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The Role of Customer Satisfaction on Enhancing the Relationship between Customer Relationship Management and Customer Loyalty: An Empirical Study on Private Kuwaiti Fitness Gyms

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate and develop an integrated framework to identify the impact customer relationship management upon customer loyalty through the mediating role of customer satisfaction. Based upon previous study, a conceptual framework was developed to guide this study. A self-administrated questionnaire was distributed to 500 participants who recently joined private Kuwaiti fitness gyms centers in Kuwait city by e-mail and hand. The response rate was 80%. Multiple regression analysis, one-way ANOVA and stepwise tests were used to verify research hypotheses. The empirical findings of the study confirmed that there was a positive significant relationship between the customer relationship management and customer loyalty and proved the role of customer satisfaction as a mediating in this relationship. These findings may aid future researchers in their quest in understanding the inherent relationships that lie between the constructs' question and may provide a platform for marketing managers in their efforts to improve customer loyalty and satisfactions through the use customer relationship management dimensions effectively.

Keywords: Customer Loyalty, Satisfactions, Customer Relationship Management

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Introduction

Today, irrespective of their types, all service businesses over the world are more concern about customer satisfaction and loyalty due to the high competition in the market place and the high cost of attracting and switching customers. Customer relationship management is used as a process of creation and maintains relationship with consumers. It involves using technology to organize, automate, and synchronize business processes. The objectives of CRM are to enhance profitability, income, and customer satisfaction. To attain CRM, many organizations use set of tools, technologies, and procedures to support the relationship with the customer to enhance sales. Long et al., (2013) indicated that CRM is an issue of strategic business and process rather than a technical one. Bhattacharya et al. (2011), CRM is implemented in an organization to reduce cost and increase company performance, which means profitability result through customer loyalty. Indeed, in a successful CRM

implementation, data are collected from internal and external source such as sales department, customer service, marketing, after sales services, procurement, and others. This is crucial in obtaining a holistic view of each customer requirement in a real time system. This information will able to aid employees to make fast and accurate decision when dealing with the customers in different areas and touch points. Thus Customer Relationship Management (CRM) as a strategy aims to satisfy and build long term relationship with clients/customers.

Countries around the world use modern technology, globalization and economic situation in the world to affect their sectors and the country itself locally and globally. They pay a lot of money and resources for researchers to develop more and more. However, Kuwait has not yet developed its sectors and industries such as sports industry through health centres, and its researchers in this sector are not enough. This research is important because the results of this study may aid managers of health centres to maintain standards of sports industry in Kuwait, collect, analyze and summarize information about the main problem of joining, not joining and customers loyalty. Therefore, it is about knowing the specific problems that face customers in their decisions of entering these centers and the solutions. To those who are interested in Kuwait people health as well as the managers of healthy centers, the results of this study will provide them with the full understanding of the customers inside the centers and outside to get their satisfaction and loyalty and to know if there are any problems to be solved. The focusing would be in the customer relationship management and its impact upon customer loyalty.

Previous researchers have explored the positive relationship between customer relationship management and customer loyalty (Long et al., 2013; Malik, 2015), and the importance of customer relationship management to gain customers (Bashir, 2017). The development of technology made new challenges in the marketplace and the business itself (Piercy & Rich, 2009). According to the observations of fitness gyms in Kuwait City and the interviewing through with some owners, they all agree that the reasons of choosing the fitness gyms which is a part of sport sector as a population, relates to the currently facing of challenges between brand competitors and new competitors in the market, for examples, the high switching customers from fitness gym to another and the misunderstanding of customers' needs.. This study aims to examine and validate the impact of customer relationship management upon customer loyalty, through the mediating role of customer satisfaction in health centers in Kuwait.

Theoretical Background and Literature Review

Customer Relationship Management

Customer relationship management is the process of carefully managing detailed information about individual customers and all customers touch point to maximize loyalty (Kotler & Keller, 2016). This program's dimensions affect customer loyalty and its dimensions are Customer satisfaction, switching barriers, service recovery, relationship bonds and trust. (Ashour, 2006). Services quality has a strong relationship with customer satisfaction, which leads to customer loyalty (Sabir, et al., 2014). Call quality, sales promotions and network coverage have a strong relationship with customer loyalty (Adjei, & Denanyoh, 2014).). Customer relationship management concept has a significant relationship with customer loyalty, retention and it is gaining more and more in the present business world. The most significant factor that leads to customer loyalty is trust (Malik, 2015). The use of customer relationship management system can positively impact the customer loyalty, which has a significant relationship with it, one dimension which is focused on key customers have no significant relationship with customer loyalty, but the other dimensions which are; Organizing business process, using updated technology and knowledge management have a relationship with customer loyalty (Amir, et al., 2014). The behavior of the employees has a significant relationship

and contributes to customer satisfaction upon loyalty, and the dimensions of CRM are Interaction management, relationship development, customer service and employees' behavior (Long, et al., 2013).

