

# Changing Consumer Behaviors Boost Sales: Theoretical Insight for Afghan Investors and Entrepreneurs

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**Abstract:** Consumer behavior is a hot topic in current market and behavior economic research. There are quite good firms in Afghanistan that have good quality product and services but lack of good customers and sales is a big problem for making profit and somehow survival. It is all due to consumer behavior that are easily changed toward new brands and products. Changing consumer behavior toward someone's product and services is a difficult job but the results are very inspiring. This is a qualitative research work which the data is taken from published books, journals, and verified websites. The main objective of this research is to discover that which strategies worked in the rest of the world in changing consumer behaviors that increased good customers and sales. We believe that the same factors that affected consumer behaviors in other countries will fit into the Afghan firms in terms up making market share, customers and sales. In this regard, at least six changing behavior strategies were successful in different countries such as identifying customer expectation, developing trust, good customer service, providing incentives to customers, business exposure, and good pricing. We found out that this consumer behavior changing strategies to be useful for the Afghan firms too. Therefore, it is clear that customer and its behavior is the same all over the world with a few culture differences, if one of the above strategies can change the behavior of a customer in other countries, it will change in Afghanistan too. The most important thing is that as long as a customer know your product, its value, reasonable price, and he receive satisfaction, he will buy from you and come back to you.

## Short look to the History of Afghan Economy:

The second Aryan Civilization initiated the idea of economy 3200 BP (Before Present) that is called the first economic phase in Afghanistan such that they had changed from nomadic to settled lifestyle. In regards to this, spinning of wool, cutting materials, sewing, domesticating lives tocks, using animals (Camel, Donkey, and Horse) for transportation, and the introduction of writing and literacy were the first products and services done as business

activities in that era. The history states that changes in economy have been slow until Ahmad Sha Durani Era but after the fall of Hotaki Era, Ahmad Shah Durani created Afghanistan as a free and powerful nation in terms of socialization and economy. It is worth mentioned that there is not enough data to prove that what specific steps have been done in improving Afghan Economy (Habibi 1967). The long history of Afghan economy tells that Afghanistan focused more on political economy rather than social as well. The 19 century was not only a notable era for economic reform in Afghanistan but also the current fast growing economies countries have also brought more significant changes in their economies and hence they kept the same way but Afghanistan remained back due to the four-decade war despite a few positive changes at the earliest of 19th century.

Until mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, we witnessed improvements in commercial and trade activities both internally and externally. Despite exports and imports, a number of significant infrastructures were built such as hydraulic power stations, roads and highways, and communication systems. Meanwhile, political and commercial relations were also established with major European and Asian countries. After mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Afghanistan was largely self-sufficient and significant exporter of agricultural products (Najeb 2007). In fact, it is very obvious that the Soviet Union invasion and the civil war destroyed everything including the Afghan economy those was developed in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. These includes the destruction of villages, irrigation systems, land and garden, roads, companies, and hydro powers which these destructions were very severe (Liakhvosky 2001). Following the US attack in 2001, there have been significant and rapid improvements in Afghanistan economy. A number of notable activities changed the Afghan economy such as re-establishing Industry, agriculture, export and import, banking, production, services, and further steps in transportation. The country made international commercial relations and made

Afghanistan the so-called bridge between the Central and South Asia (Dowdy 2011). Now the new regime (Taliban) once again smashed the Afghan economy to zero level and yet it is not clear what will happen next to what we made in the last two decades. So, one can claim that Afghanistan faced many ups and downs in its economic lifespan but it never had a stable economy in the last 50 years.

### **Consumer Behavior:**

Before addressing any other issues regarding change in consumer behavior, it is worth mentioned that introduction on consumer behavior itself is very vital. Consumer behavior takes in purchasing and other consumption activities of buyers who partake in exchange process. In other words, individuals, groups or organization whose acts are done for the purpose of obtaining products, services or other resources. These acts or processes includes the experience, window shopping, comparison shopping, for the purpose of using and getting their ownership (Consumer Behavior 2012). Experts in consumer behavior expressed their ideas and thoughts about understanding the meaning of consumer behavior. For instance, Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard wrote that acts of individuals, those directly involved in obtaining, using, decision process and disposing of goods and services, are consumer behaviors (Blackwell 1986). This definition seems similar to the first one but only decision which becomes and important consumer behavior is added and hence, completes the understanding of consumer behavior as whole. In addition to those, Berkman and Christopher Gilson made it wiser and more exciting. They claimed that consumer behaviors are acts where they are involved in actual or potential use of market items those includes products, services, retail environments, or even ideas. If one compares all the above definitions, the one initiated by Berkman and Christopher Gilson seems complete and more accurate because the ideas as acts of consumer behaviors are also added. So off course, a consumer behavior must not be done only for product, services or decisions, but also for ideas as well. So, one might always ask a question the why these acts are considered consumer behaviors? There are various answers but a short example will make it clear. Suppose, you plan to buy a new 2023 car next year. Before it happens, you will need to take actions such as searching advertisements, brand, company, design, fittings, color, engine type, gas type and expense, warranty, and payment. You have to take these actions because you cannot make a decision without these acts. Hence, these acts are called consumer behaviors.

