The factors influencing the mutual desirable behavior of restaurant customers with regard to the understanding of customers’ benevolence

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Abstract

In today's business market, a widespread attention has been focused to the concept of communication between service providers and the customers. Nowadays, what is important is to build a qualified relationship with customers to promote their perceived quality of services which this matter on its own will create loyalty and desired behavior in customers. Relationship marketing can be effective on multiple factors such as customer satisfaction and appreciation and mutual desirable behavior of the customer and can lead to attaining a competitive advantage for organizations especially in the service sector. The impact of relationship marketing on customer satisfaction and appreciation and mutual desirable behavior of the customers with respect to the understanding of customer's benevolence is investigated in the present study by providing a model. The statistical society of the study is the customers of luxury restaurants located in the city of Yazd. Questionnaires designed in a manner of random sampling for customers in order to collect research data. This is an applicable research with a survey nature. Also, structural equation modeling was used in order to analyze data by employing the PLS Smart software. Obtained results indicate that relationship marketing had a positive impact on satisfaction and appreciation and both of these items can affect the mutual desirable behavior of the customer and understanding the customer's benevolence would not weaken the bond between relationship marketing and appreciation.

Keywords: mutual desirable behavior, customer appreciation, customer satisfaction, relationship marketing, understanding the customer perception.
1. Introduction

Relationship marketing is a trend for the market in which the importance of developing and maintaining long-term customer relationships has become the norm in marketing literature. In the mid-1980s, the concept of developing a satisfying mutual long-term relationship between customers and service providers has been proposed as an asset. Relationship marketing refers to a process in which a company tries to develop and maintain sustainable relationships with customers whereby the profitable customers will be kept through the relationship and exchange.

In the late '90s and early 2000s, guidelines for solving problems related to marketing strategies especially about the brand and customer communications were considered by some pioneers of marketing and have claimed that these methods were not satisfactory. Nowadays with increased competition in global markets, organizations are aware of this issue that customer orientation is necessary to be considered as the focus of their activities because satisfied and loyal customers are known as the crucial factors for surviving, durability and achieving to goals of the organization. For this purpose, organizations should revolve their aims and activities around customer satisfaction and mutual behaviors. Since most businesses with creating social relationships are based on mutual behaviors, ignoring the effective factors on mutual behaviors reflects the sense of a lack of understanding toward the vital aspect of consumer's behavior (Lee & et al., 2014). By examining the literature of hospitality in restaurants, the importance of understanding the customer's benevolence and mutual desirable behavior with customers as well as obtaining customer loyalty has turn to be an essential strategy for business services in recent years. And these organizations have taken steps to create and maintain long-term relationships with customers because creating desirable mutual behaviors with customers is the best option for realizing this matter. On this basis, the present study aimed to investigate the factors influencing desirable mutual behaviors in a restaurant according to understanding the customer benevolence.

2. A review of the background and the theoretical framework of the research

2-1. Relationship marketing

The concept of relationship marketing first was raised in the US marketing literature (Dubici2007, 101). Relationship marketing is known as an effort to maintain and strengthen relationships with customers and understanding and managing the relationship between the customer and the supplier. Relationship marketing is a strategy to identify, create, maintain and improve relationships with both customers and shareholders. This relationship is born out of mutual trust. Relationship marketing tries to attract customers, suppliers and shareholders to participate in activities such as marketing costs. To perform and apply the principles of relationship marketing in the real world, managers must employ different factors such as market conditions, equipment information, customer databases, the ability of customers to use effective information systems and environmental factors to create a warm and friendly relationship with customers and also be aware that the implementation of each method will be different in different times and places (Doai, Rezaei, Khajehi, 2011).
Relationship marketing has made a major change in marketing and that is moving from thinking only about competition and conflict, to reflect on the relationship and mutual cooperation (Ndubisi et al, 2007, p: 22). Today, companies in addition to develop strategies to attract new customers and do business with them, intend to maintain their current customers and create a permanent relationship with them. In other words, they found that the loss of a customer is much more than losing a sale item, it means losing the customer's total purchases during their lifetime or over the time period that he was the buyer of company's goods. In other words, companies are seeking to obtain the lifetime value of their customers.

