

Customer dissatisfaction and delight: completely different concepts, or part of a satisfaction continuum?

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Abstract: Customer satisfaction is one of the most important concepts in economic research literature, having been the focus of countless studies. However, as economic knowledge enhances, there is a need for defining new concepts related to satisfaction, which place emphasis on different aspects: customer dissatisfaction and customer delight. Observing that researchers still have not yet adopted a clear definition of the concepts, nor reached a consensus regarding the relationship between the three constructs, the current paper aims to provide a clearer image of the three terms, by emphasizing both the differences between them and the common elements, which in turn can be used in the creation of better measurement scales for more adequate research instruments. The method of research is analysis of secondary data, collected from relevant literature on satisfaction through snowball technique. The findings suggest that the main difference between customer satisfaction and customer delight is the degree and intensity of the affective response they provide to the consumption experience, even though one cannot be reached without the other, while customer dissatisfaction, despite common usage in research instruments, might not be the opposite of satisfaction but that of customer delight.

Keywords: customer satisfaction, customer delight, customer dissatisfaction, concept definition, affective response, utilitarian benefits, hedonic benefits.

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Introduction

Customer satisfaction is one of the key elements of a company's financial performance and profitability (Anderson and Fornell, 1994; Fornell, 1992). However, although customer satisfaction has been a relevant concept since the 19th century (Hussain et al., 2011), literature abounds with confusing and often contradictory definitions. In fact, satisfaction has been conceptualized in time as a process, the result of a process, cognitive evaluation, affective evaluation, general sentiment of fulfilment and even as having conative elements. Still, none of these definitions has been completely accepted by the scientific community. In fact, in our opinion, the closest a researcher can get to defining

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satisfaction is by expanding on the framework provided by Giese and Cote (2000) for each individual study:

1. *Satisfaction is a summary affective response, based on a cognitive evaluation, which has a variable intensity – the holistic nature of satisfaction;*
2. *The central point of satisfaction can be the moment of choosing, acquiring or consuming the product and/or the service;*
3. *The determining point of satisfaction varies according to context, but its general duration is limited – the temporal existence of satisfaction.*

The proposed framework brings into focus the affective aspect of the defining satisfaction (Pizam and Ellis, 1999), but it does not eliminate the importance of cognitive evaluation in determining satisfaction – it underlines that although reasoning might form the basis of satisfaction, it is not satisfaction itself.

However, even with this framework, the lack of scientific consensus on what customer satisfaction really is, creates three major problems in customer satisfaction research. The fact that there is no clear definition of the concept has resulted in not having an accepted standard regarding how the concept should be measured in a given context, and that in turn it makes the results provided by a particular research hard to compare with other results on the same subject. For a long time these problems have affected the structure and the outcomes reported by marketing research on customer satisfaction, as the degree in which study results from a specific research can be generalized, explained, justified and compared is very limited.

To make matters more confusing, customer satisfaction literature has also introduced two other concepts: customer dissatisfaction and customer delight, which also lack a proper definition. And while these terms are clearly linked with customer satisfaction, the nature of the relationship between them – if they are faces of the same construct of completely different notions – has yet to be determined.

Because of this, the aim of the current paper is to make a thorough literature review that will provide the reader with a clearer view on the relationship between customer satisfaction, dissatisfaction and delight. And while the current study lacks a practical component, the theoretical aspects explored in it should help researchers develop better measurements for adequate research instruments, which in turn will lead to a better understanding of customer behaviour in general, and customer satisfaction in particular.

Customer dissatisfaction

When compared with the literature on satisfaction, the concept of dissatisfaction has been the focus of a far fewer numbers of studies. Usually analyzed in comparison with satisfaction, most of the articles have tried to discover whether there is a one-dimensional link between satisfaction and dissatisfaction, or if the concepts are actually different dimensions. Because of

that, researchers have tried to conceptualize and operationalise dissatisfaction as either the opposite of satisfaction (e.g.: „completely satisfied”/„completely dissatisfied” (Mittal et al., 1999); „very satisfied”/ „very dissatisfied” (Spreng et al., 1996)); or as different dimensions (Mano and Oliver, 1993; Westbrook and Oliver, 1991).

