

A Preliminary Study on Customer Orientation Amongst Non-Academic Staffs in Public Higher Learning Institution

Syahrul Hezrin Mahmud

Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Kuala Terengganu, (Chendering), 21080, Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu, MALAYSIA

Tel: 609-6175255 Fax: 609-6175262 E-mail: Syahr400@Tganu.uitm.edu.my

Najdah Abd Aziz

Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Kuala Terengganu, (Chendering), 21080, Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu, MALAYSIA

Tel: 609-6175255 Fax: 609-6175262 E-mail: Najda329@Tganu.uitm.edu.my

Fatimah Zainab Dzulkifli

Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Kuala Terengganu, (Chendering), 21080, Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu, MALAYSIA

Tel: 609-6175255 Fax: 609-6175262 -Email: Fatim472@tganu.uitm.edu.my

Dr Muhammad Abi Sofian Abdul Halim

(Correspondent author)

Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Kuala Terengganu, (Chendering), 21080, Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu, MALAYSIA

Tel: 609-6175255 Fax: 609-6175262 -Email: abisofian@tganu.uitm.edu.my

Abstract

The readiness of the staff in term of attitude and behavior towards customer orientation is the key factor to deliver quality services and hence, ensuring customer satisfaction. The objective of this study is to identify on the attitudinal and behavioral aspects of non academic staff towards the concept of customer orientation. This study comprise of four variables; customer orientation, leadership, organizational culture and interpersonal skills. The demographic aspect is also considered as one of the components that contribute towards customer orientation. The designed questionnaire is organized into five sections according to the variables and demographic factor. The questionnaires are being distributed to 30 non academic staff. The respondents consisted of six departments at UiTM Kuala Terengganu which included the Administration, Student Affair, Treasury, Academic Affair, Library, and Facility Services. Data were collected using self-administered questionnaire given to the respondents. This data is then analyzed using SPSS. The finding shows that there is a significant relationship between leadership variable, organizational culture and interpersonal skills with customer orientation. The researchers concluded that all variables namely leadership, organizational culture and interpersonal skills have positive relationship towards customer orientation. In future, this research should focus on the relationship between customer orientation and customer satisfaction.

Keyword(s): Customer, Orientation, Leadership, Organizational culture, Interpersonal skills, Satisfaction.

1. INTRODUCTION

"Customer orientation" has been defined in various ways (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Narver and Slater, 1990). It is usually associated with other terminologies, such as "market orientation", "customer focus", "customer-driven", and "customer-centered". "Customer orientation" is also the business of putting the customer first in everything the company does, and organizing all activities around the basic objective of delivering superior value (Webster, 1994). Chi-Kuang Cheng et. al. (2004) found that, from their literature review, the importance of fostering an organizational culture was neglected in developing a customer oriented service system. They also added that to achieve successful change, employee commitment is necessary. Nor azman et. al. (2007), stressed that customer are the main element for quality initiative in higher learning institution. Dissatisfied employees imply dissatisfied customers. It is therefore, essential that employees understand how the enhancement of customer-oriented service activities can benefit all stakeholders. Furthermore, based on a managerial biased assumption, organizational culture is viewed as a level or a tool to be used by managers to shape performance outcomes. Study done by Ruth and Wayne (2002) identified that one factor which has been increasingly discussed as an important driver of a sales person's customer orientation is that of leadership style. If a sales person's supervisor expresses a strong

customer orientation this should have a strong impact on the behaviour of his or her subordinates. While referring to Lloyd and Emmanuel (2001), this study contributes empirical verification that leadership style is a critical antecedent of market orientation. The findings that instrumental leadership constitutes a key barrier to market orientation whilst participative and supportive leadership styles are pivotal facilitating factors are important for two linked reasons. First, in terms of the barriers and second, in relation to the process of market orientation development. Having positive interpersonal skills increase the productivity in the organization since the number of conflicts are reduced. In informal situations, it allows easy communication and comfortable. People with good interpersonal skills can generally control the emotions that emerge in difficult situations and respond appropriately, instead of being overwhelmed by emotion. Healthy interpersonal skills reduce stress, reduce conflict, improve communication, enhance intimacy, increase understanding, and promote joy. Interpersonal skills was positively related to operator self-reported performance, but was not related to supervisor ratings or objective measures of performance (Bradley et. al., 2002). Thus, the objective of the study is to investigate the influence of leadership, organizational culture and interpersonal skills towards customer orientation and to identify which variable contributes the most towards the customer orientation in Universiti Teknologi MARA Kuala Terengganu (Chendering)

