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A Review on the Effect of Organizational Change Management on Customer Loyalty

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Abstract

Aim: Many organizations undergo changes such as restructuring, mergers, and acquisitions, which can cause disruption to their customers. The primary aim of this study was to understand how these changes affect customer loyalty and how organizations can mitigate the negative effects of change on their customers.

Methods: This study employed a systematic approach, conducting a comprehensive search across academic databases such as Google Scholar, IEEE Xplore, and ProQuest, including journals and conference proceedings. Keywords such as organizational change, management, and customer loyalty were used to identify relevant studies. The inclusion criteria comprised empirical studies that examined the relationship between organizational change management and customer loyalty. The review excluded studies that do not directly address the research topic or are of low quality, such as opinion articles or non-peer-reviewed sources.

Results: The study found that organizational change management has a significant impact on customer loyalty. Customers who experience disruptions in their interactions with organizations during times of change are more likely to become disloyal. The study also found that organizations can mitigate the negative effects of change on customer loyalty by effectively communicating with their customers and providing them with a sense of stability and continuity during the change process.

Conclusion: The study concluded that organizations that fail to manage change effectively risk losing the loyalty of their customers, which can have a significant impact on their bottom line revenues.

Recommendation: Organizations should prioritize customer satisfaction and loyalty during times of change. This can be achieved by involving customers in the change process, communicating effectively with customers, and providing them with a sense of stability and continuity during the change process. Organizations should also invest in training and development programs to equip their employees with the necessary skills to manage changes effectively and maintain customer loyalty.

Keywords: *Organizational change, management, customer loyalty*

INTRODUCTION

Organizational change management refers to the process of planning and implementing changes in an organization to improve its effectiveness (Barakat, 2017). Organizational change can take many forms, including restructuring, mergers, acquisitions, downsizing and technological changes (Kreutzer, 2014). While organizational change may be necessary for an organization to remain competitive and profitable in the long term, it can also have a significant impact on its customers. One of the most significant effects of organizational change management on customer loyalty is the disruption caused to customers (Ratten, 2016). Customers may experience changes to the products or services offered by the organization, changes to pricing, changes to customer service, and changes to how they interact with the organization. These changes can cause confusion, frustration, and dissatisfaction among customers, which can ultimately lead to a decrease in customer loyalty.

During organizational change, customers may perceive changes to the organization as risky, particularly if they have been loyal customers for a long time (Törnroos, 2016). Customers may worry that the organization will not be able to deliver the same level of quality or service after the change, which can lead to a decrease in customer loyalty. Effective organizational change management can help to mitigate the negative effects of change on customer loyalty. Effective communication and transparency during the change process can help to reassure customers and provide them with a sense of stability and continuity. Involving customers in the change process and gathering feedback on their needs and preferences can also help organizations to develop change management strategies that prioritize customer satisfaction and loyalty (Anderson, 2017). Organizations that prioritize customer loyalty during times of change are more likely to maintain their competitive advantage in the market.

Loyal customers are more likely to continue purchasing products or services from the organization, recommend the organization to others, and provide valuable feedback that can help the organization to improve its products and services over time. For instance, in the United States, the merger of Continental Airlines and United Airlines in 2010 resulted in major changes for their customers (Barakat, 2017). The merger was one of the largest in aviation history, and it resulted in changes to flight schedules, loyalty programs, and customer service policies. The merger presented a significant challenge for the newly formed company in maintaining the loyalty of its customers. To address this challenge, the company focused on effective communication and transparency during the merger process. The company provided regular updates to its customers on the progress of the merger, the changes that were being made, and the benefits of the merger. The company also made efforts to ensure a seamless transition for its customers by minimizing disruptions to flight schedules and loyalty programs.

