Review Article

Study of the relation of Customer Service and Entrepreneurial Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

Competition in a world, that quality of products getting closer to each other every day is based on the quality of the customer service. Nowadays, customer service can be considered as an innate element of industrial products. Therefore, many huge companies including car manufacturers also utilized it as an entrepreneurial opportunity for more profitability. On this basis, this article has tried to study the effect of customer service on entrepreneurial opportunities (based on the market and products). Present study is practical, descriptive and is of correlative type. Hence, hypothesis of the study will be analyzed using path analysis test in structural equation model, regression test, ANOVA, and with the help of LESREL 8.5 and SPSS 16 software. The population sample of the study is all of the Samand car owners in Tehran which have bought their cars in 2009. Results of the study show that customer service of Iran-Khodro Company is effective on entrepreneurial opportunities based on the market. Therefore, market development and cost leadership strategies (dimensions of entrepreneurial opportunities based on the market) can be utilized as entrepreneurial opportunity.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Opportunities, Customer Service, Path Analysis, Iran-Khodro.

1. Introduction and Statement of the Problem

Competition in today's tensioning market only depends on adopting entrepreneurial strategies based on present resources and organizational capabilities as the key to identify profitable opportunities (Grant, 1991). These profitable opportunities on basis of entrepreneurial strategies are called entrepreneurial opportunities (Shane, 2003). The main difference between entrepreneurial opportunities and other situations is in profitability. One of the issues during past years and in various industries has been considered as the source of entrepreneurial opportunities is the quality of customer service. (Herve et al. 1999) believed that customer service is being raised as a new opportunity in profitability of the companies (Herve et al, 1999) Nowadays huge companies like car manufacturing companies utilize customer service as entrepreneurial opportunity for increasing their profit. Iran-khodro Company as the pioneer in car manufacturing industry in Iran has also mentioned that its survival in the competitive market depends upon the identification of the present entrepreneurial opportunities in marketing, sales, and customer service sections. But, the question is how to identify these entrepreneurial opportunities? And or basically customer service has an effect on recognition and making entrepreneurial opportunities operational? Regarding the above mentioned contents, in this research, it has been tried to study this matter with providing a conceptual model between customer service as an independent

variable and entrepreneurial opportunities (in the form of opportunities based on market and products) as dependent variables. Considering that the subject is innovative and noticing the result of its utilization in Iran-khodro Company, the necessity of doing the present study confirmed.

2. Theoretical Framework of the Study

2.1 Entrepreneurial Opportunity

Basically, studies on strategic entrepreneurial shows entrepreneurial activities with focus on two categories of opportunity and competitive advantage (Hitt & Reed, 2000). Strategic entrepreneurial refers to such entrepreneurial activities which are accompanied by strategic prospective and for attracting competitive profitable opportunities (Hitt et al, 2001). Heart of the matter of strategic entrepreneurship is the entrepreneurial opportunities which show abilities of companies for increasing their profitability. On this basis, dominant thought in entrepreneurial opportunities' literature is based on two principles:
1) Entrepreneurial opportunities from profitability viewpoint (Baumol, 1993; Sarasvathy et al, 2003; Parrish et al, 2004 and Cohen & Dean 2005).
2) Entrepreneurial opportunities from innovation view point (Hitt et al, 2001; Hitt & Reed 2000;

Ireland, 2003 and Eckhardt & Shane 2003). Although innovation is presented in line of capturing profitable opportunities, but the importance of these two factors in recognition of entrepreneurial opportunities give credit to this classification. Maybe, the most comprehensive definition of entrepreneurial opportunities can be found in Shane studies, 2003. Entrepreneurial opportunity is a process that tries to discover, create and make profitable opportunities functional.

Entrepreneurial opportunities in marketing, sales, and customer service can be followed based on the opportunities based on the market and products. Because the objective of this research is to study these opportunities in the customer service section of Iran-khodro Company; therefore, entrepreneurial opportunities in the market will be studied in the form of opportunities based on development of the market and cost leadership and also entrepreneurial opportunities in product will be studied in form of opportunities based on the product development, diversification and differentiation.