Because the literature does not offer a comprehensible definition of customer dissatisfaction, the study on customers' perceptions on satisfaction which defined its core characteristics (Giese and Cote, 2000) has also discovered that dissatisfaction has three key components: it is an affective response; it has a clear focus point; and it happens at a determined point in time. This comes to show that the same framework used to defining satisfaction can be used for defining dissatisfaction as well. However, a marked difference the study underlines is that the affective response the customers have to dissatisfying experiences has a more extreme feel, respondents using words to describe their experience such as: “angry”, “disappointed”, “furious”, “cheated”, “bored” (Giese and Cote, 2000). Furthermore, when dissatisfaction is about a particular product, the focus point is the basic product rather than the attributes of the developed product. Also, dissatisfaction might be triggered earlier than satisfaction and have a longer duration, as customers have the tendency of retaining negative feelings regarding a specific brand for a longer period of time (Colgate and Danaher, 2000).

Moreover, research has shown that the impact certain product or service characteristics has on satisfaction demonstrates the concept cannot be considered from a one-dimensional point of view (Faleye et al., 2000; Fuchs and Weiermair, 2004; Fuller and Matzler, 2008; Matzler et al., 2003; Mittal et al., 1998; Slevitch and Oh, 2010; Tontini and Silveira, 2007). And since the idea that satisfaction is a one-dimensional, or global concept, is the basis of the theory that one factor determines both satisfaction (when everything works as it should), and dissatisfaction (when things do not work as they should) the previously mentioned studies prove the existence of product characteristics which might generate satisfaction, yet their absence might not lead to dissatisfaction.

The reverse is possible as well, since there are elements, which can generate dissatisfaction, yet eliminating them from the environment will not automatically lead to satisfaction (Kano et al., 1984). This approach was introduced by Herzberg (1966), based on older research, where he considers satisfaction and dissatisfaction as two distinct dimensions. Herzberg proposes two types of factors: one type called “motivation factors” associated with exceptionally positive responses, while the second one is called “hygiene factors” associated with “exceptionally negative” responses. The two types of factors are not opposed, but have different natures – one condition, which generates satisfaction cannot generate dissatisfaction as well, and vice versa, reasons why Herzberg considers the two factors to be independent. And while

the complete independence between satisfaction and dissatisfaction has yet to be demonstrated, the difference between the two concepts has been recognized by studies employing the critical incident technique, showing that product features affect in different ways the degree of satisfaction a customer feels (Cadotte and Turgeon, 1988; Holloway and Beatty, 2008; Johnston, 1995).

Analyzing both the complaints and the compliments left by customers to a number of restaurants, Cadotte and Turgeon (1988) have divided the attributes of the dining experience into four main categories: *satisfaction generators* – factors creating satisfaction when present, but their absence doesn't generate dissatisfaction; *dissatisfaction generators* – factors generating dissatisfaction when not at optimum levels, yet they don't generate compliments when exceeding customers' expectations; *critical attributes* – that can lead to both complaints and compliments; and *neutral attributes* – which will not lead to either compliments or complaints.

Another study performed by Bitner et al. (1990) starting from the definition of the critical incident – an event which has either a positive or negative significant contribution to an activity or phenomenon – applies the critical incident technique to the service industry in order to identify precisely the instances that generate customer satisfaction, the ones that generate dissatisfaction and to what degree the two are complete opposites or mirror images. Their study suggests that is highly unlikely the same opportunity or general aspect can be considered a major cause of both satisfaction and dissatisfaction. A similar conclusion was reached by Bleuel (1990) who considers that there is no exact correspondence between satisfaction and dissatisfaction, suggesting that the attributes which are satisfaction generators are different from those leading to dissatisfaction. And while the critical incident technique was initially created to analyze a specific experience (Bitner et al., 1990), it can also be used for bigger scenarios. For example, some studies focused on destination image created by dissatisfaction or by negative incidents affecting the overall tourism experience (Callan, 1998; Jackson et al., 1996; Petrick et al., 2006; Pritchard and Havitz, 2006; Wang et al., 2000) have concluded that dissatisfaction sources are not necessarily the opposite of those that cause satisfaction. All these affirmations support the conclusion reached by Pizam and Ellis (1999, p. 332) when discussing the Cadotte and Turgeon (1988) study:

„If Cadotte and Turgeon's findings are confirmed by other studies, we might indeed revise the prevailing theory about the nature of customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction and reject the notion that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are two extremes on one continuum.”

