

## The Social Marketing and its Role in customer Retention

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### Abstract

The current research aims to diagnose the nature of the impact between the research variables represented by the strategy of social marketing and customer retention, as well as indicating the level of awareness of these variables and their sub-dimensions at the headquarters of the Earthlink Communications Company as the field of the current research, by working on describing, diagnosing and measuring the research variables, leading to presenting a number Among the conclusions and recommendations that contribute to strengthening these variables in the researched company, and based on the importance of variables in various organizations in general and their importance in the researched organization in particular.

The researcher adopted the descriptive analytical approach in order to achieve the objectives of the research, and the research community was represented by the managers of the headquarters of the Earthlink Communications Company, who numbered (98) individuals, and the data was collected in a comprehensive inventory method from (96) managers, who constitute the research sample holding a bachelor's degree or above exclusively, and thus are The research sample is an intentional, intentional sample equal to the research community. The researcher adopted the questionnaire as a main tool in collecting data related to the practical side. It included (55) items, in addition to field visits that enhance the process of data collection, processing and analysis using a number of statistical tools such as (arithmetic mean, deviation Normative, coefficient of difference, relative importance, normal distribution test, confirmatory factor analysis, Cronbach's alpha test, correlation coefficient and multiple regression) through the use of statistical analysis programs (SPSS V.23), (AMOS V.23) to test the main and subsidiary hypotheses of the research. The field verification came in harmony with the objectives of the research, and supported the validity of the hypotheses and the validity of its hypothetical model, which proved the existence of relationships between the variables of the current research, and reached a set of results, the most important of which was (the presence of positive and significant impact relationships for the variable of social marketing strategy with its dimensions in retaining customers with its dimensions in the researched company.(In the light of the conclusions reached by the research, a number of recommendations were presented, the most important of which is (the need to increase the investment of the positive impact of the social marketing strategy in retaining customers and employing it in order to change the behavior and habits of society and paying attention to the social environment in a way that contributes to enhancing its performance by providing the appropriate environment).

**Keywords: social marketing strategy, customer retention.**

### **Introduction:**

The concept of social marketing strategy is one of the relatively recent concepts in the field of managing organizations in general and business organizations in particular. These behaviors have direct harm that threatens human lives, so organizations are moving today towards adopting important and vital issues in a rapidly changing world by trying to confront its unstable external and internal environmental variables. On which depends the success and development of the organization.

Today, the subject of social marketing strategy (SML) is classified as one of the important topics in the science of marketing because of its great impact in our current time on societies, which has attracted the attention of many researchers and service institutions in order to change the behavior of societies by spreading messages that range from avoiding the harms of smoking and marketing for a diet. Good or avoiding transitional diseases, epidemics, prevention of drug addiction, etc. Social marketing strategy research is considered one of the most difficult studies due to its recent inception and the lack of references and research related to it, in addition to its association with many disciplines such as sociology, psychology, strategy, and other sciences, and social marketing A phenomenon that can be seen in most developed countries, so many developing countries tended to consider marketing as the focus and basis of any activity to achieve goals, which is concerned with social change in conjunction with the recent development in marketing thought, which has the ability to change the behaviors and attitudes of the public and increase awareness towards issues facing society.

### **Methodology**

- A. The problem of the study :The research problem was summarized by the following main question: (How aware is EarthLink Communications of the social marketing strategy in retaining customers?)

The following questions stem from this question:

1. What is the nature of the intellectual debate about the relationship of the social marketing strategy to customer retention in the Earthlink Communications Company?
  2. What is the availability of the social marketing strategy and its dimensions in the researched company?
  3. What is the extent of customer retention and its dimensions in the researched company?
  4. What is the nature of the correlation between social marketing strategy and customer retention in the researched company?
  5. What is the nature of the impact of the social marketing strategy on retaining customers in the researched company?
- B. **Objectives of the study:** In light of the study's questions and objectives, it aims to achieve a number of objectives as follows:
1. Building a contemporary knowledge framework as well as providing an accurate scientific vision of the variables that will be researched (social marketing strategy, customer retention) and their sub-dimensions.
  2. Defining and diagnosing the social marketing strategy and identifying its recent trends in Earthlink Communications Company.
  3. Research and reveal the degree of customer retention in the researched company.

