



**IGNITED MINDS**  
Journals

*International Journal of  
Information Technology  
and Management*

*Vol. VI, Issue No. I,  
February-2014, ISSN 2249-  
4510*

**“ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF  
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS  
FOR CUSTOMER RETENTION IN RETAIL  
SECTOR – A SAMPLE SURVEY”**

AN  
INTERNATIONALLY  
INDEXED PEER  
REVIEWED &  
REFEREED JOURNAL

# “Assessing the Effectiveness of Information Technology Applications for Customer Retention in Retail Sector – A Sample Survey”

Syeda Shaheda Siddiqui

**Abstract –** The study at hand explores the role of IT on customer retention practices adopted by the retailers in the city of Aurangabad (MS), India. The study is based on both secondary and primary data. For the primary data, an empirical study was conducted amongst the customers and employees of the five chosen retailers. The content analysis of the qualitative data was done through a combination of all three methodologies, conventional, summative and directed. For quantitative analysis, the researcher has considered SPSS analysis, descriptive analysis and the inferential analysis. The key findings of the study were that IT has played a vital role in bridging the communication gap between the customers and the brands and companies and also promote a two-way communication which helps the companies to understand the customers, their characteristics, consumer behavior and buying patterns more comprehensively and thus can derive more effectual customer retention strategies. The study has also paved way for further study in regards to other industries, geographical locations or one particular company. Also, the efficiency of different IT tools and CRM can be analyzed in context of the above mentioned frameworks. The findings of the study holds a lot of relevance even for other sectors as it is about customer retention and each company is struggling to device strategies to attract and retain customers for long-term sustainability and profitability.

**Key words:** Customer retention, role of IT in retail, retail sector in India, IT, CRM, Aurangabad. India.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Customer retention is one of the most well researched topics in the field of marketing. Throughout the years, the researchers have focussed on retention and loyalty among the customers and what are the attributes which determine the willingness of customers to enter and stay into the relationship with the product or service provider. For businesses today, instead of satisfaction, managers are focussing on strategies which could enhance customer retention in their businesses. The concept of brand commitment has therefore also increased attention among the consumer behaviour researches (Homburg and Gierling, 2001)..

The importance of customer retention is all the more important because acquiring, new customers is both costly and difficult in today's times when the competition is getting to stiff. Therefore, it has become an industry across belief that marketing strategy should be focused on retaining the existing customers (Kim et al, 2004, p. 146). Businesses, in which the

customers are retained, are known as sustainable businesses and they are able to save massively on the cost of advertising which is generally spent on enticing the new customer, or costs involved in the personal selling, costs of explaining the business procedures to the customers over telephonic conversations and cost of inefficient dealing during the customer's learning process. Therefore, it can be concluded that retaining the existing customer is advantageous for the businesses. The advantage is actually two-way; the existing customers add to the revenue and profits and the cost spent on luring new customers declines considerably which contributes towards saving. For the long term success of the business, customer retention therefore is an important strategy.

### Role of IT towards Customer Retention in Retail Sector

The retail business which started as a community general shop providing items of necessity has been around for like centuries and has come of age. It started as a general store in the local community wherein local residents would shop for essentials. The speciality stores later came in which were initially

limited to only a certain segment of population within the city. However, with the advent of modernization, and adoption of new technologies, interconnectivity, communication between the cities expanded which in turn curbed the distance between societies. Retailing includes all the activities which involve selling, of goods and services to consumers who use it for their personal purposes. In today's time, the retail business has undergone a paradigm shift. The retail business is highly dependent on information and in order to succeed one needs to curb the barriers (Mansoori and Mehra, 2010). Information in today's time is considered as a valuable asset, and unless one addresses the information barriers, the businesses would not be able to face accelerated growth which can even drive them out of business.

One of the key factors, which help in maintaining an organization and efficient retail operation is information technology (IT). IT according to researchers is an enabler for customer satisfaction, operational efficiency in the business operations, and extends profitability among the business by enabling customer retention as well. The technology has made things, wireless, seamless and cashless and also enhanced our capabilities to extract whatever information we need within no time. The retail sector is a highly competitive market, and therefore it is important for the retailers to extract information regarding the spending patterns of consumers, their habits, their preferences in order to gain competitive advantage over rivals. Therefore, it has become all the more important to make investments towards acquiring information which is important for the survival of the organization or else the company may lose business and also customers. Since the customers have access to all the information available on the internet through social media and other sources, they have become highly informative and also price sensitive and therefore are not satisfied until they more than one option before making the final choice. The result of which is switching from one vendor to another (Saroja, 2012).

Applications of Information technology in the retail operations have been immense. They provide several customized solutions in different areas such as merchandising, promotion planning, inventory management, in-store operations, supply chain management, etc. However, the software used by IT systems are highly complex as they are a combination of hardware, software, communication tools, networks and data sources which are processed by the people operating them. The processes in IT systems are storage of data, retrieving it, and then finally transforming the information in order to manage the information in an effective way.

Information technologies can be applied to input, output, store, transmit, and receive data and information which is processed for use. However, what is important to determine is the fact that why there is need for information technology in retailing. The three key areas where the application of Information

technology has been discussed in the literature are; Product information, customer information and operational information. Since the present study has been conducted to understand the role of IT towards customer retention, more emphasis would be given to this aspect of IT. In terms of customer information, IT helps in determining the profile of the customer, the behaviour of the customers, their preferences and their purchasing behaviour (Saraf et al, 2007; Negi, 2008).

### **Problem Statement**

Application of IT in business is a new growing area with huge consumer market, however with great benefits, great challenges are also attached. Since most of the organizations have adopted IT applications in their day to day functions therefore the competition has become all the more tough. When the products provide almost the same value for customers, its organizations in order to sustain themselves against the competition need to add some extra value to the customer to be able to stand out in the crowd.

The new trends in the applicability of IT, is to understand the concept of customer relationship management in order to understand the needs and demands of the customers. By understanding their needs, businesses could provide tailored products or services for the customers. This also helps the businesses to identify the most valuable customers and who are they. According to researchers, the most valuable customer is the customer who repeats his or her order. So, the application of IT towards customer retention is one of key paths businesses adopt in order to raise their profits. Also, the retailers need to have clear strategy of customer retention, which has been studied and analysed in this research.

### **Aim and Objectives of The Study**

The primary aim behind undertaking this research is to explore the application of information technology for customer retention across retailers of different merchandise. A number of previous studies have explored and established the application of information technology in retail for customer retention but there is a lack of research on the subject establishing the influence of kind of merchandise one is selling on IT application and customer retention. The proposed study aims to fill this gap by finding an answer.

The study is primarily based upon the customer service department of selected retailers however, a survey of the customers has also been conducted to find out the efficacy of retailers' efforts. The idea behind choosing the customer service department is that this department basically acts as the interface between retailers and the customers hence most appropriate for a research on customer retention. The retailers included in the survey are: TATA Croma, 99 Acres, HDFC Bank, Shoppers Stop and

Domino's Pizza. The geographical area for the proposed study has been restricted to the city of Aurangabad (Maharashtra State) in India. For the purpose of this study, the respondents from 5 above mentioned retailers has been contacted at their stores in Aurangabad to gather data for the research. Besides, the customers' feedback for the research has also been assembled from those visiting the stores.