And if that is the case, could the opposite situation be true and satisfaction and dissatisfaction be really independent of one another? A big part of

satisfaction literature does not agree, especially when categorizing the factors which generate satisfaction (Fuller and Matzler, 2008; Matzler and Sauerwein, 2002) by using as starting point the Kano Model (Kano et al., 1984). According to this model, the following types of product and/or service attributes can be identified: *necessity factors* – their absence leads to intense dissatisfaction, while their existence does not raise customer satisfaction; *enthusiasm factors* – they increase satisfaction when available, but do not generate dissatisfaction when absent; and finally *performance factors* – which can evolve in both directions, as a cause for satisfaction when performing at optimum levels, or a cause of dissatisfaction when failing to reach customers' expectations.

The first question that arises from this is related to the way specific factor satisfaction or dissatisfaction can influence customer satisfaction with the whole product (Oliva et al., 1992). This can also be considered as an argument in favour of evaluating every aspect of a product or service through two different lenses: one to determine the satisfaction generated by that particular characteristic, and the second to determine dissatisfaction. This process was the starting point to the Mittal et al. (1998) study that analyzes the asymmetric impact performance attributes have on global satisfaction and re-purchase intentions. The results of the study show that as long as some service features have been classified by respondents in both the positive and the negative category, there can be no real independence between the concept of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, although the relationship between them has yet to be clearly established.

Finally, just like in the case of satisfaction, the scientific literature has yet to come with a valid and entirely accepted definition of dissatisfaction. Furthermore, while both concepts clearly have common aspects (Giese and Cote, 2000), there are too many differences for them to be considered opposite faces of the same construct, the more the reason why there should be a better delimitation between them when using both, in studies and research, in order to eliminate confusion and improve scientific rigor.

Customer delight

Due to all the perceived benefits, satisfaction has on customer loyalty and profit margins, there is no wonder that in recent decades, customer satisfaction has been the focal point of the relationship that companies have tried to build between their customers and their products. However, as numerous managers have found out, high levels of customer satisfaction don't automatically translate into highly loyal customers. In fact, as research has shown, over 60% of the clients who abandoned one brand for a competing one, have declared themselves "satisfied" with their choice prior to that change (Jones and Sasser Jr., 1995), while another study pointed out that at least a part of the customers who have declared themselves dissatisfied with a particular product or service have continued to buy from the original provider (Bendapudi and Berry, 1997). This paradox has spurred the scientific community into searching for new

behaviour concepts that could offer a logical explanation to the phenomenon, and therefore there has been coined a new term “customer delight”. Applied whenever there is the need to explain why satisfied customers would go to the competition; customer delight has been defined as a superior level of customer satisfaction and the key to true customer loyalty (Oliver et al., 1997).

But what does “customer delight” imply and what is the difference between delight and satisfaction? Rust and Oliver (2000) have conceptualized customer delight as a surprisingly positive expectancy disconfirmation, which in turn generates emotions with a high degree of excitement, such as euphoria and enthusiasm, while customer satisfaction implies only exceeding the customer’s expectations. To put it more clearly into context, the expectation disconfirmation theory as it was first stated by Oliver (1980), implies that customer expectations can be positively disconfirmed in two ways: (1) the difference between performance and expectations falls into a normal interval which, although it generates satisfaction, it is not surprising in itself, and (2) the performance level is so surprisingly above the level of expectations that it generates delight. Other authors, such as Gross (1994) (cited in Rust and Oliver, 2000), use the term of “positively outrageous service” for that type of service, which will induce customer delight, because it is unexpected, extraordinary and positively off the chart.

