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CATEGORY "CUSTOMER'S LOYALTY IN THE SERVICE SPHERE" BY UNIVERSITY TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

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Abstract

The questions of perception and awareness of the mechanism of the customers' loyalty in the sphere of service are of great interest in the process of teaching in higher educational institutions. The article presents theoretical and empirical material on the issue of studying the customers' loyalty in the service sector. In this paper, the idea of loyalty was studied among students and university professors, i.e. individuals who supposedly know the theoretical part of the customer loyalty very well. According to the results of students and university professors' surveys (attitudes were studied separately), a different attitude towards understanding loyalty was revealed. If teachers understand loyalty as, first of all, benevolence and dedication, then students interpret this concept as tolerance and neutrality. At the same time, the unanimous opinion of university teachers and students that the customers' loyalty receiving the service is connected with the culture and quality of customer service has been revealed. In addition, the positions of students and university professors are similar in points: the balance of material and non-material privileges; differentiation of work with potential consumers. The results of this study lead to the conclusion that the understanding loyalty in the service sector and its perception may be changed by the influence of knowledge, age and practical experience.

Keywords: Services, loyalty, customers' loyalty in the service sector, clients' loyalty, service sector.

1. Introduction

In our opinion, the increase of the competitiveness of a service company is one of the most perspective and least studied areas. It is based on the formation and implementation of a loyalty program, involving a process of long-term cooperation of an enterprise with service consumers.

Customer loyalty issues are presented in the research of the authors: Dominyak (2011), Lisitzina et al. (2015), Makrinova & Lysenko (2016), Gismatillina & Petrik (2016).

The managerial aspects of loyalty are investigated by Pavlova et al. (2016) and Gumerov et al. (2015).

The study of particular issues of interaction between students and teachers in the learning process at universities – Lisitzina et al. (2015), Ivanenko et al. (2016) and Bunakov, Zaitseva, Larionova, & Suslova (2018).

It should be noted that in spite of the increasing interest in studying customer satisfaction with the quality of services, the problem of customer loyalty in hospitality enterprises, reflecting the client's desire or willingness to reapply for these services in a particular hospitality enterprise, is not reflected in the available publications.

2. Problem Statement

The hypothesis of our study is based on the assumption that the ideas of customer loyalty and methods of building this loyalty among students and university professors will have their own peculiarities.

To solve the set tasks and test the hypothesis, a set of complementary research methods was used: a theoretical analysis of scientific publications, reflecting the state of knowledge of the loyalty problem in general, and customer loyalty in particular, including material and ideas used in the work of Vinogradova (2017).

A questionnaire was used as an empirical method of research. It was aimed at identifying the features of the idea of loyalty and factors affecting it in the minds of students and teachers. In mathematical processing of the obtained material, descriptive statistics, the Spearman's rank correlation method, and the criterion of the Fisher φ^* angular transformation were used (Pechnikov, 2018).

3. Research Questions

How do students and university professors perceive customer service loyalty? Is there really a difference in the perception of the concept "customer loyalty" among university students and university professors? Is there the same perception of the individual components and components of the concept "loyalty"?

4. Purpose of the Study

In this connection, we plan, firstly, to study the perception of customer loyalty in the service sector among students and university professors. Secondly, based on the survey, to determine whether there is a

difference in the perception of the concept of "customer loyalty" among university students and university professors. Thirdly, to identify the ways of solving the revealed problems.

5. Research Methods

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6. Findings

Loyalty is a stable behavioral response to a particular brand, arising from the maximum satisfaction of need, the degree of which exceeded the expected level of satisfaction, whereby the client becomes loyal to a particular brand in the long term and brings a constant high income. Empirically, consumer loyalty is shown in sustainable selectivity in a choice, acquisition and use of goods and services, i.e. it ensures the stability of consumer behavior.

According to the results of a study conducted by Makrinova & Lysenko (2014), it was confirmed that fundamental changes in the service sector, including the growth of international competition, are reflected in the level of requirements for the quality of service in the studied region.

