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## UNIT 14 CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT (CCM)

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### 14.0 OBJECTIVES

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After studying this unit, you will be able to.

- Explain the concept of customer communication management
- Identify the best method or practices of customer communication management
- Effective utilization of CCM for customer satisfaction
- Can easily distinguish between CCM & CRM
- Signifies the role of technology in CCM

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### 14.1 INTRODUCTION

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Customer communication management is vital to every industry in today’s business scenario. Be it a manufacturing or service industry. In retail a customer

wants faster, transparent and correct information about the product, service, promotion etc. It is irrelevant whether they are in-side or out-side the store. A good and effective customer communication management enhances the competitive strength of a retailer.

With the advancement of technologies customers are aware of their importance to the retailers hence an improper communication can send these customers to the rivals and you can lose the customer forever. Therefore, it is mandatory to the customer retention and customer satisfaction that one must have the efficient customer communication management system

The customer communication management process helps the business to convey all the important messages and information to the customer.

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## **14.2 WHAT IS CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT**

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Communication is a process to share ideas, information, message, emotion, feeling etc. verbally and nonverbally. CCM is a systematic approach to convey message and information with the help of technology to customers and influence their buying decision. As we know that every customer undergoes a buying process before he or she makes the final decision to purchase a product. And the various other factors influence the purchase decision, among all customer communication plays an important role. In this whole process a transparent, right, and faster communication can make or break the game. Every, retailers need to manage CCM effectively and efficiently

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## **14.3 TYPES OF CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION**

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### **14.3.1 Structured, or “Batch,” Communication**

This refers to the type of communication, sent regularly or usually to the customer by the retailers and other commercial institutes. E.g. Emails, sms blast, and pre-recorded phone-calls. This doesn't require much change in the content of communication and is sent in a particular format or structure and in a batch.

Most often we notice a promotional email in our mail box, or SMS about some offer or a pre-recorded phone call from a bank for credit cards or from an insurance company for a medical or life insurance policy. This is done randomly and in bulk. The conversion rate is very-very low and the turn out ratio is poor, although this is done to generate the prospective customer for the product the company or the retailers are offering

### **14.3.2 On-Demand Documents/Communication**

A company creates this kind of communication to the specific or targeted customer. Retailers segment the target customer on the basis of their demography, geographic, and psychographic segmentation. Where the

communication is created or designed catering to these specified customers.

For example every, retailers run a loyalty program and they keep on running various offers and schemes particularly for the loyal customers, time to time and they send this type of on-demand document or communication to these selected groups of customers to induce them to buy more.

Especially during the lean period, when the sale is not happening. Occasions like womens' Day, Children's Day, and Charwa- cauth etc., celebrated in the North are also good examples when the retailers follow these types of documents to send the communication to some particular group of people.

### 14.3.3 Interactive Documents/ Communication

The above two types of communication are one-way communication, where in sender send and the receiver means the customers receive the communication and respond. But interactive Document/communication is a two-way communication between the retailers or company and the customer.

In-case of a customer complaint or a suggestion a conversation takes place between the two parties. The customer shares their concerns or appreciation with the service provider regarding the product or services.

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## 14.4 CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

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A retailer can communicate with its customers through no. of channels. Availability of multiple channels provide the flexibility to both the customer and the retailer getting in touch with each other faster. Due to the faster communication, smoother the resolution process of customer's complaint and help in achieving the customer satisfaction to a large extent. Some of these common customer communication channels are mentioned below.

- **Chatbots on a Company's Website:** it is a small icon provided in a company's website, available for 24x7 and is capable enough to address the commons queries. A predetermined answers appears for a specific question and no human interaction takes place. It is the robot which address the queries of the questions asked by the customers
- **Email:** This is an electronic mailing system, a very common and convenient channel of customer communication. For the company it is very cost effective in terms of promotion and offers. In one go a retailer can send a communication to millions of recipients. A customer can connect with the company at any time and convey his or her message in a descriptive manner.
- **Live Chats (with Customer Service Reps) on a Company's Website:** This is another common channel of customer communication. Where a company's representative is available live to address and resolve the

customer queries. Here one can expect faster resolution of a problem since it indulges human involvement.