### **Scope Of The Study**

This study establishes if the usefulness of information technology to achieve customer retention in retailing differs according to the nature of merchandise the retailer is offering. The study has been conducted from both retailers' as well as customers' perspectives. Retailers' perspective has been explored by surveying the customer service executives; inquiring them about the various applications of IT in their organization and how it has helped them in delivering enhanced buying experience to the customers. The customers' perspective has been explored by asking them about whether the customer retention strategies of retailers have really enhanced their satisfaction. The objective behind studying both the retailers' and customers' perspective is to get an insight on whether application of the IT in different retail operations has really helped them in customer retention. Customer loyalty in retail is usually measured through enrolments into the firm's loyalty programs and repeat purchases by the customers. The study has included both these variables to identify any differences in the customer retention benefits enjoyed by the selected retailers.

The scope of this study is not restricted to the selected retailers; the benefits of the findings rather extend to all the retailers globally. This study helps them to understand IT applications used by other retailers and how it has benefitted them in achieving customer retention. This study gives an opportunity to the firms to compare their IT systems with that of other retailers, identify the loopholes in their existing IT systems, and take corrective measures and decide whether the same can be implemented in the firm considering the difference in the nature of products they offer for sale. By offering recommendations to improve customer retention in the firm, the research helps retailers to enhance their turnover, revenues and profitability.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Over the years, the business approach of trade and commerce has undergone change, especially within the last two decades. The approach that primarily focused on enhancing sales and profit through production of quality goods has now increasingly turned towards effective techniques of marketing and more recently, utilization of the IT in bringing about customer loyalty and retention, a key to attain higher sales and profit in modern day business. The area of

research for this particular study is to evaluate the evolution as well as applicability of IT for customer retention in present day retail sector.

According to Masih and Masih (2008), customer retention is one such consumer centric approach that should be utilized to ensure greater sales rate. It has been noted that greater sales are realized through the aid of customer loyalty. There is a common psychology among the consumers that they tend to stick to selected one or two brands once they have attained a certain level of satisfaction. In fact, surveys based on some of the retail giants have shown that major chunk of the product sales has been due to the products bought by consumers who are found to be loyal to the brand. They seem to be coming back again and again to the store to purchase items and hence contribute to sales of the company (Chen, 2008).

Especially, due to the advancements of technology, the companies are able to address to the expectations of the customers who again in turn play a vital role in directing the marketing forces. The business organizations that mainly operate in the capital intensive markets are the ones who are most in requirement of technology in order to swiftly and efficiently, adapt to the ever changing customer expectations and market dynamism. The companies in order to remain competitive in the global market are always in need of systems for resource and development management and technology management (Chen, 2008).

### **Meaning and Definition of Customer Retention**

According to Dyché (2008), customer retention is simply defined as an assessment of quality of services and products that are to be provided by a business organization for measuring the extent to which the customers are loyal. In several studies it has been found that statistics of customer retention are typically expressed as the percentage of long term loyal customers who are satisfied with the services and the products offered by a particular organization. The organization typically found these customers to be spending more, costing less for the company and helping in acquiring more number of potential customers who would be acting as valuable references. However, over the years, under the impact of globalization, the meaning and the techniques used for customer retention has undergone a change. In a study conducted by Deloitte in 2012 on "Understanding Customer Retention in the Retail Industry," it was found that the retailers use the tool of customer retention for the purpose of gaining a competitive market within the business environment.

The retailers are especially seen to be monitoring customer retention and then analysing the fundamental drivers in order to stay competitive.

Customer retention is now a concept that the business houses are gradually acknowledging it to be an important tool to compete against one another. However, the strategies for retaining customers are not fully developed and are mostly in the stage of experimentation (<http://www.deloitte.com>, 2013). It becomes clear from the study conducted by Deloitte that the common mistakes are often committed and re-structured for gaining better results. In fact, depending upon the continuous process of building and re-building, the modern day retailers are able to understand the various nuances of customer retention, its uses and various fields of applications. In fact, much of the success of today's retailers in achieving higher business goals has been due to the fact that they have consistently got involved themselves with strategies of employee retention and have repeatedly learnt from both phases of success and failures.

### **Importance Of Customer Retention**

As per the study conducted by Accenture on Maximizing Customer Retention, the importance of customer retention came to be expressed as strategies used by companies that can help to achieve better rates of retention (<http://www.accenture.com>, 2013). Moreover, the retention policies also include the processes that are helpful in reducing acquisition costs and hence, ultimately boost a market share that would directly address the various causes pertaining to high rates of customer attrition. Based on the causes of the customer attrition rate the companies will therefore come to know about the various flaws of business activities that are to be avoided so as to ensure that the customer retention is carried out in proper way.

Essentially, in the study it was found out that the companies increasingly started to target implementing strategies that are primarily treatment based and as a result of which all the services and channels are to be made to work and execute their jobs so as to ensure end to end results for the sole purpose of offering absolute customer experience. Therefore, it can thus be understood from the study that customer experience is one of the most effective ways to lead to customer satisfaction and hence to the concept of customer retention. Customer retention is indeed an important aspect for all business houses as it is directly involved in generation of company sales and strategic growth. So, the study conducted by Accenture concludes that there is no doubt in the fact that retaining the loyalty of the customers is very challenging. However, as markets are becoming globalised and matured, the customer retention is gradually becoming an essential element of attaining competitive advantage. Based on sophisticated analytics the various companies are trying to find out what basically hinge customers to stick to a particular brand for considerable period of time. The study further stated that it is with the aid of well-equipped model with an end to end operational system, it would help to optimize interactions with the customers across various channels and companies in order to ensure

that the delivery of better quality of service experiences for all loyal customers.

### **Challenges In Customer Retention**

Customer retention has indeed become an important aspect of customer relationship management. But there are several challenges that arise during the development of implementation of the strategies. As stated in the study conducted by SAS and Loyalty, one of the major challenges has been the dynamic change of the market (<http://www.sas.com>, 2013). The managers often make the mistake of delivering customer retention strategies based on traditional concepts. In fact, as stated in the study, the concepts of customer loyalty and that of retention is certainly not new. Therefore, the managers have tried to develop customer retention strategies around those definitions. However, it is found that effective strategies based on the traditional means for the purpose of creating loyal customers and retaining them gradually started to show diminishing results. The market was gradually becoming more matured, globalization has made the market all the more competitive and companies identified that it is by developing business edge around customer service, they would be able to come up with better customer retention strategies.

For instance, the study through a survey found out that the customers are now becoming desensitized with the traditional loyalty programs. The customers of modern markets are more interested towards programs that offer greater scope for savings. The business houses are expected to be all the more innovative so that they can deliver unique value to their existing base of customers so as to protect their brand loyalty and develop and generate a revenue system. The latest concept of using the loyal customers as brand evangelists is considered to be highly innovative and effective strategy in attracting newer customers and also retaining them with the older ones.

