

THE OPPORTUNITY FOR RECONSIDERATION OF THE DIMENSIONS OF THE ASSESMENT MODEL OF THE CUSTOMERS SATISFACTION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT IMPLEMENTATION

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Abstract:

This paper started from the implementation of the sustainable development concept, for every organization. This requests the reconsideration of the environmental protection and quality assurance policies role, inside of the organizations. The authors consider that the utilization of the specific methods, techniques and instruments request a new approach of the dimensions of the evaluation model for customer satisfaction by including a new one, named Green dimension.

Key-words: customer satisfaction, sustainable development, model of the dimensions of customer satisfaction, Green dimension.

1. PROBLEMATICS OF THE SATISFACTION INVESTIGATION

In the last years a new trend was remarked in the business environment, which means to give a special attention to the relationships with the customers, putting them on the first plane and seeing them as an asset needing to be kept and turned to account.

The important companies make important efforts to analyze the customers' satisfaction, in order to maximize it, leading to the clients' loyalty and keeping or, eventually, raising the level of the relationships.

This kind of analyze must offer objective and relevant results, that can be directly applied in order to optimize an offer; it has as a main purpose to find the factors determining the customers' behaviour. In order to do these, new conceptual tools are necessary, based on a methodology that point optimal choice of those sets of questions of the surveys and integrates and process, by adapted models, the answers [4].

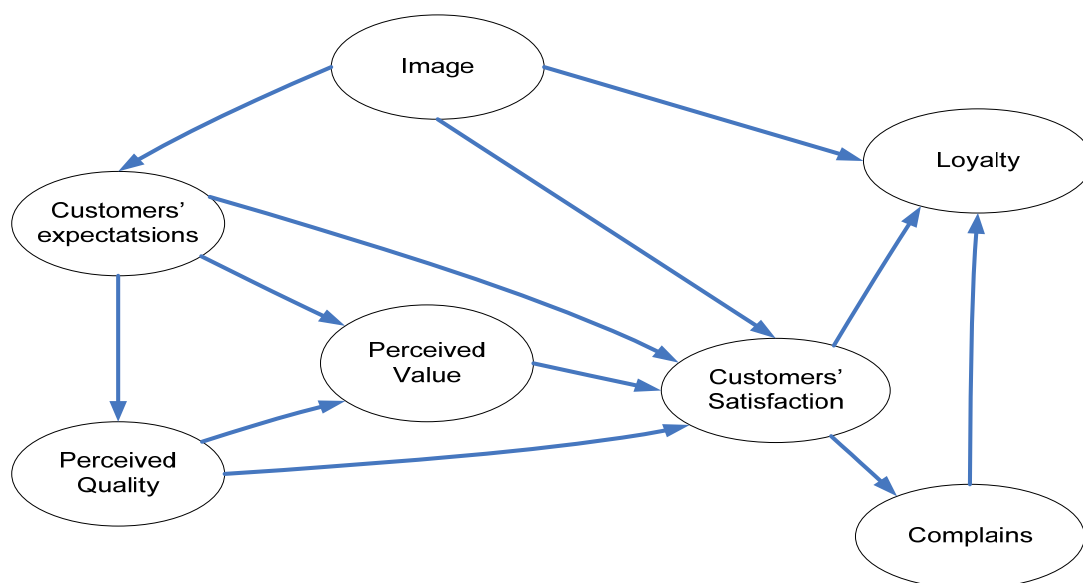


Fig.1 ECSI – European Customer Satisfaction Index

The European Customer Satisfaction Index (ECSI) model provides a potentially useful framework as it suggests a model of the relationships that lead to long-term loyalty. Kristensen, Martensen and Grønholdt [2] described the ECSI model as, “a structural equation model with unobservable latent variables...that link customer satisfaction to its determinants and, in turn, to its consequence, namely customer loyalty.”

The used method is based on verified theories concerning the customers' behaviour and it has as an objective to determine the perceived quality and the company' image by the customers or the loyalty of the clients.

The main questions imposed by the research of the customers' satisfaction, in relational marketing, can be resumed to four essential aspects:

- How the customers' satisfaction can be measured?
- What is the ratio of the satisfied clients in all customers?
- What are the main indicators of the measurement/assessment of the satisfaction?
- What is the evolution of the level of the customers' satisfaction?

