



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMPUTER APPLICATION AND MANAGEMENT

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CONSUMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS mCRM INITIATIVES OF INDIAN RETAILERS**SWATI SINGH****ASST. PROFESSOR****I.T.S- MANAGEMENT & I.T INSTITUTE****GHAZIABAD****SANJEEV KR. SINGH****M.TECH. SCHOLAR****IIIT****HYDERABAD – 500 032****ABSTRACT**

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is the latest buzzword. CRM is a tool in the hands of Retailers to compete in fierce competitive business environment where acquiring and retaining customers is becoming a tough nut to crack. Retailers are weaving CRM initiatives to win the race. Mobile as a medium to tailor CRM initiatives is becoming more and more popular. However the Mobile Customer Relationship Management as an area of research has not been explored much. The purpose of this study is to fill this gap by studying the integration of mobile medium in CRM. This study attempts to discuss various Mobile Customer Relationship Management (mCRM) initiatives by the retailers in India. Further this research studies customer perception towards the mCRM initiatives. The study establishes the difference in perception of consumer of different age and gender towards mCRM initiatives.

KEYWORDS

Customer relationship, mCRM initiatives, Retailing.

INTRODUCTION

Customer Relationship Management and Mobile Marketing are two avenues of business that have received considerable attention in the recent years. The advancements in the technology have created a large scope for CRM applications in order to leverage business practices. Paravatiyar and Sheth (2001) defined CRM as a “comprehensive strategy and process of acquiring, retaining and partnering with selective customers to create superior value for the company and the customer”. CRM has developed as an approach based on maintaining positive relationships with selective customers. Mukerjee and Singh (2009) states that CRM is regarded as an important tool for delivering revenue growth through improved customer experience, customer retention and customer repurchase. (Gartner, 2004) states that CRM is a business strategy designed to optimize profitability, revenue and customer satisfaction by organizing the enterprise around customer segments, fostering customer-centric behaviors and implementing customer centric processes. CRM is used as a tool to make long term relationship with the customers for surviving in the fiercely competitive market scenario. The core theme of all CRM is its focus on a cooperative and collaborative relationship between the firm and its customers (Nath, V et al. 2009).The mobile business industry has emerged as a growing industry; innovative technologies have created the large scope for new and effective services. As a result the mobile and personal nature of wireless devices provides a set of unique attributes such as ubiquity, reachability, localization, personalization dissemination and convenience which are considered to be a distinctive advantages upon which mobile services can build their value proposition (Folinas et al. 2002, Veerse 2000, Siau et al. 2003). Mobile Marketing and Mobile Customer Relationship Management have received great attention from the marketers. Mobile as a unique channel provides an opportunity to leverage upon facilities like 24 hours assistance, Personalized services and complements various channels to deliver superior value to the customers (Jarvenpaa, 2000). Mobile as a medium can add value to the traditional CRM practices due its large reach and personal character. Mobile Customer Relationship Management despite of being an effective tool has not been explored much through researches. The studies are available on CRM and Mobile Marketing but scarce literature is found related to Mobile Customer Relationship Management. The primary purpose of this paper is therefore to fill this gap by assessing the actual development of the mobile CRM services by the Retailers in India. The Indian retail Industry was chosen for the research purpose because Indian retail sector is growing with large pace. According to AT KEARNEY Global Retail Development Index 2010 India is amongst the top three emerging retail market and a favorite destination for expansion of various Global Players. Indian Retailing is on boom, sector is growing and so the competition as well. The present competitive scenario has made the CRM an important tool for strategic success and winning the customers. And therefore most of the retailers are investing huge amount in order to tailor CRM efforts to win customers in this competitive business world. Mobile Customer Relationship practices are also being used by the Indian retailers in order to win customer loyalty and deliver customer value. In 2005 Airtel, ICICI Bank and VISA announced the launch of mChq – a revolutionary new service – which is a credit card using the mobile phone. This was the first mobile-to-mobile payment option which enables Airtel customers and ICICI Bank Visa cardholders to pay for their purchases with their Airtel Mobile phones. Indian banks also provide various mobile banking benefits just by sending sms like Locating ATM, Locating branch, Locating drop box, Alert facilities like salary credit, account debit/credit, cheque bounce, etc., and Queries on banking, cards and Demat account. During the course of study various mCRM initiatives used by the retailers were identified. Customer perception towards the mCRM initiatives was studied.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has been extensively studied in the research related to Relationship Marketing. There are many definitions of CRM. Payne (2006), states that CRM is a business approach that attempts to improve a company’s customer value and profitability by developing and maintaining long term relationships with customers that are carefully targeted in order to increase shareholder value. Peppers & Rogers (1999), put forwards that CRM is the process of integrating the customer – centric idea in the entire company’s organization and activities. Swift (2001) suggests that CRM includes all those initiatives that a company takes in order to understand and influence customer behaviour through meaningful communication. Kotler and Armstrong define CRM as “the overall process of building and maintaining profitable customer relationships by delivering superior customer value and satisfaction” (2004, p. 16). Yim (2002) attempts to provide more conceptual clarity of CRM by synthesizing the relevant marketing, management, and IT literature to identify four key areas necessary for successful CRM implementation: (1) *strategy*, (2) *people*, (3) *processes*, and (4) *technology*. Customer relationship management (CRM) starts with in depth knowledge of customer, their habits, desires and their needs. Ganeshan (1994) states that CRM initiatives focus on collaborative and cooperative relationship oriented towards long term relationships. CRM is one of the most effective systems being used in order to attract and retain customers. The main objective of CRM initiative is to create and maintain personalized relationships with each customer which strengthens the mutual benefit of both parties through individualized, interactive and value-added contacts (Shani et.al 1992). Retailers are realizing more and more that it pays off to invest in customer relationships (DeWulf et al., 2001; Sirohi et al., 1998; Srivastava et al., 2000). According to Eichorn (2004), CRM as a holistic approach integrates internal leadership, culture, organizational structure, business processes and information systems with external customer touch points. Björnberg (2000) states that CRM is about knowing a customer very well, so that his or her needs and desires can be fulfilled in a manner that they remain loyal.