3. Opportunities Based on the Market Development

Market development strategy has been presented by (Ansoff, 1975) for the first time (Ansoff, 1975). The meaning of market development is to offer new services or products to new geographical regions. Many studies have been done about utilizing this strategy for gaining profitable opportunities in the market. (Hollensen, 1998; Bardley, 1999 and London, 2004).

3.1 Opportunities Based on Cost Leadership

This strategy was presented by Porter in 1990. In this strategy company produces and supplies such standard products which decreases the final price of each unit for the customer (someone

who is sensitive to price) (Porter and Michael, 1985; Caves, 1987; Buzzell &Gale, 1987 and DAveni, 1994).

3.2 Opportunities Based on Product Development

This strategy has also been raised by (Ansoff 1975). In performing of this strategy, the company will try to increase its sale by improving or modifying and correcting their present services or products (Magnan et al, 1999; O' Cass & Julian, 2003; Okazaki, 2004 and Parrish et al, 2004).

3.3 Opportunities Based on Diversification of Product

Meaning of diversification of product is to increase the production lines and or in other words, increasing the number of various models of the products. (Matsusaka, 1993; Matsusaka, 1993; Servaes, 1996 and Klein & Saidenberg, 1998).

3.4 Opportunities Based on Differentiation in Products

The meaning of strategy of differentiating of the product is to offer such products or services where in the related industry would be considered as a unique product and can be offered to customers who show less sensitivity to price (Porter& Micheal, 1990; Williamson, 1975; Porter, 1985 and Barney, 2002).

3.5 Customer Service

Customer service is one of the organizational processes which companies perform it considering the growing competition and for attracting entrepreneurial opportunities for increasing profitability and better access to the market and increasing the customer satisfaction level (Calif, 1987) .According to Goofin and Price (1996) customer service has importance because it ends in increasing product quality, gaining competitive advantage, gaining profitable opportunities, and as a result increasing sales and income. The domain of the activities related to customer service is vast. Tour and Kumar have mentioned duties and functions of this section in form of installation and startup services, training, maintain and repair, documentation, providing logistic and spare parts, improving products, software services, warranty and call center service(Tore and Kumar, 2003).

Recognition of entrepreneurial opportunities considered in order to present electronic customer service in this industry with developing communicational infrastructure and development of utilization of technology in car manufacturing companies. Services which are presented by car manufacturing industry today are informational, educational, communicational, leasing, repairing and maintenance services, and also innovational services (considering data mining functions).
Presenting informational services is in the line of informing customers about new products, information regarding service centers and also car news. Today, large car manufacturers present their informational services utilizing email, Short Message Service, and websites (Wilson et al, 1999).Presenting communicational services is directly related to customer satisfaction. Customers after purchasing products from the company may have doubts in their decision making; the only way to manage this uncertainty is to establish a long term relationship with

customers (Flynn et al, 2002). One of the strategies of presenting better customer services in car manufacturing industry is to provide proper trainings to personnel and customers. Presenting suitable training services create possibility for increasing the level of customer service and hence the customer satisfaction. Using trained staffs also, increases the accountability of the company (Nilda et al, 2009). Leasing contracts usually concluded and enforced in the framework of lease condition acquisition. Leasing services in car manufacturing industry increase the purchase power of people and lead to increase the sales of the company. Providing repair and maintenance is the inseparable part of customer service in car manufacturing industry. Maintenance means changing, cleaning, installing, and restarting up the parts which has problems (Calif, 1987). Discovery services refer to the services that company do for detecting defects in the product and rectifying them without causing any loss for the customers. Discovery services have also used for discovering new needs and creating new entrepreneurial opportunities. For implementing this type of services, company tests its products in some markets and with utilizing benchmarking mechanisms satisfaction of the product will be analyzed. (Kruse et al, 2010).

3.6 Hypotheses

Hypotheses of the study are stated in form of two primary hypotheses and 5 secondary hypotheses which will be tested.

H1: Customer service is effective on identifying entrepreneurial opportunities of the market.
- Customer service is effective on entrepreneurial opportunities based on market development.

- Customer service is effective on entrepreneurial opportunities based on cost leadership.