Empirical research was carried out on the basis of Kazan universities. The sample was formed from university professors and students.

In the sample, presented by students, representatives of the department of service and tourism involved - 251 people, among them: young men - 21 people, girls - 230 people. The age of subjects is from 19 to 21 years old, the average age of the subjects - 19.88 years old.

The sample of teachers include 24 women aged from 28 to 47 years old, the average age of teachers was 37 years old. All university teachers teach subjects related to the service and hotel business, which allows them to be regarded as experts in matters devoted to the study of customer loyalty in the sphere of hotel services.

A sociological survey was applied as a research method. It was used with a questionnaire compiled by authors independently. It was based on the material presented in the theoretical part of the work.

We will analyze the data obtained in our empirical research.

The first question was aimed at identifying the ideas of students and teachers about the essence of loyalty. It was formulated as follows: "Which term, in your opinion, corresponds to the concept of" loyalty " more than others?". Terms reflecting the continuum of organizational loyalty by Dominyak (2011) were suggested as variants of answers. After the initial processing, the answers of teachers and students were summarized in Table 01.

Table 01. Comparison of ideas about the essence of loyalty among teachers and students

Compared options	Students, n=251	University teachers, n=24	The value of the criterion "Fisher φ^* angular transformation"
	%	%	
a) Faithfulness	8%	0	1,410
b) Devotion	4%	12,5%	0,787
c) Dedication	8%	37,5%	1,830*
d) Patriotism	0	0	-
e) Identification	0	0	-
f) Friendliness	24%	62,5%	1,966*
g) Honesty	12%	25%	0,836
h) Dependability	4%	0	0,991
i) Law abiding	0	12,5%	1,778*
j) Neutrality	24%	0	2,519**
j) Indifference	0	0	-
k) Tolerance	32%	37,5%	0,283

*Note: - veracity of differences at level $p \leq 0,05$; **- veracity of differences at level $p \leq 0,01$.
Source: Authors.

According to the research of Dominyak (2011), organizational loyalty is presented in the form of a scale: from disloyalty through a neutral attitude to loyalty. At the same time, in the field of disloyalty there are such behavioral manifestations as betrayal, sabotage, etc. The area of loyalty corresponds to such concepts as loyalty, devotion, dedication and implies positive activity towards the organization. In our study, such concepts as indifference, alienation, opposition, malevolence, sabotage, opposition, betrayal were not associated by our respondents with the concept of loyalty. It allows us to conclude that university teachers and students understand this category adequately, i.e. corresponding to this phenomenon.

However, such categories as patriotism and identification in our study were also unclaimed, which allows us to conclude that the idea of loyalty in our sample is not complete.

In our study, it was found that in the minds of teacher's loyalty – is, first of all, friendliness (62.5%), then tolerance and dedication (37.5%), accompanied by honesty (25%), faithfulness and law-abiding (12.5%).

In the students ' opinion, loyalty is tolerance (32%), neutrality and friendliness (24%), as well as honesty (12%), loyalty (8%), dedication (8%), loyalty and reliability (4%).

Comparing the views of students and teachers on the concept of loyalty, it was found that the differences between them reach a significant level in such characteristics of loyalty as dedication, law-abiding, neutrality and friendliness. At the same time, such qualities of loyalty as faithfulness, devotion, honesty, dependability and tolerance are found among students and teachers with approximately equal frequency.

Let us consider the answers to the second and third questions.

The second question was related to the customer loyalty to the service culture and quality of service, and the third –to the connection customer loyalty with the loyalty of the internal staff (people, that directly come into contact with customers). After had processed the primary data, the obtained results have been presented in Table 02.

