

Full Length Research

Effects of marketing competency of frontline employees on customer satisfaction: A study on commercial bank of Ethiopia

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In competitive banking industry, the success/failure of business depends on the Marketing competency of Frontline Employees. A firm with strong marketing competency is able to use its deep understanding of customer needs to foster development of new products and organize marketing activities that provides unique value to customers. If a bank need to stay competitively in the industry it has to continuously meet the needs / wants of customers through developing marketing competency of frontline employees. The objective of the research is to assess the effects of marketing competencies of frontline employees at the high customer contact areas of Commercial Bank of Ethiopia. Data for the study were collected through self-administered questionnaires distributed to 600 customers and 200 frontline employees of 30 Commercial Bank Branches of Ethiopia. Collected data was analyzed using SPSS software package. The results depicted a significant positive relationship between marketing competency of frontline employees and customer satisfaction. All marketing competency parameters have positive and significant association with customers' satisfaction. The result shows that most employees working at the frontline areas did not have most of the basic marketing competency parameter. As a result, most customers were not satisfied with the services provided by commercial bank of Ethiopia and ranked it's customer service quality as poor. The research identified basic marketing competency dearth of commercial bank of Ethiopia employees in managing customers and has managerial implication of how to staff the work force with the marketing competency needed to deliver quality customer service.

Key words: Customers Satisfaction, Marketing Competency, Factors Affecting Employees Competency, Frontline Employees, and Service Delivery Standards.

INTRODUCTION

A firm with strong marketing competencies is able to use its deep understanding of customer needs to foster development of new products and organize marketing activities that provide a unique value to consumers (Day, 1994). The behaviour and attitude of contact employees can influence customers' perceptions of the service quality (Coggins, 2003). On the other

hand Frontline employees are the first lines of contact in the organization and they are the main players to create the first and long lasting impression on the organization and project a positive image in the minds of customers. They are also capable of creating awareness, understanding need among customers to use the organization's programs, products and

services effectively to generate revenue (Akinyele, 2010). Competent employees play a crucial role to create satisfied and loyal customers. They are the actors who appear front stage in the service drama when they serve customers (Lovell and Wirtz, 2004). "Competency is more than just knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands by drawing on and mobilizing psychological resources including skills and attitudes in a particular context" (Akinyele, 2010).

According to Rychen and Salganik (2003), marketing competency involves the ability to meet complex demands by drawing on and mobilizing psychological skills and attitudes in a particular context (Rychen and Salganik, 2003).

Competencies are observable behaviours, knowledge, skills, and abilities of marketing personnel to attract and retain customers by delivering quality service to the customers (Commonwealth Virginia, 2007).

Potluri and Zeleke, (2009), conducted a survey in 50 companies in Ethiopia through self-administered questionnaires distributed to 300 customers and 500 employees. The result shows that most employees working at the front desk service areas did not demonstrate most of the basic marketing competency indicators. The research identified basic competency deficiencies of Ethiopian employees in handling customers and has managerial implications of how to staff the work force with the skills needed to deliver quality service.

Competent frontline employees are invaluable assets for any organization's survival in the dynamic and competitive business environment. In commercial bank of Ethiopia where researcher conducted the study, there is a high customer-employee contact. These Frontline employees are the main interface of the organization that play crucial role to delight customers and serve as key source of competitive advantage for the bank. Competent employees understand and play their roles and responsibilities to achieve organizational goals and objectives, by applying the marketing competency parameters. Frontline employees with marketing capabilities and process, applied to the collective knowledge, skills and resources of the firm to its market related needs, create satisfied customer.

However, there is long queue in the frontlines at which customers are forced to waste much of their time in commercial bank of Ethiopia. The researcher also made baseline survey to see the marketing competency of frontline employees and customer satisfaction and identified customers complaining on the bank for its poor marketing service. These factors have a negative impact on the image of the banks and also lead to dissatisfaction and lose its valuable customers in light of competitive banking business environment if and when created.

It is a known fact that the success and failure of any organization, be it private business or public organization, mainly depends on marketing competency of frontline employees, because they are the first line of contact in the organization and they are the main player to create the first/lasting impression of the organization and project a positive image within the minds of customer and the customer viewed these employees as if they are the organization. In selected branches of Commercial bank of Ethiopia, where the researcher

had an informal and formal communication with some of its customers, it was learnt that the customers are not satisfied with frontline employee customer service. From the customers' point of view, as per the understanding of the researcher, frontline employees are, Core part of the service (visible element of the service, deliver the service and significantly affect the service quality), the service firm (represents the service firm) and the brand (frontline employees and the service are core part of the brand and the human element is the most important).