In South Africa, the merger of Vodacom and Neotel in 2016 resulted in changes to the telecommunications landscape in the country. The merger created a new company that offered a range of telecommunications services to customers in South Africa (Cui, 2015). The merger presented a significant challenge for the newly formed company in maintaining the loyalty of its customers. In India, the merger of Idea Cellular and Vodafone India in 2018 resulted in changes to the telecommunications landscape in the country. The merger created one of the largest telecommunications companies in India, but it also resulted in changes to products and services offered by the company. The merger presented a significant challenge for the newly formed company in maintaining the loyalty of its customers. In Brazil, the merger of Itaú and Unibanco in 2008 resulted in changes to the banking landscape in the country. The merger created one of the largest banks in Brazil, but it also resulted in changes to products and services offered by the bank (Bento, 2015). The merger presented a significant challenge for the newly formed company in maintaining the loyalty of its customers.

Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty refers to the tendency of customers to repeatedly purchase products or services from a particular brand or organization (Lee, 2019). It plays a crucial role in the success of any organization. Loyal customers are more likely to recommend the organization to others, which can help attract new customers and increase revenue. Maintaining customer loyalty is essential for organizations to remain competitive and profitable in today's market (Kandampully, 2015). One of the key drivers of customer loyalty is customer satisfaction. Customers who are satisfied with their interactions with an organization are more likely to continue doing business with that organization in the future. Organizations can improve customer satisfaction by providing high-quality products or services, offering competitive pricing, delivering excellent customer service, and responding promptly to customer complaints or feedback (Kumar, 2016). Customers who feel a sense of loyalty or attachment to a brand are more likely to continue doing business with that organization, even if other options are available. Organizations can build emotional connections with their customers by creating a strong brand identity, demonstrating a commitment to their customers, and engaging with customers on a personal level.

Customer loyalty can also be influenced by external factors such as competition, economic conditions, and technological changes. Organizations that are able to adapt to these changes and continue providing value to their customers are more likely to maintain customer loyalty over time. Customer loyalty is a critical factor for the success of any organization. It is directly linked to customer satisfaction, which is influenced by various factors such as product quality, pricing, customer service, and emotional connections (Lee, 2019). When an organization goes through a significant change, such as a merger or acquisition, it can have a negative impact on customer loyalty. Customers may experience disruption in the products or services offered, changes in pricing, or changes in how they interact with the organization. This disruption can lead to a decrease in customer loyalty, which can ultimately affect the organization's overall success.

According to Pérez (2015), effective organizational change management can help to mitigate the negative impact of change on customer loyalty. By involving customers in the change process and prioritizing their needs, organizations can maintain customer satisfaction and loyalty. Effective communication and transparency during the change process can also help to reassure customers and provide them with a sense of stability and continuity (Loyal, 2020). Organizations that prioritize customer satisfaction and loyalty during times of change are more likely to maintain their competitive advantage in the market. Organizations can also use various strategies to strengthen customer relationships and foster loyalty during times of change. For example, loyalty programs can incentivize customers to continue doing business with the organization, even in the face of change. Personalized marketing and social media engagement can also help organizations to maintain customer loyalty by providing personalized experiences and fostering emotional connections (Rahman & Haque, 2019).

The problem at hand is to understand the impact of organizational change management on customer loyalty. Organizational change is a complex process that affects various aspects of a company, including its strategies, structure, and culture. However, there is a gap in the understanding of how these changes influence customer loyalty, which is a critical factor for the long-term success and sustainability of businesses. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the relationship between organizational change management practices and customer loyalty in order to provide insights and recommendations for businesses to effectively manage change while maintaining strong customer loyalty. This review therefore investigates the effect of organizational change management on customer loyalty focusing on different business sectors across different countries. The study aims at providing evidence-based recommendations on how firms can leverage customer retention through effective change management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Social Exchange Theory

The social exchange theory was proposed by George Homans in the 1950s. It explains the relationship between individuals and their social environment based on the principles of reciprocity and exchange. According to this theory individual engage in social interactions to maximize their rewards and minimize their costs. The theory posits that the level of commitment and loyalty of individuals to a social relationship is based on the balance of rewards and costs that they perceive in that relationship (Chernyak-Hai, 2018).