The answers of these questions start from the comparison of the real performance and the desired performance. Bender's Model (1991) and Rapp's Model (1995), cited by Schneider [6] point on five dimensions for the customers' satisfaction assessment:

1. technical quality of the product;
2. quality of the reputation;
3. quality of the service;
4. quality of the personal relationships and
5. perception of the price.

Satisfaction represents a veritable key of modelling the acquisition behaviour of the client, being supported by three groups of variables:

1. cognitive variables (based on the qualitative superiority of the products given by the performance);
2. affective variables (based on the emotions produced to the customers) and
3. conative variables (based on the interaction between the offerer and the client in the buying act) [3].

The static vision upon the satisfaction as a fact state in the relationship with the customer was gradually replaced and improved by the paradigm of cumulated satisfaction. This is the result of a learning process, that can be developed only in presence of a stable client who ask repetitively a specific product, brand or company in order to satisfy a specific need, this meaning a manifestation of the attachment to the conscription offered by the company.

2. FOR BIG COMPANIES, MORE GREEN MEANS CHEAPER

In the actual social-economical context, the products quality dictates the organizational competitiveness because it ensures the adaptive capacity to the more dynamically markets conditions.

Actual conditions:

- The enhancement of the competition by markets globalization;
- The growth of the consumers exigency, determined by the technically progress, especially the communications;
- The growth of the society exigency, related to the life, health and environment protection; in this respect new restrictions and regulations regarding the ecologically characteristics of the products and production processes appeared.

In this context, the competitive advantage can be obtained by:

- The consumers confidence in products – quality certification;

- The consumers confidence in the provider – a quality management system implementation and certification;
- The customers' satisfaction – an appropriate to requirements product achievement [7].

Sustainable development is not just about the environment, but about the economy and our society as well. Sustainable development means development based on patterns of production and consumption that can be pursued into the future without degradation of the human or natural environment. If sustainable development is to be successful, the attitudes of individuals as well as governments with regard to our current lifestyles and the impact they have on the environment will need to change.

A healthy environment is essential in order to ensure the welfare and the life quality. The pollution generates important damages and costs. These determined the governments to promote a new concept in order to cut out the economical growth and the environmental degradation, by promoting the eco-efficiency and by interpreting the high environment protection standards as a challenge for innovation, new markets generation and business opportunities.

Sustainable development offers a frame for communities in order to use the resources more efficient, to create efficient infrastructures, to protect and improve the life quality, that consolidate their economy. Sustainable development can help to create a healthy community which can sustain both the current generation and the next one.

A modern organization is evaluated beyond its economical performances, management quality and communication policy. The evaluation must take in consideration the contribution to the social life of the community. A company is a part of public life and it has duties to the society, by its defining as *juridical person*. WBSCD (World Business Sustainable Council Development) defines *The Corporate Social Responsibility* as a concept that organizations, especially (but not only) corporations, have an obligation to consider the interests of customers, employees, shareholders, communities and ecological consideration in all of their operations [5]. This obligation is seen to extend beyond their statutory obligation to comply with legislation. Such programs became veritable marketing appliances that bring incontestable image benefits for their initiators. Corporations purchase a human face, being more than simply products and services producers. [8]

The present investments bring the future performance. This expression is very appropriate in case of the sustainable development projects, because the companies that have long term strategies, considered as visionary, have always more benefits than that based upon the classical management fundamentals, orientated on the traditional resources.

“More green means cheaper”, pointed Jozsef Tarsoly, general manager of Coca-Cola Hungary, first beneficiary of a green plant.

People want an ecologic approach of every day's life, but they want personal benefits or least a awareness that can be transposed in stimulations or facilitations. Beyond the awareness, these problems must be assumed.

The technological advance and new green politics of The European Union address companies to invest in “green products”, like an eco trend in business. As a consequence, “*green marketing*” will be more aggressive, affirm GreenBiz.com annalists [10].

All these aspects above mentioned made us to take in consideration another dimension, named, *Green Dimension*, in order to model the customers' satisfaction.

Reporting this dimension to the ECSI model, we can point some aspects:

- In respect of image, the green dimension can be recognized in the concept of *Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)*. The CSR activities of a company bring

benefits at two levels: a social level and a company level. Knowing and analyzing these benefits, inclusive by general business strategy, are essential.

