



CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE CONSUMER SATISFACTION WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE USE OF CREOLLA DESIGNS

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ABSTRACT

This paper emphasis on judging the customer satisfaction level of the customer using the product and services of a fashion house based in the UAE. This research will enable the fashion industries to develop, plan and improve their customer service with an economical and environmental friendly variables. Certain recommendations were provided in this research paper which will be beneficial to the fashion industries.

INTRODUCTION

Fashion industry is a multibillion-dollar global enterprise devoted to the business of making and selling clothes. The fashion industry is a product of the modern age. Some observers distinguish between the fashion industry (which makes “high fashion”) and the apparel industry (which makes ordinary clothes or “varied fashion designs”), Fashion is nothing but a style or a set of styles of clothing and accessories worn at any given time by a set of people. There could be differences between the expensive designer fashions shown on the runways of Paris or New York and the mass-produced sportswear and street styles sold in malls and markets around the globe. Sometimes the broader term “fashion industries” is used to refer to myriad industries and services that employ millions of people internationally.

Creolla, the ladies fashion wear designing company was established in 1995 in Ras Al Khaimah. The showroom and workshop are located at a strategic place, to be easily accessible to the elite customers while taking care of their privacy. Initially, it started with a division producing readymade dresses related to evening/party wears. Soon, developed to produce haute-couture dresses for special occasions like henna & weddings. The company also produces high class casual wears for women designed, hand embroidered & tailored to individual requirements.

By the beginning of 1996, the company opened its showrooms in Sharjah, Dubai and Abudhabi as well as at Al Hamra fort hotel in Ras al Khaimah as the results were very encouraging. At Creolla, the dresses are produced using the best of European fabrics and laces combined with authentic hand embroidery designs. Every piece is masterminded by expert designers trained in Paris and undergoes stringent quality control measures with respect to finish and attention to every detail which gives the company an edge over the competitors and sheer satisfaction to the customers. By far, Creolla is considered to be iconic in terms of trendsetting in new fashions in the emirate.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

This study is conducted to determine the customer satisfaction level of the customer using the products and services of Creolla Designs. The purpose of my research is to understand, how Creolla Design develops, plan and implement useful measures to improve customer service that are result oriented and economically viable to the customer considering corporate social responsibility and environmental friendliness.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

- The information was mostly given by the company’s Managers about the said company.
- The Sample size for this study was 100 customers out of which only 72 customers responded while some of the respondents were not responding at all.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this project is,

- To study the customer preference in choosing Creolla Design



- To study how to retain the existing customers
- To study the factors that are affecting the choice of customers in choosing Creolla design
- To increase the awareness level among the customer about Creolla Design
- To know if show room display could drive the sales.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this section, the theoretical construct is based on the theory of adopting marketing tools, quality and customer value, customer satisfaction and at the end the basic theory of retail marketing was emphasized.. The marketing mix is an essential tool for increasing sales in a company and this research emphasized on the various Ps namely product, place and process. Customers are the most important factor to please and a customer satisfaction survey is carried to find out their opinions on Creolla. Customer value and customer satisfaction theory explain how to create a good relationship with a customer and why it is so essential to find loyal customers and also to retain the old ones. The reason why the study includes a theory of retail business is that Creolla Store belongs to a retail business sector, so the aim was to link customer satisfaction to a retail business.

The four Ps are explained as under

Product

The product is the most important aspect of the marketing tools and mix. The product could be either goods or services. It could also have the tangible and intangible characteristics. Tangible benefits include benefits, which can be measured in terms of quantitative terms and intangibility could be measured in terms of qualitative terms

Price

Price is an important facet of the product offering. It is always better to set a standard price rather than a high price. It is important to observe that the price should be kept reasonable and also it should cover the cost of the product.

Promotion

Promotion enables the company to provide a briefing of the product and services being offered to the customers. It builds up awareness and also assures good quality product and service to the customers.

Place

Place emphasizes on the distribution of the product and the point of sale which is offered for the customers. There are three main distribution channels to choose from:-

Traditional - selling the product to wholesalers who will then sell the product on to retail outlets.

Modern - producers selling the product directly to the retail outlet.

