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Interactive Marketing and Its Impact on Customer Satisfaction – The Study of Mobile Communication Service Providers in Jaffna Srilanka (A Comparative Study of Dialog and Mobitel)

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Keywords : *Interactive Marketing, Customer Satisfaction and mobile communication service providers.*

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Interactive Marketing and Its Impact on Customer Satisfaction – The Study of Mobile Communication Service Providers in Jaffna Srilanka

(A Comparative Study of Dialog and Mobitel)

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I. INTRODUCTION

There is certainly a growing interest in the subject of interactive marketing. The strong rivalry characterizing today's business environment has resulted to the building of stronger firm-customer relationships which creates mutual rewards to both the firm and the customer, especially an organization can also gain quality sources of marketing intelligence for better planning of marketing strategy (Ndubisi, 2006).

Interactive marketing is one of the most important concepts in contemporary business world to survive in the market place. Because nowadays every marketers are facing lot of challenges due to technological competence, high competition, market fragmentation and market proliferation. So every organization is putting the customer first, anticipating needs and being nice to the customer. In today's fast paced and increasingly competitive market, the bottom line of a firm's marketing strategies and tactics is to make profits and contribute to the growth of the company. In particular personal are instrumental in so doing their needs to "care" for the customer. Customer satisfaction, relationship and retention are global issues that affect all organizations be it large or small, profit or non profit, global or local. Many companies are interested in studying, evaluating and implementing marketing strategies. Those are aimed at improving the interactive marketing relationship and maximizing share of customers in view of the beneficial effects on the financial performance of the firm.

In current business world many organizations adapt the holistic marketing concept and implement the interactive relationship marketing activities for long term survival from competitive advantages. Due to the high

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competition in the service sector, service organizations have to reveal their market performance to their customer as well as target market, in order to attract the new customer and maintain the long term relationship with their current customers.

There are five mobile communication service providers are now in the srilankan mobile telecommunication market. Among them competition is very high due to the customer switching behavior and different types of the interactive relationship activities. In the market of mobile communication, customers' attitude can be changed period to period due to the selection of service provider. Because of satisfy their needs based on service providers' service offerings. Service organizations can use the Interactive relationship marketing techniques as a tool to manage the competition and to maintain their customer as a loyal to their service offering.

II. RESEARCH PROBLEM

In northern part of the SriLanka, especially in Jaffna district, after the thirty year ethnic war, mobile communication service providers (i.e. Dialog, Mobitel, Hutch, Etisalat and Airtel. etc) are highly penetrated to the market through the opening of branches in several places of Jaffna peninsula. Meanwhile, they are facing more difficulties such as high competitiveness, high level preliminary expensive etc .they use different formation of strategies to compete in the highly competitive market. Most of the mobile communication service providers prefer the interactive relationship marketing strategy to secure the customer satisfaction. A Study on the interactive marketing and its impact on customer satisfaction in an emerging market like Jaffna peninsula can be a fruitful empirical work, which may likely to differ from a developed market. Furthermore, there is not much widely empirical works on interactive marketing and its impact on customer satisfaction to mobile communication sectors in Jaffna district. Therefore, it is important, to empirically examine the actual impact of interactive marketing on customer satisfaction. Such understanding or finding will help to mobile communication service providers to establish the better management of firm –customer relationship and to achieve the higher level of satisfaction among customers.

RQ: What extent the interactive marketing influences on customer satisfaction in mobile communication service providers in Jaffna district, SriLanka.

III. OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the study is to find out the impact of interactive marketing on customer satisfaction in mobile communication service providers

in Jaffna district, SriLanka and secondary objectives are:

- ✦ To identify the level of interactive marketing in mobile communication services in Jaffna.
- ✦ To recognizes the level of customer satisfaction in mobile communication services in Jaffna.
- ✦ To find out the relationship between interactive marketing and customer satisfaction.
- ✦ To find out the significant difference between personal characteristics on customer Satisfaction.
- ✦ To suggest the service providers to keep customer satisfaction.

