

Marketing Strategies to Increase the Clientele in Shipping Industry

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Abstract

The port facility will be expanded to a greater deal in order meet the growing world demands for commercial purposes. DP World is constructing a quay which will be extended and it will increase the overall capacity of the regional port. With the boom in maritime industry and new technology improvements in the shipping services sector, machinery repair services have become an attractive platform for many service companies in the UAE region. Competitive services along with less lead time and high quality is now one of the key factors that can lead to better business prospects. However, there seems to be more factors that influence the ship owners operating in Gulf waters. The fast development of shipping industry has made it feasible for many business individuals to set up their own service companies thereby increasing the competition. It is highly recommended to understand the needs of our customers and partners in the maritime sector. Thus, we will be able to guide our team to provide the best solutions that will serve the maritime sector in the UAE. The focus of this study is on understanding the factors that could help to increase the clientele and also to identify the key factors for customer satisfaction and retention.

Keywords: Global Islamic Maritime Economy • Services • Profits

Introduction

Maritime industry profile

Dubai is seen as one of the most luxurious destinations in the world. The land of fast cars, soaring skyscrapers, palaces and all-things sophisticated. It is indeed fascinating at face value, but what lies behind all this charm is a captivating story on its own. The fine establishments we see are built on the back of some tremendously working industries, one such industry is the Maritime Industry. It is seen as the spine of Dubai's future and further development. Boasting the largest port in the MENA region, and other closely integrated sea and air ports, it is an obvious statement that it hosts much of the trade in and around the area. Thus, this industry is valuable not just to the local economy, but also various other economies in the world. With the highly anticipated Expo 2020 coming up and the boom of online trade, the Maritime industry is expected to play a critical role in the success or failure of the exhibition and also in matching or exceeding the expected standard of customer satisfaction that has been set by top maritime industries over time [1]. The UAE has achieved its trademark as one of the major strategic locations for maritime trading activities over the years. Today, UAE has a very vast globalized vision, particularly Dubai developing strategies to bridge the gap for trading between east and west. Dubai has reached a long distance, in fact even beyond the old maritime trade partners and being a multi-national region, has helped the effective transaction of goods for import/export activities spreading across GCC, MENA and rest of the world.

UAE Marine history: With the boom in maritime industry and new technology improvements in the shipping services sector, machinery repair services have become an attractive platform for many service companies in the UAE region. Competitive services along with less lead time and high quality is now one of the key factors that can lead to better business prospects. To do that, it is imperative to create a loyal customer base by appealing to them in such a way that customer satisfaction is enhanced and exceeds expectations. This is why customer satisfaction is so important in this industry. This research seeks to provide information regarding

the maritime industry, the importance of customer satisfaction within the industry keeping Expo 2020 in mind and the upcoming trends that will run the industry in the coming years.

Current industry situation: Shipping industry is rapidly growing and UAE serves to be a strategic hub for shipping industry. Many businesses are realizing that maintaining a strong presence in the region is indispensable in today's global economy. As the oil price steadily inclines, the shipping charters are increasing and in turn that leads to new projects in the region. Considering the upward movement of projects, ship owners are planning to service all their machineries up to date as per surveyor instructions. Competition is getting stronger day after the other, hence the service companies are trying to establish strong presence by increasing their workforce, using new technologies and implementing new strategies. It is a statement of no surprise that an industry of such high magnitude only aspires to grow even further as \$65 billion was invested in the maritime sector in 2018, according to local publishers Gulf News. With an incredible 7% contribution to GDP, the industry seems to be an integral part of UAE's economy, and is expected to grow at around the same rate in the coming years.

Dubai is heavily inspired by Singapore's maritime industry model and aims at perfecting it, and the fact that Dubai has a highly competitive wage rate for laborers in comparison to countries like Singapore, gives Dubai an additional potency to increase profitability in their maritime industry. UAE is a nation that plans well ahead before executing any operation, which is why they have such a mighty success rate when it comes to developmental and infrastructural projects. It gives them time to prepare and perfectly carry out the plans as well as time to remove any hindrances along the way. Dubai has a Maritime 2030 vision, through which it aims at optimizing the maritime industry even further and attempting to make it an unfathomable force. Each industry aims at growth and sustainability, whilst Dubai has spent the previous few years growing the industry into a sublime force; it aims at spending the next few years trying to undertake the sustainability side of things. The various goals highlighting Maritime Vision 2030 include,

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- Instituting Dubai as a world class Global Islamic Maritime Economy and fortifying Islamic finance as a part of the trade that takes place at the various ports.

