

The Relationship between Price and Loyalty in Services Industry

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*The article consists of four parts, where **the first part** formulates the problem, aim and objectives of the article. The aim of the article is to specify the relationship between price and loyalty based on existing theory and after that to test it empirically in the sanatorium “Versmė”.*

The aim is achieved with the help of the objectives formulated that seek: 1) to ground importance and problematic of relationship between price and customers’ loyalty research, 2) to define concept price-loyalty relationship, 3) to reveal customers’ loyalty conceptual importance and factors conditioning it, 4) to prepare a theoretical model of relationship between service price and customers’ loyalty, 5) to perform empiric research of relationship between service price and customers’ loyalty, based on generalized methodological attitudes on case of AB Birštonas sanatorium “Versmė”.

Here the relevance of the topic is analyzed and the main gaps in the literature related to the price-loyalty relationship are revealed. This part presents definition of problem and necessity of further research is justified. To reach the aim a comparison analysis of scientific literature and systemic methods is used.

In the second part the analysis of price-loyalty relationship nature is presented and the concept of loyalty is defined and classification of consumers based on loyalty is analyzed. In this part factors conditioning customers satisfaction are being analyzed, discussed and presented by various scientists. After performing theoretical studies of relationship between price and customer, a theoretical integrated model of price, satisfaction and loyalty based on Consuegra, Molina and Esteban (2007) has been prepared. Based on confidence, social and exclusive viewpoint rewards satisfaction is being measured though rewards of relationship. The results of this measurement are presented in the next part of the article.

In the third part the research methodology, is described and the results of data analysis are provided. The research object, problem, aim and objectives are defined in this part. For empiric research we applied quantitative (a questionnaire survey) research method. The object of the research is relationship between service price and customers loyalty.

The aim of the research is to identify causality consistent patterns between loyalty and its determinants and service price.

The research tasks are as follows:

1. To specify and check empirically theoretic model of relationship between service price and customers loyalty when identifying factors of loyalty and price acceptance.

2. To specify price acceptance, price fairness and measuring model of its determinants and to check empirically its psychometric characteristics.

The implementation of formulated aim and tasks is related with hypotheses of this research.

The research is being performed at the AB Birštonas sanatorium “Versmė”. 112 respondents participate in the research. The results of linear multiple regression analysis are presented and the causality between loyalty and price is described.

The last part of the article delivers conclusions and suggestions of the analysis and research.

Keywords: relationship, customers’ loyalty, price, service industry.

Introduction

It is important for service enterprises to work out marketing strategy acting in market with high competition in order to assure long - term competitive advantage. Marketing concept raises condition stating that service enterprises, striving to obtain long-term competitive advantage, must identify and satisfy customer’s demands better than the competitors. On the ground of marketing theoreticians, a price is the most important factor, determining customers’ satisfaction. Customers estimating the value of obtained service most often think about the price. Studying price relationship with customers’ satisfaction and loyalty, marketing theoreticians, state that satisfaction depends on service quality, price and other factors. Striving to act successfully in internal and global market, service enterprises should evaluate price impact on customers’ satisfaction and loyalty.

Huber et.al. (2001), Henning-Thurau et al. (2002), Wong and Zhou (2006), Avlonitis and Indounas (2006), Consuegra, Molina and Esteban (2007) and Banyte, Salickaite, (2008), Tamosiuniene and Jasilioniene (2007) and other scientists’ performed empiric research confirm that service price as one of customers’ loyalty factors, becomes an important object of marketing research.

Marketing theoreticians stress that there are quite a few theoretic and empiric researches where the relationship between the price and customer loyalty were being analyzed. It confirms the problem of the analyzed object. *The identified problematic situation gives possibility to formulate scientific problem in a question: does relationship exist between service price and customers loyalty?*

The aim of the article - is to justify in theory and empirically check service price and customers loyalty

relationship in the case of AB Birštonas sanatorium "Versmė".

The aim is achieved with the help of the objectives formulated that seek:

- 1) to ground importance and problematic of relationship between price and customers' loyalty research,
- 2) to define concept price-loyalty relationship,
- 3) to reveal customers' loyalty conceptual importance and factors conditioning it,
- 4) to prepare a theoretical model of the relationship between service price and customers' loyalty,
- 5) to perform empiric research of the relationship between service price and customers' loyalty, based on generalized methodological attitudes to the case of AB Birštonas sanatorium "Versmė".

Research methodology used in the article – is the comparison analysis of scientific literature and systemic methods. For empiric research of relationship between service price and customer loyalty we applied quantitative (a questionnaire survey) research method. Linear multiple regression analysis was used to identify the causality between loyalty and price.

Concept of the price-loyalty relationship

Dovaliene and Virvilaite (2008), state that price is one of the most flexible marketing mix elements that can be quickly changed, after changing specific product and service characteristics. Besides, decisions for price are most effective when harmonized with other marketing mix elements – product or service, place and promotion. According to Nagle and Holden (2002) and Ginevicius (2008), product and service creation, its sale and promotion are the successful beginning of business, and optimal price determination assures income. Likewise many scientists indicate and Ostaseviciute and Sliburyte (2008) confirm that service price is the only marketing mix element bringing income to an enterprise.

