SATISFACTION TO DELIGHT – A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT
Without customers a firm has no revenue, no profit and no market value. This paper provides the emerging concept of delight. The objective of this paper is to review and critically appraise various concepts of delight and its opposite in the light of the changing business scenario. Few researchers stated surprise plays a major role to delight customer. In contrast, few researchers debated that the level of satisfaction determined the expression of delight. The other researchers were completely different from the above opinion. According to them delight means exceeding expectation. The researchers derived few models but, no empirical evidence. Firms need to determine their readiness to adopt a customer delight based strategy.

KEYWORDS: customer delight, outrage, satisfaction, surprise, disconfirmation of expectation

INTRODUCTION
Satisfaction works when others dissatisfy in the marketplace. Instead of satisfaction as primary business goal, the technological advancements and other supply side developments have made customer satisfaction as minimum condition and a commonly reachable goal. Now the marketing emphasis is shifting to customer delight (Verma 2003). The current marketing usage originates in work by Plutchik (1980). Business must strive for 100 percent or total customer satisfaction and even delight to achieve the kind of loyalty they desire (Schneider & Bowen, 1999).

The literature on customer satisfaction has identified various factors that influence satisfaction. The awareness of the importance of customers to long term success means that companies are cognizant that their future is determined by their ability to respond to customer needs quickly and efficiently (Willis, 1996). The effective way of increasing customer loyalty is to satisfy the customers, still recent studies have suggested that merely ‘satisfying’ customers is not enough to ensure that they are retained. Even satisfied customers have been found to defect at a high rate in many industries (Kumar, Olshavsky, & King, 2001; Reichheld, 1994; Schneider & Bowen, 1999).

There is an extensive literature on customer satisfaction than customer delight. Since, delight is emerging concept in product and service; quality concepts put forth its importance through customization and relationship management. Delight is often called engagement and loyalty, but the key message is that your customer must feel that they would never go elsewhere (Baumgardner, 2008).

In delight concepts there are some researcher tried to measure and distinguish satisfaction and delight. This review contains the list of empirical and conceptual research and presented in
chronological order. The review includes brief discussion about dimensions, sample selection, demographic variables, service quality outcomes, data analysis, etc. This review does not measure delight. It gives an insight to delight, its antecedents, and consequences.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this review is to critically appraise various concepts of delight and its opposite in the light of the changing business scenario.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Oliver, Rust and Varki, 1997

Defines delight as surprising consumption, arousal and positive affect. Their work is the first attempt to focus academic attention on the topic of customer delight. The authors derived a model and six hypotheses (1) surprise to arousal (2) disconfirmation and arousal to positive affect (3) surprising consumption, arousal and positive affect delight (4) positive affect and disconfirmation to satisfaction, and (5) satisfaction and delight to behavioral intention.

They conducted two studies, study one conducted at recreational wildlife theme park, where 90 samples were taken. In their second study, single ticket purchasers at a symphony concert in a large metropolitan area, where 104 samples were taken. To assess the overall experience a traditional seven point scale bounded by “much worse than expected” at the negative extreme, “as expected” at the mid point, and “much better than expected” at the positive extreme was used. Surprise and delight were measured using frequency scale from “Never” to “Always”. Satisfaction was measured using 10 point Likert scale and intention was measured using four 7 point items.

The results of both studies show that delight is a strong function of positive affect. Their result shows that delight was a function of its predicted constituents in study 1, but did not relate to intention. In study 2, delight did predict intention, but was related only to the affect antecedent. The authors expressed delight as unexpected performance and suggested to managers that consumer involvement and qualities like delivery variability can enhance delight. Their study revealed that delight and satisfaction are interrelated but different constructs.
He defines delight as ‘100% satisfaction’. To identify the decreasing effects on loyalty, they have taken four samples. Bank’s clients as sample 1, car insurance policy holders as sample 2, newly established retailer clients as sample 3, camera buyers as sample 4 were selected using convenient method. 7-point Likert scale item were used to measure satisfaction and loyalty, where loyalty were measured in terms of repurchase intentions and word of mouth. They used a threshold model of the customer satisfaction-loyalty relationship and the result shows that customer satisfaction has a greater impact on loyalty. Using a quadratic negative model and a linear model of satisfaction and loyalty relationship the authors identified a linear relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty. Their study indicates very high levels of customer satisfaction (delight); loyalty is likely to level off.