New possibilities are created by mobile medium which have enabled companies and industries to exploit this medium to promote CRM activities (Sinisalo et al., 2006). Sinisalo et al. (2006) explains that, companies use mobile medium to tailor CRM activities for customer in view of saving time, cost and inconvenience. mCRM in the crux has been defined in the literature as "utilizing mobile medium for the purpose of managing customer relationships and activate customers to start dialogue with company via mobile medium. Deans (2004), the convergence of mobile internet and wireless communication technology has promised users the concept "anytime anywhere", which implies access to information for work and personal communication. Sinisalo et al. (2006) considers mobile medium powerful medium to reach customers, by offering different ways for companies to plan and implement more advanced ways to communicate with their customers. One efficient tool is SMS, which is an immediate, reliable, automated, personal, discreet and customized channel, which allows an effective way to reach customer directly. Other benefits which mCRM allows include high speed message delivery, relatively low cost and high retention rates. In this sense, mCRM becomes suitable for industries like retailing, involving plenty of communications with their customers. Interactivity is however the most essential characteristics where mobile medium score over the traditional media. This is the two-way communication in real-time between companies and their customers. In that sense, Sinisalo et al. (2006) believes that the mobile medium may not have a comparative alternative when it comes to building a continuing dialogue between the company and the customer. Belachew et al (2007) opine that mCRM with its unique features make the traditional CRM more effective. According to Reinartz et al. (2004) the CRM process outlines three key stages, namely the initiation, maintenance, and termination phase. As mentioned earlier, technology plays a key role in CRM (Zablah et al. 2004). The role of technology is emphasized in the initiation stage, because this kind of information system development often includes major uncertainties (Laudon and Laudon, 1998). At the initiation stage of mCRM, there are two critical aspects to take into consideration: (1) technology and (2) marketing. Barnes and Scornavacca (2004), discuss that marketing through the mobile phones will be as common as newspaper or TV advertising in the future. So the companies seem be ready for sophisticated mobile marketing campaigns such as mobile customer relationship management. The main reasons underlying the high expectations laid to mobile channel refer to its high reach, low cost and high retention rates (e.g. Clickatell, 2002). In addition, the mobile channel provides a direct call-to-action that would be almost impossible via other channels (Barnes and Scornavacca, 2004; Clickatell, 2004).

The importance of perception has already been established in marketing literature. The process, by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment, is referred to as perception (Robbins, 2005). Perception is a "way of coming to know" an object or something (e.g., property or fact) about the object (Dretske, 1990). The relationship between perception and the various dimensions such as pricing (Lichtenstein et al 1993) and promotional activities (Krishna et al 1991) service quality (Bitner, 1990), customer satisfaction (Zeithaml, 1988) has been studied by the researchers. There are several researches which have established that there is difference in the perception people of different age (Goetz, 2009), Hoffman & Fiedler (2002) and (Barrett and Behne, 2005). Kapoor A and Kulshrestha C, 2008 in their study related to buying behavior of urban women state that there lies a difference in perception of people of different gender. Ruback & Pandey (2006) in his study also points out that perception of different sex differs. Srivastava V and Singh S. (2008) discussed that perception of male and female differs towards various marketing activities. However researches related to customer perception in CRM is very scarce. Richa Vyas (2008) also states that there is very little literature available on customer perception on customer relationship and cross selling. This has already been established in past researches that study of customer perception plays a very important role in success of any marketing activity Kotler (1980), Keller (2009), Schiffman and Kanuk (1997), Subramony M et al (2004). mCRM initiatives are tailored and implemented to win customers and score over the competitors. Consumer perception plays a great role in success of the marketing efforts and the same is true for mCRM initiatives. Past researches do not talk much about customer's perception towards the mCRM initiatives of the retailers. Role of customer perception towards mCRM initiatives may be crucial in success of mCRM initiatives of the retailers. Since not much work is done in the context of mCRM initiatives in retailing in India, this study is an attempt to fill this gap. The research was carried out with the backdrop of this theoretical framework.