According to the study, the key elements that are to be present for effective retention programs include, the development of function that would initiate a dedicated customer loyalty and retention, integration of customer information and data, effective management of the customer lifecycle and the last but not the least is the allocation of budget. Managers cannot be expected to be receiving returns as soon as the strategies get implemented as good and effective strategies take time to get matured and come up with expected results.

### **The Popular Strategies For Customer Retention**

As spoken by Ali (2009), it is very necessary for business organizations to implement appropriate marketing strategies so as to attain success. In earlier days business firms in order to enhance their market share used to focus on gaining the attention

of new customers. However, due to the onset of globalization, the market is gradually becoming all the more competitive. This in turn is forcing the various business firms to do business by adopting new ways. The focus shifted from attracting newer customers to retaining of already existing customers. In fact as spoken by Allen and Wilburn (2009), customer retention indeed became an important tool to attain business edge. So, in a highly competitive market, the organizations are seen to be developing business strategies that would ensure of meeting individual needs and expectations of customers. According to Allen and Hill (2006), the experience the customer has with the product or the service is very important as it directly impacts the sales rate of product in the market. Therefore, it can thus be determined that in order to ensure high sales rate of the organization, the products and services are to be so developed that they have the right combination of quality and design.

Customer retention has therefore become an important aspect for business organization. To go about it, the organization has to bring changes in the very way it carries out its business. The organization is therefore, has to come up with possible developmental changes in the form of transforming the internal operations like the leadership. Due to increasing consumer centric approach there was a shift from transactional form of leadership to that with a leadership style of more transactional approach. Allentuck (2007) says that this form of leadership approach has led to development and management of innovative relationship management. In fact, it is found that is this relational management that has made to develop the core aspect of the concept of marketing. Therefore, according to Anderson and Kerr (2008), marketing is basically an organizational function consisting of set of processes for the purpose of creating, delivering, communicating value of products and service to customers. As stated by Anderson and Kerr (2009), marketing is mainly useful for establishing relationships with customers that would be beneficial for both the organization and also the stakeholders of the company.

On the other hand, the concept of heterogeneity comes to the forefront when the performances of the services tend to vary on day to day basis. As stated by Blackwell *et al.* (2009), none of the services offered to customers at one point of time will be similar to the other. Therefore, it becomes very difficult to make sure of consistency in the quality of the services available across time, people and organizations. At times, it becomes quite difficult for a service manager to find out whether the services are performed in accordance to what was actually planned. The perishability on the other hand is referred to as an aspect that cannot be saved, resold or even returned. Since, in case of services, the problems are often due to the fact that they cannot be inventoried, for managers it becomes very difficult to mend up things if anything goes wrong.

So, based on the above knowledge on the characteristics of services, it becomes apparent that the way services are delivered are quite different to that of the way the goods are offered. As a result of which, it becomes quite difficult for managers to devise customer retention strategies separate for services and goods as in most cases, especially in the retail sector, the customer satisfaction largely depends upon the fine blend of the services and the products received from the outlets (Lo *et al.* 2010). At times, even if the quality of the products is good, the ultimate satisfaction level may not be quite that much as it would otherwise be due to the low quality of services offered by the customers.

As stated by Brink and Berndt (2009), customer retention policies have to great extent deal with the strategies that would depend on consumer behaviour. So, the business units have to depend upon the study of human psychology, their reaction to the quality and price of the products and largely their association to the employees of the organization. In fact, as stated above relationship management is indeed an important aspect for business organizations to come up with strategies that would be helpful in retaining customers. In fact, according to Britain (2008), apart from the product offered, it becomes very important to equally focus on the strategies that would eventually help organizations to come up innovative services. It is based on the standard of services along with the products offered, the customers are provided with a complete package leading to customer satisfaction.

Brown and Turley (2009) say that if the services are offered by the employees that are associated to the provider of the products, the customers will be able to receive proper quality of services. This is because, if the employees or the staff belongs to the provider company itself, they would be trained better with respect to the knowledge of the products (Lee *et al.* 2011). The employees will be able to get good grasp of the products and what actually the provider wants to deliver to the customers through the goods and products offered. But, as stated by Buchwald (2011), the staff of the company has to make sure of the quality of the services is best during the time of final delivery of the goods. According to consumer behaviour experts it is indeed an important aspect of customer satisfaction as the last minute quality of services brings about a lasting impression on the minds of the customers (Lee *et al.* 2009).

According to Butscher (2006), customers are often not able to understand what actually they are looking up for. If the managers and the staff are able to identify the right pulse of the customers then with the right mix of knowledge and experience, the customers can be satisfied to great degree (Kotler and Keller, 2009). If the customers are provided with the right service, they would for sure get a good impression of the products and ultimately about the

entire organization. Another very important strategy that is used now days includes the word of mouth.

The managers are found to establish channels through which they can get to know about how the consumers feel about the products and services bought by the purchasers. Also, to what extent the consumers actually think that they are satisfied. In case if they are less satisfied, the managers try to find out the reasons behind their dissatisfaction (Kim, 2008). It is through the help of the word of mouth the managers of an organization come to know about the various suggestions that the customers expect to be included in the products and services of the organization. In a way, the processes also lead to another set of benefits (Kim *et al.* 2010). If the customers find that the managers of the companies are actually paying attention to the suggestions the customers, they would for sure turn out to be more loyal and hence, the company will be able to retain its loyal customers for an indefinite period of time.

In context of the word of mouth, the IT plays a vital role. The electronic word of mouth is one of the most potent tools to retain customers (Keller et al, 2011). The social networking sites, online forums and such are very important tools to develop electronic word of mouth communication medium. Technology has therefore; enable managers to get a better idea of the expectations and the needs of the customers through those online forums (Jones and Sasser, 2008). The managers not only come to know about what consumers speak on a product or a service directly to the representatives of the company but also gather information from conversations that take place among the consumers (Kasim and Minai 2009). Therefore, it can be said that the electronic word of mouth is indeed an important aspect of customer retention. The managers who are seen to be promptly replying to the needs and expectations of the customers, are considered have greater ability to retain the consumers.

As per the study of Buttle (2008), professionalism is what makes the difference between quality customer care services. In fact, according to him, the customers are to be more satisfying when it comes to the context of professionalism. Staff members who are found to be extremely professional are the ones known to have established a healthy relationship with the customers. Therefore, according to Cahill (2007), the following are the ways through which professionalism can be established.

The retail giant must also ensure of the fact that the staff members are highly interactive. They should have the will to mix freely with the customers so that they can easily come to know about what the customers are looking for (Han *et al.* 2007). The more the staff would be seen interactive; the better would be the chances of meeting the expectations of the customers. The last but not the least, the customers are required to be extremely professional. The staff must know their

professional limitations (Hallin and Marnburg, 2008). It is certainly so that the customers must have an impression that meeting up the expectations of the staff is the most important duty, however, for the staff there lay another important aspect of their job. They are required to ensure optimal customer satisfaction by simultaneously maintaining the profit making aspect of the organization. In fact, according to Cant (2008), here lies the true challenge of a professional staff who at the same time manage customers and benefits of the organization.

