THE INTER-RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CATEGORY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION; THE CASES OF THREE SUPERMARKETS IN KARACHI

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Abstract

The basic purpose of this research is to ascertain the relationship between Category Management Practices (CMP) and Customer satisfaction with specific reference to three major supermarkets of Karachi viz. Imtiaz, Hyperstar and Naheed. The quantitative research design has been used and questionnaire is administered among the respondents. The SEM analysis is used via AMOS. Sample size is kept at 250 respondents and probabilistic sampling is used. The findings indicate that Product Promotion and Presentation are found to have significant impact on customer satisfaction. However, the factors like assortment,availability, pricing and customer service are shown to have minimal impact within the CMP and with customer satisfaction. Presentation, promotion and customer service have positive correlation while assortment, availability and pricing have negative association with the customer satisfaction.Thus, superstores need to pay more attention towards promotion and presentation of products on the shelves. Moreover, customer service should be enhanced to increase satisfaction. However, superstores need to pay less attention and resources towards assortment and pricing. This shows that customers of these Karachi-based superstores are not price sensitive; rather they tend to look for quality and thus marketing strategies should be accordingly designed. This study carries dual significance; it has negated certain factors of CMP in Karachi-based superstores of past studies and it has given a new roadmap for these stores to devise future marketing strategies.

Keywords: Category Management; Customer Satisfaction; Assortment; Availability; Pricing; Promotion; Presentation; Superstores; Supermarkets; Karachi

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

The beginning of the Category Management concept can be attributed in early 1990s when retailer were exploring various methods and techniques to boost their performance (Efthymiou, 2003). Category Management Practices (CMP) or Category Management (CM) is somewhat a sequential or structured phenomenon in the retail sector, in which, the goods and services are placed in terms of specific nature of products i.e. categories of specific nature rather than using single brand name having different product line (Gruen & Shah, 2010).

The major rationale for using CMP in the retail sector can be classified into three aspects (Basuroy, Mantrala & Walters, 2001). Firstly, CMP is the source of consolidation of suppliers, which means that you have the opportunity to buy the same kind of products from one distributer in the market, which in turn, gives benefit of bulk discount and aligns the supply chain in the context of transportation. Secondly, CMP is the logical conclusion for "supply economics", which means that cost cutting can be ensured via application of Category Management in the supermarkets or the retail outlets. Thirdly, the customer centric phenomenon is applied in this scenario. It is somewhat logical to assume that Category Management is the source of convenience for the general customers which provide them with all the brand names under one specific category and all they need is to make a choice of as per their own wishes.

From the above three benefits, it can be stated that importance of CM or CMP cannot be denied and thus, it is imperative for the supermarkets to employ CMP for their own benefits.

1.2 Background

Traditionally, the marketers had focused on the lessening prices and creating enormous sales volume in the superstores, an approach commonly known as "big box" (Lempert, 2003). However, at the end of 1990s, this approach began to replace with a new approach, in which, customer segment was given due importance rather than prices which resulted in the formulation of modern-day concept of Category Management or CMP (Dahm, 2003). It was asserted that rather emphasizing the cost aspect, one need to ponder over value aspect and thus, there should be arrangement and distribution of products in the superstores based on the convenience of

customer segments, which constituted the CMP. Blattberg (1995) has noted that idea of Category Management Practices or simply Category Management (CM) was conceived for the retail sector; however, with the passage of time, this idea was borrowed for other sectors too. In these sectors, CM was considered in the context of sourcing the products which ensures cost cutting and ease of doing business. Furthermore, the idea argued about the paradigm shift from the branding theory and asserted that rather than focusing on the brand management, it is imperative to go for the products nature irrespective of their brands.

Sharif (2012) has amply accounted a number of studies and has argued that benefits of CMP can be conceived as the fact that CMP has ensure to capture the insight of customers and meeting their demand in the supermarkets. This is due to the transformation of behavioural and other related information of customers in the CMP, which is deciphered in achieving maximum value for customers. Thus, convenience and the capturing of customer insight to achieve enhanced value proposition can be regarded as the major benefits of CMP. These benefits are not limited to these aspects, as relationship of CMP with the satisfaction, loyalty and other such factors seemed to be somewhat positive.

The idea of CMP has undergone massive changes with the time as a number of factors were included in the CMP with the passage of time. For example, Schary and Becker (1976) came with the availability on the shelves as the crucial factor for the sale to occur in real practice. Huber, Herrmann and Wricke (2001) came with the concept of pricing and cited that supermarket have bulk buying advantage and thus, lower cost as compared to others is shifted to consumers, thereby, giving price penetration benefit. Thus, appropriate pricing was also considered as an important aspect of CMP. Dupre and Gruen (2004) have cited presentation and promotion as the other constituents in this regard. Promotional activities in the supermarket not only trigger sales but are the comprehensive source of information for the general consumers. Similarly, the detailed analysis of consumer analytics shows that product presentation has the position of epicentre in the augmentation of sales and revenues for the supermarket.

The prolific and ubiquitous technological environment is seen as current challenges of CMP as Sharif (2012) has noted that modern day use of basket analysis, clustering technique and frequencies of visitation are revolutionizing the CMP. However, despite these developments, the core concept of CMP is still valid and is making its way by making traditional emphasis of big box as obsolete.

1.3 Problem Statement

Category Management Practices are shown to have positive association and significant impact on the sales and performance of the supermarkets and retail outlets. In this study ,we are interested to know the relationship between CMP and customer satisfaction. Although theoretical models point towards the significant relationship between them; yet, the findings are still inconclusive and thus the interplay between CMP and satisfaction is a puzzle which needs to be explored. Furthermore, this study is somewhat a post evaluation research for the CMP, aiming to ascertain whether or not CMP has led to customer satisfaction. To achieve this purpose, we have specifically targeted three supermarkets of Karachi i.e. Imtiaz Superstore, Agha Supermarket and Hyperstar. Thus, the professionals of these stores will get the answer of question to what extent CMP has been successful. Moreover, this study will indicate the factors which are relatively significant for satisfaction, thereby, also pointing the insignificant factors for CMP. Thus, the practitioners will able to highlight certain factors which are important for them and negating the others which are not significant to satisfaction of their customers. We want to ascertain whether or not CMP is positively associated with the customer satisfaction. We are also interested to know whether there is any significant relationship between CMP and customer satisfaction.

