

The Impact of Customer Satisfaction towards Product Return Policy on Electronic Products

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Abstract: *This research paper investigates the impact of customer satisfaction on the effectiveness of product return policies for electronic products. It aims to understand the relationship between customer satisfaction, purchasing behavior, and brand loyalty. The study examines the satisfaction levels of customers with the return policies of specific electronic brands, explores the return procedure and its impact on satisfaction and loyalty, and identifies the required documents and attachments for returning electronic products. The findings will provide insights for improving return policies and customer service, ultimately enhancing consumer satisfaction and loyalty in the electronics industry.*

Keywords: customer satisfaction

I. INTRODUCTION

Increased competition and technological improvements have made electronic devices more accessible and inexpensive to buyers. Customer happiness, however, has become a vital consideration for firms as electronic product sales have increased. Increased customer satisfaction has been connected to improved loyalty, increased sales, and favourable word-of-mouth. Return policies for electronic devices have become an important component for firms to ensure consumer happiness.

Return policies are intended to make it easier for customers to return damaged or unsatisfactory items while also providing them with a hassle-free experience. Return policies, on the other hand, may be a cause of aggravation for customers if they are overly restricted or ambiguous. To improve customer loyalty and retention, firms must understand the influence of customer satisfaction on product return policies on electronic devices.

In recent years, the electronics industry has become increasingly competitive, with numerous brands vying for customers' attention. As a result, businesses must differentiate themselves and keep a competitive edge by providing great customer service. Effective return policies are an important aspect of delivering outstanding customer service and increasing customer satisfaction.

A customer-friendly return policy may assist firms in gaining the confidence and credibility of their consumers. Increased consumer loyalty, repeat purchases, and positive word-of-mouth can arise from this trust and credibility. Furthermore, good return policies may lower the costs of returns, such as restocking fees and shipping charges, while boosting the possibility of repeat sales.

A poorly designed return policy, on the other hand, might lead to increased consumer dissatisfaction, unfavorable reviews, and decreased sales. Customers may see tight or perplexing return policies as an indicator of poor product quality or a lack of regard for their demands. As a result, companies must carefully analyze how their return policies affect consumer satisfaction and retention.

The electronics industry presents unique challenges for businesses managing return policies. For instance, electronic products may be fragile and require cautious treatment during returns. Furthermore, warranties on electronic devices may expire before buyers return them. As a result, businesses must develop return policies that address these issues while still giving customers with a pleasant return experience.

In addition to return policies, customer service is a crucial factor in enhancing customer satisfaction and retention. Customers may have questions or concerns regarding the usage or operation of electronic items due to the complexity

of these products. Effective customer service can reduce customer dissatisfaction, increase customer retention, and promote positive word-of-mouth.

The purpose of this research is to look at the influence of customer satisfaction on product return policies for electronic devices. The study's specific goal is to investigate the association between customer satisfaction and desire to return electronic devices. It also intends to investigate the impact of return policies on customer satisfaction with electronic products, identify the factors that influence customers' decisions to return electronic products, ascertain the extent to which return policies affect customer loyalty and repeat purchase intentions, and investigate the role of customer service in facilitating product returns and improving customer satisfaction.

The findings of this study will help to provide insights for firms and businesses to improve their return policies and customer service in order to increase consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Furthermore, by giving empirical data on the influence of these elements in the context of electronic devices, the study will contribute to the current literature on consumer satisfaction and product return policies.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

While product return policies are an important component of the customer experience, very little is known about the influence of consumer satisfaction on product return policies for electronic devices. It is uncertain if the happy and satisfied customers are more inclined to repurchase and suggest the brand to others. Furthermore, there is a lack of understanding of the aspects that lead to customer satisfaction with electronic device return policies.

Additionally, electronic devices are unique and distinct in that they are frequently costly and have particular return criteria, such as the demand for original packing and attachments. These limitations can make the return procedure more difficult for customers, leading to unhappiness, dissatisfaction and decreased brand loyalty.

1.2 Objective

- To value customer satisfaction in product return policy towards specific brands
- To understand the procedures of return policies and their impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty
- To determine what documents and attachments are required at the time of return of electronic products

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research is the process of systematic and in-depth study or search of any particular topic, subject or areas of investigation, backed by collection, compilation, presentation and interpretation of relevant details or data.

2.1 Research Design

Descriptive Research – Descriptive Research is a type of research design that is used to describe or summarize a particular phenomenon, situation, or group of individuals. It involves collecting data to provide a detailed and accurate picture of the topic under investigation.