The customer potential management has over the years turned out to be a potent marketing management strategy. According to the study the traditional marketing approach involves a mix of principles that basically leads to market dominance and greater market share. Traditionally thus was on gaining greater customer share, however, the process although bought about initial success but it soon failed to retain back the acquired customers. Based on a survey on 100 managers belonging to various retail giants have revealed that the inadequacies of traditional approach led to the development of the new concept called relationship management.

### **Importance Of It In Marketing**

The information technology has opened up newer avenues of marketing today. With the help of IT marketing has become very organized and systematic. Every little step is directed towards a planned and targeted marketing. The IT has not only been able to make an organized marketing system but also enhanced the efficiency level also. According to Alvarez and Casielles (2008), marketers of today's generation are therefore well versed with the latest technology, especially with respect to the information technology. The marketers are therefore well aware of all the technological implications and applicability aspects so as to gain maximum possible advantage.

In order to establish a strong customer relationship management system, the marketing managers are required to maintain huge database on customer information. Therefore, the IT plays a strong role in managing the database and an organized information system (Dutu and Halmajan, 2011). So, as stated by Anderson and Cunningham (2008), the IT plays the role of a data based warehouse where information of all possible kinds are stored, managed and utilized. The IT department has been noted to be quite efficient in providing large scale projects in order to support various marketing based activities. Such has been the market dynamism and the ever changing marketing activities, for marketers it would have been quite impossible if the marketers did not have the option of using IT (Dutu and Halmajan, 2011). For instance, the demand for bringing about innovation in marketing has been to that very extent that the IT has helped the marketers to keep pace

with the relentless change. The smart phone mobile applications for targeting consumers are known to be one such instance of IT's contribution to advanced marketing technique.

As stated by Allentuck (2007), the basic role of the IT is to communicate. Communication being one of the prime aspects of marketing, the IT indeed plays a vital role. With the aid of IT the marketing managers are able to establish a strong and effective communication system to that with the targeted consumers. Since, the IT is technology intensive the IT is able to function in interpreting business strategies for the marketing managers. It is one interpreting the strategies, the marketers are able to better understand what is basically required, what marketing strategies are to be implemented and such. Therefore, as stated by Anderson and Kerr (2009), the marketing managers are also able to find out the vary way they would have to execute their task with the aid of Information Technology.

According to Belk (2011), the boom of the retail industry has further developed the IT and its applicability in the marketing segment. This is because, the retail industry has to deal with multiple consumers and as a result of which, in order to tackle such problems it becomes absolutely necessary to use information technology. The information technology in other words is an important aspect for marketing in retail sector. In the retail sector consumerism is indeed an important aspect. Therefore, the retail departments are found to have utilized the IT in tackling the multiple customer channels.

According to Bian and Moutinho (2011), the marketing managers with the aid of IT have the opportunity to win customers as friends. The targeted consumers may get contacted through the social networking sites and develop a bond of friendship whenever needed in order to sell the products. However, as stated by Dick and Basu (2007), the managers face at times face challenges in utilizing IT. This is because IT is to some extent is rigid. The IT processes that are made to work for marketing often takes time to reshape themselves in order to be at par with the flexibility of the marketing techniques. Marketing on the other has in quite flexible. The strategies are consistently changing. As stated by Fennis and Pruyn (2007), this is mainly because of the fact that marketing is essentially dependent on consumer behaviour. As a result of which the marketing strategies are so to be devised so that the marketing techniques are in accordance to the consumers of the targeted market. The consumers, who are basically human beings and are subjected to varying ideas, interests and expectations, however, IT is technology based. As a result of which IT for the IT department becomes difficult to carry forward with ever changing marketing strategies. But, as stated by Friedman (2008), with the advancement of technology the IT is gradually evolving. It is now seen to be

coming up with the ever chaining needs and requirements of the marketing segment.

On the other hand, as stated by Harvey *et al.*(2008), the incapacity of IT to handle management techniques at times is nothing but a perception and may not be true. According to Jones and Hayes (2008), the perception is due to the organizational culture and nothing much to do with actuality. Kim (2008), further says that it is due to the problem existing in the working culture of the organization that is basically contributing to the non-performance of IT up to the expected level. On the other hand, if the organization is structured and organized in the proper way then the IT and the marketing department can work with complete coherence. Moreover as spoken by Kotler and Keller (2009), there is fundamentally no difference between the IT and marketing. He further stated IT and marketing will work out best in an organizational culture where there is a strong relationship between functions and individuals.

IT and marketing may not work out well together in a culture that is under the strong control of the head of the organization. It should otherwise be a culture where the executive are to be won with trust and not through orders. The executives must be well aware of the accountability of the leader and what can be the actions that can be taken up by the leader in order to equate the relationship (Dutu and Halmajan, 2011).

There is another very basic need for the IT to work along with marketing management. The database that is handled by the IT and used by the marketing managers requires security. So, the IT comes along with security facilities in data management systems. However, as stated by Lo *et al.* (2010), this is not all because of which the IT should be collaborated with marketing management. In large retail organizations, the IT plays the important role in rationalizing, consolidating, and prevalence of single version of truth with respect to data so as to ensure IT and marketing to work together. This is very essential as the process would lead to key customer databases within a scalable data centre, which is exclusively backed up by best practices with respect to IT and security (Dutu and Halmajan, 2011).

According to experts like Macdonald and Sharp (2007), IT is required to evolve with the changing time. For instance IT has to adapt itself to long term infrastructure projects like ERP or system of new enterprise resource planning that would be quite helpful in the long run. So, the executives working in the IT department must recognize every possible needs of the application that are well specified and engineered in order to execute seamless integration. For now, the applicability of IT in consumerism is quite short involving of marketing campaign for just few days. So, there is an urgent need for up-



gradation in order to make IT a perfect tool for using it for marking requirements in the long run.

### **Impact Of It In Customer Service And Customer Satisfaction**

As stated by Smeral (2008), for the purpose of building relationship with the customers, managers are required to have information on the customers. Again, if the data is to be utilized the data has to be quite clean and be available on the right time. So, it is very important to be aided with technology so that organizations having huge data bases can well handle their esteemed customers. In the context of identifying technology, it is very important that the number of technology based applications be identified in the form of computer or the World Wide Web, mobile based technology and telephone technology. The identification process is very necessary as this would directly influence the customer service strategy (Dutu and Halmajan, 2011).

As per the study of Yaprak (2008), the intelligent email is an important CRM based method. It is helpful in establishing customer contacts with more than 70% of all the online business houses. All though majority of the contacts are done through emailing, interestingly, it must also be noted that the success rate is quite low. About 80% of the customers are contacted through the email although only 32% are noted to have replied back to those emails. The intelligent email is an important tool for ensuring accurate and quick responses of the customers. The intelligent emailing is basically the process by which apt but short questions are to the customers (Knowles *et al.*(2010). The process becomes so simple that emailing hardly becomes a labourious task to get answered. Also, the answers received are accurate and the customers feel satisfied as they did not have to spend good about of time in answering the questions. The intelligent emailing in fact, leads to easy reduction of problems with effective resolutions for the problems. The process ultimately leads to not only customer satisfaction but also increased rate of customer retention.