- Not just keeping up with, but trying to go ahead of time in terms of Infrastructure efficiency, enhancing safety of labor, quality of underlying services and setting a new standard for top of the range facilities.

- Chunking up the capacities of storage and transportation through expansion and encouraging and attracting a higher number of passengers and also freight distribution.

- Keeping up with Dubai's goal to become a smart city, by inculcating smart activities and procedures in the Maritime industry by focusing on and launching online service provision for customer allocation and satisfaction.

- Promoting the education and knowledge sharing on logistic processes and the Maritime Industry trying to mould young talent by offering administrative degrees to further enhance the local maritime sector.

- Making Dubai's maritime industry a Green Industry which will lead by example on the global front by improving environmental safety standards and leaning towards the newest and most advanced sustainable maritime activities.

To kick start the aforementioned plans, Dubai has also proposed a bill in negotiation with various stakeholders. The New Maritime Bill will allow citizens 100% ownership to citizens who desire to procure vessel companies. It is safe to say that the Maritime Industry in Dubai is moving towards even higher success and prosperity with the monumental plans it has kept in place. Today, the maritime industry very important as the residents are more focused on holding the heritage of the region. DP world has started up a new project which is named as "dreams of the sea" and it will help to furthermore operate marine terminals globally.

Problem statement

The primary focus for the year 2018 is to increase the clientele and ensure a steady flow of business activities every month which in fact will lead to more business volumes and increase in profits and how to cope up with technological advancements. In the process of doing so it is essential to develop a robust marketing strategy which will help to increase the service orders for the year 2018. An increase in clientele will in fact help the division to grow more profitably for the upcoming years thereby ensuring a better cash flow and business opportunities.

Materials and Methods

Customer satisfaction has been identified as a very important variable in the maritime industry. It refers to the level of need fulfillment of a customer following product consumption or service redemption. Psychologically, the higher the level of a customer's perceived satisfaction, the higher the chances are of product/brand loyalty. (Perception can play a huge role) (Figure 1). All the managers in companies, all the companies in industries and all the industries in the world prioritize customer loyalty and retention and to make those possible, services need to be rendered at a really high standard and the demands of customers within the whole maritime spectrum become more and more complex each day. Consumers are most sensitive to price, and a lot of shipping orders are either made or cancelled based on the shipping price. Sometimes, the shipping cost can outweigh the product cost or be of a significant amount and using the simple law of demand, anything that adds to the product price reduces the demand. In many cases, there is a minimum order amount to be placed in order to process the order, and a report suggests that 70% people have admitted to adding items in their cart that they weren't planning on purchasing just to reach the minimum order amount. Speaking of customer satisfaction and numbers, 67% customers feel like they require more shipping options than the ones that are already available. A not so surprising statistic says that 76% customers actually expect free shipping on their orders. According to a survey, 58% customers have revealed that free or discounted delivery is

the top feature that induces them to place orders and 56% customers stop midway through an order. Many companies take control of both production and shipping of their products, and they use a strategy wherein they price the products at a premium and provide free shipping but the premium amounts are enough to cover the shipping costs. This attracts consumers psychologically. Independent shipping companies find it really troublesome to compete with that strategy [2].

Industry statistics

The UAE has been a strategic hub for marine operations and several vessels arrive and depart from UAE every day. However, Jebel Ali port maintains a data base and a small review of the ocean vessels operated in gulf waters (2014-2016) is done with the statistical representation given below (Table 1).

As it can be seen, there are plenty of cargo vessels and passenger vessels coming in and around gulf waters. The frequency of container vessels has slightly decreased due to the decline in oil price levels and it has affected the economy to a little extent. The passenger vessels have come up in the year 2015 and the amount of RORO vessels has also increased. However, there has been a steady arrival of vessels and the data shows that the market is in fact a promising one for the service companies. Considering the above factors, there are immense number of opportunities to be tapped on. However, considering the number of service/repair providers rising in the region, Organization needs to be a class higher in delivering the services to its clients and in turn, enjoy a loyal clientele in the upcoming years of business. This has been a challenge to conquer and the research aims to examine the customer pain points and analyse the factors determining the interests of customers thereby ensuring customer satisfaction and an improvement in clientele. As part of the research process, the actual opinions by the respondents in the UAE is analysed in order to know the factors that might influence them to source the service works to any maritime company.