1.4 Gap Analysis

Past studies on product assortment have been conducted by Amine and Cadenat (2003), Dörnyei, Krystallis and Chrysochou (2017) and Dhar, Hoch and Kumar (2001). These studies have studied the relationship between product assortment and consumer preferences, information search and customer contention. The studies of Ettouzani, Yates and Mena (2012), Schary and Becker (1976) and Vargo and Lusch (2004) have studied product availability in relation to sales and customer awareness. Furthermore, the product and service dominant logic has been explored to adumbrate the importance of product availability in the superstores. Huber, Herrmann and Wricke (2001) and McCullough and Padberg (1971) have argued that product pricing plays a pivotal role in superstores as bulk buying offer price discount to customers, a benefit unavailable with local stores. Dupre and Gruen (2004) and Flavián, Gurrea and Orús (2009) have studied product presentation with satisfaction. Phang et al. (2014) and Grundey (2010) have discussed the role of sales promotion in generating sales and customer satisfaction. The study of Emerson

and Grimm (1999), Lovelock, Wirtz and Chew (2009) and Sureshchandar, Rajendran and Anantharaman (2002) have argued that linchpin of superstores rests with dispensation of state of the art customer services coupled with self-serving technologies. All the above studies have reported a positive and somewhat a significant association of each construct with CMP and sales, customer preferences and satisfaction.

The detailed analysis of literature, as has been discussed in the following chapter of literature review, shows that research gaps can be summarized into four major aspects. Firstly, most of the studies lack the relationship between independent variables of CMP and customer satisfaction as most of the past studies has reported only one or two variables to show relationship with the dependent variable. Thus, there is a need to explore the direct relationship of assortment, availability, pricing, presentation, promotion and customer service with the customer satisfaction.

Secondly, most of the studies have explored the inter-relationship between Category Management Practices (CMP) and other variables like sales, performance, competitive advantage attainability, etc. To the best of author's knowledge, there are a few studies have studied the CMP in relation to customer satisfaction.

Thirdly, most of the studies have been conducted on a single retail store or a series of same kind or brand of stores. Thus, there is a need to explore the competitive practices in this regard. In other words, there is a significant dearth of studies that have collected the data from competitive supermarkets.

Lastly, none of the studies have been conducted in the context of Pakistan. Most of the studies are European and American centric with a little work in case of Middle East. Thus, in the case of Pakistan, especially Karachi, this study has addressed the gap. Not only this gap but also the rest three gaps will be catered in this study.

Hence, these studies have limitations in the form of methodology employed, sample size and technique used for analysis, all these aspects have been discussed in detail in the literature review. Furthermore, all these studies have either been conducted in the U.S or Europe. A meagre number exists in case of developing countries. To the best of authors' knowledge, none of the study has been conducted in Pakistani context, especially three superstores of Karachi.

1.5 Research Objectives and Significance

The research objectives for this study are as follows;

1. To determine the relationship between Category Management Practices and Customer Satisfaction

2. To explore the factors that constitute Category Management Practices and their subsequent relationship with customer satisfaction

3. To determine the specific factors of Category Management Practices that have significance for three superstores i.e. Hyperstar, Naheed and Imtiaz

This study carries significance both for the academia and professionals. For academia, this study is another addition to the general body of knowledge as this study is devised in such a manner that it explores the underlying dynamics of CMP in the context of Karachi. The results of this study points the constituents of CMP which carry significance and highlight factors which can be negated. Furthermore, the results of this study suggest whether or not studies conducted in the U.S, Europe and China are applicable in case of Pakistan, especially Karachi. The contradictions in this regard would reveal new insights in the demographics trend of Pakistani Customers. Furthermore, comparative analysis of three supermarkets is the valuable source of information for the market professionals as they may use this study as a guiding book to align the CMP and enhancing customer satisfaction.

This study determines a dimension for customer satisfaction which is the basic business objective and thus, both academia and industry professionals may be benefited as far as customer satisfaction is concerned.

2. Literature Review

This section sheds light on the underlying theoretical framework and past studies related to Category Management Practices (CMP) or simply Category Management (CM). Firstly, the origins and background of concept of CM is explained. Secondly, the explanatory variables of CMP or CM have been discussed in detail. Thirdly, the dependent variable has been explained. Fourthly, the relationship of CMP with various constructs has been mentioned with a special focus on the empirical evidence. Lastly, the gap in the literature has been identified with the aim of addressing it in this study.

2.2 Category Management (CM)

The fundamental purpose of marketing is to employ various methods and techniques to boost the sales or revenues of the firm by offering appropriate "marketing mix" (Kotler, 2003). The achievement of this objective forced the experts of retail sector in the US to design new strategies and methods that could augment the effectiveness of selection and display of products (Efthymiou, 2003). Thus, in the early period of 1990s, a new strategic shift was discovered in the field of retail marketing, which is now termed as "Category Management (CM)".The epicenter of CM lies in retail management and thus, this technique has been regarded as of utmost importance for the supermarkets, general stores and retail outlets (Gruen, 2002;Efthymiou, 2003).Blattberg (1995) has argued that CM has shifted the idea of individual brand management into non-branding and thus has resulted in meeting the need of consumers by providing the same category products of multiple brands. This argument emphasis the customer-centric nature of CM, in which, imparting value to customers is stressed by blindsiding the ever-green concept of brand management.

Dewsnap and Hart (2004) have analysed the Category Management Practices in the fashion industry and have reported that the interaction between the supplier and customer can be enhanced in the fashion retail sector as CMP ensures convenience and usability for the customers. In the same study, it has been argued that in-store purchase setting is also the contributing factor and its association with the CMP is the main reason that why convenience and ease granted to the customers is translated into sales. Thus, from this study, CMP is considered as the tool of generating more sales in the fashion retail sector of the United Kingdom.

Musalem, Aburto and Bosch (2018) have recently conducted marketing insight to understand CMP. This study has stated that CMP brings four major aspects and benefits for the supermarkets. The first is the functional approach, in which, products of similar categories are displayed together. The second is tactical aspects in which the CMP contributes towards the cost cutting and time management which both are essential for the proper execution of the retail outlet. The third is store layout, in which, the CMP ensures that customers has maximum reach towards the products and thus enhanced revenues can be inferred from it. The last one is performance analysis in which it has been found that overall store performance can be increased

significantly.Dupre and Gruen (2004) have studied the CMP and acquirement of competitive advantage and have found that both are positively related with each other. The sustainability of the competitiveness is somewhat dependant on the use of CMP for the supermarkets.

2.3 Exploring Category Management Practices (CMP)

Following six are the independent variables of this study and relevant theory has been explained as follows;

2.3.1 Product Assortment

Amine and Cadenat (2003) have asserted that CMP is a construct and its constituents are equally important to understand to avoid confusion. The first constituent is cited as assortment, in which, the products are assorted as per their size and quantity. They also have found that the crux of assortment lies in the consumer perception of assortment, which in most of the cases is based on the quantity of SKUs and presence of the favourite products. Furthermore, assortment was found to have a sensitive impact on the consumers. The authors employed qualitative study with 14 semi-structured interviews for the purpose of achieving objectives. The findings were that consumers highly value the assortment in the supermarkets and other retail outlet. In other words, their satisfaction is one way or other is related to product assortment.