Within this background, effects of marketing competency on customer satisfactions are compelling the attention of all banking industry around the world, and Ethiopia is not an exception. In line with these issues, the following research questions were addressed in the study.

1. Do frontline employees acquire basic marketing competencies and capable to deliver customer quality service?
2. Is service delivery consistent (standardized) or are there noticeable variations in service performance across banks branch?
3. Are resources utilized appropriately or is there wastage and loss as a result of trying to accommodate customer demands or complaints?
4. What are the competency levels required in marketing competencies to meet customer satisfaction?

RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW

Competency is a fundamental standard of skill, knowledge, ability or behavioral characteristics that an individual needs to perform his/her work successfully. It is a combination of several factors like motives, traits, self-concepts, attitudes or values, skills and abilities all of which are required from an individual to function properly and satisfy the needs and interest of customers as well as achieve the objectives of the organization (Potluri and Zeleke, 2009). Competencies are a set of identified behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities that directly and positively impact the success of employees in the organization (Commonwealth Virginia, 2007). The nature of competency is described in different literature as: "The behaviors, knowledge and motivations that is required to be effective in a job" (Summers, 2004). Competencies are individual capabilities that can be linked to enhanced performance by individuals or teams (Mathis and Jackson, 2010). Competencies are what make your organization unique and are the skills your organization possesses that set it apart from its peers. They are the sources of competitive advantage and the building blocks to future opportunities. Competence is a bundle of skills rather than a discrete skill. Competency is an integration of skills, abilities, knowledge and capabilities. Understanding and developing marketing competencies is necessary to enable the organization to exploit the opportunities they provide (Hamel and Prahalad, 1994). Competencies may be considered as talent-based interpretations of business needs. This view defines competencies as demonstrable characteristics

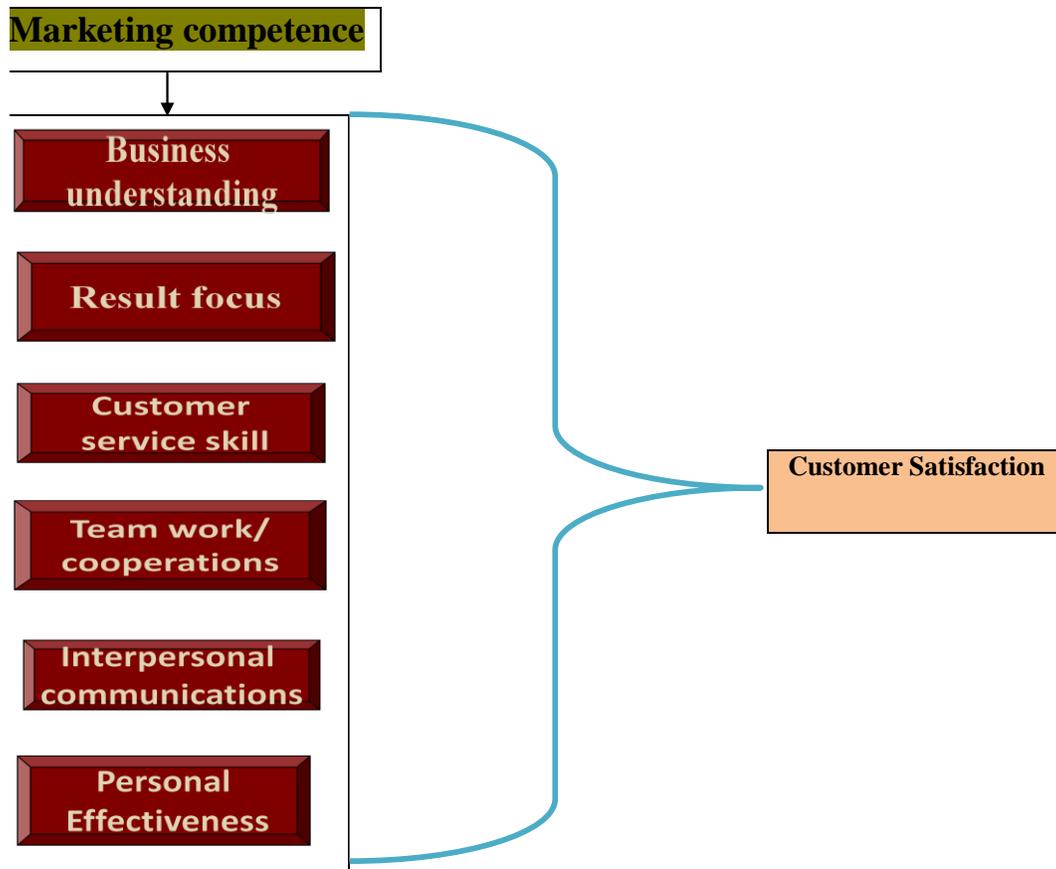


Figure 1. Theoretical/conceptual frame work of the study

of the person, including knowledge, skills and behaviours that enable performance (Ledford, 2012).

