

The Complete Customer Satisfaction Experience- An Introduction to the Domains of Customer Satisfaction

By Bart Allen Berry

Most don't understand the variety of forces that act upon a customer to influence their ultimate satisfaction with a particular product or service. The ten domains of satisfaction¹ are the statistical predictors of satisfaction in any customer-supplier relationship and are all present to some degree in each customer experience.

Rather than go into too much detail about the research etc. let's illustrate with a simple example: someone going to the bank to make a deposit. What is the first thing our bank customer has to think about?

Is the bank open? This falls into one of the ten domains called '*Ease of Access*'.

Ease of access issues are those blocks or inconveniences that stand between the customer and getting what they want that either have to be overcome or compensated for by the customer. Things like hours open, finding a parking place, remote location, or a phone system that doesn't allow you to get to the person you need to talk to. Smart companies remove all the barriers to accessing their products and services.

Our bank customer has to plan his day carefully to get to the bank after work before they close, or maybe now on Saturday morning (although his deposit won't be credited until Tuesday anyway) and plan schedule carefully if he wants the money in his account when he needs it to be there. (Someone should talk to the Federal Reserve about 24/7 check clearing, I mean why the hell not?)

So our depositor gets to the bank and goes in, two additional satisfaction factors hit him right away. '*Environment*' - which describes the physical location. It looks clean, organized, safe and generally presents a professional image. Environment also refers to the psychological environment created by the supplier (more about that later).

The second thing the customer sees unfortunately is the line he has to wait in this particular Friday afternoon. '*Timeliness*' - is another of the domains of satisfaction and encompasses a variety of factors such as wait time, on time, all the time required etc.. Our boy is looking at about ten minutes because there are 10 windows but only two tellers working.

Finally, he gets up to the teller and is greeted cordially by a well dressed and professional looking teller. '*Self-Management*' is the satisfaction domain that covers all of the front line service behaviors such as first impression, courtesy, attentiveness and attitude. The teller is pretty nice, and even calls him by his last name. "Mr. Jones, I'll need to see two forms of ID and you'll need to swipe your ATM card in the terminal and put in your password to verify your identification. Even though our boy has been waited on by this teller for the past five years, he complies with the validation process. '*Commitment to the*

Customer' is a little more abstract of a concept, and encompasses the commitment to a customer relationship. You might call it the romance in the relationship- how are you going to demonstrate to me that I'm the most important customer? Are you honest with me? Do you have a long-term commitment to our relationship? Do you let me know up front if things aren't going to turn out well? Do you take responsibility when things go wrong?

Our bank customer thought he had a relationship with his bank, but the teller had to even call her supervisor over to see if they would take his deposit because the amount was over some arbitrary number.

The teller then got all friendly again once the deposit had been approved and executed the transaction accurately without a mistake. *Quality*' is the satisfaction factor here, which in this case refers to an error-free process.

This brings us to the interesting concept of 'importance weighting. Our bank customer has more sensitivity to certain satisfaction factors than others. In this case the *Quality* of an error-free process is a lot more important than the new wallpaper in the bank (*Environment*). In fact our customer has an internal weighting to all ten of the customer satisfaction domains which is weighted differently for each product or service in his universe. Smart companies will try to determine this and match their product/service delivery to these internal needs. When businesses don't do this they are generally unsuccessful.

Finally, the teller offers Mr. Jones the new long term CD deposit program the bank has just developed (*Innovation*). Innovation means the supplier is constantly developing new and better products and services to serve the customer's needs. In this case Mr. Jones is not especially impressed, and declines the offer.