### **Types of Consumer Behavior:**

Before to return consumer behaviors, it is significant to understand the four broad consumer behaviors which are categorized by behavioral economists long before. If there is less knowledge about a consumer behavior, a change in the behavior is not

effective. So, a very short addressing on types of consumer behaviors is must. In general, there are four types of consumer behaviors, such as Complex Buying Behavior, Dissonance-Reducing Buying Behavior, Habitual Buying Behavior, and Variety Seeking Behavior. The classification of consumer behavior is the same all over the world markets, and in Afghanistan we have the same four types of consumer behavior but the only difference is that the number of each type of consumer behavior are different in different countries. For example, Afghans might have more habitual and variety buying behaviors rather than complex and dissonance. It is true that Afghanistan has very weak economy and that is why people buy just goods and services for survival. It is important for Afghan investors, firms, sales experts and retailers to understand and notice the following four types of consumers which are the same in each country.

#### **I. Complex Buying Behavior**

Consumers who buy an expensive product, have complex buying behavior because they are extremely involved in purchase decision. It means they take more responsibility in buying that good or service. So, a buyer who is highly involved in buying decision and plans to buy an expensive good or service, this is called complex buying behavior. In this category, consumers do explore more and that is why their behaviors or decision change dramatically because an expensive product or service is very unaccustomed to them. In such buying transaction, there is high risk involved and this is the reason they turn to friends, family, and experts before taking any actions and decisions. In complex buying behavior, each consumer must pass a learning procedure because he needs to change beliefs, attitudes and a purchase choice about the product but it is not easy though. The reason why marketers should have deep knowledge about the product, is that complex buying consumers need understanding of the product or service (Jose 2020). It is for sure that there are such buyers who buy expensive goods or services in Afghanistan such as expensive cars, house, land and other properties. Before buying them, investors or firms experience that they come and go for four or three times, it is because they want to get more information about the product and share this information with family, friends and expert and get consultation from them. In order to better understand the complex buying behavior in Afghanistan, it is important to put one short example here. Suppose a friend of yours plans to buy a small new production firm of shoes for investment, and we know that it is a big decision and involves high risk but he cannot decide soon. So, what he does he do? In order to buy this firm, he refers this to his family, friends, and experts and even he pays to experts. Thus, the behavior will be changed by consulting these group of people.

## II. **Dissonance Reducing Buying Behavior:**

A consumer buys a high price product which is easily available but there are very few differences among brands which gives him low accessibility of choices. Hence, the consumer is highly involved because these are uncommon purchases. In this type of behavior, a consumer will not do more research because he has very few options, limited decision, and forced to buy that product. In this consumer behavior, two situations take place right after the purchase a consumer has made. First, he might be more satisfied because he may think that he made the right decision. Second, he may be dissatisfied because he thinks that this product might not worth the money, I spent on it or he has not gotten enough information about the product before purchasing it. So, in this consumer behavior, either regression or satisfaction happen at great level. Buying car or house insurance will be a good example for this consumer behavior (Clootrack 2022). We have very a smaller number of such consumer buying behaviors because it is mentioned that Afghanistan has very weak economy and people are not able to pay for such products that they are famous brands with high prices. Let's put an example of wearing in Afghanistan. You might have seen or not that there are very small number of people who wear shoes from Nike, Gucci, Puma, Adidas, Dior, Prada, Fendi, Balmain, and many more in Afghanistan and also, we do not have many stores for these products because there is no good market for them in Afghanistan. It is simple because they cannot afford them or somehow people don not like to wear expensive shoes. So that is why we have only a few buyers who have dissonance consumer behavior.

III. **Habitual Buying Behavior:** In this behavior, daily goods or services, which have few significant differences and do not need more thoughts or complex decisions, and the consumer has very low involvement, are purchased. In this behavior, it is very easy for consumer to take decision, because he can buy his favorite brands, regularly experienced ones, the one with least costs, or they are just available in the same store. A loaf of bread, salt, sugar, biscuit, toilet paper, and black tea are easy to buy because there is no need to research or consult for them. In this behavior, consumers just go and buy them. This behavior is mostly, influenced by radio, television, print media, and many local advertisings (Open Learn 2022). If we say that 95% of Afghan buyers have habitual consumer behavior, that is true and correct because we mentioned earlier weak economy allows just eat and find shelter. Since this consumer behavior does not need more involvement, that is why that a young boy can decide what to buy in Afghanistan. Culturally, it is true that young boys or even children around 12 do daily shopping for one family

because it is not hard and these products are easily available in the market. Almost, each person who lives together with a family, experience this shopping era in his time. This consumer behavior is more important for Afghan retailers because a person can easily change his or her behavior and that is why it is important to return back this behavior by different strategies.

## IV. **Variety Seeking Buying Behavior:**

Consumer seeks variety, meaning they look for different products rather than the used one. Still there is less involvement of the consumer because there are significant differences between the brands and also, he wants to try some new ones. It is a switching and the cost may not be high between brands but it also does not mean he is dissatisfied with old brands but he just likes variety. Someone goes for Dunkin Donut today, but tomorrow he wants to try Starbucks. It is just consumers like variety (Jose 2020). In the nature of Afghans, they always try something new and one reason could be that they have not seen many available products in the markets and the second reason would be that they desire to try new thing or they try to show self-importance for having that products. Truly, we have such consumer buying behavior despite the fact that we have weak economy.

