

23

Customer Delight

We must adjust ourselves to the customer—
Never the customers to ourselves.

After going through this chapter the student should be able to:

- *Distinguish between satisfaction and delight*
- *Understand how companies are trying to delight the customer*
- *Understand the need for delight*
- *Correlate expectation and delight*
- *Suggest methods of delighting the consumer*

Customer Delight

■ 23.1 Introduction

While discussing consumer behaviour, it is seen that the process of decision-making consists of five steps. These are:

1. Problem recognition
2. Information search
3. Alternative evaluation
4. Purchase
5. Post-purchase behaviour

In the last step one is concerned with the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the customer. The aim is to satisfy the customer. However, in pursuit of satisfaction the marketeers and the manufactures have gone a step further and they now not only want to satisfy but delight the customer. By delighting the customer we go far beyond satisfaction, and by innovation, augmentation and value addition, we improve the product greatly, so that the customer is looking for a special feeling, which is far beyond his expectation. Delight dazzles the customer and gives extra benefits which he had never imagined. We can define delight from the following statements:

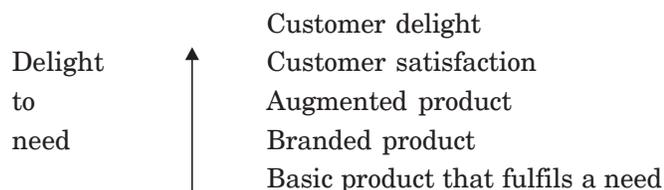
- (a) The fulfilment of latest needs that a customer is not aware of.
- (b) A quality of service or an unexpected benefit from the marketeer.
- (c) Personalised standard service of a product/service.
- (d) Solutions of the problem offered at the personnel initiative of the company's employees.

For example, the very entry into a room hired by a customer at the Le-Meridian Hotel. delights the customer. He is welcomed with a caption on the computer screen.

“Welcome to the hotel”

“Mr. and Mrs. Johnson and family”

“Have a nice day”.



By delight we mean that extra facilities are provided in terms of fruit trays, fridge full of drinks, a cake with the inscription, “Welcome to Le Meridian” Information about the contents of the food and the calories of the meal is provided. Any other information is readily available and can be had at the press of a button. This delights the customer, and the company also benefits as they get a premium on the price which justifies the investment made for delighting the customer.

Many companies are offering products and services to delight the customer, to try to retain the existing customer, and also to attract new customers. Given below are the practices adopted by various companies.

Wipro delighted the customer by delivering the computers to the clients at a much earlier date than promised, thus generating unexpected benefits to the consumer.

Arvind Group of Mills are trying their best by improving the quality of cotton, and for this they are ready to import the best technologies. The improvement in the quality of cotton will delight the customer and supplier, and build lasting relationships with them.

Maruti Udyog Limited has given a number of choices to the consumers for their cars with special attributes, so that the customers of different income groups can choose from various cars available. This includes, Maruti 800, Maruti Van, Zen, Esteem, WagonR, Alto and Baleno. Special features are built in to give the customer extraordinary benefits in terms of comfort, economy, durability, smoothness, space, etc.

Other car companies are also engaged in the same pursuit. Airline services, rail and bus services, tour operators and manufacturers are also trying their best to do whatever they can in this regard, to delight the customer.

■ 23.2 Need for Delight

The millennium is witnessing dramatic changes in the market place, change in lifestyle of the consumers and a radical revolution in information technology. The behaviour of the new generation customer has seen drastic changes. His expectation has increased, he has become more knowledgeable, is aware of multiple options to satisfy his needs, and switches over to newer brands for more value for his money. There are increasing number of competitors, both domestic and global, offering higher-value-added products and processes through innovation. This has led to a change in the marketing mix. The consumer has greater purchasing power, he is more educated, uses ultra modern tools—E-commerce and E-business to get more information about products, prices, features, attributes and can make a better choice.

- (a) The customer has become more demanding.
- (b) There is greater economic liberalisation.
- (c) There is increasing competition.
- (d) The costs are rising.
- (e) There are lower margins.
- (f) Markets are splintered.
- (g) Greater choice of customers.

The marketing concept is being followed in its entirety.

- (a) All marketing efforts are directed at the customer.
- (b) Companies allow customers to dictate their specifications and standards.
- (c) Marketeers track customer’s needs continuously and respond to them instantly.
- (d) Corporate strategy is aimed at delivering greater customer value than their rivals.

Figure 23.1 shows the customer surrounded by the functional areas of management, *i.e.*, marketing, finance, production and personnel. All the functional areas are working together in an integrated manner, following the marketing concepts, and this leads to customer-driven mission, customer-driven vision, customer-driven rewards, customer-driven appraisals, customer-driven goals, customer-driven strategy and customer-driven values. All activities are centred round the customer and the customer is supreme.

■ 23.3 Expectation and Delight

Before a company or a marketer can delight the customer, it must have an in-depth knowledge of the customer's expectations, so that not only are they able to meet, but exceed the expectation, to delight the customer. For this a knowledge of the core elements of the products and services are essential.