Consuegra, Molina and Esteban (2007) state that striving to determine relationship between service price and customer loyalty first of all it is necessary to discuss such concepts as price fairness and price acceptance.

Consuegra, Molina and Esteban (2007) based on Kimes and Wirtz (2003) state that customers may treat demand conditioned price determination and price, related with income management, as a breach of customer confidence, related with dual obligation principle. Following Vaidyanathan and Aggarwal (2003); Wirtz and Kimes (2007) opinion dual obligation principle states that majority of customers think that they have a right to know base (reference) price and service enterprise has a right to know base (reference) profit. Increase of service price concurrent with cost increase is treated as fair and acceptable to the customer as well. In such a case, change of price *status quo* should not be implemented at once or for the aim to increase service enterprise profit and when the price increased, to trade on excess profit or newly obtained power of monopoly (Bolton et al., 2003). In respect to this, it is expected that price increase would be estimated as not very fair, if causality relationships are pointed to internal part of the enterprise. Generalizing, it can be stated that customers value quoted prices comparing

them with other but the same taking into account circumstances as well (Beldona and Manasivayam, 2006).

Consuegra, Molina and Esteban (2007) based on Bolton et al., (2003) state that concept "price fairness" is described as a decision hereof if an expected result and/or process, necessary to achieve the aim, is reasoned, acceptable or fair. A cognitive aspect of this definition indicates that price fairness is decided comparing service price with appropriate standard.

Consuegra, Molina and Esteban (2007), Dovaliene and Virvilaite (2008) state that service price increase is more acceptable for customers if a service gives bigger satisfaction. Performed scientific research confirms that positive relationship exists between changes of customer's satisfaction and service price increase acceptability.

In marketing literature a price is indicated as the most important factor, conditioning customers' satisfaction, because, if customers estimate the value of obtained service, they usually think of price (Zeinhaml, 1988; Fornell, 1992; Anderson and Sullivan, 1993; Anderson et al., 1994; Cronin et al., 2000 and Virvilaite 2008). Studying price relationship with satisfaction scientists indicated that the level of satisfaction, depends on service quality, price and personal factors. As Consuegra, Molina and Esteban (2007) state, earlier empiric research has not examined price factor influence on consumers' satisfaction. Based on this, Consuegra, Molina and Esteban (2007) formed an integrated model of price, satisfaction and loyalty.

Consuegra, Molina and Esteban (2007) based on Jamal (2004) and Pranulis (2008), Banyte (2008) state that during the last four decades majority of marketing scientists treat customers satisfaction as one of the most important objects for theoretic and empiric research. Following the opinion of scientists, a concept "satisfaction" expresses customer's focused aim. Homburg et. al. (2006) state that both acknowledgement and emotional state explain decisions related with satisfaction. Performed empiric research confirmed that emotions experienced during the service may have big influence on satisfaction. Following the opinion of Henning-Thurnau et.al (2002), Gwinner and Gremler (2002), Burns and Neisner (2006), conceivable relationship rewards have influence on customers satisfaction. It is considered purposeful to perform studies of conceivable relationship rewards influence to customers' satisfaction.

Consuegra, Molina and Esteban (2007) based on Darian et.al. (2001), Henning-Thurnau et.al. (2002), and Wong and Zhou (2006) state that customers' satisfaction stimulates their loyalty. They raise hypothesis that customers' satisfaction is directly related with loyalty.

Factors conditioning customers' satisfaction

Consuegra, Molina and Esteban (2007), Henning-Thurnau et.al. (2002) distinguish the following factors having influence on loyalty: service price-value, service quality, customers' service.

Loyalty promotion involving price of a service covers the most flexible discount systems, discount cards for constant customers and financial support. Following the opinion of the scientists, if a customer uses service only for attractive price, then such enterprise does not reach long

term goals. It is being explained that a competitor may offer the same service for less price and a service enterprise loses its customers. Customers become more competent and require to justify indicated prices. For this reason additional services become a more and more important source of competitive advantage achievement.

Service quality has influence on customers' loyalty as well. It is difficult to describe quality of services, because it can be estimated both objectively and subjectively. Objectively quality may be estimated only then, when it is related with tangible things. However, many scientists agree that quality of services should estimate a customer depending on his/her level of satisfaction.

The goal of service enterprise is to satisfy customers' demands, so wishing to give service of the highest quality, it is not enough to take into account just technical and functional side of the quality. It is necessary to estimate customer's expected quality. A customer estimates service through enterprise image, and the following characteristics form it: reliability, responsibility, competence, accessibility, attention, informative, reputation, safety, understanding of a consumer, tangibility. The attention should be paid to these characteristics and improvement of presented services as well as striving for the better estimation among customers.