### **Problem Statement:**

In Afghanistan and also in other countries, understanding consumer behavior is the only key to find success for both current and new products and the failure of a product is solely depended on the knowledge of consumer reaction towards products, though it is a very hard to access that reaction. It is believed that retailers, and firms do not read the consumer behavior rather they just think that it is their need and they have to buy if they need. They think that if consumer do not need their product, they do not buy it from others too but it is not true in reality. If they need a product, from whom should they buy such that there are many options in the market. The problem is that Afghan traders cannot make new buyers and even they cannot keep the old ones because simply they do not know how to do it. Consumer behavior is not just central to find new clients but it is also very vital to keep the present customers because the existing customers are the back bone of the company and finding new one is not an easy task therefore it takes time and more marketing investment. If a shopper is happy about your particular product, definitely, he will repeat the purchase or vice versa. Recently, the navigation of consumer behavior is a big obstacle for major companies in Afghanistan and hence they lose their current consumers and off course sales which is not something new because it happened many times in the very short history of businesses maneuver in

Afghanistan. This is now becoming a big challenge for Afghan investors because there are fears and concerns of launching new products into the markets besides other problems in the country. It should be believed that a rapid change in consumer behavior puts big companies in great risk and a strong competition will take place. Some Afghan firms even cannot retain their current consumers because they keep changing very easily. They are significant factors that affecting the consumer behaviors and shifting them to other products and service and of course this will be a loss for one firm but an advantage for another. The firms believe that they don't have enough knowledge about the market and its success and customer needs, perceptions, and preferences. They also call that lack of good management with stakeholders such as customers, suppliers, investors, employees and agents, are also the main bases of consumer behavior changing. One of the most remarkable factors that pushes consumer behavior is the customer service which is not properly done in many representing agencies and that is why many firms lose their current costumers rather to make new ones. Lack of using new technologies, slow communication with market, various prices for products in different stores are also consumer behavior changing elements (Slawomir 2014). The factors mentioned above fit the Afghan consumer buying behavior because if one says that there is very low quality or even no customer service in Afghanistan, we should agree with him. If one says that firms and retailers do not have knowledge about their consumers, communication with customers and suppliers, or a good management, we should agree with him. These all factors put the Afghan market into a changing status and thus there is always be a loss of sales and put the firms into bankruptcy and failure.

There is always a question when something happens and the question is what happens if a consumer changes his behavior? It is very simple to say that one brand company will lose its sales due to customer shifting but it is also very important to say that the results of this shifting is very disappointing. The firm that loses sales and customer go through many challenges because it will have less income compared to previous year, and returning that consumer behavior will take time, money and investment in different aspects and gaining that trust is actually very tough mission. For instance, online shopping greatly improves personalized demands, convenience demand, and recognized mind of consumers and hence they are better satisfied (Wang 2015). A change in consumer behavior is one of the noteworthy problems to be solved and many firms that lose both sales and costumers, are trying to solve this problem at their best effort because sales and costumers are their prime source of surviving and generating income. Since, this is very serious problem for the companies, that is why it should be researched and studied for the purpose of finding the applicable solution to this problem in Afghanistan.

In this research study, you will find out that what factors will navigate back consumers to your firm and get back your sales and clients. It will discover that how those changed consumer

behaviors will be returned as previous. This will also show that what specific policy implications will fit the answer of the problem.

### **Research Gap:**

One of the first research gaps is that there is no yet a study either quantitative or qualitative that focuses on consumer behavior and the author finds it very interesting to bring something new in Afghan consumer behavior. Next, losing sales due to a change in consumer buying behavior is a very big problem despite the fact that there are other problems for Afghan firms such as insecurity, lack of facilities, weak border management, and no interests of FDI into the country. It is very important to solve this problem by conducting a small research study. Research work on this problem is necessary because launching new products into the Afghan market will not possible if the problem still exists. In this short paper, we will put the applicable policies for firms, investors and retailers to enjoy the expected income via sales.

### **Objective of the Study:**

- i. To find out that which factors will return back consumer buying behavior in Afghanistan.
- ii. What consumer behavior strategies that worked in other countries will work in Afghanistan too.
- iii. Which policies to put into practice to increase sales and revenue

### **Research Methodology:**

This research study is actually a sales increase plan for Afghan firms and investors who believe they face sales decrease in the short history of their investments. This is a qualitative research work which will not use an econometric model rather than just using online sources. We simply use the secondary data from books, journals, research works, data engines, and success stories which brought a change in consumer behaviors. We believe that a factor for returning consumer behavior can work in other less developing countries, may work in Afghanistan too.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **i. Identify Costumer Expectations:**