Direct - the producer selling directly to the consumer such as door-to-door sales or over the Internet

SERVICE MARKETING MIX

The following marketing mix related to the service variables:-

People

An essential ingredient to any service provision is the use of appropriate staff and people. Recruiting the correct staff members and training them appropriately in the delivery of their service is essential if the organization want to obtain a form of competitive edge. Consumers make suitable perceptions and deliver appropriate perceptions of the service based on the employees they interact with. Staff should have the appropriate interpersonal skills, aptitude, and service knowledge to provide the service that consumers are paying for. Creating and delivering product elements to customers require the design and implementation of good process. A process is the list of actions in the service performance.

Physical Evidence

Physical evidence is the elements of the service mix which allows the consumer again to make a judgment on the organization. It is an essential ingredient of the marketing mix; consumers will make perceptions based on their sight of the service actions, which will have an effect on the organization's perceptual plan of the service.

Service

A service is an act or performance offered by one person to another person. Although the process may be tied to a physical product aspect, the performance is mostly transitory, often intangible in nature, and does not normally result in ownership of any of the factors of production. A service is also an economic activity that creates value and provides benefits for customers at specific times and places by bringing about a required change in, or on behalf of the recipient of the services.

Customer Value

Marketing-orientated companies attempt to create customer value in order to attract and retain customers. Their aim is to deliver superior value to their target customers. Getting new customers and retaining old customers could involve lots of challenges. Customers often face a bewildering array of products and services from which to choose.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a measure of how an organization's total product performs in relation to set of customer's expectations. According to Philip Kotler, "If a product matches expectation, the consumer is satisfied; if it exceeds them, the consumer is highly satisfied; if it falls short, the consumer is dissatisfied". Most of the companies make a huge mistake, when they are not paying enough attention to their customer satisfaction. Keeping customers satisfied is the best competitive advantage against competitors. Customers are loyal, prepared to pay more and are excellent external marketers.

The major reasons for developing long-term relationships with customers are:

- Acquiring new customers can cost 5 to 10 times more than the costs involved in satisfying and retaining current customers.
- Loyal customers tend to spend more and cost less to serve.
- Satisfied customers are likely to recommend your products and services.

Exceeding the value offered by competitors is the key to marketing success. Consumers decide upon purchases on the judgments about the values offered by suppliers. The customer satisfaction depends upon its perceived performance compared to the buyer's expectations. Customer satisfaction occurs when perceived performance matches or exceeds expectations. Perceptions and expectations are derived through post-buying, experiences, and discussions with other people, and suppliers marketing activities. Companies need to avoid the mistake of setting customer expectations too high through exaggerated promotional claims since this can lead to dissatisfaction if performance falls short of expectations. (David Jobber, 1995) Customer satisfaction research is focused on company's current customers to clear up functionality in proportion to customer's expectations. Customer may purchase product or services, because there is no better service available, or he / she doesn't know any other alternatives. In this kind of case, customer is not committed to a company or a product, but moves over to another alternative as soon as it is available. Research measures total customer satisfaction and also divisions of it for e.g. products, price, quality, customer service etc. Research is reliable, repeated often, results are analyzed and problematic points are solved. The average business loses 10-30 per cent of its customers each year, but they often don't know which customers they have lost, when they were lost, why they were lost, or how much sales revenue and profit this customer decay has cost them. (Nigel Hill, 1996) Dissatisfaction is clearly the fundamental reason for customer decay, but what causes customer dissatisfaction has to be researched.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of this paper was to gather the opinion of Creolla's customers on various aspects such as customer service, products, prices etc. The customer satisfaction research was implemented by using quantitative research. The questionnaires were handed out to the customers in the stores. The questionnaire included a mixture of structured and open questions. This enabled the customer to write their open opinions and improvement suggestions down. The survey aimed to find out customers' general opinion about the company and its product and services. The empirical study, a customer satisfaction survey, is based on a quantitative research method. It

A sample is a subset of the population that should represent the entire group. Sampling is selecting a portion of the population, which represents the whole population. The strategy is the plan you set forth to be sure that the sample you use in your research study represents the population from which you drew your sample. Validity means that customer satisfaction research measures just those factors that are connected to the satisfaction, which is wanted to measure with the research. "Reliability refers to the stability of the measure." (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2002). This basically means that, when the customer satisfaction research is repeated, the results are practically similar to the previously implemented research.