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

a) *Interactive marketing*

A customer is one who patronizes a business, someone who gives his custom a to store or business. A majority of organizations serve multiple types of customers. Among the major distinctions are internal and external customers. Internal customers are the recipients of products or services within an organization that play a role in creating the overall service experience. External customers are those outside the company to whom products and services are provided on behalf of the company (Beazley, Harden, Boenisch, 2002). We have also found it needful to offer some definitions below although they are not part of our key words.

This is to enable our readership to have a better understanding of the electronic world that is shaping business activities today. Therefore the study of relationship between internal customer and external customer is most important aspect to realize the organizational position.

Interactive marketing theory suggests that successful interactive marketing results from certain aspects of cooperative relationships that characterize successful relational exchanges. Although according to Arnett and Badrinarayanan (2005) studies suggest numerous factors that influence interactive marketing success, three factors consistently identified as important are trust (Dwyer et al., 1987; Morgan and Hunt 1994; Sivadas and Dwyer 2000; Smith and Barclay 1997; Wilson 1995), interactive commitment (Anderson and Weitz 1992; Day 1995; Geysken, et al., 1999; Moorman et al., 1992), and communication (Mohr and Nevin 1996; Mohr et al., 1996). Successful relationship marketing efforts improve customer loyalty and firm performance through stronger relational bonds (e.g., De Wulf, Odekerken-Schröder, and Iacobucci, 2001; Sirdeshmukh, Singh, and Sabol, 2002).

Baron and Harris (2003) summarized the seven key indicators of relationship marketing approach. Such as high level of trust between both parties, high level of relationship commitment between both parties, long time horizon, open communication channels between

both parties with information exchanged between both parties, personalizing services, service quality, having the customer's best interest at heart, a commitment to quality from both parties, an attempt to favorably lock- in or retain the customer. And Ndubisi (2006) proposed the four key virtues that underpin relationship marketing, such as trust, commitment, communication, complaint

handling. In this research, we considered the seven dimensions that underpin interactive marketing, such as **trust, relationship commitment, quality of employees, quality of atmosphere, familiarity, personalizing services and complaint handling** to predict the customer satisfaction in the mobile communication service providers in Jaffna peninsula, SriLanka.

Table 1 : Definitions of relationship marketing dimensions

Concept	Definition	Author
Trust	"A willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence"	Moorman et al (1993).
	"The belief that a partner's word or promise is reliable and a party will fulfill his/her obligations in the relationship"	Schurr and Ozanne (1985).
Commitment	"Decisions or cognitions that fix or bind an individual to a behavioral disposition"	Kiesler (1971).
	"Commitment as an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship"	Moorman et al (1992).
Communication	"Keeping in touch with valued customers, providing timely and trustworthy information on service and service changes, and communicating proactively if a delivery problem occurs"	Ndubisi (2006).
complaint handling	" It is an opportunity for the company to show its engagement towards its client through its efforts to resolve the complaint and its willingness to openly discuss reasons and possible satisfactory solutions"	Taleghani et al (2011).
	"Complaint handling as a supplier's ability to avoid potential complaints, solve manifest conflicts before they create problems, and discuss solutions openly when problems do arise"	Ndubisi (2006).

b) Customer satisfaction

Kotler (1996) defined customer satisfaction as "the level of a persons felt state resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance or outcome in violation to his/her own expectations". And he modify it ((kotler, 2000, p 36) as, Satisfaction is a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to this or her expectations' so, customer satisfaction could be considered a comparative behavior between inputs beforehand and post obtainments. As the study focused on investigating user satisfaction of libraries, customer satisfaction is defined as "the levels of service quality performances that meets users' expectations".