The first and important strategy to change the consumer behavior toward your product is to recognize customer expectations, meaning that what will customer receive as a value, service, and benefit after purchasing your product (Van 2015). It is important to have repeated customers because your business without customer is not a business. Identifying customer expectations is very vital because it generates recurrence customers and statistics shows that it costs at least 5 times more money to keep the old customer than getting new one. Understanding your customer

needs and expectation will keep you away from bad competition because you meet their expectations and they will come back, you will make new ones and they will not shift to your competitors around you. On average, if your customer had a bad experience from your goods and service, they will tell 15 people but if he had good experience, he will tell 11 people, so it is significant to keep your business survived. There are several approaches to identify your customer expectations in no time. First, ask them directly via phone call or an email, and this way they will tell their experience about your service and goods. Major firms first ask their customer service team which is another source to be asked because they are in frontline and understand the customer expectations daily because customers give feedback to customer service right after their experience from service and goods. You can also learn more from your social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, and your website which most of time customer put reviews there either good or negative (Ring Central 2020).

Murat Ismet came with a helpful discovery while studying how meeting customer expectations increase mass customers in mall restaurant in Turkey in 2013. He did a survey and made his work as success story and a case study. He found out that small restaurants who were focusing on identifying customer expectations had an increase in their customer number. This means that if they increased customers, their sales are increased by the same margin too. Murat found out that these firms changed customers behaviors by applying this strategy and they make good sales (Murat 2013). It is believed that this strategy can work in Afghanistan too because we mentioned that customers are mostly similar in their behaviors. The customers want their expectations from your product or service, that is it. It is mandatory for Afghan sellers to know their customer expectations because this is the first strategy to change your customer behavior and this way you will make new customers and keep the old ones. The final result will be an increase in your sales which is your main objective. Understanding customer expectation is not new in Afghanistan but it is not achieved by the Afghan firms. There are very few businesses who follow their customer expectations but the rest are silent. If we ask customers from different firms that how many times they are asked about their experience from a product or service, they will say non. So, it is strongly advised that the Afghan firms put this into consideration that understanding customer expectation is a key to keep their customer, make new ones and an increase sale.

## ii. **Develop Trust:**

Good consumer trust encourages customers to stay with firm because their consumer behavior will not change which will lead to increase in sales. It is very vital that your customers should have faith on your firm that you really provide the right good or service for them based on their preferences. If there is no trust from customers, they will not buy them because they are not sure if you

provide the right quality of goods and services to them. If you have their trust, then the customer will have good experience, loyalty and you can hold them for longer period and also you make more clients and more sales because they share everything about goods and services with other friends and family which is a free marketing for your firm. Besides that, evolving trust in a product, brand, or a firm is a noteworthy part of making consumer company affiliation. Mutual communication is one of the core factors evaluating on the level of consumer trust. Also, marketing as a tool of communication that gets a lot of attention and reactions is one noted part of building trust with consumers. Firms take on several energies to make such advertising messages more exciting to beneficiaries and thus pursue new ways to entice customers attention (Bachnik 2018).

Since consumer trust is one of the leading factors of making new customers and retaining the old ones, it is also important to address that how consumer trust is gained by the firms. The most remarkable factor of gaining consumer trust is brand image which is consumer interpretation of your company, its products and services or simply how consumers feel about your firm and how they perceive it. It is mentioned that brand strength, uniqueness and excellence is the key influencer of gaining trust. The better the brand image, the greater the consumer trust and the more sales. Security is another notable determinant of gaining consumer trust which by security, we mean the security of consumer transaction and data and this is always requested and wished by the consumer. If a firm makes good security of transaction and data, a trust is built here and hence consumers stays for long periods with the same firms. Finally perceived risk is also insisted as a negative factor of consumer trust which means that if there is high perceived risk, there will be less or no trust from consumers. By perceived risk, we mean financial risks, physical risks, social risks, and time risk which can change the consumer behavior very easily. So, if a customer feels secure in terms of financial, social, physical, and timing, then he will have trust on your products and firms (Febrina 2020). Furthermore, a brand that has reputation, predictability, and competency have grater positive effects on consumer trust and the trust is built when costumers use the same brand, and have data about it. A good brand reputation meets the certainty of consumers, and it provided fitness to meet customer needs and thus helps to develop consumer trust (Afzal 2010).

Now it is obvious that the consumer trust is a great influencer of increase in customers and also sales, that is why it is much needed to share a few experiences of various sectors who gained consumer trust and increased their sales by changing customer behaviors. A study by Srika and Noam which titles "Consumer Trust in an Internet Store" in US discovered that consumer trust stimulated the online purchase from US merchants and thus more purchase means more sales and costumers (Srika 1999). In a study by IBM, revealed that 20% of customer have consumer trust on food producing companies, 60% of consumers have no trust on some food producing companies (IBM 2013). It is clear that food firms who gained consumer trust have high volume of customers