Marketing competencies

Marketing competencies refers to an organization's unique abilities to gain knowledge about customers and provide benefits sought by customers (Woodside et al., 1999). Marketing competencies are defined as the capabilities and processes designed to apply the collective knowledge, skills and resources of the firm to its market related needs (Wang et al., 2004). Also these competencies are skills that help place a firm in close proximity to its customers (Prahalad and Hamel, 1994). The important elements of competencies are "customer knowledge", "customer access" and "competitor knowledge" (Fowler et al., 2000) (Figure 1).

Importance of assessing employees' competency

Assessing the level of employees' competency helps organizations to communicate desired behaviors, control costs, and increase customer satisfaction. It can also serve as the foundation to hire, train, and develop employees. It's necessary

to continually assess the competency level of employee in order to ensure that employees in a particular job/occupation have the necessary skills, abilities and attitude to perform the needed activities and achieve organizational objectives. It also help identify the skills employees possess as well as any gaps existing between actual and required skill levels and to close these gaps. Assessing the competency level of employees helps management to identify and close gaps in individual's capabilities for better customer service. To identify current skill levels and the needs of training and development to meet skill requirements of a particular position and to make necessary changes in the training curriculum based on the gap (Potluri and Zeleke, 2009).

The competency level of employees is used to integrate selection, training, appraisal and compensation. On the other hand, competencies are used: As a strategy to strengthen the link with organizational culture, results, and individual performance by emphasizing competencies that are needed across occupational specialties. As a tool to help describe work and what is required from employees in jobs in a broader, more comprehensive way to identify and close the gaps in individuals "capabilities and the requirement" of the position. As a method to align individual and team performance with

organization, vision, strategies and the external environment (United States Office of Personnel Management, 1999).

Marketing competency of frontline employees

Frontline employees are the first lines of contact in the organization and they are the main players to create the first /lasting impression of the organization and project a positive image within the minds of clients. They are also capable of creating awareness, understanding, and need among customers to use the organization's programs, products, and services effectively to generate revenue. Employees play a crucial role to create satisfied and loyal customers. They are the actors who appear front stage in the service drama when they serve customers. Elements of the drama can be related to the service design and delivery: the setting (service scope, social and physical characteristics (with script) performance (service delivery) cast of actors and actresses (service providers) and audience (customers)" (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2004).

The Commonwealth of Virginia identified the following six most important marketing skills and core competencies (Understanding of the business, Results focus/orientations, Customer service, Teamwork and co-operation, Interpersonal communication and Personal effectiveness) to be possessed by frontline service employees that help them to work towards profitability of their organization and provide quality service to satisfy customers (Common Wealth of Virginia, 2007).

Based on the above reviewed literature; the researcher used to the following independent variable to analyze the effects of marketing competency of frontline employees on customer satisfaction.

Business understanding

For successful business performance, an organization needs to build employees' competency around a sound strategic understating of its business to enable them know how to deliver timely, relevant, complete, accurate, and useful services to both internal and external customers in line with the organization's services and priorities. Frontline employees should understand the organization's mission, objectives, goals and its service quality standards. It is also these frontline employees who can identify customers' problems within their work environment and bring forth immediate solutions. However, when they are faced with challenging work problems that cannot be resolved on their own, they should be able to consult their supervisors and others for better methods of solving the problems. Customers do not want to do business with staff that do not know the answers to their questions or handle their requests and problems unempathetically (Zolkiewski et.al, 2007).

Result orientation

Competent employees carry out their activities with effective management of time and resources to meet/exceed expected results within time budget and quality standards. They focus action and resources on the achievement of strategic goals and

priorities of the organization. This can be successfully achieved when all employees in the organization have a result-oriented culture with the attitude of focusing on excellence and achievement of results. Result orientation is a concern for surpassing standard of excellence. The standard may be one's own performance (striving for improvement) ; an objective measure (results orientation) ; challenging goals one has set or even improving or surpassing what has already been done (continuous improvements)" (BC Public Service, 2002).

Customer service skills

Competent frontline employees have both technical capabilities and behavioral competencies to understand and respond to customers' needs timely, accurately and in a respectful manner. The first element's technical competencies are predominately about acquired knowledge and technical abilities and skills about the service they provide. It is defined in terms of the specialized requirements of an occupation. These competencies are often easier to see, train, and develop. The second element is behavioral competencies, which is deep-seated qualities of an individual (attitudes, traits, and approaches) to communicate effectively and work cooperatively with team members and the ability to understand and help customers needs and interests (Common Wealth of Virginia ,2007). The quality of service delivered by an organization is not only related to technical and operational knowledge of employees but also their awareness of customers' satisfaction as extremely important part and top goal of the job. According to Lovelock and Wirtz (2004), the quality of service delivered by an organization is related to its frontline employee competencies (reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy).Reliability: the employees' ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately time after time. It refers to doing right the first time and every time thereafter.

