

Customer Satisfaction towards Telecommunication mobile services

A case study in Asiacell Telecommunications in Sulaymaniyah city

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Abstract:

Asiacell a leading provider of telecommunication in all the regions of Iraq is established in Sulaymaniyah city of Kurdistan region. With over 14 million customers this company is very popular among the prepaid mobile customers. The **purpose** of this study is to identify the satisfaction of customers using the prepaid services of Asiacell. So an administered questionnaire was used to collect responses from 1740 randomly selected customers in different location of Sulaymaniyah city for this study. The responses were analysed using descriptive method as the responses were so direct and precise. From the observed results of the study it is found that majority of the users of Asiacell were young customers and vast majority of them were satisfied with the prepaid mobile services provided by the Asiacell company in the city of Sulaymaniyah. But it is also to be noted that the customers' expectation on some of the service areas like pricing and customer query responses are in need of revision by the Asiacell company based on the expectations of the customers.

Keywords: Asiacell, Customer satisfaction, Telecommunication, prepaid mobile service

الملخص:

تاسست شركه اسيا وهى شركه رائد فى تقديم الاتصالات فى السليمانيه فى كورستان .وبالكثر من اربعه عشر مليون مستخدم فان هذه الشريكة تعد الاكثر شعبيه بين المستخدمين للارصاده المسبقه الدفع.تهدف هذه الدراسه الى تحديد مستوى الرضا بين المستخدمين الذين يستخدمون خدمان الدفع المسبق. وعلى هذا الاساس تم تقديم استبيان لجميع اجوبيه المستخدمين من بين 1740 بتصوره عشوائيه وتم اختيارهم من مناطق مختلفه. وتم تحليل الاجوبه باستخدام المنهج الوسفي حيث كانت الاجوبه مباشره ودقيقه. ومن ملاحظه النتائج تم التوصيل الى ان معظم مستخدمين شريكة كانوا من الشباب وبان معظمهم كانوا راضين عن اداء خدمة الدفع المسبق. ولكن من ملاحظه بعض الجوبه وجد ان هناك بعض الخدمات التي تقدمها الشريكة مثل الاسعار والاستجابة للعملاء تحتاج الى مراجعة على اساس توقعات العملاء.

كلمات المفتاحيه: شريكة اسيا, رضا الزبون, الاتصالات, خدمات الدفع المسبق

پوخته:

کۆمپانیای ئاسیاسیئل کۆمپانییەکی پیشەنگی پەیوەندییەکانە و دامەزراوە لە سەرچەم ناوچەکانى عێراق لە شارى سليمانى سەر بە هەرمىيە كورستان. ئەم کۆمپانییە زیاتر لە ١٤ ملیون کریارى ھەمیه، ئەم کۆمپانییە زۆر بەنوابانگە لەنیو کریارانى مۆبایلی خزمەتگزاری پىدانى پیشەنگەت. ئامانج لەم توپىزىنەوە دىيارىکىردىنى رازبىوونى کریارانە بە بەكارهينانى خزمەتگزارىيەکانى پىدانى پیشەنگەت بۆ کۆمپانیای ئاسیاسیئل. لەبەر ئەم، راپرسىيەکى رىيخرارو بەكارهينرا بۆ کۆكىردنەوە وەلام لە ١٧٤٠ کریارى

هەلبىزىرداوى گىشتى لە شۇينى جىوازى شارى سليمانى بۇ ئەم توپىزىنەوە يە. وەلامەكان بە بەكارەتىنائى شىوازى وەسەكەر شىكارانەوە و دەرنىجامى وەلامەكان زۆر راستەمۇخۇ و ورد بۇون. ئەنچامى توپىزىنەوەكە دەرىخست كە زۆرىنەي بەكارەتىنەرانى ئاسىياسىئىل كېيارى گەنچ بۇون و زۆرىنەي رەھايان لە خزمەتگۇزارى مۇبایلى پېشىمەت رازى بۇون كە كۆمپانىيە ئاسىياسىئىل لە شارى سليمانى پېشىكەشى دەكەت. وە هەروەھا پىويسە ئامازە بەھە بىكەرت كە چاۋەرۋانى كېياران لە سەرەتتىنەكەن لە بوارەكانى خزمەتگۇزارى وەك نرخدانان و وەلامى پرسىيارى كېياران پىويسەتى بە پىنداقچۇنەوە ھەمە لە لايەن كۆمپانىيە ئاسىياسىئىلەوە و پابەندىبۇون بە چاۋەرۋانىيەكانى كېياران.