Because a service is tangible, so to describe the essence of service quality conception is very difficult. In any case, price, quality and value are important aspects when analyzing customers' choice and purchase behavior – both speaking of services and products as well. It is necessary to note that important is not objective quality, but customer's subjective perception. Instead of understanding quality as appropriate list of standards – most often so the quality of tangible products is described – quality of service is described by customers themselves. Besides quality is most often determined by the way of comparison – in case of services it is compared what the customer expected from the service and what he/she really "got" from it.

Kopitov and Faingolz (2008) agree that service providers and service customers may very differently understand what forms quality of service. Customers are involved into service trade already in advance having formulated their expectations regarding that service. Depending on if these expectations of a customer are exceeded, satisfied or dissatisfied will affect further relationships between the service provider and the customer. In order to improve quality of service, a service provider should aim that a service meets customer's expectations or inform them in such a way that they will form their expectations according to services provided.

Banasiewicz (2002) distinguishes service of customers as one of factors that increase loyalty. Good relations with customers and their loyalty form namely good service of customers, as it is one of functions of service provider's staff. A customer, receiving a service, given a good service easier takes a decision to come back again to the same service enterprise and feels bigger satisfaction for the received service. This satisfaction creates a bigger investment value, for the customer raises confidence in service enterprise and wish to come back. Function of service rendering could not be separated from service

function, so it is obvious that willing to provide more services it is necessary to do it better, and that means to develop good service skills of a customer.

Consuegra, Molina and Esteban (2007), based on Darian et.al. (2001), Henning-Thurnau et.al. (2002), and Wong and Zhou (2006) state that *satisfaction* is one of the most important factors increasing customers' loyalty. Henning-Thurnau et.al. (2002) analyses customers' satisfaction in the context of relationship marketing. High quality of the main service or technical quality of a service is a necessary condition for each service enterprise willing to survive in this business. In the perspective of long-term relationships a customer expects not only high quality from the main service but also additional reward from long lasting relations. Rewards are explained as pleasures, satisfaction, present received from relations that customer rejoice, admires. Henning-Thurnau et.al. (2002) state that quality of relationship reflects such dimensions as satisfaction, confidence and obligation. Following the opinion of the authors, relationship rewards have influence on satisfaction.

Analyzing relationship rewards, scientists base on direct and indirect dimensions of relationship values stating that relationships may be estimated through direct or indirect functions of their values. The first (direct) value dimension covers clearly tangible components of the value (price, profit, quantity). The base of this value dimension is effectiveness: both parties from investment to relations expect service or process of cost reduction. Direct value dimension depends only on parties participating in relations and indirect relation value is related with other relations.

In the research of Barnes (1994), Bendapudi and Berry (1997), Berry (1995), Gwinner, Gremler, and Bitner (1998) three categories of relationship rewards are grounded empirically, such as: *confidence, social and exclusive viewpoint*.

Confidence rewards. Henning-Thurnau et.al. (2002) proposes to estimate confidence rewards measuring decrease of concern and states that this is practically the most important relationship reward. Following the opinion of scientists, confidence displays by psychological risk reduction reward in situations, where the customer has little knowledge, limited perception about the service.

Then confidence reduces psychological stress when decision is made. Decision is made after consulting with a reliable provider of a service or even placed at his/her disposal (Reynolds and Beatty, 1999).

Social rewards. Henning-Thurnau et.al. (2002) state that relationships by its essence are social processes, so in scientific research social rewards have important position in relation with service enterprise. Explaining social rewards many scientists stress several common characteristics: social involvement and personality acknowledgement, confidence, emotional attachment. Attachment reflects one party's interest in the other (acceptance of social standards and development of social consciousness depends on attachment to other persons). Social rewards are related with time, energy and put efforts while performing common actions. In other words it is stated, that support, maintenance and even participation in the activity attach individual to common moral and ethic codes. Palmer

(2002) confirms that social coherence is being formed in the emotional level that creates psychological barriers to exit and it makes relations stronger, more resistant. Social and personal coherence reflect a particular state and intensity between service enterprise and customer relationship. Scientists state that particular aspects of social coherence for some customers become the main motive to visit a certain service enterprise.

Exclusive viewpoint rewards. Henning-Thurnau et.al. (2002) state that element of exclusivity is very important speaking about relations. Following the opinion of majority of authors, service enterprises willing to strengthen relationship with customers should differentiate service of loyal customers. The position that “all customers are even” and that they all should be serviced evenly is not acceptable. A service enterprise that does not differentiate the customers wastes its resources trying to satisfy less profitable customers and not efficiently satisfying more profitable are the loyal customers. Service enterprises differentiating service of customers invoke essential customer’s sense to feel important (Gwinner, Gremler, and Bitner 1998). Exclusivity means that for some customers a special attention is paid (additional efforts, faster service) than to the others. A customer is treated not as usual anonymous receiver of a service, but as a V.I.P. person.