This was the first customer satisfaction survey made in the Creolla Store in Ras al Khaimah, so there is no previous example at how satisfied customers have been before. This was a good start and it was important to continue this measurement. The survey questionnaires were handed over to customers for 10 days. The number of returned questionnaires from Creolla Designs was higher than expected. The questionnaire scale was also confusing for some customers and there were some misunderstanding on how to fill the sheet. Most of the answers belong to main customer group (30-39year old) and also most of them were members of Creolla. This fact clarifies that the answers are from the right customer group and can be consider as reliable.

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Data Analysis

The research that was conducted in Nov 2013 and was answered by the customers of Creolla Design. The questionnaires were handed out in the Creolla store and as emails to its existing customers and members. 72 customers answered the survey.

The Length of the Customer Ship

It is interesting to see that the answered customers are mostly new customers. Most of the responds came from the customers who have been customers for one to two years.

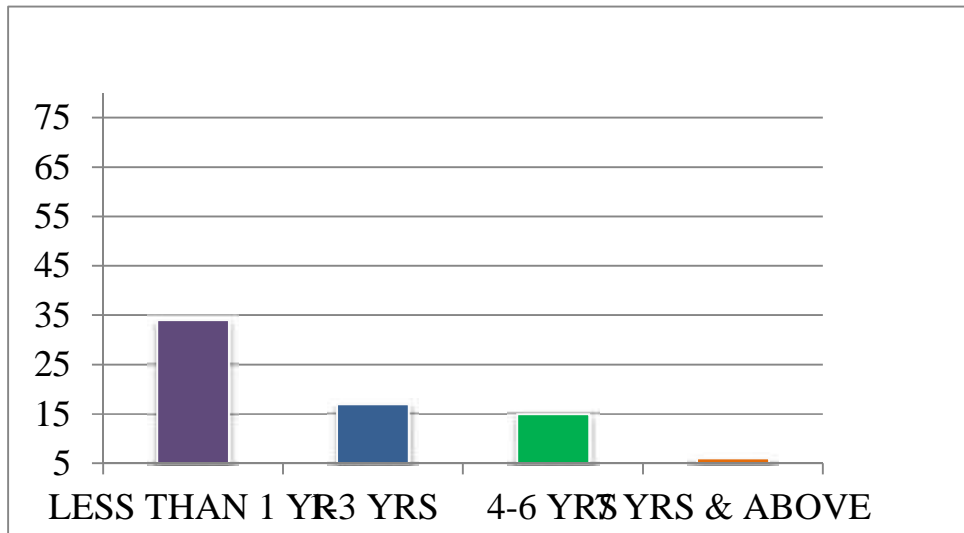


Figure 7: The Length of the Customer ship

4.3 The Age of the Customers

The question about age was asked to understand the customer. As it was expected the largest age groups were 30-39 and 40-49. It is very important to know this when purchasing collections. This age group can afford to buy more expensive goods and respect good quality. Also young people 20-29 year olds, are an important customer group. They are very potential customers. Young people spend money on them and are interested in the fashion.

