

THE INFLUENCE OF PRODUCT QUALITY ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

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Abstract: *this paper presents an analysis of quality, customer satisfaction and business performance in food industry. The main objective of the article is to determine the influence of quality on customer satisfaction and on business performance and competitiveness.*

Keywords: *customer satisfaction, product quality, performance of a company, analyse, affect, satisfied.*

The goal of the article is to analyse the relationship between customer satisfaction and performance of a company. The authors assume that customer satisfaction affects corporate performance since it is surmised that customers will buy a product from companies they will be satisfied with, i.e. such products that will meet their expectations (in all aspects). These customers will not only buy the product again later (in case that their expectations concerning the satisfaction with the product are met) but will also recommend other customers to buy it. The aforementioned assumption clearly indicates that customer satisfaction can be observed from various perspectives and during various time intervals.

Quality is defined as a zero error rate, i.e. the ability to produce a perfect product on the first try [2, pp. 41-50]. Crosby defines quality as the producer's ability to meet expectations [1, pp. 3-16]. As far as the customer's (consumer's) point of view is concerned, quality can be defined as the quality perceived upon the basis of the consumer's decision on the overall excellence or superiority of the product [3, pp. 34-45]. All definitions mentioned above apply to the quality of a product, which is consistent with the focus of the research into the foodstuffs industry. Customer satisfaction can be defined in different ways - as a comparison of previously held expectations with perceived product or service performance [4, pp. 84-96]. Alternatively, customer satisfaction can be defined and measured as consumer ratings of specific attributes. With respect to the focus of the paper on company's product quality, we have defined customer satisfaction as a reflection of this quality. It is an easier view of satisfaction because sales policy, company's marketing and price policy were omitted, although they can be considered as factors affecting customer satisfaction and business profit [3, pp. 34-45]. Of course, we also understand the relationship of product quality and customer satisfaction over the long term, i.e. that should a satisfied customer influence profitability positively (through the purchase of a quality product), he or she must be attracted and held, which is consistent with findings of Crosby [1, pp. 3-16] also mentions the key factors that affect customer satisfaction and which can be used to measure customer satisfaction. These factors are product (in terms of its quality, availability etc.); price (convenient payment conditions and others); services; distribution; and image of a product. In cases where the determination of customer satisfaction is through product quality, with that satisfaction simultaneously affecting quality, a situation arises, where that certain factor affects quality and is itself affected by it. This problem does not arise in cases of a dynamic perception of customer satisfaction and quality itself, it only happens when customer satisfaction and quality are considered to be a process. Quality (both perceived and technical) affects customer satisfaction and companies examine that satisfaction and may react to it by innovating products to increase customer satisfaction further. The definitions stated above show that the extent to which customer requirements are met determines customer satisfaction and the degree of meeting them then becomes the degree of product quality. Every company should therefore struggle to reach the optimal level of quality of its products to meet the expectations of their customers. In this article, quality is defined to be quality as subjectively perceived by customers. Therefore, the main factor (measure) of product quality is customer satisfaction itself. To achieve high customer satisfaction, it is crucial for companies to make a product that fulfils the customer's requirements.

By definition, performance of a company is linked to productivity, i.e. to a realized output of a particular company and it can therefore be calculated and analysed further. The aspects of evaluating customer satisfaction individually do not have any significant impact on the performance of a company. Based on this we can conclude that customer satisfaction can be understood in a broader sense as a sum of several factors; here, this is a combination of general customer satisfaction with a product, satisfaction with meeting customer requirements of a product, satisfaction with the technical parameters – with quality. These partial aspects are apparently reflected in the future purchase of the product and with recommending other customers to buy that product. Last but not least, the degree of customer satisfaction can be demonstrated by comparing the product to that of a competitor.

To achieve higher customer satisfaction, it is necessary to determine the optimal mix of marketing tools (i.e. not just the product) and not only with respect to competition, but in particular with regard to the character,

preferences and options of the customer. This is not possible without sophisticated research of customer customs, values and preferences. Many businesses are not aware of it and constantly underestimate these facts. That is what the cause may be of a different perspective on product quality by the business and its customer.

References

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