4. Diagnosing and explaining the influence relationships of the social marketing strategy in retaining customers in the researched company..
- C. The importance of the study:** The importance of the research stems from noticing the growing interest in these topics (social marketing strategy, customer retention) in developed countries and trying to simulate these topics in the Arab environment, especially in developing countries, by discussing the possibility of adapting them in order to apply them according to the perspective adopted by the current research, In addition to discussing one of the recent topics in the field of marketing science and its management represented by diagnosing the role of the social marketing strategy in retaining customers, and perhaps addressing the research of such topics whose importance is no longer hidden, would open new horizons for researchers to enter into its midst as well as encourage them to discuss the details of dimensions And other elements that were not dealt with in the current research, which achieves an accumulation of knowledge to enrich the Arab library with advanced research.
- D. Hypothesis of the study:** There is a significant impact relationship between the social marketing strategy and its dimensions (social product, social pricing, social promotion, social distribution, change policy, partnership) in retaining customers with its dimensions (direction, organizational structure, selection, information systems, staffing) at the headquarters Earthlink Telecom Company.
- E. Population and sample of the study:** For the purpose of practical testing of the research scheme, achieving its goals, and confirming the communication between scientific research and community institutions, the researcher chose the headquarters of the EarthLink Communications Company in Baghdad Governorate as the current research field, Accordingly, as a result of what was proposed, the researcher seeks to accurately determine the research community, which is represented by the managers of the headquarters of the researched company in Baghdad, holders of a diploma or above, whose number is (98) managers divided into (75) departments in the company.  
As for the research sample, a comprehensive enumeration was made of the research community, which became its sample, for all the higher departments of the company, and they are at the level (managers, department managers, their assistants, divisional and branch officials), and thus the sample becomes equal to the research community, meaning that the researcher targeted a sample of (100%) of the size The total community, so the sample was (96) individuals. This percentage is good in administrative and social research.

### **Theoretical framework**

- A. Social marketing strategy:** Social marketing exists in every social activity of society that affects every one of its members, and communication processes between community organizations and individuals depend on social marketing, as each organization encourages a set of practices and behaviors (Al-Shehri, 2011: 19), and the basic essence of marketing is to meet the needs and desires Consumers (Wymer, 2017: 1)), marketing is an organizational function and a set of processes to create, communicate, deliver value to consumers, and manage the relationship with customers and consumers in order to benefit the company and its stakeholders (Galvão et al, 2012: 38). The first foundations of social marketing in the United States were during the colonial phase (Zainuddin & et al, 2011: 3), and the first settlers traded among themselves as retailers, wholesalers and traveling salesmen, but marketing on a large scale in the United States did not begin to take shape until the industrial revolution in The eighteenth century (Stanton, 2001: 7), and it is worth noting that marketing has become at the present time not only for profitable companies, but also for the non-profit

community based on the American Marketing Association, which defined marketing as an activity, an institutional tool, and the process of making and changing consumer, customer and society values (Dahlstrom, 2011;5), therefore, with the development of marketing, social marketing emerged as an important and urgent function in the non-profit business environment, and took a positive turn to strive to market its scope by creating value for society and individuals as well as for promoting institutions and their customers, which is included in the introduction of social and behavioral changes in the application of marketing concepts (monthly , 2011: 15).

**B. The importance of social marketing strategy:**

1. The social marketing strategy contributes to influencing the values and ideas of individuals and societies, encouraging rationalization in consumption and combating extravagance. It also contributes to drawing an organized approach by bringing about social change using marketing programs and tools so that the values of society are in line with the public interest.
2. Civil society organizations can formulate a framework for action, which is an organized approach in order to research the actual needs of customers, as the social marketing strategy helps increase resources for voluntary organizations and attracts the attention and attention of financiers to sponsor programs and activities (Allam, 2021: (311).
3. The social marketing strategy provides the possibility of complementing the educational and legal curricula for behavior change, and therefore the social marketing strategy should be strengthened and integrated for organizations to obtain the desired benefits (Basil & Wymer, 2014: 18).