2-2. Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is the feeling or attitude of a customer towards a product or service after using it. Schneider defines customer satisfaction as a result of the comparing process of trends between the fact of the product or service or expectations and the social norms in relation to the product. Rap, by taking into account the above definition, describes the customer satisfaction as a personal attitude that raises form the comparison between the actual efficiency and productivity expected from the company (Dahmardeh et al., 2010). Customer satisfaction can be defined as the goal that had been previously predicted to be gained, this means that the customer reaches to products and services that has already in mind (Martenson, 2007). Customer satisfaction is defined in two ways: as an output or as a process, the first category defines customer satisfaction as the ultimate result of the consumption of a good or a service. The output process of purchasing and consuming the services that was predicted by the consumers is obtained as result of comparing the services and cost of purchasing. The second category is associated with definitions which are mainly focus on perceptual and psychological aspects affecting customer satisfaction. Assessing whether goods or services received is as good as they were expected to be is important (Pratten, 2004), Japanese companies believe that the customer is the king (Goldsmith & Foxall, 1997) and the level of customer satisfaction affect their buying patterns (Park, 2001& Cho).

Oliver (1980) defines satisfaction as the amount of meeting customer's expectations before purchasing and comparing them with the perceived results after purchase. In fact, the level of meeting customer's expectations affects the amount of customer satisfaction. However, satisfaction can be identified on the continuum of very low to very high, but generally, meeting the customer's expectations is called as satisfaction and unfulfilled expectations is considered as dissatisfaction. Customers, in response to satisfaction, may take actions and give some positive recommendations to others or repurchase. However, dissatisfied customers may refuse to repurchase products or may take malicious actions such as negative publicity to take their revenge from the seller. Sheth, 1973 suggests that consumers' satisfaction from previous purchases affect their purchase intention in the future. Similarly, dissatisfactions that happened in the past affect their purchasing decisions in the future. However, dissatisfaction, in addition to having a negative effect on customer's future decisions, can result in protests and negative publicity which can undermine the company's credibility. In fact, negative publicity is the customers' active response in order to directly inform their dissatisfaction to others. This negative publicity does not just target the product or service provider, but can directly affect the existing and potential customers. However, protests and negative word of mouth are identical but they are distinct from each other. In fact, customers use protest as an option to change but do not use negative publicity to make changes.
2-3. Acknowledgements

Gratitude is a cognitive-emotional state usually associated with a perception in which a person received an interest that didn’t deserved or did not earn it but this benefit have reached to him because of the good intentions of another person. Appreciation is an excitement that realizes an external factor. This excitement comes up after a benefit that is interpreted as a rich, valuable and altruistic intention. Appreciation as an attribute indicates individual differences in the intensity and frequency of the emotional experience of gratitude and the amount of stimulation needed to recall appreciation.

A research has shown that appreciation, as one of the seven dimensions of religiosity, is correlated with the reduction of the risk of dependence on nicotine, alcohol, drugs, abuse of drugs, psychopathic behavior, major depression, phobias, anxiety disorder, panic disorder and mental appetite. In another study, it was associated with gratitude towards god and decreasing the mental effects of stress (kendler, K.S.et al, 2006).

Gratitude acts as an ethical barometer and attracts people's attention to the benefits received each day. Gratitude gives four types of information about the location of the person who delivers benefit: 1- the cost of benefit for whom delivered it (donor), 2- The value of the benefit for the person who received it (receiver), 3- plans with interest; 4- And that without the requirement of relatives how much can expect to receive benefit. Thus, gratitude can be considered as Profit Finder. From the viewpoint of evolutionary or bio-cultural perspective, gratitude helps people to form and maintain relationships. Since communication is necessary for survival and well-being of individuals, groups and communities, appreciation and other social emotions have been shaped to solve particular problems in human life. In particular, gratitude is formed to solve the monitoring problems of the group. Appreciation is an evolutionary compromise for adjusting the people's response to humanitarian actions; an interface mechanism that makes connection between receiving a favor and compensate for a favor. Create a desire for retaliation is the effect of these emotions. In other words, Appreciation is a response to the previous moral behavior and is an incentive to the next ethical behavior.