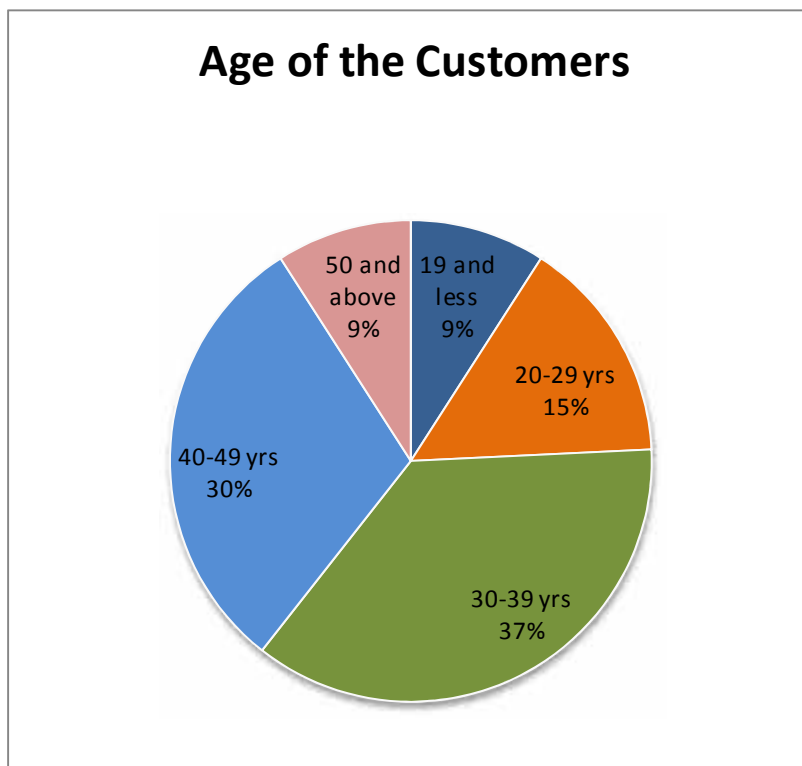


Figure 8. Age of the Customers

CREOLLA STORE

The Style of the Store

Most of the respondents found stores attractive and stylish. The stores have been built according the Creolla concept, but maintaining the style is sometimes challenging. A little bit of a confrontation can be observed, so all the respondents are not fully satisfied with the appearance of the stores.

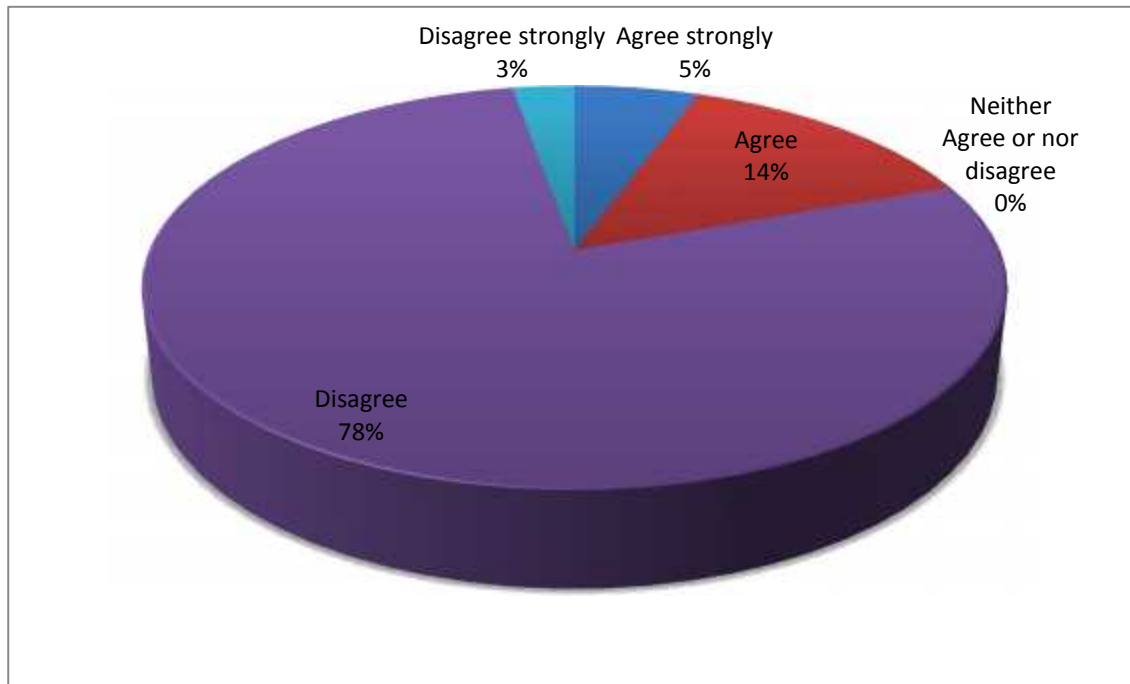


Figure 10: The Style of the Store

Image

According to the study, Creolla Store in the metropolitan area has managed quite well. A slight difference of opinion also exists, but it just helps to remember that improvement must be done all the time.