According to Knowles *et al.*(2010), the collaborative chat is also a very useful tool for ensuring standard customer service. For instance, if a particular customer has any query regarding on a particular product or shipping details, a live collaborative chat will enable the customer to get all the details. All the customers are required to do is to click on the icon of live collaborative chat or in other words the customer service icon. On clicking on to the icon, the customer can enter into the chat box and can effectively communicate with the executive of the organization. In case the customer has already got registered in the website of the organization, the executives can easily get in touch with the customers once they log in to the website. The customers on logging in are addressed by the customer service executive who has every

detail of the customer and thus are efficient enough to come up with effective customized solutions.

As stated by Hitt and Hoskisson (2009), the option of self-help is also quite useful in attending to customers. However, the process is little traditional in format but is still quiet efficient. The process of self-help consists of intelligent FAQs. The FAQs are developed with the aid of expert search systems that are helpful in interpreting various common asked questions of the customers that can otherwise may not be searched and found out through the use of a keyword. The process involves engagement of bots or virtual agents who have the right expertise just as any live human being would have in answering the questions of the customers. The virtual agents are well equipped in learning about learning algorithm that actually enables the bots to come up with the right answers to the customers. According to Parker (2011), such self-help communication features help in gaining customer satisfaction. This is because; the process involves very quick way of responding to the queries of the customers. Since, the responses offered are also very accurate, the rate of satisfaction is higher. The enriched technology effectively collects the customer information and their responses quite effectively and then manages and evaluates the information so as to come up with clear idea of the general trends of customer satisfaction, customer preferences. The process helps in improving loyalty and relationships with the consumers.

The telephony tool is computer aided telephony integration. The tool is usually incorporated in web pages. The process is essentially equipped with call-back buttons. When these buttons are clicked, a window opens up where the customer is provided with a phone number. This phone number is the contact point enabling an establishment of communication channel between the customer and the representative of the organization. A request for any query regarding a product from the consumer's end may provide a scope for the organization to give right information on the new product launches and hence capture prospective customers (Dutu and Halmajan, 2011).

The VOIP technology is used for the purpose of transferring data or information through the organization's local area network and wide area network systems. This basically shows that that the business organization for instance retail giant is in no longer need for physical phone line for the purpose of communicating with the world outside. The customer service representatives through the help of the VOIP technology are able to come up with advanced tools in the form of speakers and headphones to speak directly to the customers. A typical VOIP salesperson can make use of the web pages that can show up new products or services during the conversations with customers about the various product and service related attributes (Dick and Basu, 2007). According to Ed (2008), the

process will lead to increase in acquisition as well as retention of the customers. Thus, in a way the process also leads to development of an effective website that directly connects to the customers and the customers are left satisfied through quality interaction and service offerings.

### **How It Helps In Customer Retention**

The customer relationship model shows the determinants of customer based relationships and commitments. According to Dyche (2008), the model consists of here major factors, effectiveness of communication, the technical quality and the functional quality. In all the major factors, the concept of trust plays a vital role. The factors are directly associated to the concept called trust and in turn influences the formation for relationship based commitment.

Parker (2011) says that the service quality is in accordance to two main components, the functional quality and the technical quality. However, the major role of IT in customer retention is basically with respect to monitoring and evaluation of customer relationships. According to Bauernfeind and Zins (2008), the technology helps in identifying the progress of the strategies pertaining to customer relationship and customer retention. There are basically two different ways to track down the progress of customer relationship policies. One is through the process of relationship based surveys and another is through the use of customer data bases. In both cases, the IT is used to make the tasks more effective and efficient. Also, with the aid of other IT based tools like complaint monitoring, customer visits and lost customer based surveys, a profile of customer based relationships are developed.

Another important medium for ensuring customer relationship monitoring is to ensure of a good customer data base (Dick and Basu, 2007). The customer data base is very effective in developing efficient customer based retention strategies. The data base can involve the process of gaining information on the current customers including their names, address and also phone numbers. The data base consists of the revenue rates, costs as well as preferences.

### **Challenges For Using It Tools In Customer Service**

Customer service is a vast domain involving too many functions within a company and anything going wrong has serious repercussions in the form of a complaint. Thus the approach to get it right first time saves a lot of hassles, time, effort, energy. There are challenges of the access control, sharing of information, which is directly linked to the organizational hierarchies, the work flow process of the organization. Research proves that there is almost no customer retention strategies for all the companies in the last decade,

while post millennium there are specific retention departments at service. Investing in the right IT infrastructure that has CRM capabilities for customer retention strategies are now plenty as the software have evolved offering features which are aiding the company's world over (Macdonald and Sharp, 2007).

Many have argued that in spite of installing CRM an enterprise version the profit per employee in serving a customer still do not show up. The challenge of revenue generation which is so explicit in CRM software shows the options to choose in the competitive marketing environment. The business analytics of the software also throws up challenges where the strategic options are sometimes not feasible to implement due to constraints and compliance issues. The tussle is between the operational efficiency and compliance in order to do revenue generation (Lo *et al.* 2010). For a growing organization which has gone global, a multichannel and multilingual customer engagement software is needed which can add on to the latest (sms, web integration) for smoother customer service delivery. As the whole world is becoming more web driven with customers accessing internet from their smart phones, the need to engage them in a improved online experience forms a larger part of customer retention strategy now a days (Lim and O'Cass, 2009). To enable virtual chat service globally, chatbot (robots) answering customer's FAQs are enabling the power of the software across continents on real time basis. So progress in new generation technology is aiding to provide business solutions against the challenges faced (Oosterveer, 2009).

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research has been conducted by following a well-defined set of methodology. For instance, the researcher has developed a structure including research philosophy, research design strategy, data collection tools and process followed by a defined method for data analysis. The research philosophy chosen for this particular research is epistemology and positivism. The type of research that has been selected is the exploratory research study. On the other hand, the research approach is deductive involving both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. For data analysis, proper tools are utilized to establish the reliability of the data and the validity of the outcomes. With a special emphasis, detailed information on primary and quality research studies has been provided.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study is based on the same belief that Information Technology (IT) plays critical role in contemporary retail and hence it is important to explore the various applications of IT in retailing

along with the varied ways in which it helps the firms in the sector to retain their customers. However, there is a lack of research comparing the IT applications by retailers of different merchandise, thereby exploring the similarities and differences in the ways Information Technology (IT) is utilized by them. Moreover, there has not been sufficient research on whether the IT's benefits relating to customer retention vary for retailers selling different kinds of merchandise. This research fills this gap by making a comparison different kinds of retailers and finding out how each of these retailers match or differ in their IT applications and how far their individual ways of IT implementation have proved effective in customer retention.

The study does not take into account the perception and views of the people across India, rather the study is limited since the responses of respondents from one city, Aurangabad were considered for the research. The study has been carried out in the context of India only thus, the study is limited from being universal in nature.

