The Use Of Social Network Websites for Retaining Customers in Turkish Companies

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Abstract: *This study identifies Turkish companies perceptions towards retaining customers by using Social network websites. This exploratory research utilized qualitative research method semi-structured in-depth interview in order to achieve more detailed information in terms of Turkish companies. The literature review in Section Two explored the previous study sources and theories related to SNW, customer loyalty, customer trust and brand awareness. Section Three summarized usage of the in-depth interview in the study. In Section Four key findings is described and in Section Five discussion and results related to these findings is outlined. Major findings in four Turkish companies show that usage of SNW in a proper way could lead the company to increase customer trust, to develop brand awareness and make the current customers loyal to the company. This study could be helpful for future researchers and it could be beneficial for both academics and practitioners.*

Keywords: Social network websites, customer loyalty, customer trust, brand awareness, customer satisfaction, retaining customers, company, customer, perception

1. Introduction

[1] determined Social network websites as an SNS (Social network sites) in their study and they utilized SM (Social Media) more than SNS in their research. But in this research author concentrate on Social network websites (SNW) and its relation with customers rather than SM (Social Media). SNW are defined as web-based services. They give access to people to build their own whether public or semi-public profile in a limited system, to create better communications with other individuals, to check their contact lists with others. Contacts can differ from each other site by site according to their style and nature [2]. According to [3], nowadays online users have been affected by online Social network, for example, Facebook, Twitter entered their life and they manage to influence them to share information about their private life with different users.

When social networks start to increase its importance, especially after Facebook and Twitter become worldwide speed of information transformation has changed dramatically. In November 2015 Facebook managed to achieve 1.01 billion online users that are active daily [4].

Increasing usage of SNW also leads to companies to start to use them for their business purposes. Companies used SNW as advertising their business over the Internet and get more customers. Since the beginning, till now it worked quite well that they managed to acquire a lot of customers through SNW as compared before. But one of the important part of this work is to define how to retain the customer in the company by using SNW.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Network

Social network create a strong connection between people, companies or between company and customers in order to grow individuals business or social contacts through some famous social media websites, like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google etc. The social network created interconnected online communities that enable to individuals to contact with each other easily, otherwise, it would take too much time [5].

One of the most popular and well-developed website - Facebook started its work since 2004. Since that time it grew so fast, and another website hardly competes with it in this area. Even statistics show that in 2010 Facebook reached fourth place among other websites. More than 800 million people joined this network during that period [6].

Facebook based on making a private profile, sharing some contents like individuals' personal photos, videos and most important creating strong communication between different people. It was available for the public first time in 2006 and in January 2015 it has more than 950 million people using Facebook and it includes 500 million users that enter Facebook every day. According to 2015 information, individuals who are in 25-34 age range are 30% and more than half, about 53% of people are females [7].

2.2 Customer trust

Definition of trust can be explained credence in the reliability, sincerity, consistency of the second person and creates connection process that is the main goal for marketers trying to reach. This element plays a key role for successful communication and has a relation with various

factors such as satisfaction and competitive advantage additionally for connection process.

In order to create constant social communication, trust is believed that has great influence. Interchanging products is achievable if it based on broad trust and reliability. Also, approach to behavior theory can be defined as a high level of trust. Trust has a great impact on personal and group behavior that no other variable does. It is assumed that when civilization can break down, once trust is devastated [8].

2.3 Customer loyalty

CL is defined as the arrangement of frequent buying from the supplier or famous companies combined with customers similar idea related to the supplier. It is also determined like features of individuals that while buying repeatedly from the supplier, they are not searching any data about it. Deficiency of data shouldn't influence to CL if the consumer is totally loyal, then he/she will continue to purchase from the same supplier and will not have an argument about price and changes in the market even he/she doesn't have an idea about the deal [9]. Loyalty is determined also like a great obligation for buying and supporting same goods and service continuously in the future, that's why continuing to purchase identical company and goods [10]. Loyalty is a recurrent buying of goods, apparent maintenance, cost inconsiderateness, opposition to resist encouragement and advice to another people. The main sign of CL is considered readiness sharing optimistic word-of-mouth regarding supplier and manner of continuously buying from the same brand. These two performances are believed as loyalty signs by several investigators. Loyalty has described the power of the connection between customers comparative behavior and recurrent patronage and also find out 4 elements: 1) real loyalty; 2) hidden loyalty; 3) specious loyalty; 4) no existence of loyalty [11].

2.4 Brand awareness

Nowadays customers according to increase in awareness select their acquainted and promising brand. As result companies should make passion towards their brands in the brain of customers for struggling against another firm. Even though customers are acquainted and ready to purchase goods, BA is a different issue that affecting buying idea. If the customer is ready to purchase products or services the initial brand comes to his memory indicates that BA of this goods and service is high-level. If the BA level is high, it can affect buying the idea of customers. It can cause more portion in the marketplace and greater estimations of their excellence. It is almost five times more overpriced to bring extra customer than retaining the old customer. So the small rate will result in the goods to a high level of brand loyalty [12].

It is already clear that main purpose of business is to increase their transaction and income too. That's why companies attempt to inspire customers to their goods and services in order to buy and customer lifecycle importance. BA is one of the necessary element is trying to find out in which way make customers conscious to its goods and services [13].