- **Mobile Phone Short Message Service (SMS) Texts:** - Many retailers or companies send text messages to the large no. of people in general to generate the prospect. It is a one-way communication channels mostly followed by telecommunication industry
- **Phone (Land-line):-** This is a kind of channel which is used by both the company or the customer to communicate with each other in case they don't want to disclose their personal no.
- **Social Media:** Social-media has a very strong reach among the customers, almost every second person in cities uses facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc. The users are increasing day by day, because of its reach and accessibility retail uses it as tool of customer communication
- **Web Pages:** including links to interactive documents and information

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## 14.5 BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

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A retailer or a company that has effective customer communication enjoys huge benefits.

Some of these benefits are mentioned below let us discuss one by one

- **Integrated Communication from All Departments:** There are many departments in a company or a retail company. An Effective customer communication management system ensures all the departments should follow the same format or standard of communication with customers. Such an integration brings uniformity in the process and makes the communication faster and easier.
- **Increased Efficiency of Communication:** when the customer communication is managed well it increases the efficiency of the communication with fast resolution of the customer complaint and customer queries or retailers can convey their message at much cheaper cost.
- **Increased Consistency of Communication:** An effective customer communication management ensures that there is no discrepancy while communicating with the customer. As they follow a particular set of processes or guidelines in terms of customer communications. Therefore there is no doubt in the mind of the person or team engaged in the customer communication. The line of communications is very to the company representative.
- **Less Customer Confusion and Frustration with Contradictory or Inconsistent Messaging:** The customer is quite clear and happy when

the communication is clear, immediate, and valid. Due to consistency in the communication, the company rep. is conveniently addressing all the queries of the customer satisfactorily. Consistency in the communication do not create any ambiguity or contradiction in the mind of the customer

- **Improved Branding:** Retailers are investing huge amount of money in brand building and brand reputation through various activities. Effective customer communication can prove to be an excellent tool for brand building for the retailers. When the customer communication management is consistent, efficient and reliable it creates a positive impression in the mind of the customer and they become loyal to it
- **Improved Compliance with Regulations:** Compliances and regulation are the mandatory procedures a retailer must adhere to. These compliances and regulations are imposed by the state or central govt. A diversion from these may lead to huge legal consequences. Therefor in an effective customer communication management these also must be considered
- **More Happy Customers:** Every retailer wants to make their customer happy and this is their top most priority. A hassle-free customer communication system makes it easier for the customer to convey their message in a much easier way and make their life easier. This brings a smile on the face of the customer and gives a sense of happiness.

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## 14.6 CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

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Now a Question comes, what strategy a retailer should follow in his customer communication management. Well, an answer to the question is very simple, an effective customer communication system should consist of all the above discussed channels of customer communication. Simply following one or two channels is not enough, multiple choices of communication provide flexibility, and convenience to the customer.

All the selected channels should be well synchronized with the available technology.

A well-established communication strategy strengthens the relationship between the customer and the retailer. The communication channels serve as a bridge between the two, making it easier for the customer to communicate with the retailer or company. Moreover the customer is happy and satisfied. Whereas a limited no. of channels or inefficient communication technology causes huge inconvenience to the customers.

A dissatisfied customer is very much prone to shift or move to your competitors, who can take care of them well. In such a situation it is extremely-extremely difficult for a retailer to bring back these customers. While formulating customer communication strategy a retailer must keep in mind the customer convenience.

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## 14.7 CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION BEST PRACTICES

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There are numbers of different best practices that are being followed by all-most every retailer in an organised retail sector to serve the customers. Let's discuss some of these best practices one by one

- **Use Multiple Channels of Customer Communication:** Every customer is different in their taste and preferences; therefore, different communication options provide them the ease to convey their message without any hassle and expect a prompt resolution of their problem from the retailers. Simultaneously multiple channels of communication provide the consistency to the retailer to communicate with the customer.
- **Create Clear, Readable, and Compelling Content:** A retailer when creating a communication content whether written or oral must be simple, clear, and easy to understand by any random person. Communication is a process of conveying a certain message to the receiver to get the desired result, therefore one should avoid any words or sentences which may create confusion. Any Jorgen or unprofessional words should be avoided.
- **Understand and be Relevant to your Customer:** A customer seeks interest in the communication if it is relevant, otherwise they may get irritated. In the communication process one first listens, and understands the customer and is relevant.
- **Don't Get Too Personal:** It is advisable that one should have empathy with the customer in the whole communication process but avoid getting too much personal. Be professional, as the customer may feel offensive if one is trying to get too much personal and can badly humper the communication.
- **Don't Send Spam:** A retail marketing team is generally very aggressive in terms of their marketing promotions. Some of them make this mistake by sending spam and irrelevant mailers or communications to their valuable customers. Nobody would like to receive such irrelevant and spam mails and the loyal customers too. Therefore, a retailer must be very carefull while sending emails to their customers.
- **Let Your Customer Decide:** This means, a retail should allow their customers to decide, what types of communication channels should a customer opt for the communication among the available channels. They should be given a free choice, so that the customer can choose as per their convenience and feasibility.
- **Treat Every Customer Equally:** In all pieces of customer communication, every single customer should be treated equally and an equal importance should be given whether the customer is a one time or a regular customer. Remember a customer who is not treated well and taken seriously, whether one time or regular, may spoil ten other customers and can damage your company's reputation to a large extent.

