

Consumer Satisfaction Dissatisfaction Models: A Critical Review

There has been much literature in consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction in last decade. Consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction is always judged in relation to a standard (Olender, 1977). The marketing and consumer behavior literature has always suggested that C/D is a relative concept. In the beginning of the literature of consumer behavior lots of theories with various standards were developed to explain consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction. It is sometimes unclear which model is best applicable and is suited for a particular situation. In this research paper an effort has been made in comparing different models of consumer S/D that have been developed in recent literature. Some important theories underlying each model and their characteristics are critically analyzed. Main developments in the models applicability of each model in different situation strength and weakness of each model are analyzed and discussed in this paper.

INTRODUCTION

Academic and business interest in consumer satisfaction continues. From the business perspectives interest in satisfaction began with the creation of macroeconomics indexes (Pfaff, 1972). Consumer satisfaction is the central element of marketing concept. Maximization of consumer satisfaction is an ultimate goal of marketing because success of any business depends upon consumer's satisfaction. In general, satisfaction is taken to be a bipolar variable falling between two extremes of satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Mittal, Kumar, Tsiros, 1999). However, despite secular growth in dissatisfaction research in the 1980s (Singh, 1988), the literature on satisfaction, as a positive judgment, is more extensive. There are so many researchers of seventies such as H. Keith Hunt and Ralph Day in eighties and now there is a rapid growth in the literature of consumer satisfaction. Many theories and models were developed and discussed from different angles. In this paper researcher examines some important models of consumer satisfaction. An integration of various theories and paradigm in consumer S/D is badly needed, and hopefully researcher will be successful in achieving that goal.

The Expectation - Disconfirmation Model

This paradigm dominated the literature of consumer satisfaction in early 1970s. According to EDP consumers are believed to form expectation about a product prior to purchasing the product (Oliver, 1980). and basically the notion of consumer forming expectations is derived from the expectancy theory (Tolman, 1932). This theory derives that consumer belief that a product has certain desired attributes. The expectation level then becomes a standard against which the prod-

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uct is judged, that is once the product or service has been used outcomes are compared with ex-

pectations , if the outcomes matches the expectations confirmation occurs, disconfirmation oc-

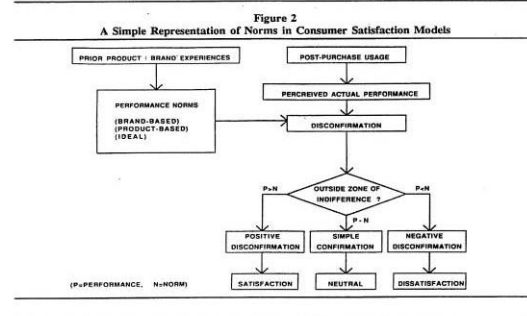
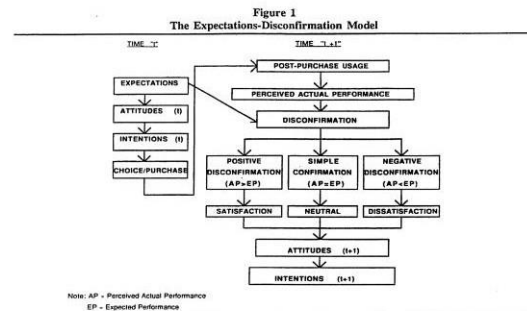
there is difference between expectations and outcomes, a customer is either satisfied or dissatisfied as a result of expectations and outcomes. When the actual performance of the product is more than the expected performance satisfaction occurs and this may lead to strengthens consumer's belief, attitude and further purchase intension. While negative disconfirmation may leads to weaken future disposition towards purchasing the product and consumer may search for the other products (Engel, Blackwell and Miniard 1990).in other words, modified by the total purchasing experience, expectations of satisfaction would thus seems to be more encompassing and hence more determining factor in final outcome ;consumer satisfaction. Indeed the importance of viewing expectations as expectations of satisfaction would seem to be implied in the conclusion of Cardozo's (1965) article, perhaps the grandfather of all consumer studies. Two processes at two different time period affect the expectation/disconfirmation process expectation may be affect by market stimuli such as advertisement (Olson and Dover 1979) or non-market stimuli like average product performance (Miler 1977).a separate expectations effect that is consider to be operate independently of the disconfirmation effect was hypothesized by (Oliver,1980) they found this effect as a third most important effect in consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction judgment after a disconfirmation and performance effect Although they believe that the expectation effect may interact with the disconfirmation effect in the common direction of influence. The disconfirmation effect is considered to be an important in consumer satisfaction as expectation effect may decay over a period of time (Oliver,1981).and it is believed that disconfirmation is originated from the emotional experience associated with usage of product (Swan & Trawick 1981).positive disconfirmation increases the satisfaction and negative disconfirmation decreases it. Simple confirmation always maintain the adaptation level (Oliver & DeSarbo, 1988).