Because of the development of information technology revolution, in particular, the World Wide Web is one of the best ways to build better relationships with customers in the world. The impact of CRM on customer loyalty was positively high, the impact of it on competitive advantage in the industry was high and there is a positive relationship between it and customer loyalty, its dimensions are: Loyalty programs, special treatment and recognition programs, community building and knowledge building programs (Rajab, , et al., 2014). There is a study which showed a significant relationship between CRM and customer satisfaction and its dimensions are Services quality, access to services and service features (Khan, 2013). CRM affects customer loyalty in the banking sector and its dimensions measured as Forming customer database, learning customer needs, and complaints and producing solutions to customers (Kocoglu & Kirmaci, 2012).

CRM has a significant relationship with customer satisfaction and loyalty and a high rate of customer satisfaction leads to customer loyalty (Shvydenko, 2011). There is a highly significant relationship between CRM and customer retention, and its dimensions in this study are the physical environment, the behavior of the employees, trust and customer relationship management technology (Bashir, 2017). The dimensions of CRM, which are: Perceived service quality, care process and tangibles have significantly affected customer satisfaction, loyalty and corporate image (Chaipopirutana & Combs, 2008). CRM has a relationship with patients' satisfaction and services quality is the dimension (Mohite, et al., 2013). In marketing concepts, marketers would use customer relationship management to communicate and deliver values to the customers, it is the firm attempt to inform, persuade and remained customers directly or indirectly about the products and brands they sell, it is also shown to the customers how and why the products or services are used, by whom, where, when and it allows companies to link their brands to other places, people, brands, events, feelings and things (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

CRM used in order to gain more customers (Osman et al., 2009). It is very important and necessary in today's market (Teo, et al., 2006). It is a comprehensive tool to build relationships with customers (Rusta et al., 2012). For sure, there are different ways to do that but, the most important thing is to be connected and keep in touch with customers always. Customers are always right this is a new concept for them. This means, they always want to be involved, connect, inform of new things in the company, keep in touch, and knowing about the products and services. In this study, the major critical elements of CRM that frequently tested by previous studies were: Integrated marketing communication and it is a combination of promotional elements and marketing activities to reach consistency, communication impact and to choose the perfect way to build relationships with customers (Schultz et al., 1993), communication, relational bonds, and trust which is the willingness of depends on an organization and the believe of the brand itself (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

Customer Satisfaction

Kaur et al., 2012 defines customer satisfaction as the customer's judgment following their experience with consuming the product or service; or the client's judgment that the service or product provided is what they expected.. It is person's feelings of pleasure or disappointed that result from comparing a product or service is perceived performance to expectation (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Customer Satisfaction is the customer experience of goods and the benefits or them in a period of time, the

perfect solution of survival and growth of organizations and it is the cost-effectiveness of goods (Gazor et al. 2012, Suki et al. 2012). Customer satisfaction is more quality driven by goods and services that price or value driven and when variance in production is low, customer expectations play a greater role (Fornell et al., 1996). The quality of service is an important factor in customer satisfaction, which leads to future intentions (Abbasi et al., 2010). According to Gazor et al. (2017), customer satisfaction is a Latin word which means enough to do or make and it is an internal view of the experience of consumption. The connection between forms and customer satisfaction is very high (Alexander & Hill 2000).

Based on marketing perspective, customer satisfaction with organization's services and goods is the essential determinants of retention and it leads to a successful relationship and a long-term competitiveness (Rego et al., 2013). Some studies indicated that psychological and personal customer's expectations are main factors and must be met to reach customer satisfaction (Rego et al., 2013). While others found that employee's behavior and physical characteristics influence the personal satisfaction (Hsu et al., 2012;). Organizations lose, or win based on numbers of their customers they can keep and the best way to do that by reaching their satisfaction (Chotipanich, 2004). Customer satisfaction is one of the commonest problems to managers, which comes from many reasons and a key issue of improving the performance of the market (Macintosh & Doherty, 2007). Some researchers indicated that quality of services and products leads to customer satisfaction and profitability (Williams, et al., 2011). The new marketing philosophies and studies are all about how to reach customer satisfaction because the customers now are the basic or come at the top of the modern Customer-Oriented Organization. The dimensions of this study are customer satisfaction and the elements are the overall satisfaction and expectation.