Global scenario

Gone are the days when countries could claim self-sufficiency. In today's age, every country produces what they specialize in and what is most cost beneficial to them. Everything else that is needed is obtained through maritime trade. According to the United Nations, the maritime industry which is 'the spine of the global economy' enables the even spreading and allocation of resources throughout the world. Also, maritime trade constantly helps developing countries in their progress and helps reducing the global economic divide. Billions of people are employed in this industry and many families are fed and provided shelter due to this industry. It is an industry that has helped millions of people from the nightmare that is being below the poverty line. The industry helps in the transport of much needed goods, food and also medicines which enables standardization of healthcare industries across the globe. If the maritime industry were to be summarized in one word to the whole word, it would be 'indispensable'.

UAE scenario

Industry magnitude: As mentioned earlier, Dubai is home to the largest port in the MENA region and when you combine that with Dubai's strategic location and the fact that it is the busiest transit in the world, you come across some jaw dropping numbers. As of 2018, this sector has created 76,200 jobs in Dubai alone, this meant 3.3% of Dubai's population (including those outside of the labor force) at that point of time. 75% of these jobs were directly connected with engineering, port jobs and shipping accounting. These numbers have only increased in the last 4 years and are expected to keep growing as time passes and the industry tries to evolve. Owing to the multiple sea ports, airports and free-zones, Dubai's Maritime industry is said to be worth about a staggering \$66 billion. The annual economic value addition is said to be about \$7.3 billion, which takes up about 7% of the economy's GDP. This is almost twice as much as it used to be in 2015. Which is the fourth highest maritime contribution to a nation's GDP in the world only behind Norway, Singapore and Hong Kong (Table 2).



Figure 1. Perception can play a huge role.

Table 1. These are the trading ports and zones in Dubai.

Location	Dubai Airport Free Zone	Al Quoz	Al Qusais	Ras Al Khor	JAFZA	Jebel Ali Industrial Area	Dubai Industrial Park	Dubai Investment Park	Dubai South	Dubai Maritime City
Established	1996	1973	1975	1976	1985	1995	2004	1997	2006	2007
Status	Free Zone	Non Free Zone	Free Zone	Non Free Zone	Free Zone	Non Free Zone	Non Free Zone	Non Free Zone	Non Free Zone/Free Zone	Non Free Zone
Total area (sq km)	0.7	27	8	12	56	22	32	23	146	2.3
Time to airport	Located next to DXB	25 minutes to DXB	15 minutes to DXB	18 minutes to DXB	25 minutes to DWC	15 minutes to DWC	20 minutes to DWC	15 minutes to DWC	Located next to DWC	20 minutes to DXB

Table 2. There are plenty of cargo vessels and passenger vessels coming in & around gulf waters.

Vessel Type	2016	2015	2014
Containers Vessels	5,767	6,090	6,215
General Cargo Vessels	1,397	813	934
RORO Vessels	642	713	649
Passengers	207	194	195
Other	13,855	14,714	14,747
Total	21,868	22,524	22,740

Source: Dubai Ports World

Out of these ports, there is one particular port that stands out distinctly and that is the Jebel Ali port. It is the most generative port in the world. With a profit rate of almost 12%, and expansion and introduction of new terminals, this port has cemented its significance to Dubai and the rest of the world. In terms of size, the port's capacity is 18.1 Million Twenty-foot Equivalent Units (TEU). Apart from this the various free zones have an immense part to play as they attract the private sector through lucrative features such as full ownership, tax exemption, storage and office spaces and the facilities that come with such features. In the year 1972, the great Port Rashid had started their operations for commercial shipping. The revenue earned through oil became a financial source for building Port Rashid. This turned out to be one of the best economic zones in UAE. The cargo movements increased rapidly and it was permitted to do the cargo shipments via containers through Port Rashid. Meantime, more handling equipment's and storage facilities were opened up for trade. Over the years, the complete operational activities have been designed and its container shipments increased leading to more investments. Port Rashid, turned out to be regional hub with container ships making port calls from all over the world and containers were offloaded. Most of the shipments were also re-exported and the entry to Dubai waters was not mandatory at that point. That in fact, was the time for JIT deliveries, complete trade globalizations and the