**C. Dimensions of social marketing strategy:** The core and foundation of the social marketing strategy is represented in the so-called social marketing mix, and this mix differs according to the researched phenomenon and the target audience, which consists of (social product, social price, social distribution, and social promotion) for social products and services, abbreviated to it (4ps), and because of the interlocking nature, I added Other elements (Marie, 1993; 6). Moreover, despite the differing opinions of researchers in defining the mix and dimensions of social marketing, many researchers referred to the dimensions of social marketing represented in (social product, social pricing, social promotion and social distribution) (Desouki et al., 2022: 36) and emphasis must be placed on the marketer Social should take into account each of the four elements of marketing (product, place, price, promotion) as they are applicable to promote ideas, attitudes and behaviors that benefit the target audience and society (Rumm, 2005: 122), and in the same regard Kotler & Zaltman suggested, (1971)) a model based on the four elements of marketing (often referred to as the 4Ps) to be included in a social marketing strategy (product, place, price, and promotion), which is currently the most widely used classification for structuring social marketing tools.

**A. Customer retention:** Customer retention today is one of the most important functions of marketing management in particular and management in general (Darzi & Bhat, 2017: 3), which includes a degree of ambiguity because it represents a theoretical structure that cannot be observed directly. Conceptually, there is a great discrepancy by researchers and scholars in Determining the methods by which customers are retained, and there are also large differences in determining the method by which they are separated in one way or another (Gerpot & et al, 2001: 252), and many researchers indicated that the terms (customer retention and customer loyalty) were used in the past to describe The same phenomenon (Ranaweera & Neely, 2003: 235), and customer loyalty is equal to customer retention (Zhang & at al, 2014: 269), or loyalty is an integral part of the customer retention process (Silva & Yapa, 2015, 2). The literature indicates that there is relatively little research published in the

field of customer retention, where the pioneers of this field are the American consulting organization (Bain & Company), whose focus was mainly on the impact of customer retention on the profitability of the organization (Clark, 1997: 295), and in this context, the concept of Customer retention applies to all types of business organizations (Wilson & et al, 1995: 1), and the literature also emphasized the need for service providers to invest in customer retention as a profitable investment track record rather than in acquiring new customers (Min & et al, 2016: 3). This is because the goal of business organizations is to establish professionalism, and customer retention is the key to achieving this goal, and the long-term relationship between the customer and the organization can lead to a profitable relationship and other benefits (Adzoyi & et al, 2018: 58). There is no doubt that the loss of an existing customer negatively affects the profits of the organization (Caroline & Elizabeth, 2014: 10), especially when a customer is absent. Tamaddoni & et al, 2017: 1). It is imperative that building customer retention focus on repeat care which is different from buying behavior and loyalty, although closely related to it, and the marketer is seen as playing a more active role in the relationship between customers and the organization (Hennig-Thurau & Klee, 1997: 741), moreover Customer retention focuses on the main drivers of cost, quality, and customer experience. A number of factors may lead to customer retention such as satisfaction, service quality, customer relationship management, marketing strategies, and customer acquisition (Jeng & Bailey, 2012: 1572). The ability to retain customers and secure customer loyalty also affects the profitability of the organization and is therefore essential for any organization (Iarsson & Broström, 2019: 152).

**B. The Importance of Customer retention:** Excellent organizations do their best to retain their customers, and the best approach to customer retention is to provide customer satisfaction that results in strong customer loyalty (Kotler & et al, 1999: 483), and customer retention has become more important in a competitive market compared to customer acquisition (Darzi & bhat, 2017: 4 ), and the marketing approach draws attention to the importance of retaining customers, and not to the importance of retaining only, but to the importance of attracting customers with a focus on developing long-term relationships with existing or existing customers (Al-Atoum et al., 2012: 230), so customer retention is of great importance not only from the perspective Private marketing but also from a public policy perspective (Díaz, 2017: 77), so customer retention is very important and becomes a preoccupation for many organizations (Thaichon & Quach, 2015: 198), and nowadays it is more preferable for companies compared to customer acquisition where they are located. Many of the benefits achieved by the organization to retain existing customers, for example, the organization should invest less time to retain existing customers than the time invested in obtaining new customers (Polas & et al, 2018: 3), and can Arguing that it is the most important component of the customer lifetime value framework (ascarza & et al, 2017: 3), therefore, today's focus by organizations on customer retention is very important for improving organizational performance and competitiveness (Hanaysha, 2018). (Rosenberg & Czepiel, 1984: 45) indicated that the customer retention area needs more attention for two reasons:

1. Effectiveness: In most cases, marketing can build a loyal following of repeat buyers. This activity can guarantee a growing market share for the organization.
2. Efficiency: It is estimated that the organization spends an average of six times what it spends to obtain a new customer, than it spends to obtain an existing customer, and the leaky customer reduces the profits of the organization in large proportions.

