

An exploration study to detect important factors influencing on learning oriented customers

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ABSTRACT

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The recent advances in technology have increased learning channels in industry helping organizations remove the middle level management. This paper presents an empirical investigation to study the role of different factors influencing on learning oriented customers. The study designs a questionnaire and distributes it among 200 randomly selected regular customers of a chain store named Shahrvand located in city of Tehran, Iran. Cronbach alpha is equal to 0.935, which is well above the minimum acceptable level. Using principle component analysis, the study has detected six factors including learning management, strategy, learning tools, learning approaches, human related factors and learning spirit.

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1. Introduction

The recent advances in technology have increased learning channels in industry helping organizations remove the middle level management (Ratten, 2008; D'Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008; Souchon et al., 2012). Gardiner (1999) presented a study in two large engineering firms trying to use a learning orientation and discussed a new sector-specific model of a learning orientation. The study highlighted a necessity for bigger evaluation of learning in organizations and a more holistic method to the implementation of learning initiatives. Coad and Berry (1998) stated that desirable leadership behavior for a learning organization is transformational and desirable follower behavior must include a learning orientation. Lee and Tsai (2005) investigated the impacts of business operation mode on market orientation, learning orientation and innovativeness. Pappas (2005) investigated the relationship between learning orientation and leadership quality by investigating their effect on salespersons' performance. Mavondo et al. (2005) studied the relationship between learning orientation and market orientation by exploring the relationship with innovation, human resource practices and performance.

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McGuinness and Morgan (2005) studied the effect of market and learning orientation on strategy dynamics. Kropp et al. (2006) investigated entrepreneurial, market, and learning orientations and international entrepreneurial business venture (IEBV) performance in South African firms. They reported that IEBV performance was positively associated with the innovativeness component of an entrepreneurial orientation. Keskin (2006) studied market orientation, learning orientation, and innovation capabilities in SMEs. He reported that firm innovativeness positively influenced on firm performance and firm learning-orientation positively affected firm innovativeness. Kim (2007) investigated learning goal orientation, formal mentoring, and leadership competence in human resources development.

2. The proposed study

This paper presents an empirical investigation to study the role of different factors influencing on learning oriented customers. The study is concentrated on regular customers of a chain store named Shahrvand located in city of Tehran, Iran. The sample size is calculated as follows,

$$N = Z_{\alpha/2}^2 \frac{p \times q}{e^2}, \quad (1)$$

where N is the sample size, $p = 1 - q$ represents the probability, $z_{\alpha/2}$ is CDF of normal distribution and finally ε is the error term. For our study we assume $p = 0.5$, $z_{\alpha/2} = 1.96$ and $e = 0.05$, the number of sample size is calculated as $N = 198$. The study designs a questionnaire in Likert scale, distributes 33 ones among some experts in order to validate the overall questionnaire. Cronbach alpha has been calculated as 0.935, which is well above the minimum acceptable level. Therefore, we distribute 200 questionnaires among some randomly selected people who do regular purchase from this store. Table 1 shows the results of communalities.

Table 1

The summary of communalities

Variable	Initial	Extraction	Variable	Initial	Extraction
VAR00001	1.000	.676	VAR00018	1.000	.621
VAR00002	1.000	.745	VAR00019	1.000	.680
VAR00003	1.000	.615	VAR00020	1.000	.631
VAR00004	1.000	.626	VAR00021	1.000	.617
VAR00005	1.000	.726	VAR00022	1.000	.746
VAR00006	1.000	.752	VAR00023	1.000	.764
VAR00007	1.000	.555	VAR00024	1.000	.606
VAR00008	1.000	.660	VAR00025	1.000	.657
VAR00009	1.000	.761	VAR00026	1.000	.689
VAR00010	1.000	.675	VAR00027	1.000	.598
VAR00011	1.000	.665	VAR00028	1.000	.582
VAR00012	1.000	.736	VAR00029	1.000	.627
VAR00013	1.000	.671	VAR00030	1.000	.607
VAR00014	1.000	.626	VAR00031	1.000	.517
VAR00015	1.000	.681	VAR00032	1.000	.635
VAR00016	1.000	.512	VAR00033	1.000	.676
VAR00017	1.000	.577			

As we can observe from the results of Table 1, all communalities are within acceptable levels. Table 2 demonstrates the results of principle component analysis.