The Value Percept Model

Similar to LA Tour and Peat's argument, Westbrook and Reilly(1983) argued that the expectancy- disconfirmation paradigm may not be the most appropriate model to explain customer satisfaction and dissatisfac

tion as the customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is determined by the comparative standards rather than the expectations about the product they proposed a value percept disparity model that

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is originally formulated by Locke(1967), it was an alternative to the expectation disconfirmation paradigm. Westbrook and Reilly(1983), argued that what is expected from the product may or may not be related with what is desired or value in a product so value is an alternative of expectations in explaining the consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction. According to this theory satisfaction is an emotional response and is triggered by a cognitive evaluative process in which perception of an offer is compared with one's value need want or desire (Westbrook and Reilly,1983). Just like the previous model of expectancy disconfirmation paradigm a growing disparity between one's perceptions and one's value indicates the increasing level of dissatisfaction. in case of a non-durable product the traditional expectation disconfirmation relationship occurred, but in case of durable goods the consumer satisfaction totally depends upon the product performance. When a product performs well the consumer will be satisfied no matter of any disconfirmation effect. On the other hand there are products that have little or no instrumental performance dimension (Helbrook & Hirschman,1982). This is also consistent with the fact that consumers often learn from their past experience especially in case of new product. The value percept theory which postulate satisfaction as the fulfillment of consumer desires value or want as opposed to their expectation has not received as much as support from researchers as the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm has achieved in ascertaining customer satisfaction in service industry.

Multiple Process Model

The data from previous studies shows that no single model can predicts about consumer satisfaction/ dissatisfaction judgments. Instead a better description of consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction may contains multital processes and standard of comparison.while many researchers (Sirgy 1984; wilton and niscosa 1986) have suggested multital comparison process for explaining consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Some empirical evidence that consumer may use multital comparison process and standard to arrive at satisfaction/dissatisfaction has been provided by (Tse & Wilton,1988).this findings suggest a multital comparison process including complex interactions which may takes place sequential or non sequential. (Oliver, & DeSarbo, 1988). Observed that joint effects of various variables in the satisfaction formation process .they suggested that disconfirmation occurs through objects may be subjected to psychological interpretations that may dominate under certain circumstances. Similar observations has been found by Cadotte Woodruff and Jeckins(1987) they suggested a multi dimensional standard where consumer use a standard that can be weighed against a multital standards. This standard can be formed from a past experience(from a focal and competing brands. Future research is much needed to better explain of some of the issues.

The Attribution model

The attribution theory was first developed by the Weiner, Frieze and Kukla's (1971). This theory is mainly used to explain consumer dissatisfaction and consumer complaining behavior rather than explaining the consumer satisfaction, according to this model customers are regarded as ra-

tional processors of information who is always looking for a reason for explaining why a purchase outcome for example dissatisfaction has occurred (Folk,1984). This model argue that when the delivery of a service does not match the customer expectation or other expectation customer engage in an attribution process in order to make sense of what has occurred (Bitner,1999). This theory assumed that the consumer looks for the causes for product success or failure. Here the success or failure of product is explained by the three dimensional schema (Folkes ,1989; Oliver & DeSarbo,1988; Pearce & Moscardo,1984 Weiner at al 1971).