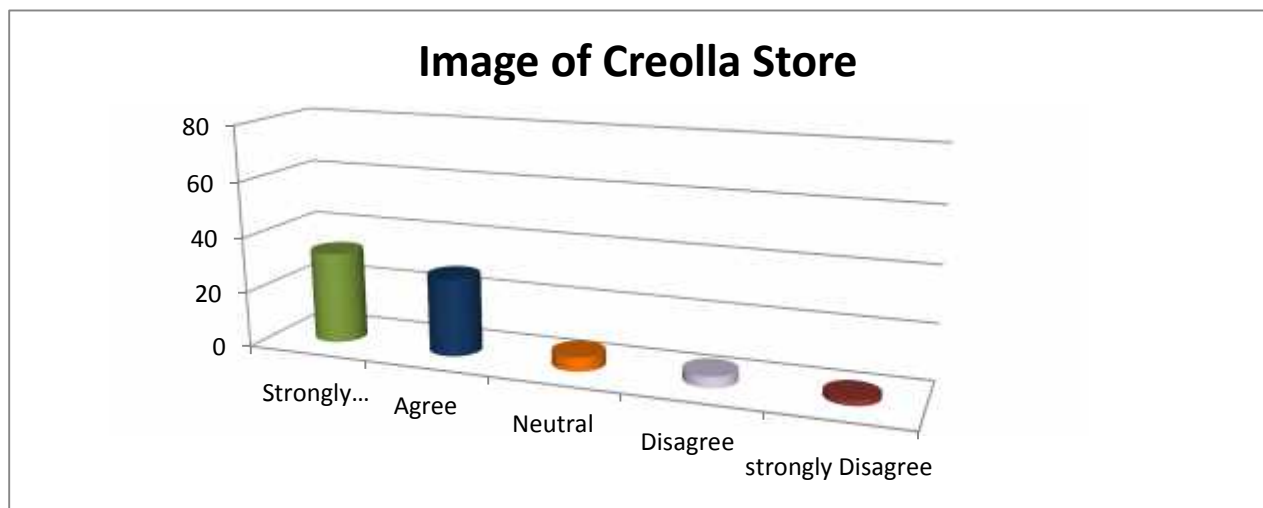


Figure 11. The image of the Store

Cleanliness

Cleanliness important to everyone and it is appropriate that the store is tidy and clean. Clothing dust spreads and regular cleaning is mandatory. According to the survey respondents find stores clean and tidy.

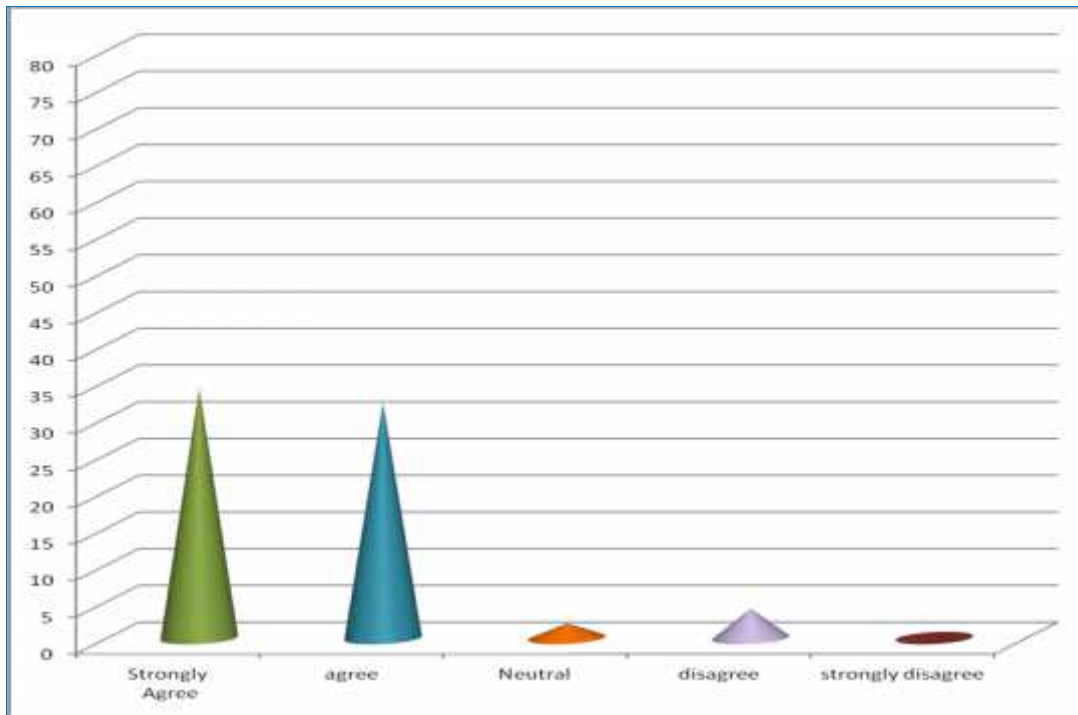


Fig 12. Cleanliness of the store

Attractiveness of the Windows

Windows are an extremely important way to wake customer's interest in entering the store. According to the results window decorations have been quite successful. Some disagreements were also found, so improvements must be made all the time. Maybe professional styles might be a good idea.