- There are two factors making, actually, from CSR a redoubtable tool in a brand development:
 - Customers became more informed, more able to express their opinions and more preoccupied of themes like health, environment or social problems;
 - Market became more agglomerate and brands were forced to find new and relevant methods to develop emotional links with public. Just because they answer to these emotional problems, the CSR programmes represent a good opportunity to communicate the values of a brand in a memorable way.

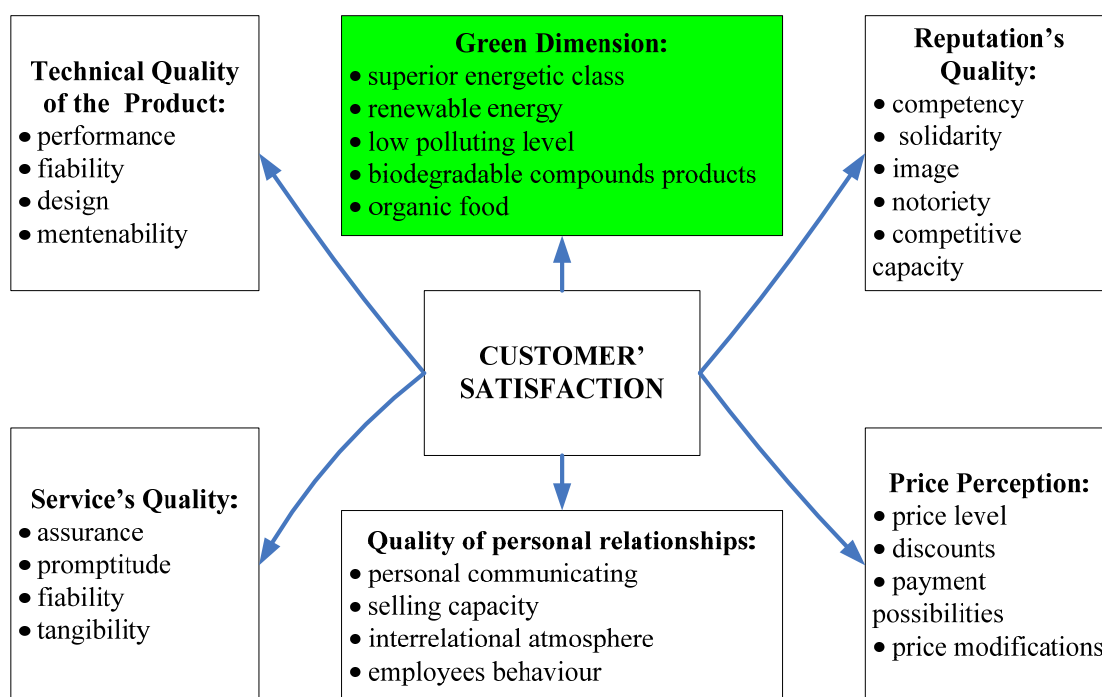


Fig. 2. A new Model of the assesment of customers' satisfaction

- Regarding of *perceived value*, the green dimension can be taken into consideration in many respects. So, Daedalus Consulting and Green Report in a partnership, performed first Romanian quantitative research on environmental problems. The survey's result was published in February 2008. In respect of availability of the Romanians to pay for „green products”, the organic food can be distinguished, for what 73.1% of the respondents declared being available to pay more. Under 50% would pay more for renewable energy (49.1%) or for products with biodegradable compounds (36.3%). A medium percent that would be added to the actual costs of the products is between 10% and 14%. 30% of the respondents declared available to pay this extra costs for renewable energy, 28.3% for biodegradable products and 25.8% for organic food. [9]

3. CONCLUSIONS

The top management must be ensured that the customer's requirements are known by the company's personnel and applied to increase the level of customer satisfaction. The whole activity must be focused on understanding and anticipating the current and future needs of the customers, and trying to fulfil them by:

- observing the laws regarding quality, environmental protection, health and occupational safety, applicable to the activities that take place within the organization, international conventions to which Romania has adhered, as well as compliance with the E.U. Directives;
- continuous monitoring of the problems regarding quality, environmental issues, hazards, as well as health and occupational safety risks;
- minimization of loss and consumption optimization for natural resources, materials and energy.

Organizations must collect and analyze information regarding to: technical quality of the product, quality of reputation, quality of the service quality of the personal relationships, price perception and green dimension. After these analyses, new objectives can be established in order to determine growth of the customers' satisfaction degree, taking into consideration the six dimensions of the enounced model.

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