and sales comparing to those who do not have consumer trust. Actually, those food producing firms have changed consumer behavior by gaining consumer trust and boosted their sales. Another research work about consumer trust conducted in Indian Food business, has shown that around 41% of customers have consumer trust because those firms have provided detail information about brand, security, health risks and benefits. The rest, had complaints and concerns about food product healthiness and risks (Jamuda 2015). Besides that, Dr. Nischay, Chanda, Ankita, and Kaur have another research experiment that came up with similar inferences. They added that having consumer trust means customer retention and raising sales. They claimed that there is a positive effect between consumer trust and consumer retention. Their research experiment does not specify any specific sectors, countries or businesses which means that consumer trust can help to boost your sales by retaining your firms anywhere and in any business (Chanda 2015). Here, it is important to insist that those firms that have consumer trust, have actually changed consumer behavior by consumer trust and thus they increased sales and costumers. A Research survey shows that Amazon has the highest consumer trust in E-commerce and thus gained the market comparing to other E-commerce such that they various strategies to gain that trust which security and loyalty to its customers. This is also a sign of more customers and sales (Amazon 2017). E-bay retained 165 million active buyers which is also a sign of good consumer trust and they also launched a program name "Authentication" which has further security and confidence for consumers (E-Bay 2017).

Since consumer trust plays an important in boosting sales and retention of customers in many business sectors and many countries, that is why we believe that it will work for Afghan firms as well but the only differences are in the size of business. It should be claimed that Consumer trust either for a small firm or a big firm has the same objective which increase or retain customer and raise your sales. There is no specific data that which percentage of Afghan Firms gained their consumer trust in last 20 years or in their business history. It should be asked that how many firms provided detail information about their product risks either financial or physical. This is also noticed that how many or which firms advertised their brands in terms of security and loyalty. Firms who provide actual information about their product and service risks, and security will retain the old customer and also make new ones and boost their sales. So, it is strongly advised to the Afghan Firms and sellers to gain their consumer trust by providing product information, consumer security, and the risks associated with product, this way this will make customers and sales.

### iii. **Customer Service:**

The next determinant of changing consumer behavior is customer service which also a factor for increasing sales and customers either in providing service or goods. In customer service, there are two parties involving who interacts directly, one a firm representative who is selling, and another a buyer who purchase.

The customers that have expectation for a good quality of your goods or service, they also have expectations from your customer service. In a firm or retail shop, frontline employees have crucial role in communicating the values of their goods or service which is because of close contact (Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler, 2013). Better and large number of customer-oriented manners, such as good understanding and listening skills lead to more satisfactory perceptions of service quality of customers. These observations and skills of frontline employees' impact customer valuations and future intents and finally seller performance (Maxham, Netemeyer, and Lichtentein, 2008). The connection between the frontline employees and venders' performance provides confidence that the profit feter commences by hiring the right people, developing people, providing needed support, and keeping the best people to deliver high quality customer service (Heskett 1994). In recent years, customers necessitated accessibility, convenience, and liability in customer service which a technology can assist and serve customers and technology accompanied customer service from face-to-face interactions to telephone and mobile communications (Harris 2010). Customer service becomes a key element to businesses successes in all matters such as success in marketplace, retaining customers and increase sales (Meyer 2014). Besides other factors such as Service quality, product variety, product quality, and perceived value, customer service is the only determinant that gives customer satisfaction and customer loyalty such that make new customers and generates more sales and income (Dr. Emel 2011). It is believed that profit can be gained for customers and firms which is achieved by good customer service. It is true in many circumstances that the final decision by the consumers is not made only on product price but also on better customer service. Customer service is the noted element to survive in the most competed market (Lucie 2010). This is a need for business to have quality customer service to retain its customers and make sales, and a business without a good customer service would lead to fail (Charlene 2016).

Since customer service plays an important role in business success, retaining customers and making sales, that is why it is also important to put some strategies that how a good customer service is improved. First, seeking customer feedback is important because as seller you are supposed to know that what are the needs, experiences, and aching points of your customers. One can do customer feedback by telephone surveys, feedback email forms, and a complaint system. Strong customer service team means hire and train professionals in the right skills such as empathy and patience, good communication skills, and knowledge which lead to a good customer service. The other notable strategy is to use Customer Relationship Management platforms which provides useful insights about customer needs, improves customer interaction and engagement, and your customer can get access to what was promised with them. Leveraging multi-Channel serving is another way to improve customer service. Around 69% of customers buy from brands who provided multi-channel for services such as mobile devices, social media, and self-service (Gaurav 2018).

There are numerous studies and research conducted that how a good customer services increased sales and customers and we put a couple of experiences from them that hopefully will work in Afghanistan because customer service is the same in many countries only cultural differences distinguish them in a few matters. A Lebanese pharmaceuticals company was losing sales for the past six years despite the fact that it has good product quality proved in its history. In conducting this research in 20 local hospitals, the result showed that customers were satisfied with the product quality, price, location but there were issues in sales team meaning that they were not satisfied with customer service, as a result they were losing sales. It has recommended that if this company focus on finishing offer quotations, reply in timely manner, visiting client more often, changing the behavior of customer care department, spending in retaining, increase the satisfaction of clients, lead to an increase in its revenue (Jennifer 2018). Publix is the number one customer service grocery chain in US, it has a huge number of customers and great sales. Costco which a home décor chain, is the second position in good customer service. There are other big and small firms that improved their customer services and made new customers and sales increase, such as IKEA, Trade Joes, Wegman, HubSpot, Shopify, Poll fish, Apple, Rackspace, Google and many more (Claire 2019).

