

EXPLORING THE SRILANKAN MODERN TRADE RETAILER PRACTICES TO SATISFY CUSTOMERS DURING COVID-19

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By following organized and systematic approaches towards the chain of distribution, modern trade outlets have made a variety of offerings and wider assortments available under one roof. As opposed to general trade, modern trade distinguishes itself for the different measures taken to improve the availability, and its operations had to undergo numerous changes to enhance customer satisfaction in the Covid-19 Pandemic. It caused a worldwide pandemic circumstance, bringing about a total lockdown to control the spreading of the infection. Subsequently, satisfying the customers has gotten more challenging for the retailers. Focusing upon that issue, this study was carried out with two objectives as to explore the factors that affect customer satisfaction during Covid-19 from retailers' perspective and to explore the modern trade retailer practices on Customer satisfaction during the pandemic. Following a qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews conducted with middle-level managers of large-scale modern trade retailers in Sri Lanka. Findings revealed that according to the retailers' perspective, the usual factors that affect customer satisfaction in a non-pandemic situation had been changed in the pandemic situation. Therefore, modern trade retailers have focused more on customers' safety and perceived risk compared to loyalty service quality, and trust. Further, this study identified the practices that modern trade retailers used to satisfy their customers during the Covid-19 pandemic situation. The discoveries will be essential in recognizing the variables in satisfying the customers during Covid-19 in addition to distinguish future dangers related to Covid-19 which will affect the industry.

Keywords: *Covid-19; Customer satisfaction; Modern trade; Retailer behavior*