Taking this into consideration, it can be said that the differences between satisfaction and delight are the element of surprise (Berman, 2005; Magnini et al., 2011; Oliver et al., 1997; Rust and Oliver, 2000) and the fact that delight appears to have a more pronounced affective component than satisfaction (Berman, 2005). To explain this point of view, the scientific literature has analyzed delight from two different perspectives: one that starts from the concentric structure of product levels (Rust and Oliver, 2000), while the second perspective takes into account the type of happiness customers experience while consuming products (Kumar et al., 2001).

Starting from the idea that products and services can be analyzed as a set of concentric levels (core benefit → basic product → expected product → augmented product → potential product), each circle representing a set of specific attributes (Kotler and Keller, 2006, p. 372) and the Kano Model (Berger et al., 1993; Kano et al., 1984) in which product or service attributes can be placed into specific groups such as: basic factors, delight factors and performance factors, Fuller and Matzler (2008) propose *The three-factor theory of satisfaction*, that includes:

1. *Necessity factors* (dissatisfaction generators) – they are the minimum necessary elements a product or service must contain, and they will generate dissatisfaction if their performance is not up to customer’s expectations, yet their exceeding expectations performance will not lead to satisfaction. There is an asymmetric relationship between the performance of one attribute and global satisfaction, because the poor performance of these factors has a greater impact on total satisfaction than their strong

performance. Therefore, it can be said that by being part of the basic product, these factors are a matter of necessity, yet they are insufficient for the creation of satisfaction. To the customers, there are key elements of the basic product, reason why they mustn't be absent, either partially or totally.

2. *Enthusiasm factors* (satisfaction generators) – they represent those factors which will increase customer satisfaction with their presence, yet their lack will not lead to dissatisfaction. Their strong performance has a greater impact on total satisfaction than their poor performance, which in turn leads to an asymmetric relationship between the two of them. These factors are not expected; their presence is surprising, and therefore, they are the main generators of delight.
3. *Performance factors* (hybrids) – they lead to satisfaction when they have a strong performance or dissatisfaction when their performance is poor. In the case of these factors, their relationship with total satisfaction is symmetric and linear.

The three-factor theory of satisfaction has important implications for business practice because the existence of the necessity factors is the threshold for entering a certain market (Berman, 2005). If they exist at a satisfactory level, increasing their performance will not lead to a higher level of total satisfaction as they represent the needs and desires explicitly stated by the customers. For this reason, one organization must be competitive when it comes to their performance. On the other hand, enthusiasm factors are unexpected and surprising. Because their main result is delight, an organization should try to use them as a competitive advantage.

However, the three-factor theory of satisfaction has several practical setbacks especially when it comes to creating and maintaining enthusiasm factors, which call for a serious effort from the organization trying to employ them. Because enthusiasm factors are not elements that customers expect or explicitly desire, one question that arises is 'for how long a specific factor will lead to customer delight, before turning into something that customers explicitly expect (performance factor), or even become a necessity factor?'

Analysing the issue Rust and Oliver (2000) propose that delight, like all extreme positive or negative emotions is temporary, and maintaining it for a long period of time leads to stress, which in turn bring about a series of biological mechanisms that eventually will counteract it (Solomon, 1980). And that means that when individuals claim to have felt delight for a long period of time, they actually refer to the memory of that state (Levine, 1997), which can then trigger temporal emotional cues. Furthermore, these memories are fallible and that makes determining for how long they remain in memory a difficult endeavour.

If this is the matter, then the memory function in the case of delight has negative implications for managers. When customers remember the feeling of delight and what aspects lead to it, in time they will start to consider those elements as normal and delight becomes the norm as expectations rise.