H2: Customer service is effective on identifying entrepreneurial opportunities of the product.
- Customer service is effective on entrepreneurial opportunities based on product development.

- Customer service is effective on entrepreneurial opportunities based on diversification of product.

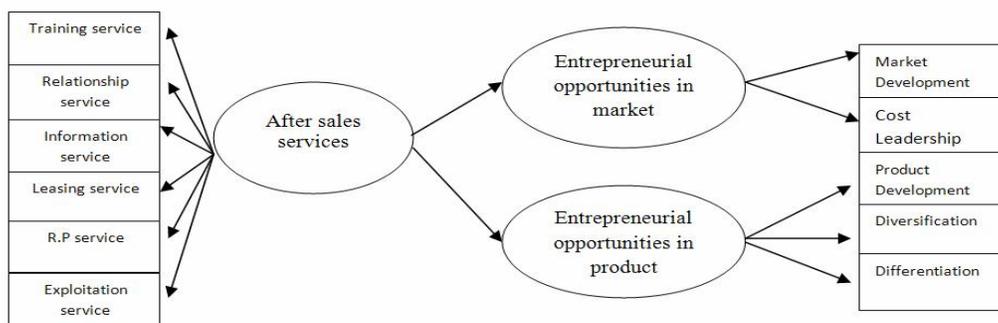- Customer service is effective on entrepreneurial opportunities based on the differentiation in products.

Figure 1: Image showing the Interrelationship

4. Methodology of the Study

4.1 Methodology

Current study, because deals with testing the effect of customer service's variables on entrepreneurial opportunities (opportunities based on market and entrepreneurial opportunities based on product) and develop practical knowledge about the quality of relation and effectiveness between these two variables, from the aiming view point is practical and from method of data collection and analysis view point is descriptive and is of correlative type (Harandi et al, 2008).

4.2 Tools of Data Collection and Analysis

In data collection stage a questionnaire with 44 questions has been used. 5 questions are related to personal information of the respondents. 27 questions are designed to evaluate customer service and 12 questions are designed for identifying entrepreneurial opportunities. For designing this questionnaire Likret 5 scale multiple-choice has been used. For analyzing data derived from questionnaire path analysis in structural equation model, regression test, and ANOVA test has been used and the softwares which have been used for analyzing the data are LISREL 8.5 and SPSS 16.

4.3 Reliability and Validity of the Study

For determining **reliability** of the study Cronbach's Alpha method has been used. Followings have been resulted from this analysis:

- For questions related to customer service the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.85 has been calculated.

- For question related to entrepreneurial opportunities Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.75 has been calculated.

- For all questions Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.78 has been calculated.

For determining **validity** of the questionnaire content credit has been used (Harandi et al, 2008). Content credit of this questionnaire has been justified by guide professors and co-guides and also initial distribution of questionnaire among number of experts, scholars and considering their corrective comments, it has the necessary credibility.

4.4 Statistical Population and Statistical Samples

Statistical population of the study consists of "all Samand Car owners, product of Iran-Khodro Company" which has bought their cars in 2009 in Tehran. Total number of them according to Iran-Khodro sales department is about 27000 people. To raise the accuracy and correctness of the analyses population samples has been estimated 379 people based on Morgan's table. Therefore, 400 questionnaires have been distributed in 2 months period between population samples randomly. Afterwards, 381 questionnaires have been collected and for easing the calculation of data process 380 of them have been used.

4.5 Findings of the Study

4.6 Statistical Description of Population Sample

From 380 respondents, 22 people under high school graduation, 56 people high school graduated, 108 people has associated diploma, 132 with bachelor degree, 46 people with master degree, and finally 7 people hold a PhD degree. And this is while the age of 78 of these people were 18-25, 84 people between 26-35, 113 between 36-45, 66 people between 46-55 and 59 people were more than 56 years old.

4.7 Testing Hypotheses using Structural Equation Model

For this reason Lisrel software for testing hypotheses of the study has been used. Diagrams 8-1 and 8-2 show primary model of the study in standard estimation and significant parameters state.