و شەى سەرەكى: ئاسىياسىئىل، رازىبىونى كېيار، پەمپەندىيەكان، خزمەتگۇزارى مۇبایلى پېشىكە.

Introduction

Since cellular industry is one of the fastest growing sectors in telecommunication business, it is important to explore the drivers of customer satisfaction in this industry, (Katta et. al, 2018). It is a common scenario in all parts of the world and especially in Middle Eastern region this business seems to be in a great boom. Kurdistan region of Iraq has many prosperous business sectors which attracts investors from all over the country of Iraq and also from its neighbouring regions like Kuwait, Dubai and so on. Telecommunication service sector is one of the emerging sectors in Kurdistan region that provide services to fullfill the expectations of the customers, (Demir 2019). Asiacell Telecom Company started in this region is offering mobile phone services and mobile internet in all the regions of Iraq. This company is found to be one of the leading telecommunications operators in the Kurdistan region and all other parts of Iraq and doing so it clearly covers all of Iraq's provinces with its telecommunication services. Asiacell provides quality mobile telecommunications and data services with a subscriber base of 14 million customers. Also it is the best internet provider with its data services, offering the best network coverage in the entire of Iraq since January 2015. The company started to serve the Kurdistan region from Sulaymaniyah city from its establishment in 2009 and covered almost 97% of Iraq with its network, but there is a decline in the company's performance and in its net profit from listing of Iraqi stock exchange, (Doski 2014). So Asiacell company needs to continue to work in a competitive manner, especially with the rest of the communication companies, by offering high-quality offers that are accepted by customers for the purpose of earning their loyalty, preserving their reputation and improving their image in order to attract new customers. (Awan and Bukhari 2011) in their study states that customer satisfaction can affect the company's performance and determine the strength of its competition in the given market. Because customer satisfaction is the most important element in the success of communication companies and it is one of the most important indicators of the quality of their service and success agreements. In a competitive market where businesses compete for customers, customer satisfaction is a key business strategy, (UmaMaheswari, 2020). Because, it can lead to increase in the loyalty of customers towards the company and so reduces the rate of leaving the company and it is always proved that satisfaction is the most significant cause to steer the loyalty from customers. Henceforth the Asiacell Company which has a huge market share of prepaid customers in the Kurdistan region of Iraq has to understand the satisfying elements of its customers to regain its popularity and indeed its profit in the region.

Review of related literature

Theoretical review

Customer satisfaction is one of the most important elements to be concentrated in any form of the businesses. It is about how well a business meets its customers expectation in the given market. The businesses that need a continuous reputation has to go with the trend which makes the customers satisfied and delighted. In service sector business there is great possibility for the customers for brand switching given there is a high competition. With regard to serving the customers, it is observed that satisfaction is an important mediator between loyalty and other variables, (Demir et. al., 2021). The satisfaction of customers is not an easy task as it is very complicated and very dynamic in nature. Irrespective of these challenges any organization has to keep on continuously treating its customers and identify the attributes that could satisfy their customers. Especially in services marketing businesses has to focus on identify and implementing strategies to full the expectation of the customers to keep them satisfied. Based on the review of secondary literature the most common attributes to be noted in telecommunication services are;