### **Research Approach And Strategy**

The main aim of the researcher is explore the application of information technology for customer retention across retailers of different merchandise so that the findings can be applied and generalized among other retailers who are yet to adopt information technology. Therefore, the study implied deductive research wherein the research questions framed for the research were answered through both primary and secondary research.

For the present study initially exploratory research was conducted to formulate the research questions. Then the descriptive study was conducted to seek the answers to the research questions. For the present study, survey research strategy was found most appropriate as it is associated with deductive approach, is common business strategy and helps in making generalizations and conclusions regarding the target population. It is most sought strategy used mainly for exploratory and descriptive research studies.

### **Data Type**

Data for the research has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data is the first-hand data, original in nature and collected specifically for the current research. Close-ended questionnaires were developed to collect data from customers. For qualitative analysis, open ended questionnaire was prepared and data was collected using face to face interviews. On the other hand, secondary data is the one which is published and collected originally for some other research and is utilized in the present study. Both primary and secondary research data have been used for this study. Using both research methods strengthened the research findings with respect to aim and objectives of

the study. It helps in giving descriptions and explanations of the topic being studied. For quantitative analysis, 200 customers (40 from each organisation) were approached on the basis of convenience sampling from Aurangabad to find out if the application of IT in retail has really improved customer retention. For qualitative analysis, 2 managers each from 5 retailers and 4 customer service executives from each retailer chain (TATA Croma, 99Acres, Shopper's Stop, HDFC Bank and Domino's Pizza) were interviewed.

### **Quantitative Analysis**

This analysis starts with *descriptive and normative analysis* of the demographic profile of all the customers who have been the customers of research participants. This helped the researcher in describing the characteristics of research group and helped in estimating the frequency or proportion of sample population. Next, in order to explore the respondents' preferences and awareness of ICT applications to increase customer retention, *normative analysis* of data collected from the quantitative questionnaire has been conducted. In the final stage, qualitative analysis of data collected from interview conducted on the company employees and management was analyzed results of which have been presented.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

To explore the problem of customer retention in today's highly competitive business environment and to understand the role of information technology in the customer retention practices and techniques adopted by companies, the researcher adopted a comprehensive approach towards the primary study. Apart from gathering quantitative data through the primary study conducted amongst the customers of the five case retailers, the perspective of the company employees was also collected in form of qualitative data. The managers and customer executives of the five case retailers, Shoppers Stop, Domino's, Tata Croma, 99 Acres and HDFC Bank were approached first and briefly informed about the study and its purpose. Those who gave their voluntary consent were considered to be as the part of the study. 2 managers and 4 customer executives from each case retailer were considered for the study. In total, the perspectives of 30 company representatives were taken into account to provide a two-way analysis for the usage of IT for retaining customers by the organized retail sector. To ensure that no vital information is missed out, the researcher prepared a list of questions to be asked. Moreover, there were separate set of questions for the managers and the customer executives.

To gather first-hand information from the managers and customer executives of the case companies at Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India, the scholar conducted interview sessions with the concerned managers and customer executive at the time

mutually agreed upon. The analysis of the data thus gathered is done through adoption of all the three approaches of content analysis: conventional, summative and directed. Similar questions were asked to the customer service executives to get a response from the employees at the bottom level of the marketing hierarchy. These employees have the direct contact with the customers and thus, are the best source to know about customer satisfaction, loyalty and customer retention. Four executives from each of the five case companies were interviewed to get their opinion.

### **Basic Findings Of Survey**

The retail companies studied during the research are using a combination of CRM software, mostly customized, along with the various IT applications like loyalty programs, e-coupons, alternative online retailing platform, intelligent marketing, email direct marketing and mobile applications. Even customers are highly informed these days and prefer a brand with a sound and efficient IT system. Companies are integrating the IT tools for luring customers to make repurchase decisions through their IT tools especially online shopping platform. Also, the primary study highlighted how customer retention is important not only from the company's perspective but also customers are keen on establishing a long-term relationship with the brands and companies. Based on hypotheses testing it was deduced that there is a high positive relationship of the effects of ICT application on customer repurchase, trust, customer satisfaction, customer involvement, customer loyalty and retention and the tools have been critical for it are online shopping, promotional emails, electronic word-of-mouth, personal interaction with sales person, more information about the product usage and e-coupons.

The researcher had an enriching experience while interviewing the managers and customer service executives as customer retention at their respective companies was extensively discussed. It was deduced that most of the companies are already using IT applications and CRM tools for attracting and retaining customers. Companies are also using social media to a considerable degree to get in touch with their customers and encourage them to voice their opinions and even spread positive word-of-mouth publicity. Companies like Shoppers Stop and HDFC bank have customized CRM software which provides them with an edge over their counterparts. Companies are leaving no stone unturned to retain their existing customers. However, for different companies, different IT applications have worked better. For Shoppers' Stop, its loyalty program, First Citizen, which is in collaboration with the Citi bank has been instrumental in the brand's success. On the other hand, Domino's revived its market position through direct marketing through direct emails and developing a whole new menu of offerings based on customer feedback. HDFC

bank helped to synchronize all its services into a comprehensive offering through its customized CRM application and enabling online banking. 99 Acres used the social networking websites to establish itself in the arena of e-commerce. Tata Croma has been riding high on its CRM and IT tools like emails, websites but also attempt to develop an integrated customer database with other Tata companies for cross-selling purposes and lowering the cost of data management separately. Thus, it is evident that most of the companies are attempting new and innovative ways to attract and retain customers in order to survive in the competitive market.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This part highlights the major findings of the study and summarizes the research with conclusions and recommendations for the retail businesses based on the drawings of both the primary and secondary study. Also, the scope of future research has been discussed.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

- **Gaps on the evolution and applications of IT in retailing:** There is substantial literature available on customer retention. However, there is a dearth of studies which analyze the concept in organized retail sector from the perspective of both the company and customers. Moreover, how IT has been instrumental in organized retail sector in India has not been explored much.
- **Relevance of IT in customer retention in retailing:** The studies already done focus on how IT helps in CRM and promoting customer satisfaction. However, the studies lack that how role of IT in CRM is different in different sectors and also how companies have employed IT as a tool for reaching out to the customers in a better and competitive manner. Different companies have developed their own customized CRM software and use various IT applications depending on the nature and characteristics of the offerings, market and target customers. Even the consumers have shown a diverse preference for the IT applications like some prefer emails, some mobile apps, some loyalty programs and some e-coupons. However, most of the customers prefer online shopping for not only purchases but also accessing information about the company.

### **SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ITS APPLICATIONS:**

The existing literature pertains to understanding the concept of various software of CRM like SAP, ERP, Oracle Siebel, customized software, IT applications like emails, e-commerce, mobile applications etc. and how companies use these all in different permutation and combinations. The recent emerging models of CRM software are related to cloud and social as the market place has evolved with social networking sites providing more interactivity of the social CRM element. This is leading the future as most of the software IT firms are offering the cloud versions which is basically the customer and organisation data together kept in the cloud. These are web based application tools which enables users to login from anywhere of the globe (DeGregor, 2011).