HYPOTHESIS

The main purpose of the research was to study the difference in perception of consumers of different age and gender towards the mCRM initiatives of the retailers in India. As per the requirement of the study two hypotheses were formulated.

Hypothesis 1 - *There is no difference in the perception of male and female towards the mCRM initiatives of retailers.*

Hypothesis 2 - *There is no difference in the perception of consumers of different age towards the mCRM initiatives of retailers.*

METHOD

In order to study mCRM initiatives of the retailers, the data was collected from newspapers, magazines and articles. The websites of various retailers were studied in detail to find out their efforts related to mCRM initiatives. For the accomplishment of the purpose officials and managers of the selected companies were interviewed for in depth knowledge about the mCRM initiatives. The interview aimed at finding out the aim and objective of various mCRM initiatives. On the basis of in-depth Interview and available secondary data, a list of CRM initiatives was prepared.

The consumers of Delhi and NCR formed the population of this study. The method of convenience sampling was used for sample selection. This sampling method was used due to easily accessibility, availability of the respondents, and it involves less time and cost to gather required data. Bickle, R., & Papaginnis, G. (2001) contend that "the advantage of non-probability samples is that they are less complicated and more economical than probability samples." Furthermore, convenience sampling involves collecting information of members of the population that are near and readily available for research purposes. For data collection, responses of 678 respondents were collected on a structured questionnaire; out of which only 493 were found fit for the further study. 252 respondents out of 493 were male and 241 were female. The main purpose of the research was to study the perception of respondents of different age and gender. The data was collected from the respondents of different age group viz- 15-25 years, 25-35 Years, 35 years and above. 157 respondents fell in the age group of 15- 25 years, 169 respondents were of age group 25- 35 years of age and 167 respondents were of age group 35 and above. A structured questionnaire was framed to study the consumer perception towards the various mCRM initiatives. The questionnaire consisted of 19 statements related to mCRM initiatives and two statements related to demographic profile of the respondents. Data collected with the help of questionnaire was subjected to statistical analysis such as descriptive statistical analysis and frequency distribution. Data was also tested for reliability with the help of Cronbach alpha reliability test. In order to study the difference between perceptions of consumers of different gender Student's t- test was applied which helped in the testing of first hypothesis. In order to test the second hypothesis and study perception of consumers of different age group ANOVA was used. All analysis was carried out by SPSS 16.0.

DATA ANALYSIS & RESULTS

This research was carried out in order to find out major mCRM initiatives of the retailers in India. On the basis of past literature and in-depth interview of the officials of the selected retailers which are tailoring mCRM initiatives a comprehensive list of mCRM initiatives was prepared.

TABLE 1: LIST OF mCRM INITIATIVES

Sl. No	mCRM Initiatives
1	Wishing By Name On Mobile Phone Calls
2	Phone Calls For Schemes
3	Phone Calls For Additional Discounts
4	Phone Calls For B'day/ Anniversary Wishes
5	Wishing By Name In Sms
6	SMS For Schemes
7	SMS For Discounts
8	Personalized Discount Coupons through SMS
9	SMS On B'day / Anniversary
10	SMS As A Reminder
11	SMS for Loyalty Points
12	Feedback Through SMS
13	Payment Through Mobile Phones
14	Handling Queries On Mobile Phones
15	Solving Problems On Mobile Phones
16	Taking Orders Through Mobile Phones
17	Calls for Loyalty Benefits
18	24*7 Customer Care
19	Feedback through Mobile Phone Calls

The reliability of the data was checked with the help of Cronbach's alpha test, the value of alpha for the data was 0.731 which is greater than 0.6 showing the data is reliable. Descriptive statistics was carried out on the data which helped in analyzing the profile of the respondents in detail on the basis of gender and age. The descriptive analysis also helped in checking the missing values.