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, it is attempted to clarify research methodology used to study research question which is *"What are Turkish companies perceptions regarding usage of social networks in retaining a customer?"* As a method in this research in-depth interview has been utilized in order to explore the topic and create new ideas.

3.2 Justification for this methodology

Methodological approach
This research attempts to realize Turkish companies perceptions regarding usage of social networks in retaining customers. As a field, this research is exploratory, due to making the SNW famous is accordingly new occurrence [14]. An exploratory study is generally used where limited data is existing and for future survey fields investigator targets to gain elasticity.

4. Results

4.1 Sample characteristics

This research attempts to identify Turkish companies perception towards usage of SNW for customer retention and in order to make this sampling strategy four company and from each company one responsible person to the related area is chosen.

Table 0.1: Sample characteristics of in-depth interview participants

Companies	Names of participants	Age of participants	Position of participants
Bürosan Ofis Mobilyaları Sanayi ve Ticaret A.Ş	Ibrahim Köse	37	Sales Director
Gençpa Teknolojileri A.Ş	Savas Kayacan	34	Sales Director
D&B Academy	Ebubekr Siddik Solmaz	35	Assistant General Manager
Comedy	Ismail Kose	39	General Manager

5. Discussion and Conclusion of Research

It is very necessary to take into account propositions and key findings based on propositions in order to refer research purpose. In first proposition, author tried to find out how the companies realize a relationship with customers. Companies should make products based on customer needs, which is the best way to make a connection with the customer and gain profit easily. It is very critical to make promotions, advertisements and also improve visual of a company that strengthens communication process with customers.

In second proposition it is analyzed, do companies consider retaining customers priority for themselves. When a company is focusing on customer retention, before the service that they offered, companies must provide CS. Because if the customer satisfied with the company, it will support company to reach their goals easier.

Based on third proposition author figured out which SNW are companies utilizing and are they considering it beneficial to themselves. In this research utilizing Whatsapp and Telegram in one company due to most of its customer's usage these two websites, suggested that besides those main, big SNW, companies also should exist in websites that their customers are utilizing actively.

In terms of the fourth proposition, it is attempted to clarify that which contents have most user engagement on Facebook. Based on customer demand informational posts and special **offers have some user engagement, but they are not that much preferred as compared with others.**

In fifth proposition author concerned, is hashtag marketing utilized by the companies. Firstly they should have enough followers in their SNW and secondly, compny should be famous and international enough in order to know in the market. In this study, only one company successfully using hashtag marketing which means that company is ahead than others in the usage of SNW

In sixth proposition, author attempted to define which activities is used by companies via SNW. Especially increasing CS is a key element for improving companies marketing strategy, even though one company consider it necessary to be done via SNW.

According to seventh proposition, author tried to determine how CS and CL are estimated in the companies through SNW. Companies who are capable of using SNW for estimating CL and CS, usage of polls can be effective. In the case of limited usage of SNW, paper distribution can help for estimating CL and CS.

In eighth proposal, author tried to learn what extent is SNW used for in order to gather information regarding product preference. If the company use SNW for defining their customer preference it is very beneficial to itself. They can save time and can find most suitable product according to the customer demand by using SNW activities.

In ninth proposal author attempted to find out how SNW is utilized in order to address to customer problems and complaints. If the company has specialized person that work as a solving problem-related customers via SNW, it can help a lot to the company. Especially nowadays which SNW is very famous among people, any person can write any problem they faced, on the company SNW and can get feedback faster.

In tenth proposal author concerned how the company performed since it started to use Social Media as compared to its competitors. Due to less competition in this area, using to SNW for competing with opponents also can give the privilege to that company. This time company compete with opponent in two area – virtual and real market.

In eleventh proposal author interested in if the companies managed to gain the trust of customers through SNW. Gaining trust, BA and CL are main indicators in customer retention for companies and companies should consider

these elements if they want to be successful while using SNW.

5.1 Limitations of the Study

Limitations are existing in generalizability and reliability related to findings, like any qualitative research. Due to nature of the study is exploratory most of the findings can not be generalisable to all companies which are using SNW. There was difficulty in terms of language in this research. Another problem happened when the author decided to choose companies for this research. Next problem occurred when researcher tried to meet with managers and directors of the company because it was very hard to find their free time and to make an interview with them. There was also difficulties also with participants in terms of questions. There are some questions had taken out, due to some companies find it not matching with their structure and policy. Also the lack of time creates difficulty for the research process.

5.2 Suggestions for Future Research

Despite several studies related SNW usage in companies for retaining customers, this is first research which includes Turkish companies by using this topic. Future researchers who will need information regarding Turkish companies in the related field, this study could be beneficial. Also, language preferences would give more opportunity who wants to write their research in the English language. The exploratory research identified key findings which indicate Turkish companies perceptions regarding usage of SNW in retaining customers.

The author suggest usage of quantitative method for this study in future research would provide an additional source. Making survey with Turkish companies customers would give more information and data based on customers ideas. Moreover, adding more companies to the research would extend study and researcher can get more detailed information.

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