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## FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE ENHANCING CUSTOMER SERVICE IN VIETNAMESE BUSINESSES IN THE COMPETITION AND INTEGRATION TREND

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### ABSTRACT

**T**he results were to analyze the factors affecting performance enhancing customer service in Vietnamese businesses in the competition and integration trend. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to survey 500 people with 28 observed variables aiming to identify factors affecting performance enhancing customer service in Vietnamese businesses in the competition and integration trend. The study results showed that there were 05 factors affecting the group as follows: Customer service, Physical Facilities, Complaint Resolving, Service Capacity and Convenience Perception. The objectives of this study are following: First, to identify the factors affecting performance enhancing customer service in Vietnamese businesses in the competition and integration trend; Second, to determine the priority order of the impact degree of factors affecting performance enhancing customer service in Vietnamese businesses in the competition and integration trend; Third, to propose solutions improving the performance enhancing customer service in Vietnamese businesses in the competition and integration trend in the future.

**Keywords:** *Customer service, businesses, Vietnamese, integration and competition*

## 1. Introduction

One of the most important experiences that businesses around the world have learned from the early 21st century to continue the growth and sustainable development is customers are the first. Businesses would gain many benefits and win the competition and develop sustainably if there have been more and more loyal customers. Customer satisfaction will help build customers' loyalty. In order to have loyal customers, the service quality must be good. Quality customer service of the company is to ensure customer satisfaction and take their needs into consideration to improve service quality. High customer service quality will generate value not only to meet customer needs but also to beyond the expectations of customers and make businesses more prominent than their competitors.

It is said that finding new customers and turning new customers into loyal customers are important, but retaining the previous customers is also important. According to the results, analysis and assessment of many prestigious organizations, the business figures have showed that sales in the first months came mainly from existing customers (up 70%), and cost selling an item to existing customers is less than 10-20 times than finding new customers. Moreover, according to statistics from Harvard Business school (Harvard University, 2014), when the customer retention rate increased by 5%, profits would develop 25-95%. Therefore, companies need to invest budgets and efforts to retain loyal customers, turning new customers into loyal customers. Nowadays, the term "customer services" or "customer relationship management" or "call center" or "contact center" has become popular and revolutions in many enterprises.

In reality, there have been many forecasts from experts and organizations related to consumer habits through social networks. According to research on American Express global customer services, in 2014, 23% of customers have chosen to use the service through social media, up 6% compared to 2013. Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn were three top social media channels in 2014 and promised growing more this year. In addition to direct customer service, the companies have improved their differences such as customer service will focus on social networks based on the image. 2015 is the year that the businesses had raised their leverage and adapted to customer service on social networks like Pinterest image-based, YouTube, Instagram, Tumblr and large domestic and foreign businesses, corporations are constantly enhancing their budgets for customer services. They appear in those places where customers wish to be seen or to aim at. All their contact points are good opportunities for the enterprises. They turn up on the multichannel, which means that customers will be able to freely choose their favorite channel for contacting and reducing "seeking" efforts. Doing that, enterprises have gone beyond the expectations of customers. In the fierce competitive environment, the intensity of competition in winning the customers becomes more aggressive.

## 2. Literature review

Higher satisfaction can keep customers. Customers' loyalty boosts profit and growth of any organization. This comprehensive experience can turn customers into enthusiastic fans for all organizations. Valarie Zeithaml (1993), Boulding (1997), William, Richard Staelin, and Ajay Kalra (2001) suggested that making customers' satisfaction in high level is not easy and many conclusions have been proved that customers' satisfaction come from a chain of events that are correlated with each other, and it is also known as Customer service, Physical Facilities, Complaint Resolving, Service Capacity and Convenience Perception. They emphasizes that in order to have good "Customer Service" and "Complaint Resolving", training plan for staff must be into consideration to be technology expertise in serving customers in skillful, quick and efficient ways in digital technology and social media development. That is the basis for business to break their competitors down. In particular, staff responsible for direct customer contact should be equipped with knowledge, skills and tools to proactively create impressive experience for customers, which