Research Plan:

- Data Source: Primary
- Research Approach: Survey Method
- Research Instrument: Questionnaire

Sampling Method

Convenience Sampling is selected for this research due to its practicality and ease of data collection. It allows to gather information from a diverse range of customers who have experience with the return policies of electronic products. The sample will consist of customers who have made recent purchases, ensuring that their experiences are relevant and up-to-date.

Limitations of the Study

- **Sample Bias:** The study's findings may be limited to the specific sample of customers who participated in the research. It is possible that this sample may not fully represent the entire population of customers in the electronics industry, leading to potential biases and limited generalizability of the results.
- **Self-reporting Bias:** The data collected through surveys and interviews may be subject to self-reporting bias, where participants may provide socially desirable responses or inaccurately recall their experiences with product return policies. This bias can affect the validity and reliability of the findings.
- **Recall Bias:** Customers' ability to accurately recall their experiences with product return policies might be limited, leading to potential recall bias. Participants may remember recent experiences more vividly or their recollections may be influenced by their current attitudes or emotions.
- **Response Rate:** There might be a low response rate to surveys or low participation in interviews or focus groups, which can introduce response bias and affect the representativeness of the findings. Non-respondents may have different experiences or perspectives from those who participated, leading to potential bias in the results.
- **Brand and Product Variation:** The study may focus on specific brands or types of electronic products, which could limit the generalizability of the findings to other brands or product categories. Different brands may have different return policies and customer satisfaction levels, thus affecting the study's outcomes.
- **External Factors:** External factors such as economic conditions, industry trends, or changes in consumer behavior over time may influence customer satisfaction and return policies. These factors may not be accounted for in the study and can impact the findings.
- **Time Constraints:** Conducting comprehensive research on customer satisfaction and return policies may be time-consuming and resource-intensive. The study's time constraints might limit the depth and breadth of data collected and analyzed, potentially affecting the comprehensiveness of the findings.
- **Subjectivity in Qualitative Analysis:** The qualitative analysis of interviews or focus groups involves subjective interpretation by the researchers. Different researchers may interpret the data differently, potentially introducing bias and affecting the consistency of the analysis.
- **Document Availability:** Access to the required documents and attachments during the return process of electronic products may be limited. Brands may have varying policies on document availability, which could impact the completeness of the analysis.

III. METHODS OF COLLECTION

This study uses both Primary Data as well as Secondary Data.

Primary Data

The data collected through the surveys and interviews will be analysed using qualitative and quantitative methods, depending on the type of data collected. The analysis will be guided by the research objectives and the specific research questions being investigated. The findings will be presented in a report that will include both descriptive and inferential statistics, as well as qualitative analysis of the open-ended responses.

Secondary Data

Existing industry reports on the electronics industry can provide valuable insights into customer satisfaction, return policies, and trends in the market.

Reviewing previous research studies and academic literature related to customer satisfaction and product return policies in the electronics industry provide a foundation of knowledge and help identify gaps in the existing literature.

Reports and documentation from specific electronic brands regarding their return policies, customer satisfaction surveys, and customer service practices can offer valuable insights.

Online platforms, such as e-commerce websites, forums, and social media, often contain customer reviews and feedback on electronic products and return policies.

Scope of the Study

- Customer satisfaction in product return policy: The study would aim to assess the level of customer satisfaction specifically related to product return policies for electronic devices. This would involve evaluating customers' perceptions, opinions, and experiences regarding the ease, convenience, fairness, and effectiveness of return policies provided by different brands.
- Specific brands: The research would focus on analyzing customer satisfaction in relation to product return policies offered by specific brands in the electronics industry. This may involve selecting a sample of brands for in-depth examination based on their market presence, popularity, or other relevant criteria.
- Impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty: The study would investigate the impact of product return policies on customer satisfaction and subsequent customer loyalty. It would explore how a customer's satisfaction with the return policy influences their overall satisfaction with the brand and their likelihood of repurchasing products or recommending the brand to others.
- Procedures of return policies: The research would seek to understand and describe the procedures involved in product return policies for electronic products. This would include examining the steps customers need to follow, such as initiating a return request, packaging the product, returning it to the brand, and receiving a refund or replacement.
- Required documents and attachments: The study would aim to identify and document the specific documents and attachments that are typically required from customers during the return process of electronic products. This may include exploring the necessity of original packaging, proof of purchase, warranty cards, serial numbers, receipts, or any other relevant paperwork.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