The authors suggest if managers know the existence of minimum and maximum thresholds of satisfaction, they can allocate their resources better and reap the benefits to respective segments of satisfying customers. Managers should assess the costs and the benefits of such investments and they have to take the ‘customer delight fashion’ carefully.

Kumar & Iyer, 2001 stated disconfirmation of expectations plays a critical role in influencing customer’s satisfaction. Kumar and Iyar (2001) conducted a research to verify the antecedents that best discriminate between customer satisfaction and customer delight. They hypothesize that a firm’s performance on aspects of a service that are related to a service provider’s interpersonal behavior will be a better discriminator between customer satisfaction and customer delight than aspects related to the firm’s service characteristics.

The sample were taken from the U.S. automobile 191 customers who were recently visited the dealerships in a large Midwestern city. The data were collected through telephone interviews by trained professional interviewers. The survey instrument was designed to get maximum information as 15 questions about their most recent experiences, 3 questions about ratings of various interpersonal aspects of the service provider and 4 for characteristics of service concluded with an open-ended question to get any comments. The instrument used 1-10 rating scale was used to get the responses, 10 being completely satisfied and 1 being completely dissatisfied. Overall attitude of the dealership’s staff, overall helpfulness shown by the dealership’s staff, and explanation provided to the customer of the service work were become the part of interpersonal aspects of the service provider. The cleanliness of the dealership, the service
hours of the dealership, scheduling of work, and the length of time needed to complete the work was included as the characteristics of service.

In an analysis using estimation method, the rating scale 9 or 10 rating means “overall satisfaction with the service” was considered as “delighted”. Thus they conclude delight means extreme form of satisfaction. Discriminate analysis and logistic regression analysis were used to support their hypothesis. This study found that service provider’s interpersonal behaviors are much better at discriminating between customer satisfaction and customer delight than firm’s service characteristics. They provided empirical evidence that high levels of performance on interpersonal behavior attributes’ are likely to evoke delight. Low or medium level of performance on interpersonal behavior attributes’ is not likely to evoke delight and need not affect satisfaction levels. But their study did not address the issue of whether and how delight is different from very high level of satisfaction. They suggested managers interpersonal behavior attributes (needs investment and time) is the area they should focus than service characteristics like cleanliness to delight customers.

Kumar et.al, 2001 described ‘delighted’ customers as the customers who were ‘completely satisfied’ or ‘totally satisfied’. He added that the emotion of ‘delight’ comprised ‘Joy’ and ‘Surprise’ – both of which feature prominently in most of the existing literature on the subject of customer delight. They replicate Plutchik’s two studies with one difference. In first study 50 undergraduate students were taken as sample from Midwestern University. The questionnaire showed 12 pairs of emotions/feelings they were asked to name the pairs. The study matched with the Plutchik’s result and the feeling of joy + surprise was termed as excitement. In their second study 48 sample were chosen with a questionnaire containing two lists of emotion. List A includes 18 emotions and list B includes Plutchik’s 8 basic emotions. Subjects were asked to think about each emotion in list A is matched with list B. Results showed that 25% said they experienced joy and surprise when they felt delighted, 72% experienced joy without surprise when they felt delighted. Their exploratory study had suggested that consumers could experience delight with or without surprise (joy alone).

In their third study, the authors proposed two kinds of joy as ‘Magic joy’ and ‘Real joy’. Here magic joy involved a measure of surprise while real joy does not. The samples were randomly chosen from the audience of a Irish dance performance show in a Mid-Western University town. 6 point semantic differential scale where 1 was ‘extremely dissatisfied’ and 6 was ‘extremely satisfied’ used in the questionnaire. Surprise was measured by 7 point semantic differential scale where 1 was ‘very surprised’ and 7 was ‘not anticipated at all’. Delight was measured with 6 point scale where 0 indicated ‘did not feel emotion’ and 5 indicated ‘experienced emotion very much’. Out of 200 145 returned completed questionnaire, the ANOVA revealed there was no significant difference which the emotion of delight was felt by subjects who experienced high levels of surprise compared to low level of surprise.