Table 02. Percentage of teachers 'and students' answers to the second and third questions of the questionnaire

Compared groups		The answers to the questionnaire				
		2 question		3 question		
		a	b	a	b	c
Students, n=251	%	88%	12%	52%	0%	48%
Teachers, n=24	%	100%	0%	87,5%	0%	12,5%
The value of the criterion "Fisher φ^* angular transformation"		1,766*	1,739*	1,999*	-	1,988*

*Note: - veracity of differences at level $p \leq 0,05$.
Source: Authors.

Analyzing the obtained data, we see that the majority of students and absolutely all teachers agree that customer loyalty is related to the culture of service and quality of service. Only 12% students deny the possibility of such a correlation. The statistical processing has revealed the significance in these evaluations. We can say that teachers are more agreeable than students that customer loyalty is related to the service culture and quality of service, while students deny such a correlation in comparison with teachers.

A similar result was obtained by the studies conducted by Saleem, Yaseen, & Wasaya (2018). They revealed that the image of the hotels was insignificant and did not influence on relations.

Had answered the third question, the students' opinions have been divided approximately equally: 52% students believe that the formation of a loyal client layer depends largely on the loyalty of the internal staff, especially the part of staff which directly contacts with customers, 48% believe that it can be different. For teachers, the majority (87.5%) agree that the loyalty of internal staff can form a loyal client layer and only one teacher (12.5%) believes that it can be different. The statistical processing has revealed the significance in these evaluations. It can be confirmed that teachers agree more often than students with the fact that client loyalty is associated with the loyalty of internal staff, while students in comparison with teachers much more often admit the possibility that such a correlation may not exist.

In the fourth question of the questionnaire respondents were asked to rank the proposed measures for the formation of customer loyalty by their importance. It was necessary to put number 1 to the most important event, number 2 less important, etc., the last, number 6 to the least important event.

Based on a summary Table 03 with results of answers to the fourth question of the questionnaire, the values of the ranks of characteristics proposed for selection were averaged.

Table 03. Empirically derived average and assigned ranks of measures for forming customer loyalty

Measures	Rank of importance			
	students, n=251		teachers, n=24	
	Average rank	Assigned rank	Average rank	Assigned rank
Differentiated offer	3,12	3	2,5	2
Selection of consumers with a high level of internal loyalty	4,48	5	2,875	3
Customer service differentiation	2,08	1	2,375	1
Control of customers' migration indicators	4,52	6	4,25	5
Motivation of the company's employees	2,64	2	3	4
Creation of customer switching barriers	4	4	6	6

Note: Source: Authors.

The method of rank correlation of Spearman (Pechnikov, 2018) was used for statistical processing of the obtained material. Based on the obtained data, it can be concluded that there is no correlation between the profiles of students and teachers, i.e. they differ.

Based on the numeric data, it can be stated that the most important activities for students aimed at forming customer loyalty are the differentiation of work with customers; motivation of employees and differentiated offer, further on the degree of reduction of importance are the creation of barriers to switching customers; selection of consumers with a high level of internal loyalty and control of indicators of customers' migration.

Teachers have similar points, in the first place they also have a differentiation of work with clients; then there is a differentiated offer and selection of consumers with a high level of internal loyalty, then on the degree of decline in importance are the motivation of employees of the company; control of customer migration indicators and the creation of customer switching barriers. It should be noted that the last measure at teachers received unanimously the last rank of the importance.

The greatest differences between teachers and students are observed in such parameters as motivation of the company's employees; creation of barriers to customer switching and selection of consumers with a high level of internal loyalty. The first two measures are considered more important by students than by teachers, while teachers prefer the latter.

The results of consumer testing in a study conducted by Chang & Hung, (2018) showed that the impact of the use of services on the trust and satisfaction is significant.

Let us consider the results of the answers to the fifth and sixth questions of the questionnaire. The fifth question was formulated, based on the scheme used Terentyeva et al. (2016), according to it, the company events of the social and ethical marketing enhance the level of social responsibility of the company perceived by the customer, which contributes to increasing customer loyalty (Vinogradova, 2017).