Theoretic model of relationship between service price and customer loyalty

After performing theoretical studies of relationship between price and customer loyalty, it can be stated that service price is one of the customer satisfaction factors though it is not analyzed enough. Following Consuegra, Molina and Esteban (2007), earlier performed research did not show price factor impact to customers’ satisfaction and loyalty. Based on Consuegra, Molina and Esteban (2007), Darian et.al. (2001), Henning-Thurnau et.al. (2002), Wong and Zhou (2006) and works of other scientists, a conclusion could be made that service price has impact to customers’ satisfaction and loyalty. On the other hand, it is stated that striving to determine relationships between service price and customers’ loyalty the most acceptable is Consuegra, Molina and Esteban (2007) prepared integrated model of price, satisfaction and loyalty. Henning-Thurnau et.al. (2002) and other scientists state that satisfaction is the most important factor having influence on customers loyalty. It could be noted that analyzing satisfaction in the context of relationship marketing scientists state that in long term relationships a customer expects not only high quality from the main service but also additional rewards from continuing relations. Maintaining Henning - Thurnau et.al. (2002) opinion, confidence, social and exclusive viewpoint rewards have influence on customers’ satisfaction. Based on these attitudes, satisfaction will be measured through rewards of relationship. Confirming the opinion of Henning-Thurnau et.al. (2002), Wong and Zhou (2006), it is stated that obligation is one of the main dimensions of relationship marketing having influence on customers’ satisfaction.

Striving to determine relationship between price and customer loyalty, a conclusion is made that two definitions

are used to characterize service price: price fairness and price acceptance.

Empiric research of relationship between service price and customer loyalty in case of AB Birštonas sanatorium “Versmė”

Performed analysis of scientific literature showed, that knowledge about causality of price and loyalty are fragmentary and limited. Some authors state that loyal and satisfied customers tend to pay more for the services and are not so sensible to price increase (Consuegra, Molina and Esteban: 2007:463), though these statements are justified empirically only partly. It is not clear how much price increase acceptability may be explained by satisfaction and loyalty.

Research methodology is a questionnaire survey. Research may be classified into reconnaissance, descriptive and causative (Burns; Bush: 2006: 116). Type of this research is causative, as its essence is identification of causality between variables using linear multiple regression analysis.

The object of the research is relationship between service price and customers loyalty.

The aim of the research is to identify causality consistent patterns between loyalty and its determinants and service price.

The tasks of research are as follows:

1. To specify and check empirically a theoretic model of relationship between service price and customers loyalty when identifying factors of loyalty and price acceptance.
2. To specify price acceptance, price fairness and the measuring model of its determinants and to check empirically its psychometric characteristics.

The implementation of the formulated aim and tasks is related with the following **hypotheses** of this research:

- H₁: Exclusive viewpoint reward has direct positive impact on social reward.
- H₂: Social reward has direct positive impact on confidence reward.
- H₃: Social reward has direct positive impact on obligation.
- H₄: Confidence reward has direct positive impact on satisfaction.
- H₅: Confidence reward has direct positive impact on obligation.
- H₆: Satisfaction has direct positive impact on obligation.
- H₇: Satisfaction has direct positive impact on loyalty.
- H₈: Satisfaction has direct positive impact on price acceptance.
- H₉: Obligation has direct positive impact on customer loyalty.
- H₁₀: Loyalty has direct positive impact on price acceptance.
- H₁₁: Price fairness has direct positive impact on confidence reward.
- H₁₂: Price fairness has direct positive impact on satisfaction.
- H₁₃: Price fairness has direct positive impact on loyalty.
- H₁₄: Price fairness has direct positive impact on price acceptance.

An easy selection was applied to form the sample (Bush; Burns: 2006), so the sample may not precisely reflect the population. The use of this selection method was selected because costs of an even chance assurance and application method for each population member are very high. Besides the sanatorium has no personal contact data of a population member, so practically would be very difficult to apply chance sample selection methods. The questionnaire was applied in the sanatorium "Versme". Data was being selected for a week. Patients having treatment there were asked to fill in a questionnaire survey. The quote of a questionnaire survey feedback is roughly 75 % and may be treated as good. There were questioned 112 respondents.

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents showed that women form 60.7 % of all participants.

Majority of respondents have higher education (60 %). Salaried together with specialists form 64.3 % from all respondents. Even 40 % of all respondents have more than 1000 Lt. income per a member of family home economics. 37 % of respondents get from 1001 Lt. to 1500 Lt. income. These two income groups form even 74.5 % of all respondents. Only 25.5 % of respondents get higher than 1500 Lt. income. Even 68.1 % of respondents spend more than 1000 Lt. for the sanatorium services per year. 12.8 % of respondents spend from 1001 Lt. to 1500 Lt. per year. The same part of respondents spends from 1501 Lt. to 200 Lt. per year services in the sanatorium. Only 6.4 % of respondents spend more than 200 Lt.

Factorial analysis was performed using the most widely known method of the main components. Number of factors was determined based on eigenvalue. Factors were formed until eigenvalue was higher or equal to 1.