- 1) Locus of causality (internal or external); this means that the purchase outcomes for example is a cause of consumer dissatisfaction and can be attributed either to consumer or to the marketer
- 2) Stability ; stable causes are thought to be not be vary with the time, means it remains unchangeable
- 3) Controllability ; both consumers and firm can either have volitional control over an outcome

It is argued that under some conditions for example when a number of consumers find them self in agreement about the reason of consumer satisfaction/ dissatisfaction. When the same event repeats their mistake again and again (consistency) and when only this establishment commits errors (when distinctiveness of behavior is very high) external attribution take place, and on the other hand agreement consistency and distinctiveness is low, consumers are assumed to relate their dissatisfaction to themselves (Pearche& Moscardo,1984). In the past attribution models have been useful in explaining consumer's reaction when they are dissatisfied than in explaining the satisfaction process itself (Huang & Smith,1996). However folks and Richins (1985) have obtained some evidence that supports the locus of casualty i.e. internal and external attribution and satisfaction judgment. Satisfaction is more affected by internal factors than the external factors. Oliver & DeSarbo (1988) compared the effect of five determinants of satisfaction 1) expectancy 2)performance 3)disconfirmation 4)equity and attribution have reported the similar findings that attribution dimension was the least significant of all effects in the situation tested.

The Equity Model

According to the equity theory, satisfaction is a result of greater received value than the perceived value. Satisfaction exists when consumers perceive their input /output ratio as being fair (Swan &Oliver, 1988). Equity model is derived from the equity theory (Adams,1963).and is based on concept of input and output ratio, which plays an important role in satisfaction (Oliver & Swan,1988). According to this theory parties to an exchange will feel equitably treated (thus satisfied)if in their mind the ratio of their output to input is fair(Oliver&DeSarbo,1988).whether a person feels equitably treated or not may depend upon the various factors including the price paid for the product benefits received from the products experience of privies purchase and time

and efforts made in making the purchase(Woodruff et al 1983).this implies that comparative base line may take many different forms , this theory shares similarities with the comparison level theory which posits that bases of comparison used by consumers in satisfaction judgment may be more than the expectation. Equity model of consumer satisfaction seems to be different from other model, because here satisfaction is measured in relative to other parties in an exchange of outcomes of all the parties sharing the experience are taken into consideration. Erivvels and leavitt argued that equity model can provide a better picture of consumer dissatisfaction than any other previous model. It may be helpful in understanding a situation where satisfaction with other parties is considered to be the important factor.

Fisk and Coney (1982). Argued that consumers were less satisfied and had a less positive attitude towards a product when they find that other parties received a good deal than them. In other words we can say their perception of same treatment by company converted into satisfaction judgments and even affect the future expectation and purchase intentions.

Equity theory is more applied to customer satisfaction /dissatisfaction and accepted how comparison works (Oliver& DeSarbo,1988). Equity and attribution theory has proposed as consumer satisfaction determinants.(Oliver& DeSarbo,1988). Found that equity is the fourth important factor of satisfaction after disconfirmation, performance, independent expectations effects in spite of the fact that satisfaction was framed in terms of purchase outcome. It is possible that if satisfaction with the other party to the transaction had been modeled equity have emerged as a more significant effect. Oliver& Swan(1989) address the issue of intervening approaches to satisfaction judgment. Non intervening frameworks are characterized by a direct path from input ratio output ratio to satisfaction judgments; whereas the intervening approach is based on the notion that a party to an exchange derive some meaning from the input output that cannot same constructed as satisfaction but rather a factor which affect satisfaction. Two intervening approaches used as fairness and preference or advantageous inequity. The concept of fairness means that both the parties to the transaction get what is right Oliver& Swan(1989). Preference or advantageous inequity means a focal party in a transaction strives to maximize his outcomes so that he has equitable benefits over the other parties. Here it is found that there is a relationship between perception of high outcomes and high level of fairness and preference. However when satisfaction with the salesperson was measured the fairness dimension mediated the effect of input – output ratio on satisfaction, where as the preference dimension did not. So apart from fairness disconfirmation was found to have an independent effect on satisfaction. From recent research it seems obvious that equity models offer an interesting interpretation of satisfaction judgments. A deep research is needed to understand the equity in transaction. This is used in sales management, retailing and can be used for capturing interpersonal components in transactions. When it combines with other it can provide a better picture of the satisfaction.

