



RELATIONAL MARKETING ACTIVITIES IN THE SCALE OF ATAKÖY MARINA ISTANBUL

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Abstract:

As it is known main purpose of the modern marketing is to create a satisfied and loyalty customer. First requirement of the relationship marketing is to create lifelong customer, means to create a customer with happiness, satisfaction and loyalty. Marina management is a type of tourism facility administration. Marinas are the companies that support tourism both regional and international area in order to improve the service quality and customer satisfaction. In this research Ataköy Marina, one of the most important marinas of Turkey is chosen with case analyze method. It is a considerable fact that yachts are small, luxury and floating hotels, carrying their own beds, which their expenses of repair and maintenance are met by yachtsmen and yachtswomen themselves and that yachting is an important source of income contributing to the economies of the countries visited. Observations and interviews are made with the managers of the Ataköy Marina residents etc. We hope this research will help the future studies about marina concept in both customers and manager view.

Keywords:

Customer Relationship Management, Marine Management, Relationship Marketing

1. Introduction

Customers are nonetheless becoming less loyal and apparently more demanding and more sophisticated due to a number of reasons including abundance of choices, availability and access to information, commoditization of services. (Ojiaku, Aghara and Obianuju L., 2017, p.60) According to Berry (1995) it involves strengthening relationship with current customers and retaining them rather than acquiring new ones. The logic underlying relationship marketing is that customer relationship should be approached on a long-term basis such that customers acquired are retained. (Dibb and Meadow, 2001; Ojiaku, Aghara and Obianuju L., 2017)

As is known the aim of contemporary marketing is primarily to create satisfied customers, and then loyal ones. The aim of applying relational marketing in business organizations is to form the concept of lifelong customers and provide its continuance. Marina management is a part of service class. Marinas are business organizations representing the tourism of the country in both national and international scale. In this context, they adopt relational marketing activities to offer a better service for tourists and increase customer satisfaction.

Meanwhile marinas form the heart of countries having coasts. Nowadays it has been observed that many coastal countries have increased their wealth thanks to the advances in navigation. While studying the history of countries it is seen that countries with coasts are very important in this respect and play an important role in commercial and tourism activities amongst remote countries. Yacht tourism is also important and creates a considerable source of liquidity. More than the aim of transportation, yacht tourism is the whole recreational activities, done by using boats with a limited tonnage and passenger capacity, with the intention of travel, culture, vacation, sport and so on. (Kahraman, 2018, p. 326)

Marketing activities of the port operator companies which have the specific features of service sector are to obtain new customers, retain the existing customers and inform them, and tell local people about or remind them of economic and social contributions to the location where ports operate. (Esmer, 2011) Marina firms are service establishments operating in the field of sea tourism. In recent years the developments in the business of marina in our country, raise in the number of marinas and in the anchorage capacity increase the competition amongst the

firms, and in order to retain their present customers and establish long-termed relations with them, marina managers look for ways to apply and develop some methods. (Arlı, 2103, p. 61) Being the golden rule of customer relations management, retaining the old customers than finding new ones appears as an important concept, particularly in service management. Today it is resorted to differentiation in tracks left on customers more than increasing competition, creating value over customers in the problems of differentiation of firms and 4P. In other words, marketing work is done on customers such as costumer relations management, relational marketing, direct marketing and micro marketing. This shows that now marketing is done on the basis of customers.

Especially in the service sector requiring close relations with costumers, the quality of interaction between customers and management along with staff members becomes one of the most important determinants of perceived service quality and the dimension and quality of interaction between customers and management along with staff members emerge as the most important value to determine the direction of marketing endeavors. (Hart and Johnson, 1999, p.9-17; Uyguç, 1998, p. 34-35). Warm and close one-to-one contact depending on the service offered to customers and making them feel confident and special may lead customers to decide to depend on the firm and continue to purchase the service. (Arlı, 2013, p. 62)

It is possible to define relational marketing as forming, maintaining and developing customer relations in multiservice organizations. (Berry, 1995) This assures the relations between firms and customers to be lasting and to realize customer loyalty. Relational marketing applications in marina operating firms play an important role not only in terms of marina firms, but also in the publicity of a country. In particular, the fact that foreign boat owners who tie up their boats in a marina in Turkey are happy with the service given and the ties provided will cause to share this experience with other foreign boat owners, will contribute to the publicity of Turkey and Turkish people and will get foreign boat owners to prefer the country. (Arlı, 2013, p. 62)

1.1. Relational Marketing

In technical literature, when the studies about relational marketing is considered, the relations amongst the firms are studied in detail, and generally under the headings of loyalty and trust, how relational factors shaped relations has been researched. (Özdemir ve Koçak, 2012, p.131) Although relational marketing has more than one definition in literature, (Harker, 1999; Kulabaş ve Sezgin, 2003, p.76) in academic studies it is dealt with various marketing approaches and comparisons. Grönroos (1994), the inventor of the most widely accepted definition, compared relational marketing with classical marketing in detail. Grönroos defines relational marketing briefly as the transformation of products into service. He expressed that adding value to the product is the most important step (Raveld and Grönroos, 1996; Kulabaş ve Sezgin, 2003, p.76) in this transformation. Marketing of the value added to products and services and relational marketing becomes more significant, and new customers are created as well. Having a good relationship makes the stakeholders of the firm more eager to contribute, attracts good talent, helps retain existing customers (Başçı Ertemel, 2016, p.1).