- a) **Quality** - Quality plays an important role in building customer satisfaction with cellular service subscribers and they tend to continue to use the current service as the level of customer satisfaction is high which leads to customer loyalty (Ishaq, 2012). In order to provide high quality services, companies had to design them with features that provide the desired benefits to customers. When companies design goods, it is usually possible to assess quality by testing them by some customers. Manufacturing companies are responsible for ensuring product quality by trying to eliminate the defect once. The situation of the service industry is somewhat more complicated, since the service produces intangible products, which could make difficulty in measuring quality. In addition, customers evaluate the quality of service not only in terms of performance benefits received but also in terms of the service delivery process.
- b) **Price** - The price is the amount of money the customer pays for any product or service. The price must be related to the value they get from the service provided. The set price of the service can make customers satisfied. Price is the degree to which a customer can bear the price of using cellular service according to level of satisfaction. It is found that competitive pricing has significant positive influence of consumer behaviour, (Ali & Anwar, 2021)
- c) **Expectation** – The expectations of the customers determines their level of satisfaction as they use it as a measure to match it with the offered services by the company. So, the companies that understand the expectations of the customers from them can directly work on filling the gap between such identified expectations and their current offerings. There must be market research and relationship building strategies to meet a high level of customer expectations. Customers can create their expectations from various sources such as ads, friends, family, social media, etc, (Chopra et. al, 2021).

Empirical review of literature

Detailed reviews of related literature on published articles were done and the following are identified for the purpose of this study:

A study by Yaqub et al, (2019) entitled “Effect of service quality, price fairness, justice with servicer recovery and relational bonds on customer loyalty: Mediating role of customer satisfaction in Pakistan” found that Perceived service quality and customer satisfaction are keys driving factors to customer loyalty satisfaction. Also the results indicate that customers have high expectations for cellular service providers to some extent. Deb and Naha (2015) in their research revealed that the main influencing factors in selecting the service provider include customer care and facility, network coverage, tariff plan, and recharging facilities. An important relationship was established between the gender of the respondents and their choice of service provider.

A research by Saha et al. (2016) states that, factors like “price, network quality, product diversity, and facilities for the customers” are having a positive relationship with the level of customer satisfaction in the mobile telecommunications industry of Bangladesh. The results of this study also indicates that mobile operators should develop appropriate strategies by taking into account their strengths in satisfying their subscribers as well as by overcoming their weaknesses by learning from other services. Also the study by (Al-Tit, 2015) revealed that reliability, responsiveness in quality of service, reasonable price, and customer satisfaction leads to brand loyalty to cellular providers. So it can be understood that in telecommunication business, the perceived quality of telecommunication services is among the key factors in bringing satisfaction to the customers of a service provider, (Pham & Tran, 2018).

The goal of most of the companies doing business is to maintain their existing customers and gain new customers without losing any of them, (Munyanti & Masrom, 2018). Asiacell company ofcourse have this motto to work in different cities of Kurdistan region and all the other parts of Iraq. Service quality is the main contributor in maintaining strong bonds with the targeted customers, and this can only be achieved by concentrating on the existing aspects that can be manipulated by service providers such as satisfaction, loyalty, and trust, (Alkhurshan & Rjoub, 2020). These all factors seem to be present with the Asiacell prepaid mobile services and it would be a promising factor for the proceeding success of the company in the region.

Based on all the above review of literature it is found that the overall satisfaction of the customers is very important to get brand loyalty and profitability of the company. Also the factors that lead to customer satisfaction must always be identified by the service providing company to survive in the competitive market. Henceforth the following objectives were developed for the study.

Statement of the problem

Mobile phone users are increasing all the in every part of the world and the companies involved with telecommunication businesses are presented with a great opportunity for the coming decades of time in the future. But this opportunity also invites a heavy competition in this industry from various Multinational investors. To survive and remain profitable in the business the companies has to be dynamic in their operations and also stay customer fouced based on the expectations of the customers.

Because service quality, perceived value and trust has a very positive influence on customer loyalty, (Shamsudin et. al. 2015), which would ensure the profitability of the service providing company. In the Kurdistan region of Iraq the city of Sulaymaniyah is popular for its business and economic growth and the presence of Asiacell Company in this city needs to focus on its users for such reasons. The exponential growth of telecommunication in Sulaymaniyah city thus brings competitors for the Asiacell from Korek and Zain Iraq. To keep their market share and to gain more customers the Asiacell telecommunications should know the level of present satisfaction of their customers and the factors that lead to their satisfaction. Since no such study was attempted in the city of Sulaymaniyah the research was initiated with the following research questions;

Research questions:

1. To which extend the customers are satisfied by the prepaid services of Asiacell Telecommunication company in Sulaymaniyah city?
2. What are the factors that determine the satisfaction of prepaid customers of Asiacell telecommunication company in Sulaymaniyah city?
3. What is the overall satisfaction of prepaid customers of Asiacell telecommunication company in Sulaymaniyah city?