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

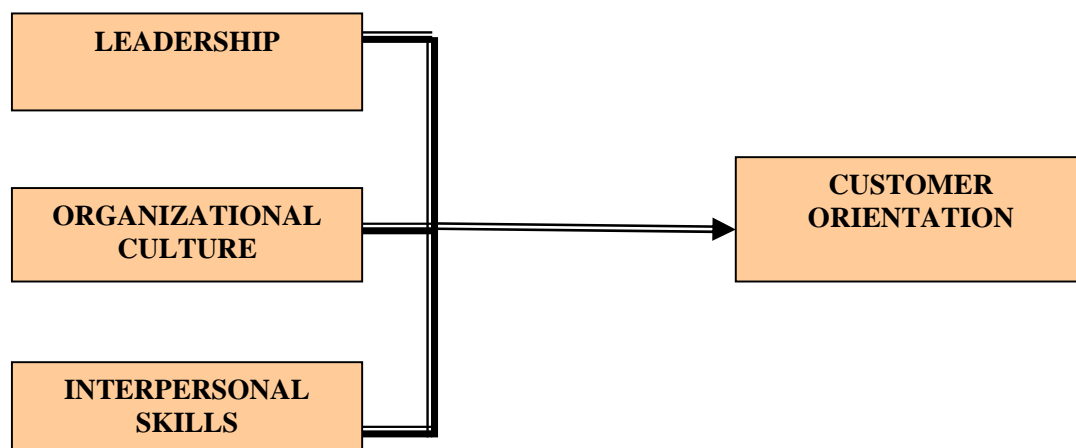
2.1 Respondents and data collection

A questionnaire survey was conducted in June 2009. The population for the study comprised all the non-academic staffs (consisted of six departments namely the Student Affairs and Alumni, Academic Affairs, Administration, Treasury, Library and Facility Services) in Universiti Teknologi MARA, Kuala Terengganu (Chendering). A total of 60 questionnaires were distributed to them using stratified sampling. Due to unforeseen circumstances, a total of 30 usable questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 50%. In order to avoid bias and inaccuracy of data, the researchers will personally administer the data collection process. All the questions in each section were measured by using a 5 point Likert Scale as a scaled response of this type takes no more values, the error introduced by assuming that differences between the discrete points are equal become smaller. In addition, it is a simple method to administer (Zikmund et. al., 2010). While those concerning with the profile of the non academic staff as in Section A is using nominal values. All the data tested using SPSS software.

2.2 Framework

The research will be carried out based on the following framework as illustrated in Figure 1. It shows the association between independent variables namely leadership, organizational culture and interpersonal skills with dependent variable which is customer orientation.

Figure 1: The research framework



2.3 Hypothesis development

Reliability test was done to test the consistency and reliability of items both independent and dependent variable. The Cronbach's Alpha of the reliability test was 0.946 for the Customer Orientation Section, 0.936 for the Leadership Section, 0.947 for the Organizational Culture Section and 0.808 for the Interpersonal

skills Section. Thus, according to Mohd Rafi (2008) the closer the value of Cronbach to 1, the more reliable the scale of the variables. As a conclusion, most of the questions asked are reliable.

There are four hypotheses being developed in conjunction with the objective of the study namely:

H1 : There is a significant relationship between variables as to the customer orientation

The Pearson Correlation analysis as a whole suggested that there is significant relationships between independent variables with customer orientation.

H2 : There is a significant relationship between leadership and customer orientation

The Pearson Correlation analysis as a whole suggested that there is significant relationship between leadership variable with customer orientation

H3 : There is a significant relationship between organizational culture and customer orientation

The Pearson Correlation analysis as a whole suggested that there is a significant relationship between organizational culture variable with customer orientation

H4 : There is a significant relationship between interpersonal skills and customer orientation

The Pearson Correlation analysis as a whole suggested that there is a significant relationship between interpersonal skills variable with customer orientation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result of Pearson Correlation Matrix is shown in Table 1. The table shows the result indicating that independent variables are statistically significant with the p-value of 0.000 at 0.01 significant levels. The analysis on the strength of association, interpersonal skills (Section D) formed the highest Pearson Correlation analysis with $r=0.858$, indicating that this variable has positive correlation with the customer orientation (followed by leadership which represent in section B with $r=0.514$ and as for the organizational culture in section C with $r=0.462$. Based on finding, the result indicates that all the three variables have positive correlation respectively when referred to strength of association. The Pearson Correlation analysis as a whole suggested that there is significant relationships between independent variables with customer orientation.

Table 1: The correlation between independent variables and customer orientation

<i>Variables</i>		<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Organization culture</i>	<i>Interpersonal skills</i>
Customer orientation	Pearson Correlation	0.514(**)	0.462(*)	0.858(**)
	Sig. (2 tailed)	0.004	0.010	0.000
	N	30	30	30

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result of Pearson Correlation Matrix is shown in Table 2. The table shows the result indicating that there is significant relationship between leadership and customer orientation where the r -value is 0.514 and p -value is less than 0.05 ($0.004 < 0.05$). Based on the finding, the result indicates that the leadership has positive correlation towards customer orientation. The Pearson Correlation analysis as a whole suggested that there is significant relationship between leadership variable with customer orientation. This result is supported by Ruth and Wayne (2002), Lloyd and Emmanuel (2001) and William et. al. (2002)

Table 2: The correlation between leadership and customer orientation.