Customer satisfaction is a well known and established concept in several areas like marketing, consumer research, economic psychology, welfare-economics, and economics. Common interpretations obtained from various authors reflect the notion that satisfaction is a feeling which results from a process of evaluating what has been received against what was expected, including the purchase decision itself and the needs and wants associated with the purchase (Armstrong & Kotler, 1996). Thomas.O, Jones and

Sesser (1995) explained customer satisfaction is the individual's perception of the performance of the product or service in relation to customer expectations. As noted the concept of customer satisfaction is a function of customer expectations. A customer whose experience matches expectations will be dissatisfied. Whose experience match expectation will be satisfied? And customer whose expectations are exceeds will be very satisfied or delighted.

Berry.L.L, Parasuram and Zeithaml (1994) argued that customer unreasonable at times; little evidence can be found of extravagant customer expectations. Meeting and exceeding customer expectations may reap several valuable benefits for the firm. Positive word- of- mouth generated from existing customers often translates into more new customers. Satisfied current customers often purchase more products more frequently and are less likely to be lost to competitions than are dissatisfied customers. Peterson and Wilson (1992) explained customer satisfaction surveys also provide several worthwhile benefits. That provides a formal means of customer feedback to the firms which may be identify existing and potential problems. Satisfaction surveys also convey the message to customers that the firm cares about



customer's well being and value customer inputs concerning organization's operations. However, the placement of customer feedback forms by some companies makes customers wonder if they really want the feedback. Other benefits are derived directly from the result of the satisfaction surveys. Satisfaction results are often used in evaluating employee performance for merit and compensation reviews and for sales management purposes. Such as the development of sales training programs. Survey results are also useful for compensation purpose to determine how the firm stacks up against the compensation. When ratings are favorable, many firms use the results in organization corporate advertising.

c) Interactive marketing and customer Satisfaction in mobile communication service sector.

The mobile communication service providers are fighting with each other to gain a great slice of the market share with a globalization effect. Therefore, they use the interactive marketing concept as strategy to build loyal with each customer, which leads to improved financial and market performance, and an increased competitive edge (Ravesteyn, 2005). Ndubisi (2006) concluded that if the mobile service organization is trustworthy, committed to service, reliable, efficient in communicating to customers and able to handle complaints well. mobile customers tend to be loyal in Malaysia. And also Ndubisi (2004) suggested that the organization should maintain the good relationship with customers to get the loyalists. Loyal customers are the greatest asset to the organization. Because they can communicate through the favorable word of mouth about the organization or products to which they feel loyal and also attract new customers for the organization which lead to the benefit of its sales, revenue and profit. Useful sources of new product ideas can be also drawn from loyalists. And also, Afsar et al. (2010) concluded that when a customer is committed to a mobile communication service a provider, his/her trust is grown up which automatically leads to the loyalty of the customer. In contrast, Das et al. (2009) found that customer relationship management deployment might not be a profitable strategy for mobile service organization, particularly in an Indian context.

But in most cases in both developed and developing countries the interactive marketing in mobile communication service sector is positively related to the customer satisfaction. In SriLanka, service sector is considered as main recipient in recent economic downturn. Better formation of strategies in service sector is the needed one especially in the recent information technology era. As a result of the continuing movement towards deregulation and the associated increase in competition, Maintaining a long term customer relationship leads to get a moderate or greater share of market and of a corporation's business (Abeysekera et

al., 2010). In an Iran context, Taleghani et al. (2011 a) suggested that mobile communication service providers should be trustworthy and committed to the service ethic, should communicate timely and accurately, and must resolve conflicts in a manner that will eliminate unnecessary loss and inconvenience to customers. However, much of the work and understanding of relationship or relational marketing to date focuses on the Western perspective, and hardly any work has been done in the Asian context (Nguyen, 2006). And also there are possible influences of personal demographical factors on interactive marketing dimensions and customer satisfaction. Studies have suggested that Women tended to be more loyal than Men; older people have more level of loyalty than younger age groups. Moreover, higher – income customers to receive better attention from mobile communication service providers in Malaysia (Ndubisi, 2005). Therefore, it is important, to empirically examine the actual impact of interactive marketing on customer satisfaction. Such understanding or finding will help to mobile communication service providers in Jaffna peninsula, SriLanka, to establish the better management of internal – external customer relationship and to achieve the higher level of satisfaction among customers.