The most important and basic factor to create loyal customer is to form a lasting relationship model with customers and to assure its continuance. To form, maintain and develop customer relations, firms attract consumers by promises related to the products and services offered. As for customers, they give promises from their point of view. It is necessary for both sides to abide by their promises based on trust to maintain long-termed good relations. In relational marketing firms principally try to keep customers in the center and to be close with them. They are attentive to the issues of customer loyalty, encouraging customers to purchase more goods and services more often, increasing their lifelong value, and taking costs under control. For these reasons relational marketing assumes an important role for firms and becomes an indispensable practice. On this point, the advantages of relational marketing can be summarized in three main headings (Odabaşı, 2013, p. 20):

- The advantages resulted from close relations formed and carried out with costumers,
- The advantages derived from the improvements in customer satisfaction that could come out from the practices relational marketing,
- Financial benefits that relational marketing can provide for firms.

Table 1. Comparison of Relational Marketing and Traditional Marketing

Relationship Marketing	Traditional Marketing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Focus on customer keeping ✓ Continuous customer relationship ✓ Focus on customer value ✓ Long-term perspective ✓ On Customer service is overemphasize ✓ High promise to meet customer expectations ✓ All employees are interested in quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Focus on product features ✓ Focus on sales only ✓ Intermittent customer relationship ✓ Short-term perspective ✓ Less dwell on customer service ✓ Limited promise to meet customer expectations ✓ Only manufacturers are interested in quality

Source: Odabaşı, 2013: 20

The focus of this approach consists of settling relations on a strong and healthy ground, making customers loyal and transforming customers into regular ones, making them familiar faces. In the practice of relational marketing, if customers are very interested in products and services they will buy and if there is a personal contact between customers and salespersons, customers are more eager to establish relationship with service providers. Mere efforts of firms to maintain lasting and sound relations will not be enough. Customers, too, must show this willingness. Therefore, the efficiency of practices of relational marketing comes to the fore with the willingness of both sides and their mutual close and warm relationship.

1.2. Marina Dwellers

Tourism has become a sector taking its share from commodity and service productions in the fields of economic activities like transportation, communication, accommodation, catering, entertainment, and health. Tourism also steers economic structures and systems of the countries. Firms which directly contribute to these systems are marinas. Yachts which are served in these marinas are the boats, built with the aim of travel, entertainment, relaxation and sport, with various types, sizes, speeds and functions.

It is a considerable fact that yachts are small, luxury and floating hotels, carrying their own beds, which their expenses of repair and maintenance are met by yachtsmen and yachtswomen themselves and that yachting is an important source of income contributing to the economies of the countries visited. From this point of view, those who lodge in the marina and receive this service are called marina dwellers. As long as they get service and lodge, they are qualified as the customers of marina, in other words marina dwellers. It is observed that marina dwellers, namely yachting tourists are a very important source of income in terms of yacht tourism as they spend money over the average spending per tourist. For yacht owners yachting is sometimes a passion to discover new places. As long as this passion exists, there will be always need for places to harbor and tie up yachts.

It should be thought as a basic factor that increases competitive advantage, provides the customer's loyalty, and creates the best and unmatched customer value since the customer's preference will be based on the value given by the firm. High quality customer value is a status that can be reached by creating more value than rivals for the customers of firms. (Onaran vd, 2013, p. 38)

The concept of customer emerged when trade came to exist and has become a common and unchanging element from the early ages when swap started to appear up to now. This is why how firms can obtain customers, how to retain the customers they already have and how they can be more effective in competition depend on attaching importance to the customers' expectations. (Çatı and others, 2010, p. 431)

Gwinner, Gremler and Bitner (1988) indicated that three basic factors which will be useful for service firms in their long-termed relations with their customers are to give confidence, socialize and offer the benefit of special treatment. As for the basic factors to form confidence are to eliminate worries, trust in service providers, reduce the perception of risk concerns and be aware of what the customers' expectations are. (Çatı and others. 201, s. 431) In marina management, too, it is very important to meet customers' all demands and needs with the relational marketing rules and provide complete customer satisfaction. Satisfaction criteria are very important for customers whom we call

marina dwellers. These criteria result from service quality and the activities of customer relations management and relational marketing in the marina. If marina management provides this, it is possible to speculate that the marina dweller will remain happy and loyal to that marina. The marina customer's satisfaction from the service he receives has a direct effect on his preference for the same firm next time. As long as the customer is happy, he or she will prefer to get service from the same firm next time.