Additionally, customers' satisfaction increases the customers' lifetime value, it determines the money amount generated through the customer for business firms; whereas retaining the existing customers' costs is lower than acquiring new customers (Sanjuq, 2014; Saad, 2012; Sun & Kim, 2013). Moreover, Customers' Satisfaction reduces the possibility of negative word of mouth (Kaura, 2013; Hill et al., 2013;). Customer satisfaction identified by various dimensions mentioned in literature including perceived value (Hsu et al., 2012; Rego et al., 2013), the important needs fulfillment (Steven et al., 2012), effective response (Grissemann & Stokburger-Sauer; 2012; Kärnä, 2014) and expectations or beliefs confirmation (Dehgan et al., 2012)

Customer Loyalty

Customers' Loyalty has several crucial benefits to business organizations such as continues profits, decreases the marketing costs, increases referrals and increase customers growth (Blut et al., 2014). It makes customers less likely to deal with other companies if they have a great sales and promotions. It makes customers to cover the losses of companies when they lose customers Because of the importance of customer loyalty, organizations are trying to reach their loyalty by retention and customer relationship management strategies. Setó-Pamies (2012) and Evanschitzky et al. (2012) arguing that customer loyalty leads to customers staying with an organization for a longer time and purchasing more products or services from the organization. Burke (2015) and Malik et al. (2013) in turn posit that organizations benefit from a loyal customer as the latter costs less to serve since they require less support and are familiar with the product or service. Loyal customers, in addition, help to insulate the organization from price wars or competitions, while also acting as ambassadors of the organization's brand (Martinez & Del Bosque, 2013; Lawfer, 2014). Finally, loyal customers also provide the organization with high quality and honest feedback, which can help improve the organization's products (Blut et al., 2014; Sachs, 2013).

Customer loyalty divided into attitudinal and behavioral. Attitudinal loyalty has been a major study-marketing researcher (Christodoulides, Michealidou&Eid, 2011). The continuous relationship between the brand and customers is the customer loyalty (Ltifi &Gharbi, 2012). The attitudinal loyalty is simply about the positive word of mouth. It helps to test factors of loyalty and avoid behavior of switching (Caceres &Paparoidamis, 2007). Behavioral Loyalty is the continuing long-term relationship between consumers and the organization (Ltifi & Gharbi, 2012). The rebuying from the same organization is customer loyalty (Eid, 2011). One of the most popular definitions of loyalty is the mental commitment of repurchase always from the same brand (McMullan & Gilmore, 2008). . Loyalty is one of major concepts in marketing which leads to benefits for any firm, and it is very important because it does not require a huge promotion (Kalati et al., 2008).This aspect is helpful in expecting sales and profits for organizations and it solves financial problems for firms (Allameh &Noktedan, 2009). Customer loyalty is a strong commitment to rebuy always from the same brand no matter the services or marketing efforts are, and it is psychological process, which evaluate goods and services from organizations (Birely et al., 2004) . The elements that contribute to customers' loyalty in the service industry were examined by Amin et al. (2012); they found that there is a positive relationship between long-term customers' loyalty and corporate image, switching cost, trust and perceived service quality. Iriqat and Abu Daqar (2017a) investigated the impact of customer relationship management on long-term customers' loyalty in the Palestinian Banks; they demonstrate that there is a direct impact on long-term customers' loyalty and employees' behaviour.

Research Hypotheses

Based upon the study theoretical background and the literature review, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- H₁: There is a significant relationship between customer relationship management and customer loyalty.
- H₂: Customer satisfaction has a significant effect as mediating factor on the relationship between customer relationship management and customer loyalty.

Research Methodology

So as to obtain the empirical data needed to examine the research hypotheses, a self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the required data. The target respondents were the customers who joined the fitness gyms in Kuwait and the single key respondents' approach was used. Kuwait is a small country with high resources such as Financial and technological and if these resources used well, the country would be developed better, Kuwait population continued growth and reached 4million people, Kuwaitis are 1.3 million and a 2.7 million are foreigners (Cia World Factbook, 2017). The study population identified as only the main branch of private fitness gyms in Kuwait, Kuwait City. The sampling of this study will be the best 10 fitness gyms in Kuwait, Kuwait City based on the most popular, famous, brand name and numbers of customers according to the observations of the fitness gyms and customers themselves: Oxygen, Platinum, Professionals, Golds and Flex for men. The Corniche, Palms and Crown Plaza for mixed fitness gyms, Flex and Fitness First for the women.

