to become customers. As a result, customer care helps consumer goods retail marketing in building awareness.

Ilieska (2013) states that excellent customer care in Vietnam appeals to customers, especially consumer goods. Decades ago, retail businesses dealing in consumer goods prioritized making sales. That is, they never cared how they got there. Nevertheless, in the current world, according to the British Business Group Vietnam (2016), businesses with retailers being no exception ought to cater to the potential as well as new customers.

These people expect a lot from the business and do not want to be treated just like numbers. In this way, extending excellent customer care will ensure that the business is making efforts to meet the people's expectations who are likely to become customers (Mihai-Florin et al., 2006).

Besides, Kotler and Keller (2012) assert that nothing matters if they do not extend customer care to their customers for most businesses in Vietnam. It is evident that with good customer care extended to potential customers during consumer goods retail marketing, all times appeals to them. They feel like their needs are being met; thus, contributing to consumer satisfaction, which contributes to retention in big numbers. With this said, customer care plays a significant role in Vietnam's retail industry.

In a study carried out by Sivadass and Baker-Prewitt (2000), it was revealed that excellent customer care helps retail businesses in Vietnam to keep their customers for longer periods like years. Exposing customers to effective customer care, they are undoubtedly likely to keep around and buy the company products in particular consumer goods any chance they get. Moreover, British Business Group Vietnam (2016) writes that extending good customer care to business customers is one way of keeping customers around for a long time.

Through customer care, retail businesses in Vietnam are retaining their customers as well as attracting others. For instance, Nguyen (2017) describes that customer care contributes a lot to customer satisfaction, which plays a significant role when it comes to success. For this matter, customer care is very significant in the Vietnamese retail industry as it helps retain customers.

Minh et al. (2015) study reveals that customer care helps retail businesses extend their lives. The authors assert that only 4/100 retail businesses in Vietnam last for more than 10 years. In other words, 96% of the businesses in the country are failing. On the same note, Hoang (2011) and Mattsson (2009) state that when customers are not treated the right way and their needs are ignored, businesses cut short the chances of their longevity.

It is evident that with various responsibilities and obligations, they ought to prioritize their customers if one is concerned about their retail business in Vietnam. In support of the statement above Ha Xuan (2014) writes that customers are the ones that do businesses as, without them, the latter does not exist. Given the above, customer care is an essential aspect of consumer goods retail marketing in Vietnam that all businesspeople should consider.

According to Kotler and Keller (2012), businesses may have an insight into what their brands portray. Nevertheless, their customers are incapable of getting into their heads. They will come up with expectations based on external marketing, content, advertisements, and social media presence.

Moreover, Charlton (2017) states that a business's customer care team is its primary link. In this way, the team is in charge of representing the retail business' brand to them. There is no direct communication without a customer care team in any business, with consumer goods retail marketing being no exception.

It is essential to assert that the customer care team, according to Malhotra (2010), also influences potential consumer goods customers and convinces them of the strengths the business being marketed has over its competitors. This act is vivid in all countries, with Vietnam being no exception (Mattsson, 2009). With this said, customer care has helped in the representation of businesses' brand image, values, and mission in consumer goods retail marketing in Vietnam.

Like Ilieska (2013), Hoang (2011) believes that customer care leads to increased sales, which leads to high profits in the long run. The authors state that all customers with consumer goods being no exception are always willing to buy and pay more to retail businesses that extend excellent customer care. Research findings from Dang and Huang (2014) reveal that 50% of customers in Vietnam increase the rate at which they purchase goods with a particular brand following excellent customer care.

The authors further posit that approximately 86% of customers are likely to pay 20% more in the bid to get an amazing customer care experience. Ideally, customer care is crucial and not overlooked by customers in that they can pay more for businesses that practice it. According to Sivadass and Baker-Prewitt (2000), retail businesses in Vietnam that do not prioritize customer care services are likely to burn as well as crash since others value it so much.

Therefore, even the things perceived as small such as customer care influences customers, and it could be one of the deciding aspects for them to keep around.

3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

3.1. Research Model

A research model was selected as well as handled effectively in the bid to meet the research goals of the current study. There are various research models, but the current research employed a qualitative research design. According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015), qualitative research is primarily exploratory. It was applied to understand various underlying opinions about the role of customer care in consumer goods retail marketing in Vietnam.

It is evident that the model provides insights into the identified problem and assists in coming up with hypotheses for further research quantitative in nature (Danziger, 2018). The researcher also embraced this model because it has effective data collection methods. These entail interviews and observations. Therefore, in the bid to meet the current study's primary goal, the research embraced a qualitative research model.