Teamwork and co-operation skills

Team work and Co-operation Skills are the abilities of employees to work together cooperatively within diverse teams, workgroups and across the organization to achieve group and organizational goals (BC Public Service, 2002). No one seems to know what is going on outside his or her own immediate responsibilities and start to say, "I don't know- it is not my Job". This leads to a harsh atmosphere of the service delivery environment that results in poor customers' service (Macaulay and Cook, 1995).

Interpersonal communication skills

The service delivery activities at front desk involve a high interaction of employees and customers each day in which effective communication and problem-solving skills of frontline employees are critical. It is enough to know services policies or the job responsibilities to deliver quality services but it is also necessary to communicate openly and honestly with co-workers and customers. Besides, they should treat each

other with respect and resolve any conflict in a positive way to create harmony at the work environment (U.S. Department of Labor, 2006). Customers assume that all elements in the processes may frustrate when the system breaks down due to lack of employee communication with each other about the customers problems and lack of ability to provide a kind and complete service process (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2004).

Personal effectiveness

Employees are required to be effective and efficient in utilizing organizational resources and effective in delivering the service to achieve organizational mission and objectives. Frontline employees should be personally effective in achieving results, solving problems; planning and managing their own time and works (Common Wealth of Virginia, 2007). Employees working at the front desk should prepare themselves for potential problems before they occur, accept new ideas and new ways of doing activities with a positive attitude; organize and prioritize their own work / activities to stay on track towards implementing decisions and solve problems at the right time and in the right way (Lovelock and Wirtz ,2004).

Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is the extent to which a product's perceived performance matches buyers` expectations. If the product performance falls short of expectations, the buyer is dissatisfied. If performance matches or exceeds expectations, the buyer is satisfied or delighted. Customer satisfaction with a purchase depends upon the product's performance relative to a buyer's expectations. Customer satisfaction is a term most widely used in the business and commerce industry. It is a business term explaining about a measurement of the kind of products and services provided by a company to meet its customer's expectation. It is well established that satisfied customers are key to long-term business success (Zeithami et al., 1996). Customer satisfaction is generally described as the full meeting of one's expectations (Oliver, 1980). Customer satisfaction is the feeling or attitude of a customer towards a product or service after being used. Customer satisfaction is a major outcome of marketing activity whereby it serves as a link between the various stages of consumer buying behavior. If customers are satisfied with a particular service offering after its use, then they are likely to engage in repeat purchase and try line extensions (East,1997).

Fornell (1992) identifies satisfaction as an overall evaluation based on the total purchase and consumption experience focused on the perceived product or service performance compared with pre-purchase expectations over time. Oliver (1997, 1999), regards satisfaction as a fulfillment response or judgment, focused on product or service, which is evaluated for one-time consumption or ongoing consumption.

Customer satisfaction is widely recognized as a key influence in the formation of customers' future purchase intentions (Taylor and Baker, 1994). Satisfied customers are also likely to tell others about their favorable experiences and thus engage

in positive word of mouth advertising (File and Prince, 1992).

Objective of the study

The main objective of this study is to assess the effect of marketing competencies of frontline employees on customer satisfaction at the high customers contact areas of commercial bank of Ethiopia. The specific objectives of the study include:

1. To assess the impact of marketing competency of frontline employees on customer satisfaction.
2. To assess the Marketing competency level of frontline employees.
3. To assess factors related to frontline employees that will cause low quality of service delivery.
4. To assess the key dimensions of marketing competency and customer satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

Due to the wide geographical coverage and large population of the study, the scope of the research was limited only to 30 branches of commercial bank of Ethiopia. The researcher used the standardized questionnaires taken from commonwealth of Virginia competency assessment tool and adopted accordingly. The population for the study includes both front line employees and all types of customers of the commercial bank of Ethiopia. Simple random sampling technique was used to select sample employees and customers from the stratified population across 30 branches of commercial banks of Ethiopia. A self-administered questionnaire of both open ended and closed ended forms was used to collect the relevant data from 600 customers and 200 employees of 30 commercial banks of Ethiopia. Two types of questionnaires (for employees and for customers) were used to collect the necessary data from the selected sample employees and customers. The questionnaire for employees was structured around six marketing competence areas of business understanding, result orientation, customer service, team work, interpersonal communication and personal effectiveness. The questionnaire for customers was designed to collect data supplementary to the data collected from employees and data related to competency of employees that might not be directly answered by them. The collected data from both employees and customers were summarized, coded and processed by using SPSS software package. The data was analyzed and interpreted using the statistical tools of frequency tables, cross tabulation and descriptive frequencies (mean responses) to answer the research question and achieve the desired objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Commercial bank of Ethiopia operates in a complex and dynamic business environment in which marketing competency of frontline employees is a critical success factor to deliver the

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for business understanding.