incline of container shipments and its sizes forced Dubai to invest more for developments. Jebel Ali port was built in 1976 and the largest port in the world started its operations in 1979. This was the greatest achievement of UAE. The opening of Jebel Ali port gave the way to a new future in the maritime sector as they supported the growth of industries in Dubai. Jebel Ali only existed as a port at that time. Jebel Ali port did not kick start the way it was expected for few reasons. Initially a US company named Sea land shipping had the contract and they managed the operations of the port. This backfired in a way that other ship owners were reluctant to approach Jebel Ali port as it was operated by a competitor. Knowing this, Dubai government terminated the contractual agreements with Sealand shipping and took over their staff to establish government owned Dubai Ports Authority. Ship owners came for shipments and containers were moved using trucking fleets between the ports at no cost to the customer receiving the shipment. The throughout gradually increased. There is also another development, which is port of Fujairah which currently functions as a multi-purpose terminal in UAE. The year 2000 had even more further developments in the shipping industry. The new facility named "Dubai Maritime city" was constructed with a complete marine business center, a district for marine operations, the residences and offices in harbor.

Results and Discussion

Theoretical frameworks

In this section, the complete independent variables were discussed in detail. The importance of each selected independent variables in relation to the objective of the project has been focused and discussed for a clear understanding.

Technically qualified/experienced service team: Customer satisfaction is "a customer's post-consumption evaluation of a service". Customer satisfaction increases repeat orders and positive word of mouth and satisfaction help to forecast repeat purchase [3]. Satisfaction leads to positive word of mouth and customers tend to be satisfied if the engine is problem-free post service provided by the experienced/well qualified team. A proactive staff response increases customer satisfaction. Hence, experienced team has to technically interact with customers and that in turn will lead to customer satisfaction. The main reasoning for the mutual relationship between the company attitudes and those of clients is that value is created by the team who deliver high-quality services to customers. Thus, to ensure customers are satisfied, there needs to be good technical interaction and the employees need to deliver high quality service. These high cost machineries are supposed to be services/repared by qualified experienced professionals and good knowledge of the product can boost the confidence level of the clients to offload the works. Therefore, it is hypothesized that, technically experienced team has a positive effect on the increasing the clientele.

Competitive pricing: Estimation of repair services/pricing structure should be very competitive in nature. Creating references/testimonials among the clients is very important as it helps them attain critical mass. Pricing has an impact on purchase intentions of clients. Offering high quality services to customer at a competitive price is a challenge due to overhead/operational costs. Sales promotional activities have been a major tool to convince customers. However, it is not advisable in long run as it won't be a strategy that can be relied upon in future. Reducing the operational costs/service lead time could be a factor that could contribute for competitive pricing structure. Awareness of the vendor's website needs to be created among the public so that the vendor can attract customers. If we are able to offer competitive pricing structure by implementing efficient operational practices, it naturally increases awareness among the clients which in fact will lead to increase of clients and also increases the reputation of the firm [4]. Hence, it is hypothesized that, Competitive pricing structure has a direct positive effect on increasing the clientele.

Service warranty: Experts suggest that product warranty is one of the key elements of competitive strategy. From the new client's point of view, there is a fear of approaching new service providers if they don't have the assurance of a warranty on the repair services. To reduce the fear, many service providers offer a warranty for their repairs in order to boost the confidence level of new clients. Service quality along with warranty is identified as a major key factor influencing the returning customers' trust in the service provider and repurchase intention. Good service quality will encourage the repurchase intention of the customer [5]. Offering service warranty has a positive effect on the increasing the clientele.

Authorized product/service dealer: Being an authorised agent for the product has a huge impact in the customer mindset. They can be viewed as the most authentic service dealer for various reasons. At the first place, the engine manufacturer has officially authorised the dealer to repair/service all the products coming under their category. The service team is equipped with latest ET tools and software diagnostics in order to monitor the data which in fact could impress the customer at various angles. They have a better control over the cost of the spare parts (as they receive discounted rates from product manufacturer) and also offer warranty benefits to their clients. There are instances in which the service is performed for free of charge if the parts are purchased from the dealers which make it really competitive for other service providers. Approaching other service

providers might not be a favorite choice for certain clients. However, the fact remains that their pricing structure for workmanship is high in the market (due to high overhead costs) and this is a potential area for other service providers. In case, the customer approaches other service providers for workmanship and procures spare parts from authorised dealers, the deal is considerably positive in nature for the clients. Reducing costs improves customer relationships and is thus beneficial to both buyer and seller. Being an authorised dealer is a positive attribute for the increasing the clientele. Being an authorised dealer is a positive attribute for the increasing the clientele.