"bribes" not only difficult customers but also creates loyal customer base that any competitors always want to have. In addition, good technology will also bring to the enterprise solutions to monitor and assess customer data better. According Spartk Central (2014), these statistics will help businesses understand their customers better and then they set standards for appropriate customer service. So enterprises need to invest in technology customer care Keaveney, Susan M. (1995)

Kordupleski, Raymond E., Roland Trust, and Anthony J. Záhořík (1993) shared the same view and noted Physical Facilities, Service Capacity and Convenience Perception are very important factors in customer service. According to Cronin and Taylor, (1992, 1995) "Service Capacity" was through "qualifications, knowledge, attitude and enthusiasm" in service. These authors believed that the selection of the right person for the right job is always paramount. Once the appropriate personnel chosen, enterprises can definitely bring customers with different experience.

In conclusion, the factors affecting performance enhancing customer service in Vietnamese businesses in the competition and integration trend focus on the following important factors: Customer service, Physical Facilities, Complaint Resolving, Service Capacity and Convenience Perception.

**Convenience Perception** is a collection of useful, convenient and easy value that the supplier gives the consumer in order to arouse the love and the interest of other people. [Laitamaki, Jukka and Raymond E. Kordupleski, (1997)]

**Service Capacity** refers to qualifications to perform the service, the ability to manifest when serving staff with customer contact employees directly in performing services, researching capabilities to capture information related to the needs for customer service. In other words, the assurance of qualifications, the attitudes of staff and their ability create trust and confidence in clients. The spirit and enthusiasm of the staff is always ready to serve will ensure rapid implementation and quality. [Cronin and Taylor, (1992, 1995)]

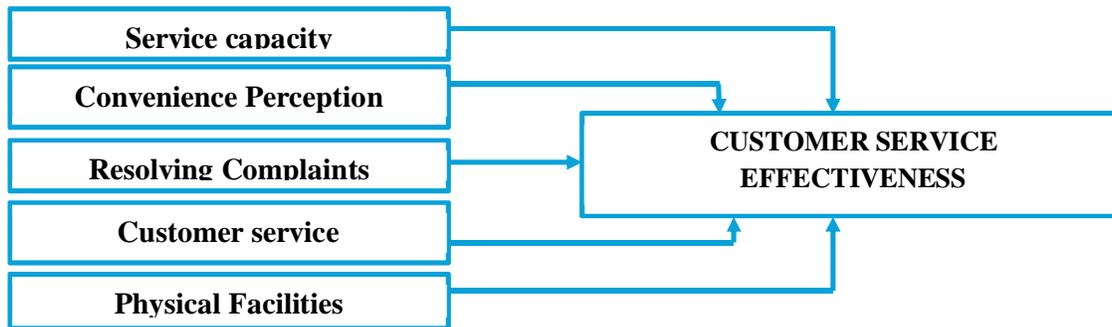
**Physical Facilities** (Facilities and equipment) is the set of elements as tangible evidence of physical material, equipment, people and information materials, service personnel costume, support equipment for the provision of services. [Cronin and Taylor, (1992, 1995)]

**Customer service** is the process of providing service to customers before, during and after purchase. The process of customer service is to implement a series of activities on awareness and interaction between employees and customers whose process is dependent on the employees those who can adjust characteristic of each customer. [Valarie Zeithaml (1993)]. This customer service is also commonly known as the cultural business of many organizations. [Boulding, (1997)]

**Resolving complaints** is a set of steps in the process as collecting information, receiving feedback, appeasing the anger of customers, analyzing the complaint and determining the remedial action, applying skills in communication etc. to convince customers or deal with all the issues, including really stressful situations. Through problem solving, good relationships with customers and creating customer satisfaction can be built. [Laitamaki, Jukka and Raymond E. Kordupleski (1997)]

