

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR, RELATIONAL SELLING BEHAVIOR AND RELATIONSHIP QUALITY IN RETAIL BANKING FROM CUSTOMERS PERSPECTIVE: A PROPOSED MODEL

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Abstract

Retail banks are highly pressured to create, develop and maintain a high quality relationship with their customers to ensure they remain in the competition. Relationship quality is said to rely on exchanges and interactions made between bank employees and customers. In this article, the author propose that a model on relationship quality can be built using causal links between transformational leadership behavior, relational selling behavior and relationship quality. In this proposed model, transformational leadership behavior and relational selling behavior acts as an antecedent of relationship quality.

Key Word: Relationship Quality, Leadership Skill, Positive Word of Mouth, Future Interaction

Introduction

As a service provider, retail banks place an importance on their employee's competencies since most of them are the front liners where they interact directly with bank customers before, during and after banking services are delivered (Clark Timothy et al 2005). Whether bank customers are satisfied with the service delivered depend mostly on how they evaluate the quality of interaction they have with the bank's employees. This mean that the employees must be able to acquire, develop and maintain long term relationship with customers. The higher relative cost of customer acquisition has shift the emphasis of banks to building and maintaining long-term customer relationship to improve profitability (Ennew and Binks, 1996). This relationship relies on the exchange within relationship based on trust and high satisfaction (Zeithaml et al., 1996; Caceres R.C. and Nicholas G.P., 2007; Callarisa et. al 2007). Companies have the advantage of low risk, better technology access, more cooperative, improved knowledge and sharing of information when they have good relationship with their customers (Ellram, 1995).

The literature has acknowledged the importance of relationship quality in the banking industry i.e. retail banks and other factors like transformational leadership behavior, relational selling behavior and relationship quality. Noting their importance, the author conceptualize relationship quality as higher order construct consisting of three essential components namely satisfaction, trust and commitment. Previous research found that satisfaction has strong prediction to customer behavioral intention (Anderson et al., 1994; Zeithaml et al., 1996; Caceres R.C. and Nicholas G.P., 2007). Therefore, customer satisfaction with the bank services will lead to customer intention to maintain long term relationship. In addition, long term relationship should be based on trust which can reduce risk and uncertainty by relying to other party honesty and trust (Caceres R.C. and Nicholas G.P., 2005; Malewicki S.D., 2005; Callarisa et. al 2007; Doney M.P., 2007).

Beside satisfaction and trust, customer commitment is very essential as basic motivation of customer in maintaining and developing long term relationship with the company (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Birgelen van Marcel et al, 1998; Malewicki S.D., 2005; Callarisa et. al 2007). The quality of relationship can be determined by three types of customer commitment, namely continuance/calculative commitment, normative commitment and affective commitment.

In this article the author propose transformational leadership behavior and relational selling behavior as an important antecedent of relationship quality between customer and retail bank. Transformational leadership

behavior (in this article) consists of two dimensions, i.e. idealized influence behavior and individual consideration (Sanjeevani and Jayakody, 2006). Idealized influence behavior will engender persuasive communication which leads to increase bank employees' credibility which may lead to increase customer trust. Meanwhile, higher individual consideration to bank customer' need will help to increase customization of service and increase bank employee's empathy to customer. Therefore, this will establish emotional attachment of customer to retail bank.

In line with this knowledge, the authors propose that a relationship quality model for retail banks can be developed using causal links amongst transformational leadership behavior, relational selling behavior and relationship quality. Transformational leadership behavior and relational selling behavior is proposed to be the antecedent of relationship quality. The author will also forward related hypotheses on the proposed relationship between the variables.

Literatur Review

Many previous researches have addressed the antecedents and consequences of relationship quality. For instance, Crosby (1990) tested the antecedents and consequences of relationship quality in insurance industry. In his model, he found that there is significant effect of three antecedents (i.e. expertise, similarity, and relational selling behavior) on relationship quality which in turn leads to two outcomes (i.e. sales effectiveness and future interaction). Dong et al (2007) conducted the research about antecedents and consequences of relationship quality in health clinic in China. Furthermore, Dong et al (2007), in his model, found significant effect of four antecedents (i.e. expertise, likeability, similarity and communication effectiveness) on relationship quality which in turn lead to two outcomes (i.e. word of mouth and re-patronage). In addition, Chow et al (2008) found that there is significant positive effect of information sharing on relationship quality which in turn leads to two behavioral outcomes (i.e. willingness to recommend and future interaction). Meanwhile, Jayakoday (2006) tested the model about antecedent of relationship quality in corporate banking in Srilangka. Furthermore, Jayakoday (2006) , in his model, found the positive significant impact of transformational leadership behavior to relationship quality. For enhancing the relationship quality between customers and service provider, it is imperative to integrate transformational leadership behavior with relational selling behavior as antecedent of relationship quality in the previous model. The next part of this literature review will address how to establish causal link between transformational leadership behavior, relational selling behavior and relationship quality.