Service lead time: Having a better lead time definitely reduces the operational costs and can definitely boost up profits. The customer will enjoy an earlier departure of vessels for their upcoming charter/shipping projects which in turn will be profitable for them. Service lead time plays a major role in shipping industries, as time involves money. This will be tested with new clients to know their preferences in detail. Having said, it is hypothesized that, performing jobs with less lead time does have a positive relationship with impressing and increasing clientele.

In house capabilities of all services: Having all in house machineries has been a major benefit to serve as one stop shop for all major clients and this in fact, helps them to get all their requirements done in an efficient manner. The logistics cost can be reduced and discounted prices can be offered considering the volume of business transactions. Having in house capabilities does have a positive relationship with impressing and increasing clientele.

Offer drydock facility/total package: Shipping owners operate a number of vessels in gulf waters and they have dry-docking schedules planned throughout the year. Considering the market conditions, they prefer competitive service packages which inclusive of dry-docking costs and several other machinery repair costs. The major players offering such competitive service packages inclusive of dry-docking facility are ehav drydocks, Damen shipyards and Goltens. They have been dominating this sector for many years. Offering drydocking package has a positive effect on increasing the clientele.

Extended credit period (>30 days): Credit facility is one of the most important factors for many customers. Trust is "a willingness to rely on another party and to take action in circumstances where such action makes one vulnerable to the other party". Having a better credit period, will definitely increase the volume of business activities in the marine sector. Thus, it is hypothesized that offering an extension on credit period has a positive effect on the increasing the clientele. Based on the literature review, the conceptual model of the research is framed (Figure 2).



Figure 2. The conceptual model of the research is framed.

The researcher would like to assess and analyse the actual factors that might create an influence and thereby ensuring the improvement of clientele

for the upcoming years. Being a new division, the study is very much relevant for the company. The researcher opted for quantitative techniques to find out the influence of variables and testing hypothesis proposed. This research captures the actual decisions taken by the respondents in the UAE by conducting the survey [6]. Each and every factor is justified in detail according to the opinion / feedback of the clients on a random basis as it offers an equal chance for every respondent to be chosen. Furthermore, the results will be concluded after using several statistical tools and will be recommended to the management for the formulation of implementation strategy.

Problem statement

The current business activities are more or less dependent on 4-5 major marine customers and any decline in sales orders from them could affect the stability and profits of the company. Hence, an increase in clientele is very important for a better flow of orders and stability in future. The decline in stability and orders are due to insufficient client base which in turn can affect the sales and profits of marine business. The most relevant factors will be shortlisted and more focus will be given in order to ensure customer satisfaction/increase in clientele.

Sampling procedures and research design

This section gives the data collection methods and sample which was used for this research project. Data collection was conducted in two different phases: a) secondary data collection; b) primary data collection (questionnaire). The research design was descriptive and exploratory in nature.

Primary data collection: A survey was conducted with 40 respondents and subsequently 10 respondents were interviewed face to face to obtain feedback on the questionnaire and their suggestions for improvement. The questionnaire conducted was aimed at measuring the dependent and independent variables. The research aimed at conducting a convenience/random sampling process.

Secondary data collection: Secondary data collection was conducted by reading around 30 journals.

Data findings and analysis

Once the final survey was formed, a total of 40 people were approached with online questionnaires. The table below gives a summary of the demographic details of the respondents. As can be seen, 90% were male, 17.5% were aged more than 51 years and 32.5% were tech. superintendents, 47.5% located in Dubai and 35% were having vessels between 11-20 ranges (Table 3). Here it is observed that professionals who aged between 31-40 and 41-50 were the maximum out of all the respondents. The personnel aged between 20-30 were comparatively less than personnel aged between 51-60. The customers more or less were spread across Dubai and second dominant place was Abu Dhabi. Graphical representation of designation responses (Figure 3).

Table 3. A summary of the demographic details of the respondents.