V. CONCEPTUALIZATION

Based on the research question, the following conceptual model has been constructed. This model of interactive marketing in mobile communication organization introduces new constructs and uniquely combines them in specifying that the customer satisfaction is a function of trust, relationship commitment, quality of employees, quality of atmosphere, personalizing services, familiarity and complaint handling in the interactive marketing. In which, personal demographical factors are used as a moderating variable.

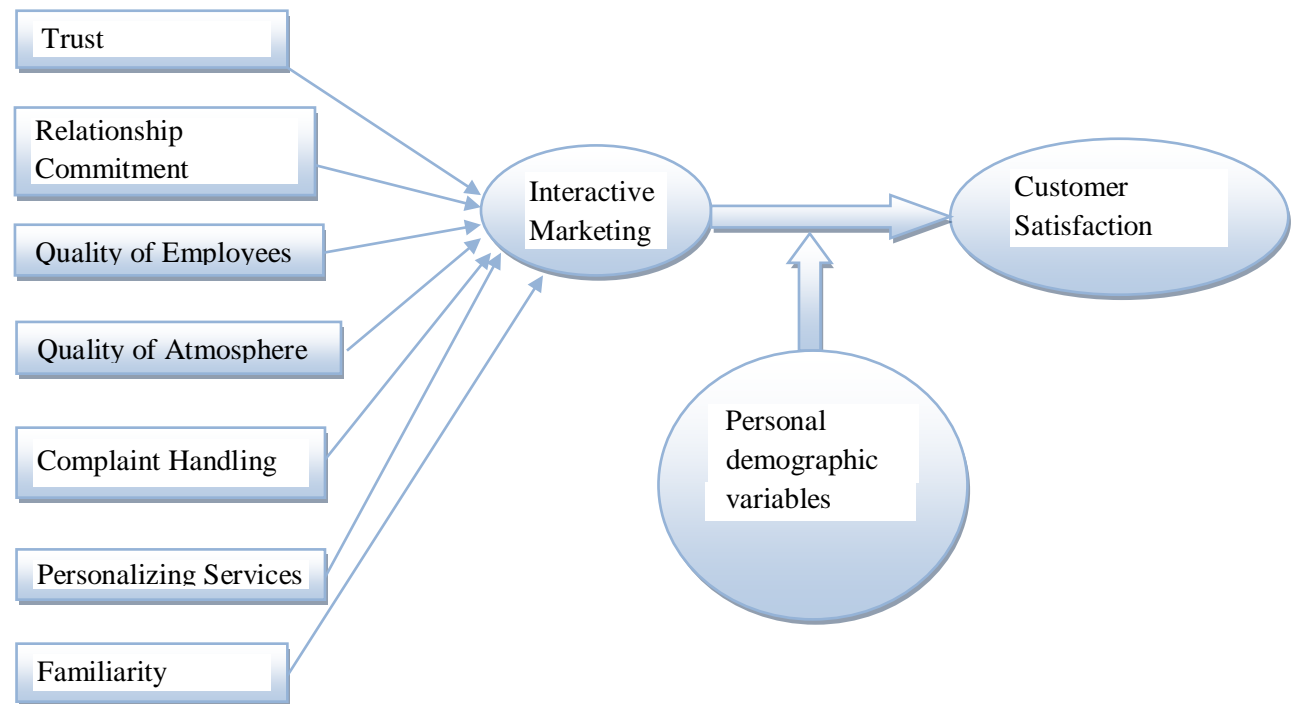


Figure 1 : Conceptualization model.

VI. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following hypotheses are formulated for the study.

H1: There is a positive relationship between interactive marketing and customer satisfaction.