Expectations, as they are evaluated, are made after experiencing the performance of a certain product or service (Boulding et al., 1993; Johnson et al., 1995), and performance that triggers delight intensifies this effect. Furthermore, the effect is not limited only to the clients of a certain company, but it implies a larger group of consumers of the same product who experience increasing expectations through the positive word-of-mouth made by the actual clients (Buttle, 1998). The implications for organizations are numerous. On one hand, customer satisfaction and delight will be harder to attain in the future, because in order to surprise the customer with each buying experience, the cost of delight becomes unpractical and prohibitive (Rust and Oliver, 2000); but on the other hand, increasing the level on customer expectations for the entire market through word-of-mouth can have serious negative consequences on the competition, especially when the competitive advantage the company has is a non-imitable or hard-to-copy element.

A second type of delight identified by research is *seductive delight* – which vanishes with time, but whose memory stays (Rust and Oliver, 2000). This type of delight is triggered when someone listens to a favourite song, or watches a favourite movie. The individual retains the memory of delight and will experience it again every time they repeat the experience or activate the stimuli associated with it. In terms of consumption, the customers understand that this type of delight is unique and cannot be inserted in the future versions of the product.

Starting from here it can be said there are two different kinds of delight, one which raises customer expectations in time, and one that can be fully appreciated only in one instance, but which it can be searched for by repeating the consumption of the product or service. It is also entirely possible that if enough time has passed between the instances of purchase, then the customers might have forgotten about the delight they have previously experienced. However, anecdotic evidence seems to imply the existence of a third type, when delight appears as a singular event each time a service or a product gets consumed, especially when the triggering factor is a random event like perceived fate or happenstance.

As a conclusion, customer delight can be defined either as a continuous state that leads to increasingly higher customer expectations or a temporary state that can be reminded in the presence of certain stimuli or it can be entirely forgotten. These three states define three types of delight: assimilated, reminded and transitory (Rust and Oliver, 2000).

Secondly, customer delight asks for additional effort from the organizations which strive towards it. Because of that, managers need to be aware of the costs delight implies and the effects it has on both customer satisfaction and loyalty. Some of the enthusiasm factors are easily provided while others ask for serious investments, therefore, no organization should embark in a strategy based on customer delight without having the resources needed to continue it for a long period of time. This is a consequence of the fact that if a company provides with

one instance which generates customer delight, returning to a previous level of quality would have negative consequences. After having raised the level of customer expectations, returning to previous levels of quality is likely to generate dissatisfaction, which has been known to have long-term negative effects over the company (Homburg and Furst, 2005). These dissatisfied customers would generate complaints and lower levels of demand, which in turn will negatively affect future company profits, all the more reasons not to launch a program dedicated to delighting customers if there are no long-term plans to keep it.

While the conceptualization of delight proposed by Rust and Oliver (2000) is in the author's opinion the best known in satisfaction literature, there is another reference study (Kumar et al., 2001) describing delight as a construct based on the type of happiness the customers experience. The first type is described as a combination of pleasure and surprise, while the alternative type of delight comes from happiness without the contribution of surprise. This secondary type of delight states that happiness is the result of having the customer involved in a long-term, mutually satisfying relationship with the company providing the needed products and services; which is the result of the company having a proactive attitude towards identifying the customer's needs and desires without having them explicitly stated and, as a result, the customer is loyal. This type of delight is of particular interest to managers since it eliminates some of the pitfalls previously associated with creating customer delight as a continuously surprising experience (Fuller and Matzler, 2008), while at the same time it implies several additional costs for active market research in order to know better the clients so that their needs and desires get anticipated (Kumar et al., 2001).

The relationship between customer satisfaction, customer delight and customer dissatisfaction

As previously shown, even with all the studies published so far there is still no clear consensus regarding how the three concepts: customer satisfaction, customer delight and customer dissatisfaction relate to one another, or what is the exact nature of the relationship between them. And while *The three-factor theory of satisfaction* as proposed by Fuller and Matzler (2008) offers some insight into how the customer responses associated with each concept might be generated by specific products or services attributes and their perceived performance, there is another point of view regarding customer behaviour that might give a clearer image on the issue – the benefits customer gain after consuming a product or a service.