2-4. Mutual desired behavior

Mutual favorable behavior is an expectation that people respond to each other so favorably for benefits and indifference or hostility to harm. Social norm of mutual behavior often has different shapes in different areas of social life or societies. However, all of them are separated from related ideas such as appreciation, the golden rule or mutual good faith. An essential and optimal mutual behavior is a powerful engine needed to motivate, create, maintain and adjust social organizations and also to control the damage. Two key elements of mutual favorable behavior are the positive and negative aspects of it. A positive mutual norm is the "embedded obligations created by the exchange of benefits or interest among the people; So that the receiver will feel the benefit and the one who gives the benefit feels indebted until his kindness be compensated (Chen, 2009). A positive mutual behavior is a common expectation that when someone helps another person would expect a positive feedback in form of a gift, a definition, loans, reference works, and so on.
Darrell and Robinson (2002) showed that most students believe that criminal penalties should be determined by the seriousness of the crime to prevent similar crimes and not the punishment's effect. When the distinct discussions of negative and positive norms on mutual relations are raised, conflicting ideas could be existed. "In front of a positive mutual norm Gouldner (1960) also proposed a mutual negative norm or acts of reprisals in which dealing with injuries and losses is emphasized (Chen, 2009)". Therefore, a distinct line can be considered between a positive and a negative norm. But both of these mutual norms are mechanisms that were adopted by human beings in order to maintain a balance between humans. "Accordingly, norms, positive and negative mutual relations act as a starter mechanism and functions' stability, maintain fair interpersonal exchanges in human evolution (Chen, 2009)".

2-5. Understanding the customer benevolence

Understanding the customer's benevolence is the degree of customer's perception that the seller is sincerely interested in defining the customer's health. Understanding the benevolence includes showing the retailers' respect and sensitivity (Fazal Hasan .et al., 2014). The perceived value is a comparison between revenues of goods purchased in front of what was paid for it. Satisfaction is a comparison between the experienced value (before buying) and perceived value after the buy. Customer's satisfaction has an emotional and effective structure, while the value of customer perception has a cognitive structure. Customer's satisfaction is related to the next stage of purchase but the customer's perceived value is associated with the process before or after the purchase. The orientation of customer's satisfaction is technical, while the orientation of the customer's conceptual value is strategic. Customer's satisfaction only measures the existing customers but the perceived value, measures the potential customers, in addition to existing customers. In customer's satisfaction, presented products are measured in the customer's conceptual value (Moliner, 2007).

2-6. the research conceptual model

In order to achieve the main objective of the study, the following hypotheses have been proposed and tested:
1- Relationship marketing has a significant positive effect on appreciation.
2- Relationship marketing has a significant and positive effect on satisfaction.
3- Appreciation has a positive and significant effect on mutual desirable behavior.
4- Satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on mutual desirable behavior.
5- The relationship between understanding the relationship marketing and customer appreciation is adjusted by understanding the customer's benevolence.

In this study, it is assumed that mutual appreciation and satisfaction has a positive effect on mutual desirable behavior and on the other hand, factors that influence these two items are: restaurants' attractions and relationship marketing in which understanding the customer's benevolence would adjust the relationship between relationship marketing and appreciation.
3. Methodology

