



Identifying and Prioritizing the Relationship Marketing Factors Affecting the Customer Satisfaction with Services Section of the Tejarat Bank through the Application of Q Methodology

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Abstract

The present research project aims at studying the impressions and beliefs of the customers of Tejarat Bank in order to identify and prioritize the factors of relationship marketing which help increase the satisfaction of the customers with the service section of Tejarat Bank of Hamadan, Iran. It is a mixed exploratory study conducted based on Q methodology. The statistical community of the study comprised all the customers of the central branch of the bank who had, at least, one kind of account in it and were considered as active customers. Finally 30 customers were aimfully selected for the study by using a focused group discussion technique. Based on the interviews conducted with the customers through focused group discussions, 21 Q phrases were extracted. The phrases were then handed out to the customers in the form of a questionnaire with 21 items and an answer sheet (Q diagram). They were asked to give their agreement or disagreement with the items provided. Then after collecting the data which were gained through regulating the Q, they were analyzed by using factor-analysis method. The results thus found showed that the customers have introduced the five cases of *trust*, *commitment*, *conflict handling*, *relationship* and *competence* as the main factors of relationship marketing. The identified factors were then prioritized, and this showed that, from the viewpoints of the customers, the variables of trust, commitment and conflict handling were the most important ones in increasing the customer satisfaction.

Keywords: Relationship marketing; Customer satisfaction; Tejarat bank; Q method.



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1. Introduction

No doubt, in the highly competitive world of business and commerce, customers are among the most important assets of every manufacturing or Service Company. This is even more importantly true for the banks and financial institutes as, not only the main financial assets and resources of the banks are provided by the customers' investments, but also the buyers of all the services provided by the banks are the same customers whose presence is the key to the livelihood and survival of it. Upon knowing more of the importance of the customer satisfaction, we would realize that one of the main reasons for the loss of the customers in many companies and financial organizations is their dissatisfaction with the company; the same dissatisfaction which can be harmful to the agency. The most determining factor of customer satisfaction is to know fully about the customers' needs and demands and thus, to have a close relationship with them. Relationship marketing is a new approach in today's banking industry whose main purpose is to make close and stable relationship with the customers in order to know about their needs and work toward getting their satisfaction. Any analysis and study of the impressions and perspectives that customers hold toward the way a bank's services are provided can certainly be a very effective way for enhancing the efficiency of the bank and increasing the number of its customers. Therefore, in the present study, we employed the Q methodology which is helpful in finding about the impressions of the customers of the bank, upon knowing which, we would be able to identify and prioritize the relationship marketing factors affecting their satisfaction with the services provided.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Basically, the customers are the most important asset of every business or service Company. Nowadays, customers are faced with many questions and considerations in their purchases as the great variety of the products and services has given them ample choices to make. Also, the companies well know that the costs of getting new customers are five times as big as those of keeping their current ones. Thus, losing a customer is not the loss of a single item, but the loss of a life-long process of sales and profits that the customer may regularly make during their lives (Noorbaksh *et al.*, 2013).

Unlike the classical marketing systems which focused on recruiting new customers and doing more transactions with them, the new method of relationship marketing is oriented toward keeping the old customers and making stable relationships with them. This new marketing system has challenged the mixed and traditional marketing and has become a strategic alternative for increasing the dynamism and interactions of the company with the customers (Haghgoyi, 2011). The concept of relationship marketing was first introduced by Barry in 1983 to be used by service companies as a working strategy for attracting, and retaining the customers and enhancing relationship with them. It undertakes a long-term approach whose main purpose is to provide the customer with long-term values and then gain