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## 14.8 CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

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The technological development and advancement have changed the traditional method of customer communication. Big retail players like shoppers stop, and lifestyle have introduced the latest technological software for their customer communication management. This gives an edge to them in the competition by efficiently managing their communication system. These are cloud-based software and require a heavy investment which is beyond the reach of the small retailers in the industry. Using this software alone will not be integrated with the process and people of the organisation, because these can't work in isolation and need humans to control and monitor it.

Another important technology is the AI (Artificial Intelligence) technology, this is a future technology although this is in a primitive stage in India. Most of the developed countries has adopted this technology well in all across their industries and retail too. The introduction of these technologies has changed the entire dynamics of the retail industry especially in the organised sector of retail.

The industry leaders have a huge customer base therefore it is not possible to manage the customer communication with the traditional methods. This kind of software makes the life of the retailer easier, as they can effectively and efficiently communicate with the huge base of customeres.

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## 14.9 AUTOMATED CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION

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Automated customer communication refers to messages (usually emails) that a company's communication system sends automatically to a customer or a customer request. A primary Objective of the CCM is to use automated customer communication as frequently as possible.

Automated customer communication also includes website chatbots, what's app and virtual assistants that can answer the questions of the customer by phone or text 24x7.

Along with sending automated messages, the retailers should be able to send personalized messages when necessary. Here are some examples of personalized automated customer communication:

- A promotional message that a customer receives shortly after their first purchase. E.g when you recharge your mobile phone immediately you get a text messages from the tele- communication company.
- A promotional message (with or without incentives) that a customer receives when they have not ordered or purchased from the retail organization for a long period of time
- A promotional message that offers a customer a new discount/ rebate after they have made several purchases over an extended period of time.

As mentioned, chatbots, what's app and virtual assistants can also be efficient and effective ways to help customers. However, the retailer must use these automated tools very-very carefully. Customers and clients always want an easy and convenient way to quickly reach a customer service representative when they are not getting answers.

However, there are some real benefits to automated technology. It can improve your customer service by facilitating and accelerating the process of responding to client requests and questions.

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## **14.10 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CCM AND CRM**

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Most often the term customer communication management and customer relationship management are used interchangeably, but there is a distinction between these two. The term CRM is more related with the monitoring and improving the relationship with the customer and the prospective customer of the company. Whereas CCM refers to coordinating those relationships with customers and the prospective customers.

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## **14.11 HISTORY OF CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT**

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Nowadays the customer communication management software is a very common tool to manage customer communication for most of the organization whether it is retail or any other company. But the scenario was quite different during the initial days, in the year 1980 it first came into existence when the software was being used for sending mails, and other documents like bank statements, accounts statements, invoices and bills etc.

Gradually companies started noticing that opening rate of such mails were quite high, therefore retailers and the organisations started attaching various promotional communication in the same envelop to promote their products and service.

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## **14.12 LET US SUM-UP**

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Customer communication management is vital to every industry in today's business scenario. Be it a manufacturing or service industry. In retail a customer wants faster, transparent and correct information about the product, service, promotion etc. This is a systematic approach to convey message and information with the help of technology to customers and influence their buying decision. In this whole process a transparent, right, and faster communication can make or break the game. Every, retailer needs to manage CCM effectively and efficiently. There are three types of customer communication 1- Structure or batch communication, 2- On Demand communication and 3-interactive communications. Each communication type has its own significance. This



customer communication follows through different channels like, chat-bot in a web site, email, live chat, Mobile phone text sms, social media etc. Then we have discussed some of the very important benefits. Such as Integration of departments in terms of customer communication, Consistency and efficiency in communication, improve branding and compliance. Next comes what should be the strategy in customer communication. Whether one should consists of a limited channel of communication or it should include all possible channels of customer communication. Finally, we discussed some of the best practices of effective customer communication management. Like one should treat all the customer equally, don't get personal with the customers, don't spam etc.