A total of 500 self-administered questionnaires were distributed to the respondents by e-mail and hand and the response rate was 80%. 68.8 of the respondents were male, and 75.6 were under age 30 years. In this survey, some variables are factual (for example,

demographic information such as the sex, age and occupation), whereas others are perceptual (for instance, customer relationship management, loyalty and satisfaction),. The dependent variables (i.e. the customer relationship management) and the independent variables (customer loyalty) and the mediating variable (customer satisfaction) were measured using a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire's content (constructs and measures) were mainly selected from the previous studies and were modified to Kuwait environmental context based on the results of a pilot study and feedback from five professional academic staff in this field. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed by examining the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The value of Cronbach's alpha is found to be 0.82. It shows the stability and consistency of the scale are acceptable. The reliability of a study tool is the degree to which the measures are free from error and therefore yield consistent results (Hair, et al. 2014).

Data Descriptive Analysis

Means and standard deviations were employed to describe responses and their attitudes. The descriptive statistics presented below in Table (1) indicate a positive disposition towards the items. While the standard deviation (SD) values ranged from 0.760 to 0.930 these values indicate a narrow spread around the mean. Also, the mean values of all items were greater than the midpoint (3) and ranged from 4.343 to 4.433. However, after careful assessment by using skewness and kurtosis, the data were found to be normally distributed. Indeed, skewness and kurtosis were normally distributed since most of the values were inside the adequate ranges for normality (i.e. -1.0 to +1.0) for skewness, and less than 10 for kurtosis (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 1. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Normality of Scale Items

Construct /items	Mean	S.D	Skewness	Kurtosis
Independent Variable				
1.Customer Relationship management	4.388	0.734		
CRM System interaction	4.407	0.723	-0.114-	0-.678-
Service Recovery System	4.371	0.568	-0.089-	-0.683-
Service quality	4.432	1.067	-0.264-	-0.342-
Employees behaviour	4.343	0.581	-0.228-	-0.465-
Mediating variable				
2.Customer Satisfaction	4.355	1.282		
Customer Satisfaction	4.355	1.282	-0.128-	0-.678-
Dependent Variable				
3.Customer Loyalty	4.425	0.570		
Attitudinal Loyalty	4.421	0.583	-0.089-	-0.683-
Behavioral Loyalty	4.429	0.557	-0.840-	0.462

Hypotheses Testing

The multiple regression analysis technique was used to examine the first hypothesis. Tables 2 and 3 summarize the results of multiple regression analysis, with the F-ratio test, for this hypothesis.

Table 2. Results of Regression Analysis for the First Hypothesis

Hypotheses	Multiple R	R. Square	Adjusted R Square	DF	F	Sign
Ho1	0.790 ^a	0.625	0.621	164.439	164.439	0.00

a. Predictors: (Constant), trust, Relational bonds, I.M.C, Communications

The results indicate that the hypothesis is accepted at $\alpha \leq .000$. Accordingly, it may be concluded that there is a significant relationship between customer relationship management and customer loyalty. The correlation coefficient of R is the statistical method technique that identifying whether and how strongly pairs of the variables are related to each other or not. In this study, the correlation coefficient of R is 0.790 which means a positive relationship between customer relationship management and customer loyalty. The R square is 0.625 which means a 62.5% of changeability of customer loyalty is explained by independent variables. The adjusted R square is 0.621 which is close to R square value and it is always been less or equal R square. It means that there will be 0.004 less variance in the model result. This result empirically proved that CRM has a positive direct impact on customer loyalty.

Table 3. Coefficient for the Effect of Customer Relationship Management Dimensions upon Customer Loyalty

		Coefficients				
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.846	1.325		5.923	0.000
	I.M.C	0.424	0.045	0.321	9.410	0.000
	Communication	1.023	0.069	0.590	14.757	0.000
	s					
	Relational bonds	0.119	0.033	0.117	3.613	0.000
	Trust	0.102	0.109	0.102	2.966	0.040

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Loyalty

The multiple regression tests finished as shown in the table 9 which showed coefficient beta measures the contribution of every variable in the framework model. All of the independent variables (dimensions) are significant at a level of 0.00. The same statistical techniques were also used to test the second hypothesis. Table 4 indicated an R-value of 0.800, R square of 0.640 which means a 64% with a positive significant value of the chosen variable because they are less than 0.05. The R changed from 0.763 to 0.800 which means an increase of 0.37% and the R square from 0.582 to 0.640 which means an increase of 0.058.