The above research questions gave the direction of the research in the city of Sulaymaniyah and the research objectives were developed as;

Objectives of the study

1. To identify the level of customer satisfaction of prepaid customers of Asiacell telecommunication company in Sulaymaniyah city.
2. To identify the factors that determines the satisfaction of prepaid customers of Asiacell telecommunication company in Sulaymaniyah city.
3. To investigate the overall satisfaction of prepaid customers of Asiacell telecommunication company in Sulaymaniyah city.

Importance of the study

This study provides a deep understanding on the expectations of the customers and their satisfaction towards the offered prepaid mobile services of the Asiacell Company. Also the results obtained from this research work would help the mobile service providers in the city to formulate a marketing strategy including competitive strategies and gaining customer loyalty. Moreover this study is a pioneer for other researchers attempting to investigate the mobile phone services industry in the region for the future.

Research Methodology

The study was conducted to identify the overall satisfaction level of the customers of Asiacell using the prepaid mobile services in Sulaymaniyah city and to find out the factors that contribute to such satisfaction towards the prepaid services of Asiacell telecommunications. So, the prepaid customers were selected using non probability method and the technique of convenience-sampling was used to select the customers of the Asiacell who were using prepaid mobile services. This

technique was used to select the respondents because the users of the prepaid mobile services of Asiacell are in an increase every day in the selected city Sulaymaniyah. The respondents were contacted in person on different locations of the city including shopping malls, sales outlets of Asiacell Telecommunications Company and in the bazaar region of the city. Those respondents were given with an administered questionnaire to fill in the questions and their responses were collected. The collected responses were used to derive results and interpretation of the results was done using descriptive analysis. The results were thus presented with the simple descriptive techniques of tables and charts to get the information in precise and conclusion for the study. There were no hypotheses derived for the study due to the application of descriptive analysis technique which could summarize the satisfaction level of customers in very direct explanation based on the results of the study.

Data analysis and discussion

The data were collected from the 1740 customers from different parts of the Sulaymaniyah city namely in areas like bazaar, malls, restaurants and in the retail sales outlets of Asia cell company were analyzed and interpreted as of the following;

Table: 1. Age of respondents

| S.NO | Age | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|--------------|-------|--------------------|-------------|
| 1 | 18-20 | 921 | 53% |
| 2 | 21-22 | 537 | 31% |
| 3 | >23 | 282 | 16% |
| Total | | 1740 | 100% |

Source: Survey Questionnaire

Among the users of Asiacell prepaid mobile service a vast majority of the customers are seem to be very young population, in the city of Sulaymaniyah. It can be interpreted that the Asiacell prepaid services have attracted more young people towards it prepaid mobile services. It gives the company a great hope for its future business and opportunity to come up with various different product-lines for its customers in Sulaymaniyah city. Because the young consumers are using their phones not only for communication but also to search, collect and compare information about their desired products, (Knežević, 2015). Since the youth are using for multi-purposes the prepaid services have more scope in the future for their customers.