Factorial analysis showed that measure scale of loyalty, obligation, satisfaction, exclusive viewpoint reward, social reward and confidence reward distinguishes in excellent psychometric characteristics and is proper for use. Internal consistence and reliability of scales is being analyzed in this work in the sector of sanatorium services and is the same as in other service sectors. The worked out results comply with other researchers' (Auruskeviciene, Palaima, 2007) empiric research results, performed in other service sectors. Burinskiene and Rudzikiene (2007) agree with Consuegra, Molina and Esteban (2007) offered measurement scale of price acceptance. However, it should be improved, because its reliability is below the critical limit.

A linear multiple regression method was used to check the formulated hypothesis and causality. Totally there were formed six regression models, because there exist six endogenic variables (consequences).

Regression analysis showed that there is no causality between exclusive viewpoint reward and social reward. **There is no statistically important exclusive viewpoint reward effect on social reward, so the hypothesis H₁ is also rejected.**

Confidence reward is not influenced by social reward, so the hypothesis H₂ is rejected.

The research showed that price fairness has statistically important effect to confidence reward ($\beta=0.4$, $p=0.00$), though it explains only 16 % of the latter construct ($R^2=0.16$). The **hypothesis H₁₁ is confirmed.**

Confidence reward determines satisfaction ($\beta=0.38$, $p=0.00$), so **hypothesis H₄ is confirmed.**

However, price fairness has no statistically important effect on satisfaction. **The hypothesis H₁₂ is rejected.** Confidence reward could be explained only by 15 % of the satisfaction construct.

Regression analysis showed that nevertheless satisfaction does not influence obligation, so the **hypothesis H₆ is rejected.** Social reward ($\beta=0.30$, $p=0.00$) and confidence reward ($\beta=0.46$, $p=0.00$) has statistically important effect on obligation and explain 33 % of simple dimension (modified $R^2=0.33$).

Obligation determines customers loyalty ($\beta=0.37$, $p=0.00$). So, the **hypothesis H₉ is confirmed.** Satisfaction ($\beta=0.37$, $p=0.00$) and price fairness ($\beta=0.37$, $p=0.00$) are the factors influencing loyalty as well, so **hypotheses H₇ and H₉ are confirmed.** The last three variables explain even 74% of loyalty. Regression model is acceptable only when it explains at least 50% of dependant variable.

Neither loyalty nor satisfaction have statistically important effect on price acceptance. So, **hypotheses H₈ and H₁₀ are rejected.** Regression analysis showed that price fairness determines price acceptance ($\beta=0.37$, $p=0.00$), so **hypothesis H₁₃ is confirmed.** Though price a fairness explains only 13 % of price acceptance ($R^2=0.138$).

Regression model can be treated as good if the regression the model is 50 % or more of dependant variable (Diamntopoulos, Siguaw, 2000), though it is stated that in social sciences lower size of this statistics can be acceptable.

Regression model is correct and reliable only when linear regression assumptions are satisfied. So there were checked all linear multiple regressions.

Linear. Variance analysis showed that regression is linear ($F=19.46$, $p=0.00$).

Sample sufficiency for linear multiple regression. It can be possible to use linear multiple regression, sample size should consist from 10 to 5 respondents for each independent variable. A regression model consists of 8 factors, measuring intellect competences. Size of research sample $N=112$, so a conclusion can be carried out that sample size is sufficient for linear multiple regression application.

Autocorrelation of residuals errors. Durbin-Watson statistics showed in all cases that there is no autocorrelation of regression errors. Burinskiene and Rudzikiene (2007) state that the meanings of the statistics may vary from 1 to 4. Statistical meaning 2 means that there is no correlation among the errors. Higher meaning shows negative correlation of errors and lower – positive. Statistical meanings raise problems when lesser than 1 or higher than 3. In the case of positive correlation standard errors of b coefficient are too small and in the case of negative correlation – too high.

Multicollinearity. Model is suitable for prognosis because dependant variables do not correlate among and dependence relates only them and dependent variable. Dispersion meaning of VIF reduction multiplier varies in interval from 1.01 to 1.10 and shows that there is no multicollinearity problem. Variable is too much multicollinearious, when its dispersion reduction multiplier VIF is >4 .

Regularity of regression errors. Regularity of regression errors was checked performing Kolmogorov - Smirnov test. Statistical meaning showed that errors distributor is normal ($p=0.09 > 0.05$), so the regression model could be applied.

Homoscedasticity. If data are not homoscedastic, so most probably that linear assumption is not correct. Dispersion diagram of standardized regression bias and standardized prognosis meaning showed that data are homoscedastic, so linear regression model could be applied.

Outliers. Outliers influence signally accuracy of linear regression model (Burinskiene and Rudzikiene, 2007). Standardized bias whose meanings are higher than $|3.29|$ are named outliers.

Standardized bias higher than $|2.58|$ could be not more than 1%. Higher than $|1.96|$ bias can be no more than 5 %. So the analysis showed that there are no outliers.