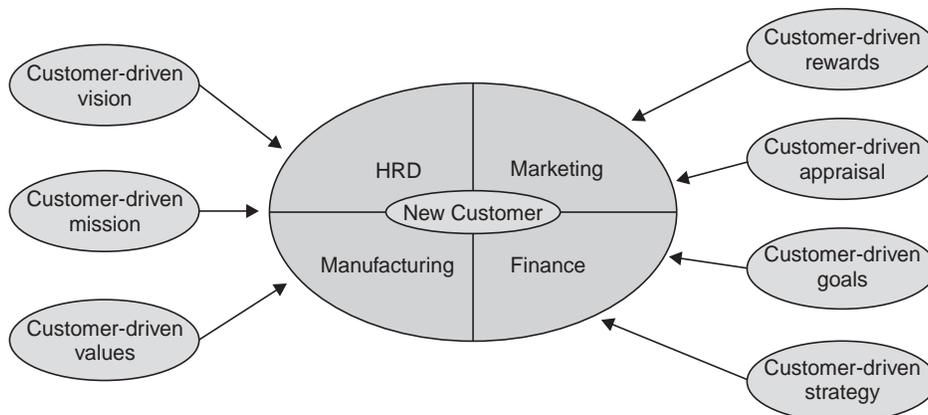


Fig. 23.1 Core elements for delighting a customer

The core elements of a product are its shape, quality, colour, quantity, packaging, price, brand name differentiation, etc. While the core elements of service are reliability, usefulness, responsiveness to specific needs assurance and acceptability, etc. from the service provider.

In case of a product (tangible), the customer should be provided what he expects and the core elements remain almost the same. However, services being intangible and their characteristics which are intangibility, inseparability, perishability, etc. must be kept in mind. The core elements given above can be manipulated to exceed the expectations of the customers, as the human touch is also involved, and this can give unexpected positive elements to delight the customer and have a competitive edge as well. A study conducted by Parsuram. Berry and Zithmal in 1991 came out with some conclusions given below.

- A customer expects fundamental benefits, not fancies.
- A customer expects performance and not empty promises.
- A customer expects competency.

In case of automobile repair

- A customer wants competency (job done right, the first time).
- A customer wants things to be explained.

- A customer wants to know why you have suggested repairs.
- A customer wants to be shown respect.

In case of hotels

- A customer wants a clean and secure room to be provided.
- A customer wants to be treated as a guest.
- A customer wants the promises to be kept.

In case of insurance

- A customer wants up-to-date information.
- A customer wants to be treated fairly in case of claims, etc.
- A customer wants to be provided with prompt service.

For other services and products

- A customer wants reliability which is the ability to perform the promised service, dependably and accurately.
- A customer wants tangibility or the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and other materials.
- A customer wants responsiveness—the responsiveness to a query or to a call, *e.g.*, telephone enquiries. Sometimes nobody picks up the phone for a long time, which irritates and turns off a customer.
- A customer wants assurance—the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.
- A customer wants empathy—the caring individual attention provided to customers. Salesman putting himself in the customer's shoes.

Reliability is more concerned with the service outcome, whereas the other factors of responsiveness, assurance, tangibility and empathy are more concerned with the service process. With the help of these guidelines and their implementation, the customer cannot only meet his expectations, but be delighted to the core of his heart.

■ 23.4 Generating Delight

To generate delight is not an easy job. Companies are vying with each other for competitive advantage. A customer gets most satisfied when he least expects it. The company also delivers at the doorstep of the consumer which generates unparalleled value and satisfaction. For this one must:

- (a) Strive constantly to provide additional customer value in every transaction.
- (b) Try to provide surprise benefits.
- (c) Constantly express expectations that the customer has built around your product.
- (d) Treat the customer exclusively.
- (e) Look for expectations and performance gaps in order to identify opportunities to delight.

The delight chain shown in Fig. 23.2 starts with measuring the customer satisfaction through customer satisfaction indices, and by market research and consumer researches, and

through direct contact to understand the latent needs of the consumer. Once the needs have been recognised, quality management is practised and implemented to provide better service than competitors. For this, it is essential for the management to give a lot of power to employees to take proper decisions and initiative. The customer is delighted when the service or the product gives a touching feeling. It is also essential to over deliver (deliver more than has been promised), and also to come out with newer methods of service and techniques to give creativity and innovation as much as possible.

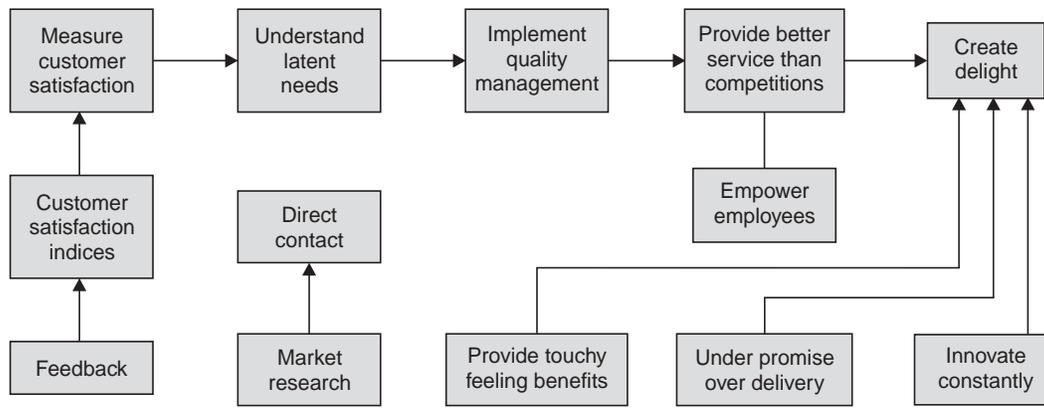


Fig. 23.2 Customer delight chain

Questions

1. What is the need to delight the customer?
2. Give examples of companies who are delighting the consumer and how?
3. If you were running an automobile workshop, what steps would you take to delight the customers?