If a good customer service increase sales and make new customers, why it would not do in Afghanistan besides that Afghans culturally like good manner, truth, smile, and their needs to be met. Since a good customer service do work in India, Lebanon, United State, Russia and many more countries, it might work in Afghanistan too. Many of you as buyers have experienced that customer service is very weak and you may have no good experience while buying however their products and services are good quality. Why many good food restaurants lose customers right after their first year of business, why other good quality Afghan produced products have no sales? Retailers have concerns that their customers have changed their behaviors or their customers are shifting to other stores. Because there is a big problem, which there is not a good customer service. You might have experienced that when you bought many products in 5 different stores, nobody would have said hello to you, nobody gave you detail information about the product, nobody called you back on how satisfied are you from their goods or services and nobody gave or showed you their contacts to call them back in case you are happy from their services and goods. Now this is the problem, that customers do not return back to those stores who do not have good customer services in Afghanistan. Your information, good manner, and support affect their buying behavior and hence they will repeat buying from you, and that way you change their consumer behavior, make or retain customers, and finally make sales. It can be an advice for Afghan firms and stores to provide a good customer service and this way they can make sales by retaining their old customers. So, one can argue that good customer service can change consumer behaviors in Afghanistan too.

#### **iv. Provide Incentives:**

Incentive could be used in many situations but in sales business, it is something given by the firm or seller that can motivate their customers and prospects to take some specific actions such as purchase and repetition in return. It is one of the most succeeded ways of keeping the current customers and making new. There are many examples of incentives but here we address a few ensuing. For example, price reduction such as “Buy one get one” is one of the most remarkable customer incentives which it motivates customers to buy more and come again and again. Provide samples which is also a good incentive. If it is a food store, a restaurant, and any other businesses, you can provide free samples and this way they will be motivated and buy from you. Bonus product incentive is always helpful because you give them a free product in return of a specific amount sale or products. For instance, buy iPad pro and get free charging case or anything that fits the explanation (Jenny 2013). One thing should be noted that customers want incentive that is relevant to their purchase product or something useful such as buying 100\$ cosmetics and receives a free cosmetic case. This means that not everything given to customers can be customer incentives.

Giving customer incentives can be an important factor of increasing customers, sales and income. In a survey, 62 percentage of respondents said that customer incentive can improve their opinion on brands. Customer incentives can lead to more expensive and large purchases in terms of quantity. Higher income buyers show interests in incentives and the research showed that after receiving incentives, they buy more items, shopping in different stores that give incentives, buying a different brand that give rewards, and buying more expensive items. When customer incentives are given, then customers think they valuable customers, they will drive to your brand, they will be loyalist, and brand advocates. It is worth mentioned that women are more interested than men in incentive programs because a survey showed that 62% women buy more and expensive items when they receive incentives or rewards. In recent world, 85% of buying decision is made by women and we found out that women prefer more incentives than men (Virtual 2015). So that is why customer incentives is another way of making sales and customers because it affects directly the customer behavior toward your products and brands.

Since the customer incentive programs are very vital and play a crucial role in retaining and increasing customers and sales, we put a few short case studies of those who successfully launched their customer incentive programs and received good returns from them. The IKEA a Swedish company that sells various home furniture, kitchen tools, and different products, has made major success in making new customers by launching a few customer incentives such as free instore coffee, damage protection, special discounts on products. They have 1.6 million US customers. Target a general merchandise retailer in US has celebrated 80 million customers by applying special reward programs such as 5% saving for each customer and a 30 days' time period for

returning goods for exchange. Starbucks approached 21 million members in 2021 by launching reward program that would allow members to refill on coffee and tea, and discounts to those members who keep coming back to the Starbucks (Stewart 2022).

Although we put samples of very large firms but we believe that these incentive programs do work in very small businesses because an incentive is always a reward for a customer of either a large firm or a small firm and the behavior of a customer is the same in all times. It should be said that a customer buys as long as he is satisfied and receive something in return from buying your or any firm products. This (Incentive) can be true in Afghanistan too because the main objective is to satisfy your customers, give them value, make them special, and provide something in return besides the product he buys, such as discount, free relevant products, membership savings, and many more which is based on the type of product and service. Suppose an Afghan trader has supermarkets in the country that sell general merchandise products. If they launch a reward program that a customer who buys 10 times from the same store will save 3% in cash back each time he buys from our stores. Or he can provide small free drinks either coffee or tea for those customers who visits and buy from their stores. It is for sure that he will make new customers, retain the old customers, increase sales and make good profit comparing to the no reward program in his stores. The rationale behind this is that the firm actually changes the behavior of customers toward his business by launching these rewards programs. Incentive programs are very common in other part of the world but maybe very new in Afghanistan. There is a strong belief that applying such reward programs will better work in Afghan businesses in terms of increasing customers and sales by changing customer behaviors. At this point, it is strongly advised to the Afghan traders to focus on reward programs for the purpose of increasing their sales and customers and this way, they will make it to the mission and vision of their businesses.