(Ramanathan, 2011) Ability of an organization to attract and retain customers is vital to its success. Customer loyalty requires that there is a strong desire by the customer for a product, and that he has several product vendors to choose his product based on his preferences (Dick and Basu, 1994, Otim and Grover, 2006). It is often shaped by positive experience by the customer on his purchase. A number of factors contribute to the experience—convenience, availability of the product, delivery, returns policy, etc. Obviously, some of these factors are based on efficient performance of companies in managing product returns, and in fact these factors are more important in the e-commerce context since e-commerce typically experiences higher levels of product return compared to traditional retailing. Using data from online customer ratings, we explore how the relationships between performance of companies in handling product returns and customer loyalty are affected by risk characteristics of products. Our results show that handling product returns plays an important role in shaping customer loyalty for low-risk products and also for high-risk products but not for products that exhibits medium levels of risk. These results have implications for website managers and development of reverse-logistics channels in the internet supply chains.

(Gianfranco Walsh, 2017) Customer product returns are a key challenge for online retailers. Previous research primarily focused on causes of returns and possible interventions to reduce customers' product returns and concomitant costs for online retailers. However, little is known about the effect of product returns on key relational outcomes. Drawing on relationship marketing theory, we test a model that relates product returns to three relationship marketing outcomes—customer satisfaction, trust, and positive word-of-mouth. A field study based on online panel data from customers of eight large online retailers demonstrates that product returns negatively affect customer satisfaction with the retailer, customer trust, and word-of-mouth. The findings extend previous research by revealing that product returns can detrimentally affect relationships with customers. Implications for e-commerce research and management are discussed.

(Mandal, 2022) In the digital age, more and more customers are preferring to buy through online. But the market share of e tailing industry compared to retail industry is still very low. The buying as well as selling process is changing because of the fast development of information technology and availability of internet services. The customer needs are also changing. There are advantages and disadvantages of buying through online. The high internet usage rate has given an opportunity for the firms to sale through online (Jayasubramanian et al., 2015). New customers are to be motivated to buy through online by giving them post purchase satisfaction (Tandon et al. 2017). Measurement of

customer satisfaction in online shopping will guide the firms to take necessary strategies to improve the sales. The objective of this research was to identify the antecedents of customer satisfaction in online shopping for electronic products. The study was based in Kolkata and the questionnaires were distributed to the online buyers only. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using SPSS was done to extract factors. Thirty five independent observed variables are reduced to twenty three, which are grouped in six constructs. The nine scale items of dependent variable were reduced to two variables. It was found through EFA that the antecedents of customer satisfaction in online shopping for electronic products are delivery process, payment system, e-service quality, price experience, return policy and website quality.

(**J.P. Shim, 2002**) Customer satisfaction in traditional retail markets is one of the most important issues in the field of business [Zwass 1996, 1999]. Customers expect a certain level of service to accompany their purchases of goods and services, and the service-profit chain recognizes the lifetime value of a loyal customer [Heskett et al. 1994; Watson et al. 1998]. Elements that contribute to customer satisfaction and thereby to repeat purchases include availability of sufficient information about product/service features and warranties and guarantees, ease of return or exchange, technical support, and even the convenience of the purchase experience itself. The Internet/World Wide Web (Web) is a critical medium for the sharing of business information between retail firms and their customers (business-to-customer or B2C). Although electronic commerce (e-commerce) has received considerable research attention, little research has examined the effect of e-commerce Web presentations on retail customer shopping experiences. This two-phase study explored customer reactions to Web retailers presentations of their products/services, attempting to identify Web-site characteristics that contribute to customer satisfaction arising from the Web-based shopping experience. Findings from use of the qualitative method of existential phenomenology were explored further with quantitative analyses including logistic regression. Findings suggest that two key elements in inoperative retail Web sites are convenience of site use and simplicity of site design for the customers access to information about product/service characteristics and customer-service policies.

(**Alexander Brown, 2008**) When selling products with highly uncertain demands and short life cycles, it is common for a manufacturer to offer some form of returns policy to entice the distributors to increase their order quantities. In this paper we consider a multi-item returns policy called “pooled” (or joint) returns policy under which the distributor can return any combination of the products up to R percent of the total purchases across all products. We analyze the distributor's optimal profit and order quantity under the pooled returns policy, and compare these operating characteristics to the case when a single-item “non-pooled” returns policy is instituted. Under the non-pooled returns policy, the distributor can only return on individual items using item-specific return limits. We show an intuitive result that the distributor will always achieve a higher profit under the pooled policy. However, the manufacturer could actually obtain a lower profit under the pooled policy due to a counter-intuitive result: the distributor may order less under the pooled policy even though the pooled policy offers more flexibility. This counter-intuitive result motivates us to determine the conditions under which the distributor would order less under the pooled policy. Finally, we develop a heuristic for determining the distributor's optimal order quantities associated with the n-product case under the pooled policy.