The present study has an applicable nature and a descriptive and survey method is applied. The study population included all customers of Yazd luxury restaurants (Restaurants: Sezar, Ariana, Hall of Yazd, and UN has been considered). In this study, the available sampling method was used and to determine the sample size, according to the unknown size of the population, Cochran formula was used and 374 was the number obtained. In the present research, the required data was collected through a questionnaire. The questionnaire used in this study have been determined based on a combination of questionnaires used in the service sector, including Palmatyro and friends (2009), the variable of relationship marketing (5 questions), Morales (2005) and Palmatyro et al (2009), the variable of appreciation (3 questions), Oliver (1995) and Johnson et al (1981), the variable of satisfaction (3 questions), Morales (2005) and Palmayro et al (2009), the variable of mutual desirable behavior (3 questions), Koumartal (1995), the variable of understanding the customer’s benevolence (3 questions) in the 5 time likert scale format. In order to assess the validity of the questionnaire, the two logical and construct validities were considered. In this regard, the content validity and reliability factor (factor analysis) were evaluated. The construct validity indicates that to what extent the measuring instrument can measure the structure or trait that has a theoretical basis. Sarmad et al, 1999, factor analysis is a confirmatory to ensure the association of each of the items used with their structures. The credibility factor test of the questionnaire was done with the help of the confirmatory factor analysis and the use of smart PLS 1 software. According to the results of all the factor loadings, the research variables were above 0.4, which illustrates the high validity of the questionnaire. Also, the content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed and the necessary corrections were made based on the experts’ opinion. In order to calculate the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire and to ensure the internal consistency of research’s measurement instruments, Cronbach's alpha test was used. The total amount of the questionnaire’s Cronbach's alpha was obtained 0.904 which shows...
the reliability of the questionnaire. In this research, structural equations model is used to test a particular model of relationship between the variables. This model is a comprehensive approach to test hypotheses about the relationship between observed and latent variables (Hooman, 2008). In this research, smart PIS software and two-stage method of partial least squares was used to test the hypothesis and the model’s fitness that is a kind of methods of Structural Equation Modeling.

Table1. Factor loadings of the research variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>size of factor loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mutual desirable behavior</td>
<td>My repeated visits to the restaurant staff make the extra effort to satisfy me.</td>
<td>0.755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Due to the feeling of loyalty towards this restaurant I’m looking forward to come more</td>
<td>0.861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I do more shopping in order to compensate the past efforts of the restaurant</td>
<td>0.761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>The restaurant serves better in comparison to other similar restaurants</td>
<td>0.838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I owe to the kindness of employees and managers of this restaurant</td>
<td>0.693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I appreciate this restaurant</td>
<td>0.825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the customer’s benevolence</td>
<td>The restaurant gives priority to my requests</td>
<td>0.773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restaurant management has a good understanding of the problems that arise</td>
<td>0.792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restaurant’s management seriously considers the impact of their decisions on consumers.</td>
<td>0.830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship marketing</td>
<td>I am shore that the reception will be done properly</td>
<td>0.804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I trust the services of the restaurant</td>
<td>0.713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>key staffs of the restaurant know me well</td>
<td>0.554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I’m intimately familiar with the staff of the restaurant</td>
<td>0.399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have established a good relationship with everyone in the restaurant.</td>
<td>0.632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>I am happy with the way restaurant provides quality of and services.</td>
<td>0.806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In general, I’m happy to visit this restaurant.</td>
<td>0.803</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The criterion for the suitability of factor loadings is 0.4 (Hulland, 1999). The amount of factor loading in most questions is more than 0.4, which indicates the appropriateness of these criteria.
According to the values reported in the above table, Cronbach's alpha is higher than 0.60 and the composite reliability is above 0.7 which indicates that the reliability of the model is appropriate.

The second criterion for evaluating the fitness is the measurement models of convergent validity which examines the level of correlation in each structure with questions (indicators). The AVE criterion is used for this purpose which is reported in the following table.

### Table3. Convergent validity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Convergent validity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the customer's benevolence</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual desirable behavior</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship marketing</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the report of Magner et al. 1996, amounts more than 0.4 is appropriate for this criterion which based on the reported amounts in the above table, the convergent validity of the model shows the fitness of the measurement model.

### 4. Research findings

#### 4-1- Structural model fitting

In the model of data analysis with the use of PLS method, Structural model fitting should be examined after analyzing the measurement model.

### Table4. R Squares criterion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Convergent validity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mutual desirable behavior</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R2 represents the effect of an exogenous variable on an endogenous variable. According to the values reported in the table for this variable, the suitability of the structural model fitting is confirmed.
4-2. Hypotheses testing

According to the values reported in the table below, the value of Z is more than 1.96 for the hypothesis of one, two, three and four. Therefore, these hypotheses are confirmed. As a result, the relationship marketing affects appreciation and customer satisfaction. Also, mutual desirable behavior is affected by satisfaction and gratitude. But for the hypothesis number five, the amount of Z is less than 1.96, so understanding the customer's benevolence could not weaken the relation between relationship marketing and appreciation.