Another way to look at the product assortment in the supermarket is via "information searches". It has been found that greater the size of assortment, greater is the probability that consumers would attain information via cues and products itself (Dörnyei, Krystallis&Chrysochou, 2017). This study employed simulation method to ascertain the results with 399 respondents. The implication of this study argues for undermining the attributes of the product to some extent in the supermarket. Thus, assortment size debilitate physical traits of products and focus more on the holistic presence of products, thereby, giving benefit to supermarket as purchase will be carried out more on the holistic perception of products rather than examining product attribute. Dhar, Hoch and Kumar (2001) have ascertained the driving factor in the category management and results shows that product assortment based on broader categories is the linchpin of CMP accompanied with labelling, Everyday Low Prices (EDLP) and other related factors. This study employed 19 categories of food and analysis of variation was used for attaining results.

The critical analysis of above studies suggest that product assortment has close association with the category management and this relationship hold valid irrespective of pedagogy; for example, Amine and Cadenat (2003) used qualitative methods, Dörnyei, Krystallis and Chrysochou (2017) employed simulation technique and Dhar, Hoch and Kumar (2001) relied on quantitative analysis, all indicating nearly the same results. Given the fact that all these studies were conducted in different geographical areas in various periods of time; therefore, it can be argued that assortment has significant role in defining the CMP in most of geographic locations. However, the question remains, "What about Pakistan, specifically Karachi and more precisely the three major supermarkets viz. Hyperstar, Imtiaz and Naheed?"

2.3.2 Product Availability

Ettouzani, Yates and Mena (2012) have argued that product availability on the shelves of the supermarket is not only essential aspect of CMP but is also most important factor for the sale to occur. This paper has employed case study design to assess 7 supermarkets in the U.K. The results indicated 6 general themes which forms the basis of availability in the supermarkets. These themes entail forecasting followed by collaboration between retailers and suppliers and then replenishment, distribution and production. Furthermore, it has been asserted that availability of the products not only ensures sale but is the way to create awareness in the mind of consumers. In other words, product availability is the source of promotional activities too in the supermarket. Schary and Becker (1976) came with the availability on the shelves as the crucial factor for the sale to occur in real practice. This paper is based on the observational analysis of the authors who have emphasized that emergence of the marketing era demand two-pronged strategy; one being cost cutting and second being competitive. Both of which can are related with the availability of the product on the shelves of the supermarket.

From the above two studies, it can be argued that product availability is the crucial factor for the supermarket for the sale to occur, which, in turn can be translated into customer satisfaction. Vargo and Lusch (2004) were the pioneers of the product and service dominant logic, a framework that argued availability on the shelves is the predominant factor for the tangible products which may not be essential for service logic marketing. This research employed qualitative designs and offered in-depth analysis based on the critical analysis of literature review. Kitrungpaiboon and Kim (2017) studied product availability in the context of brand

loyalty and found that a significant and positive relationship is prevailing. This study employed quantitative research design with data from 384 respondents in the Bangkok and sampling based on convenience technique.

A keen study of these four studies shows a prominent emphasis and predominant relationship of product availability with loyalty, efficacious marketing, sales, etc. which are all important for customer satisfaction. However, these studies entail certain weaknesses. The study of Ettouzani, Yates and Mena (2012) does not allow for statistical analysis owing to small sample. Likewise Schary and Becker (1976) have relied on their own professional experience to analyse the interrelationship, which cannot be considered a viable method to generalize the findings. The research of Vargo and Lusch (2004) have relied on secondary literature review analysis, which too entails issues such as non-availability of fresh and first hand data.

2.3.3 Product Pricing

Huber, Herrmann and Wricke (2001) came with the concept of pricing and cited that supermarket have bulk buying advantage and thus, lower cost as compared to others is shifted to consumers, thereby, giving price penetration benefit. Thus, appropriate pricing was also considered as an important aspect of CMP. This paper is based on data collected from Germany and analysed via regression analysis.The level of customer satisfaction is considered to be dependent on the product pricing in three manners (Huber, Herrmann & Wricke, 2001). The higher satisfaction level means that even a higher price is acceptable for the customers. In case of dissatisfaction, the efforts of company to ameliorate a little satisfaction may result in acceptance of price by the customers. However, it should be noted that Huber, Herrmann and Wricke (2001) have reinforced the past findings that product pricing acceptance by the customers entails massive variability, thereby, pointing towards the fact that there are multiple segments among the customers which involves specific strategy to cater pricing decisions.

In a classic work, McCullough and Padberg (1971) have analyzed the pricing techniques in supermarkets and results suggest that lower pricing by the supermarket due to bulk buying is the major factor of satisfaction. This study is somewhat contradictory to the study of Huber, Herrmann and Wricke (2001) who have argued that rather than lower pricing, it is the segment of the customer that matter as some customers may be satisfied paying premium prices for the brand of their choice. It should be noted that work of McCullough and Padberg (1971) is four

decades old and since Herrmann and Wricke (2001) manifests somewhat modern version of the buying perception; thus, the findings of Herrmann and Wricke (2001) would hold ground that segments are the major player whenever product pricing come into play a role in attaining customer satisfaction.

Another endeavour to determine product pricing and satisfaction is done by Matzler, Würtele and Renzl (2006), who have studied the retail banking sector of Austria using sample of 160 respondents. The results suggest that pricing policy in the retail sector is the source of customer satisfaction if and only if an appropriate mix of pricing is adopted which entails transparency, reliability and ample price to quality ratio. However, a variation in this notion has been expressed in the study of Jakpar et al. (2006), who have asserted that discounting the price may create a perception of low quality among the customers. So, it is imperative that discounting the price should be accompanied by perceived quality, enhanced reliability and adequate performance of the product. This research is done in the Kuching city of Malaysia with the sample size of 264 and quantitative analysis has been performed via regression technique. Although the above studies do provide deeper insights in the product pricing, yet there are certain limitations or weaknesses associated with these studies. The study of Huber, Herrmann and Wricke (2001) concludes an inconclusive trend in the results owing to complexities involved with the data. Similarly, the research of McCullough and Padberg (1971) is nearly five decades before and marketing at that time was different from today's global challenges. In addition to these, the study of Matzler, Würtele and Renzl (2006) has limited the collection of data from students who were the customers of retail banking. Jakpar et al. (2006) have drawn sample from a narrow range which limits the comprehensibility of data and thus the results generated from them.

2.3.4 Product Presentation

Dupre and Gruen (2004) have cited presentation and promotion as the other constituents in this regard. Promotional activities in the supermarket not only trigger sales but are the comprehensive source of information for the general consumers. Similarly, the detailed analysis of consumer analytics shows that product presentation has the position of epicentre in the augmentation of sales and revenues for the supermarket. This study is based on FMCG sector with a special focus in the Europe and the U.S. The authors employed exploratory design to address research issues.

In a study, Flavián, Gurrea and Orús (2009) have analyzed the case of websites in relation to product presentation. Their findings suggest that ample presentation in the schematic way has significant impact on the satisfaction level of users. However, if the presentation entails random and paragraph form, then discontent may occur. Furthermore, spatial pattern was found to be insignificantly related to the perception of the users in terms of satisfaction. This study employed experimentation method with 86 sample size and experiment was performed in Spain. From this study, it can be argued that satisfaction and delivery of lucid information is somewhat dependent on the presentation. The application of this aspect in the supermarket may suggest that appropriate presentation can be a source of satisfaction for the customers.