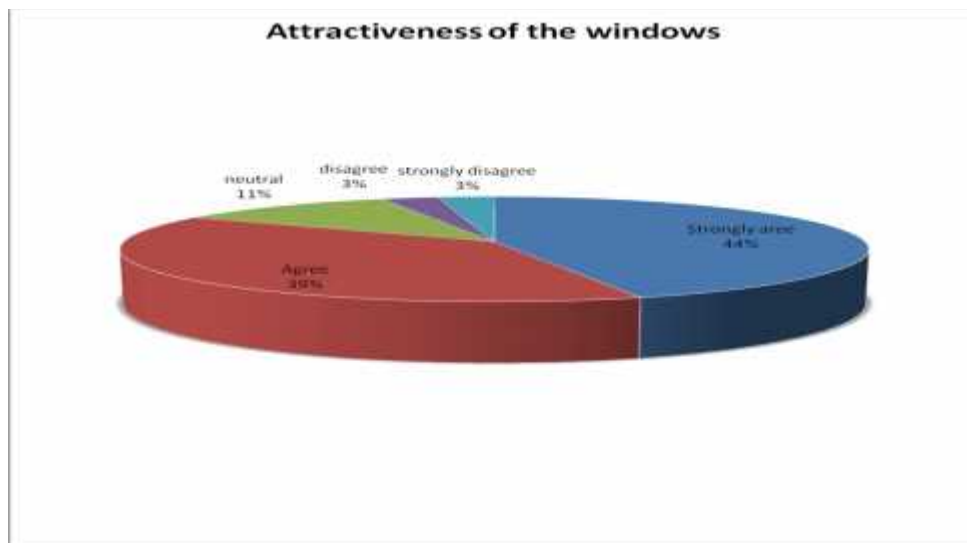


Fig 13. Attractiveness of the windows

Location of the Store

Store is located middle of the city of Ras al Khaimah or near the busy business location like Nakheel. There are excellent transportation connections to all of the places. The results of the questionnaire also show that the location of the store is good and functional.



Fig 14. Location of the store

PRODUCTS

Price versus Quality

Customers have high expectations of the products. The price is quite high, so the quality should be good. Creolla is known for high quality products and it should fulfill this image. As shown in the diagram, the customers are quite happy with the price-quality ratio. There is also some dissatisfaction to be noted, which might be the influence of globalization.

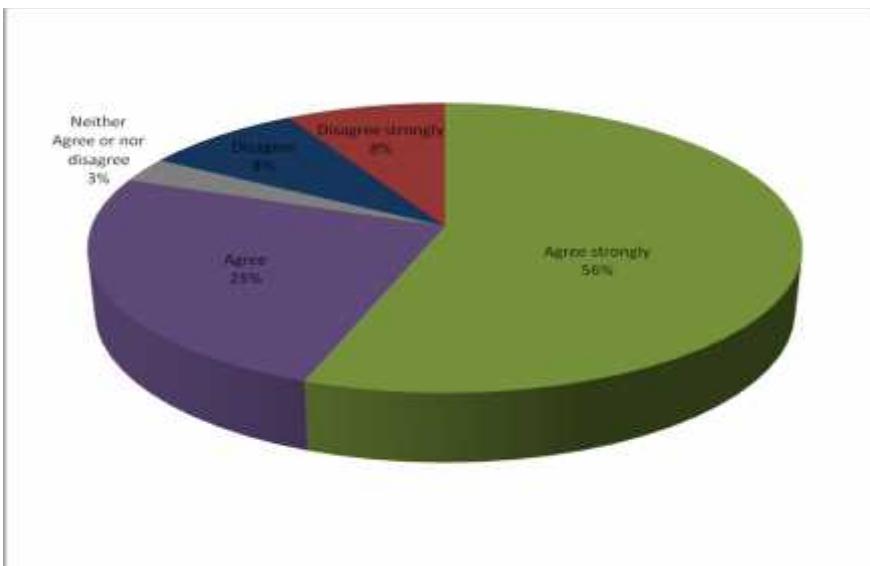


Fig 15. Price of the products

Service

Service expertise is very important for business to be successful. Products can be bought also elsewhere, but if the customer feels important and will get high quality customer service, he will also return to the store. The study result is brilliant. Expertise is very good. A slight improvement must be made, but these need to be made in all areas, so that store will keep up with the competition.