### 3. Research Model

Based on the results of scientific research of Valarie Zeithaml (1993), Boulding (1997), William, Richard Staelin, and Ajay Kalra (2001); Michael D. Johnson, Eugene W. Anderson, Jaesung Father, and Barbara Bryant (1996), Finn, Adam and Ujwal Kayande (1997); Behavioral theoretical framework of Chann, T, (2001) and John Ward, J (2002), Ajzen and Fishbein (1975); Theory of Planned Behaviour of Ajen (1985); Theory of Reasoned Action of Brown, P., J (1988) and many results mentioned above, the experts were consulted to develop research models and conduct preliminary research before proposing a formal model as follows:



**Figure 1: Model study of factors affecting performance enhancing customer service in Vietnamese businesses in the competition and integration trend**

### Hypothesis

H1: “Service capacity” impacts on customer service performance in Vietnamese business in the competition and integration trend.

H2: “Convenience Perception” impacts on on customer service performance in Vietnamese business in the competition and integration trend

H3: “Resolving complaints” impacts on on customer service performance in Vietnamese business in the competition and integration trend.

H4: “Customer service” impacts on customer service performance in Vietnamese business in the competition and integration trend.

H5: “Physical Facilities” impacts on customer service performance in Vietnamese business in the competition and integration trend.

### 4. Methods of research

The two major research methods, qualitative and quantitative research are focused, specifically; the research process has three stages. Stage 1, Based on theory and the related results mentioned the above, qualitative research method was used for group discussing and leading experts consulting to select the variables and observed variable groups. Stage 2, based on the factors affecting performance enhancing customer service in Vietnamese businesses in the competition and integration trend, a questionnaire survey was designed to get reviews of 500 shoppers in HCMCity, Can ThoCity and Hue City. The research model includes 5 scales, 31 observed variables (questionnaires), using 5-point Likert scale (Likert scale with a 5-point), Distance value = (Maximum - Minimum) / n = (5 - 1) / 5 = 0.8: 1. Completely disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. No opinion / Normal; 4. Agree; 5. Totally agree. Survey results were entered SPSS 20.0 and Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to test reliability of the scale. Stage 3, After testing the reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, Exploratory Factor Analysis - EFA was analyzed to shrink and summarize the data of the scale (Hoang Trong Chu and Nguyen Mong Ngoc, 2005 "Quantitative Research SPSS"). This method is based on extraction ratio factor (Eigenvalue), under which only those factors having ration (Eigenvalue) greater than 1 will be kept, those smaller than one will not show information better than origin variable because after standardizing, each original variance is 1. The method of extracting the main components (Principal components) and original method of factor rotation (Varimax Procedure) were used to minimize the number of variables that have large coefficients for the same factor, which increases explaining the factors. The above results were used to analyze multiple linear regressions aimed at testing the assumptions of the model, which considered the level of impact of factors affecting performance enhancing customer service in Vietnamese businesses in the competition and integration trend.

## 5. Research results

### 5.1 Enterprises' information

**Table 1: The information channels that customers know**

Enterprises' information		Frequency	Percent (%)
<b>Enterprises that loyal customers want to be</b>	Fast Food Restaurants	281	20.0
	Banks	355	25.2
	Business tourism	196	13.9
	Retail businesses (supermarkets, malls,)	293	20.8
	Foreign Language Training Center	154	10.9
	Health Care and Beauty Center	89	6.3
	Other	39	2.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1407</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>The infomation channel</b>	Acquaintance	216	15.0
	Charity Activities	220	14.5
	Tivi	268	18.7
	Newspapers, magazines	327	20.7
	The propaganda activities	232	15.3
	The sales promotion activities	237	15.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1500</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: The researcher's collecting data and SPSS)

The table 1 showed that the group of observed variables "banks", "retail businesses" and "fast food restaurant" are businesses which customers are the most loyalty (over 20%) . "Health Care and Beauty Center" and "other businesses" are not the groups that customers use the product/service and are in low proportion (below 10%). The study results also are true in VN because Health Care and Beauty Centers have not been paying much attention. Enterprises are mainly known by "media", "magazine", "TV", "sales promotion", "propaganda activities" and "acquaintance". Charity activities are less known whose results also reflect the reality because Vietnamese enterprises do not have contributions. The charity events for the benefit of community development strategies have rarely been seen in the planning of the businesses recently.