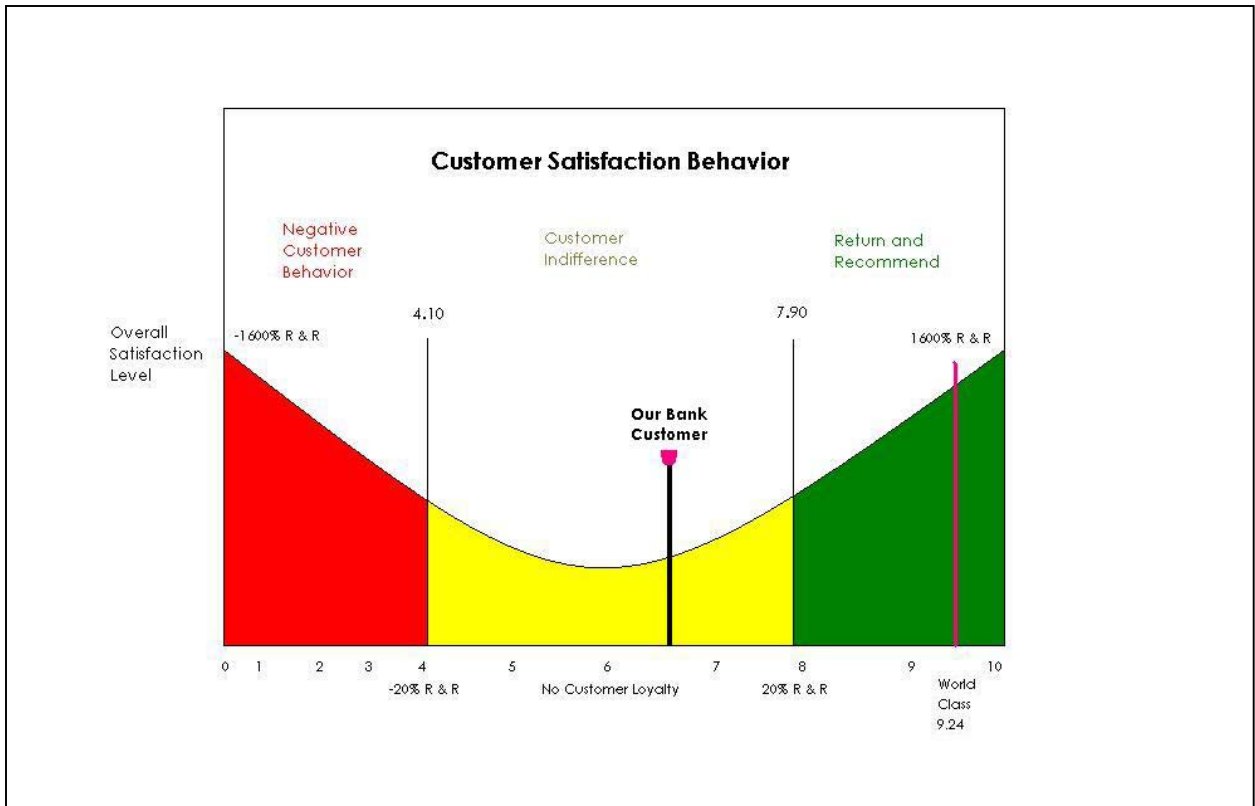
So in this simple scenario we see that Mr. Jones was influenced by 7 separate satisfaction factors that will create an overall impression of his customer satisfaction experience.

If we measured his satisfaction with each on a 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) scale for each of these factors it might look something like this:

Ease of Access	6
Environment	8
Timeliness	4
Self Management	8
Commitment	6
Quality	9
Innovation	5
Total	46

Now if we divide by the number of factors in the experience (7) we come up with an overall satisfaction score of **6.57**.

Now let's pull in a little bit of information called the customer satisfaction behavior curve. I'm going to present a very simplified version of this.



So here's what this means in a nutshell. Customer satisfaction behavior falls into three distinct zones- The Zone of Dissatisfaction (4.1 or lower- the red zone) where customers actually take negative actions to not buy again or to tell negative things to others to influence them negatively. As overall satisfaction numbers get lower, negative satisfaction behaviors get stronger.

The yellow zone is the Zone of Customer Indifference. In this zone customers are not loyal and are vulnerable to more satisfying supplier.

The Zone of satisfaction is where customers actually begin to return to buy again out of preference and loyalty which increases with higher and higher return and recommend behavior until the supplier reaches World Class Status (9.24) or and even stronger reputation.

In our bank deposit example, a number of factors contributed to the overall satisfaction rating given by Mr. Jones. At 6.57 Mr. Jones is certainly not a loyal customer. Probably this is the closest bank to his house or maybe the only one in town. The fact is, it wouldn't take much for another bank to do a better job and steal Mr. Jones' business.

It is important to see however, that any competitor must score at least a 7.9 or higher to effectively compete. Being a little higher but still in the zone of indifference won't cut it. Mediocre is mediocre.

This concept of the Overall Satisfaction Experience, the ten domains of satisfaction (with 50 sub characteristics) are described in great detail with accompanying metrics, and matrixes, audits and examples in "What Customers Want!" by Bart Allen Berry. This book is designed as an interventional tool for suppliers to dramatically vitalize their customer relationships and to raise customer satisfaction levels to become the benchmark in their industry.

Come join us in our grand adventure into the understanding of this new science of Customer Satisfaction.

A simplified data collection vehicle is included at the www.whatcustomerswant.org website where you can rate any product or service for eventual industry reporting and to get your complaints and evaluations into detailed advocacy reports for increasing satisfaction. Click on 'Your Satisfaction Story' and include your experience into our scientific model.

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