#### v. **Business Exposure:**

The next important strategy for increasing a firm customers and sales is the exposure of business which is done for changing consumer behavior. The business exposure means that your goods and services must be seen or have great visibility in a competitive market which is a great step for a firm success and survival. The more your company, product, and service are known or heard by the market, the more success the firm will be; however, it is very difficult to have complete status in the market. Recently, traders attempt at their best to make known their firm in the market. There are various reasons why the business exposure is very important for firms or sellers. For example, it will attract more customers into your business because potential buyers will know your company, brand, product or service and the quality what you have to offer them which will lead to attracting more customers, sales, and profits. This will also help in reputation of your business because people will hear and see constantly what you offer, name, and brand and thus it will make a positive association between your business and customers. So, once it happens, higher sales will

be expected which is the main objective of the firms. People will trust your business because they know you, your product, service, name and brand and hear the good things about your business, hence, a trust will take place between your business and customers and people will do business with you (Brian 2022).

Numerous experts published many ways to increase business exposure but here we address a few very accepted ways of how to increase your business exposure. First, it is important to conduct street marketing starting from the very close spots of your business locations. A firm specific marketers or employees can print various posters that can be placed on train or bus stations, parks, benches, billboard or any other common areas that seem busy which will lead your business at local scale and close potential buyers will know your brand, product and name. Next, promotional items could be another opportunity to make exposure that includes trade shows, business events, marketing conferences, network gatherings and many more. These promotional items can be different but it depends on the type of business you have. For instance, a fast-food restaurant will have branded water bottles, a homemade sauce or any other things that fit is relevant to the business. Contest marketing is also highly recommended in increasing business exposure which includes photo contest, caption contest, and sweepstakes. In photo contest, a customer or user posts or submit your brand in any social media with your business hashtag, then you select randomly and provide free product or service to him. In caption contest, a user comments positively on your product photo and you select the one with good support and more likes and then giving him or her a free good or service. In sweepstakes, a user tags his or her friends on your product post and you give him or her free good or service. Finally, social media plays an important role in fast speed marketing for your goods or services. Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and twitter are so remarkable in this regard. There you can post your goods and services, and then reply to users' comments, complaints, and their suggestions (Shutter 2020).

A few examples of large auto mobile companies will further enhance the importance business exposure. Mercedes Benz plans to launch a pure electric car, called "The Rich Man's Big Toy" in 2024. Before the car comes to the real market, they already put this car exposure with detailed information and quality. This will be an expensive car and only the rich men can buy it. Now their product has already much exposure and close the deadline, many rich customers will be in line to buy this car. Some customers might be saving money from now on and some will have different plans to buy this car. As result, the company will have good sales and customer at the time or release and thus will make profit (I media 2022). The same is true for Tesla, Toyota, Ford, Audi, Honda and many more famous Auto Mobile producing companies do business exposure or in other words, product exposure via various channels which nowadays online exposure has the best results in successful business exposure. It should be noted that it is not only true for very big firms but it is true for even very small businesses. A small business product exposure can give the same

result in sales in-customer increase. As long as you have known product or service in the market, you will have customers and sales.

Focusing back in Afghanistan, it is very necessary for all Afghan firms to do business exposure and for sure it will give very acceptable results in terms of customers and sales increase. One reason could be that the new generation can read and write and are able to use the new technology specially the social media. It is believed that social media is mostly used for fun and social relations but there are people who even do business by these channels. Business exposure is not well and completely done by the firms as much as needed and this is the reason why many new product or services are failed on their first year because they cannot make market for them or in other words, they can find customers. Now, we found out that a business exposure is experienced almost all over the world with better inferences, and it is expected the same in Afghanistan too because your customers just need to know your brand, product or service and information. Once you have your customers know about your product or service, then they are yours and you will have sales and profit with a long-term survival. Once again, it is highly recommended for the Afghan firms to do business exposure and thus make customers and sales by changing their consumer behaviors.

#### vi. Good Pricing:

The price is the amount a customer pays for a product or service which is important because it governs a firm profit and also survival. There are several pricing strategies which are based in various situations, for instance, markup pricing strategy where companies adding a specific margin after computing product cost such as Walmart. Target return on investment pricing is another strategy which firms add a percentage of return on investment after calculating the product cost such as auto mobile, gas and electric firms. Competitive pricing strategy sets prices based on competitors scale such as food restaurants (Alexandre 2010). Penetrating pricing strategy is the backbone of a business which is also called promotional pricing, involves setting the prices below market or even below product costs. This is done when a new product is launched into the market or a firm wants entry to the market and plans to have more market share for its product or services. There are also a few factors that affect pricing for different firms, for instance, the external image of a firm, geographical location, discounts, and price discrimination (Tanya 2015). Good pricing is very important because it is the only element that produces revenue such that it has direct impacts on the firm's bottom line and firm's profit. Good pricing also plays a key role in creating customer value, customer relationship and managing customer relationship. It is also the main determinant of creating attracting new customers, retaining the old, and making reasonable profit and sales (Lisa 2019).