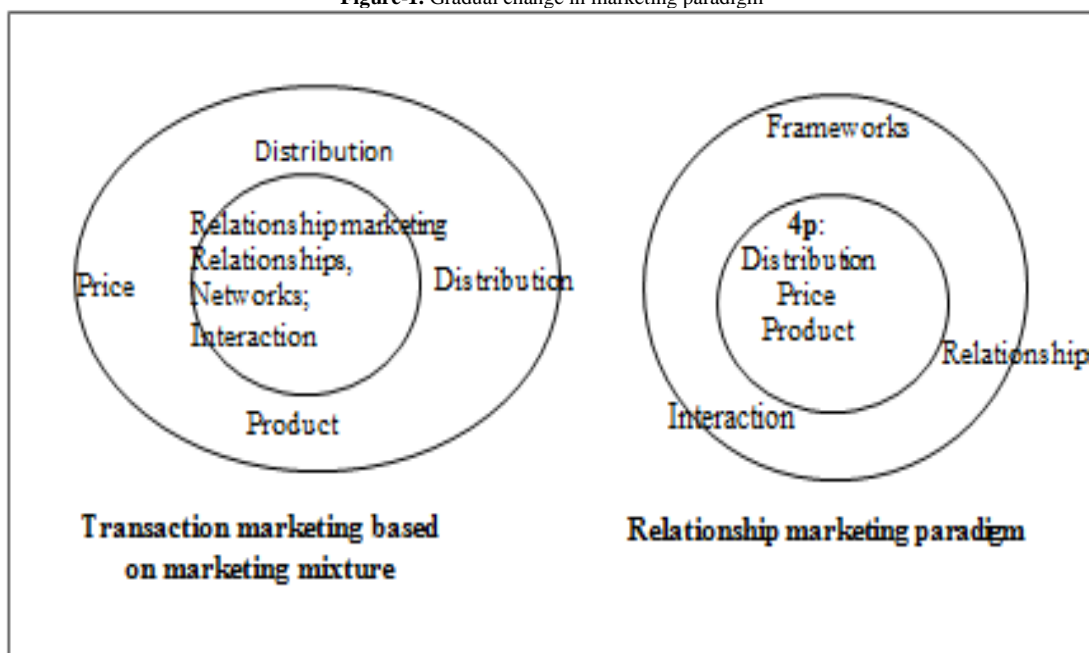
their long-term feelings of satisfaction, in return for that. Customer satisfaction is a complete evaluation of the experiences that he/she has undergone with the company during a certain time span. Cuttler believes that customer satisfaction is the degree to which a company has actually met the expectation of its customers. Simply put, Cuttler states that the customer would be satisfied if the company can grant their demands, and if not, they would not be satisfied (Cuttler Philip., 2014). Considering the ever-increasing competition among the banks at an international level, relationship marketing has been widely noted as an efficient way for making and retaining a long-lasting relationship with the customers because all the banks offer almost the same services and it is difficult for them to make distinctive ones. Unfortunately, most of the marketing theories and approaches put their greatest emphasis on selling more products and developing ways and strategies for attracting a larger number of customers, while little or no attention is paid to keeping the current customers. As the markets are becoming more profoundly competitive, the companies have more clearly realized the importance of keeping their customers satisfied. A recent study has shown that if the companies can lower the loss of their current customers up to 5 percent, their profitability will increase from 25 to 85 percent (Ghazizadeh *et al.*, 2014).

It is now acceptable for all the developed companies that in highly competitive markets, retaining the current customers through developing relationships with them is more profitable even at the cost of sacrificing some of the benefits of attempts for recruiting new customers. New evidence proves the significance of relationship marketing as a useful strategy for the functions of the banks. Therefore, in the intensely competitive market for the banks in the present Iran, and considering the privatization of many state banks, the brief difference between the interest levels at the resources and expenses of both private and state banks, and the fact that Iran is likely to be accepted for the membership of the WTO, banks have to take quick measures for preserving their customers and this can best be done through relationship marketing and effective satisfaction of the customers (ibid, 79). The service section of the banks can, along with other activities of the bank, have a telling role in aiding their relationship marketing. And about the Tejarat bank of Hamedan, the question we have raised is: what are the effective factors of relationship marketing which can help increase the customers' satisfaction with the service section of this bank, and how are such factors prioritized?

2. Theoretical Framework and Review of Literature

The base and ground for marketing mixture was first set by McCarthy in 1960 by expressing a set of variables based on which, for many years, the marketing approach was focused on managing customers' demands. This approach also used advertising and distribution of the products, price management, pricing for enthrusing the demand, and developing products with various prices in order to penetrate the different sections of the market (Salari and Maryam, 2013). The traditional marketing, however, has been subject to criticism because in it, all the customer groups and sections are the same and are treated based on single standardized procedures. Many factors are involved in the current increase in the importance of the relationship marketing strategy, some of which are: globalization of the markets, increasing competition and rivalry in such markets, increase in customer demands and advanced customers, increase in the power of sections of the consumer markets, sudden change in consumption pattern, ever increase in quality standards, insufficiency of quality alone in creating stable competitive advantage, the effects of technological innovations on the development of products and services and the traditional marketing's failure in achieving full success.