Parameter	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Business understanding	200	1.25	4.50	2.7533	0.64484
Valid N (list wise)	200				

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Result focus

Parameter	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Result focus	200	1.40	4.00	2.5447	0.70925
Valid N (list wise)	200				

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for customer service.

Parameter	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Customer service	200	1.20	4.40	2.6526	0.87901
Valid N (list wise)	200				

expected quality service at all levels of the bank. The frontline employees' competency was assessed using the basic marketing competency parameters such as; Business understanding, Results focus/orientation, Customer service, Team work/cooperation, Interpersonal communication and Personal effectiveness. Under each competency parameter, there are sub competency parameters used as key indicators. In analyzing the result, the responses of the first three measurements never, rarely, and occasionally shows the competency parameters are considered as negative and on the other hand two measurements frequently and always are considered as a positive response to the questions.

Business understanding

Understanding organizational mission and objectives, technical and operational skills of the services, ability to solve work related problems and knowing when and where to obtain assistance were key sub competency indicators asked under this major marketing competency parameter (Table 1). Most frontline employees of selected branches of commercial bank of Ethiopia do not have a clear understanding of the banks mission, objectives, and goals. Besides, most of them do not have the technical and operational knowledge of the service they provide to customers. However, most of them know where and when to obtain assistance when faced with challenging work related problems.

Result focus

Under this competency parameter, participants are asked five questions regarding application of innovative ideas, timely performance of activities, working process improvement,

prioritizing activities and achieving own performance target (Table 2). Based on the data obtained most frontline employees innovative ideas (new and better ways of doing activities) did not apply to improve their working process of service delivery. Frontline employees of the selected branches of the bank did not perform activities on/ before dead line. Service personnel at the selected branches of commercial bank of Ethiopia lack continual improvement of work processes to increase performance result. Organizing and prioritizing their own work/activities to stay on track with organizational goals and objectives have not been experienced by most participants. Frontline employees of the selected branches did not set and achieve own performance targets aligned with the business plan.

Customer service

Under Customer service competency parameter, participants are asked five questions about service delivery; to meet needs and interests of the customer, capability to collect and implement customer satisfaction feedback, competency to put customer satisfaction as part and top goal of the job, service delivery accuracy and time, and treatment of the customers (Table 3). The participants/respondents never, rarely and frequently consider the needs and interest of customers while delivering the service. It is identified that large members of frontline employees weakly collect and implement customer satisfactions feedback to increase service quality. Most of frontline employees of selected branches of commercial bank of Ethiopia did not set customers satisfaction as a part and top goal of their jobs. This shows that they did not deliver the service to meet the needs and expectations of customers. Operational efficiency (efficiency in time and resource

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Team work.

Parameter	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Team work	200				
Valid N (list wise)	200	1.40	4.80	3.1842	1.05465

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for Interpersonal communication.

Parameter	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Interpersonal communication	200				
Valid N (list wise)	200	1.61	4.37	3.0843	0.76283

Table 6. Descriptive statistics for personal effectiveness.

Parameter	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal effectiveness	200				
Valid N (list wise)	200	1.67	4.33	2.8224	0.67183

utilization) of the service personnel is weak. At the same time as delivering the service most of participants did not treat all customers (individual corporate, and retailers) equally.

Team working

Under team working marketing competency parameter, participants were asked five questions; team work participation, cooperation, concern for needs and interest of others, information and experience sharing, and mutual respect among co-workers (Table 4). Participation, cooperation and information, opinion and experience sharing, the sub marketing competency indicators of team work are rarely and occasionally demonstrated. During service delivery most of the participants work independently and are not willing to work in a team to meet or exceed clients expectation. Furthermore, there is no culture of sharing information, opinions and experiences with each other among the staff members. The frontline employees of the selected branches have a satisfactory level of mutual respect among work members. It is also clear from the discussion result, most participants weakly consider the needs and interests of their staff members while taking actions or performing the service delivery activities because most frontline employees like to work independently and are not willing to work in team.