Table5. Hypotheses testing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>results of the hypothesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship marketing has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction.</td>
<td>14.66</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship marketing has a positive and significant effect on customer appreciation.</td>
<td>10.57</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on customers' mutual desirable behavior.</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation has a positive and significant effect on Mutual desirable behavior of the customers</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The impact of relationship marketing on appreciation is adjusted by understanding the customers' benevolence.</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion and Conclusion

The results obtained in this study approve the impact of satisfaction and appreciation on having a mutual desirable behavior with customers according to understanding the customer's benevolence. Understanding and emphasizing on the issue of having a qualified relationship with the customer and managing it in the service sector is considerably important. A qualified and desirable relationship has many interests for service departments. Nowadays, customers' satisfaction is not enough to make them stay is the department, and beside satisfaction it will be essential to be shire about their loyalty. Meanwhile, the goal is to establish a long-term and mutual relationship with interest groups of the organization, especially customers, in a way that more customers are maintained and fewer customers intend to leave the organization. More market share and profitability of the organization is considered as the outcomes of this matter (Saboktakin, 2011). All units and sectors of the studied restaurant (in addition to the subsidiaries and marketing units) should play an active role to fulfill the plans of commitment, appreciation, satisfaction and mutual desirable behavior of the customer. Based on Peter Drucker's point of view (the renowned scholar of the twentieth century), one of the basic mistakes of organizations is that they think the task of marketing and sales is mainly related to the marketing and sales unit, while all units of the organization should have a marketing approach. Although most of the staff does not directly deal with customers, they should intensify their effort to supply quality and commitment to the customer. The accounting sector with providing the bills properly, the Public relations by providing accurate and understandable information to customers and the sector of Purchasing and Logistics by
purchasing suitable and cost-effective goods correctly can participate in providing a desirable experience for the customers, while every program associated with loyalty, commitment and mutual desirable behavior requires a strong leadership. Clearly none of these parts are separated from each other and the promotion of one part can form the enhancement of another part. For instance, the high quality of food and Services in a restaurant will help the reputation of a restaurant to grow.

The results obtained from the first hypothesis of this study confirmed the impact of relationship marketing on appreciation, in other words, an increase in the level of relationship marketing can raise the amount appreciation. This result is consistent with the studies of Palmatir (2009) and Kim and Jane Suwon (2013) who showed that relationship marketing has a positive effect on appreciation. The founding of the second hypothesis of this study approved the effect of relationship marketing on satisfaction. This means that an increase in the level of relationship marketing can also raise the amount of satisfaction. This conclusion is also in line with the studies conducted by Palmatir (2009) and Kim and Jane Suwon (2013) who showed that relationship marketing has a positive effect on satisfaction. The founding of the third hypothesis of this study confirmed the impact of appreciation on the mutual desirable behavior. This means that a rise in the level of appreciation can also increase the amount of mutual desirable behavior. These results are also complies with the studies conducted by Palmatir (2009) and Kim and Jane Suwon (2013) who showed that appreciation has a positive effect on mutual desirable behavior.

The results of the fourth hypothesis confirm the impact of satisfaction on mutual desirable behavior. In other words, an increase in the level of satisfaction will also surge the amount of mutual desirable behavior. This is consistent with the research of Suwon Kim and Jane (2013) who indicated that satisfaction has a positive effect on mutual desired behavior. In the results of the fifth hypothesis of this study, the relation between understanding the relationship marketing and customer appreciation has been weaken by understanding the customer's benevolence. This result isn't consistent with the studies of Fazel and colleagues (2014) who showed that understanding the customer's benevolence can undermine the relation between appreciation and marketing and that this relation is not moderated. According to the first and second hypothesis, relationship marketing has a positive effect on appreciation and satisfaction therefore it is necessary to use mechanisms of relationship marketing (for example through organizing programs for meeting clients, inviting customers to attend formal or informal meetings or ceremonies) and satisfaction of employees who considered to be internal customers should be provided (because you have to treat restaurant staffs the way you expect them to deal with customers). In today's competitive world, demands and expectations of customers about the services are changing all the time. Therefore, it is recommended to executives of restaurants to receive comments and suggestions from customers and their satisfaction periodically on how the services are provided and compare it with previous periods in order to help them reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the restaurant.
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