Ali and Amin (2014) have studied the interplay between physical environment and customer satisfaction in the Chinese resort industry using 500 sample size. The results have been computed via SEM and suggest that product presentation is the cornerstone for the physical environment, which results in the positive emotions of customers. These emotions are crucial for the creation of customer satisfaction. Song and Kim (2012) have studied the product presentation in the e-retailing sector of United States using simulation method and web experimentation. The results indicate that e-retailing sector involves perceived risk which can be dramatically reduced by emphasizing presentable product presentation. This is due to the fact that such presentation tends to create tangible attributes or feelings among the customers.

The above four studies create sufficient grounds to signify the importance of product presentation in the retail sector, both physical and online. Furthermore, product presentation has been found to reduce risks, generate information, boom sales, enhance satisfaction and incite positive emotions among the customers. However, there are certain weaknesses associated with these studies that create enough grounds for further exploration of role of product presentation with customer satisfaction. For example, the study of Dupre and Gruen (2004) has focussed on the exploratory method rather than explanatory; it is to be noted that role of product presentation has already been confirmed before 2004. Likewise, the study of Flavián, Gurrea and Orús (2009) focussed merely on website and there is a room for physical stores which has been tried to cover in this paper. Ali and Amin (2014) have used convenience sampling which may raise objections for the generalization of results. Song and Kim (2012) based their research on fashion goods which are generally thought to have significant association of product presentation with satisfaction. Thus, given the diverse nature of products in the supermarkets, the real picture of

product presentation with satisfaction needs to be understood.

2.3.5 Product Promotion

In a comprehensive study regarding promotional aspects of marketing, Pulitzer (2005) has outlined the detail method of promotion that are typically adopted in the supermarket. A critical analysis of the various methods employed suggest that promotion in the supermarket is accomplished in a manner that tends to create satisfaction. Phang et al. (2014) have studied the promotional aspects of retail businesses and have found that promotion both online and offline is the bloodline of enhancing business reach to its customers. This study has comparatively studied the Chinese and the U.S customers using qualitative designs. Grundey (2010) has studied the Lithuanian supermarkets in the period of economic downturn and has argued that promotions in the supermarkets should be based on sales promotion. This would urge the customers to quit local shops and opt for supermarkets. The data has been collected via primary sources using observations in this study.Ubeja (2014) has determined the role of promotions on customer satisfaction in Indore city of India by using 175 active customers of supermarkets. The quantitative analysis thus employed suggest that CMP is incomplete without appropriate product promotion and major chunk of promotions should be sales promotions, which constitute the gist of supermarkets.

The above studies are viable endeavour towards understanding product promotion and customer satisfaction, yet there are certain issues associated with above studies. Pulitzer (2005) has simple put up systematic process involved in promotion in supermarkets and has assumed its association with customer satisfaction without empirical testing. Phang et al. (2014) has relied more on comparative analysis of China and the U.S rather than focusing on one country or target population. Similarly, Grundey (2010) has focused on promotional aspects of supermarkets in economic downturn rather than normal economic conditions. Ubeja (2014) has highlighted the sales promotion in the supermarket and yet there may be slight difference between product promotion of CMP and general sales promotion. Thus, these issues in the studies provide ample opportunity to further explore the relationship between product promotion and customer satisfaction in this study.

2.3.6 Customer Service

Apart from above aspects, one way to look at CMP is via provision of valuable customer service (Dupre & Gruen, 2004; Blattberg, 1995).The greater the level of high class service to consumers, better is the result regarding performance of the supermarket. The ultimate impact of CMP is being studied in the context of sales, performance, revenues, competitive advantage which in most of the cases has shown positive and significant association.The inter-relationship between customer service and customer satisfaction is not new, but rather a favourite topic for most of the marketing researchers (Emerson & Grimm, 1999). It has been often cited that customer satisfaction can only be ensured by providing high level service, in which focus is emphasized on the retention of the customer. The study of Emerson and Grimm (1999) has further asserted that increasing the product line in the supermarket and thereby ensuring the flexibility on the part of provider of goods and services are the mandatory requirements for the satisfaction. In other words, an indirect relationship occur as the result of interaction between customer and retailer. This study has collected data from 230 respondents in the U.S and regression analysis has been performed to calculate the results.

Lovelock, Wirtz and Chew (2009) have argued in their study that the success of service marketing is owed to the level of the customer service and thus, the satisfaction in the service provider industry is dependent on the level of customer service. This is also the reason that why providers have moved towards after sale services.

Sureshchandar, Rajendran and Anantharaman (2002) have studied the customer service and satisfaction and have argued that crux of the modern marketing is somewhat dependent on the satisfaction. Moreover, this study has argued that tangible and intangible attributes of the services are crucial in attaining the right mix of customer satisfaction. It has been found in this study that the inter-play between service and satisfaction is of higher extent that association is positive and level of statistical tests are significant. Thus, from this, it can be stated that customer service amelioration at the supermarket is the utter manifestation of the efforts for improving customer satisfaction.

2.4 Customer Satisfaction

The measurement of customer satisfaction is merely the context, in which, the authors conduct their research. As a result, there are multiple variables that explain the construct of customer

satisfaction.Huddleston et al. (2009) have studied the customer satisfaction in the context of supermarket and retail stores. This study indicated the satisfaction in the supermarket is dependent on the three factors, which are pricing, customer service and assortment. Thus, from this study it can be stated that variables influencing customer satisfaction are different in various scenarios. Furthermore, this study has indicated the importance of speciality stores and supermarkets rather than conventional stores. It has been found that customers visiting branded supermarkets are more satisfied than their counterparts visiting conventional stores. This study has collected data in the form of survey and stepwise regression has offered meaningful insights in the data. Orel and Kara (2014) have studied the customer satisfaction in the supermarkets of Turkey using 275 sample size. The results indicate that customer satisfaction has been increased due to Self-Service technologies in the supermarkets as they tend to enhance customer experience. This self-service technology is the modern form of CMP. Thomas (2013) has studied the role of customer satisfaction on loyalty in supermarkets and has found that satisfaction, loyalty and technology are a mix construct in supermarkets. This study employed regression analysis based on data collected from India. The above studies are an honest milestone in determining the relationship of customer satisfaction in supermarkets. However, given the limitations of research methods and population area, there are still major frontiers that need to be explored, which have been tried in this research.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Customer Satisfaction: Customer satisfaction is the most frequently used term in the marketing literature which can be regarded as the satisfaction or contention achieved or felt by the customer after consuming the goods or availing the services (Hill & Brierley, 2017).This customer satisfaction is the outcome of many variables as loyalty, branding and off course CMP, which is the subject matter of this study.

Product Assortment: Product assortment refers to the labelling of a particular category of products in the retail store that provides convenience to the customers. The reaction of the consumer in relation to the assortment of the products plays a significant role in the retail management (Ruiz-Real et al., 2017). They are done on the basis of private labelling, then image of the store and private labelling purchase intention both affects each other in a direct manner. However, in case of mixed assortments, variety and image of retail outlet impacts each other.