There are exist many ways to set a good price for your product or service but the most noted point is that what type of price do you want to set which is based on the type of business, situation,

geography, and product or service history. But here, we will focus on penetration pricing strategy. In penetrating pricing strategy, market analysts set lower prices than the current market and thus aiming to have more market share, and it also breaks down the purchasing behavior of customers. After allocating the product or service costs and determining the current market prices and then setting your product or service price below the market one. The main objective of penetrating price strategy is that it gives fast sales and keeps your competitors away in the market and also selling a very large number of products, therefore making customers, and profit, is the core advantage of penetrating pricing strategy (Sahoum 2019).

It is found out that there are many industries that they use penetration pricing strategy for the purpose of getting large market share and profit. These include streaming companies such T.V, Internet and cable providers, banking institutions, hospitality, grocery stores, airlines, clothing retailers, cell phone providers, online education institutions, and food manufacturing firms. Brodington grocery stores provide 2.99 \$ discount (Lower Price) to its regular members. Fastlane internet provider charge lower price in the market for the first year and its revenue increased by 20% in the first six months. Fine Tune Show gives free 30 days access to all programs and then charge 4.99\$ monthly. Landlocked Airlines reduces its prices in winter and making good sales. Marriage Style, a wedding clothing firm, provide lower price to those who spends 500\$ or more. Finally, Pop Culture, selling carbonated beverage sells its one soda can for .99\$. The main objectives of the above-mentioned firms are to gain large market share, make new customers and sales, and make more future profit (Indeed 2021).

We learned that almost each firm or business experienced a good pricing strategy with very good results such as large market share, sales increase and more profit. It should be true in Afghanistan too because those large firms who benefited from good pricing were once small as they are now in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, we have superstores, telecommunications, grocery stores and many more business that a good pricing strategy will work for their goodness. Why not a penetration pricing strategy will not work in Afghanistan? It is for sure that there are no reasons that it will not work because a customer is always a customer either in Afghanistan or abroad. The behavior of customers is the same in each country. Giving him the same quality product available in the market with a lower price or discount will give mutual benefits to both the customer and the firm. Since a penetration pricing strategy is a successful pricing strategy and it gave good results in terms of sale and customer increase, that is why it will work in Afghanistan too if the firms and sellers just do a real product or service cost analysis and hence, they will make sales and more customers which are the main objectives of their businesses.

#### Conclusion and Policy Implications

Consumer behavior is one of the key research issues recently in market and economic studies. Changing consumer behavior

toward someone's product and services is a difficult job but the results are very inspiring. This is a qualitative research work which the data is taken from published books, journals, and verified websites. The main objective of this research is to discover that which strategies worked in the rest of the world in changing consumer behaviors that increased good customers and sales. We believe that the same factors that affected consumer behaviors in other countries will fit into the Afghan firms in terms of making market share, customers and sales. In this regard, at least six changing behavior strategies were successful in different countries such as identifying customer expectation which is the first that affects sales due to making good customer. It means that what will customer receive as a value, service, and benefit after purchasing your product. Identifying customer expectation generates recurrence customers and will keep you away from bad competition. We also found the developing trust brings good relation between the firms and customer which enhances sales and buyers at great level. Customer service was also found vital because the good manners, detailed information about the product and services, and listening to customer carefully, give the confidence to consumer buy your good or service and thus a firm can make good customer and sales. Providing incentives to customers, business exposure, and good pricing have given good results in generating customers and revenue. We found out this consumer behavior changing strategies to be useful for the Afghan firms too. Therefore, it is clear that customer and its behavior is the same all over the world with a few culture differences, if one of the above strategies can change the behavior of a customer in one country, it will change in Afghanistan too. The most important thing is that as long as a customer know your product, its value, reasonable price, and he receive satisfaction, he will buy from you and come back to you.

Since this research study is done mainly for the Afghan firms and sellers, the following a few policies are worth mentioned for application in Afghan firms:

1. Understanding customer expectation is very vital because it will generate new customers and the Afghan firms will make good sales. Social media channels, an email or a phone call for feedback will give you a good understanding of customer expectation. Applying one of them for now, will help you more in staying in the market
2. Developing trust is also important because it brings good relationship between you and the customers and also it connects the firms with the customers. Gaining this trust assists in creating new customers and retaining old customers. Good brand image, security of the customers and perceived risks are important factors of developing trust. It is advised that providing good brand image, information about customer security, and informing consumers about risk either financial or physical will help in gaining this trust.
3. Customer comes an important factor of making sales. Training your first line employees, providing good manners, giving value to customer and informing customers about the

product is a customer service. It helps to retain the current customers.

4. Giving customer incentives is remarkable in this study. Giving discounts, or something relevant to the sale product will encourage consumer to buy, especially women. Price reduction, bonus and buy two get one are good options for providing incentives. It belongs to you and your business type that what type of incentive you can provide.
5. Make yourself visible, meaning put your business name everywhere such customers will know you. Business exposure is also very important that brings new customers to your door. It depends on your budget that how much you can expose your business.
6. Finally good pricing is a method to encourage good customers to your stores. There are many types of good pricing for different business but penetration is recommended in Afghanistan and for Afghan firms. Setting a price below market such that it will not be less than product cost, will give you good sales and customers however you will make less profit on one sale.

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