Measure	Items	Sample size	Percentage
Gender	Male	36	90%
	Female	4	10%
Age	16-30	3	7.50%
	31-50	30	75%
	≥ 51	7	17.50%

Profession	Technical Managers	12	30%
	Commercial managers	7	17.50%
	Tech. superintendents	13	32.50%
	Purchase officers	7	17.50%
	Business owner	1	2.50%
Location	Abu Dhabi	14	35%
	Dubai	19	47.50%
	Sharjah	5	12.50%
	Fujairah	2	5%
	Other emirates	0	0%
Vessels	Under 10	4	10%
	Nov-20	14	35%
	21-30	8	20%
	31-40	6	15%
	41-50	4	10%
	≥ 51	4	10%

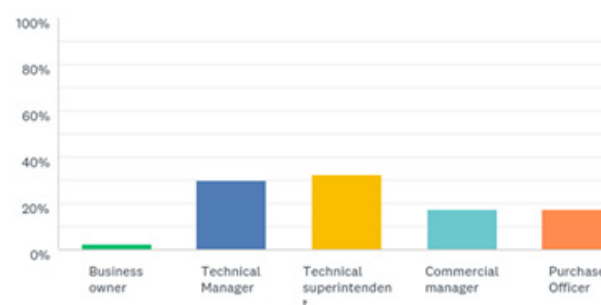


Figure 3. Graphical representation of designation responses.

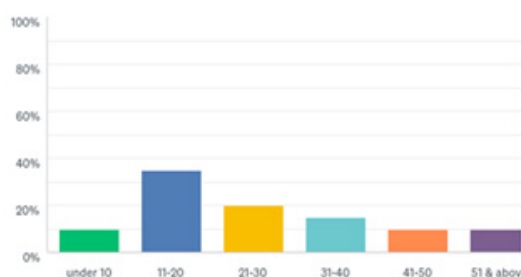
Data representation of designation responses (Table 4). Here it is observed that the survey was conducted among the professionals listed above. Out of all, the technical superintendents were around 32.5%, whereas technical managers were 30%, commercial managers and purchase offers share an equal percentage of 17.5% and business owner which was 2.5%. The technical superintendents can give more insights in to the technical aspect of the services and also the favourable decision makers of the industry. They are the key personnel which have been targeted more during the survey. Graphical representation of no of fleets in their firms (Figure 4). Data representation of no of fleets in their firms (Table 5). Here it is observed that ship owners with operating vessels 11-20 category were 35%, 21-30 vessels were 20%, 31-40 were 15%, 41-50 and 51 above shared the equal weightage of 10% and vessels under 10 were 10%. The results were taken in to consideration during the interview process (Table 6). Out of the questionnaire, the respondents had indicated their willingness to approach organization for future projects and the data was recorded in the form of likert scale (Figure 5).

Table 4. Data representation of designation responses.

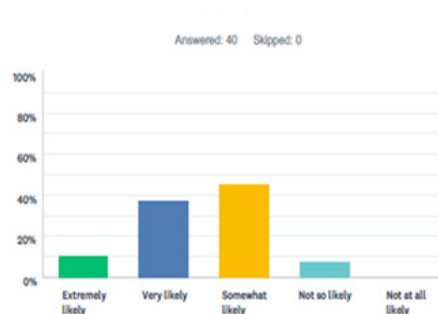
Answer Choices	Responses	
Business Owner	2.50%	1
Technical Manager	30%	12
Technocal Superintendent	32.50%	13
Commercial Manger	17.50%	7
Purchase Officer	17.50%	7
Total		40

Table 5. Data representation of no of fleets in their firms.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Extremely Likely	10%	4
Very Likely	37.50%	15
Some What Likely	45%	18
Not So Likely	7.50%	3
Not at all Likely	0%	0
Total		40

**Figure 4.** Graphical representation of no of fleets in their firms.**Table 6.** The respondents had indicated their willingness to approach organization.t

Answer Choices	Responses	
Extremely Likely	10%	4
Very Likely	37.50%	15
Some What Likely	45%	18
Not So Likely	7.50%	3
Not at all Likely	0%	0
Total		40

**Figure 5.** Graphical representation of the data.

Also the different independent variables were listed and respondents had recorded their preferences in the form of very important- not important scale factor. The figure given below indicates the data obtained in the likert scale and the following figure shows the data by plotting the client preferences (Figure 6, Table 7).