The Relationship Quality

Previous research found that there are three group concept of relationship quality. Some scholars posit satisfaction and trust as dimension of relationship quality (Chen et al 2007, Dong et al 2007, Ndubisi 2007, Chow et al 2008, Crosby, Evans and Cowles 1990). Other scholars propose trust and commitment as dimension of relationship quality (Chakrabarty et al 2007). While, The rest scholars posit satisfaction, trust, commitment as dimension of relationship quality (Morgan and Hunt 1994, Callarisa 2006, Tseng 2007, Paparoidamis 2005). Next section will address each component of this relationship quality.

Trust

The trusted relationship exchange indicate that customer believe to credibility of service provider, therefore reduce uncertainty and increase customer motivation to do future interaction and provide positive word of mouth (Chow et al 2008, Dong et al 2007 and Crosby et al 1990) . Trust is quoted as a recipe to determine success (Morgan and hunt 1994, Chen et al 2007, Chakrabarty et al 2007, Ndubisi 2007, Callarisa 2006, Tseng 2007, Paparoidamis 2005, Chow 2007) in relationship exchange. Trust is believed able to decrease the risk and increase cooperation in relationship exchange. Trust has two dimensions (Doney and Canon 1997). The first dimension is an objective credibility from a party of exchange which has words and written statement from a trustful partner. The second dimension is kinds hearted which a partner is interested in others parties welfare and motivated to get profit together in a business. There are five processes to develop trust. They are calculated, prediction, capability, extensionality and transference process (Doney and Cannon 1997).

Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction with relational exchange will lead to future interaction (i.e. repeat purchase, buy product/services more frequent and buy more product variant/line) and positive word of mouth (Chow et al 2008, Dong et al 2007 and Crosby et al 1990). Satisfaction refers to the degree of interaction between buyer and sellers to fulfill their hopes from their performance and it can be based on tangible product evaluation or unrelated attributes to products such as shipping, services and communication (Wilson 1955). Cumulative satisfaction is an evaluation based on total experiences to consume products or services enduring the time (Anderson, Fornel, and Lehman 1994). A cumulative satisfaction can be differed from satisfaction to the certain transaction which a pasca evaluation or affective reaction to the transaction of a company (Oliver 1993). Cumulative satisfaction is cumulative construct, accumulated satisfaction with a specific product and service form on organization and satisfaction from many aspects such as physical aspect. Satisfaction has important role in establishing and developing long term relationship exchange in the company (Chow et al 2007, Chen et al 2007, Ndubisi 2007, Callarisa 2006, Tseng 2007, Paparoidamis 2005.)

Commitment

Commitment is enduring desire and a basic motivation to maintain relationship and the length of relationship. When customers can identify their personal goal or objective within relational exchange, they will maintain this relationship in the longer time. In other word, the probability of them to do future interaction and provide positive word of mouth is high (Chow et al 2008, Dong et al 2007 and Crosby et al 1990). Commitment is an important variable to determine successful relational exchange (Morgan and Hunt 1994, Chakrabarty et al 2007, Callarisa 2006, Paparoidamis 2005). A long relationship implicitly stated the degree of certain commitment between two parties. According to Moorman, Zaltman, Desphande (1992) commitment to the relationship defines as a long-term intention to maintain the relationship where the commitment existed because it is considered important. Given et al (2000) expressed there are three types of commitment in relationship marketing in case the professional association they are: Continuance commitment, normative commitment, and affective commitment. The continuance commitment based on the personal necessity in having relationship (Gunlach et. al 1995) shown by the degree of member psychologically within organization based on cost perception regarding to issuance of membership in the organization. The normative commitment is derived from moral responsibility with the organization. Meanwhile the affective commitment focuses on positive emotion (Allen and Meyer 1990) shown by the degree of interests of members to organization

Antecedent of Relationship Quality

In some previous research about relationship between buyer and sellers is found out some factors, which determine the quality of relationship between buyers and sellers (i.e. relational selling behavior, domain expertise and share value). Relational selling behavior consisting of mutual disclosure, communication and customer orientation has proven affect quality of relationship between buyer and seller (Crosby, Evans and Cowles 1990; Collins and miller 1994; Amy L Parson 2002). Moreover, customer orientation (Amy L. Parson 2002; Kelley 1992; Thurau-Henning Thorsten 2004), domain expertise (Amy L Parson 2002; Sharif 2005) and shared value (Crosby, Evan Cowles 1990; Morgan and Hunt 1994) proven have positive significant influence to relationship quality. However, there is no research in marketing which integrate the relationship between transformational leadership behavior, relational selling behavior and quality of relationship between customer and bank employees. In addition, there is only one previous research investigated the impact of transformational leadership behavior on relationship quality (Jayakodai 2006). This proposed model will focus to investigate the impact of transformational leadership behavior and relational selling behavior to relationship quality.

