

Customer service as a factor in loyalty in retail: an analysis with global data

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SUMMARY

Customer loyalty is a constant challenge in the global retail scenario. This article aims to analyze how customer service, when well structured and humanized, can become a strategic pillar for retention and loyalty. Based on a qualitative and descriptive approach, the theoretical framework is based on leading authors in the fields of marketing and management, as well as global data from institutions such as Harvard Business Review, PwC and Microsoft. The results demonstrate that excellence in service directly influences the decision to repurchase, brand reputation and business profitability. The conclusion is that retail managers should understand service not as a cost, but as an essential investment for the company's longevity.

Keywords: Customer service; Loyalty; Retail; Consumer experience; Strategic management.

ABSTRACT

Customer loyalty is a constant challenge in the global retail scenario. This article aims to analyze how customer service, when well structured and humanized, can become a strategic pillar for retention and loyalty. Based on a qualitative and descriptive approach, the theoretical framework used is the main authors in marketing and management, in addition to global data from institutions such as Harvard Business Review, PwC and Microsoft. The results demonstrate that excellence in service directly influences the decision to repurchase, the brand's reputation and the profitability of the business. It is concluded that the retail manager must understand service not as a cost, but as an essential investment for the company's longevity.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Competitiveness in retail requires companies to adopt increasingly efficient strategies to retain their customers. In a globalized and digital market, where consumers are equipped with options and

information, the experience offered by the brand has become a decisive factor in the customer's choice and retention.

According to PwC (2018), 73% of consumers say that customer service experience is crucial to defining their loyalty to a brand, even when the price or quality are equivalent to those of competitors. Customer service has therefore moved from an operational function to a strategic role, directly impacting the company's image, its positioning and, especially, loyalty.

This article seeks to analyze the importance of customer service as an instrument for customer loyalty in retail, contextualizing effective practices and their correlation with efficient management, based on human values and global data.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Customer Service: from Operations to Strategy

For a long time, customer service was considered only a sector responsible for resolving complaints. However, authors such as Kotler and Keller (2012) emphasize that customer service is part of the value proposition of brands and must be integrated into the business strategy. The traditional view of customer service as a "necessary cost" has been replaced by an approach focused on the consumer experience.

Grönroos (2009) argues that customer service should be seen as an element of relational marketing, essential for creating lasting bonds with the customer. This implies investing in active listening, empathy and personalization.

2.2 Loyalty and Perceived Value

Loyalty is the result of a continuous process of delivering value. According to Reichheld and Sasser (1990), increasing the customer retention rate by just 5% can represent an increase of up to 95% in the company's profit, depending on the sector. The reason lies in the concept of Customer Lifetime Value (CLV), which measures the financial value generated by a customer throughout their relationship with the company.

Furthermore, loyal customers tend to become brand promoters, reducing the cost of acquiring new consumers and strengthening the organizational reputation (HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW, 2019).

3 METHODOLOGY

This work follows a qualitative approach, with a descriptive and exploratory method. The theoretical basis was constructed from a bibliographic review of classic and contemporary authors on marketing, customer service and consumer behavior.

Secondary data from relevant research up to 2020 were analyzed, such as reports from PwC (2018), Microsoft (2017), and Harvard Business Review (2019), which offer a global perspective on the impact of service on loyalty.

Good practices were also considered in global companies that excel in customer service, such as Amazon, Apple and Zappos, based on reports and studies published up to 2020.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Global Service Data

Microsoft (2017) found that 96% of consumers consider customer service essential to maintaining their brand loyalty. PwC (2018) found that 59% of consumers have stopped buying from a company after a negative experience, and 32% said they would stop doing business with a brand they love after just one bad experience.

This data shows that investing in customer service is, in practice, investing in profitability.

4.2 Service as a Pillar of Sustainability

Companies like Amazon, with renewal rates of over 90% among Prime subscribers (FORBES, 2020), show that loyalty is directly linked to delivering value at all points of contact. This includes speed, empathy, efficient problem-solving, and clear, human communication.

Apple, in turn, maintained a loyalty rate above 80% until 2020 (STATISTA, 2020), thanks to the integrated experience of product, service and technical support. Such examples reinforce the thesis that customer service is a lasting competitive differentiator.

4.3 Technology, Humanization and Omnichannel Service

Today's customer service is increasingly digital. According to Accenture (2019), 83% of consumers prefer companies that offer integrated omnichannel experiences. However, PwC (2018) warns that, despite technological advances, human interaction continues to be the difference maker in decisive moments.

Chatbots and CRMs are useful tools, but they do not replace human relationships, which convey trust and acceptance.

4.4 The Role of the Manager in the Service Culture

Managers who value customer service as part of their business strategy position their companies ahead of the competition. According to Bain & Company (2018), companies that invest in customer experience grow 4 to 8% above the market.

This requires investment in training, organizational listening, definition of satisfaction indicators (NPS, CSAT) and leadership that recognizes the importance of customer experience as part of the company's mission.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Customer service, when well structured and valued, becomes one of the greatest assets of a retail company. It not only builds customer loyalty, but also increases perceived value, reduces costs and strengthens brand positioning.

In a scenario where experience matters as much as the product, customer service becomes the link between what the brand promises and what the consumer receives. And this link, when well managed by conscientious managers, generates trust, loyalty and sustainability.

Therefore, providing good service is not just a differentiator — it is a strategic necessity.

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