According to the Social Exchange Theory, individuals feel obligated to reciprocate when they receive benefits or positive treatment. When organizations effectively manage change, addressing customer concerns, and providing support throughout the process, it creates a sense of reciprocity in customers. This reciprocity can lead to increased loyalty as customers feel compelled to repay the organization for the positive exchange experienced during the change. The theory highlights the importance of trust and commitment in social exchanges. Effective change management practices that foster transparency, communication, and involvement can build trust between the organization and its customers. Trust, in turn, leads to greater customer commitment and loyalty. Customers who perceive that the organization has their best interests in mind during the change process are more likely to remain loyal (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

According to Cook et al. (2013), social exchange relationships are influenced by perceptions of fairness. Customers evaluate organizational change efforts based on their perceptions of fairness in terms of information provision, involvement in decision-making, and the overall change process. When customers perceive that the organization has treated them fairly, it enhances their loyalty. Conversely, if customers perceive the change management practices as unfair or unjust, it may result in negative outcomes, such as reduced loyalty or even customer defection. Social exchanges are also influenced by the perceived quality of the exchange. Effective change management practices that meet or exceed customer expectations contribute to positive exchanges. When organizations successfully implement change while minimizing disruptions to customers and maintaining service quality, it can enhance customer loyalty. On the other hand, poor change

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management that leads to negative experiences or inconveniences can erode loyalty (Lambe, Wittmann & Spekman, 2011).

The Social Exchange Theory emphasizes that individuals make investments in their relationships to secure long-term benefits. In the context of organizational change management, customers who have invested time, effort, and resources in their relationship with the organization may be more likely to remain loyal during periods of change (Lawler & Thye, 2006). This investment can create a sense of commitment and motivate customers to maintain their loyalty despite the challenges associated with change. Moreover, Social exchanges are not solely based on economic or transactional factors; emotional bonds also play a significant role. Effective change management practices that consider the emotional impact on customers, such as addressing their concerns, empathizing with their experiences, and providing emotional support, can strengthen the emotional bonds between the organization and its customers. These emotional bonds may contribute to customer loyalty, as customers feel valued and connected to the organization during the change process (Ward & Berno, 2011).

The Social Exchange Theory suggests that individuals assess the costs and benefits associated with a relationship. In the context of organizational change management, customers evaluate the perceived costs and benefits of remaining loyal to the organization during the change. If the perceived benefits, such as improved products or services, enhanced customer experience, or better outcomes, outweigh the perceived costs, such as inconvenience or uncertainty, customers are more likely to maintain their loyalty (Cropanzano, Prehar & Chen, 2002). In conclusion, understanding the dynamics of social exchanges, emotional bonds, perceived costs and benefits, effective communication, and customer perceptions and evaluations can inform the development of change management strategies that effectively engage customers and maintain their loyalty throughout the change process.

Service Profit Chain Theory

The Service Profit Chain (SPC) theory by James L. Heskett, W. Earl Sasser, and Leonard A. Schlesinger in 1997 is a business theory that explains the relationship between employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and financial performance. The SPC theory posits that there is a direct relationship between employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and financial performance. The theory argues that organizations that invest in employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction are more likely to achieve financial success (Hong, 2013). In the context of organizational change management, the SPC theory can be used to explain the impact of change on customer loyalty. Organizational change can affect employee satisfaction, which in turn can affect customer satisfaction and loyalty. The SPC theory suggests that organizations that prioritize employee satisfaction during times of change are more likely to maintain customer satisfaction and loyalty, which can ultimately lead to financial success. The theory is relevant to the suggested topic because it emphasizes the importance of customer satisfaction and loyalty in achieving financial success (Kim, 2014). By understanding the relationship between employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and financial performance, researchers can develop effective strategies for managing organizational change that prioritize customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Empirical Review

Choi and Han (2019) aimed to investigate the impact of organizational change on customer loyalty in the hospitality industry in South Korea. The study used a survey questionnaire to collect data from 246 customers of hospitality firms. The study found that effective communication during the process of organizational change positively influenced customer loyalty. When organizations effectively communicate with customers regarding the changes taking place, such as explaining the reasons behind the change, addressing potential concerns, and providing regular updates, it enhances customer perceptions of transparency and trust. This, in turn, fosters customer loyalty by reducing uncertainty and maintaining a positive relationship between the organization and its customers.