The table 1 showed that showed that the percentage of customers have a strong attachment to businesses are quite high. Most of them have used the products/services in the enterprises from 1 to 3 years (53%) and the number using products/services in the year were up to 5 to 6 times accounted for 51.2%. However, according to Bernd Stauss and Neuhaus Patricia (1997), the results were not optimistic, which is not fully safe. According to the two authors, even if the customer has the same positive satisfaction; however, the satisfaction level is "satisfied" or "fairly satisfied" (level 4 Likert scale 5 levels); they can also look for other businesses and stop using the services of the business. Only customers who are "completely satisfied" (5-highest level), they will certainly be loyal customers and always support the businesses.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for factors affecting performance enhancing customer service**

Questions	N	Mean
NLPV1 (Staff have knowledge and qualified)	500	3.19
NLPV2 (Staff have high professional skills)	500	3.34
NLPV3 (Staff give reliable advice)	500	3.22
NLPV4 (Staff have enthusiastic and good in serving customers)	500	2.71
NLPV5 (Employees treat customers politely)	500	2.64
STT1 (Information on products and services found easily on the business web, and the other web sites)	500	3.17
STT2 (Transaction network and coverage are wide)	500	3.26
STT3 (Located in a convenient place for customer transactions)	500	3.29
STT4 (Advisory service hotline is good)	500	2.88
STT5 (There are many products and services, and commodity which are rich and diversified)	500	3.24
STT6 (Enterprises notice the utility for customers in transaction or in the meantime serving such as free wifi, water, magazines etc.)	500	2.60
QLKN2 (Enterprises have various forms of assistance and information to customers)	500	2.68
QLKN3 (The receiving of the request and answering complaints are convenience)	500	3.40
QLKN4 (Process resolving issues arisen are to ensure customer benefits)	500	2.97
QLKN5 (The services and products are always improving)	500	2.66
DVKH1 (Staff are always interested in the needs of each customer)	500	3.22
DVKH2 (There are many forms of good support (Zalo, Voicechat, phone, web ...))	500	2.86
DVKH3 (Placing service, online payment is easy)	500	2.75
DVKH4 (The cancelation service or change service are well-done through networking)	500	2.82
DVKH5 (Providing high quality service)	500	2.84
DVKH6 (The customer appreciation programs are good and regular)	500	2.60
DVKH7 (Regards and gifts are given on special occasions such as birthdays, holidays )	500	2.23
CCHH1 (Facilities are good)	500	3.47
CCHH2 (Costumes of staff are beautiful, impressive and unique)	500	2.76
CCHH3 (The documents introducing products and services are very attractive and professional)	500	3.51
CCHH4 (Gifts for customers are specific and unique)	500	2.74
CCHH5 (Toilet, lounge for customers are modern and polite)	500	2.51
DGC1 (I am very happy about now)	500	2.98
DGC2 (I will continue using the products or services)	500	3.06
DGC3 (I will introduce my friends and family using the services of companies)	500	2.90
QLKN1 (Enterprises receive requests and customer feedback quickly)	500	2.60

(Source: The researcher's collecting data and SPSS)

The table 2 showed that the average results of the scales showed most of the scales are the average from 2:23 to 3:51 is quite low. Scale "Customer service" is the lowest evaluation and variables are from 2:23 to 3:22. It can be seen that customers do not really appreciate the enthusiastic interest and support of employees, as well as customer appreciation from enterprises. In fact, "customer service" has always been a common drawback of Vietnamese businesses recently.