Table 2
The summary of principle component analysis

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.728	17.357	17.357	2.240	6.789	6.789
2	2.049	6.209	23.567	2.211	6.700	13.489
3	1.920	5.820	29.386	2.045	6.196	19.685
4	1.738	5.267	34.654	1.858	5.629	25.315
5	1.575	4.772	39.426	1.748	5.297	30.612
6	1.444	4.376	43.802	1.739	5.270	35.882
7	1.380	4.182	47.984	1.681	5.094	40.976
8	1.284	3.890	51.874	1.680	5.091	46.066
9	1.190	3.605	55.480	1.662	5.036	51.102
10	1.159	3.511	58.991	1.565	4.744	55.846
11	1.027	3.112	62.103	1.552	4.703	60.549
12	1.018	3.086	65.189	1.531	4.640	65.189
13	.912	2.765	67.953			
14	.881	2.670	70.623			
15	.800	2.424	73.047			
16	.779	2.362	75.409			
17	.734	2.223	77.632			
18	.689	2.087	79.719			
19	.677	2.050	81.770			
20	.647	1.960	83.730			
21	.602	1.824	85.553			
22	.580	1.758	87.311			
23	.543	1.647	88.958			
24	.492	1.490	90.448			
25	.484	1.467	91.915			
26	.429	1.300	93.215			
27	.395	1.196	94.410			
28	.358	1.085	95.496			
29	.350	1.061	96.557			
30	.340	1.031	97.587			
31	.292	.884	98.472			
32	.270	.818	99.290			
33	.234	.710	100.000			

According to the results of Table 2, there are 12 influencing factors and we use varimax rotation technique to extract the important components. In addition, Scree plot has been used to extract the important factors show in Fig. 1 as follows,

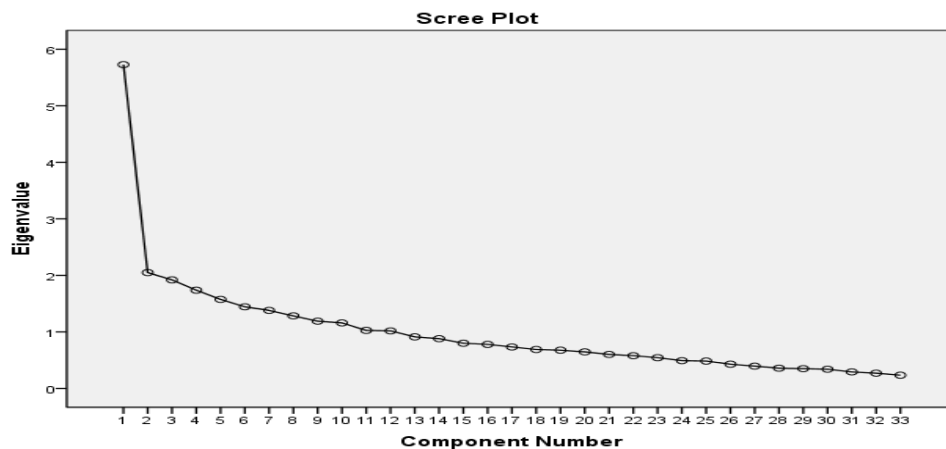


Fig. 1. The summary of Scree plot

According to the results of Fig. 1, there are six factors influencing on learning oriented customers. Table 3 shows the results of our investigation.

Table 3

The summary of principal component analysis using Varimax rotation

	Component												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
VAR000			.533										.379
VAR000			.839										
VAR000			.706										
VAR000								.655					
VAR000								.591		.462			
VAR000										.837			
VAR000													.679
VAR000									.653				.395
VAR000												.779	
VAR000												.704	
VAR000	.38						.499		.342				
VAR000		.448					.375			.512			
VAR000		.563		.423									
VAR000		.332				.556							
VAR000	.34	.414											
VAR000	.52												
VAR000									.527				
VAR000		.472											
VAR000							.781						
VAR000			.340				.575						
VAR000					.681								
VAR000					.761								
VAR000	.59				.352			.400					
VAR000	.72												
VAR000	.47					.460							
VAR000									.633				
VAR000		.699											
VAR000		.382			.475								
VAR000						.733							
VAR000				.474				.419					
VAR000	.34												
VAR000				.435									.499
VAR000				.768									

3. The results

According to the results of Table 3, there are six factors associated with the proposed study of this paper including learning management, strategy, learning tools, learning approaches, human related factors and learning spirit.