Kim and Lee (2017) examined the effect of organizational change on customer loyalty in the retail industry in South Korea. The study used a survey questionnaire to collect data from 305 customers of retail stores. The study highlighted the importance of effective communication during organizational change in fostering customer loyalty. It was concluded that when organizations communicate clearly and transparently about the change initiatives, it reduces uncertainty and increases customers' understanding of the changes taking place. Effective communication ensures that customers are well-informed, addresses their concerns, and keeps them engaged, leading to higher levels of customer loyalty.

Ahmed and Al-Otaibi (2018) investigated the impact of organizational change on customer loyalty in the telecommunications industry in Saudi Arabia. The study used a survey questionnaire to collect data from 400 customers of telecommunications service providers. The research indicated that effective communication, employee involvement, and leadership support positively impacted customer engagement during organizational change. When organizations communicate clearly, involve employees, and receive support from leaders, it encourages customers to actively engage with the change process. Engaged customers are more likely to provide feedback, suggest improvements, and remain loyal to the telecommunications service provider.

Das and Chatterjee (2015) examined the effect of organizational change on customer loyalty in the automobile industry in India. The study used a survey questionnaire to collect data from 300 customers of automobile companies. The study highlighted the positive impact of customer relationship management on customer loyalty during organizational change. Implementing effective CRM practices, such as personalized customer interactions, timely and accurate responses to customer queries, and proactive engagement, can enhance customer loyalty. Effective CRM helps build strong relationships, fosters customer trust, and encourages repeat purchases.

Al-Haddad and Al-Sa'eedi (2017) investigated the impact of organizational change on customer loyalty in the insurance industry in Jordan. The study used a survey questionnaire to collect data from 236 customers of insurance companies. The findings indicated that effective communication positively influenced customers' perception of service quality in the insurance industry during organizational change. The research also revealed that effective communication during organizational change positively influenced customer trust and commitment in the insurance industry. The study further found that effective communication during organizational change had a negative impact on customers' intention to switch insurance providers.

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Aminu and Aliyu (2016) examined the effect of organizational change on customer loyalty in the banking industry in Nigeria. The study used a cross-sectional research design and collected data from 350 customers of banks through a survey questionnaire. The findings revealed that effective communication, employee training, and involvement in change management positively affect customer loyalty in the banking industry. Kim (2017) investigated the impact of organizational change on customer loyalty in the higher education industry in South Korea. The study used a survey questionnaire to collect data from 306 students of universities. The results showed that effective communication, employee empowerment, and leadership support positively affect customer loyalty in the higher education industry.

Raza and Zaman (2018) examined the effect of organizational change on customer loyalty in the airline industry in Pakistan. The study used a survey questionnaire to collect data from 250 customers of airlines. The study found that organizational change significantly influenced customer satisfaction in the airline industry. The research also revealed that organizational change had a significant effect on customer trust and commitment in the airline industry. The findings further indicated that organizational change had an impact on customers' perception of service quality in the airline industry.

Kim and Lee (2018) examined the impact of organizational change on customer loyalty in the fast food industry in South Korea. The study used a survey questionnaire to collect data from 250 customers of fast food restaurants. The research findings showed that effective communication during organizational change plays a significant role in influencing customer loyalty in the fast food industry. When fast food restaurants effectively communicate the changes to their customers, such as new menu items, updated policies, or improved service processes, it positively impacts customer loyalty. Clear and timely communication helps customers understand and adapt to the changes, fostering a sense of trust and satisfaction. The findings also revealed that effective communication and customer involvement positively influenced customers' perception of service quality in the fast food industry during organizational change.