(**Amanda B. Bower, 2012**) To limit costs associated with product returns, some online retailers have instituted equity-based return shipping policies, requiring customers to pay to return products when retailers determine that customers are at fault. The authors compare the normative assumptions about customers that underlie equity-based return shipping policies with the more realistic, positivist expectations as predicted by attribution, equity, and regret theories. Two longitudinal field studies over four years using two surveys and actual customer spending data indicate that retailer confidence in those normative assumptions is unjustified. Contrary to retailer assumptions, neither the positive consequences of free returns nor the negative consequences of fee returns were reversed when customer perceptions of fairness were taken into account. Depending on the locus and extent of blame, customers who paid for their own return decreased their post return spending at that retailer 75%–100% by the end of two years. In contrast, returns that were free to the consumer resulted in post return customer spending that was 158%–457% of prereturn spending. The findings suggest that online retailers should either institute a policy of free product returns or, at a minimum, examine their customer data to determine their customers' responses to fee returns.

(**Xingzheng Ai, 2012**) The means by which manufacturers share the responsibility and risk of unsold inventory with retailers is one of the critical issues in supply chain management. It is a common practice for manufacturers to offer

some type of returns policy to encourage retailers to order more products when they sell products with short life cycles and demand is uncertain. The extreme cases are the cases in which the manufacturer takes all responsibility by buying back all unsold inventory with a full-returns policy, or the retailer takes all responsibility and the manufacturer has a no-returns policy. We examine decisions of retailers and manufacturers in two competing supply chains selling a substitutable product, with demand uncertainty, when manufacturers offer or do not offer full returns policies. We consider retailers' two pricing strategies, optimal pricing and clearance pricing, and we find that full returns policies have different implications in the presence of chain-to-chain competition as compared to the case of a monopoly supply chain. The conditions under which manufacturers and retailers prefer or not prefer full returns policies are identified.

(Francisco J. Martínez-López, 2022) In the online return context, offering the consumer a satisfactory return experience is critical to an online seller's success. However, little is known about how online sellers can improve consumers' online return experience. This research examines whether an instant refund service can improve the online return experience. To obtain a comprehensive view of the outcomes of using an instant refund service, this paper also examines how the use of an instant refund affects several pivotal consumer responses. Study 1 analyzed the effects of an instant refund service on consumer responses in a post-purchase pre-return scenario, and Study 2 analyzed the effects of instant refunds on a set of key variables in a post-purchase post-return scenario, including satisfaction with the online return experience. For each study, the hypotheses of the effects of an instant refund on consumer responses were discussed, and a one-factor (instant refund service, yes vs. no) between-subject scenario experiment (with an additional related experiment in study 1) was conducted, using online panel data from Wjx.cn. One-way ANOVA was used to test the hypotheses. It is concluded that an instant refund service increases consumer satisfaction with the experience and improves other consumer responses. In terms of potential side-effects, instant refunds are not significantly associated with stronger product return intentions. These findings can help online sellers decide whether to evolve their conventional refund mode to a new instant refund mode.

(Pamal R. Nanayakkara, 2022) Global e-commerce sales are growing rapidly adding complexities to their supply chains. There is an increasing trend of product returns along with the growth of global e-commerce platforms, placing a huge significance on reverse logistics management. E-commerce being a competitive industry, factors such as environmental concerns, customer awareness, and legal pressure have led the firms to pay attention to the circular economy and sustainability concepts while managing their reverse logistics. Considering the above factors, this paper proposes a three-stage, circular reverse logistics framework for handling e-commerce returns. We introduce a novel method of applying ward-like hierarchical clustering with geographical constraints on returns data to identify return patterns as the first stage. As the second stage, a circular economy network was introduced among different parties to commit towards the circular economy. We develop a mixed integer linear programming model upon the above circular economy network in the third stage to capture different facets of the reverse logistics in e-commerce and optimize the network. At the final stage, the model is validated with a case study based on an e-commerce firm engaged in consumer electrical and electronics. The decision support system which is an output of this study will help the decision makers in e-commerce firms to embrace circular economy and optimize the reverse logistics network, while handling product returns.