Figure-1. Gradual change in marketing paradigm



The concept of relationship marketing was first introduced by Leonard Berry in 1983. He first defined it as attracting, keeping and developing relationship with customers. in response to the criticisms against mixed marketing

system, Groneros has formulated and offered a definition for marketing according to which the aim of marketing is to make, retain and enhance relationship with customers so that the aims and needs of the two parties involved in the transaction are satisfactorily met through interactions and gratifying their demands. His basis for the relationship marketing paradigm is the concept which was first provided by Berry and developed by other scholars. The relationship marketing stance is also indebted to the works of Adrian Payne, David Ballantyne, and Martin Christopher who further developed its theoretical tenets. They have described the main focus of marketing as this: first at a large scale, realizing the fact that marketing can affect a vast scope of environments such as customer markets, staff markets, suppliers markets, domestic markets, clients markets and other effective markets such as governmental and financial ones. And second, at a smaller scale, realizing the fact that the nature of the domestic relationships between the companies and customers is undergoing a change, and finally, noting the change of focus from transaction to relationship (Noorbaksh *et al.*, 2013). Generally, scholars and theorists have offered various definitions for the senses and conceptions of relationship marketing. For such variety of explanations, there are two major reasons offered; first, the relationship marketing has had a short life to become a completely well-formed and organized theoretical model. The second reason is that the people who have contributed to the development of relationship marketing have come from different sociopolitical and educational backgrounds. Some of the more important definitions of relationship marketing are presented in table 1, below (Shamutt, 2007 quoted in Ghazizadeh *et al.* (2014).

Table-1. Definitions of relationship marketing

authors	Definitions	Key words
Jackson (1985)	Making and keeping stable and profitable relationship with the customers	Stable, profitable relationships
Martin (1999)	Focusing on two aims: recruiting and keeping customers	Keeping, customers
Gummesson (1996)	Relationships, networks and interactions	Relationships, interactions
Cuttler P. (2000)	Making, keeping and fortifying a stable relationship with customers and other groups involved	Relationships,

Beside the definitions that different authors and scholars have offered about the relationship marketing, many theoretical schools in the field of marketing have also provided ideas about it. Palmer considers relationship marketing as “schools of thought” and discusses three different group of schools and prominent scholars that have effectively contributed to the formation and evolution of this system of marketing. They are 1- Nordic school which is a famous name in the field of quality and services marketing and emphasizes the long-term aspects of relationships in service marketing, 2- Cranfield School is an Anglo-Australian school in the field of relationship marketing which studies the cohesion between quality management and services marketing concepts. It also studies the nature of relationships in marketing. Although service provision quality and marketing are often managed separately, they are closely connected. The relationship marketing approach creates a kind of union and cohesion between these elements. 3- The IMP group which works on industrial marketing. The group studied more than 300 companies and found that the buyer-seller relationship comprises of a set of interactions between the concept of acceptance and the process of creation (Palmer, 2005, quoted in Ghazizadeh *et al.* (2014).

One financial agency in which the relationships among the buyer, services and the seller can be defined based on the principles of targeted marketing is bank. Studies by scholars of economics have invariably shown that banks can vastly add to their productivity through increasing the number of their best and most loyal customers and keeping them firmly satisfied by their services. Relationship marketing is a new procedure in the banking industry whose main purpose is to make a long-standing and close relationship with the customers in order to know more fully about their needs and demands and provide for their satisfaction. That is why more banks are ever taking to using and implementing the principles of relationship marketing (Ranjbaran and Mojtaba, 2010). The development of relationship marketing in banks is closely connected with making relationships with customers. Keeping stable relationships with customers is a long-term process in which more attention must be paid to the future results and outcomes rather to the current ones. Also, the quality of such relationship is measured based on the satisfaction of the customers. The ways for keeping the customer satisfied might vary from one cultural or social context to another. In their study, (Alrubaiee and Al-Nazer, 2010) have investigated the effects of the relationship marketing strategy on the loyalty of the customers of banks in Jordan. They found that such factors as commitment, trust, relationships, and satisfaction affect the customer satisfaction.

