

19

Post-Purchase Behaviour

“A dissatisfied customer is like a spark that spreads fire”
“A dissatisfied customer should not be taken as an unwanted nuisance”.

Post-purchase behaviour is very important to the marketer. It gives a feedback about the success or failure of a product/service:

- *Expectations and actual performance*
- *Evil effects of dissatisfaction*
- *Marketeer's role to satisfy the consumer.*

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■ 19.1 Introduction

It is important for the marketer to know whether his product is liked by the consumer or not. He wants the feedback about his product so that corrective action, if necessary, can be taken, and the marketing mix be modified accordingly. Post-purchase behaviour is the reaction of the consumer, it gives an idea of his likes and dislikes, preferences and attitudes and satisfaction towards the product. It indicates whether or not the purchase motives have been achieved. Purchase is the means, and post purchase is the end. Post purchase behaviour indicates whether or not repeat purchases will be made. Whether the customer will recommend the product to others or not. It indicates whether long-term profits can or cannot be expected. All this can be found out by the post-purchase behaviour of the customers. Post purchase is the last phase in the decision-making process as indicated by Fig. 19.1.

The customer while making a decision goes through three phases:

1. Pre-purchase activity which consists of;
 - Problem recognition → Information search → Evaluation of alternative
2. Purchase process → { Intention to buy
Situational influences
3. Post-purchase behaviour → { Maintenance
Repair
Usage cost
4. Feedback to the marketer → { Improves the products
Changes the marketing mix
gives more facilities to the consumer

Fig. 19.1

After purchasing a product, a customer is either satisfied or dissatisfied and his satisfaction or dissatisfaction depends on his expectation and the difference between the performance. Expectation gives the degree of customer's satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the product. This is shown in Fig. 19.2.

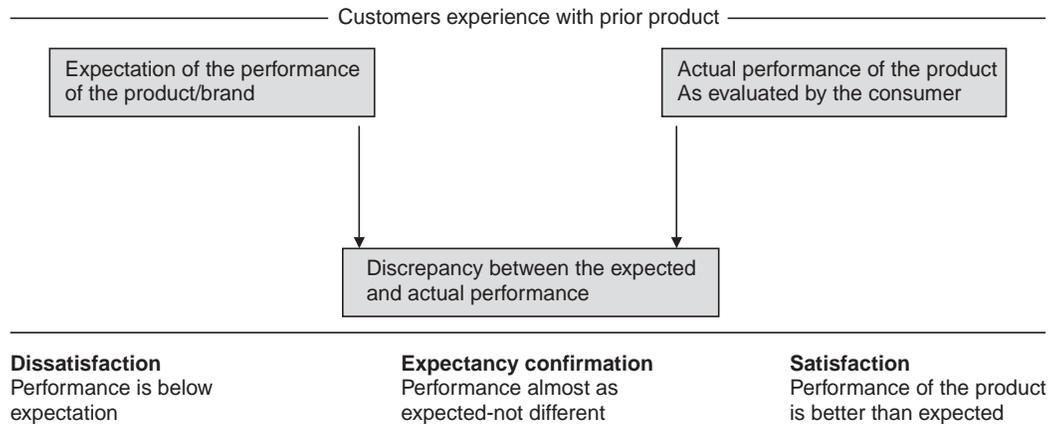


Fig. 19.2

The figure illustrates that if the performance is below expectations the customer is dissatisfied. However, there can be a match between the two, *i.e.*, performance is in line with expectation. In another position is the product which surpasses the expectancy level, and performs much better than expected. This is a source of satisfaction and delight to the consumer.

Satisfaction or dissatisfaction cannot be generalised, *i.e.*, there is no accepted definition of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. It depends on a number of factors outlined below:

- (a) The presence of a particular factor may cause dissatisfaction. If the same factor is removed, it may not unnecessarily lead to satisfaction, *i.e.*, greasy snacks may lead to dissatisfaction but, the absence of greasiness in the same snacks may not lead to satisfaction.
- (b) If is a cumulative effect of many factors put together, the effect of individual factors cannot be gauged easily.
- (c) Dissatisfaction may as such not lead to any complaint, but the dissatisfaction of a high degree may lead to complaint making of a complaint and, handling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction is a logical process. A person will not complain if he sees no use of doing so or feels that the complaint will not entertained. Also, consumers complain if it is convenient for them to do so. They may not go out of their way to make complaints. Complaining also requires resources, *i.e.*, time, money, knowledge, expertise, etc. which one may not possess. The dissatisfaction by a consumer towards a product may lead to:
 - (i) *Discontinuing purchase* of those products or brands by which a customer is dissatisfied. If he had been patronising that product which has led to his dissatisfaction, he may change to a new brand or a new product.
 - (ii) *Negative Word of mouth* He speaks negatively about the product to his friends, peers and associates. Instead of propagating the positive aspects, he starts defaming the product/brand and shows his dissatisfaction openly.
 - (iii) *Lodges a complaint* to the concerned authorities. Consumer Forum is one such agency that entertains such complaints. It may be a time-consuming process and difficult for all dissatisfied customers to resort to.
 - (iv) *Complaints directly* to the seller and gets his claim settled or the product/brand changed according to his liking or agrees for any such settlement.

It is the effort of every firm to produce satisfied customers. This is essential to fight increasing competition. Some dissatisfied customers however remain repeat purchasers, as they do not find a suitable alternative or, find that brand readily available and buy it due to force of habit or, because of low price. These purchasers may not be brand loyal. A brand loyal or a committed customer is attached to the brand emotionally. He believes in the firm and trusts the brand. Brand loyalty increases if the performance of the brand is more than the expected performance. In case of committed customers, they believe and have faith in line extension and brand extension of the firm. Committed customers also promote the product by positive word of mouth.

Role of a Marketeer

The marketeer has to watch that the customer is not dissatisfied. Through dissatisfaction, a lot of customers or clientele is lost and the marketeer suffers losses. To avoid this, a marketeer has to be on the look out for causes of dissatisfaction and maintain and build consumer satisfaction. This can be done by regularly monitoring consumer reaction. It can be done by interviewing the consumer or serving questionnaires and analysing and interpreting them carefully. Besides this, a strict vigil is to be kept on the quality of the product. The quality should be the joint responsibility of marketing and production. If necessary, other departments should also be involved, and an integrated marketing procedure be followed.

In case of complaints, they must be given proper attention and redressal be made as soon as possible. All complaints must also be acknowledged to satisfy and assure the customer that appropriate action will be taken as soon as possible. While registering complaints, due courtesy should be shown to visiting customers and their complaints be entertained in a proper manner. To avoid dissatisfaction of the consumer, only realistic claims be made—*i.e.*, advertisement of a scooter giving 55 km. per litre may be unrealistic when it can give a maximum of 40 km. This unrealistic claim made by the manufacturer may lead to dissatisfaction of the consumer. The marketeer must also help train the consumer for the proper use of the product. If the product is not used in the way it is meant to be used, it gets spoilt, and does not perform upto expectation leading to a discrepancy between the actual and the desired which leads to dissatisfaction of the consumer. A marketeer must also assure after sales service and keep in touch with the consumer even after purchase, to give him the promised after sales facility, as well as, importance to the consumer. A marketeer must also sell solutions instead of the product. He should emphasise upon the felt need and fulfill it, rather than emphasise the product. He should take care of the marketing concept. If this is not taken care of, it becomes injurious in the long run.

In case of dissatisfaction, post-purchase dissonance occurs which creates anxiety and the consumer feels psychologically uncomfortable. The consumer reduces the negative information received by the following methods:

- Ignoring the dissonance information.
- By selectively interpreting the information.
- By lowering the level of expectation.
- By seeking positive information about the brand.
- By convincing themselves that the purchase was right.

If the disparity between performance and expectation is not great an assimilation effect occurs and consumers ignore the product's defects and their evaluation is positive. If the disparity is great a contrast effect takes place and repeat purchase does not take place.

Product vs. Service Consumption

Products are tangible while services are intangible and the consumption experience is more variable while travelling one trip can be pleasant, other trips may be unpleasant. Once the service can be courteous then it can be discourteous. It is therefore difficult for consumers to assess services rather than products. Therefore, marketers must reduce service variability and build a long-term customer relationship (Relationship Marketing).

Re Donald stresses on uniformity in service, training etc. Products are bought for their utility, feeling of independence, self-image etc.

Questions

1. What is satisfaction and dissatisfaction? How is it formed?
2. What are the factors leading to satisfaction and dissatisfaction and, what are the responses of a dissatisfied customer?
3. How should a marketer try to do away with the dissatisfaction of the consumer? What should be his role?