Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, it is tried to offer a conceptual idea about customer delight. The issues related to the importance of customer delight and its continuance from the viewpoint of a firm are also discussed here. While doing so, literatures are reviewed thoroughly. Towards the end of the chapter, an effort is made to draw out the problems which form the basis of this study. In this process, this chapter has also attempts to give the review of literature related to customer delight.

Delight refers to “great pleasure” or “joyful satisfaction” that a person experiences from a product, service, experience or idea etc. In fact, delight is explained as the status that “affords extreme enjoyment” to a person (Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary 341; Reader’s Digest Universal Dictionary 413; Webster Comprehensive Dictionary 339). The term delight has been used in management literature, particularly in marketing literature to a large extent. The concept of customer delight has gained popularity in the recent years and it is seen that firms are trying their best to delight their customers (Crotts and Magnini 719; Crotts, Pan and Raschid 462; Keiningham, Goddard, Vavra and Laci 54-64; Keiningham and Vavra 25; Mascarenhas, Kesavan and Bernacchi 486; Torres and Kline 290).

Customer delight refers to any one of the following (Keiningham and Vavra 25):

i. “Positive surprise arising from extremely good service or product performance”.

ii. “The highest level of satisfaction”.

iii. “Exceeding customers’ expectations”.

The same authors have stated that “customer delight will only be achieved by exceeding all the base expectations in the performance of a product or in the delivery of service (or in the servicing that accompanies a product or service)”. This has also been repeated by Keiningham et al. (54-64). Crotts and Magnini (719) have defined customer delight as the reaction of customers when the performance of any product not only satisfies them but also provides “unexpected level of value or
satisfaction”. This has been supported by Magnini, Crotts and Zehrer (535-545). On the other hand, in marketing literature, delight is explained as the “emotional response to a successful business transaction” (Keiningham et al. 54-64; Keiningham and Vavra 25; Kumar, Olshavsky and King 14). According to noted experts in service marketing like Zeithaml, Bitner, Gremler and Pandit (100-101) customer delight refers to the “profoundly positive emotional state” resulting from one’s expectations “exceeded to a surprising degree”. This has also been emphasized by Lovelock, Wirtz and Chatterjee (51-52). Almost two decades ago, Lynch (1) described customer delight as the “capacity to provide customers with experiences that transcend normal standards of quality services”. This viewpoint has also been shared by other researchers (Berman 137; Driggs; Schneider and Bowen 35).

Delighting customers has become an important strategy for most companies and organisations in their quest for higher profitability and survivability (Arnold, Reynolds, Ponder and Lueg 1133; Crotts et al. 463; Donovan and Samler 38; Fuller and Matzler 116; Kanji 44-45). Same findings have also been stated by other researchers (Mascarenhas et al. 486; Raut 623; Schneider and Bowen 35; Skogland and Siguaw 222-224; Stewart 112-113; Torres and Kline 290). It basically involves providing an added set of unexpected benefits along with the core product and/or service which surprises the customer leaving him/her enthralled with a favourable attitude regarding the company or organization (Berman 131, 132, 142; Crotts and Magnini 719). In today’s globalized business scenario every corporate organisation has experienced hard competition. Therefore, most of their decisions are made keeping in view the prevailing and changing tastes of existing and prospective customers in relation to their products and/or services. In fact, it may not be surprising to find different business activities of these organisations (namely planning, organizing, leading, coordinating, controlling and staffing) are centered on satisfying their customers. However, keeping in view the number of their competitors, merely satisfying customers may not be enough (Deming; Mascarenhas et al. 486; Stewart 112-113; Yang 85-88). The above discussion shows that customer loyalty has gained higher importance along with customer satisfaction for these organisations (Engeset and Heide 23-33; Fuller and Matzler 116; Kandampully and Suhartanto 348-350; Pantouvakis and Lymeropoulos 624-626). The same observations have also been given by other thinkers (Hawkins, Best, Coney and
Mookerjee 701-716; Kotler 20-21, 59-64; Kotler, Armstrong, Agnihotri and Haque 12-23; Nair 1-315; Panda 180-210; Schneider and Bowen 35; Schiffman and Kanuk 27-30, 246-250; Stanton, Etzel and Walker 159). Customer loyalty, which every company strives to achieve, may not be obtained only by satisfying the customer. This necessitates the marketing firm to venture beyond customer satisfaction. The most promising path towards obtaining customer loyalty is by achieving customer delight (Crotts et al. 463; Crotts and Magnini 719, 721; Keiningham et al. 54-64; Keiningham and Vavra 25; Kumar et al. 14). In fact, customer delight can help in generating more “positive word-of-mouth” for any company (Paul 34-36). Therefore, there is a vital need for organisations to move beyond simply satisfying customers. As observed by some researchers, retention (the result of customer loyalty) can be best achieved by delighting the customer (Burns, Evans, Johansson and Barrett; Popli 19).