Sin *et al.* (2002), have found about the positive effects of relationship marketing principles (trust, social relationships, communications, common values, sympathy and mutual efforts) on the economic activities of different businesses such as hoteling, financial services, commercial services and insurance, etc. in Hong Kong. Nachimuthu and Kalimuthu (2013), have studied the effects of such aspects as trust, commitment, sympathy, mutual action, the quality of services, attraction, the emotional element, ordering, social responsibility and mutual efforts on the satisfaction and loyalty of the customers of banks in India. They found that such variables as commitment, ordering, and quality of services, mutual efforts, trust and attraction are the most effective ones, respectively and the other factors come after these. According to Dhanushanthini *et al.* (2015) the four variables of trust, communications, shared values, and sympathy have positive effects on the loyalty to the brand of the customers of banks in Sir Lanka. In a research project entitled “The Relationship Marketing: Making Loyalty in the new Era of Banking Marketing in

Thailand”, [Boonajsevee \(2005\)](#) has found that the relationship between the variables of communication, and the quality of services and medium variables of trust, satisfaction and commitment on loyalty and satisfaction of the bank customers a positively direct relationship. Also, [Tabatabai et al. \(2013\)](#) have found that the effects of trust, communications, conflict handling as aspects of relationship marketing, on customers’ loyalty to the name of banks are positive. Upon investigating the effects of the relationship marketing basics on the satisfaction of the customers of Saman bank, Iran, [Ranjbaran and Mojtaba \(2010\)](#) found that competence, communications, trust, and conflict handling are, respectively, the most effective factors on satisfaction, while commitment did not have any positive effect on it. Based on [Ghazizadeh et al. \(2012\)](#), the three factors of financial advantages, social factors, and structural connections, through affecting the quality of communications, and likewise, the factor of feelings, through influencing the quality of communication, can lead to the rise of satisfaction in the customers in relationship marketing. And similarly, [Venus and Bahareh \(2012\)](#) concluded that from among the value aspects of relationship marketing, only the three factors of functional interests, symbolic interests and experimental interests could affect the satisfaction of the bank customers.

As we can see from nearly all such studies, careful consideration of the impressions and opinions of the customers about the quality of the services provided is the most important means for the banks and other financial institutes toward gaining better results. Based on the same token, the present research project undertook to study the influence of relationship marketing factors on increasing the customers’ satisfaction with the service section of the Tejarat Bank. Also, as many researchers have pointed out the suitability of Q methodology in identifying the viewpoints of the people on various subjects and grounds, the present study has applied the same methodology for identifying the attitudes of the bank customers, whom as was mentioned above, are the main asset of this economic agency. The findings of the study would be presented as practical suggestions to be adopted by various banking systems especially that of the Tejarat bank. Bank authorities can use the findings for planning working strategies for raising the satisfaction of their customers with their services and, therefore, avoid the crisis of decline in the number of customers. Thus, the main purpose of the present study is identifying and prioritizing the effective aspects of relationship marketing in increasing the satisfaction of the customers in their service section based on Q methodology.

2.1. The Questions of the Study

What are the factors of relationship marketing which can affect the satisfaction of the customers with the service section?

How are these factors prioritized through the Q methodology?

Based on the Q methodology, what is the classification of these factors? In other words, what impressions and stances are prevalent among the participants of the study about its subject?