3.2. Hypothesis

Customer care plays a significant role in consumer goods retail marketing in Vietnam. The current study was based on the assumption that a very significant relationship exists between customer care and consumer goods retail marketing in Vietnam.

3.3. Research Method

The target population of the study was the consumer goods customers as well as retailers. The retailers were five years plus in the business of consumer goods. The researcher considered a very small sample size to ensure that the entire selected population was entirely analyzed (Simon, 2011). For example, they used only 10 retail businesses and 20 customers, making 30 participants. Random sampling was employed to allocate the participants, which reduced cases of bias.

It is significant to assert that for all research studies to be successful; data collection should be collected using the most effective methods. As such, the researcher embraced interviews and observation in the bid to collect relevant information for the study. According to Sekaran & Bougie (2010), these data collection methods are cheap, time-saving, and are reliable as they provide firsthand information.

Further, interviews entailed interaction between both groups of participants and the researcher. For example, the consumers and retailers interacted with the researcher in various ways. During this method, various questions were formulated, and the participants had to provide different answers. The observation was also employed, and no interaction occurred as

the researcher just observed what happened from a distance. It is evident that most of the businesses that were part of the researcher did not realize that someone was watching over them.

This method helped the researcher collect primary data without biases, according to Saunders et al. (2009). To ensure that the collected data was effectively analyzed, the researcher used the SPSS software. The software increased accuracy in the research findings, thus, the credibility of the study. Finally, the researchers embraced all the ethical considerations to ensure that the study was successful.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Role of Customer Care in Customer's Perspective

What is the role of customer care in consumer goods retail marketing?	Response
Customers 1,2, 5, 7, 9 and 10	Attract customers
Customers 3, 4, 6, 8, 18, and 12	Leads to loyal and dedicated customers
Customers 13, 20, 14, and 15	Builds trust amongst customers and increases awareness
Customers 11, 16, 17, and 19	Increases customer satisfaction

Following the findings from table 1, various customers provided different responses when asked the same question of what role does customer care play in consumer good retail marketing. Customers 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, and 10 said that customer care attracts. The customers were real evidence that customer care is magic as they admitted that they buy specific consumer goods at those retail businesses that extend customer care.

The perception of the customers was in line with previous research findings from Dang and Huang (2014); and Charlton (2017), who stated in their studies that many businesses have managed to maintain the number of their customers as well as attract others because of extending excellent customer care such as follow-ups.

Furthermore, customers 3, 4, 6, 8, 18, and 12 reported that customer care makes them loyal and dedicated. According to these customers, it was because of customer care that they were loyal and dedicated to their retailers. Like Charlton (2017), these customers believed that customer care is a way of showing a customer that they are valued and contribute a lot to the business's existence. The participants' response corresponded with the research findings from Ngo and Nguyen (2016), who says that when a business takes good care of its customers, they will always come back; thus, loyalty and dedication.

Customer 13, 20, 14, and 15 revealed that customer care helps businesses build trust amongst customers and increases awareness. The response is similar to that of Dang and Huang (2014) and Tlapana (2017). The authors stated in their studies that trust is one of the things that all businesses want from their customers, but if customer care is embraced, it can be gained.

Finally, Customer 11, 16, 17, and 19 said that it is through customer care that customers get satisfied. When a customer comes to a given consumer-goods shop, they expect to be welcomed and attended to effectively. When the businesses meet this, they make them happy; thus, satisfied. The response provided by the participants is consistent with the research findings of Nguyen (2017), who states that customer satisfaction is very significant in businesses.

Table2: the Necessity of Customer Care in Customer’s Perspective

Is customer care a necessity in consumer goods retail marketing	Yes Number of Customers (%age)	No Number of Customers (%age)
	20 (100%)	0 (0%)

The findings presented in Table 2 portray that all the interviewed customers in Vietnam considered customer care to be a necessity in consumer goods retail marketing. As such, they believe that all retail businesses ought to extend it to their customers as it has various advantages and benefits. Out of 20 customer participants, none was of the view that customer care is not unnecessary. The participants’ belief was similar to all those authors who recommended businesses in Vietnam to extend customer care to their customers. For example, Nguyen (2017); Ngo and Nguyen (2016), and many others (Table 3).

Table 3: the Role of Customer Care in Retailer’s Perspective

What is the role of customer care in consumer goods retail marketing	Response
Retailers 1, 4 and 10	Increases sales and makes businesses survive for long
Retailers 2 and 3	Customers can pay more when there is excellent customer care
Retailers 4, 9 and 5	It is a competitive advantage and a marketing strategy
Retailers 6, 7 and 8	A way of maintaining and attracting customers

To avoid bias in research, the researcher interviewed even the retailers in Vietnam. The table above presented their different responses when they were asked the role of customer care in consumer goods retail marketing. Retailers 1, 4, and 10 revealed that it increases sales and makes businesses survive for a long. It is evident that a business that does not make sales is likely to collapse, but with customer care, this is impossible. The

participants' answer is in line with what researchers such as Hoang (2011) believe as they write that to increase sales, one has to meet their customers' needs.