Modern business scenario demands customer delight to be treated differently from customer satisfaction (Berman 130; Crotts et al. 463; Chowdhury 253; Patterson 221-224; Popli 19). Customer delight is a “better measure of customer relationship management than customer satisfaction” (Torres and Kline 290-291). In the long run, this ensures a healthy relationship between the organisation and the customers thereby creating loyalty of the latter. As stated earlier, this leads to improved image of the organisation with greater profitability and chances of better survivality in the long run.

1.1 Review of Literature:

Most scholars have treated customer satisfaction and customer delight separately. Crotts et al. (463) have stated that customer delight “goes beyond” customer “satisfaction”. Chowdhury (253) has highlighted that presently most companies aim at delighting customers “by assuring only what they can provide, then providing more than their assurance”. Companies do so in order to win a customer for life (in case he or she is continuously delighted). This fact has also been supported by other scholars (Berman 131, 132, 142; Crotts and Magnini 719; Patterson 221-224; Popli 19, 22). Besides, Chowdhury (265) has described obtaining customer delight as a move towards providing Total Customer Satisfaction (TCS).
Kano (39-48) has conducted a detailed analysis of the concept of customer satisfaction and has put forwarded a model on the said topic. His model of customer satisfaction distinguishes the following six categories of quality attributes (Fig. 1.1):

i. **Basic Factors (Dissatisfiers - Must Have):** These are the minimum prerequisites in any product which lead to customer dissatisfaction if they are not fulfilled. However, they do not cause customer satisfaction if they are fulfilled or exceeded (Kano 39-48).

ii. **Excitement Factors (Satisfiers - Attractive):** These factors increase customer satisfaction if delivered. However, they do not cause customer dissatisfaction if they are not delivered. These factors leave the customers surprised and generate “delight” (Kano 39-48; Sauerwein, Bailom, Matzler and Hinterhuber 314).

iii. **Performance Factors:** These factors cause customer satisfaction if their performance is high but lead to dissatisfaction for low performance. Normally, these factors are directly connected to customer’s explicit needs and desires, and any company should try to be competitive here (Kano 39-48).

iv. **Indifferent Attributes:** These refer to those features in any product that are not given much emphasis by the customers. In fact, they do not care about these features (Kano 39-48; Sauerwein et al. 314).

v. **Questionable Attributes:** These refer to those features in any product whose level of expectations are not clear among the customers (Kano 39-48; Sauerwein et al. 314).

vi. **Reverse Attributes:** These refer to those features in any product whose opposite are expected by the customers (Kano 39-48; Sauerwein et al. 314).
The above viewpoints in Fig. 1.1 have been supported by Matzler, Hinterhuber, Bailom and Sauerwein (6-18) and Sauerwein et al. (313-327). Many other researchers have added further explanation to the above discussed points. Berman (131) and Berger, Blauth and Boger (3-35) have referred to basic factors of any product as must-be requirements. Burns et al. have referred to these requirements as basic qualities to be present in any product or service. Berman (131) and Berger et al. (3-35) have referred to excitement factors of any product as attractive requirements. Burns et al. regards them as delighter features of any product or service. Performance factors of any product have also been referred to as one-dimensional requirements by some researchers (Berger et al. 3-35; Burns et al.). All these points have been incorporated into Kano’s model of customer satisfaction (39-48). Thereby, an adapted model of customer satisfaction based on the above Kano’s model has been developed. This has been shown in the following Fig. 1.2. This was done to give a greater insight for better understanding of the concept of customer delight. At the same time, this would also provide an easier understanding of the various factors that may result in customer delight in any firm.
Rust and Oliver (86) have described customer delight as “profoundly positive emotional state” generally resulting from “having one’s expectations exceeded to a surprising degree”. After thorough analysis of the insights of customer delight, the product attributes can be classified into the following three types (Fig. 1.3):

i. **Must Attributes:** Customers expect these attributes while purchasing a product. Their absence can render any product unable to perform its basic function and may end up dissatisfying the customer. In Fig. 1.3, these attributes are the innermost bull’s eye.

ii. **Satisfiers:** These represent additional features associated with the basic product. Higher levels of these attributes may increase the level of satisfaction beyond that which is provided by the basic product. In Fig. 1.3, these attributes are the next adjacent ring from the innermost bull’s eye.

iii. **Delighters:** These represent product attributes that are unexpected by the customers and provide them with surprising enjoyment leading to customer satisfaction.
delight. In Fig. 1.3, these attributes are the next outer adjacent ring from the inner ring comprising the satisfiers.