H2: There is an impact of interactive marketing on customer satisfaction.

H3: There is a significant mean difference of customer satisfaction across the prepaid service and Postpaid service

H4: There is a significant mean difference of customer satisfaction across the three levels of Age group.

VII. METHODOLOGY

a) Data collection

Primary and secondary data are used for this study. Primary data are collected through the questionnaire, and secondary data are collected from texts, journals and magazines.

b) Sample

A survey instrument in the form of close-ended questionnaire was developed for the purpose of collecting the main data for the study. This study was conducted in mobile communication service providers in Jaffna peninsula. Factors such as precision, confidence, time and cost constraints were taken into consideration in selecting sample size.

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Age group	18-30	42	42%
	31-45	37	37%
	46-60	21	21%
Gender	Male	50	50%
	Female	50	50%
Occupation	Students	27	27%
	Non government staff	30	30%
	Government staff	43	43%
Service Kind	Pre paid	54	54%
	Post paid	46	46%
Service Organization	Dialog	50	50%
	Mobitel	50	50%

Table 2 : Number Of Respondents By Personal Characteristics

The study is limited to customers of mobile communication service providers in Jaffna peninsula. Convenience sampling method has been adopted to select respondents. Researchers issued one hundred and twenty (120) questionnaires to the selected customers and out of which hundred (100) only returned with their responses. The above table gives details about the distribution of questionnaires.

c) Instrument development

The instrument used in this study is composed of 3 parts .The part 1 includes a number of demographic questions such as age, gender, occupation. The second part deals with interactive marketing in the mobile communication service sector. This is measured by seven dimensions from Baron and Harris (2003), namely (1) trust (2) relationship commitment (3) quality of employees (4) quality of atmosphere (5) familiarity (6) personalizing services and (7) complaint handling which comprised eighteen items. Part 3 includes customer satisfaction in mobile communication service. This is measured by using four dimensions from Berry.L.L, Parasuram and Zeithaml namely (1) word of mouth (2) service innovation satisfaction (3) service availability and (4) competitive price which comprised twelve items. All items were measured by responses on a five-point Likert scale of agreement with statements, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

d) Data analysis method

Various statistical methods have been employed to compare the data collected from 100 respondents .these methods include (1) descriptive statistics which involves in collecting, summarizing and presenting data .this analysis is given information for the data through the frequency distribution, central tendency, and the dispersion. (2) Inferential statistics which involves in drawing conclusions about a population based only on sample data. It includes single linear regression analysis, independent sample one-way Anova (f-test), independent sample t-test (t-test). Single linear regression analysis is used to find out the significant impact of interactive marketing on customer satisfaction. And t-test and f-test are used to identify the significant mean different between the levels of customer satisfaction across the personal demographic factors.

VIII. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

a) Reliability

The internal consistency of the research instrument should be tested by reliability analysis (Ndubisi, 2006). Nunnally (as cited in Ahsan et al., 2009) suggested that the minimum alpha of 0.6 sufficed for early stage of research. The cronbach’s alpha in this study were all much higher than 0.6, the constructs were therefore deemed to have adequate reliability. The descriptive statistics of the variables and reliability estimates are shown in table No 03.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and reliability estimates.

Dimension	Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbach's alpha value
Trust	4.0425	0.41751	0.785
Relationship Commitment	4.0250	0.41056	0.725
Quality of employees	4.2600	0.54346	0.631
Quality of atmosphere	4.1750	0.50440	0.652
Personalizing services	3.9500	0.59671	0.592
Complaint handling	3.8000	0.60720	0.575
Familiarity	4.0200	0.48158	0.681
Customer satisfaction	4.2350	0.47253	0.692

b) Correlation analysis

From this analysis we can summarize that, the interactive marketing of Dialog and Mobitel has significant influence on customer satisfaction regarding their services. Because the coefficient of correlation is 0.650 at 0.01 significant level which is nears the strong relationship.

c) Regression analysis

The purpose of regression analysis is to find out the significant impact or influence of independent variable on dependent variable (Ndubisi, 2006).In this study, interactive marketing is considered as independent variable or predictor variable, and the customer satisfaction is considered as dependent variable. Table No 04 presents the results of the regression analysis.