## 5.2 The testing of cronbach's alpha

**Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha**

	Code	Factors	Hệ số Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Independent variables</b>	NLPV	Service Capacity	0,882
	STT	Convenience Perception	0,856
	QLKN	Complaint Resolving	0,872
	DVKH	Customer service	0,834
	CCHH	Physical Facilities	0,888
<b>Dependent variables</b>	DGC	Total evaluation	0,797

(Source: The researcher's collecting data and SPSS)

The table 3 showed the test results of the scales are highly accurate with Cronbach's alpha coefficient  $> 0.7$  and the correlation coefficients of the total variables meet standard allowance ( $> 0.3$ ), only the scales "Convenience Perception" variable "STT6 was eliminated Businesses should pay attention on the gadgets for customers when transacting or in the waiting time such as free wifi, water, magazines etc." because the total coefficient of variable total  $< 0.3$ . After eliminating, all variables are acceptable. In fact, Vietnamese businesses rarely notice the utility for customers when the transaction or in the meantime, such as free wifi, water, magazines etc. But this factor is the strength of large enterprises, foreign corporations. That is the positive difference between the enterprises with better customer service and companies being improved in customer service.

### **5.3 Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)**

Results of EFA - Exploratory Factor Analysis in the above table shows the total variance extracted is 66.415%  $> 50\%$ , this means that the deduction factors would explain 66.415 % for models, 33.585% the remaining will be explained by other factors. Extraction ratio factor (Eigenvalue) is greater than 1 should be retained.

Through EFA - Exploratory Factor Analysis, the scale "Convenience Perception", observed variables "STT4\_ businesses have hotline service" with Factor Loading coefficient  $< 0.55$  which should have been excluded from the model. This is a very important factor in the customer service business, but in practice, little attention is paid by Vietnamese enterprises, which is a crucial tool for customers. After testing Exploratory Factor Analysis, the model was fully consistent with the data, calculated into 5 groups of factors and may be used for a multiple regression analysis.

### **5.4 Analysis of multiple linear regressions**

Methods of regression analysis is the study of the influence degree of one or more independent variables to one dependent variable to predict outcome variables based on the known values of the explaining variables. To measure the impact on performance of the customer service of enterprises, analysis and multiple linear regression are used to test the hypotheses of models with 5-element group which is independent variables to measure the impact level of factors affecting performance of the customer service of Vietnamese enterprises. The study results show that the influence degree of these factors reflected multiple regression coefficients. To compare the effects of the factors, regression coefficients standardized are used for this coefficient does not depend scale (Nguyen Dinh Tho - Nguyen Thi Mai Trang, 2009, page 126). Thus, using the regression equation was standardized to analyze the extent of factors influence the decision to use the products / customer services.

**Table 4: Summary model for Factors affecting performance of the customer service of Vietnamese enterprises.**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.792 <sup>a</sup>	.628	.624		.20834	2.017

**ANOVA**

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	36.136	5	7.227	166.511	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	21.442	494	.043		
	Total	57.578	499			

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
	(Constant)	.351	.101		3.494	.001		
	X1	.224	.021	.303	10.822	.000	.961	1.041
	X2	.226	.017	.396	13.464	.000	.873	1.146
	X3	.146	.018	.264	8.291	.000	.743	1.345
	X4	.193	.017	.320	11.502	.000	.972	1.028
	X5	.104	.021	.159	4.897	.000	.715	1.399

The table 4 showed that the correlation coefficient adjustment:  $R^2 = 0.624$  (verification F, sig. < 0.05); which means that 62.4 % of variable Y shift is explained by the six independent variables (Xi). Coefficient Durbin - Watson (d) = 2.017; some observations n = 500, parameter k = 5, the level of significance of 0.01 (99%), the statistical tables Durbin - Watson, dL (less statistical value) = 1.623 and dU (statistical value above) = 1,725. So we have: (dL = 1.623) < (d = 2.017) < [4 - (dU = 1.725) = 2.275] proved the model no autocorrelation phenomena.

The table 4 showed that the test results F = 166.511 value and Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05 shows the model is consistent with the data set and the variables included in the model are related to the dependent variable. Generally, regression analysis with selected reliability is 99%, corresponding to the selected variables are statistically significant at the p < 0.01; Results show that all variables are satisfying demand. Verification of conformity of the model showed multicollinearity phenomenon not violate (VIF < 10).