4.7.1 First Primary Hypothesis

Customer service of the company is effective on identifying and operational making of entrepreneurial opportunities in market. In testing mentioned hypothesis with path analysis, output of the software shows suitable propriety of model for testing first primary hypothesis (X^2 to df ratio is less than 3 and is suitable. The X^2 value is suitable and low. Value of AGFI=0.92 GFI=0.96 and RMSEA=0.080 also show suitable propriety of structural model). Diagram 8-1 shows structural model of the study for confirming first primary hypothesis of the study in standard estimation state.
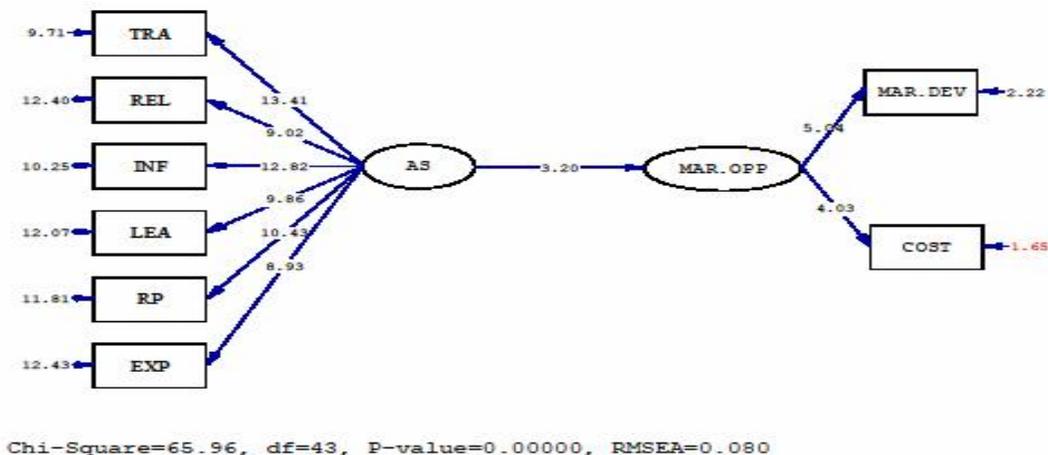

Chi-Square=65.96, df=43, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.080

Figure 2: Structural model of study for confirming first primary hypothesis in Standard

Figure 2 also shows significance and resulted parameters from first primary hypothesis. Significance value of 3.20 is placed out of (2, -2) interval; Therefore, formed relation is significant and is a good indicator for value of the model. According to results of these two

models (relation is based on standard estimation of 0.23 and is based on significance equal to 3.20) first hypothesis Approved.

4.7.2 Second Primary Hypothesis

Customer service of the company is affective on identifying and making operational the entrepreneurial opportunities in product. In testing mentioned hypothesis with path analysis test, output of the software shows suitable propriety of model for testing second primary hypothesis (X^2 to df ratio is less than 3 and is suitable.

The X^2 value is suitable and low. Value of GFI=0.96, RMSEA=0.071<0.080, and AGFI=0.93 and also show suitable propriety of structural model). But, because the correlative relation between two variable of customer service and entrepreneurial opportunities is weak and is equal to 0.07 therefore, second hypothesis has not confirmed. Diagram 8-3 shows structural model of study for confirming second primary hypothesis of the study in standard significance state.
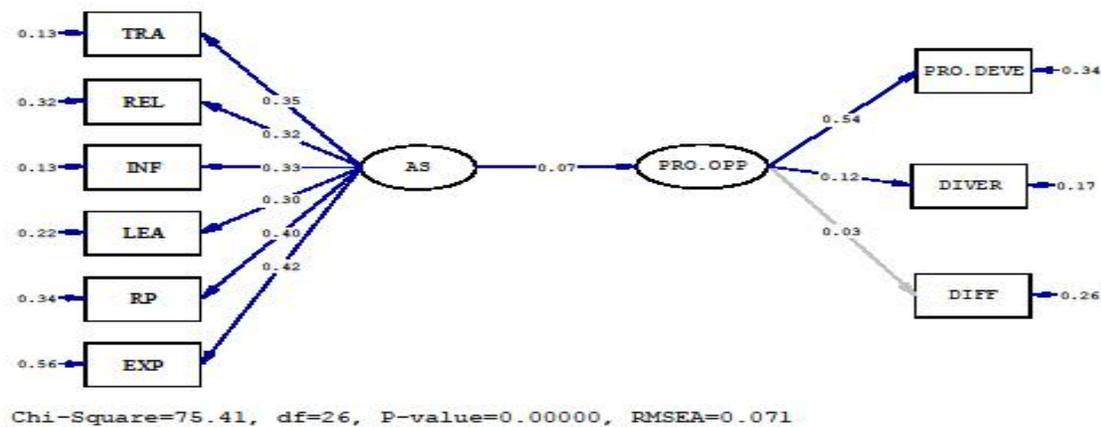