Table 4 : Single linear regression analysis.

Multiple R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.F
0.650	0.422	0.416	0.24016	0.650	8.464	0.000

Note: Significant at 0.05 levels.

The results of the regression analysis summarized in table no 04 show that interactive marketing contributes significantly to customer satisfaction predicts 41.6 percent of the variation found. Therefore every service organizations more concentrate on developing and maintaining better relationship with their customers and any other stake holders.

d) Independent samples t-test

In this study, t-test is utilized to find out the significant mean different in customer satisfaction between prepaid and postpaid services. Table no 05 show the results of t-test.

Table 5 : Results of T-test

Independent sample T - test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
CUSTOMERS ATISFACTION	5.606	.020	2.431	98	.017	.14969	.06157	.02751	.27187
			2.342	71.738	.022	.14969	.06390	.02229	.27709

Group Statistics

Kind Of Service	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Customers Pre Paid	54	3.9830	.22972	.03126
Atisfaction Post Paid	46	3.8333	.37802	.05574

According to the above group statistics, the mean customer satisfaction score were 3.9830 (SD = 0.22972) for prepaid services and 3.8333 (SD = 0.37802) for postpaid services. The customer satisfaction scores of prepaid and postpaid were compared using an independent sample t-test. The results shows that there was a significant different between the customer satisfaction of prepaid and postpaid services. Because the significance value is less than 0.05 (Sig = 0.020).Therefore we can conclude that prepaid service customers are highly satisfied rather than postpaid service customers regarding their usage of mobile services.

e) *Independent sample one –way ANOVA test*

One- way ANOVA test can be used to find out the significant mean different in customer satisfaction among different age groups. Generally it is used when a researcher has one independent and one continues dependent variable and the independent variable specifies three or more groups for an example, age group at 18-30, 31-45 and 46-60). It was used to find out whether there is any significant mean difference of customer satisfaction across the three level of age group.

Table 6 : Results of ANOVA

Descriptive Customer satisfaction

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
18-30	42	3.8413	.37441	.05777	3.7246	3.9579	2.50	4.58
31-45	37	3.9685	.25181	.04140	3.8845	4.0524	3.42	4.83
46-60	21	3.9643	.26163	.05709	3.8452	4.0834	3.50	4.33
Total	100	3.9142	.31437	.03144	3.8518	3.9765	2.50	4.83

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Customer Satisfaction

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
3.028	2	97	.053

ANOVA
Customer Satisfaction

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.385	2	.193	1.987	.143
Within Groups	9.399	97	.097		
Total	9.784	99			

The above descriptive statistics represent that the mean customer satisfaction score were 3.8413 (SD = 0.37441) for 18-30 age group, 3.9685 (SD = 0.25181) for 31-45 age group and 3.9643 (SD = 0.26163) for 46-60 age group. The customer satisfaction scores of three level of age group were compared using an independent sample one way ANOVA. The results shows that there was no significant different between the customer satisfaction of three level of age group. Because the significance value is greater than 0.05 (Sig = 0.053). Therefore we can conclude that three level of age group people are equally satisfied regarding their usage of mobile communication services from both dialog and mobitel.

f) Hypotheses testing

NO	Hypotheses	Results	Tools
H1	There is a positive relationship between interactive marketing and customer satisfaction.	Accepted	Correlation
H2	There is an impact of interactive marketing on customer satisfaction.	Accepted	Regression
H3	There is a significant mean difference of customer satisfaction across the prepaid service and postpaid service.	Accepted	T - test
H4	There is a significant mean difference of customer satisfaction across the three levels of age group.	Rejected	ANOVA

