

FIVE FACES OF SATISFACTION

From Mere Satisfaction to Extreme Delight

For customer patronage, satisfaction is the minimum requirement. It is necessary but not sufficient. Merely satisfying customers will not win them over. Instead, marketers will need to *delight* them. From dissatisfaction to mere satisfaction to delight, satisfaction has five faces.⁹ Let us view them closely.

Consider five recent consumption experiences of a consumer who calls himself Ross (the famous character, Ross, from *Friends*, is his favorite). Here, in his own words:

- **My toothbrush—I have used various brands; all name brands, of course. One day, while traveling, I bought one of those national brands (allow me to refrain from naming it). After a week of use, I felt the bristles in my mouth—on my tongue. When I examined the brush, sure enough the bristles had come loose. I found it incredible. Vowed to never buy that brand again!**

- **I have a good collection of shirts. Name brands. Store brands. Whatever is on sale. They wash well, fit well. They please me when I wear them. But there are some that seldom “get chosen,” because there is always some other shirt I would rather wear. But I still keep these “second-choice” shirts. For some “just in case” occasions. They “hang out” happily with my “first choice” shirts.**

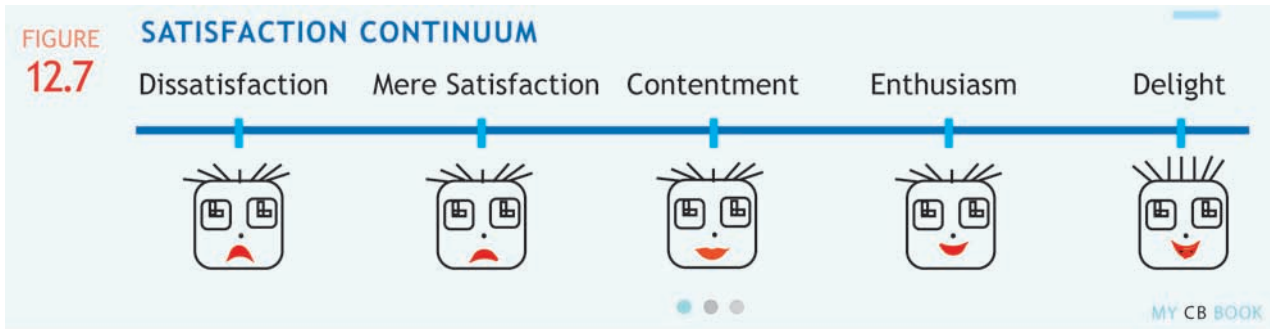
- **My cell phone is Samsung Galaxy Note 4, serviced by Verizon. I got it a year ago. It has all the usual functionalities and it has all the bells and whistles common to high-end models of smartphones. But my special attraction was its 16 MP camera and a stylus pen, two features I continue to enjoy. Now, last month, Note 6 came out, and I am attracted by its sleeker body and better stylus experience. And I am smitten also by the thought of iPhone 6S, introduced last week, finding the leapfrog upgrade of its camera irresistible. Maybe someday I will go for one of these. But for now I have no desire to reopen the “phone-shopping project,” and I am “settled and happy” as far as my wireless communication needs are concerned.**

- **In the second example above, when I spoke of my shirts—“first choice,” “second choice” alike, I was not thinking of one particular shirt I have in my collection. This one is a Mossimo, in dark blue. The fabric in this one is thin, so it almost sticks to my body, and it has a chic European collar. There is something about it, the way it feels on my body and the way it looks, that I just love. Never mind that it wrinkles easily—I postpone putting it on until it is time to go out, so it would look unwrinkled at least for some time at the ‘big event.’ When I wear it, I feel just a bit more self-confident, a bit more spirited.**