Chi-Square=75.41, df=26, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.071

Figure 3: Structural model of study for confirming second primary hypothesis of the study in Standard estimates state

Figure 3 also shows significance and resulted parameters from second primary hypothesis. Significance value of 0.91 is placed in (2, -2) interval (red color value) and shows formed relation significant; therefore, also according to this model too second hypothesis is not confirmed.

Based on analysis done using path analysis, results of testing hypothesis (primary and secondary) of the study can be seen in table 8-1. Standard estimation test and significance values in confirming or rejecting considered hypotheses (significance of hypothesizes) has been used.
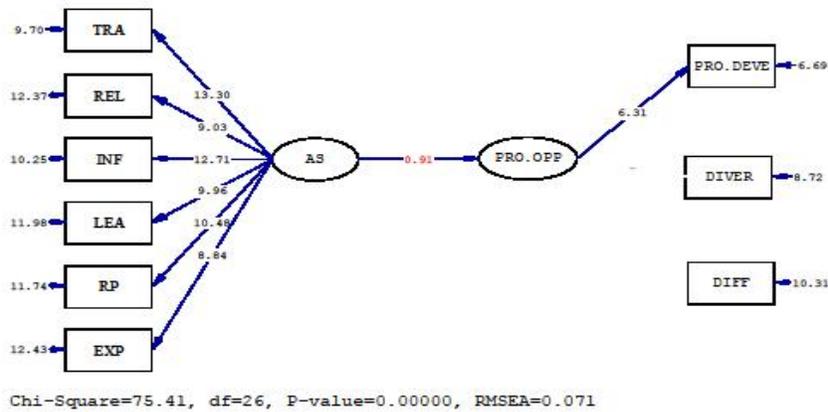
Figure 4: Structural model of study for confirming second primary hypothesis of the study in significance state of parameters

Table 1: results of testing the hypotheses of the study using path analysis

Hypothesizes of the study	Path		Has standard coefficient	Has significance values	Testing of Hypotheses
First primary hypothesis	Customer services	entrepreneurial opportunities based on market	0.8	5.11	confirmed
First secondary hypothesis	Customer services	Hidden opportunities in developing of the market	0.14	4.48	confirmed
Second secondary hypothesis	Customer services	Hidden opportunities in cost leadership	0.10	4.35	confirmed
second primary hypothesis	Customer services	entrepreneurial opportunities based on product	0.2	2.20	rejected
Third secondary hypothesis	Customer services	Hidden opportunities in product development	0.23	1.41	confirmed
Fourth secondary hypothesis	Customer services	Hidden opportunities in diversification	0.05	0	rejected
Fifth secondary hypothesis	Customer services	Hidden opportunities in differentiate of product	0.07	0	rejected

5. Testing Hypotheses of the Study using Regression Test and ANOVA

For this reason and for all hypotheses of the study below test assumption has been used.

$$H_0 : \beta_i = 0 \begin{cases} 0 \text{ assumption: Regression is not significant} \\ 1 \text{ assumption: Regression is significant} \\ H_1 : \beta_i \neq 0 \end{cases}$$

Table 2 also shows regression test for hypotheses of the study. As seen correlation coefficient and determination coefficient of first, second and third primary hypotheses are high. Therefore, we can assume a high correlation for variables of these hypotheses.