Here, it is observed that most of the respondents believed having a technically qualified experienced team is the best assurance of getting their works done in an efficient manner. However, it was also observed that offering a credit facility for more than 30 days along with competitive pricing and reduced lead time is the key to get the attention of new clients. The researcher believed having a dry dock options and offering warranty will play a major role in attracting clients, however the data seems to show

something different. The factors are analysed in detailed below using various regression tools and hypothesis testing methodologies. The researcher had developed a strategic questionnaire in order to identify the relationship and attributes of competitors with clients based on certain parameters.

Statistical test design: The data collected from the primary research is analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) tool. Regression test was performed using SPSS software. The likeliness of choosing a company (dependent) was analysed with different independent variables. The responses were recorded in to SPSS and regression was performed in order to identify the relationship between the independent variables and their effect on the dependent variable. The observations were informative and valid for further strategy implementation (Table 8).



Figure 6. The weighted average has been calculated based on the responses collected from the respondents.

Table 7. The respondents believed having a technically qualified experienced.

	Very important	Important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not important	Total	Weighted average
Technically experienced service team	77.50% 31	10.00% 4	12.50% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	40	1.35
Competitive pricing	87.50% 35	12.50% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	40	1.13
Warranty	57.50% 23	17.50% 7	22.50% 9	0.00% 0	2.50% 1	40	1.73
Have to be an authorized dealer for the product	7.50% 3	2.50% 1	5.00% 2	37.50% 15	47.50% 19	40	4.15
Service lead time	12.50% 5	25.00% 10	32.50% 13	30.00% 12	0.00% 0	40	2.8
Complete in house capability of all activities	12.50% 5	10.00% 4	15.00% 6	17.50% 7	45.00% 18	40	3.73
Drydocking option to be available	2.50% 1	0.00% 0	2.50% 1	25.00% 10	70.00% 28	40	4.60
more than 30 days credit period	62.50% 25	30.00% 12	7.50% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	40	1.45

Table 8. Informative and valid for further strategy implementation.

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.7
R Square	0.493
Adjusted R Square	0.362
Standard Error	0.6264
Observations	40

Table 9. A complete hypothesis testing was conducted and the data has been listed.

	Coefficients	t Stat
Intercept	2.59	3
Technically experienced service team.Q 11	0.39	2.45
Competitive pricing	0.12	0.39
Warranty	-0.22	-1.88
Have to be an authorized dealer for the product	-0.18	-1.75
Service lead time	0.13	1.04
Complete in house capability of all activities	0.26	3.33
Drydocking option to be available	-0.21	-1.47
more than 30 days credit period	0.01	0.03

Table 10. Hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis	Relationship	Coefficient	t-value	Supported
H1	Technically exp. Service team→ To increase clientele	0.39	2.45	Yes
H2	Competitive pricing → To increase clientele	0.12	0.39	Yes
H3	Warranty → To increase clientele	-0.22	-1.88	No
H4	Authorised dealer → To increase clientele	-0.18	-1.75	No
H5	Service lead time→ To increase clientele	0.13	1.04	Yes
H6	In house capability→ To increase clientele	0.26	3.33	Yes
H7	Drydocking option→ To increase clientele	-0.21	-1.47	No
H8	+30 days credit → To increase clientele	0.01	0.03	Yes

Measurement validation and reliability: The reliability of the model was determined using discriminant validity and the goodness of fit was also tested. The goodness of fit values indicated that the model is highly valid and can be considered reliable. The values were at part with the cut off values and indicated the validity if the model. Further details are given below and all the values are greater than the acceptable values. Discriminant validity

The discriminant validity is used to identify the strength of the model and also to ehavio the relationship between each factor in the same model. The discriminant validity was confirmed and it was tested by using the correlations between the intersecting measures. The square root of the AVE of each construct is calculated and the correlation between the measures is at 0.35.

Goodness of fit: A Goodness-of-Fit (GoF) assessment was carried out for the PLS path modelling outcomes. GoF is calculated by considering the geometric mean and average R-square values for constructs. It is calculated using the formula,

The GoF value for the PLS path model was calculated and found to be 0.35 (the mean value of the AVE was 0.252 and the R2 value was 0.49; and is at the cut-off value of 0.35. The chi-square value and differential values were considered keeping the degrees of freedom sheet as reference. In a PLS model, a GoF value of 0.1 indicates low validity, a value of 0.25 denotes medium validity and a value of 0.35 and above indicates the model is highly valid. Thus the PLS evaluations in this research are highly valid.