- **Recently, I visited Mitchell’s Salon and Day Spa, for one hour of full body massage, turning in my \$75 gift certificate. My masseuse, Nathan, met me at 7:05 and began to work on my body. I was really liking it. Soon, I lost track of time. And soon I had gotten enough of it—enough kneading, heavy pressing, big time muscle loosening—I really felt I had had plenty (in a “boy, it feels great” sort of way). By now I no longer cared if Nathan gave me an entire hour. But if I thought I had had the best of it, and I did, I was in for a further surprise. The hot-towel wrap was still to come, and when it did, by itself it was worth every dollar my gift-giver had paid. Finally, it was 8:10 when he finished, and we warmly shook hands, and I made a mental note to go back and ask for him again.**

Now, if we asked Ross if he were satisfied with his toothbrush, his shirt collection, his cell phone, and his massage parlor experience, his answer would be “Yes” for all but the toothbrush. Yes, he is satisfied with his Galaxy Note 4, and he is definitely satisfied with his blue Mossimo shirt, and with the massage parlor. But is he satisfied with them all in the same way? Certainly not. By just asking a consumer if he or she is satisfied with a product, we wouldn’t really know the true depth of the consumer’s variable satisfaction. As marketers, it pays to recognize that consumer satisfaction comes in various flavors¹⁰ (see Figure 12.7):





Dissatisfaction This is clearly a negative experience. Dissatisfaction is what Ross feels toward the toothbrush he once bought while traveling. Dissatisfaction is not mere absence of satisfaction. Rather, it is a decidedly negative state of unhappiness.

Mere Satisfaction At the lowest level is “mere satisfaction,” defined more by an absence of any dissatisfaction, of anything negative, rather than by the presence of anything positive. Ross’ “second choice” shirts present an example of “an absence of dissatisfaction.” Ross is aware of his satisfaction with them merely by not experiencing any dissatisfaction. He wears them on non-important occasions, or not at all, still taking satisfaction in knowing that they are there if he needed them.

Satisfaction as Contentment With his cell phone, Ross is more than merely satisfied. Not only does he feel no dissatisfaction, but in fact he is quite content. He is so content, in fact, that he resists the idea of upgrading it with newer models. More than mere absence of dissatisfaction, it is a positive feeling of having his need fulfilled and one of life’s problems solved in an admirable way. This is satisfaction as contentment.

Satisfaction as Enthusiasm Recall that with his shirt collection in general, Ross feels simply fine. But his blue Mossimo shirt—now that is something special. When it comes to how Ross feels about it, he can’t put it in the “they are just fine” group with his other shirts. Instead, the very thought of it, and certainly its use, makes him feel elated. He looks forward to occasions to wear it. So his satisfaction with it is much more than mere satisfaction and, for that matter, more than contentment. He feels positive enthusiasm.

Satisfaction as Delight Finally, with respect to Ross’ massage parlor experience, the word *satisfaction* would actually do injustice to it. Ross sees his experience at the spa as nothing short of pure delight. Delight as in what we feel when we see our old buddy after decades; delight as in when we get to buy our dream car. Delight as in when our name is called at the Oscars! **Delight** is an experience deluged with positive, pleasant emotions. It is the ultimate in satisfaction!

Note that these five kinds of satisfaction differ not merely in degree but also in kind. We experience them differently. We feel activation or arousal for some (i.e., we feel energy and the desire to do something) and passivity for others. Also we feel emotional for some but not for others. Thus, our mental states differ for different kinds of satisfactions. Table 12.2 summarizes some important differences. To review them briefly, *dissatisfaction* activates us, whereas with mere *satisfaction* and *contentment* we feel passivity. With *enthusiasm* and *delight*, we feel activated again. In terms of emotion, with *dissatisfaction*, we feel negative emotion; with *mere satisfaction*, we feel no emotion. With *contentment*, *enthusiasm*, and *delight*, we feel positive emotion, in mild, moderate, and strong degrees, respectively. Thus, *mere satisfaction* is based entirely on cognitions—beliefs about how the product performed. All five states relate, of course, to expectations, but in diverse ways. *Dissatisfaction* results, clearly, when expectations are not met. *Mere satisfaction* is the outcome when product performance barely meets consumer expectations. *Contentment* follows when prior expectations are well met. *Enthusiasm* requires that expectations be exceeded. Finally, *delight* occurs when there is some element of surprise.

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