Generalizing results of empiric research, it is stated that the theoretic model of relationship between service price and customers loyalty correspond all assumptions of linear multiple regression are correct, reliable and may be applied to empiric research.

Conclusions

After analyzing from problematic point of view relationship between service price and customers loyalty and after generalizing theoretic decisions and preparing theoretic model of relationship between service price and customers' loyalty and performing empiric research the following conclusions could be made:

- Studies of scientific literature showed that the relation exists between service price and customers loyalty.
- Generalizing presented explanations of service price concept, it could be stated that service price is one of factors of customers' loyalty and satisfaction.
- Having analyzed factors of customers' loyalty, it can be stated that the main factors effecting customers' loyalty are service price-value, service quality and customers' service. It is noticed that many scientists distinguish satisfaction as one of the most important factors of customers' loyalty.
- Results of theoretic and empiric research showed that relationship rewards (confidence, social and exclusive viewpoint) have influence on customers' satisfaction that in its turn determine customers' loyalty as well.
- Generalizing results of empiric research, a conclusion can be made that price fairness has important impact on confidence reward. Besides, satisfaction is determined by confidence reward. Social reward and confidence reward have significant effect on obligation. Obligation determines customers' loyalty. Satisfaction and price fairness directly influence customers' loyalty. Price fairness determines price acceptance. Following the results of empiric research, a conclusion can be made that theoretic model of relationship between service price and customers loyalty complies with all assumptions of

linear multiple regression is correct, reliable and may be applied to empiric research.

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Paslaugų kainos ir klientų lojalumo sąsajos

Santrauka

Problema. Rinkoje, pasižyminčioje didele konkurencija, veikiančioms paslaugų įmonėms svarbu parengti marketingo strategiją, užtikrinančią ilgalaikį konkurencinį pranašumą. Marketingo koncepcijos sąlyga - siekiamas įgyti ilgalaikį konkurencinį pranašumą, paslaugų įmonės privalo nustatyti ir patenkinti klientų poreikius geriau už savo konkurentus. Anot marketingo teoretikų, kaina yra svarbiausias veiksnys, sąlygojantis klientų pasitenkinimą. Klientai, vertindami suteiktos

paslaugos vertę, dažniausia galvoja apie kainą. Tirdami kainos ryšį su klientų pasitenkinimu ir jų lojalumu, marketingo teoretikai teigia, kad pasitenkinimas priklauso nuo paslaugos kokybės, kainos ir kitų veiksnių. Siekiamas sėkmingai veikti vidaus ir globalioje rinkoje, paslaugų įmonės privalo įvertinti kainos poveikį klientų pasitenkinimui ir jų lojalumui.

Remiantis Huber et. al. (2001), Henning-Thurau et al. (2002), Wong ir Zhou (2006), Avlonitis ir Indounas (2006), Consuegra, Molina ir Esteban (2007), Banytės ir Salickaitės, (2008) ir kitų mokslininkų atliktais teoriniais ir empiriniais tyrimais, paslaugų kaina, kaip vienas iš klientų lojalumo veiksnių, tampa svarbiu marketingo tyrimų objektu. Marketingo teoretikai pažymi, kad yra gana mažai teorinių ir empirinių tyrimų, kuriuose būtų nagrinėjamos paslaugų kainos ir klientų lojalumo sąsajos. Tai patvirtina nagrinėjamo objekto problematiškumą. *Nustatyta probleminė situacija suteikia galimybę suformuluoti mokslinę problemą klausimu: ar egzistuoja sąsajos tarp paslaugų kainos ir klientų lojalumo?*

Stripsnio tikslas - teoriškai pagrįsti ir empiriškai patikrinti paslaugų kainos ir klientų lojalumo sąsajas AB Birštono sanatorijos „Versmė“ pavyzdžiu.

Tyrimo metodai. Atliekant paslaugų kainos ir klientų lojalumo sąsajų teorines studijas, taikyti mokslinės literatūros lyginamoji analizė ir sisteminimo metodai. Empiriniams paslaugų kainos ir klientų lojalumo sąsajų tyrimui taikytas kiekybinis (apklausa) tyrimo metodas. Priežastiniams ryšiams tarp kintamųjų nustatyti naudota daugialypė tiesinė regresija.

Paslaugų kainos ir klientų lojalumo sąveikos konceptas

Marketingo literatūroje kaina yra nurodoma kaip svarbiausias veiksnys, sąlygojantis klientų pasitenkinimą, nes jei klientai vertina įsigytos paslaugos vertę, jie dažniausiai galvoja apie kainą (Zeinhaml (1988), Fornell (1992), Anderson ir Sullivan (1993), Anderson et. al. (1994), Cronin et. al (2000) ir Virvilaitė (2008). Zeithaml ir Bitner (1996) tirdami kainos ryšį su pasitenkinimu, nurodė, kad pasitenkinimo lygis priklauso nuo paslaugų kokybės, kainos, situacijos ir asmeninių veiksnių.