The table 4 showed that the results of regression analysis show that these factors are affecting performance of the customer service of Vietnamese enterprises priority as follows: (1) "Physical Facilities":  $\beta = 0.396$ ; (2) "Resolving of complaints",  $\beta = 0.320$ ; (3) "Customer Service",  $\beta = 0.303$ ; (4) "Service Capacity":  $\beta = 0.264$ ; (5) "Convenience Perception",  $\beta = 0.159$ . The regression equation takes the following form:  $Y = 0.351 + 0.224X1 + 0.226X2 + 0.146X3 + 0.193X4 + 0.104X5$ . Results of this research are the basis of the recommendations proposing solutions to improve performance of the customer service of Vietnamese enterprises.

## 6. Conclusion and recommendation

### 6.1 Conclusion

This study shows that there are five factors affecting the performance enhancing customer service in Vietnamese businesses and the influence degree of each factor is different. According to the analysis, five factors are correlated to impact performance customer service, respectively: Physical Facilities, Resolving complaints, Customer Service, Service Capacity, and Convenience Perception. This is an important basis for enterprises to consider the strategic development of its business in the future.

### 6.2 Recommendations

**6.2.1 Recommendation for “Physical Facilities”:** Enterprises should invest in tangible evidence such as material, equipment, information materials, and costumes for service personnel and support equipments in the process of implementing the service. Many research findings have demonstrated that the Physical Facilities impact directly or indirectly on the satisfaction of the customers.

**6.2.2 Recommendation for “Resolving complaints”:** Handling complaints, feedback and customer's objection are one of the difficult issues for any organizations. Staff should be trained with the knowledge, qualifications, necessary communication skills and professional to deal with the complaints of customers confidently. Team of customer service staff is able to listen; psychologically response and to control customer complaints in a positive way which will be an important step in creating customer loyalty in long – term.

**6.2.3 Recommendation for “Customer Service”:** The Vietnamese enterprises need customer care strategy to turn new or existing customers become loyal customers. Staff in customer service should be trained, switchboard parts are enthusiastic and honest consultants as a friend (With new customers purchasing for the first time, the needs for customers can really be advice useful for customers to free purchasing their favourite items. After customers purchase, information of the customer can be saved (customer's nick on the web, phone number, YM, email, birthday, wedding) to get better after sales service and this is also an opportunity to save data on customer data; Promotions, discounts for existing customers never be redundant (mechanism of issuing VIP cards, accumulate points, promotional card, discount card should be applied, etc aiming to keep customer information about a store in a purse as one business cards and can return when required and discount points so customers can buy later); Do not forget customers and do not let customers forget businesses (Please notify existing customers know about new batches, about upcoming promotions or discount policies applicable through SMS, send YM, PM for customers on Muare.vn, email. Customers will not mind receiving the information that companies bring. To the contrary, they will have the feeling of being in intensive care); Concerned with what customers want (businesses decrease the interest in terms of revenue rather than look at the style of service. Customers want businesses to understand their needs, take the time to contact them, appreciate their attitude and help them buy the most pleasing items); Make the customer feel that they are important (Try to maintain its customer base by making it simple in effective ways such as sending greeting cards on holidays and thank customers, private call, send flowers or special discounts for customers that only their birthdays, or important day for that customer. Thus, customers always receive attention, enforced intimacy).

**6.2.4 Recommendation for “Service Capacity”:** In the trend of extremely fierce competition among companies operating the same field, the human factor is extremely important to create differentiation for their products and their services. Therefore, customer care team needs investing because they are part of communication with customers, the face of business and receive feedback on products and services of the business. Therefore, if they are not trained professionally, there are no professional customer care processes, the services are good, they are difficult to create a competitive advantage and have the long-term progress in the market.

**6.2.5 Recommendation for “Convenience Perception”:** The enterprises should improve the customer service process; build a perfect customer service, particularly customer care through social networks - where interaction is extremely important for young consumers, generation Y consumers. A service is done well which brings real emotion to the customers, surpassing the expectations of customers. They will generate huge profits for the business, and conversely, bad service will spend a lot of cost such as the opportunity cost, the cost due to losing customers, the cost to attract new customers, etc.

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