**C. Dimensions of Customer retention:** Customer retention standards and measures seem to differ in terms of relevance and importance from one product category to another, and it is

clear that finding the best definition and measures is vital for how the organization evaluates its performance and relates this performance to actions in the market (Aspinall, 2001: 81), and the view involves creating customers. In the long run, the approach should include five components (value, satisfaction, loyalty, retention, and profitability). This direct perspective is reflected in the proposed customer value/retention model (Weinstein, 2002: 264). Financial products are purchased and owned for a specified period of time as a result of which you remain a customer until all products are closed or expired. With regard to the final status of financial products there are two types of products: First, “products that have a fixed term and as a result automatically expire when the expiry date is reached.” and the second, “Products that do not have a specific expiration date and therefore receive a (non-final) label, as they only stop when the customer requests to cancel this product” (Larivière & Poel, 2005: 473).

Some of the antecedents to customer retention include “likeability, identification, commitment, trust, willingness to recommend, and buy-back intent.” Many literature has discussed several ways to measure customer retention namely “behavioural, quantitative, attitudinal, and composite.” In the context of services, retention is known as While the behavioral model shows that the frequency of purchase is one measure of retention, this does not differentiate between the loyal customer from others. The researcher relied in his research on a study (Farghar, 2003) to measure the variable of customer retention, which includes five dimensions: orientation, organizational structure, selection, information systems, and staffing).

**Third: The practical aspect:**

**A. Describe and diagnose the dimensions of the social marketing strategy:**

The social marketing strategy variable includes six dimensions represented by (social product, social pricing, social promotion, social distribution, change policy, partnership). The sample's responses will be analyzed on these six dimensions, as the following table shows:

**Table (1)**

**The arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation for social marketing strategy variable dimensions:**

<b>n</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>MENS</b>	<b>S.D</b>	<b>C.V</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>social product</b>	<b>3.74</b>	<b>1.07</b>	<b>28.84</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Social pricing</b>	<b>3.656</b>	<b>1.012</b>	<b>27.74</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>social promotion</b>	<b>32.12</b>	<b>1.124</b>	<b>3.537</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>social distribution</b>	<b>28.57</b>	<b>1.045</b>	<b>3.667</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Politics</b>	<b>29.14</b>	<b>1.040</b>	<b>3.570</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Partnership</b>	<b>28.01</b>	<b>0.998</b>	<b>3.562</b>
<b>General</b>		<b>29.07</b>	<b>1.04</b>	<b>3.61</b>

Table (1) shows that the explanatory variable (social marketing strategy) in its total form obtained a (high) arithmetic mean of (3.61) and a coefficient of difference (29.07%). This confirms that the sample members at the company's headquarters are interested in social products and providing appropriate services to customers and the target audience. , and working to create an appropriate work environment of a sustainable social nature, and through the results of the table (1) the first dimension (the social product) ranked first in terms of the proportions of the social mediator, and this confirms a scientific conclusion that the managers at the headquarters of the Earthlink company are keen to create the appropriate climate for the

completion of social tasks And providing additional services to subscribers, and my dimension (Social Distribution and Social Pricing) got a close rank among the rest of the dimensions of this variable, while the dimension (Social Promotion) came in the final order, amounting to (3.53).

**B. Describe and diagnose the dimensions of customer retention:** The customer retention variable includes five dimensions represented by (guidance, organizational structure, selection, information systems, staffing) where the answers of the research sample, who are the company's managers, will be analyzed about these dimensions as follows:

table(2)

The arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation for the dimensions of customer retention variable:

N	dimensions	MENS	S.D	C.V
1	Guidance	25.31	0.951	3.758
2	organizational structure	24.65	0.934	3.766
3	the choice	21.06	0.797	3.787
4	Information systems	28.02	1.025	3.672
5	Career staffing	29.78	1.108	3.727
General		25.73	0.963	3.742

Table (2) shows that the second respondent variable (customer retention) in its total form obtained a (high) arithmetic mean of (3.74) and a coefficient of difference (25.73%). suitable for them in order to retain customers and achieve the desired goals, and through the results of table (2) the first dimension (choice) got the first place in terms of the ratios of the social mediator, and this confirms a scientific conclusion that the managers at the headquarters of the Earthlink company are keen to allow space for employees to choose the method of dealing with The customer to complete tasks and provide an added service to subscribers with the aim of remaining a dealer with the company, while (information systems) came after (information systems) in the final ranking, amounting to (3.67).