Product Presentation: Presentation of the products has two pronged benefits. Firstly, the information and content of the product are narrated via presentation. Secondly, the convenient and adorable presentation in the retail outlet acts as the source of value addition for the customers, which can be regarded as the means of creating customer satisfaction (Park, Lennon & Stoel, 2005).

Product Pricing: McCullough and Padberg (1971) suggested that lower pricing by the supermarket due to bulk buying is the major factor of satisfaction. An appropriate pricing deciphers into customer satisfaction which argues that products in the supermarkets should be priced in a manner that is in alignment with value proposition.

Product Availability: Schary and Becker (1976) have argued that rising costs and maintaining competitiveness in the market forces the marketers to devise distribution in such a manner that availability of the products is ensured at every possible level, where the demand is prevalent.

Customer Service: Kursunluoglu (2012), inclded factors of service. 1. pricing, cleanliness, honesty on the part of retailers are ensured. 2. atmosphere is actually the ambience which means that environment of the mall or supermarket has significant impact on the customer perception which later leads to satisfaction

Product Promotion: In the supermarkets, the promotional activities carried out for the products not only create awareness among the consumers about the products but also is the source of purchase intention as compulsive buying behaviour has been observed in this regard (Laroche et al., 2003).
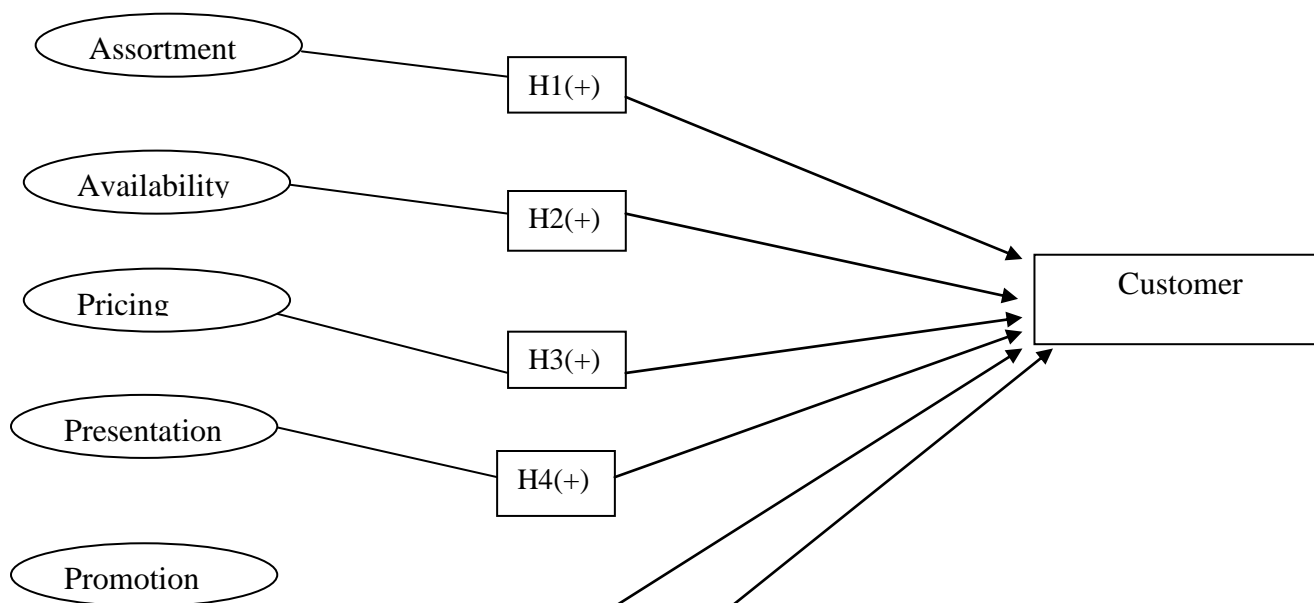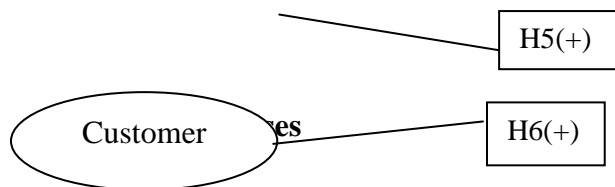
H1: There is a significant and positive relationship between Product Assortment and Customer satisfaction

H2: There is a significant and positive relationship between Product Availability and Customer satisfaction

H3: There is a significant and positive relationship between Product Pricing and Customer satisfaction

H4: There is a significant and positive relationship between Product Presentation and Customer satisfaction

H5: There is a significant and positive relationship between Product Promotion and Customer satisfaction

H6: There is a significant and positive relationship between Customer Service and Customer satisfaction.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter sheds light on the methods and techniques adopted to address the research questions. The design and overall strategy has been discussed. The method of the data has been discussed with detail. The sample size has been accounted in detail. The statistical tests have been discussed too.

3.2 Research Design

This study uses a quantitative research design, in which, the data has been analyzed using quantitative techniques. Quantitative design is based on the positivist approach of research in which the objectivity of the study has been ensured(Neuman, 2013). Thus, in order to ensure the objective answers of the research question, it is imperative to employ positivist paradigm of research involving quantitative design approach.

3.3 Instrument of Data Collection

The instrument of data collection is questionnaire which is administered among the respondents. Cooper, Schindler and Sun (2006) have argued that questionnaire imparts the fresh look into the data and offer primary solution for the research. Furthermore, as per the nature and scope of our study, most of the past studies too have used the questionnaire method of data collection which reinforces this decision of using questionnaire.

3.4 Sampling

The sample size is 250 respondents. The sampling technique is based on probabilistic sampling and is random in nature. The author has collected the data by personally distributing the questionnaire at three supermarkets in Karachi. All the biases were excluded as random sampling was done and questionnaire was distributed to the customers visiting the supermarkets irrespective of any credentials.

3.5 Statistical Techniques

The statistical technique applied for the research is structural equation modeling. The SEM analysis tells the nature and extent of the independent variables with the dependent variable. Moreover, it suggests a model that can be used as the basis for decision making and prediction in the future.SEM is used to address the research questions in which a complex model is involved owing to tumultuous nature of social sciences data (Kelloway, 1995). SEM incorporates multiple statistical analysis like Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Regression, Correlation, and others into a single fit. Anderson and Gerbing (1988) have discussed the foundation and systematic analysis of SEM technique in data analysis and have argued that SEM provides opportunity to fit the model so that maximum variations can be explained and model may act as a good predictor, an approach absent in previously used simple regression and simple correlation analyses. Given a number of explanatory variables, it is prudent to use SEM as this research is complex.