Structural equation modelling

The hypotheses framed were tested through Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using the SPSS statistics and SEM tools. SEM is a technique related to data analysis and it is multi variate. It is often used to test linear models. With this SEM technique, the marketers can analyse the different relationships present among the variables and prioritize them to determine which variables are the most important. A technique (boot

strapping) is performed to test whether the cross factor loadings and path coefficients are significant or not by estimating the standard errors of the estimates. Based on the t-values, the interval for each independent variable is found, Table shows the hypothesis testing for the model framed (Table 9). The outcome for each hypothesis characterized in the above table was tested and verified using the t-values; the results for the hypotheses are as follows:

- The effect of having experienced service team (2.45) for increasing the clientele is strongly significant as the t-value indicates that it is significant. Thus H1 is strongly supported.
- The effect of competitive pricing (0.39) for increasing the clientele is strongly significant as the t-value indicates that it is significant. Thus H2 is strongly supported.
- The warranty for increasing the clientele (-1.88) is not significant, thus leading to the rejection of H3.
- Being an authorised dealer for increasing the clientele (-1.75) is not significant, thus leading to the rejection of H4
- The effect of service lead time (1.04) for increasing the clientele is significant as the t-value indicates that it is significant. Thus H5 is strongly supported.
- The effect of in house capability (3.33) for increasing the clientele is strongly significant as the t-value indicates that it is significant. Thus H6 is strongly supported.
- The effect of drydocking optional package (-1.47) for increasing the clientele is not significant as the t-value indicates that it is not significant. Thus H7 is rejected.
- The effect of offering more than 30 days credit period (0.03) for increasing the clientele is strongly significant as the t-value indicates that it is significant. Thus H8 is strongly supported.

Research findings

In this research, it was found that customers primarily focus on service providers who offer competitive pricing, having technically experienced service engineers working on specific engine models, better warranty agreements and extended credit period. Before the research study was conducted, the researcher was of the impression that factors like drydocking package, authorised dealership networks were of prime importance for the new clients. However, the research data conveys a different story and it was analysed that these factors were not at all important contributors for customer preferences. This study focuses on the different parameters that could possibly be the factors for gaining the attention of new customers. It is found that pricing plays a major role in this highly competitive market. Ship owners prefer well recognized service providers at comfortable pricing levels. Considering the economy and oil pricing levels, the service providers with less overhead costs have been gaining the competitive edge on this. Several studies have focused on better warranty conditions, arguing that it is an important parameter for service industry and the findings of this study are in line with those of previous studies, showing that service quality with qualified engineers is important in developing trust among the shipping customers (Table 10). Service quality perception can be measured by 3 dimensions: service product, service delivery and service environment, whereas the most common dimensions in service sector are completeness, timeliness, consistency, responsiveness, empathy, accessibility, convenience and courtesy. Researchers have also found that surveyors or third party class ratings are important in establishing trust among the technical professionals, but this study highlights how warranty conditions can be an important factor for services clubbed along with extended credit facility for payments. More emphasis on these parameters will help to increase the visibility range and get the attention of new customers. No studies have examined the benefits of having a complete in-house facility for repair works. In UAE, we have a lot of coastal areas and shipping trade is expected to grow for the coming years keeping an eye on Expo 2020 logistic opportunities and various other factors. To the best of our knowledge, having a complete in-house facility will help customers have one point of contact and one stop shop for all their solutions.

Limitations and Scope for Future Research

As the technology is developing at a faster pace and increase in competitors with latest ET tools/SIS systems being a major threat; this particular research sample analysis may not be representative over the long period. Another limitation of this research is that only 8 core variables were considered for the process. There might be other parameters as well. With the findings of this research, future study can be based on improving the service lead time and also for reducing the operational costs by incorporating repair works within the facility. On the positive side, UAE is

one of the major logistics hub in the world and considering the future EXPO 2020, there would be a lot of business opportunities in the marine sector. Thus, future research could be done to investigate the business possibilities with new clientele.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this research was to develop a market strategy by understanding the customer preferences and thereby incorporate those factors for a better business strategy in future which would result in increase of clientele. The model supports the view that the independent variables of competitive pricing, experienced service engineers, service lead time with in-house behaviour and a credit period more than 30 days exert a major influence on customer preferences in choosing their service providers. Investigating the subject in detail has made it possible to determine the main parameters and the aspects on which organization has to concentrate to increase the clientele.

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