The previously stated perspective which acknowledges that the consumption experience generates positive, negative or mixed feelings (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Westbrook and Oliver, 1991), has been the basis of several studies trying to differentiate between the concepts by using the idea of utilitarian versus hedonic consumption benefits as a starting point. For

example, while investigating the causal relationship between satisfaction and delight, Chitturi et al. (2008) have tried to draw a parallel between the consumption of utilitarian benefits, which generate feelings of confidence and security – antecedents of satisfaction; and the consumption of hedonic benefits – that lead to joy and enthusiasm (Chitturi et al., 2007; Higgins, 1997), to come to the following conclusions:

1. Products and services which answer or exceed utilitarian expectations for customers will have a significant influence on generating customer satisfaction;
2. Products and services which answer or exceed hedonic expectations for customers have a significant influence on generating customer delight, with the essential condition that the customer has previously attained satisfaction.

One particularly interesting conclusion the study performed by Chitturi et al. (2008) reaches is that customer delight might not be directly influenced by satisfaction in itself. This is of especially interest for managers because it points out that improving the utilitarian benefits a product possesses well beyond the customer's expectation and needs might lead to a higher degree of satisfaction, but not to delight. In order to generate delight, the offer must also appeal to a customer's desire for hedonic benefits, which in turn will lead to sentiments of happiness and excitement. Furthermore, what research has shown is that the majority of consumers consider hedonic benefits and dimensions to be more important than the utilitarian ones, but only when a certain "utilitarian" standard has been reached – meaning a specific degree of satisfaction (Chitturi et al., 2007). This aspect is consistent with the principle of precedence associated with Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Plăiaș, 1997); and the results obtained by Kivetz and Simonson (2002) that show customers pay more attention to the product's utilitarian dimension (in contrast to/opposed to its hedonic dimension), unless they consider that they are entitled to "indulge".

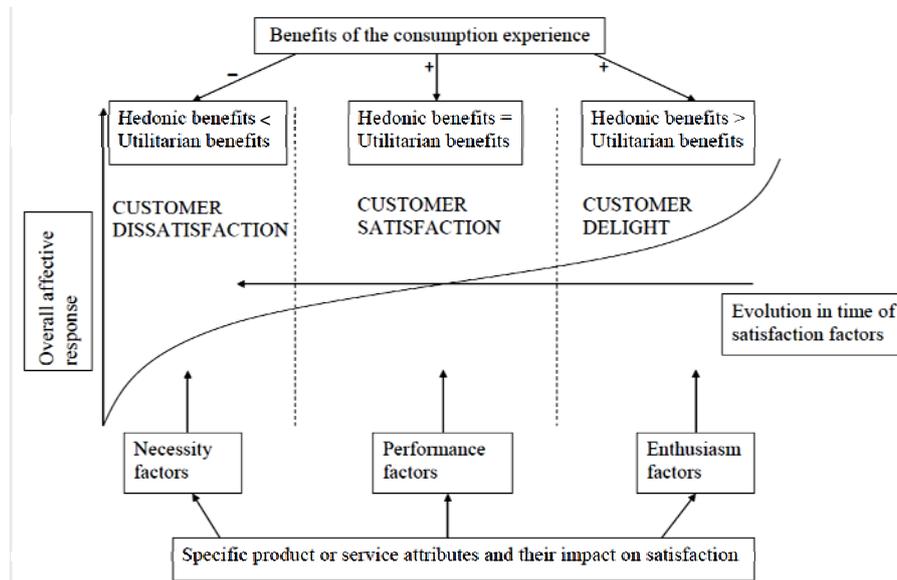
Yet, as formerly stated, the feeling generated by the consumption experience can also be negative when the product performance does not rise to previous customer expectations (Mano and Oliver, 1993; Westbrook, 1987). In this case, the nature of those negative feelings can also be related to the type of consumption benefits the products failed to deliver, and the customers will experience both anger and dissatisfaction (Chitturi et al., 2007, 2008). And while anger is associated with the product failing to deliver necessity factors (or utilitarian benefits), because in this case, customers are more likely to experience intense negative emotions (Roseman, 1991), dissatisfaction is the answer to the product failing to deliver enthusiasm factors (or hedonic benefits).