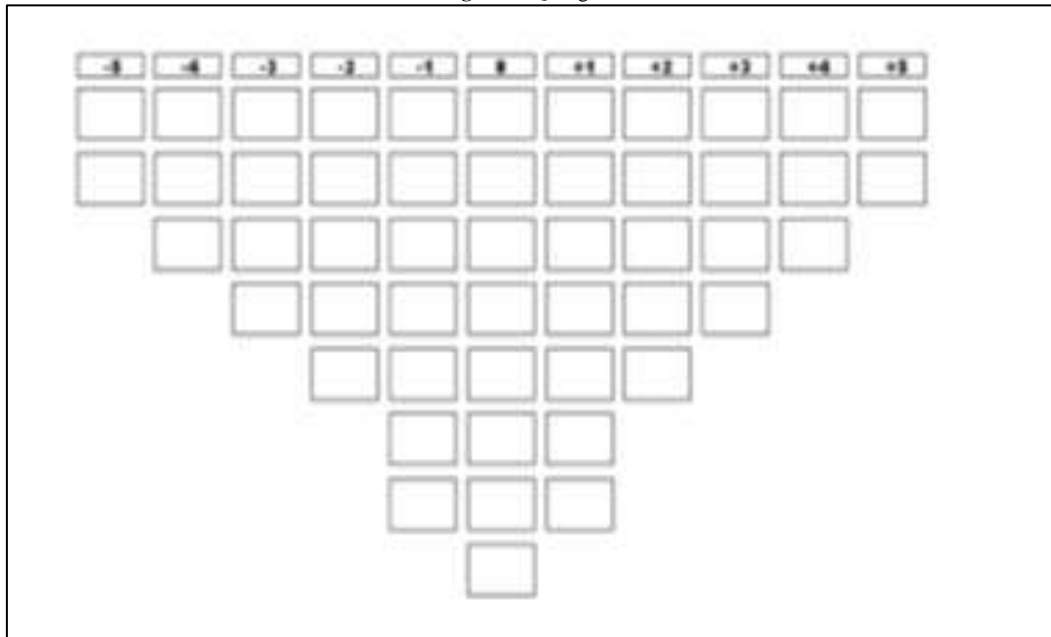
3. Methodology

The philosophical framework of the study is of positive interpretive paradigm, and in its orientation, is of practical sorts of research. The research methodology is mixed exploratory in nature whose implementation method is also a combined one. At collecting the customer’s opinions, the study used a qualitative method, but in the stage of extracting customers’ impressions, it was quantitative. It is also a case-study and library-based one because the theoretical data, necessary for finding about the impressions of the subjects, were gathered through considering, and looking into many sources that are about relationship marketing. The Q-method consists of five stages in the first of which, after specifying the topic, the researcher designates the statistical community. In the second stage, the necessary the phrases about the subject of the study are extracted from the viewpoints of the people related to that discourse. In the third one, the researcher selects a limited number of the phrases from those that have been gathered in the previous stage. In the fourth stage, the selected phrases should be classified and ranked based on a certain scale (from quite agree to quite disagree). And finally in the last stage, the researcher should gather and interpret the opinions that the subjects have provided on the phrases in the fourth stage ([Papzan et al., 2016](#)). After explaining about the relationship marketing and its advantages in enhancing the satisfaction of the customers, the attitudes of the subjects about their satisfaction with the services provided by the bank were gathered through holding interviews in the form of focused group discussions in which men and women took part separately. After having three sessions of panel discussion with 30 customers of the bank, we reached a level where no more information seemed required. After performing content-analysis on the data gathered through the interviews, the phrases were further reduced to 21 ones which represented the whole views of the subjects of the study. In order to find out about the validity of the Q phrases, they were reviewed by scholars in the field of bank services marketing to see if they would accurately reflect the attitudes of the customers about satisfaction with the services provided by the bank. Slight changes were made to the statements after consulting the scholars of the field, and finally the validity of them was approved of.

Also for deciding about the reliability of the research tool of the study, two weeks after placing the cards into the Q diagram, we asked 10 customers of those participating in the study to provide their ideas again. Then, after considering the correlation between the answers given by these 10 people at the two different times, it was found that the research tool was reliable enough. After putting the 21 statements on the cards, the subjects were asked to personally put the cards in the slots based on the scale from +5 (quite agree) to -5 (quite disagree). In the present study, the cards were distributed mandatory. That is to say, the formation and distribution of the cards were already decided and the subjects were just asked to see how the Q statements (the variables of relationship marketing which affect the customer satisfaction) on the scale (quite agree to quite disagree) were true about them. Therefore, the customers (subjects) were supposed to study and compare all the statements and put those with which they felt the

strongest agreement in slot +5 and those of the strongest disagreement into the -5 slot. Finally, the quantitative data gathered through Q methodology were analyzed by the SPSS software. To do so, the exploratory factor-analysis was performed to classify the customers based on their comments and attitudes expressed. For 20 percent of the subjects, the test was conducted a second time and upon comparing the gained marks, the correlation coefficient was calculated to 86 percent which showed a high level of reliability.