The correlation analysis used in this study tells whether there is weak, moderate or strong association among the variables of interest. This ensures the room for further interpretation and exploring new dimensions within the context of our research.Apart from SEM, descriptive statistics have been performed to ascertain the gender, income and occupation of the respondents. This descriptive analysis reveals insights among the respondents and cross-tabulations helps to offer new insights in the data set.

4. Results and Findings

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

The following table shows the descriptive analysis of the questions answered by the respondents. All the 30 items of questionnaire, representing seven latent variables have been shown below;

Questions	Estimate (Mean)	S.E.	C.R.	P
Do you often find new products in this supermarket?	4.084	.070	57.944	***
Do you believe that this supermarket carries a wide assortment of products to satisfy your purchasing needs?	3.996	.065	61.713	***
While shopping, do you find a balanced mix of local and foreign products and brands?	3.984	.076	52.248	***
Do you find products that are available at this supermarket and not available anywhere else?	4.048	.060	67.873	***
Do you find items out of stock on a regular basis in this supermarket?	4.084	.066	61.870	***
When buying a product at this supermarket, do you believe that you are paying more than the product's value?	4.072	.072	56.208	***
Do you think that the total value of your shopping basket is more than the value of individual items?	3.912	.073	53.402	***
Do you think that this supermarket provides lowest pricing when compared to other supermarkets?	4.180	.068	61.147	***
Are you satisfied with the pricing levels in this supermarket?	4.252	.062	68.893	***
At this supermarket, do you find products easily without lot of searching?	4.124	.071	58.331	***
Do you find the product displays in this supermarket to be attractive and appealing?	4.108	.061	67.279	***
Are you able to move comfortably around this supermarket without hindrances?	4.128	.071	57.765	***
Do you consider the types of promotions undertaken by this supermarket to be appropriate?	3.996	.067	59.266	***
Do you consider the frequency of promotions by this supermarket to be at an adequate level?	4.244	.059	72.028	***
Do you consider promotions by this supermarket to be effective in capturing customer attention?	3.952	.070	56.420	***
Do you find service staff in this supermarket as and when one is needed?	4.232	.063	67.246	***
Do you think that the service staff in this supermarket have adequate product and supermarket knowledge to answer your questions and queries?	4.144	.061	68.054	***
Are you content with the customer complaint management program in this supermarket?	4.024	.066	60.669	***
Do you think that this supermarket follows and practices adequate safety and hygiene standards?	4.116	.069	59.326	***
Do you receive the service that you deserve while shopping at this supermarket?	4.212	.060	70.569	***
This supermarket offers good variety of products	4.168	.065	64.131	***
This supermarket offers better prices than other supermarkets	4.108	.062	66.706	***
This supermarket is regular and active with promotions	4.164	.064	64.646	***
Shelf presentations at this supermarket are practical and attractive	4.136	.061	67.549	***
The products I want are always available at this supermarket	4.220	.062	67.837	***
Customer service at this supermarket is prompt and adequate	4.160	.069	60.574	***
Parking is never a problem at this supermarket	4.084	.068	59.914	***
Sales staff is always available and helpful at this supermarket	4.104	.069	59.187	***

Questions	Estimate (Mean)	S.E.	C.R.	P
Shopping atmosphere in this supermarket is pleasant and organized	3.992	.068	58.489	***
Hygiene and cleanliness standards are high in this supermarket	4.116	.067	61.411	***

The first column in the second section shows mean, the second column shows standard error and the third column indicate critical ratio. The mean value is 4 for most of the items which shows that most of the respondents answered in agreement with our statements. A few items have mean value of 3, indicating the respondents were neutral about these items. It is somewhat interesting to note that there is absence of mean values of 1 and 2, showing that none of the respondent was in disagreement with the questions asked in questionnaire. Most of the values for Standard Error are in between 0.06 to 0.07, which shows that uncertainty around respective mean values is 6% to 7%, which is not more than 10%; thus, the mean values show a true representation of population with less likelihood of error. The critical values of all the items are greater than 1.6, which shows that these paths are significant. Holistically speaking, descriptive statistics show positive and encouraging trends.

The descriptive analysis run via SPSS shows that out of total 250 sample size, exactly 160 are males and 90 are females. Thus, males accounts for 64% of total sample and female accounts for 36% as shown in following table;

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Male	160	64.0
	Female	90	36.0
	Total	250	100.0

As has been discussed earlier that this study is based on the case of three supermarkets of Karachi viz. Imtiaz, Naheed and Hyperstar. Out of total 250 respondents, 86 are customers of Imtiaz, 66 are of Hyperstar and 75 of Naheed. 23 respondents opt for others supermarkets. The corresponding table in this regard shows;

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Imtiaz	86	34.4
	Hyperstar	66	26.4
	Naheed	75	30.0
	Others	23	9.2
	Total	250	100.0

4.2 Inferential Statistics

4.2.1 Reliability

The reliability statistics for seven latent variables have been shown in the following table

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Product Assortment	0.987	3
Product Availability	0.999	2
Product Pricing	0.979	4
Product Presentation	0.989	3
Product Promotion	0.999	3
Customer Service	0.978	5
Customer Satisfaction	0.988	10

The above tables show that Cronbach Alpha's values in most of the cases is either 0.978 or more than it. This exceeds the normal cut off criterion of 0.6. This shows that internal consistencies for each latent variable is more than 97%, which shows that items of each respective latent variable measures what they intends to measure, thereby, showing a high reliability of data.

4.2.3 Structural Equation Modeling

With regard to Model fit, following table shows relevant statistics as generated by output results of AMOS;

Absolute Fit Measures	
P-Value	0.000
GFI	0.4
RMSEA	0.27
Incremental Fit Measures	
AGFI	0.3
NFI	0.582
IFI	0.595
Parsimonious Fit Measures	
DF	19

