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The Antecedents and Consequence of Customer Loyalty: Active Travelers as an Example

ABSTRACT

The fact that 5 % increase in customer retention results in 95 % increase in profit at various sectors (Reichheld, 1996) does not only attracts marketing practitioners' but scholars' as well. It seems as if the ratio of loyal customers indicates the profitability.

The purpose of this dissertation is to understand customer loyalty towards active travel including antecedents and consequences. Besides, finding out whether the current loyalty models are adequate for a service type like active travel with cultural, physical and social experiences.

To have a deep understanding of the phenomenon called customer loyalty, eleven focus groups were held during April and August, 2007. The 103 participants were actually on an active tour to Turkey, organized by a well known travel agency with its senior customer profile and special tour packages for small groups. The attitude and behavior patterns towards active travel were analyzed through discourse analysis.

It was possible to recognize operational definitions of cognitive, affective, conative and action loyalty (Oliver; 1997, 1999), but the increase of strength between dimensions was not clear. As the members of the travel agency's loyalty program, they were strongly loyal towards their travel kind but only cognitively and affectively to the travel agency. The antecedents of active travel loyalty are perceived cultural difference, security and physical remoteness of the destination; perceived value consists of price, tour program, thrust, and the size of the group; satisfaction through cultural, physical and social experiences. The consequences are word of mouth, exclusive consideration and strength of preference.

Key Words: (1) Customer Loyalty, (2) Active Travel, (3) Special Interest Tourism, (4) Focus Group Discussions, (5) Third Age Tourism, (6) Active Experience.