3.1. Learning management

Learning management is the first factor in this study and Table 3 shows details of sub-factors.

Table 3

The summary of the components associated with learning management

Sub-component	Factor loading	Eigenvalues	% of variance	Accumulated
Effective leadership	0.528			
Top management support	0.728	2.240	6.789	6.789
Educational plan	0.590			
Reward paid to learners	0.474			
Open management	0.345			

As we can observe from the results of Table 3, top management support is number one factor influencing on learning management followed by educational plan, effective leadership, reward paid to learners and open management.

3.2. Strategy

Strategy is the second factor in this study and Table 4 presents details of sub-factors.

Table 4

The summary of the components associated with strategy

Sub-component	Factor loading	Eigenvalues	% of variance	Accumulated
Common outlook	0.563			
Relationship with world	0.414			
Market orientation	0.472			
Group decision making	0.699	2.211	13.489	6.700

According to the results of Table 4, group decision making is the most important factor influencing on strategy followed by common outlook, market orientation and relationship with world.

3.3. Learning tools

Learning tools are considered as the third important factor in this study and Table 5 provides details of three sub-factors.

Table 5

The summary of the components on learning tools

Sub-component	Factor loading	Eigenvalues	% of variance	Accumulated
Sharing effective information	0.523			
Employee ethics	0.839	2.045	19.685	6.196
Advanced technology	0.706			

According to the results of Table 5, employee ethics is the most important factors influencing learning tools followed by advanced technology and sharing effective information.

3.4. Learning approaches

Learning approaches are considered as the fourth important factor in this study and Table 6 shows details of three sub-factors.

Table 6

The summary of the components on learning approaches

Sub-component	Factor loading	Eigenvalues	% of variance	Accumulated
Work engagement	0.681			
Ideas	0.761	1.858	25.315	5.629
Critical discussions	0.475			

According to the results of Table 6, having perceptual ideas is number one important factor influencing on learning approaches followed by work engagement and critical discussions.

3.5. Human factors

Human factors are considered as the fifth important factor in this study and Table 7 demonstrates details of three sub-factors.

Table 7

The summary of the components on human factors

Sub-component	Factor loading	Eigenvalues	% of variance	Accumulated
Learning commitment	0.499			
Employee perception	0.781	1.748	30.612	5.297
Employee skills	0.575			

According to the results of Table 7, having perceptual ideas is number one important factor influencing on learning approaches followed by work communications and critical discussions.

3.6. Learning spirit

Learning spirit is the last important factor in this study and Table 8 shows details of three sub-factors.

Table 8

The summary of the components on learning spirit

Sub-component	Factor loading	Eigenvalues	% of variance	Accumulated
Choosing challenging tasks	0.653	1.739	35.882	5.270
Job performance	0.527			
Risk acceptance	0.633			

According to the results of Table 8, Choosing challenging tasks is the most important factor followed by risk acceptance and job performance.

4. Discussion and conclusion

In this paper, we have presented an empirical investigation to study the role of different factors influencing on learning oriented customers. The study has implemented factor analysis and extracted six factors influencing on learning oriented customers. In terms of learning management, top management support is number one factor influencing on learning management followed by educational plan, effective leadership, reward paid to learners and open management. Strategy is the second factor where group decision making is the most important factor influencing on strategy followed by common outlook, market orientation and relationship with world. Learning tools are considered as the third important factor where employee ethics is the most important factors influencing learning tools followed by advanced technology and sharing effective information. Learning approaches are considered as the fourth important factor in this study where having perceptual ideas is number one important factor influencing on learning approaches followed by work engagement and critical discussions. Human factors are considered as the fifth important factor where having perceptual ideas is number one important factor influencing on learning approaches followed by work communications and critical discussions. Finally, Learning spirit is the last important factor in this study with three factors where choosing challenging tasks is the most important factor followed by risk acceptance and job performance.

The results of our study are consistent with findings of Chughtai and Buckley (2011) in terms of work engagement. The results are also consistent with findings of Wu and Lin (2013) and Lin et al. (2008). As stated by Ratten (2008), there has been a shift in many business organizations to create a learning organization in which productivity and effectiveness can be enhanced. Learning organizations are those in which people are continually expanding their knowledge base to nurture new techniques of thinking. Learning orientation states a core dimension in organizational learning. Therefore, the attitude an organization has towards the necessity of learning is its learning orientation and this is reflected in values routinely associated with learning.

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