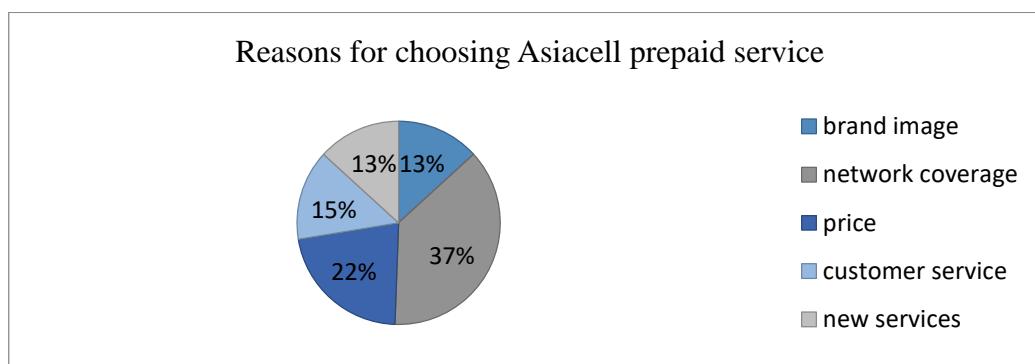
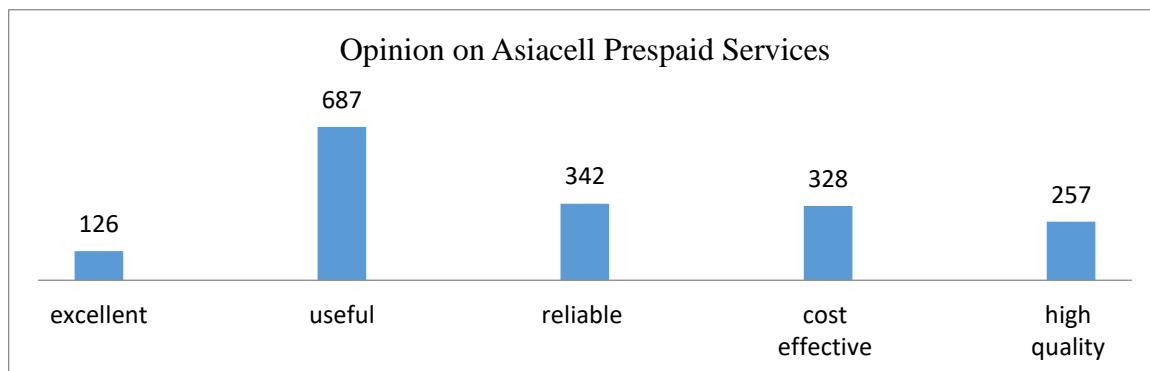


Figure: 1. Reasons for choosing Asiacell Prepaid service

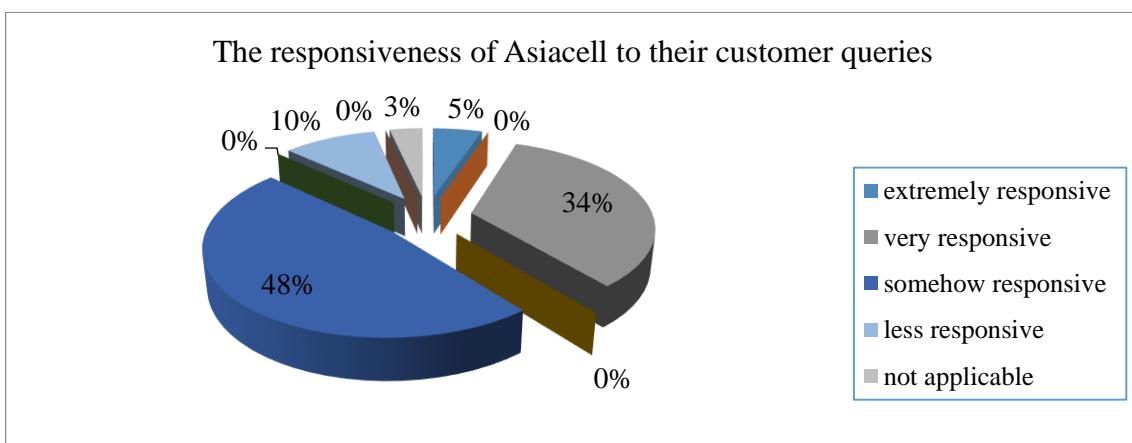
Source: Survey questionnaire

The top reason for selecting Asiacell by its customers is found to be its network coverage and it shows the strength of this prepaid service provider in the capital investment and the quality of the technology employed which could keep the company in the leading position in the competitive market. Also it cannot be ignored that the customers have mentioned, in providing new services and in customer service the company has a long way to go. This indicates that Asiacell shall focus its attention on providing customer services and also to introduce new services as per the demand and trends of the market. These factors are also reassured by a study of (Nur Alam, 2018) as network coverage, customer service, pricing, and internet service are notable factors to have impact on customer satisfaction in Telecommunication industry.