More so, Retailers 2 and 3 and then 4, 9, and 5 said that customer care makes customers pay more, and it is a competitive advantage and marketing strategy, respectively. These answers are similar to Ilieska's (2013) research findings, which confirms that customer care is significant. Ultimately, Retailers 6, 7, and 8 identified that the practice attracts customers just like Huang (2014) and Charlton (2017) in their findings.

Table 4: the Necessity of Customer Care in Retailer's Perspective

Should all retailers practice excellent customer care	Yes Number of retailers (%age)	No Number of retailers (%age)
	9 (90%)	1 (10%)

The findings presented in this table 4 portray the necessity of customer care from the retailers' perspective. Accordingly, 90% that accounts for nine interviewed participants, proposed the view that all retailers should practice customer care. It is evident that all the reviewed articles were also in support of customer care. For instance, Huang (2014), Nguyen (2017), Ngo and Nguyen (2016), and Charlton (2017).

However, only 10% that accounts for 1 participant was against it as they claimed that sometimes it is expensive as one needs to incur training costs. Therefore, considering the majority, it is without any doubt that all retailers ought to practice customer care as it comes along with various benefits regardless of the incurred costs.

Table 5: Observations: Findings from Different Retailers

Retailer 1	Findings
	Extended excellent customer care
	There were many customers.
	There were fewer complaints from customers.
	Customers came with friends.
Retailer 2	There was little customer care
	Customer turn up was not good.
	Customers were often unhappy.
Retailer 3	There was effective customer care.
	Customers paid extra money for the services.
	There were many customers.
	Customers were happy
Retailer 4	No customer care
	Customer turn up was fair.
	Customers and retailers were fairly happy.
Retailer 5	There was a customer care team.
	Good customer care was extended to the customers.
	Customers were very happy.
	There were many sales considering the number of customers observed.

According to the findings of table 5, some of the retailer's businesses were observed to find out firsthand information to help in the investigation. On observing retailers 1, 3, and 5, it was revealed that they extended excellent customer care to their customers. Their customers were often happy, just like their employees. The business registered various sales, evidenced by the many customers who came around.

To ensure that customer care was effectively done, the businesses had customer care teams. On the other hand, retailers 3 and 4 who did not extend excellent customer care to a few customers turned up, which means that the sales were also few. The responses from the participants were similar to the research findings of Hoang (2011), British Business Group Vietnam (2016), and Wadud (2013).

5. CONCLUSION

The current study aimed to identify customer care's role in consumer goods retail marketing. Some of the study's significant findings were that customer care is a way of increasing loyalty and dedication among customers. A customer who is well attended will stick around all the time. Besides, no customer sticks around a given business for no reason, and with customer care, it is vivid. Another finding is that customer care is a way of increasing sales since it leads to customer satisfaction. A happy customer will recommend a given business to another person, and in the long run, the number of customers will increase; thus, increased sales.

Further, through customer care, businesses live for a long since they have money from sales to sustain it. Without sales, the business is likely to collapse. Through interviews, it was revealed that customer care also helps businesses build trust amongst customers as well as increases awareness. A business that extends excellent customer care is able to gain the trust of its customers, and it is remarked that it is one of the primary achievements that all businesses yearn to achieve.

It is evident that with customer's trust, everything else does itself automatically. On the other side of awareness, it should be noted that word of mouth is the most powerful ally that businesses have on their side. Words from customers to others can undeniably break or help enhance a given business. With this said, a business that extends excellent customer care will be made famous in a given locality because of word of mouth and vice versa.

Considering the observation findings, it was revealed that customers were often happy, just like their employees in businesses that extended customer care. Profoundly, to ensure that customer care is effectively done, the businesses should employ customer care teams. Customer care is an investment in the business since it yields long-term benefits. As such, the research met the hypothesis according to research, interview, and observation findings.

All the data collection methods opposed the hypothesis, and this means the research was successful. It is evident that the research above helped heighten the understanding of customer care's role in consumer goods retail marketing in Vietnam and the entire world. It is significant to write that the current research focused on customer care in marketing, which can be useful for students in the field of business administration, marketing, and other related fields.

Moreover, they can identify the gaps evident so as to improve it for better results, such as looking at the other side of customer care in consumer goods retail marketing. It is, therefore, evident that more research on the disadvantages of customer care ought to be carried out so that a more thorough analysis can be done.

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