Figure-2. Q diagram



4. Findings

Demographics of the subjects: the average age of the customers was 39.76 with 5.2 of standard deviation. 22 percent of them (73 percent) were men and 8 others (27 percent) were women. 8 ones (27 percent) held high school diploma, 18 ones (60 percent), had a bachelor degree and 4 others (13 percent) held M A. The attitudes of the customers under study about the relationship marketing factors affecting the customers’ satisfaction with service section of the bank: in order to know about the customers’ attitudes and impressions, the exploratory factor-analysis through Q methodology was conducted. Results from this part are presented in the table 3, below.

Table-2. The extracted factors and their shares

Factors’ number	Special value	Variance percentage	Collected Variance percentage
1	5.926	19.725	19.752
2	12.550	3.765	32.302
3	9.44	3.839	46.746
4	9.056	2.717	50.822
5	8.087	2.426	58.909

As we can see from the table above, the first factor with 5.926 of special value has the greatest share in determining the total variance of the attitudes, while the last one with 2.426 of such value has the smallest share in determining the total variance of the attitudes of the customers participating in the study. Generally speaking, as decided from the information presented in the table above, the 5 factors (attitudes) can decide for about 95 percent of the total attitudes of the customers.

Based on the results presented in table 3, below, we now discuss the five attitudes of the customers which have been gathered through the Q method as described above:

The first factor; trust: based on the ideas expressed by the customers of the bank studied, the factor of trust had the greatest share in increasing their satisfaction. This factor was measured through three statements of the Q: 1- safeguarding the financial information of the customers and building their confidence through the proper behaviors of the staff, 2- staff’s careful and flawless transference of financial assets and correct financial statements, and 3- taking security measures in the use of new technological, electronic and digital means for ensuring the customers. Based on this finding, we can say that the bank’s best performance shall be through confidence-building measures. Therefore, for making and keeping the customers and bringing their maximum satisfaction in the services provided, the bank should pay its largest attention and investment to training the staff about confidence-building behaviors in doing financial transactions.

The second factor; commitment: the customers taking part in the study marked this factor as the third important one in raising satisfaction. Four statements of the Q were used measuring this factor: 1- bank’s doing the promised actions on due dates, 2- being committed to performing the promised tasks, 3- increasing the number of staff and working hours when necessary, and 4- ease of payments and withdrawals and providing proper services

according to the customer's needs. Bank's commitment is a means to reaching customers, keeping their satisfaction and a workable way for increasing its long-lasting productivity. This commitment is also the best means for building customers' confidence. Fabin warns service companies against making and not fulfilling promises as this would bring about the following risks: 1- dissatisfaction of the personnel that are not able to grant the customers' expectations. This makes them feel depressed and cause a decline in their productivity, 2- dissatisfaction of the customers whose impressions of the bank and the efficiency of their services is damaged. This also causes the loss of potential customers. From the customers' stance, all the four statements of the commitment Q are important, while the third one (increasing the number of staff and working hours when necessary) is the most successful measure for causing the satisfaction of the customers.

The third factor; conflict handling: this was identified as the third most effective factor in enhancing the satisfaction of the customers. for statements of the Q have been applied for measuring this variable: 1- caring for order of the line of customers and avoiding clash and contradiction by installing a summoning system, 2- setting a proper process for receiving and responding to customers' complaints and objection, 3- carrying out opinion polls for finding about the problems and taking measures for solving them, and 4- staff's being fair and just in treating the customers and avoiding discriminatory acts. Our findings show that all the four parameters have been important in increasing the sense of gratification among the customers. The third one (carrying out opinion polls for finding about the problems and taking measures for solving them) has been the most noticeable one

The fourth factor; competence: this is the fourth important factor that the customers have selected. Five statements comprising this factors are: 1-having well-trained and professionally educated staff who can best perform the transactions in response to the customers' demands, 2- installing all the necessary equipment for the welfare of the customers (wide and well-furnished waiting halls, water dispenser, air-conditioners, etc.), 3- opening branches in proper places and parts of the city, 4- applying recently-developed, technologically-advanced equipment for the doing banking dealings (ATM, internet, or telephone banking, etc.) and making them available to the customers, and 5- cleanliness and tidiness of the bank office and using well-dressed, well-behaved personnel. Among these determining factors, the customers have given the greatest significance to 1 and 2 (having well-trained and professionally educated staff who can best perform the transactions in response to the customers' demands; installing all the necessary equipment for the welfare of the customers).