Transformational Leadership Behavior

Theory of Transformational Leadership posits trust as a key feature of relationship quality between leaders and their followers. By trusting their leader, followers are motivated to increase their performance. A meta analysis study found that transformational leadership is a strong predictor of trust (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002). Previous research found that transformational leadership behavior (idealize influence) has significant positive impact to trust (Kelloway 2001).

Previous research found that transformational leadership has positive significant influence to employee commitment (Kelloway 2001; Chiou, 2008; Podsakoff, 1996). Transformational leadership behavior (individual consideration) can effectively improve communication with their employee. This process will increase employee's confidence to their leader and improve their organizational commitment (Liaw, Wang, Tai, 2004). Deluga and Souza (1991) pinpoint that transformational leadership can affect job performance, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In marketing area, Sanjeevani and Jayakody (2006) found that idealized influence behavior of salesperson has positive significant impact to customer trust and individual consideration behavior of salesperson has positive significant impact to customer commitment through trust as mediating variable.

Regarding the important role of employees in retail bank who act as salespeople in acquiring, developing, and maintaining long-term relationship with customers, it is imperative to provide transformational leadership behavior (idealize influence and individual consideration) for bank employees in order to increase the quality of relationship with their customers. High relationship quality, furthermore, is required to increase the intention of customer to do future interaction and provide positive word of mouth.

Relational Selling Behavior

Relational selling behavior is the nature of salesperson's behavior during customer interaction. Interaction may be in person, by telephone or electronically. Relational selling behavior has many components. Three amongst them which proposed in this model (mutual disclosure, communication and customer orientation) have significant effect in previous study (Crossby et al 1990; William and Spiro 1985; Collins and Miller 1994; William, Spiro and Fine 1990; Saxe and Weitz 1982).

Mutual Disclosure

Mutual disclosure is very importance in establishing, developing and maintaining interpersonal relationship (Derlega et al 1987). It is critical for the salesperson in a relational sales setting for establishing trust. Trust is considered as an essential component of relationship quality (Crosby et al 1990). In personal context, disclosure involves revealing personal information about one-self to another (Collins and Miller 1994). In business context, this could be interpreted as sharing information about production schedule, quality initiative, strategic plan etc (Walton 1996). Part of the customers who reluctance to reveal critical personal/ business related information may block or severe delay satisfactorily problem resolution. Furthermore, a party engaging in unreciprocated disclosure behavior is likely distrust the other party (Crossby et al 1990). According to social penetration theory, relationship develop gradually through increases the depth and breadth of information exchange (Altman and Taylor 1973, Taylor 1979, Collins and Miller 1994).

Communication

Trust is assumed as an important component of the relationship quality (Crosby, Evans and Cowles 1990; Morgan and Hunt 1994). The skilful communication with the exchange partner will strengthen cooperation and trust in relationship (Perrien and Ricard 1995). Hausman (2004) in his research fund that there is a significant influence of communication on satisfaction in patient-physician relationship. Formal and informal information exchange proved have significant impact to trust in relationship between customer and small and medium enterprise in electrical and electronic company (Sharif 2005). Likewise, communication also has impact on trust and satisfaction in relationship between customer and bank service provider (Ball Dwayne 2004). Furthermore, communication proved has significant impact on trust in supplier-manufacturer relationship (Yeh Pin-Ying 2005). Communication is an important tool for gathering information about customer's want and need. Service employee needs specific information to negotiate customized offerings and persuade customers to buy a firm's product (Batt, 2002). Two type of important communications form that was needed in implementing customer relationship management program are dialogue and influence (DeFazio, 2003).

Dialogue, was an interactive leadership skill that allowed a free flow of meaning and enabled yet another transformation of insight to coordinated actionable knowledge. Dialogue was a leadership skill that enable service employee to discover the fit between the needs of prospective customer and the service offered. The aim of dialogue was to understand the truth value or inner reality of the need or desire for service offering to a prospective customer during didactic communication (Sternberg, 1990). According to Senge (1990), discussion was a necessary

counterpart of dialogue. Sternberg (1990) said problem solving was a skill that could be demonstrated during dialogue. The question is the central concern of problem finding, but the answer was the central concern with problem solving.