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### 14.13 KEY WORDS

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**Communication:** Is the process conveying ideas, feeling, information, message etc. verbally or non-verbal

**CCM:** Customer communication management is basically a software used for the communication process by most of the retailers in the organised retail.

**CRM:** Customer relationship management, this is different from CCM, as this refers to the management of the relationship between the customer, prospective customer and the retailer.

**A.I:** Artificial intelligence, is a new technology which can enhance the customer communication management to many folds.

**Chat-Bot:** This is a small icon visible at the corner of the website. This application is used for the automated communication with the customer.

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### 14.14 ACTIVITY

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**1) Fill in the Blanks.**

- a) Communication is the process of sharing, ..... with other (ideas/ right)
- b) Customer communication management software first introduced in the year ..... (1980/ 1981).
- c) The CCM strategy says a retailer should use .....of communication (limited /Multiple channels)
- d) The CCM best practices says that every customer should be treated ..... (Differently/ equally).
- e) ..... can help in improve branding of the retailer (CRM/CCM)

**2) True or False**

- a) There is no difference between customer communication management and customer relationship management.....
- b) Customer communication management software is very expensive....
- c) An efficient CCM can increase the loyalty of the customer .....
- d) Social media is not an effective channel for customer communication.....

- e) A retailer should create a clear, readable and easy communication  
.....
- 3) Visit any retailer in your nearby location and mention, what is his strategy for customer communication management and consist of what all channels?

### Illustration

“Detox-Fashion” is a retail chain in a department store category facing tough competition from their competitors. The customer base is huge and spread across the country. Due to the inefficient marketing team, the company is really struggling to manage their customers. There is an increasing number of dissatisfied customers with the passing of every single day. In the board meeting the board of directors analysed the situation and found the following are the factors contributing to such a sever condition as 1) The communication regarding various offers and scheme are not reaching to all the customer on time, 2) The company is not getting enough news leads, and 3) The customer complaint are not resolved on time or not at the satisfaction level of the customers.

The board members decided to hire a marketing head, who can help the company to overcome from this situation at the earliest as possible. The very next month the expected Marketing head joined and been asked to make an effective plan to address this issue. The steps evolved in the action plan are as follows.

- 1) **Generating New Leads:** Every company needs new customers together with the existing one on a regular basis so “Detox-Fashion” is no exception. To get connected with the new lot of customers the company used “**Structured or batch communication**” method of **customer communication**. Under this method of customer communication, a dedicated team is there for Sms-blast, cold callings and E-mail marketing. A rigorous effort for two consecutive weeks has shown the result in terms of 500 customers has purchased from the company.
- 2) **Customer Segmentation:** The company divided its entire customer base into different customer segmentation on the basis of demography, different geographic location, taste- preference to target the right customer for the right promotion and offers. To approach targeted customer “Detox-Fashion” used “**On demand Document/Communication**” method and ensured that the right sort of promotion should reach to the right customer segmentation on the right time. This approach helped the company to generate 100 cr.; additional sales in the current financial year.
- 3) **Customer Complaint:** To address the customer issues/complaint the company applied “**Interactive documents/communication**” method. The 24x7 help line no. is created and shared it with the customers, there is a team to resolve the customer complaint on an immediate basis. A chat bot is also there so that customer can share their concern and get the response immediately. All this led to great customer satisfaction and customer retention.

### Key take-Away:

- A) “Customer Communication” is the key to be successful in retail.
- B) Different customer communication method should be used on the basis of the requirement.

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## 14.15 TERMINAL QUESTION

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- 1) Explain customer communication management.
- 2) What are the benefits of CCM?
- 3) What is the difference between CCM and CRM?
- 4) Write five best practices of CCM.
- 5) How CCM can help improve branding of a retailer?

### ANSWERS

- 1) a) ideas, b) 1980, c) multiple channels, d) equally, e) CCM
- 2) a) False, b) True, c) True, d) False, e) True



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