The fifth factor; communications: the customers have identified this factor as the fifth significant one affecting their satisfaction. Five Q statements have designated this factor: 1- informing and training the customers about the latest developments in electronic banking services through mass media, 2- providing the necessary instructions on how to fill out the forms and other needed processes, 3- staff's updated information about the banking operations, marketing conditions and customers, 4- carefully listening to the customer's demands and clearly responding to them, and 5- bank's true appreciation of the business conditions and financial affairs of the customers. Although all the five parameters of communication are highly important in providing for the satisfaction of the customers, the first one is more intensely so. Thus, bank is recommended to make more investment on this one.

Table-3. Factors and their factor values

No.	Q examples	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
1	safeguarding the financial information of the customers and building their confidence through the proper behaviors of the staff	0.77	1.99	0.64	0.74	-0.61
2	staff's careful and flawless transference of financial assets and correct financial statements	-0.64	1.96	-1.96	0.56	0.62
3	taking security measures in the use of new technological, electronic and digital means for ensuring the customers	-0.43	1.48	-0.81	-1.82	--0.44
4	bank's doing the promised actions on due dates	-0.51	0.96	-1.18	-0.26	--0.99
5	Doing the banking transactions quickly and carefully enough by the staff	-0.04	0.85	-0.29	-1	-0.23
6	increasing the number of staff and working hours	-1.09	-1.23	-0.53	-1.41	0.19
7	ease of payments and withdrawals and providing proper services according to the customer's needs	-0.97	-0.30	-0.53	0.13	-0.67
8	caring for order of the line of customers and avoiding clash and contradiction by installing a summoning system	-1.13	-0.88	-1.65	-1.81	-0.56
9	setting a proper process for	-0.59	0.72	1.95	1.50	1.33

	receiving and responding to customers' complaints and objection					
10	carrying out opinion polls for finding about the problems and taking measures for solving them	-0.24	-0.43	0.57	1.75	2.96
11	staff's being fair and just in treating the customers and avoiding discriminatory acts	-1.60	0.35	0.66	-0.91	2.21
12	informing and training the customers about the latest developments in electronic banking services through mass media	-0.43	-0.23	-0.30	-0.03	0.22
13	providing the necessary instructions on how to fill out the forms and other needed processes	-1.56	0.29	-0.72	-1.24	1.07
14	staff's updated information about the banking operations, marketing conditions and customers	-0.19	-0.18	0.29	0.85	-0.62
15	carefully listening to the customer's demands and clearly responding to them	-0.38	0.58	1.53	-0.10	-1.43
16	bank's true appreciation of the business conditions and financial affairs of the customers	-0.04	-0.12	0.21	1.27	-0.15
17	having well-trained and professionally educated staff who can best perform the transactions and do the same acts as other banks	-1.23	-0.19	-1.37	-0.10	-0.49
18	installing all the necessary equipment for the welfare of the customers (wide and well-furnished waiting halls, water dispenser, air-conditioners, etc.)	0.26	-0.39	-1.29	0.30	-0.42
19	opening branches in proper places and parts of the city	2.05	1.03	-0.36	-1.11	0.55
20	applying recently-developed, technologically-advanced equipment for the doing banking dealings (ATM, internet, or telephone banking, etc.) and making them available to the customers	1.46	0.58	1.18	-0.04	-0.03
21	cleanliness and tidiness of the bank office and using well-dressed, well-behaved personnel	1.45	0.18	0.54	-0.89	-0.40