The authors suggest to managers who have frequent transactions or interactions with their customers, the notion of ‘surprising’ customers at every transaction is impractical and cost prohibitive. Actually they suggest that it is desirable to delight customers with their product instead of attempting to surprise at every interaction with the firm. Finally they conclude that joy and surprise comprise delight, but in strongly they believe in joy alone.
The researcher distinguishes satisfaction and delight in his literature as satisfaction is more cognitive and delight is more affective. Satisfaction has a weaker memory trace than delight. Delightful experiences are much more memorable. He derived a model of dissatisfaction, outrage, satisfaction and delight. According to his model, the major difference between satisfaction and delight and dissatisfaction and outrage/pain is the element of surprise. Positive surprise results in delight and negative surprise results in outrage and pain. He suggested to managers customer delight delivery strategies need to be assessed from the perspective of cost/benefits, return on quality, ability of competition to copy a specific strategy, and a firm’s ability to deal with raised expectations associated with each strategy. Prior to that managers should identify a strategy of customer delight is to identify areas of performance where consumer expectations do not exist. Since different market segment may have different range of expectations.

In addition to customer delight driving loyalty, delighted customers provide feedback on their positive experiences to others. He identified positive consequences of delight such as lower costs due to increased word of mouth promotion, lower selling and advertising costs, lower customer acquisition costs, higher revenues due to higher initial and repeat sales, and long-term strategic advantages due to brand equity and increased ability to withstand new entrants. He provided six examples of how organizations can delight their customers: 1) provide courtesy and empathy and try to understand customer needs, 2) find and deliver the right product for customers, 3) do more than satisfy the customer by providing unexpected, very positive, services, 4) provide novelty and entertainment to customers, 5) focus on multiple contacts with customers with attempts to please customers at each contact, 6) reposition the organization to provide solutions to customers rather than only products and services.
Finn 2005

He conceptualized delight as an emotional response from surprising and positive levels of performance. A reassessment of Oliver, Rust and Varki (1997) research, Finn 2005 propose and test an integrative model of behavioral basis for customer delight. He selected a convenience sample of 319 university students and staff who were visited a consumer web site, were administrated a survey instrument including measures of the delight model constructs and web site evaluation questions. Multi-item measures or four constructs (Surprising consumption, Arousal, Positive affect, Delight) consisted of emotion items and 5 point scale was used to measure the response. The author removed 5 negative items from 18 constructs and made remaining 13 items as four factor solution. Using Structural Equation Model he identified the direct effect of delight on intention, which becomes weaker and is no longer statistically significant. With further analysis, it was noted that customer delight is not capturing a nonlinear effect of customer satisfaction on intention; it also provides additional support for the emotional versus cognitive distinction between delight and satisfaction. Finally the research support for the conceptualization (Oliver, Rust and Varki, 1997) of customer delight and customer satisfaction as distinct constructs.

Neilly & Barr, 2006 described delight as customer expectations. Their study examines accounting firm client’s expectations and perception of delight in professional accounting services. Their result shows that service providers are meeting and exceeding client’s expectation.

Two samples were utilized, 50 business clients drawn from local, regional, and national companies in the Midwest (USA) as first sample using convenience sampling method. A second convenience sample of respondents interviewed consisting of 58 company representatives to determine whether or not the findings were stable and consistent with those of the first sample. Interviews were conducted via telephone, e-mail, and face-to-face using open ended questions, identified activities and behaviors. Their sample were asked to rate their accounting service providers on each of the eight previously identified activities to determine the extent to which the accounting firm exceeded their (clients’) expectations such as meeting deadlines, relating well to
the client’s employees, being available when needed, and being knowledgeable about the client’s firm and industry.

In sample 2 the result shows “completing work without disturbing the client’s operations” was a significant activity. They suggest that there are two core attributes important to meeting and exceeding the expectations of client’s. First, meeting deadlines and keeping promises and, second being knowledgeable about the client’s firm and industry.