Table 4. Model Summary for the Second Hypothesis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics Sig. F Change
1	0.800 ^a	0.640	0.638	1.79308	0.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), customer satisfaction, customer relationship management variables

According to the next tables 5 and 6 of ANOVA and Coefficient, for the effect of customer relationship management as independent factor and customer satisfaction as mediating factor upon customer loyalty which is the dependent factor, the third alternative hypothesis should be accepted, because of the positive significant level of the chosen variables which is 0.000 for both of them.

Table 5. Analysis of Variance for the Effect of Customer Relationship Management and Customer Satisfaction Variables upon Customer Loyalty

ANOVA ^a							
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Results
1	Regression	2269.985	2	1134.992	353.016	0.00	Accept the alternative hypothesis
	Residual	1276.405	397	3.215			
	Total	3546.390	399				

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Loyalty

b. Predictors: (Constant), customer satisfaction, customer relationship management variables

Table 6. Coefficient for the Effect of Customer Relationship Management and Customer Satisfaction Variables upon Customer Loyalty

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.754	1.107		6.102	0.000
	Customer Relationship Management	0.328	0.017	0.633	18.819	0.000
	Customer satisfaction	0.161	0.019	0.283	8.417	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Loyalty

Discussion and Conclusions

Empirical evidence showed that a significant relationship between customer relationship management dimensions (integrated marketing communication, communications, relational bonds and trust) and customer loyalty whether were taken together or taken separately. The results of Beta coefficient showed that communication, IMC, relational bond and trust are the most important dimensions influencing customer locality respectively.. This is an important finding, as it suggests that increasing customer relationship management with focus on all its dimensions will enhance customer loyalty in gyms fitness industry in Kuwait. This result was supported by Ashour (2006), Long et al., (2013), Amir et al., (2014), Rajab, , et al., 2014),., Malik (2015), Al-Naser (2016), Khawaja (2016),and Bashir (2017).

The result of the second alternative hypothesis also supported the proposition of the mediating effect of customer satisfaction on the relationship between customer relationship management and customer loyalty. Long et al.(2013), Nazir et al. (2015), and Ganiyu(2017) suggests that to improve customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, the gyms fitness center should enhance the customers relationship management. The structural model of the research tried to add a new concept to analyze the effect of all independent variables together on customer loyalty. Correlation between these variables were reasonably a high and positive $R= 0.790$ in table 7 and an R square of 0.624, the overall of f-ratio for independent variables was positive which means significant, but the t-test for all of them showed that trust variable was not significant and by support from the stepwise test, the modified model came up with a new change in it.

Managerial and Practical Implications and Limitations

The present study has important implications for private gyms fitness industry in developing countries. The results of this research are particularly important from managerial and marketing perspectives more than purely building of marketing strategies and campaigns focused on increasing profitability. It is very important to know the customer needs and all of the private gyms in Kuwait should consider this point as the main strategy. They should always distribute feedbacks with comments to be updated with new information from the customers. In addition, they should focus more and more on using and developing the quality of customer relationship management, customer satisfaction to reach customer loyalty and to build a better competitive advantage in this sector.

Based on those results, Kuwaiti private gyms should take into consideration the process of customer relationship management, integrated marketing communication, communications and relational bonds in order to reach customer loyalty. In addition, the gyms should educate the employees more about the importance of trust and its main effect on customer relationship management and customer loyalty For the second alternative hypothesis result, which showed that there is a positive relationship between customer relationship management and customer loyalty through customer satisfaction as a mediating effect between them, they should pay a strong attention of customer satisfaction to the link between customer relationship management and customer loyalty. In addition, the next recommendations that could enhance customer relationship management, creating values to reach and increase customer loyalty. The Kuwaiti private gyms should have to well implementation of customer relationship management between employees and customers. This system should be friendly and easy to use in the gyms and employees should always distribute to customers a feedback and their comments. As a marketing concept, the gyms should have one eye on the customer and another eye on the competitors to know any new important information. Gyms should pay more attention to the customer values and how to deal with customers based on their wants and needs. Gyms should change their strategies about customer costs and try to come up with a new idea about it.

However, several limitations should be considered when evaluating and generalizing the study's conclusions. The study was conducted in one country, Kuwait Although Kuwait is a valid indicator of prevalent factors in the wider Middle East region and developing countries, the lack of external validity of this research means that any generalizations of the research findings should be taken with caution. Future research can be orientated in other national and cultural settings and compared with the results of this study.

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