Interpersonal communication

Four interpersonal communication competency indicators questions, mutual respect among staff; communicates with openness and honesty among other staff members, conflict resolution and interpersonal cooperation were asked (Table 5). Most participants frequently and always demonstrate the mutual respect among staff members competency indicator of

interpersonal communications. However, most participants; never, rarely, and occasionally demonstrate open and honest communication with other staff members. Also there is no smooth and positive way of resolving any conflict among members or help co-workers when they face difficulty on their jobs. All of these factors are indications for the existence of weak interpersonal communication among the employees of the frontline.

Personal effectiveness

Under this sub marketing competency indicator (personal effectiveness); six questions of problem solving, cost benefit analysis, resource utilization, activity organization, problem anticipation and attitudes to accept new ways of doing activities were asked to assess personal effectiveness of frontline employees (Table 6). Most frontline employees are less competent, personally ineffective and incapable of solving work related problems of service delivery system at the right time and in the right way. It is also clear from the response that more than half of the participants randomly applied the cost, benefit and risk analysis of their action. On the other hand, organizing and prioritizing their own work to stay on the right track toward their target was weakly practiced by most participants. Organizational resources can be used efficiently and effectively when the basic service expectations of customers are identified and prioritized based on customer importance, company resources, and ability to deliver the expected service. Majority of the participants did not prepare themselves for potential problems before the occurrence of the problem, have negative attitude to accept and implement new ideas and new ways of performing the service delivery activities and are not ready to changes for continual performance improvement of the service delivery system.

Table 7. Descriptive statistics for customer satisfactions.

Parameter	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Customer satisfactions	600	1.80	3.70	2.6900	0.45567
Valid N (list wise)	600				

Customer satisfaction

According to assessment made majority of customers of the selected branches of commercial bank of Ethiopia replied with average response of 2.69 and standard deviation of 0.456 showing that most customers did not get the required level of service. This implies that large numbers of the customers are not satisfied with level of service provided to them by frontline employees of selected branches of commercial bank of Ethiopia (Table 7). About 70.5% of the customers rated the overall quality of the services provided by the bank as poor.

Service delivery standards

Selected branches of commercial bank of Ethiopia, has standardized performance procedures that frontline employees should follow across all branches whilst delivering services. The existence of such a standardized performance procedures is an integral part of the overall quality of a service. The existence of predetermined standards serves as a common language among employees and customers to measure and value individual performance of the service delivery activities. The existences of predetermined standards steer those frontline employees to deliver consistent service at all branches; so as to steer clear of conspicuous deviation in quality. It is also vital for fast planning, organizing, implementation, and problem solving decision making activities by using predetermined standards. In most of the branches frontline employees mentioned that the performance standards are prepared without consulting them and it is not modified and aligned with the changing business environment of the banking industry.

Findings

Creating marketing competency of frontline employees are not an optional competitive strategy which may, or may not, be adopted to differentiate one bank from another, today it is essential to any complex and dynamic business profitability and survival. The major concern of the study was to assess empirically the relationship between business understanding, result focus, customer service, team work, interpersonal communication, personal effectiveness and customer satisfaction in the selected branches of commercial bank of Ethiopia. To achieve the stipulated objectives, the study used primary data collection through self administered questionnaire collected from 600 customer respondents to supplement questionnaire administered and collected from 200 frontline employees of selected branches of commercial bank of Ethiopia.

The study assesses the effect of marketing competency (business understanding, result focus/orientation, customer service, team work/cooperation, interpersonal communication and personal effectiveness) of frontline employees on customer satisfaction in the selected branches of commercial bank of Ethiopia. Further, it is worth noting that the findings of this study reveal that the six marketing competency parameters had effects on the customer satisfaction in the selected branches of commercial bank Ethiopia.

Employees are assigned to the frontline position in spite of their marketing competencies (Business understanding, Result orientation, Customer service skills, Team work / Co-operations, Interpersonal communication skill and Personal effectiveness) and capabilities to deliver customer service. Moreover, there is no adequate work related training for these employees working at the high customer contact service areas of checker and maker. Even though, frontline service employees are the blood line of the organization, most frontline employees of the selected branches, do not have enough understanding of the aspiration and strategic objectives of the banks. They also have no technical and operational knowledge of the service they provide and incapable of solving problems on their own.

Most frontline employees are less result oriented in delivering customer service. The majority of frontline employees did not prioritize activities and set performance targets aligned with the plans and objectives of the bank and this resulted in wastage of time and resources in performing both value adding and non value adding activities. The services delivered by most front line employees are not customer oriented. These employees give prior attention to their operational duties and responsibilities than considering the needs, interests, and expectations of customers while delivering the service. Moreover, there is no culture of collecting customers "satisfaction feed back" to improve the service delivery system and customers' satisfaction.

There is no adequate team working and interpersonal co-operation culture among the frontline employees of the selected commercial bank of Ethiopia branches. Most of them work independently. This locks the opportunity of sharing experience and learning from others for operational efficiency and customer service excellence. As a result, most of them are personally ineffective and unable to respond to the ever-changing customer demands of quality services in the service industry.