Influence or persuasion was a leadership skill practiced during discussion, in dyadic relationship, between buyer and seller (Rost, 1991). According to Rost (1991) influence transcended several conceptual framework of leadership including steering another toward a goal, the ability to influence the action of another, non coercive influence afforded by one’s status, and the process of moving one in some direction through non-coercive means. Rost (1991) said influence as persuasion was essential leadership skill involving what he called “power resources.” Olshavsky (2001) took a human activity system approach to influence as persuasion and focused on a specific real world problem situation, a salesman interaction with a prospect in a retail appliance store. This approach focused on the correlation between references to attributes during a three-phase model of transaction (the orientation phase, the evaluation phase, and consummation phase). Olshavsky (2001) observed the greatest influence of salesman occurred in the evaluation of alternative phase, specifically the salience of particular product attributes.

Customer Orientation

The costumer orientation refers to the seller in adapting selling strategy to help costumers take decision to fulfill the needs of customers. Costumer’s orientation is used as indicator of the relationship quality between buyers and sellers. It affects the degree of satisfaction like quality and duration of the relationship (Kelley 1992). Customer orientation of service employee proved has significant influence to customer satisfaction and commitment in relationship between customer and service provider (Thurau-Henning Thorsten 2004).

Regarding the important role of employees in retail bank who act as salespeople in acquiring, developing, and maintaining long-term relationship with customers, it is imperative to provide relational selling behavior (mutual disclosure, communication and customer orientation) for bank employees in order to increase the quality of relationship with their customers. High relationship quality, furthermore, is required to increase the intention of customer to do future interaction and provide positive word of mouth.

Proposed Model

As earlier stated, the author is proposing a model on relationship quality made up of two variables as the antecedents of relationship quality in banking industry. Based on the literature review, we propose two variables as antecedent of relationship quality which consist of transformational leadership behavior and relational selling behavior. The framework of the proposed model is shown below.

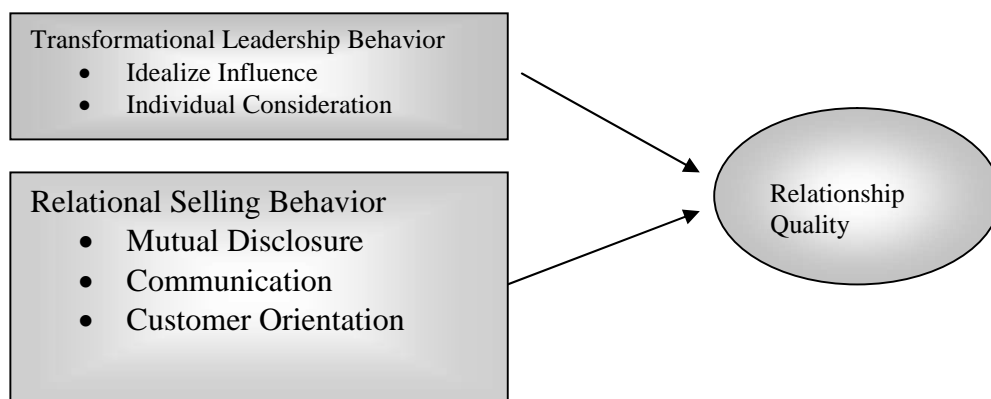


Figure 1. TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR, RELATIONAL SELLING BEHAVIOR AND RELATIONSHIP QUALITY IN RETAIL BANKING FROM CUSTOMERS PERSPECTIVE: A PROPOSED MODEL

Hypothesis

The following hypotheses are proposed to test the validity of the model via survey using bank customers as respondents.

- Idealize influence will lead to positive relationship quality between customers and retail bank employees.

- Individual consideration will lead to positive relationship quality between customers and retail bank employees.
- Mutual disclosure will lead to positive relationship quality between customers and retail bank employees.
- Communication will lead to positive relationship quality between customers and retail bank employees.
- Customer orientation will lead to positive relationship quality between customers and retail bank employees.

Conclusion

The proposed model provide causal link between transformational leadership behavior, relational selling behavior and relationship quality. The role of bank employees (who act similar to salespeople) in acquiring, developing and maintaining long-term relationship is very importance because most of direct interaction in banking industry is taken place between customers and bank employees. Transformational leadership behavior has proven can maintain high relationship quality between leader and follower in organizational behavioral research. The authors intention were to fill up the gap about the lack of comprehensive model of relationship quality which integrate the relational selling behavior and transformational leadership behavior of bank employees in acquiring, developing and maintaining long term relationship with customer. Furthermore, the study to be carried out resulting from the proposed model is expected to contribute in encouraging the strategic role of bank employees as the bank's salespeople in enhancing the quality of relationship with the customer in order to increase the competitive advantage of the bank.

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