As the p value is 0.000 which is less than 0.05, thus model is fit for estimation. However, for absolute fit, GFI should be greater than 0.9 and RMSEA would have value that falls within the range of 0.05 to 0.08. As, in this model, these requirements are not fulfilled; thus, this model is not absolute fit. In case of incremental fit measures, the values of CFI, NFI and TLI. As NFI and TLI are not greater than 0.9, thus incremental fit is not applied. For Parsimonious fit, DF should be less than 5, which is 19, thus Parsimonious is too not applicable. Overall, model seems to be not too good fit. However, the p value of 0.000 makes this model at least appropriate for research inferences. This is also due to the fact that in SEM, estimates do not hold valid in case of unidentified model; however, our model is over-identified as shown below;
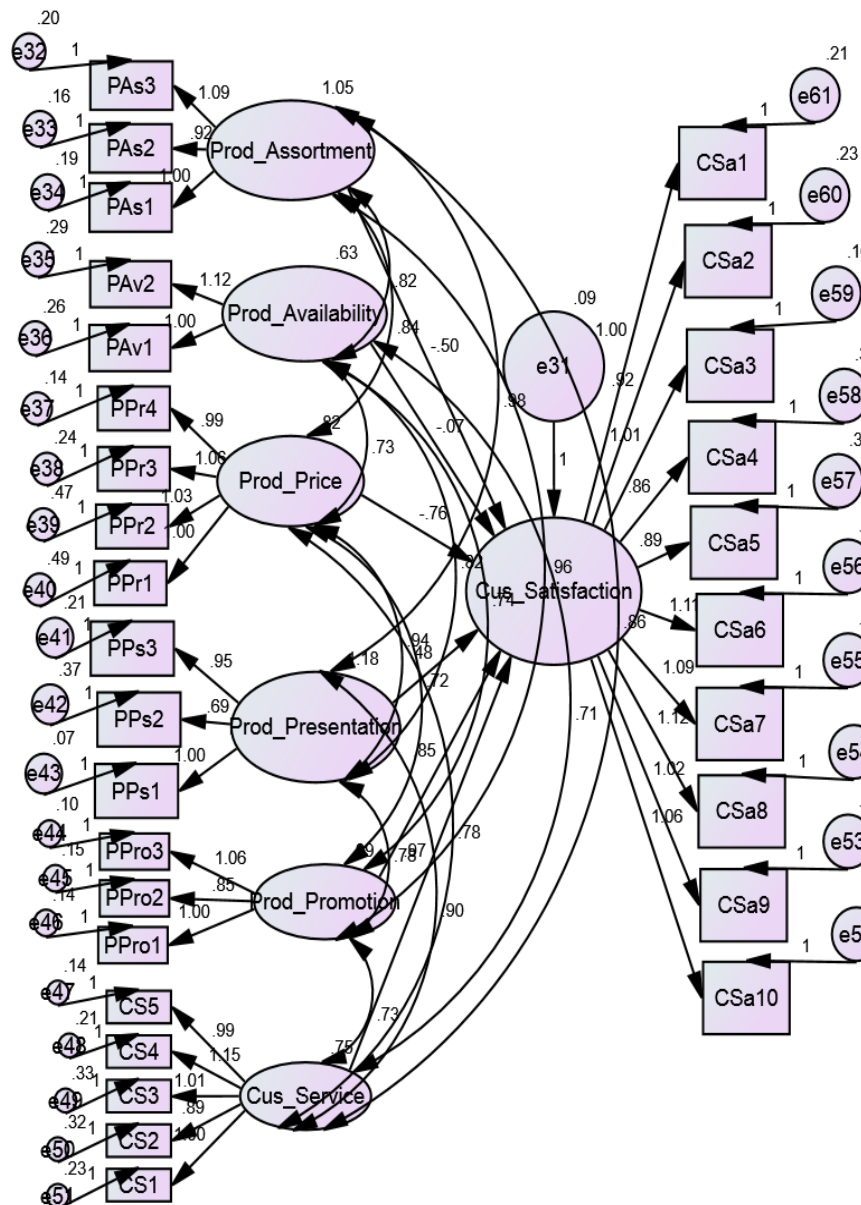
Chi-square = 7369.367

Degrees of freedom = 384

Probability level = .000

Since, the degree of freedom is positive, such model is over-identified and minimum expectations for the research are met.

The path diagram formulated in the AMOS software is shown below;

For the estimations, following relationships have been observed;

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Cus_Satisfaction <--- Prod_Assortment	-.499	.411	-1.215	.224
Cus_Satisfaction <--- Prod_Availability	-.070	.192	-.363	.717
Cus_Satisfaction <--- Prod_Price	-.760	.468	-1.625	.104
Cus_Satisfaction <--- Prod_Presentation	.485	.198	2.451	.014
Cus_Satisfaction <--- Prod_Promotion	.848	.243	3.494	***
Cus_Satisfaction <--- Cus_Service	.965	.654	1.476	.140

The above table shows that p value for product assortment is 0.224 which is not less than 0.05, thus, product assortment has insignificant impact on customer satisfaction. For the path "availability-satisfaction", p value is 0.717 which shows insignificant relationship. For the pricing, p value is 0.104 which is too not less than 0.05 and thus showing insignificant relationship. However, the p value for presentation and customer satisfaction is 0.014 which is less than 0.05, thus, this indicates significant relationship. The relationship between promotion and customer satisfaction is too significant as p value is 0.000 which is too less than 0.05. However, customer service shows insignificant relationship as p value exceeds 0.05.

The estimates show that product presentation, promotion and customer service are positively correlated with the customer satisfaction. It should be noted that among these three positively correlated, customer service suggest more intensified positive relationship with satisfaction of customers as 96.5% positive correlation exists. There is 84.4% positive correlation between promotion and satisfaction. There is 48.5% positive correlation of product presentation with the customer satisfaction.

The above mentioned analyses are subjected to one assumption, which is that items used measure the constructs adequately. This assumption can be tested using a technique called Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The following table shows a glimpse in this regard;

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
PAs1	<---	Prod_Assortment	1.000				
PAs2	<---	Prod_Assortment	.917	.035	25.882	***	
PAs3	<---	Prod_Assortment	1.089	.041	26.664	***	
PAv1	<---	Prod_Availability	1.000				
PAv2	<---	Prod_Availability	1.123	.061	18.503	***	
PPr1	<---	Prod_Price	1.000				
PPr2	<---	Prod_Price	1.029	.070	14.607	***	
PPr3	<---	Prod_Price	1.061	.063	16.792	***	
PPr4	<---	Prod_Price	.992	.056	17.682	***	
PPs1	<---	Prod_Presentation	1.000				
PPs2	<---	Prod_Presentation	.691	.038	18.271	***	

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
PPs3	<---	Prod_Presentation	.952	.032	30.161	***	
PPro1	<---	Prod_Promotion	1.000				
PPro2	<---	Prod_Promotion	.847	.033	25.730	***	
PPro3	<---	Prod_Promotion	1.064	.034	31.679	***	
CS1	<---	Cus_Service	1.000				
CS2	<---	Cus_Service	.895	.052	17.123	***	
CS3	<---	Cus_Service	1.007	.055	18.194	***	
CS4	<---	Cus_Service	1.146	.053	21.735	***	
CS5	<---	Cus_Service	.993	.045	22.114	***	
CSa1	<---	Cus_Satisfaction	1.000				
CSa2	<---	Cus_Satisfaction	.921	.044	20.901	***	
CSa3	<---	Cus_Satisfaction	1.015	.043	23.872	***	
CSa4	<---	Cus_Satisfaction	.864	.047	18.426	***	
CSa5	<---	Cus_Satisfaction	.886	.047	18.768	***	
CSa6	<---	Cus_Satisfaction	1.111	.043	25.744	***	
CSa7	<---	Cus_Satisfaction	1.091	.044	24.962	***	
CSa8	<---	Cus_Satisfaction	1.116	.044	25.386	***	
CSa9	<---	Cus_Satisfaction	1.023	.049	21.012	***	
CSa10	<---	Cus_Satisfaction	1.065	.044	24.429	***	

The above table shows that p values for individual items are 0.000 which are less than 0.05; thus, it can be argued that almost all the factors or indicators were loaded on the construct efficaciously. From CFA, it has been confirmed that results of SEM holds valid.