(Narayan Janakiraman, 2016) Retailers often use lenient return policies—possibly due to the belief that leniency inherently increases purchase more than returns—despite the substantial expense associated with product returns. Through meta-analysis, we are able to shed new light on this trade-off. Consistent with Petersen and Kumar (2010), we observe a more pronounced increase in purchase stemming from lenient return policies than for return rates. This suggests that, overall, return policies do in fact benefit the retailers as well. While most retail stores offer return policies, some offer more lenient return policies than others. The inherent belief is that lenient return policies are more likely to lead to purchases than to encourage returns. Examining prior research, we find that return policy leniency has been characterized in terms of five different dimensions: time, money, effort, scope, and exchange. We conduct a meta-analysis of 21 papers examining the effect of leniency on purchase and return decisions, and demonstrate that overall, leniency increases purchase more than return. Further, we show the return policy factors that influence purchase (money and effort leniency increase purchase) are different from the return policy factors that influence returns (scope leniency increases returns while time and exchange leniency reduce returns).

V. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- Majority (39%) of the respondents belong to the age group of 21-30.
- 58.5% of the respondents are Male.
- 48.3% of the respondents have their highest educational qualification as an Undergraduate Degree.
- Most (42.4%) of the respondents are those working in Private Sector.
- Majority (32.2%) of respondents have their annual income below Rs.2,50,000
- Majority (70.2%) of the respondents have returned an electronic product.
- Most (50.8%) of the respondents purchase electronic devices Occasionally.
- Majority (36.4%) of the respondents had Performance Issues with their device which is why they chose to return the electronic product.
- Most (34.7%) of the respondents have returned a Smartphone.
- Majority (49.2%) of the respondents Somewhat Agree that the return policy was easy to understand and follow.
- Most (41.5%) of the respondents Somewhat Agree that the return process was quick and hassle-free.
- Majority (48.3%) of the respondents Strongly Agree that they were given clear instructions on what documents were required at the time of return by the brand.
- Most (45.8%) of the respondents Strongly Agree that they received a Fair Refund or Exchange policy from the brand.
- Majority (43.2%) of the respondents Strongly Agree that the Brand's Return Policy influenced their purchase.
- 25.4% of respondents have purchased electronic products from Samsung.
- Most (31.4%) of the respondents Occasionally refer to the return policy before making a purchase decision.
- Majority (40.7%) of the respondents became aware of the Return Policy through a Customer Service Representative.
- Most (39.8%) of the respondents communicate their return request to the store by Calling their Customer Service.
- Majority (38.1%) of the respondents received their Refund/Replacement in less than a week.
- Most (57.6%) of the respondents believe that an Easier Return Process might appear more appealing to customers.
- Majority (67.8%) of the respondents had to provide the Proof of Purchase (Receipt, Invoice, etc.) while initiating the return process.
- Most (63.6%) of the respondents will Contact Customer Service for Assistance if they've misplaced the required documents/attachments for initiating the return process.
- Majority (67.8%) of the respondents believe that it is Very Important for the Brand/Retailer to clearly communicate about Documents/Attachments required for the return process.
- There is no significant difference in the level of agreeableness regarding the return policy of the electronic product brands based on age group of the respondents.
- There is a significant difference in the level of agreeableness about the importance for a brand or retailer to communicate clearly about the documents and attachments required for a return process based on age of the respondents.
- There is no significant difference in the level of agreeableness about the reference to the brand's return policy before making a purchase decision based on qualification of the respondents.

VI. SUGGESTIONS

- Improve clarity and ease of understanding: Enhance the return policy documentation and communication to ensure it is easy to understand and follow for customers. Provide clear instructions on the required documents and attachments at the time of return, making the process more transparent.

- Streamline the return process: Address performance issues with electronic devices to minimize returns. Focus on resolving customer concerns promptly and efficiently, aiming for a quick and hassle-free return process. Consider implementing automated systems or dedicated customer service representatives to handle return requests effectively.
- Enhance communication channels: Explore additional channels to inform customers about the return policy. Utilize customer service representatives, online resources, and other communication channels to raise awareness of the return policy among potential buyers. Ensure that customers can easily access and refer to the return policy before making a purchase decision.

VII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research provides valuable insights into customer satisfaction with product return policies and their impact on loyalty. The majority of respondents, especially those in the 21-30 age group, have returned electronic products, indicating the significance of return policies. It is encouraging to note that respondents generally found the return policy easy to understand and follow, emphasizing the importance of clear instructions and transparent communication. However, there is room for improvement in streamlining the return process and addressing performance issues to reduce returns. Enhancing communication channels and ensuring easy access to the return policy can contribute to better customer experiences and decision-making. By implementing these suggestions, brands can enhance customer satisfaction, loyalty, and overall business success

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