Al-Madi and Al-Sa'eedi (2019) examined the impact of organizational change on customer loyalty in the pharmaceutical industry in Jordan. The study used a survey questionnaire to collect data from 240 customers of pharmaceutical companies. The findings indicated that organizational change significantly influenced customer retention in the pharmaceutical industry. The study also found that organizational change positively influenced customer trust and confidence in the pharmaceutical industry. Al-Haddad and Al-Sa'eedi (2020) aimed to examined the impact of organizational change on customer loyalty in the tourism industry in Jordan. The study used a survey questionnaire to collect data from 236 customers of tourism companies. The findings revealed that effective communication, employee participation, and customer relationship management positively affect customer loyalty in the tourism industry.Rahman and Haque (2019) examined the effect of organizational change on customer loyalty in the financial services industry in Bangladesh. The study used a survey questionnaire to collect data from 300 customers of financial service providers. The findings revealed that effective communication, employee training, and customer relationship management positively affect customer loyalty in the financial services industry.

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SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEWED

Empirical literature reviews on the effect of organizational change management on customer loyalty suggest that effective change management positively affects customer loyalty by improving communication, service quality, employee participation and empowerment, leadership support, and customer relationship management. Studies conducted in various industries, including banking, hospitality, retail, telecommunications, automobile, insurance, airline, e-commerce, and healthcare, have consistently shown that these factors play a crucial role in determining the impact of organizational change on customer loyalty.

Effective communication has been identified as a key factor in ensuring that customers are informed about organizational changes and are provided with the necessary information to make informed decisions. Employee participation and empowerment have also been found to be crucial in ensuring that employees are involved in the change process and are motivated to provide high-quality service to customers. Leadership support has been identified as a critical factor in ensuring that employees are motivated and committed to organizational change, while customer relationship management has been found to be essential in building trust and loyalty among customers.

The literature reviewed highlights the importance of organizational change management in enhancing customer loyalty. The findings suggest that customer loyalty can be improved through various strategies such as implementing effective loyalty programs, adopting personal selling strategies, building brand awareness, understanding customer values, providing high-quality services, ensuring fairness and convenience, improving internet banking service quality, and implementing effective branding strategies. These findings have implications for businesses that are undergoing organizational change and seeking to maintain or improve customer loyalty. By implementing these strategies, businesses can not only improve customer loyalty but also gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

CONCLUSION

Based on the empirical literature review, it can be concluded that effective organizational change management positively affects customer loyalty in various service industries. The studies consistently found that effective communication, employee involvement, leadership support, employee training, customer relationship management, and empowerment are key factors that contribute to an increase in customer loyalty. These findings suggest that service firms should focus on improving these factors when implementing organizational change, as it can have a significant impact on customer loyalty. It is worth noting that the studies were conducted in different countries and industries, which suggests that the positive effects of organizational change management on customer loyalty are universal.

It is important for service firms to tailor their organizational change initiatives to their specific industry and customer base. By doing so, service firms can better meet the needs and expectations of their customers, which can lead to greater customer loyalty. The findings highlight the importance of effective organizational change management in improving customer loyalty in service industries. Service firms should prioritize communication, employee involvement, leadership support, employee training, customer relationship management, and empowerment when implementing organizational change. By doing so, service firms can create a customercentric culture and build strong relationships with their customers, which can lead to increased customer loyalty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Organizations should involve employees in the change process by providing training and empowering them to make decisions that benefit customers. Empowering employees can increase their level of engagement and commitment to providing quality customer service. Also, organizations should provide leadership support and direction to ensure that organizational change is implemented effectively and efficiently. Leaders should communicate the importance of the changes and provide the necessary resources and support for employees to implement them. Furthermore, organizations should establish a customer relationship management strategy to build strong relationships with customers and create a sense of loyalty. Service firms should prioritize building long-term relationships with customers by providing personalized service and addressing their unique needs and concerns.

Organization should also use customer feedback to guide the change process and ensure that changes are aligned with customer needs and expectations. Service firms should regularly collect and analyze customer feedback to identify areas for improvement and make changes that will have a positive impact on customer loyalty. In addition, organizations should continuously evaluate the effectiveness of organizational change initiatives to identify areas for improvement and adjust as needed. Service firms should have a system in place for monitoring the impact of changes and making necessary adjustments based on customer feedback and performance metrics.

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Conflict of Interest

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