**Figure 2: Customers' opinion on prepaid services of Asiacell**

Source: Survey Questionnaire

On the opinion of the services provided by the Asiacell to its prepaid customers it is found that a great number have responded, the services are useful, reliable, cost effective and of high quality. It can be noted here that the company is offering quality services to satisfy its customers and moving towards excellence in its offered services. The telecommunications sector is one of the most dynamic and active industries in Iraq, (Sahi, 2019). For such a rapid booming and dynamic industry, the opinion of the customers paves ways for all its anticipated growth.

**Figure 3: The responsiveness of Asiacell to their customer queries**

Source: Survey Questionnaire

The slices of the pie chart clarify about the respondents feeling on the customer query response of the Asiacell Company. Thus the company seems to have a good response system for the customer queries yet it has to be improved as the large group of the respondents expressed their feeling as 'somewhat responsive' only. For the reason that to build a solid relationship with the customers, providing best services can be described as the strongest, highest and fastest way to relationship marketing, (Atua et. al. 2019).

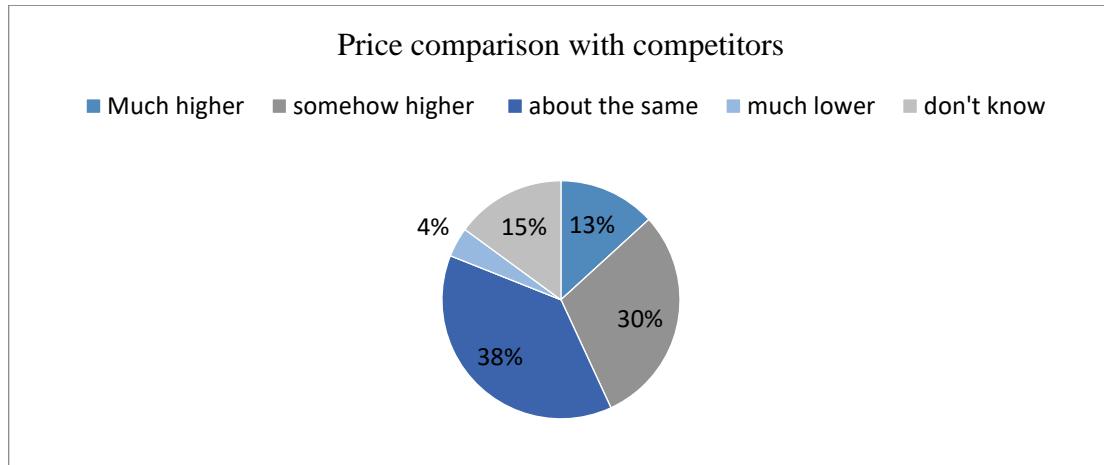


Figure 4: Price comparison of Asiacell prepaid services with competitors

Source: Survey Questionnaire

Price is a great motivator in the consumption of the products and services which is often proved in many studies and researches. With regard to the pricing of the prepaid services of the Asiacell the Customers have found it similar with the pricing of its competitors or slightly higher. In the competitive market environment, a company can succeed its competition by offering lower and attractive price to its customers. Because price discounts can be more effective in enhancing customer purchasing intention, (Qiu et. al., 2022). Hence Asiacell can offer its prepaid services slightly lower for the customers and gain a good market share in the prevailing situation, since all the companies in Iraq pricing is based on pre-paid cards, (Budur, 2019).