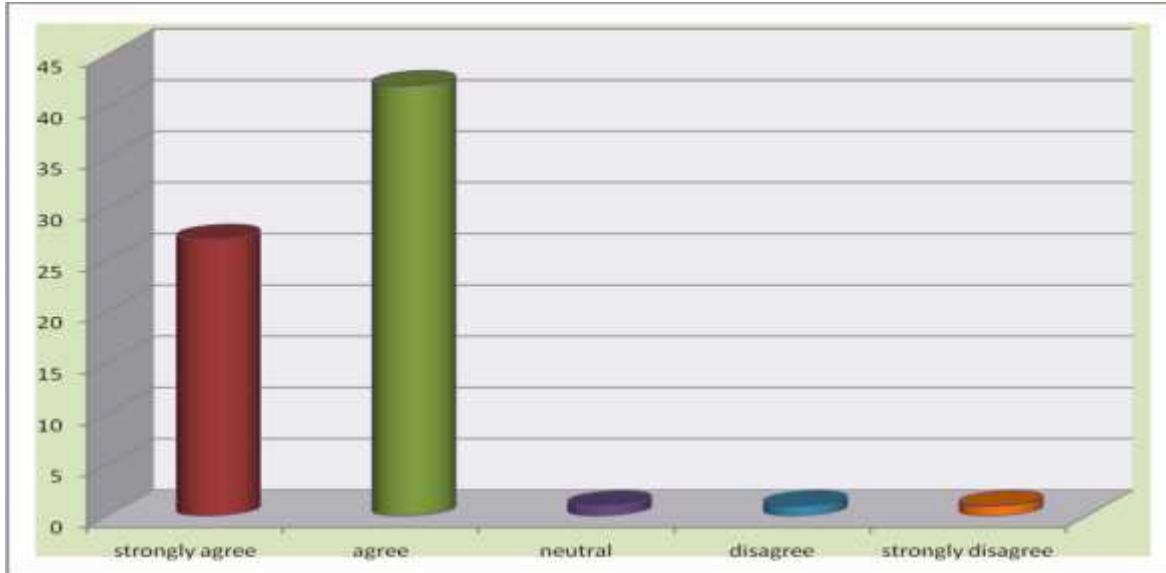


Fig 17. Service of Creolla

Opening Hours

Store is open in according to the rules by the management. Some of the respondents held the view that the stores would not have to be open until 21.00. Most of the respondents were indeed very satisfied with the changes in opening hours.