The quality of service provided by the selected branches of commercial bank of Ethiopia does not meet the needs and expectations of large number of customers due to low quality of service provided by its frontline employees. Most customers

rated the quality of service provided by the branches of commercial bank of Ethiopia as poor. This is mainly due to lack of marketing competency of frontline employees. The selected branches of commercial bank of Ethiopia has a standardized performance procedure but it was formulated without involving the frontline employees; who are the owners and implementers of it and it is not revised in line with the changing and dynamic business conditions of the banking industry.

Generally, most frontline employees of the selected branches of commercial bank of Ethiopia lack marketing competency. This implies that most of the frontline employees are not competent enough to deliver the quality of service promised by the banks. As a result, most customers are not satisfied with the quality of the service and considered customer service as poor.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings and conclusions reached, the following recommendations are forwarded to commercial bank of Ethiopia to possibly improve the marketing competency of the frontline employees in a way that boosts customer satisfaction. The bank should exert its utmost effort in increasing the marketing competency of frontline employees to meet customers' expectation up to the standard. The parameters of marketing competency as presented in the analysis influences customers satisfaction. For the bank to better satisfy its customers, it should emphasize on parameters of marketing competency (Business understanding, Result focus, Customer service, Team work, Interpersonal communication and Personal effectiveness) of its frontline employees. It sounds that customers are valuing more of the human element and task efficiency. The bank employees should be imparted with knowledge, skill, abilities and behaviours that would enable them to accomplish their activities in the most effective and efficient manner. Besides, the behaviours of employees have to be shaped in a way that can satisfy the customers of the bank. This could be ensured through both training programmes and pursuing appropriate motivational techniques and increase power to frontline supervisor, reward employees for good services and help employees to bring into being their own marketing competency to improve customer service. But, when designing the training sessions care must be taken to address the parameters of marketing competency. Introducing equipment, materials and networking technologies of the state-of-art-technology would facilitate and ensure prompt service delivery in the bank that would in turn enhance customer satisfaction.

Business understanding, Result focus, Customer service, Team work, Interpersonal communication and Personal effectiveness are the most important marketing competency parameters to form satisfied customers. Of course, the findings showed that there is strong correlation with the independent variables (marketing competency) and the dependent variable (customer satisfaction). These indicate almost equal level of

emphasis has to be given to the determinants. The bank should build its strategy on marketing competencies of frontline employees, because marketing competency of frontline employees represent the bloodline of the organization. Branches of commercial bank of Ethiopia should have strong marketing competencies that can use its deep understanding of customer needs, to promote development of new products and organize marketing activities that provide unique values and place in close proximate to its customers through careful recruitment, effective training and empowerment. To increase the customer satisfaction, management should be highly committed in terms of planning, leadership, implementation and follow-up in a way that leads to the development of a corporate culture that internalizes a marketing competency orientation in all of its activities.

For customers to remain satisfied and remain customer, everyone in the organization has to take the responsibility for customers, by setting high standards and sticking to those standards. The bank should set customers benchmark marketing competencies not just from what similar service companies are doing, but what the best service providers in general are doing. There is a mismatch between the increasing number of customers and the number of frontline employees servicing these customers especially at the maker and checker point. This can affect employees' operational efficiency and the quality of service delivered as they become bored and tired with the burden of serving a large number of customers. Customers also waste most of their time waiting in long queue to get the various services. Therefore, the selected branches of commercial bank of Ethiopia should increase the number of frontline employees to go with the increasing number of its customers in line with their marketing competencies.

Management of the bank should therefore be aware of the need to include all marketing competency parameters in their effort to improve customers' satisfaction. The bank should not wait until complaints arise from customers about service quality. An organization that continuously monitors the satisfaction of its customers can improve its customer services by listening to the evaluations of customers.

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Conflict of interest

Author has none to declare.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Responses of Front line Employees in percentage for different research questions used under six Independent Variables.