The sixth question is referred to the balance of material and non-material privileges in the formation of the customer loyalty program.

The percentage of responses of teachers and students to the fifth and sixth questions of the questionnaire is presented below. An interesting fact is that 100% teachers agree that the social and ethical marketing activities implemented by the company increase the level of social responsibility of the company, which affects the increase of the customer loyalty, while 32% students believe that it can be in different ways. The differences between students and teachers in answering this question reached a statistical significance 0.1%

Regarding the balance of material and non-material privileges, the positions of students and teachers are similar, the statistical significance of the differences could not be identified. The majority (84% students and 62.5% teachers) believe that a combination of material and non-material privileges is necessary; a smaller part prefers material privileges (12% students and 37.5% teachers) and only one student (4%) believes that when forming a customer loyalty program, non-material privileges are the most important: information, exclusive goods, activities, additional services.

Let's consider the data which we have received when teachers and students answered the seventh question of the questionnaire. It is concerned the importance of various tools of communication with

customers in the formation of customer loyalty, respondents had the opportunity to mark 3 factors out of 9 as the most important. Primary quantitative indicators and percentages are presented in Table 04.

Table 04. Percentage of teachers 'and students' answers to the seventh question of the questionnaire

Compared parameters	Students, n=25		Teachers, n=8		The value of the criterion "Fisher φ^* angular transformation"
	Quantity	%	Quantity	%	
Personal meetings with clients	16	64%	7	87,5%	1,399
Information leaflet	8	32%	4	50%	0,905
Postal mail	3	12%	3	37,5%	1,503
E-mail	2	8%	2	25%	1,163
Informational bulletin	2	8%	0	0%	1,410
Web-site	14	56%	3	37,5%	0,917
Hotline	11	44%	1	12,5%	1,791*
Mobile telephone	3	12%	2	25%	0,836
Retail outlets	8	32%	3	37,5%	0,283

*Note: - veracity of differences at level $p \leq 0,05$.
Source: Authors.

Students ' priorities were distributed as follows. In the first place - personal meetings with customers, then in descending order of importance: Web-site, hotline, information leaflet, retail outlets, mobile phone, postal mail, e-mail, informational bulletin.

The priorities of teachers are as follow. In the first place - personal meetings with customers, then in descending order of importance: information leaflet, postal mail, Web-site, retail outlets, e-mail, mobile phone, hotline and informational bulletin, which has not received any choice.

The statistical analysis of the students' and teachers' positions revealed significant differences in only one parameter – the "hot line". Students believe that it can be useful in forming customer loyalty, while teachers believe that it is unlikely. In other positions, the views of our respondents do not differ significantly.

7. Conclusion

Summarizing the data of the empirical study, the following main conclusions can be made below.

Students and teachers' idea of loyalty of is quite adequate in general, but not complete. Students 'and teachers' views on loyalty coincide in such characteristics as faithfulness, devotion, honesty, dependability and tolerance; and differ in such parameters as dedication, law-abiding, neutrality and friendliness.

Teachers often agree more than students that customer loyalty is related to the service culture and quality of service, as well as the loyalty of internal staff, while students, in comparison with teachers, are much more likely to deny such an opportunity.

Views on the importance of various measures to build customer loyalty among teachers and students do not coincide. The greatest differences between them are observed in such parameters as the

motivation of the company's employees; the creation of barriers to switching customers and the selection of consumers with a high level of internal loyalty. The first two methods are considered more important by students than by teachers, while teachers prefer the latter.

All teachers agree that social and ethical marketing activities increase customer loyalty, while a significant number of students doubt it.

Regarding the balance of material and non-material privileges, the positions of students and teachers are similar. Most respondents consider that a combination of material and non-material privileges was necessary; a smaller part prefers only material privileges

Views on the tools of communication with customers in the formation of customer loyalty among students and teachers in most positions are similar, significant differences were revealed only one tool-"hotline".

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