The literature explored do not reveal the relevance and effectuality of different IT tools and CRM software with respect to the retail sector. Moreover, the literature usually boasts about the positive impact of CRM and IT tools but when applied different tools deliver different results for different products, services or brands.

The study explored the combination of CRM tools and IT applications used by the case companies and how effectual they have been. Even consumers have preferred different tools for different products like for Domino's telephony has been widely preferred and for HDFC bank, online banking and direct emails are preferred. For Shopper's Stop, Loyalty Programs have worked wonders and for 99 Acres, 24 hours live chat was effective and customers prefer electronic word-of-mouth for Tata Croma. All are extensively using social media for connecting with the consumers.

- **Effectiveness of information technology according to the nature of merchandise:**

The existing literature has numerous studies on the impact of IT on organizational effectiveness and how companies are developing customized software and IT applications to serve the customers in a manner wherein they can gain competitive edge. However, there are no studies that compare the effectiveness of information technology to support customer retention in retailing varies according to the nature of merchandise.

The study identified the ways in which companies have been able to gain a competitive edge over their counterparts through enhancing their efficiency of operations. Shoppers Stop and HDFC have used customized CRM software to understand their customers better and provide them with better services through an integrated system and also providing them the opportunity of transacting online. Domino's improved its service through direct and email marketing and integrating telephony and online ordering into the system.

- **Strategies for better utilization of IT in retailing across different merchandise:**

The literature propounds mainly generalized recommendations for implementing CRM tools to overcome the confronted challenges like access control, sharing of information, which is directly linked to the organizational hierarchies, the work flow process of the organization. Investing in the right IT infrastructure that has CRM capabilities for customer retention strategies are now plenty as the software have evolved offering features that are aiding companies the world over (Macdonald and Sharp, 2007). Technical challenges of defining and mapping a customer service agent's function into the CRM software is vital (Parker 2011).

There is lack of studies that make recommendations for better utilization of information technology towards customer retention in retailing of diverse products and services. Retailing is extensively expanding at a global level and geographical boundaries becoming meaningless through ICT tools. The research covered five diverse retailing companies and made suitable recommendations of better utilization of IT in improving customer retention. Shopper's Stop can use microsites, mobile apps and e-tags to improve customer retention. Tata Croma can use social media marketing, and integrated customer base of other Tata companies. HDFC bank can use mobile voice application to enhance customer interaction and utility, Domino's, apart from online ordering and telephony system can develop a mobile app for the same and 99 Acres can use social media marketing.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the study, following recommendations can be made:

- **More usage of social media marketing:**

Social media is highly popular in India and thus companies need to use it for communicating and interacting with customers to foster customer satisfaction, loyalty and retention. Social media marketing can be used by all the companies in India. Social networking has mass acceptance in India and thus unleashes the immense opportunity to connect with the customers and disseminate information about the brand and products.

- **Adoption of internationally adopted innovative retention practices:**

Indian companies can adopt the internationally used best practices like "e-tags" used by Prada stores which can be quite helpful for Shopper's Stop. Likewise, HDFC bank, Domino's, 99 Acres and Tata Croma can also adopt internationally best practices

in the field of CRM to serve their customers beyond delight.

- **Integration of two or more companies' customer database:**

Two or more companies can use the same customer database for cross-selling like Tata is attempting for Taj hotels, Westside and Croma. Even Shoppers' Stop has tied up with Citi bank for their loyalty programs. More companies can do so. For instance, Dominos can integrate with the soft drink company and 99 Acres can club with different real estate companies in different geographical locations.

- **Building and promoting microsites and mobile applications:**

Most of the people nowadays access internet on their mobile gadgets and thus, companies can develop more user friendly microsites which are suitable for small screen of smartphones and tablets and more structured and easy to use mobile applications. Shoppers' Stop can adopt micro sites and mobile app for the shoppers' on the move while HDFC can improve its mobile app by making it more user friendly and help mobile users to access banking services from anytime anywhere. Even, an integration of allied services like insurance, loans etc. can also be attempted.

- **User Friendly Websites:**

Today with the increase in internet access, consumers are making their choices after exploring the information available on the company's website and other portals. Also, online shopping is on a continuous rise. Thus, it is essential for the companies to focus on their websites and keep updating it and making it easy for the users to understand and navigate through it. The information must be precise. For example, Shoppers' Stop and Tata Croma are multi-brand outlets, so they need to give information about each and every brand they offer, so the information need to be concise yet covering all the essential information that a consumer would like to know. Also it is essential to channelize the communication on the website in a very easy to use manner. Customer care live chats or email options must be highlighted so that customers can easily find them.

## CONCLUSION

The study was conducted to understand the role of IT in customer retention practices in the purview of the retail sector in Aurangabad city of Maharashtra State, India. Technology is expanding at a fast speed and influencing each and every aspect of business. With rise in globalized competition and marketing nearing saturation, companies need to find innovative ways of

attracting and retaining customers. Thus, customer retention is one of the top agenda of the marketing strategies. IT provides a scope to innovate the means of retaining customers. The study paves way for further study in the same direction to have more sector specific and even company specific studies. There is an infinite scope of studying customer retention with respect to a single IT application or CRM tool. Moreover, a comparative study of two competing firms can also be done. The study can also be particularized in terms of geographical locations. Customer retention is critical for competitive sustainability, thus, it is the center of attraction of both academia and practice.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Accenture. (2011). *Maximizing Customer Retention: A Strategic Approach to Effective Churn Management*. Retrieved February 2, 2014, from: <http://www.accenture.com/SiteCollectionDocuments/PDF/Accenture-Maximizing-Customer-Retention.pdf>.

Ali, S. S. (2009). *Models in Consumer Buying Behavior*, 3<sup>rd</sup>ed. New York: Harper Collins.

Allen, D. R., and Wilburn, M. (2009). *Linking customer and employee satisfaction to the bottom line*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Allen, R., and Hill, N. (2006). *Customer Behaviour: A managerial Perspective*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. London: McGraw-Hill Education.

Allentuck, A. (2007). *Consumer Choice: social welfare & health policy*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Kogan Page Limited

Anderson, K., and Kerr, C. (2008). *Customer satisfaction: tools, techniques, and formulas for success*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Chapman and Hall.

Anderson, K., and Kerr, C. (2009). *Customer relationship management*. 5<sup>th</sup>ed. New York: Leadership Press.

Anderson, W., and Cunningham, W.H. (2008). The socially conscious consumer, *Journal of Marketing*, 36, 23-31.

Alvarez, B. A., &Casielles, R. V. (2008). Consumer evaluations of sales promotion: The effect on brand choice. *European Journal of Marketing*, 39 (1), 54-70.

Belk, R. W. (2011). *Research in Consumer Behavior*. Page 245, 3<sup>rd</sup>ed. New York: Free Press.

