

Chapter 9

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Knowledge-Enabled Customer Delight: A Case on Bahrain

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ABSTRACT

As customers we would like to feel important when we enter a business, or buy a product. How much information given to us by the company plays an important role in strengthening brand loyalty and repeated visits. Expressing gratitude, concern, and understanding towards customers has proven to enhance customer satisfaction and thereon relationships with the business. Being able to respond to customers by providing technical support and knowledge about the product or service would lead to a more understanding customer. Most managers agree with the notion that they should focus on growing the lifetime value of their customer relationships. Knowledge enabled customers are more productive and improve the quality and services of businesses, whether directly or indirectly. The daily challenge of dealing effectively with emotions is critical to the human condition because human brains are hard wired to give emotions the upper hand. The higher the level of Emotional Intelligence (EI) displayed by employees, the more satisfied customers are with the experience. Empathizing with customers' problems and allowing them to express their opinions enable organisations to improve and become much more effective. The objective of the chapter is to present the link between customer satisfaction, emotional intelligence, and knowledge management within the context of Bahrain.

The research found a relationship between emotional intelligence, knowledge management, and customer satisfaction. National and corporate culture influenced such relationship. The findings of this research therefore add a new dimension (namely, national and corporate culture in the Gulf Region) to the concepts of emotional intelligence, knowledge management, and customer satisfaction.

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INTRODUCTION

Due to the nature of the topic, a multi-case research design was adopted with five major organisations in Bahrain covering the following sectors: manufacturing, telecommunications, banking, ship repair and petrochemicals. These sectors were chosen because of their major contribution towards the economy of Bahrain, and being well-known successful companies. In addition, the research had access to information in these organisations. The research approach followed was a deductive one using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, taking into consideration answers to research questions. The questionnaire adopted was the Emotional Competency Inventory (ECI). Other data collection was in the form of company reports, performance evaluation and interviews at the top, middle and supervisory levels of management as well as corporate customers with a sample size of 103 out of a total population of 250. The study was not confined to specific departments but covered a sample from across the organisation to include a range of departments as follows: Information Technology, Finance, Service Management, Business Development, Marketing, Electronic Banking, Operations, Human Resource, Engineering, Maintenance, Administration, Public Relations, Quality Assurance, Risk Management, and Power and Utilities.

The chapter covers emotional intelligence and knowledge management, its meaning and importance at work and its link with customer satisfaction. The chapter looks at emotional intelligence and organizational culture, highlighting the importance of Bahrain's culture as a case study. The final part of the chapter covers the role of Emotional Intelligence, knowledge management in creating customer delight.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research examined the relationship between components of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skills) identified by Goleman (2000), knowledge management and customer satisfaction, with the following objectives in mind:

1. Overview of emotional intelligence from different perspectives, its importance and relationship with knowledge management
2. The way emotional intelligence and knowledge management can be used at work to enhance employee and customer satisfaction. The research investigates levels of emotional intelligence of leaders in Bahrain and how it affects customer satisfaction.
3. The importance of emotional intelligence in strengthening customer relationships and creating customer delight. Cultural factors are investigated throughout the research.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

What is Meant by Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional intelligence is about being more aware of one's emotions (Orme 2001), using them intelligently to improve performance (Orme, 2003a) at work through helping people to be perhaps happier (Hein, 1996), satisfied with their responsibilities and assigned work, better motivated and strive for greater achievement (Royal and Stark, 2010; Goleman, 1999). Consequently it would affect human relations at work (Bar-On, Maree and Maurice, 2007; Lussier and Achua, 2007). Some authors such as Boyatzis, Goleman and Rhee (2000), define the concept in terms of 'focusing attention on the human talent.' Although the phrase may sound simple, it underlines the complexity of a

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