There are two arguments supporting the previously stated point of view. Firstly, according to the precedence principle, customers are more inclined to pay attention to whether a product's functional aspects are up to the standard,

and any failure in this aspect is seen as being someone else's fault (e.g. the blame is passed on to the producer). And according to the appraisal theory, as stated by Roseman (1991), negative outcomes that can be attributed to outside sources are very likely to lead to anger. The second argument relates to the situation in which customers choose a more utilitarian product instead of an attractive one, in order to be sure of the product's functionality. They are already experiencing a certain degree of disappointment because of this exchange (Chitturi et al., 2007). Furthermore, should the utilitarian aspects of the product not be enough to provide the expected utilitarian benefits, the negative emotional state created so, will be added to the negative feelings already manifesting – dissatisfaction, and the resulting state would be a much more intense feeling, more likely manifested as anger towards the producer or the seller (Roseman, 1991).

Seeing things from this perspective, provides us with a partial answer to the question, whether satisfaction and dissatisfaction are opposing limits placed on the same continuum or mirror images (Bitner et al., 1990; Cadotte et al., 1987; Pizam and Ellis, 1999). Apparently, when it comes to the feelings experienced by customers when consuming the utilitarian or hedonic benefits a product or service provides, dissatisfaction is the opposite of delight, with satisfaction providing the middle ground between them (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The relationship between customer satisfaction, dissatisfaction and delight



However, even when taking into account both *The three-factor theory of satisfaction* (Fuller and Matzler, 2008) and the evidence provided by Chitturi et al. (2008) when analyzing the impact of utilitarian versus hedonic consumption

benefits, any proposed model still has many unanswered questions. One of the most important is the one related to the evolution in time of specific product attributes that influence satisfaction. Rust and Oliver (2000) have already analyzed the way enthusiasm factors transform in time into performance factors, and eventually necessity factors, but the reverse has never been studied. In fact, there are no studies the author could find which evaluated whether necessity factors can actually become performance factors when related to a certain context. Also the measurement of thresholds between concepts, how large is the gap between them, or even their exact nature, has yet to be determined, something which can provide fertile ground for future studies in the field of customer behaviour and satisfaction.

Also, by identifying satisfaction as middle ground between dissatisfaction and delight, perhaps the most important conclusion is the one related to the construction of measurement scales used in satisfaction research. First of all, overall satisfaction should never be measured as global concept, but broken down into its components, for a clearer image on how the factors interact, while involved in its creation. And secondly, current research which uses the terms of “dissatisfied” and “satisfied” as the extremes to which customers must evaluate their experience, disregards half of the picture, since the proper order of terms should have been “dissatisfied”, “satisfied” and “delighted”.

Conclusions and study limitations

Literature on customer satisfaction agrees on the fact that there is no clear definition of the three concepts discussed in this paper: customer satisfaction, customer dissatisfaction and customer delight. However, what the three of them have in common is a fundamental affective component which manifests to a different degree according to the context. In the case of satisfaction, the affective response is the result of cognitive assessment, while for both dissatisfaction and delight, the affective component is the outcome of emotional investment in the consumption experience, but going in two different directions: towards negative emotions when considering dissatisfaction, and towards very positive ones when considering delight. Furthermore, when exploring the concept of customer delight, researchers have used one equally ambiguous concept such as “customer happiness”, which can only add to the confusion existent in the literature.

And while clearly the concepts are linked with one another, literature review has not yielded yet an explicitly stated model that involves all the three concepts, nor has the relationship between them been evaluated using advanced statistical modelling. This has been in part due to the lack of operational definitions, and also because the concepts have not got yet to be fully understood. However, numerous studies put customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction on the same measurement scale for the sake of expediency, not considering that this type of methodology is flawed from the beginning, which

translates into skewed results and partially applicable conclusions. In order to avoid this in the future, better measurement scale are required and also more comprehensive research instruments, so that researchers can unravel the mysteries to three concepts still retain.

Because of this, the current paper cannot be considered as a final piece of evidence, but merely a starting point for several directions of research that will widen the scope of economic and marketing knowledge in the necessary field of customer satisfaction.

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