**C. Hypothesis testing:** Through the table (3) it is possible to view the results of the data of testing the main hypothesis, which states: (There is a significant impact relationship of the social marketing strategy and its dimensions on retaining customers in the Earthlink Telecom Company).

Table (3) shows the relationship of the effect of social marketing strategy dimensions on customer retention

path	B	T	P	R <sup>2</sup> -F-Sig.	decision
Social Product >> Customer Retention	0.196	2.217	0.029	R <sup>2</sup> = 0.750 F= 44.489 Sig.=0.000	Acceptance
Social Pricing >> Customer Retention	0.157	1.745	0.084		
Social Promotion >> Customer Retention	0.344	4.288	0.000		
Social Distribution >> Customer Retention	0.168	2.498	0.014		
Change Policy>>> Customer Retention	0.203	2.591	0.011		
Partnership >>> customer retention	0.079	1.158	0.250		
N=96	F tabular value =3.62		tabular value t=2.113	Significant Models=4	

The calculated (F) value was (44.489), which is higher than its tabular value, which amounts to (3.62) at a significant level of (0.05). (There is a statistically significant effect relationship between the dimensions of the social marketing strategy (social product, social pricing, social promotion, social distribution, change policy, partnership) in retaining customers at the headquarters of Earthlink Communications Company).

The value of (R<sup>2</sup>) for the multiple regression model was (0.734), and this indicates that the dimensions of the social marketing strategy explain (73.4%) of the changes that occur in the dependent variable (customer retention), while the remaining percentage is due to other variables not included in the regression model. Regarding the significance of the regression model, the value of (Sig.) was (0.000), which is less than (0.05), and this justifies the significance of the multiple regression model and confirms the acceptance of the main hypothesis.

With regard to the effect of the dimensions of the explanatory variable (social marketing strategy) on the responsive variable (customer retention), we see that there is a clear significant effect for each of the dimensions (social product, social promotion, social distribution, change policy). The (P-value) reached ( 0.029, 0.000, 0.014, 0.011), respectively, which is less than (0.05), and with regard to the marginal propensity coefficient ( $\beta$ ) for the significant dimensions (0.196, 0.344, 0.168, 0.203), respectively, and this confirms that the change in the dimension (social product) by One unit leads to a change in customer retention by (19.6%), and a change in the (social entertainment) dimension of one unit leads to a change in customer retention by (34.4%), and a change in the (social distribution) dimension leads to a change in customer retention by (16.8%), and that the change in the (change policy) dimension leads to a change in customer retention by (20.3%), and this indicates that (social product, social promotion, social distribution, change policy) receives clear attention from the company's management, and activate it appropriately with the behavior of individuals and society to achieve the goals. The desired change in unethical behaviors, and the significance of these dimensions confirms the value of (Sig.) of (0.029, 0.000, 0.014, 0.011), respectively. As for the two dimensions (social pricing, partnership), it did not achieve a significant effect on the dependent variable (retention of customers), and this can be explained by the fact that the management of EarthLink did not realize the active role in these dimensions and the extent of their impact, and regarding the (t) values of the moral dimensions (social product, social promotion, social distribution, change policy), its values amounted to (2.217, 4.288, 2.498, 2.591), respectively, which are greater than their tabular values of (2.113), which is another confirmation of the significant effect of these dimensions on retention.

**Conclusions:** The results of the analysis proved that there is a positive effect of significant significance for the explanatory variable of the social marketing strategy with its sub-dimensions in retaining customers with its sub-dimensions in Earthlink Communications Company, as it was revealed through the influence of the dimensions of the social marketing strategy consisting of (social product, social pricing, social promotion, social distribution, policy change, partnership) in retaining customers and its dimensions represented by (guidance, organizational structure, selection, information systems, staffing), that is, the greater the social marketing strategy by one unit, the greater the retention of customers by the same percentage.

**Recommendations:** Exploiting the positive impact of the social marketing strategy in retaining customers, and employing it in the researched company in a way that contributes to



enhancing the company's performance to retain its customers for a longer period, by providing them with appropriate services.

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