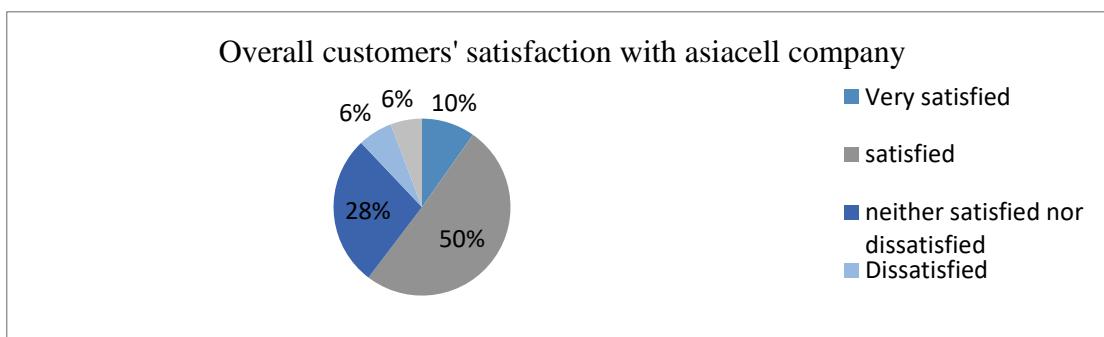


Figure 5: Overall satisfaction of customers with Asiacell Company

Source: Survey Questionnaire

Vast majority of the users of prepaid mobile services of Asiacell in the Sulaymaniyah city has reported that they are satisfied and very satisfied with the prepaid services of Asiacell. This shows

that the company is performing well with their operations and providing valuable mobile services in the city. Though there are groups of customers mentioned neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and dissatisfied, the company does not have notable negative comments from any of the respondents as per the survey. But since it has become central concern for companies of services to improve service quality, and to maintain customer loyalty within a highly competitive market place, the sustainability of the company can positively influence customer loyalty through customer satisfaction, (Strenitzerová, and Gaňa, 2018). Henceforth, Asiacell shall employ continuous customer service excellence to maintain and improve the level of their satisfaction.

Conclusion

As this study seeks to understand the customers' satisfaction in the city of Sulaymaniyah with reference to the prepaid services users of Asiacell, it was done with all consciousness to get the quality information. The results showed that the extend of customers satisfaction is high because the opinion of all the respondents states that, the services of Asiacell company is useful, reliable, cost effective, high quality and excellent. Moreover, the usefulness, reliability, and cost effectiveness of the prepaid services by Asiacell company are the leading factors in determining the satisfaction of the customers. On the overall satisfaction of customers using prepaid mobile services of Asiacell, major population i.e. 60 percent have reported that they are very much satisfied and satisfied with the prepaid mobile telecommunication services of Asiacell company. This shows the overall satisfaction of the customers are seeming to be very positive.

Also, Asiacell has become a standard feature of the mobile telecommunications business in Iraq. Definitely this company strives to become a leader in the competitive market. To achieve such market leadership customer satisfaction is the only key to gain loyalty and sustainability for the business in all the company's future. Also, it was found in this research that the majority of customers who participated in expressing their opinions are satisfied with the services provided by Asiacell, and this is a very good indication of the success of the company's access to the majority of its customers.

Recommendations

The company may focus more on providing the necessary offers to keep the customers more satisfied, which thus leads to an increase in the customer's loyalty and company's profitability. To gain the long-term loyalty among the competition the Asiacell shall offer new services for their customers as it is found to be less as per the results of the study. The customers can also be more informed about the response services and methods the company provides to achieve full reach to the market. Pricing will give a positive outbreak in the sales-oriented markets, which could be considered by the company and the services may be provided in more competitive prices to the customers of Asiacell company.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

Dear Respondents,

This is a Questionnaire about (Customer satisfaction on Asiacell prepaid service) and it is for the purposes of scientific research only, please choose the answer you think corresponds to your opinion by placing a cross (✓) in the appropriate box□. Thank you for your response.

1. Name (Optional):
2. Gender (Optional): Male Female
3. Age: 18-20 21-22 23 and above
4. Which mobile service do you use?
 Asiacell Others
5. What service of Asiacell do you use?
 Prepaid Postpaid
6. Give Reasons for choosing Asiacell mobile service
 Brand image network coverage price customer service
 New services
7. Which of the following word would you use to describe Asiacell prepaid services?
 High quality cost effective reliable useful excellent
8. How responsive have Asiacell been to your queries about its services?
 Extremely responsive very responsive somehow responsive
 Less responsive Not applicable
9. Compare to Asiacell competitors, how is the price of the company?
 Much higher somehow higher about the same much lower don't know
10. State your overall satisfaction with Asiacell Company?
 Very satisfied satisfied neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 Dissatisfied very dissatisfied