Anot Consuegra, Molina ir Esteban (2007), jog siekiant nustatyti sąsajas tarp paslaugų kainos, klientų pasitenkinimo ir jų lojalumo pirmiausia būtina aptarti šias sąvokas: kainos teisingumą (angl. price fairness) ir kainos didėjimo priimtumą (angl. price acceptance).

Consuegra, Molina ir Esteban (2007), remdamiesi Jamal (2004), ir Pranulis (2008) bei Banytė (2008) teigia, kad paskutinius keturis dešimtmečius dauguma marketingo mokslininkų klientų pasitenkinimą laiko vienu svarbiausių teorinių ir empirinių tyrimų objektu. Mokslininkų teigimu, „pasitenkinimo“ sąvoka išreiškia kliento siekiamą tikslą. Henning-Thurnau et. al (2002), Gwinner ir Gremler (2002) bei Burns ir Neisner (2006) teigimu, klientų pasitenkinimui turi įtakos jų suvokiamos santykių naudos. *Todėl manoma, kad tikslinga atlikti suvokiamų santykių naudų įtakos klientų pasitenkinimui teorines studijas.*

Klientų lojalumą sąlygojantys veiksniai

Consuegra, Molina ir Esteban (2007), Henning-Thurau et. al (2002) išskiria tokius veiksnus, kurie turi įtakos lojalumui: *paslaugos kainą - vertę, paslaugos kokybę, klientų aptarnavimas.*

Lojalumo skatinimas, naudojantis *paslaugos kaina*, apima lanksčias nuolaidų sistemas, nuolaidų korteles pastoviams klientams, finansinę pagalbą. Mokslininkų teigimu, jei klientas naudojami paslauga tik dėl jos patrauklios kainos, tuomet paslaugų įmonė gali nepasiekti ilgalaikių tikslų.

Paslaugų kokybė taip pat turi įtakos klientų lojalumui. Paslaugų kokybę apibūdinti sunku, nes ją galima vertinti tiek objektyviai, tiek subjektyviai. Objektyviai kokybė gali būti vertinama tik tada, kai ji susijusi su apčiuopiamais dalykais.

Banasiewicz (2002) išskiria *klientų aptarnavimą*, kaip vieną iš lojalumo didinimo veiksnių. Gerus santykius su klientais ir jų lojalumą formuoja geras klientų aptarnavimas, nes tai yra viena iš paslaugos teikiančio personalo funkcijų.

Consuegra, Molina ir Esteban (2007), remdamiesi Darian et. al (2001), Henning-Thurnau et. al (2002), Wong ir Zhou (2006), teigia, *kad pasitenkinimas yra vienas iš svarbiausių klientų lojalumo didinimo veiksnių.* Henning-Thurnau et. al (2002) klientų pasitenkinimą nagrinėja santykių marketingo kontekste. *Aukšta pagrindinės paslaugos arba techninė paslaugos kokybė kiekvienos versle norinčios išlikti paslaugų įmonės yra būtina sąlyga.*

Barnes (1994), Bendapudi ir Berry (1997), Berry (1995), Gwinner, Gremler ir Bitner (1998) tyrimuose empiriškai pagrindžiamos trys santykių naudų kategorijos: *pasitikėjimo, socialinė ir išskirtinio požiūrio.*

Pasitikėjimo nauda. Anot mokslininkų, pasitikėjimas reiškiasi psichologine rizikos sumažinimo nauda ypač esant situacijoms, kada klientas mažai žino, ribotai suvokia apie paslaugą.

Socialinės naudos. Apibūdinant socialines naudas, akcentuojami šie bruožai: socialinis įsitraukimas ir individo pripažinimas, pasitikėjimas, emocinis prisirišimas (angl. attachment).

Išskirtinio požiūrio naudos. Daugumos autorių nuomone, paslaugų įmonės, norėdamos stiprinti santykius su klientais, privalo diferencijuoti lojalių klientų aptarnavimą.

Paslaugų kainos ir klientų lojalumo sąsajų teorinis modelis

Atlikus paslaugų kainos ir klientų lojalumo sąsajų teorines studijas, galima teigti, kad paslaugų kaina yra vienas iš klientų pasitenkinimo ir jų lojamo veiksmų. Tačiau ji nagrinėta nepakankamai. Remiantis Consuegra, Molina ir Esteban (2007), Darian et.al (2001), Henning-Thurnau et. al (2002), Wong ir Zhou (2006) ir kitų mokslininkų darbais, daroma išvada, kad paslaugų kaina turi įtakos klientų pasitenkinimui ir lojalumui. Henning-Thurnau et. al (2002) teigimu, pasitikėjimo socialinė ir išskirtinio požiūrio naudos turi įtakos klientų pasitenkinimui. Remiantis šiomis nuostatomis, pasitenkinimas bus įvertintas per santykių naudas. Pritariant Henning-Thurnau et.al. (2002), Wong ir Zhou (2006) nuomonei, teigiama, kad įsipareigojimas yra viena iš pagrindinių santykių marketingo dimensijų, turinti įtakos klientų pasitenkinimui.