IX. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the finding of the study, there are a few key points that can be used to conclude this research paper. It is very important that the interactive marketing in the mobile communication service providers in Jaffna peninsula contributes to the customer satisfaction. Mainly trust and relationship commitment in the interactive marketing contribute to the customer satisfaction. Therefore the mobile communication service providers should strive to earn customers trust .By giving and keeping promises,

showing concern for the security of customer transactions, providing quality services, showing respect for customers, fulfilling obligations to customers, and striving always to enhance customers' confidence. Furthermore, Effective communication predisposes customers to stay with a provider of mobile services. Satisfaction can also be nurtured by providing timely and reliable information. In contrast, customer satisfaction is not significantly contributed by the personalizing services and complaint handling in the interactive marketing in this study. But both dimensions are the important predictor variables to predict the customer satisfaction (Ndubisi, 2006; Taleghani et al., 2011). At the same time mean value of both dimensions are in a low level compare with the mean value of trust and relationship commitment dimensions in this study. Therefore, the service providers should have proper strategy to handle the complaint, by trying to avoid potential conflict, trying to solve manifest conflicts before they create problems and holding the ability to openly discuss solutions when problems arise. Furthermore, the commitment is another critical factor to building the customer satisfaction and loyalty. So that service providers should concentrate on customer commitment through offering the personalized and flexible services. Lastly, in the moderating effect of personal demographic variables, service providers should concern the age wise segmentation. Persons who are 18-30 years old have lowest level of customer satisfaction. Lot of expectations in the mobile service technological aspects might be the reason for the least level of satisfaction among customers who are 18-30 years old. Therefore the service providers should provide innovative and enthusiastic services to especially the persons who are 18-30 years old. In today's technologically advanced world and due to arrival of internet, it's much more difficult to retain a Customer. Several strategies have been attempted to retain customers (Afsar et al., 2010). Nguyen, (2006) recommended the strategies to develop the capability of interactive marketing in the mobile communication service sector especially in the Asian context.

1. Strategy development: It is imperative to develop an overall approach to managing customers. There is a need to link back to the overall corporate and marketing strategy of the company.
2. Customer information strategy (CRM): There is a

need for detailed data identification, collection, analysis and interpretation of customer information to enable the detailed strategy to be implemented with confidence in the mobile communication service sector.

3. Reduce the customer list: There is a need to differentiate customers by value which will allow a firm to priorities its marketing efforts, allocating more resources to high value customers, while minimizing the resources applied to low value customers.
4. Planning and internal marketing: There is a need to draw together all the analyses of the different departments to produce a case for changing the way to manage customers plus the associated investment and profit implications, and developing a project plan to manage and monitor.
5. Technology: it can be used to speed up the routine aspects of business, freeing up people for more complex issues and increasing their job satisfaction. Consumers are happy because of the increased speed of response and the capability to access information as required.

X. LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research focuses on mobile communication services in one particular district of the country; therefore further research in other sectors may be necessary before generalization can be made on the entire service industry. For the purpose of practicability and manageability, Convenience sampling method has been adopted to select respondents. Factors such as precision, confidence, time and cost constraints were taken into consideration in selecting sample size. Furthermore, this research mainly conducted based on the data collection, through the questionnaire. The other data collection methods had not been considered. As a result they may not be 100% accurate. In this study, interactive marketing contributes significantly to customer satisfaction and predicts 41.6 percent of the variation found. Remaining 58.4 percent of the variation should be found. Due to that, an important future research direction is to find out the key factors to determine the interactive marketing in the mobile communication sector in Jaffna peninsula through the factor analysis. Furthermore, interactive marketing research may include other less widely acknowledged interactive marketing variables, for example, friendship, recognition, thoughtfulness, understanding, benevolence, competence, and time to listen. Impact of the interactive marketing underpinnings can be investigated on other dependent variables such as customer retention, loyalty, market share, profitability and firm performance.

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