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aims at identifying and prioritizing the relationship marketing factors affecting the satisfaction of the customers with the service section of Tejarat Bank, through the application of Q methodology. To this end, 30 customers of the central branch of the bank were aimfully selected to take part in collecting Q statements used for identifying and ranking their own attitudes and ideas about the subject of the study. As the attitudes of the customers affect their choice of the services provided by the bank, the identification and ranking of the customers' attitudes were done based on the personality characteristics of them, as it is believed that such characteristics are involved in their choice of banking services. Based on the findings of the study, rightly asserted that the 5 factors of relationship marketing, namely, trust, commitment, conflict handling, communications and competence, are important for them. Based on the findings of the study the factors, ranked from the most important to least important, are *trust*, *commitment*, *conflict handling*, *competence* and *communications*, respectively. The effects of the five mentioned factors on relationship marketing agree in this order of importance agrees with the findings of the studies done by Alrubaiee and Al-Nazer (2010), Ranjbaran and Berari (2013), and Tabatabai *et al.* (2013).

Giving the first position to the factor of *trust* by the customers shows the great importance of this element in banking services. Regarding the kind of job done by the banks in keeping the assets of the customers, trust seems to be of greatest importance. This ranking accords with those of the studies of Sin *et al.*, Gordon *et al.* (2008), but was not in agreement with the findings of Ranjbaran and Berari (2013). This also rightly shows that people's most

relevant expectation of their ideal bank is the confidence they should feel in doing their financial tasks with it. Therefore, for keeping this grand feature which later is applied in keeping the customers and bringing about their satisfaction, the management of the bank under study is strongly recommended to invest in teaching and training their personnel on doing their best in banking tasks and confidence-building behavior. The second ranking position was devoted to the commitment factor by the participants. This result agrees with those of Venus and Zohori (2010), but not with that of Alrubaiee and Al-Nazer (2010). Thus, Tejarat bank can demonstrate its commitment to achieve the best state of productivity by increasing the number of the staff and working hours, or even revising the working processes for decreasing the waiting time for the customers. The third important factor from the stance of the customers is *conflict handling* which is the ability of the supplier in minimizing the negative effects of potential and manifest clashes. In other words, it refers to the ability for avoiding potential conflicts and handling the ongoing ones. As a factor affecting the relationship marketing, conflict handling accords with the result from the study of Alrubaiee and Al-Nazer (2010). Regarding the probable conflicts among the customers, the bank can launch a system for managing the complaints and getting the customers' feedback on possible problems in order to be able to handle or prevent them quickly. Hawkins and Coney believe that taking care of the customers' complaints is greatly important, and companies must seek ways for finding about and responding to the complaints and comments of their clients in shortest time possible. Their lack of attention to such problems can provide the ground for the negative impressions of the customers regarding the products and services of the agency. Upon receiving such harmful impressions, the customers may even work on the negative publicity of the organization by publicly degrading it. The resulting dissatisfaction of the customers would finally lead to the loss of them and further harm to the prestige of the company.

Competence was selected as the fourth important factor affecting the customer satisfaction. It is defined as the knowledge, ability and technical prowess of each of the parties involved for having efficient function. Hunt et al. have also referred to competence and its importance in the success of relationship marketing. They designate certain competences for an economic agency some of which are: competence related to the market, competence related to relationship management, and competence related to alliance. They also rightly suggest that as not all the possible relations between a company and its customers are profitable, the company should wisely be able to manage its relationships with them. This finding of ours agrees with those of Nachimuthu and Kalimuthu (2013), and Noorbaksh et al. (2013). And finally, the factor of *communication* was found to be the last important one in deciding for the satisfaction of the customers. Relations based on communication, both in formal or official or informal formats, is a way for sharing the useful information between the buyers and sellers. When wisely and optimally used, communication can help overcome the differences and contradictions and provide the ground for mutual understandings and expectations. In relationship marketing, communications between the parties involved is a good means for keeping the valuable customers through providing them with necessary information on the changes in the quality and form of the services. When there is effective and timely communication between an organization and its active customers, there would be a better relationship between them and this makes them more loyally related to the organization. This finding concurs with those of Ranjbaran and Mojtaba (2010), Alrubaiee and Al-Nazer (2010), and Venus and Zohori (2010).

At the end, we recommend the following topics to be further studied by the researchers: 1- Comparing the private and governmental banks on their application of relationship marketing system. 2- Studying the effects of relationship marketing of the financial performance of the different companies.

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