4.3 Hypotheses Assessment Summary

Hypotheses	P Value	Nature	Accept/Reject
There is a significant and positive relationship between Product Assortment and Customer satisfaction	0.224	Negative	Rejected
There is a significant and positive relationship between Product Availability and Customer satisfaction	0.717	Negative	Rejected
There is a significant and positive relationship between Product Pricing and Customer satisfaction	0.104	Negative	Rejected
There is a significant and positive relationship between Product Presentation and Customer satisfaction	0.014	Positive	Accepted
There is a significant and positive relationship between Product Promotion and Customer satisfaction	0.000	Positive	Accepted
There is a significant and positive relationship between Customer Service and Customer satisfaction.	0.140	Positive	Rejected

Discussions

Product assortment is having a negative and insignificant impact on the customer satisfaction. In the supermarkets, it is assumed that customers consider the assorted products as the benefit of coming to supermarket, which in most of the cases is not available with the ordinary retailers. Thus, this benefit of assortment is considered so important for respondents that their satisfaction is found to have dependency on this factor. However, this argument has been rejected in our study, which contradicts the prior studies of Ruiz-Real et al. (2017) and Amine and Cadenat (2003). The reason for this may be that customers in Karachi would not consider assortment as crucial element and may pay less attention to it as compared to other factors of Category Management. Thus, this has resulted in insignificance association of assortment with customer satisfaction. This finding carries immense significance and implication for superstores as they usually tend to invest massive sums in assortment, which now needs to be revamped as per this study and more investment should be made in other factors that have shown significant association.

Product availability has insignificant relationship with the customer satisfaction. This aspect is contradictory to the prior studies of Schary and Becker (1976) and Ettouzani, Yates and Mena (2012). The theoretical argument in this regard suggest that more the frequency of the availability of products on the shelf, more is the likelihood on the part of customers to buy and subsequently showing customer satisfaction. Although this study has not completely negated this argument, yet the insignificance level shows that customers prioritize other factors rather than availability. This result offers new insights in case of customers of three superstores of Karachi that for them, it is not important to have more frequency of availability. Rather, they would be please to have better quality since a trade-off between number of products available and its quality is prevalent.

In case of product pricing, the same relationship has been observed which too contradicts the past claim of Huber, Herrmann and Wricke (2001). The previously prevalent notion argues that lower pricing would lead to satisfaction. This study has contradicted this stance by claiming that it is not the price rather quality that matters for the customers in superstores in Karachi. This claim reinforces the relationship found between availability and satisfaction in this study, which shows a coherence among respondents that in price-quality trade-off, customers are tilted towards quality. This is of great importance for superstores who need to create new ways to maintain highest quality possible for the products and collaborate with their suppliers in this

regard.

Like pricing, customer service is also found to have insignificant impact on customer satisfaction. This may be due to the general perception that customer service is not associated with the supermarkets, rather, is the headache of company. This too contradicts the past claim of Emerson and Grimm (1999). However, given the fact that service in the superstores are becoming digitalised, so it can be argued that customers are happy with the current state and want to prioritize other factors like promotion and presentation.

Product presentation and promotion are found to have positive and significant association with customer satisfaction. In the supermarkets, the way the products are presented and their promotional activities are crucial factor for creating convenience. Thus, this convenience translates into satisfaction for them. These findings are reinforced in the prior studies of Pulitzer (2005), Flavián, Gurrea and Orús (2009) and Park, Lennon and Stoel (2005). Product presentation constitutes the major and crucial aspect of CMP as the basic rationale for customers coming to superstores as compared to local or traditional stores is based on appropriate presentation coupled with blend of technology. Product presentation not only is the comprehensive source of information about the product but is also the essential component of better physical environment, which as per literature review plays a pivotal role in arousing positive emotions which are imperative and inevitable for customer satisfaction. Similarly, as identified in the literature review that promotion, especially sales is important and constitute the main rationale for customers to opt for superstores has been found as linchpin of CMP and customer satisfaction. Thus, practical implications call for more investment both in terms of cost and time on promotional and presentational aspects of products rather than other factors.

5. Conclusion, Limitations and Future Research

5.1 Conclusions

The basic purpose of this study is to determine the inter-play between Category Management Practices and Customer satisfaction while analysing the data collected from customers of supermarkets in Karachi, with specific reference to three supermarkets viz. Naheed, Imtiaz and Hyperstar. The results have shown that holistically speaking, Category Management do have a significant and positive association with the customer satisfaction. However, certain factors have been found to be insignificantly associated with customer satisfaction; for example, customer

service, assortment, pricing and availability are found to be insignificantly associated with the customer satisfaction. The reason for the insignificance relationship may be that customers prioritize other factors of CMP rather than pricing, availability and assortment. Moreover, this points towards the trend that customers of these superstores would opt for quality in price-quality tradeoff. This shows a major shift in the customer behavior over the past decades as price sensitivity has been replaced by quest for quality and better services.

However, the rest independent variables, like promotion and presentation are found to be significantly associated with the customer satisfaction. Promotion whether in the form of sales or general offer value proposition that is deciphered in the form of customer satisfaction. Product presentation is the source of meaningful information for the customers and contribute towards creation of physical environment that is more customer friendly. Positive emotions generated from physical environment accompanied with meaningful information results into customer satisfaction. It should be noted that customer service is found to have more positively correlated impact than promotion and presentation. The reason is quite common that given the bombardment of technological oriented environment in superstores, the customers seem to be satisfied with these self-serving technology.

This study has amply studied the relationship between all constructs of CMP and customer satisfaction; thus, this provide an addition in the scarce literature covering all constructs under the ambit of CMP. This research has specially conducted for three superstores of Karachi and thus it helped to cover the deficiency such that none of the literature was available on Pakistan, especially Karachi. Limiting the research on three superstores has generated results that carry immense practical implications for these superstores. The significance of promotion and presentation on customer satisfaction and high positive correlation of customer service with customer satisfaction suggest that these stores need to pay attention towards these three factors. Paying attention would mean to spend cost and time specially on these factors. This would bring two-pronged benefits; it would direct the right flow of resources and it would prevent from wasting of resources in trivial aspects of CMP.

5.2 Limitations

The main limitation was time as given the enormous number of customers of three supermarkets, it was not possible to account for majority, which may be exhaustive. Thus, a limited sample was

used owing to time constraint. Furthermore, the constructs were measured based on prior studies which may be subjected to further scrutiny and amelioration.Given a number of items for the constructs, the model needs modifications which are so complex that it becomes nearly impossible to draw conclusions from such a complex model. Thus, this study has retained the lucidness of model, thereby avoiding intense complexities which has compromised the model fit parameters.

5.3 Future Research

The future studies should explore the experimentation methodologies as works in quantitative designs are frequent. Furthermore, hands-on knowledge can be provided in this regard via employing market experimentation techniques. Given the fact that this study has negated certain aspects of Category Management like availability, pricing and customer service and thus, there is a great room to explore various other variables in this regard.

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