Table 2: Regression test for hypotheses of the study

Hypothesizes of the study	Correlation coefficient	Coefficient of Determination	Adjusted coefficient of determination	Standard error of estimate
First primary hypothesis	0.170	0.029	0.026	0.156413
First secondary hypothesis	0.145	0.021	0.018	0.056416
Second secondary hypothesis	0.175	0.031	0.028	0.58091
second primary hypothesis	0.081	0.007	0.004	0.48530
Third secondary hypothesis	0.037	0.019	0.016	0.60517
Fourth secondary hypothesis	0.037	0.001	-0.001	0.52580
Fifth secondary hypothesis	0.043	0.002	.000	0.79345

Table 3 shows the result of ANOVA test of hypotheses of the study. As significance (sig.) in first primary, and first, second, and third secondary hypotheses are less than 0.05 therefore, these hypotheses are Approved. From the other hand, as much as Total Square of regression coefficient and effective coefficient of random factors are smaller, correlation in mentioned hypotheses will be more. Hence, in all of the mentioned hypotheses assumption will be assumed as 0.

5.1 Conclusion of the Study

The main goal of present research is to study the effect of customer service on entrepreneurial opportunities based on market and product. Results obtained from secondary hypotheses showed

that customer service in Iran-Khodro Company is effective on entrepreneurial opportunities based market development, cost leadership, and product development. Also, a result obtained from primary hypotheses of the study showed the effectiveness of customer service on entrepreneurial opportunities based on market. The second primary hypothesis of the study despite confirming of primary hypothesis of product development (third secondary hypothesis) because of mutual effect of all three hypotheses has not been approved. Results of testing hypotheses have shown in tables 1, 2, and 3. Although other studies too have been done about the effect of customer service on profitability of companies and also increasing customer satisfaction (Berry& Parasuraman, 1991; Bull, 2003 ;Cavalieri et al, 2007 ;Chevalier and Schrieck , 2008; Morris and Lee, 1990; Helper 1991; Jackson, 2005; Lovelock and Gummesson, 2004; Mathieu, 2001; Nishihata et al, 2009) but the thing which differentiate this study from other studies is the study of the effect of customer service on entrepreneurial opportunities in market and product in form of a conceptual model.

Table 3: Result of ANOVA test of hypothesis

Hypotheses of the study	Total square of regression coefficient	Effectiveness coefficient of random factors	Sig.
First primary hypothesis	3.750	120.298	0.001
First secondary hypothesis	3.265	152.827	0.005
Second secondary hypothesis	4.052	127.561	0.001
second primary hypothesis	0.583	89.024	0.0116
Third secondary hypothesis	2.651	138.435	0.007
Fourth secondary hypothesis	0.143	104.505	0.473
Fifth secondary hypothesis	0.451	237.980	0.398

Based on this model, customer service as an independent latent variable on entrepreneurial opportunities in market and product is effective as a dependent variable. Findings of the study about study of conceptual model lead us to some important results: first, about the primary subject of the study it can be concluded that customer service is effective on identifying and making entrepreneurial opportunities operational based on market. Second, entrepreneurial opportunities in car manufacturing industry can be evaluated in two factors based on market and product. Entrepreneurial opportunities in market include market development strategies, cost leadership, and entrepreneurial opportunities in product include product development strategies, diversification and differentiating in product.

Overall results of this study showed that customer service in big companies is considered as one of the entrepreneurial strategies for obtaining entrepreneurial opportunities and profitability. Iran-Khodro Company too with utilizing customer service mechanism in form of educational-communication services, informational, leasing, and repair and maintenance services, and also discovery services each day creates a profitable opportunity in domestic and foreign markets. Opportunities which are obtained depend on needs of the market and in form of approaches based on product and market.

6. Recommendation for Further Studies

- Study mutual relation between elements of customer service
- Study effectiveness of customer service on entrepreneurial opportunities in basis on organizational decisions
- Study relation of strategic management and customer service
- Study customer service on attracting profitable opportunities in private and government sections
- Study relation of marketing strategies and sale and its effect on customer service
- Study customer satisfaction from presenting electronic customer service in car industry

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