2. Ataköy Marina

Ataköy Marina, located in the southern end of the Bosphorus opening to modern and mysterious Istanbul where the continents of Asia and Europe unite, is an important harbor for yachts. Ataköy Marina is the first marina which has been awarded with the 5th Gold Anchor by The Yacht Harbor Association Ltd. Apart from this; Ataköy Marina has the feature of being the first harbor awarded with blue flag by FEE (Foundation of Environmental Education). Right beside Ataköy Marina, located in Ataköy tourism complex which is one of the biggest projects of Turkey, are Sheraton Istanbul Ataköy Hotel, Ataköy Marina Hotel, 'Galleria', the first shopping mall of Turkey, and the sport complex called 'Sport International'. It is possible to say that the hotels around it add to the location and trademark value of Ataköy Marina. In photo 1 there is a shot taken from the website of Ataköy Marina. There it is possible to see the size and beauty of the marina.

Ataköy Marina has a very different situation with its marina settlement plan and geopolitical position. It may be said that a wide wellness center has been formed with a street of shops inside and areas of a shopping center, cafés, and restaurants. Marina Park (the name of the complex in the marina) consists of 20 cafe-brasserie-restaurant chain, 20 flats of a residence and 20 stores in Ataköy. The services offered in Ataköy Marina are given in Table 2.



Photo.1 Ataköy Marina a Square from Web Site

Table 2. Ataköy Marina Services

Front Office Services	Port Services	Maintenance-Repair Services	Social Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Guidance in transitlog procedures ✓ Information about Daily meteorology ✓ Communication Services ✓ Internet Access ✓ Library ✓ Doctor Service ✓ SOS Service ✓ Taxi ✓ Rent a car 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mooring line service (7/24) ✓ Backup and recovery (7/24) ✓ Diving services ✓ Water and electricity ✓ Toilet and bath ✓ Laundry and ironing ✓ Telephone connection to boats ✓ Cable TV connection ✓ Wireless internet Access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Travel Lift (Max. 63 ton) ✓ Forklift ✓ Mobil crane ✓ Mast disassembly service ✓ Free on-site parking ✓ Boardyard area ✓ Washing ✓ Paint and Polyester Works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Yacht Club ✓ Sailing School ✓ Swimming pool ✓ Children game area ✓ Fitness Center ✓ Park ✓ Car park ✓ Ataköy Marina Park "LifeCenter " ✓ Galleria Shopping Centre

✓ Tourist Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Free parking for 1200 cars ✓ Vaulted anchoring system at berths (16-30m) ✓ Surveillance Tower and Camera Control (7/24) ✓ Communication by walkie-talkie (VHF 73) (7/24) ✓ Security Services with Security Elements and Security Cameras (7/24) ✓ Fire Warning and Extinguishing Systems ✓ Sales gasoline and gas (7/24) ✓ Sales Motor Oil (7/24) ✓ Market and süpermarket ✓ Yacht Broker Companies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Engine-maintenance repair ✓ Electricity ✓ Furniture ✓ Hydraulic system repair ✓ Stainless and chrome work ✓ Sail-Canvas-Flooring ✓ Rigging and Hardware Works ✓ Ventilation and Cooling ✓ Inflatable Boat ✓ Boat interior and exterior cleaning ✓ Marine supplies stores 	✓ Fish Restaurant
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Source: www.docdroid.net/MO3pB9G/atakoy-marina-katalog.pdf

2.1. Relational Marketing Activities in Ataköy Marina

The main aim of this study is to determine customer profile according to relational marketing activities and to make assessments on this point. Marina dweller's depiction is tried to make particularly with the services offered by the marina management and applied relational marketing.

In the research section, Ataköy Marina, one of the oldest and most important marinas in Istanbul, has been chosen and interviews have been done with the firm manager and sector officers from there. Interviews have been performed with Yalçın Dülger, the general manager of Ataköy Marina, Bülent Argüç, the firm manager, and İlyas Korkmaz, the chief of the marina firm, on an individual basis. In August and September, the marina was visited two times and a face to face meeting was done. The marina officers were asked questions about the marina and interviews were done on marina customers. The materials used in the interviews were a sound recorder and a camera. Various questions were asked during the face to face interview with the managers Ataköy Marina. The questions asked in the research part were recorded by a sound recorder, and then the notes taken were arranged in the scope of research process and prepared in the written format. The answers of the questions were transferred at first hand. The questions asked and their answers are below.