		<i>Mean_Customer Orientation</i>	<i>Mean_Leadership</i>
<i>Mean_Customer Orientation</i>	Pearson Correlation	1	0.514**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.004
	N	30	30
<i>Mean_Leadership</i>	Pearson Correlation	0.514**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.004	
	N	30	30

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The result of Pearson Correlation Matrix is shown in Table 3. The table shows the result indicating that there is significant relationship between organizational culture and customer orientation where the r-value is 0.462 and p-value is less than 0.05 ($0.01 < 0.05$). Based on finding, the result indicates that the organizational culture has a positive correlation towards customer orientation. The Pearson Correlation analysis as a whole suggested that there is a significant relationship between organizational culture variable with customer orientation. This result has been supported by Chi-Kuang Cheng et. al. (2004) and G. Tomas et. al. (2001)

Table 3: The correlation between organizational cultures as to the customer orientation

		Mean_Customer Orientation	Mean_Organizational Culture
Mean_Customer Orientation	Pearson Correlation	1	0.462*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.010
	N	30	30
Mean_Organizational Culture	Pearson Correlation	0.462*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.010	
	N	30	30

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result of Pearson Correlation Matrix is shown in Table 4. The table shows the result indicating that there is a significant relationship between interpersonal skills and customer orientation where the r-value is 0.858 and p-value is less than 0.05 ($0.000 < 0.05$). Based on the finding, the result indicates that the interpersonal skills have a positive correlation towards customer orientation. The Pearson Correlation analysis as a whole suggested that there is a significant relationship between interpersonal skills variable with customer orientation. This result has been supported by Charles et.al. (2007), Hong and Mia (2007), and Christina and Selasinsky (2010).

Table 4: The correlation between interpersonal skills as to the customer orientation

		Mean_Customer Orientation	Mean_Interpersonal Skills
Mean_Customer Orientation	Pearson Correlation	1	0.858**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	30	30
Mean_Interpersonal Skills	Pearson Correlation	0.858**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	30	30

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4. CONCLUSION

All the independent variables namely leadership, organizational culture and interpersonal skills influence the customer orientation. So the leaders or managers should be the first person to strive on, since leadership has significant impact on customer orientation. Besides, the organization should carefully focus on their culture such as toward the aspect of interdepartmental communication, shared value, inter-functional coordination and etc in order to fostering a desirable customer orientation among employees. Customer orientation also is suggested to pervade the organization through the interpersonal influence process among employees. The organization should seriously emphasize on the human capital development in order to train and transform their employee to gather relevant interpersonal skill demanding in fulfilling the needs of customer. A further study on the relationship of customer orientation and customer satisfaction is highly recommended in the future.

REFERENCES

- Bradley J. A., Maria T. G., Robert L. H., Julie F. and Rosemary M.M., (2002), *Measuring Customer Service Orientation Using a Measure of Interpersonal Skills: A Preliminary Test in a Public Service Organization*, Journal Of Business And Psychology, 16(3): 476-476
- Charles E. P., Lind S. P. and Taylor A. J., (2007), *Customer Orientation, Job Satisfaction, and Organizational Commitment, and Reduce Turnover?*, Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management, 27(1):75-88
- Chi-Kuang C. et al (2004), *A Customer-oriented Service-enhancement System: Managing Service Quality*, 14(5):414–425.
- Christina S. and Selasinsky M. V., (2010), *Exporting Services Successfully: Antecedents and Performance Implications of Customer Relationship*, Journal of International Marketing, 18(1):86-108

- G. Tomas M. H., David J. K. Jr. and Taco H. R., (2001), *Organizational learning capacity and internal customer orientation within strategic sourcing units*, Journal of Quality Management, 6(2):173-192
- Hong, M. and Mia, W. B., (2005), *Embracing Customer Service In Libraries*, Emerald Group Publishing, 28(1-2):53-61
- Kohli A. and Jaworski, B. (1990), *Market Orientation: The Construct, Research Proposition, And Managerial Implications*, Journal of Marketing, 54:1-18.
- Lloyd C. H. and Emmanuel O., (2001), *Leadership Style and Market Orientation:An Empirical Study* European Journal of Marketing, 35(5):744-764,
- Mohd Rafi Y., (2008), *SPSS For Business And Social Science Students*, 1st ed., Pustaka Aman Press Sdn. Bhd.
- Narver, J. C. and Slater, F. S. (1990), *The Effect Of A Market Orientation On Business Profitability*, Journal of Marketing, 54:20-35.
- Nor Azman A., Faridah M. and Mohamad Z., (2007), *HRM Issues In Quality Initiative For Malaysian University*, International Journal Of Economics & Management, 1(3):437-452
- Ruth M. S. and Wayne D. H., (2002), *Leadership Style as Driver of Salespeoples' Customer Orientation*, Journal of Market-Focused Management, 5(4):355-376
- Webster, F. E. Jr (1994), *Market-driven Management:Using The New Marketing Concept To Create A Customer-oriented Company*, Wiley, New York, NY.
- William B. L, Frank H., Daniel L. and James S. (2002), *Developing a Leadership-Rich Culture: The Missing Link to Creating a Market-Focused Organization*, Journal of Market-Focused Management, 5(2):149-163
- Zikmund, W. G., Babin, B. J., Carr, J.C. and Griffin, M., *Business Research Methods*, 8th ed., South Western Publications.