- Bian, X., and Moutinho, L. (2011). *Consumer Behavior, Branding and Counterfeiting*. 4<sup>th</sup>ed. New York: Business Expert Press.
- Blackwell, R. D., Miniard, P. W., and Engel, J. F. (2009). *Consumer behavior*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Mason: Thomson.
- Brink, A., and Berndt, A. (2009). *Relationship marketing and customer relationship management*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Gordon & Breach: Bristol.
- Britain, G. (2008). *Consumer Choice: competition and prices*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Routledge.
- Bauernfeind, U., and Zins, A. H. (2008). The Perception of Exploratory Browsing and Trust with Recommender Websites. *Information Technology & Tourism*, 8(2), 121-136.
- Brown, S., and Turley, D. (2009). *Customer research: postcards from the edge*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Prentice Hall.
- Buchwald, B. (2011). *Schweppes - how the Beverage Brand Affects UK's Consumer Behaviour*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Butscher, S. A. (2006). *Customer loyalty programmes and clubs* 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Norwood: Artech House.
- Buttle, F. (2008). *Customer relationship management*. 6<sup>th</sup>ed. New York, London: Routledge.
- Cahill, D. L. (2007). *Customer loyalty in third party logistics relationships*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. USA: BiblioBazaar.
- Cant, M. C. (2008). *Customer behaviour: a Southern African perspective*. . 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Mason: South-Western Cengage Learning.
- Chen, Y. (2008). *Consumer Choice and firm strategy in an experience*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. California: Random House.
- DeGregor, Dennison. (2011). *Customer-Transparent Enterprise: Beyond 20th Century CRM*. Motivational Press
- Dick, A. S., and Basu, K. (2007). “Customer Loyalty: An Integrated Conceptual Framework,” *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, 22 (2), 99-113.
- Dutu, C., and Halmajan, H. (2011). The Effect of Organizational Readiness on CRM and Business Performance. *International Journal of Computers*, 1(2), 106-114.
- Dyche, J. (2008). *The CRM handbook: a business guide to Customer Relationship Management*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.
- Ed, P. (2008). *Customer Relationship Management*. 4<sup>th</sup>ed. New York: Business Expert Press.
- Friedman, M. (2008). Consumer boycotts in the United States, 1970-1980: Contemporary events in historical perspective, *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 19, 96-117.
- Hallin, C.A., and Marnburg, E. (2008). Knowledge management in the hospitality industry: a review of empirical research. *Tourism Management*, 29(2), 366-81
- Han, Y. K., Morgan, G. A. Kotsiopoulos, A., and Kang, P. J. (2007). “Impulse buying behaviour of apparel purchases”, *Clothing and Textile Research Journal*, 9(3), pp. 15-21.
- Harvey, M., Price, M.F., and Novicevic, M.M. (2008). The role of ipatriates in a globalization strategy and challenges associated with the inpatriation process. *Human Resource Planning*, 22(1), 38–50.
- Hitt, M. A., Ireland, R. D., and Hoskisson, R. E. (2009). *Strategic Management: Competitiveness and Globalization*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Prentice Hall.
- Homburg, C., Giering, a. (2001) Personal characteristics as moderators of the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty; *Psychology and Marketing*.
- Jones, R. M., and Hayes, S. G. (2008). The UK clothing industry: Extinction or evolution? *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 8 (3), 262-278.
- Jones, T. O., and Sasser, W. E. (2008). Why satisfied customer defects. *Harvard Business Review*, 71, 88–99.
- Kasim, A., and Minai, B. (2009). Linking CRM strategy, customer performance measure and performance in hotel industry. *International Journal of Economics and Management*, 3(2), 297 – 316.
- Keller, K. L., Parameswaran, M. G., and Jacob, I. (2011). *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*. 4<sup>th</sup>ed. New Jersey: Pearson Education.
- Kim, B.Y. (2008). Mediated Effects of Customer Orientation on Customer Relationship Management Performance. *International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Administration*, 9(2), 192-218.
- Kim, M., Park, M., Jeong, D. (2004) The effects of customer satisfaction and switching barrier on customer loyalty in Korean mobile telecommunication services. *Telecommunications Policy* 28 145–159.
- Kim, W.G., Lee, Y-K., and Yoo, Y-J. (2010). Predictors of relationship quality and relationship

- outcomes in luxury restaurants. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 3(2), 43-69.
- Kotler, P., and Keller, K. (2009). *Marketing Management*, 14th ed. New Jersey: Pearson International Edition.
- Knowles, T., Diamantis, D., and El-Mourhabi, J. B. (2010). *The Globalization of Tourism and Hospitality: A Strategic Perspective*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Continuum.
- Lee, J., Lee, J., and Feick, L. (2009). The impact of switching costs on the customer satisfaction–loyalty link: Mobile phone service in France. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 15, 35–48.
- Lee, P. R., Naylor, G., and Chen, Q. (2011). Linking customer resources to firm success: The role of marketing program implementation. *Journal of Business Research*, 64, 394–400.
- Lim, K., and O'Cass, A. (2009). Consumer brand classifications: An assessment of culture-of-origin versus country-of-origin. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 10 (2), 120-136.
- Lo, A.S., Stalcup, L.D., and Lee, A. (2010). Customer relationship management for hotels in Hong Kong. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 22(2), 139-159.
- Macdonald, E. K., and Sharp, B. M. (2007). Brand awareness effects on consumer decision making for a common, repeat purchase product: A replication. *Journal of Business Research*, 48 (1), 5-15.
- Mansoor, K. and Mehra, P., (2010). Retail Industry Development. [pdf] Available at: <http://classes.soe.ucsc.edu/ism158/Spring10/Projects/Retail%20Industry%20and%20Impact%20of%20Technology.pdf> [Accessed 13 March 2014]
- Masih, A.M.M., and Masih, R. (2008). Propagative causal price transmission among international stock markets: evidence from the pre- and post globalization period, *Global Finance Journal*, 13, 63-91.
- Negi, H.S., 2008. Technology In Retail. [online] Available at: <http://ezinearticles.com/?Technology-In-Retail&id=1105821>
- Oosterveer, P. (2009). Globalization and sustainable consumption of shrimp: consumers and governance in the global space of flows. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 30(5), 465-476
- Parker, B. (2011). *Introduction to Globalization and Business: Relationships and Responsibilities*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Sage Publications.
- Saraf, V., Tiwari, P. and Malviya, V., (2007). Applications of Information Technology in Retailing. [online] Available at: [http://www.indianmba.com/Faculty\\_Column/FC546/fc546.html](http://www.indianmba.com/Faculty_Column/FC546/fc546.html) [Accessed 12 April 2014]
- Saroja, S. (2012). *Information Technology-Key Success Factor in Retail*. GianJyoti E-Journal, Vol 1 (2) (January-March, 2012). Retrieved February 4, 2014, from: <http://www.gjimt.ac.in/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/N22.pdf>
- Smeral, E. (2008). The impact of globalization on small and medium enterprises: new challenges for tourism policies in European countries. *Tourism management* 19 (4): 371-380.
- Yaprak, A. (2008). Globalization: Strategies to build a great global firm in the new economy. *Thunderbird International Business Review* 44 (2), 297–302.