Questions posed to Front line Employees:	1	2	3	4	5
Variable 1: Business understanding					
Understand the bank's mission, objectives and goals	26.32%	30.26%	32.90%	3.95%	6.57%
Know the technical and operational aspects of the service	32.90%	42.10%	17.11%	5.26%	2.63%
Capable to solve problems related to external factors affecting the work	23.32%	32.89%	19.74%	19.74%	3.95%
Know when and where to obtain assistance when faced with challenging problems	2.63%	13.16%	21.05%	38.15%	25.02%
Variable 2: Results focus					
Apply innovative ideas (new and better ways of doing activities)	25%	51.31%	13.16%	7.89%	2.64%
Perform activities on or before dead lines	21.05%	32.89%	26.31%	14.47%	5.28%
Continually improving work processes to increase performance results	15.79%	34.21%	15.79%	26.32%	7.89%
Prioritize activities and work accordingly	15.79%	39.47%	26.32%	13.16%	5.26%
Sets and achieves own performance targets aligned with the business plan	13.16%	32.89%	26.32%	14.47%	13.16%
Variable 3: Customer service					
Deliver service to meet needs and interests of customers	19.74%	32.90%	14.47%	14.47%	14.47%
Collect and implement customer satisfaction feedback to increase service quality	23.68%	31.58%	27.63%	9.21%	7.90%
Put customer satisfaction as extremely important part and top goal of the job	21.05%	32.90%	26.32%	14.47%	5.26%
Deliver services accurately and on time	13.16%	19.74%	19.74%	15.78%	15.78%
Treat all customers (corporate, retailers, and individual customers) equally	32.89%	28.95%	17.12%	13.16%	7.88%
Variable 4: Team work					
Participate willingly and actively in the team to achieve common goals	15.79%	22.37%	39.47%	15.79%	6.58%
Work cooperatively and with team work to meet or exceed client expectations	15.79%	22.37%	26.32%	15.79%	19.73%
Take actions that demonstrate consideration for the feelings and needs of others	3.95%	10.53%	44.73%	18.42%	22.37%
Openly share information, opinions and experiences with other work groups	15.79%	18.42%	39.47%	13.16%	13.16%
Build trust and respect among team members	10.53%	13.16%	30.26%	28.95%	17.10%
Variable 5: Interpersonal communication					
Treats others with respect and get respected by others	9.21%	15.79%	19.74%	32.90%	22.36%
Communicate openly and honestly with other staff members	7.89%	26.32%	36.85%	14.47%	14.47%
Helps co-workers when they face difficulty on their jobs	7.90%	18.42%	39.47%	21.05%	13.16%
Resolves any conflicts smoothly and in a positive way	9.21%	11.84%	38.16%	19.74%	21.05%
Variable 6: Personal effectiveness					
Solve problems at the right time and in the right way	22.37%	32.89%	27.63%	9.21%	7.90%
Consider costs, benefits and risks when making and implementing decisions	14.47%	26.32%	21.05%	22.37%	15.79%
Use time and other resources wisely	13.16%	6.58%	17.11%	39.47%	23.68%
Organizes and prioritizes own work/activities to stay on track towards targets	25%	30.26%	27.63%	9.21%	7.9%
Prepares oneself for potential problems before they occur	31.58%	26.32%	11.84%	14.47%	15.79%
Accept new ideas and new ways of doing activities with a positive attitude	21.05%	15.79%	28.95%	18.42%	15.79%

Where; 1= never, 2= rarely, 3= occasionally, 4= frequently, 5 =always.

Appendix 2. Responses of customers in percentage for different questions asked under dependent variable

Q	Questions asked to Customers	1	2	3	4
2.1	Are the Frontline Employees/ Customer Service Officers willing to provide information, advice and support when you are in need of it	26.32%	31.58%	14.47%	27.63%
2.2	Provide prompt and timely service to you	31.58%	32.32%	24.26%	11.84%
2.3	handle your complaints constructively	35%	35.26%	17.63%	12.62%
2.4	Are polite and courteous with you	22.89%	33.95%	27.12%	16.04%
2.5	Willing to listen to your individual point of view	32.90%	42.10%	12.11%	12.89%
2.6	Deliver full range of services with clearly stated terms and conditions to meet your changing needs	42.10%	32.90%	12.20%	12.80%
2.7	Deliver the required level of service promised by the bank	32.90%	42.90%	14.11%	10.09%
2.8	Their behaviour makes you feel that you can trust them and have confidence in them	43.90%	35.10%	17.10%	3.9%
2.9	They provide equitable and dependable service which does not vary over time	37.90%	42.10%	17.11%	2.89%
2.10	They provide complete and accurate information at the right time	36.40%	43.10%	16.10%	4.40%

Where; 1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4= strongly agree

Appendix 3. Pearson's Correlation matrix.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	1						
2	0.453**	1					
3	0.435**	0.668**	1				
4	0.655**	0.439**	0.561**	1			
5	0.568**	0.656**	0.675**	0.856**	1		
6	0.596**	0.625**	0.563**	0.381**	0.401**	1	
7	0.675**	0.765**	0.564**	0.567**	0.435**	0.564**	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Source: Author, Computed from survey data, 2013. Note: where 1 = Business understanding, 2= result focus (orientation), 3= customer service, 4 = teamwork, 5 = interpersonal communication, 6 = personal effectiveness, 7 = customer satisfaction