TABLE 2: GENDER OF THE RESPONDENTS

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid MALE	252	51.1	51.1	51.1
FEMALE	241	48.9	48.9	100.0
Total	493	100.0	100.0	

TABLE 3: AGE GROUP OF THE RESPONDENT

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 15- 25	157	31.8	31.8	31.8
25-35	169	34.3	34.3	66.1
35 & Above	167	33.9	33.9	100.0
Total	493	100.0	100.0	

In order to accomplish the objective of studying difference in the perception of consumer of different gender towards mCRM initiative the data was collected from both males and females. Difference in the responses of males and females was analyzed with the help of Independent Sample t- test. The results obtained from Independent sample t-test analysis revealed that males and females differ in their perception regarding six mCRM initiatives, for most of them there was no significant difference in the perception of males and females. The mCRM initiatives for which there was significance difference in the perception of males and females are as follows:

TABLE 4: INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T- TEST

mCRM Initiatives	Sig	t
Phone Calls For B'day/ Anniversary Wishes	.000	2.986
Sms For Discounts	.000	4.765
Personalized Discount Coupons Through SMS	.003	-5.53
Handling Queries On Mobile Phones	.000	-.873
Solving Problems On Mobile Phones	.000	.734
Feedback through Mobile Phone Calls	.026	4.99

This research was carried out with the purpose of studying perception of consumers of different age group towards mCRM initiatives. In order to study the difference in the perception of consumers of different age group one way ANOVA test was carried out. The analysis of result revealed that consumer perception of different age group differs towards the mCRM initiatives of the retailers. There was a significant difference in the perception of male and female towards all mCRM initiatives except Feedback through mobile phones. The ANOVA result listed below in the table show that for Feedback through Mobile Phone Calls the significance value is 0.558 showing that there is no significant difference in the perception of male and female towards this mCRM initiative.

TABLE 5: ONE WAY ANOVA

CRM Initiative		Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Feedback through Mobile Phone Calls	Between Groups	.891	.446	.584	.558
	Within Groups	373.424	.764		
	Total	374.315			

The study included two hypotheses which were tested with the help of the results of Students t- test and ANOVA. The results of Independent sample t-test revealed that perception of consumers of different gender vary towards the mCRM initiates viz Phone Calls For B'day/ Anniversary Wishes, Sms For Discounts,

Personalized Discount Coupons Through SMS, Handling Queries On Mobile Phones, Solving Problems On Mobile Phones and Feedback through Mobile Phone Calls. The result of ANOVA reveals that people of different age differ in their perception towards mCRM initiatives of Retailers in India. Feedback through Mobile Phone Calls was the only mCRM initiative for which there was no significant difference in perception of consumers of different age. The results of Independent sample t- Test and One way ANOVA helped in hypotheses testing and on the basis of the results, both the hypotheses were rejected.

TABLE 6: HYPOTHESES TESTING RESULTS

Hypotheses	Test	Statement	Remarks
H1	t-Test	There is no difference in the perception of male and female towards the mCRM initiatives of retailers.	Rejected
H2	ANOVA	There is no difference in the perception of consumers of different age towards the mCRM initiatives of retailers.	Rejected

The null hypotheses formulated for this research were rejected on the basis of the results of Independent sample t-Test and ANOVA. Since the null hypotheses were rejected, the results establish that there is a significant difference in the perception of consumers of different age and gender towards mCRM initiatives.

IMPLICATIONS

The retailers are facing tough and competitive environment with changing customer preferences. Most of the retailers are using cost effective, personalized mCRM initiatives to attract and retain customers. The perception of consumers towards any marketing efforts determines the success of the effort to a large extent. This research analyzed the perception of consumers of different age and gender towards mCRM initiatives of the retailers. The results of the study suggest that people of different age and gender have different perception towards mCRM initiatives. The results possess major implications for the retailers tailoring mCRM initiatives. The perception of consumers of different demographic profile should be taken into consideration before designing and tailoring the mCRM initiatives because consumers of different demographic profile differ in their perception and preferences. This research also has academic implications because; by this study an attempt has been made to fill the gap in the existing literature related to Mobile marketing and CRM.

CONCLUSION

The research was carried to study the difference in perception of consumers of different age and gender towards mCRM initiatives of the retailers. The results established that there is significant difference in the perception of consumers of different age and gender regarding mCRM initiatives. The research findings carry managerial as well as academic implications. However, the study has some limitations as well. Firstly, it studied the consumer's perception only at one point of time in a small region of Delhi NCR. Therefore, the results might be affected by situational and regional factors. And secondly, the findings of the research cannot be generalized because research was carried out on a sample of 500 respondents in a particular geographic area.

The study also opens some important avenues for future research. The research can be extended to the study of perception consumers related to other demographic variables like different income group and occupation. The research can also be extended for a comparative study of rural and urban consumer perception towards mCRM initiatives.

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