-How do you describe your customers?

Former customers and the present ones are quite different. Especially after the crisis of 2001, with "the passing of money into other hands", we may say that our customer profile completely changed. The types of jobs of our present customers can be sorted as building contractors, car dealers, lawyers, real estate agents, and business persons. While in the past we appealed to a social segment having a higher cultural level like doctors and artists, it may be said that nowadays we are serving people who are economically more powerful, but with a lower cultural level. Our customer profile that in the past we defined as "the gentleman of Istanbul" can be described now as the ones earning a lot, but becoming a part of consumption culture and having a faster pace of life.

- How do you explain the change in your customer profile?

First of all with the change of general cyclical situation (world trends), namely with the passing of money into other hands, our customer profile has changed. After the privatization of Ataköy Marina in 2005 our prices increased and after 2008 they increased more. It may be said that these prices seriously decreased the number of real sailors. However, hull lengths increased, but it didn't change our profits. Real seamanship and the number of sailors decreased.

-How do the marina dwellers spend their time?

Our present customers use the yacht harbor mostly for the aim of recreation at the weekends, while our former customers did this particularly to see the beauties of Istanbul and for the love of the sea. In the past our marina dwellers preferred to spend their weekends in the sea, not in the marina. Today, however, our marina dwellers prefer to spend their time by relaxing and entertaining on the yacht. It is also possible to say that they use their yachts more for friends and business meetings.

-How do you explain your customer satisfaction and loyalty?

We may say that our loyalty rate is very high. The fact that there are no alternatives in the immediate surroundings is an important factor. As we are an old marina in terms of brand familiarity and geopolitical position of Ataköy Marina, this, too, is a very determinative factor. We may say that our 80 percent customers are the former ones. We understand this from the term of contracts. Various discount rates play an important role in retaining our former customers. Also, the quality of services we offer determines and affects our customer satisfaction. That we know our customers and their needs well determines and affects our customers' loyalty.

-Do you have a CRM department for your customers?

We do not have a special CRM department. On this point as the management team we do we are well equipped to meet, on behalf of our customers, their all sorts of requests and needs from A to Z (as soon as yachts enter the marina we provide all the services like the process of tying up, security and so on)., and we do this in the best way. Customer satisfaction is the most important thing for us. Requests and needs of marina dwellers are not theirs anymore, but ours. We are offering services with this understanding. This naturally results in customer satisfaction. In addition, we help our customers perform activities like birthday parties, graduation parties and wedding or engagement ceremonies. Furthermore, as a firm, as we know our customers well, we try to contact them with some activities like competitions or celebrations aimed at them and help them have the time of their life here. All these, in fact, can be an example of the fact that we do CRM activities and have a good relationship with our customers.

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

A lot of factors like increase in competition, industrialization and globalization have caused the products and services offered by firms to resemble each other. This has led firms to tend towards different marketing channels. This has also resulted in stronger relations between firms and customers and in preferring the concept of relational marketing activities, reflecting the longer-termed relationship model and, as a result, aiming at the customer loyalty. Relational marketing activities preferred especially by service and industrial enterprises are preferred by marina enterprises as well. In the meantime, increasing importance of relational marketing often appears before us in creating the concept of country and city brands.

Relational marketing practices in marina firms play a great role not only in marina enterprises, but also in the publicity of a country. In this context, the effect of relational marketing in the outstanding customer satisfaction is clearly seen. Marinas are typically customer-focused enterprises in terms of the service they offer. Additionally, because yachting tourists spend money over the average spending per tourist, it is obviously observed that yachting tourism is a very important source of income for our country. In consequence of ever-increasing importance of yachting tourism offering customer-focused service and also as a result of adopting relational marketing factors, it is an indispensable fact that both customer portfolio and customer satisfaction will increase. As the variety and quality of services improve, occupancy rate will increase. In this context, Ataköy Marina will be irreplaceable for visitors for both its location and its own structure.

In the evaluation of Ataköy Marina enterprise, the location and geopolitical position of the marina is important. This is very important in the preference of marina customers. In the bilateral discussions, it may be said that executive team of the marina is very caring and has definitely fulfilled the criteria of relational marketing. It is quite determinative that they immediately respond to customers' demands and needs and that they maintain the order and the division of labor in the marina.

This study primarily aims to light the way for marina managers, and then for similar studies. It will also provide integrity with a quantitative study. The next study plan bears the aim of the integration of the customer satisfaction survey with the data of this study. Moreover, with the concept of marina dweller it is aimed to contribute to the

technical literature. The term of marina dweller may have contribution in different dimensions with satisfaction scales and new quantitative studies. This has an instructive quality for marina managers and other enterprises in the sector.

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