Siekiant nustatyti paslaugų kainos ir klientų lojalumo sąsajas, daroma išvada, jog paslaugų kainai apibūdinti vartojamos dvi sąvokos: kainos teisingumas ir kainos didėjimo priimtumas.

Paslaugų kainos ir klientų lojalumo sąsajų tyrimas: AB Birštono sanatorijos „Versmė“ pavyzdys

Mokslinės literatūros analizė parodė, kad žinios apie lojalumo ir kainos priežastinius ryšius yra fragmentiškos ir ribotos.

Tyrimo metodas – apklausa naudojant klausimyną. Šio tyrimo tipas yra priežastinis, nes jo esmė yra priežastinių ryšių tarp kintamųjų nustatymas daugialypė tiesine regresija.

Tyrimo tikslas - nustatyti priežastinių ryšių dėsningumus tarp lojalumo, jį lemiančių veiksmų ir paslaugų kainos.

Tikslo ir uždavinių įgyvendinimas siejamas su šiomis tyrimo hipotezėmis:

H₁: Išskirtinio požiūrio nauda turi tiesioginį teigiamą poveikį socialinei naudai.

H₂: Socialinė nauda turi tiesioginį teigiamą poveikį pasitikėjimo naudai.

H₃: Socialinė nauda turi tiesioginį teigiamą poveikį įsipareigojimui.

H₄: Pasitikėjimo nauda turi tiesioginį teigiamą poveikį pasitenkinimui.

H₅: Pasitikėjimo nauda turi tiesioginį teigiamą poveikį įsipareigojimui.

H₆: Pasitenkinimas turi tiesioginį teigiamą poveikį įsipareigojimui.

H₇: Pasitenkinimas turi tiesioginį teigiamą poveikį lojalumui.

H₈: Pasitenkinimas turi tiesioginį teigiamą poveikį kainos didėjimo priimtinumui.

H₉: Lojalumas turi tiesioginį poveikį kainos didėjimo priimtinumui.

H₁₀: Įsipareigojimas turi tiesioginį teigiamą poveikį klientų lojalumui.

H₁₁: Kainų teisingumas turi tiesioginį teigiamą poveikį pasitikėjimo naudai.

H₁₂: Kainų teisingumas turi tiesioginį teigiamą poveikį pasitenkinimui.

H₁₃: Kainų teisingumas turi tiesioginį teigiamą poveikį lojalumui.

H₁₄: Kainų teisingumas turi tiesioginį teigiamą kainos didėjimo priimtinumui.

Apklausa buvo vykdoma sanatorijoje „Versmė“. Duomenys buvo renkami savaitę. Klausimyno grįžtamumo kvota yra apie 75 % ir gali būti laikoma gera. Buvo apklausti 112 respondentų.

Apibendrinus empirinio tyrimo rezultatus, nustatyta, kad kainos teisingumas turi reikšmingą poveikį pasitikėjimo naudai. Be to, pasitenkinimą lemia pasitikėjimo nauda. Socialinė nauda ir pasitikėjimo nauda turi reikšmingą poveikį įsipareigojimui. Įsipareigojimas lemia klientų lojalumą. Pasitenkinimas ir kainų teisingumas turi tiesioginį poveikį klientų lojalumui. Kainos teisingumas lemia kainos didėjimo priimtumą. Empirinio tyrimo rezultatai parodė, kad paslaugų kainos ir klientų lojalumo sąveikos teorinis modelis atitinka visas daugialypės tiesinės regresijos prielaidas, yra korektiškas, patikimas ir gali būti taikomas empiriniuose tyrimuose.

Išanalizavus paslaugų kainos ir klientų lojalumo sąsajas, apibendrinus teorinius sprendimus, parengus paslaugų kainos ir klientų lojalumo sąsajų teorinį modelį ir atlikus empirinį tyrimą, galima daryti šias išvadas:

- Mokslinės literatūros studijos parodė, kad egzistuoja ryšys tarp paslaugų kainos ir klientų lojalumo.
- Kaina yra vienas iš klientų pasitenkinimo ir jų lojamo veiksmų.
- Pagrindiniai veiksniai, turintys įtakos klientų lojalumui, yra paslaugos kaina-vertė, paslaugos kokybė ir klientų aptarnavimas.
- Teorinių ir empirinių tyrimų rezultatai parodė, kad klientų pasitenkinimui turi įtakos santykių naudos, tai savo ruožtu lemia ir klientų lojalumą.
- Empirinio tyrimo rezultatai parodė, kad kainos teisingumas turi reikšmingą poveikį pasitikėjimo naudai, o paslaugų kainos ir klientų lojalumo sąveikos teorinis modelis atitinka visas daugialypės tiesinės regresijos prielaidas, yra korektiškas, patikimas ir gali būti taikomas empiriniuose tyrimuose.

Raktažodžiai: *paslaugos kaina, klientų lojalumas, ryšys, kaina, sąsaja, paslaugos, naudos.*

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