Added to that emotional connection with the client’s exceeding expectation has the potential to generate the highest level of satisfaction, loyalty, and ultimately, profit for the firm. Simultaneously, delight goal may raise the level of customer expectation which cannot be within reach, in turn creating dissatisfied customers. The authors suggest managers the cost associated with creating and maintaining delight strategies are often not worth the benefits. Even though by gathering information about clients may lead to delight them through cost-effective activities by service providers.

Evans and Burns, 2007

They conducted three exploratory researches to investigate product related delight. They conceptualize delight, as experienced by customers when their expectations are surprisingly disconfirmed. Further Evans & Burns, 2007 defined delight is an extension of satisfaction, characterized by pleasure or positive affect. In their first study a miniature camera and microphone were mounted in the dashboard of an EVM car designed to capture the authentic evaluative behavior of visitors at the 1998 British Motor show.

308 female and 472 male visitors facial and verbal reactions, were described qualitatively and given a subjective rating from 1=delight, through 3=indifference, to 5=disgust. They identified 22 overt and instantly recognizable customer delight responses to distinct vehicle features. In second study 16 subjects (4 women, 12 men, age range 19-61) evaluated 4 vehicles and were accompanied throughout by the same interviewer. A five point scale from like (1) to delight (5) was used. The sample size of the 16 items was not enough to conduct Kano’s analysis of the delighters identified. In the third study 30 subjects (12 women, 18 men, age range 16-53) were taken as sample in the 1999 London Motorshow. To describe the vehicle attributes scoring each on a 1-5 scale from like to delight and to explain their reaction qualitatively and in terms of the eight factors: operation, function, novelty, surprise, emotional appeal, look, feel, and sound. The results revealed that the delighters are styling and look of everyday features like gearstick, handbrakes and switches.
In their qualitative study the results shows that the delighter items fell in three groups such as feature, delivery and wholes. Added to that, performance inferences, product characterizations, and references to self were considered as product as a whole, benefits and quality inferences were responses to all three types of delighter. Cognition type and ingenuity inference were considered as delivery delighters. From the research they conclude delight as a consumption emotion.

Wang (2011) conducted a research on unrelated supporting service quality on consumer delight, satisfaction and repurchase intentions in a field experiment with MBA students at a university located in Southern China. He defined unrelated supporting service as a service that is not substantially relevant to furthering operation of the core service but rather provides an extra benefit to enhance the attractiveness of the core service to consumers. He also defined core service as the fundamental value the service product offers and the primary reason for consumer purchase. The author added that unrelated supporting service could provide unanticipated value to consumers, leading to possible delight and greater repurchase intentions toward core service.

In their study they found that unrelated supporting services could provide unanticipated value to consumers and can be surprising but not delightful. He then defined unrelated supporting service as a service that is not substantially relevant to furthering operation of the core service but rather provides an extra benefit to enhance the attractiveness of the core service to consumers. Added to that, to delight consumers, a firm must offer unexpected value in a positive way like provide valued supporting services unrelated to the core service. Occurrence of de
tight requires more than simply gaining satisfaction; hence resulting in a positive disconfirmation delight would be produced.

The service literature has increasingly made use of behavioral concepts in postulating the existence of ‘greatest levels’ of satisfaction and service quality that might produce exceptional behavioral results for instance greater loyalty (Chin Chow Yang 2011). There is other definition given for delight as “extent of satisfaction”

CONCLUSION

To sum up, there are an increasing number of studies of the phenomenon of ‘customer delight’. However the extant academic literature has largely focused on the conceptualization than its implications in practice. Several authors have developed their own framework to conceptualize delight. This review does not measure delight or outrage. It gives an insight to delight concepts. Unfortunately; there is no commonly accepted scale to measure customer delight. And there is no theoretical and practical model for delight and outrage. There is a need of theoretical and practical model of delight and outrage for service sector and product sector separately. Hence future research needs 1) practical methodology 2) a model for delight, its opposite and their outcomes 3) develop a common scale to measure delight.
REFERENCE