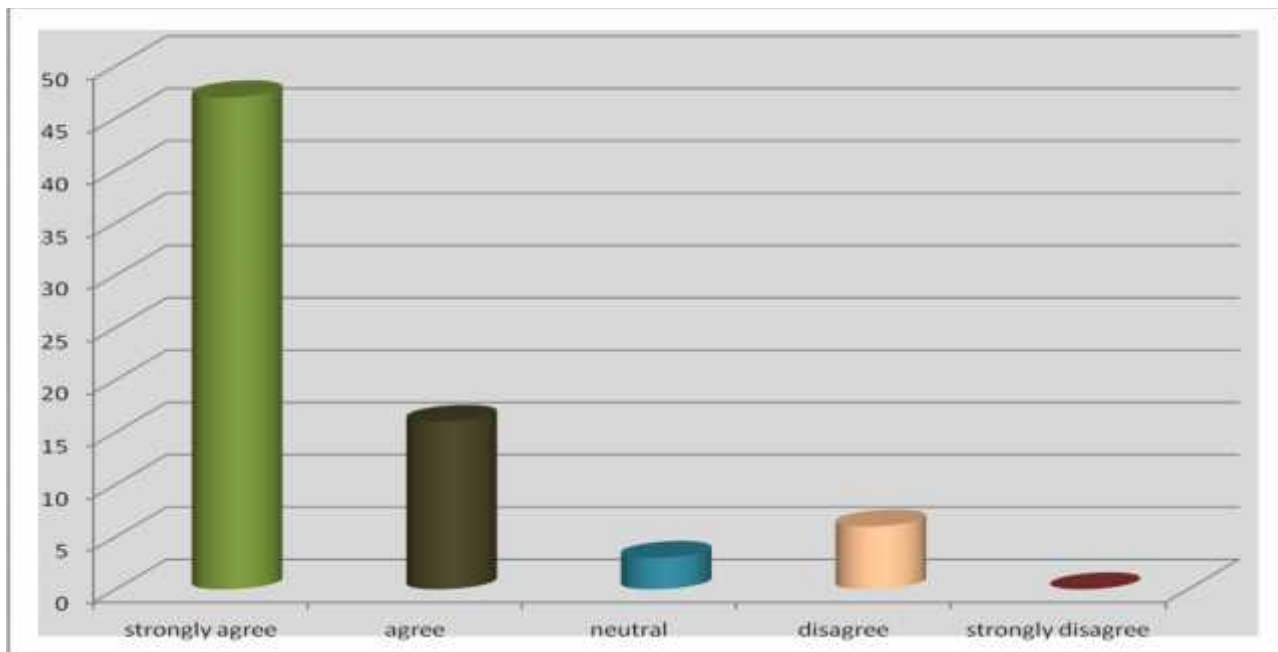


Fig 18. Open hours of the store

Finally, the respondents were given a chance to comment freely and the following remarks and suggestions were given:

- Very less selection for teenagers
- Fitting room's carpet is torn
- A lot of light bulbs burnt
- Too dark
- Nice atmosphere, lovely to visit here
- Personal service, thank you!

FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Customer satisfaction is the basis for any company to operate and make profit. Service quality creates customer satisfaction, and the customers define quality. The customer satisfaction surveys have to take place on continuous basis, and the results have to be put into practice in the company's strategies and operations

FINDINGS

1. A sample size of 100 was selected and 72 were the respondents.
2. Majority of the respondents were new customers and old customers were very few.
3. Largest groups were of age 30-49 years, who spent more on clothes
4. More than half of the customers belonged to Creolla, by taking membership with it.
5. Most respondents found store not attractive and stylish
6. With a slight difference in the satisfaction level, Creolla managed to have a good image
7. The survey showed that respondents found the store clean and tidy.
8. Results showed that the window decorations have been quiet successful though some disagreement were also found.
9. Questionnaire result also show that the location of the store is good and functional
10. The respondents are mostly satisfied and customers are finding the fashionable styles they are looking for. But some disagreement was also seen as the models in the catalogue were not always available in the store.
11. The Service Expertise is very good.
12. Most of the customers were satisfied with the timings of the Creolla.
13. Some respondents have given their suggestions separately.
14. The customers are quite happy with the price- quality ratio, even though the price is quite high. But the quality of the clothes was very good.
15. From personal interview with the staff in Creolla, it was found that no clothes were displayed for men. But they were getting orders from schools and companies like Al Hamra groups for uniform for the children and staff respectively.
16. Most customers were residing in Old Ras al Khiamah area because many people are still not aware of Creolla , though it exists since two decades.
17. They did not have a website, which was very usefull in getting many new customers as the new generation mostly prefers online information and shopping.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

This survey was the first of its kind in Creolla and it was found very useful in modifying the customer service methods. It would be very useful if customer satisfactions surveys are conducted in Creolla in the coming years. The Creolla Designs had quite a good image in the market and that is the unique reason that it still exists in the 20th year too. A determined and sincere group of employees are the backbone of Creolla and the reason behind its growth.

The following are the recommendations for the Creolla Design firm

- ✚ New and improved measures are to taken to be retaining the old customers.
- ✚ As young people of 20-29 year old are the potential customer group who look for the modern fashions, it is essential to give them due importance.
- ✚ The appearance of the store could be modified and maintenance need to done in its time
- ✚ Though Creolla managed to have quiet good image, improvement must be done, all the time.
- ✚ Clothing dust spreads and regular cleaning is mandatory.
- ✚ Professional stylish windows might be a good idea
- ✚ Creolla catalogue could be modified or new fashions could be introduced as globalizations draws away its customers to another place
- ✚ A slight improvement must be made in all the areas of customer service, so that store keeps up with the competition.
- ✚ Hosting a website for Creolla could be very good as many people prefer online shopping.
- ✚ Displaying designs and models for young people and non-Emiratis would bring more sales and fame, as there are not many apparel stores in that area and also there are many expats living in that area
- ✚ A plan to open a separate section for males, in the future, will be very fruitful.

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