The Evaluative Congruity Model

According to the Sirgy's(1984) evaluative congruity model satisfaction is a function of evaluative congruity it is a cognitive matching between perception and evoked referent cognition in or-

der to evaluate a stimulus or an action. The result of this cognition process is assumed to produce either emotional state or motivational state. Customer satisfaction is regarded as an emotional state because it prompts the consumer to evaluate the alternative course of action to reduce an existing dissatisfaction state and obtain the satisfaction state. This model argued that there are three types of congruity state: positive, negative, and non-congruity state. Similar to disconfirmation/confirmation concept, negative congruity state is a congruity state which results from a negative discrepancy between the valence perception and evoked referent cognition and induces dissatisfaction. Positive congruity state results from positive discrepancy between the valence perception and evoked referent cognition and induces satisfaction. Whereas non-congruity means insignificant or negligible discrepancy between perception valence and evoked referent cognition which contains a neutral evaluation state. This theory assumed that satisfaction may be determined by one or more cognitive congruities such as between 1) new product performance after usage and expected product performance before use, 2) new product performance after use and old product performance before use, 3) expected product performance after purchase and deserved product performance after use. Means such discrepancies are argued to independently influence consumers' satisfaction/dissatisfaction with a given product (Siry, 1984). It is an important theory because it explains the different states of satisfaction/dissatisfaction resulting from different combinations of expectations and product performance outcomes (Chon, 1992). Siry further postulated that product image can be classified as being functional (physical benefits associated with a product) and symbolic (self image) and assumed that consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction is not only an evaluative function of the consumer's self image and product image congruity.

Primary characteristics of current Models of consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction

Model Primary characteristics

1. The expectation disconfirmation Model: Consumer's pre-purchase expectations are positively or negatively disconfirmed and it results in satisfaction/dissatisfaction based on received value and expectation difference.
2. The value percept model: for some products consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction is decided by the perceived product performance and are independent of initial expectations.
3. Multiple process model: consumers sometimes use multiple comparison processes or standards. Which can take place either in a sequence or simultaneously to arrive at satisfaction/dissatisfaction.
4. Attribution model: consumers tend to search for the causes of purchase success or failure and attribute the success or failure using a multi-dimensional schema. Attribution decides the consumer's post-purchase response.
5. The equity model; consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction judgments are based on equity interpretation derived from cost of the product and the anticipated rewards.
6. The evaluative congruity model; consumer satisfaction judgment is a result of positive incongruity while dissatisfaction is a result of negative incongruity.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, it is clear that much research has been done in consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction since the Cardozo(1965). In nineteenth century so many researchers worked for consumer satisfaction /dissatisfaction and a very respectable research base exists in this period. The most important decision was to decide on which model is suitable for different consumption situation and for different products. It was still not clear that which paradigm is more suitable for consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction. An understanding of situation in which one model dominates others will give practitioners a more comprehensive view of construct. For example for attribution and equity theory much more research is needed. Equity theory is very helpful in modeling a situation where interpersonal affects are important. Attribution theory is may be useful in explaining satisfaction in a situation where cause of outcome is important for consumers and formation of attribute enhances the experience of consumption. More researchers examine the satisfaction/dissatisfaction at an individual level rather than aggregate. And for better picture it is important to see the satisfaction/dissatisfaction as an individual level. Most research has been done on aggregate level (a notable exception is the research of Oliver & DeSarbo .1988).

This paper has examined the various model of consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction growth of the literature of consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction and some major changes in eighties literature of consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction. It is hoped that this integration of the various approaches in the area of consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction literature will identify where we stand today and can create a sense of direction for future research. Intense competition among the various marketers underscores the need of understanding consumer satisfaction. While understanding the concept of consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction is important. it should not be considered an end in itself. And efforts should be made to incorporate developments in marketing strategy.

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