

Status of Customer Focus in the Readymade Garment Industry of Pakistan

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Objective

The objective of this study is to identify trends and patterns in the readymade garment industry, keeping the status of customer in focus.

Background

Customer is the focal point², in every business in general but in this industry in particular. In today's increasingly commercialized society, consumer awareness about the outlook is on the rise, making the role of our garment industry all the more important.

In recent years, as the economy has become increasingly service based, the slow shift from a product-focus toward a customer-focus has occurred across a range of industries.³

Therefore; readymade garments should be as close to the requirements of customers as possible.

It is imperative for the Industry to take into consideration the changing aspirations of the customers and devise a need-based strategy⁴. Readymade garments are finished goods; if they do not fulfill the requirements of customers, the chance of success is undermined⁵. Although it is encouraging that a few entrepreneurs of this industry have had partial success, the fact remains that improvement in understanding needs of target market will bring more success to the business in terms of sales as well as quality.

To lead the market companies need customers who are enthusiastic 'advocates', customers who are highly loyal and drive new business to the company⁶.

This, in turn, will help our indigenous garment industry to improve standards of the products and to compete with their multinational counterparts. In the wake of WTO, the only defense against the likes of Versache is to channelise the business mechanics rather scientifically.

If our readymade garment industry continues to undermine the customers, it will not be long that they find themselves in the hot waters. Around the world every organization gives prime importance to customers.

In today's environment, the world can be characterized by overcapacity, and customers have become kings and queens⁷.

Methodology

For this study, two types of questionnaires were designed. One questionnaire was aimed at discovering the trends and attitude of the entrepreneurs, importers as well as local manufacturers. We analysed whether they take input from the target market or react to the feedback of the end-users while planning designing or marketing. It was also discovered what, popular as well as scientific, is important for such a business to grow.

Second questionnaire was designed to know how readymade garment users feel about those who sell readymade garments, how they deal with customers, how they take their complaints and how readymade garment sellers behave during and after sale. We also tried to know that what is important for consumer economy, quality or variety while purchasing readymade garment.

Sampling

Three different markets were chosen for this study Super market Islamabad, Sadar and Raja Bazaar Rawalpindi. Purpose to choose these markets were to have true feedback. This study is done in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. But we think that findings are depictive of trends of readymade garment industry in Pakistan.

Two categories of readymade garment industry were studied i.e. importers and local manufacturers.

Study was done on random sampling method. List of all readymade garment shops was made, then 10 shops were chosen from each market through draw, and then they were interviewed and questionnaires were filled. For customers we decided to interview 100 customers from each market, all exists, weather they purchased or not.

Findings

Findings of this study suggest that readymade garment industry in Pakistan is lacking significantly in customer focus. The value of customer remained high in every business throughout human history, but in today's competitive market where customers have many options it becomes more important. In case of readymade garments customer has much more importance. If readymade garment manufacturing and selling truly comply with customer's needs and requirements it can bring significant increase in the business. Currently most of readymade garment sellers believe that good market place and amount of money is the key to success. In other viewpoint there are two segments of customers one those who have sufficient money to purchase and they are choosy in purchasing readymade garments and the other segment only requires less prices. But this study suggests that in general customers need satisfaction of their aesthetics while purchasing readymade garments.

Mostly readymade garment sellers don't take feedback from end users; their behavior to the complaints is not up to the mark; they don't have system to give feedback to manufacturers and believe in their own experience and intuition for purchases. Manufacturers are also not so keen in getting feedback from end users. The response of following question gives us more detail.

Question: What is most important factor for your business?

Response: Customer	43%
Capital	14%
Market Place	43%
Other Resources	0%

57% businessmen voted for market place and capital. And when we asked, "Do you have Complaint Cell?" Except two modernly operating manufacturing retail outlets none of them have complaint cell. These two outlets have proper record of complaints and they also have membership system of their customers. Our readymade garment industry is undermining the importance of customers and still believes in their own resources, which alarms tough time for RGI in the future because;

the customer experience will be the next business tsunami. The customer experience is the next competitive battle ground⁸.

Here if we analyze the response of customers to a following question, it will give us an idea that customer is concerned to the variety of designs while purchasing readymade garments instead of market place.

Question: How you select the place for shopping of readymade garments?

Response: Cooperative Salesman	0%
Economy	24%
Quality	24%
Variety	52%
Attractive Shopping Place	0%

This clearly identifies that readymade garment customer gives least value to the shopping place, but the readymade garment seller gives maximum. This also clearly establishes that readymade garment customer searches for variety to find the best for his or her personality. But our manufacturers and sellers of readymade garments still don't give priority to understand needs and requirements of target customers and believe that if they have the opportunity to sell or display their products in busy and popular shopping places it will bring results for them. Actual scenario is now changed and readymade garment customer searches for variety and tries to satisfy need of his or her personality. Customer works hard to chose readymade garments and don't just consider low prices. In general readymade garment sellers believe that low prices are important factor in selling readymade garments: but above response tells that economy is far secondary to variety and same is the case for quality. It means while purchasing readymade garments people consider designs and styles than economy and quality. Our readymade garment industry has to understand that now they should go to the target market and try to know the latest

requirements of customers. This will help them to increase their business. Those who will take lead in this aspect will definitely increase their market share.

Continuous improvement in designs needs regular feedback and our readymade garment manufacturers have not yet adopted or developed any system of feedback. Our retailer outlets should develop system to record feedback of customers. During study those who import readymade garments emphasized that the reason of their success is variety in designs. Their claim is supported by our findings. It means Pakistani readymade garment customer gives more value to aesthetic satisfaction.

Another interesting finding was that 82% respondents said that they either don't or slightly believe salesmen.

Question: Do you believe in what salespeople say?

Response:	No	29%
	Slightly	53%
	Moderately	18%
	Completely	0%

This shows that salesmen of readymade garment industry have to think of their credibility in the minds of customers. Response to another question was

Question: Do you think that sales people deceive you?

Never	12%
Seldom	47%
Usually	41%
Always	0%

This shows that generally our sales people in RGI try to sell their product at any cost, keeping business values aside. This results in customer dissatisfaction. If RGI wants to retain their customers for repeated purchases then they have to bring change in their attitude.

Our all findings suggest that the Status of Customer Focus in the Readymade Garment Industry of Pakistan is not satisfactory. Our readymade garment industry should focus on customers and their feedback to come up to the expectations.

If you're a peasant, then naturally you'll want peasant dress. The gown will be simple and modest, using rougher fabrics and less decoration. A noblewoman, on the other hand, can wear velvets, silks, satins and brocades⁹.

This research disproves the concept that the key to success in Pakistani market is economical price. According to these findings variety of designs coupled with reasonable price, which matches the quality, is the right mix for the success of readymade garments.

Conclusion

This study suggests that all readymade garment sellers should establish a system of recording feedback and complaints of customers. They may record manually on register or can use IT, which can be the better option. Regular and accurate feedback should be given to manufacturers to develop future designs.

Customer data can be used as an input in the design of new services or in the redesign of existing ones. Managers also need to realize that there are many times when only IT will provide the necessary infrastructure to meet their customers' needs in today's highly competitive environment¹⁰.

Readymade garment manufacturers can get best out of latest IT technology. They can develop network with retail outlets to get prompt feedback of end users. This will surely bring significant improvement in customer satisfaction and it will give an opportunity to the Industry to improve standards.

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