![Classification of Attributes of a Product](image)

Fig. 1.3. Classification of Attributes of a Product
(Source: Rust and Oliver 87)

Rust and Oliver (86) have depicted the above classification by the example of a gasoline station. In a gasoline station, the availability of gasoline is a must attribute, the existence of clean rest rooms represent satisfiers and existence of a “concession area” represents delighters. They have described customer delight in case of a product’s performance from the point of view of exceeding customer expectations which may be of the following levels:

i. **“Level of Exceedingness” is within the Normal Range:** This implies that the product’s performance would lead the customers to have a notion that the product was better than expected but not so surprising.

ii. **“Level of Exceedingness” is beyond the Normal Limits:** This implies that the product’s performance would surprise the customers.

Burns et al. have described customer delight as a “post-purchase emotion” that results from the consumer’s evaluation of the performance of product or service and is assumed to be an “extension of satisfaction characterised by positive effect”. Their Disconfirmation Theory of customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction provides the theoretical basis for defining customer delight (Fig. 1.4). Customers evaluate the performance of the products and services they have purchased by referring to their expectations before purchase. Whenever products or services cannot meet their expectations, the customers experience dissatisfaction (negative disconfirmation). However, when these products or services meet expectations, these expectations are confirmed and customers experience satisfaction. But, when the products or services exceed customer expectations, the latter feels delighted (positive disconfirmation).
The above viewpoint has also been supported by Berman (135), Crotts and Magnini (719), Chitturi, Ragunathan and Mahajan (48-50) and Zehrer, Crotts and Magnini (106).

Leventhal (53) has further added another dimension to the concept of customer satisfaction and delight through his analysis of the Disconfirmation Theory of Customer Satisfaction (Fig. 1.5). If the product or service delivery has met customer’s “desired expectations”, then it is said to be a state of confirmation leading to customer satisfaction. If on the other hand customer’s expectations are not met, then it is said to be a state of disconfirmation which may be of the following types:

i. **Positive Disconfirmation**: According to Leventhal (53), this occurs when product or service delivery surpasses customer’s expectations whenever the higher “should be” and “ideal” expectations are met. Customer delight occurs at this level leading to compliments from the customers (Leventhal 53).

ii. **Negative Disconfirmation**: This is seen when product or service delivery falls below customer expectations. Negative disconfirmation will generate acceptance by the customer in between “predicted” and “minimum tolerable” expectations. However dissatisfaction occurs in between “intolerable” and “worst imaginable” expectations leading to complaining behaviour of the customer (Leventhal 53).
Berman (135) has further modified the above concept of customer delight through his Model of Dissatisfaction, Outrage, Satisfaction, and Delight shown in Fig. 1.6. As per this model, when the performance of any product relates to an existing expectation of a customer, there can be two possibilities- Dissatisfaction (if the experienced performance is negative) and Satisfaction (if the experienced performance is positive). However, when the performance of any product “does not relate to any prior expectation” of a customer, there can be two probabilities- Outrage and Pain (if the experienced performance is negative) and Delight (if the experienced performance is positive). Berman (135) has stated that it is the “element of surprise” that differentiates satisfaction from delight, and dissatisfaction from outrage and pain. Berman (135) has opined that positive unexpected level of performance (that is a positive surprise) leads to delight, whereas a “positive expected level of performance” results in satisfaction. Similarly, a negative unexpected level of performance (that is a negative surprise) results in outrage and pain, and a negative expected performance results in dissatisfaction. The arrow starting from the no prior expectation column to the existing expectation column points out that customers form “expectations through their experiences” regarding any product with the passage of time.
Torres and Kline (290-291) have suggested in the above context that the real way to increase customer loyalty and retention is not to satisfy customers but to delight them. Keiningham and Vavra have measured customer satisfaction along a continuum. The three major points along this continuum are as follows (25):

i. **Zone of Pain:** It is the point at which the company or organisation is not satisfying its customers’ needs.

ii. **Zone of Mere Satisfaction:** It is the point at which the company or organisation is fulfilling needs but not doing much to distinguish itself from any other competitor within the same market.

iii. **Zone of Delight:** It is the point at which customers demonstrate behaviour consistent with the goals of the firm (like increased retention, sales, word-of-mouth recommendations etc.).

Berman (132) and Crotts et al. (464) have further modified the above concept of the impact of customer satisfaction and delight as put forwarded by Keiningham and Vavra (25) by replacing the zone of mere satisfaction by zone of dissatisfaction and zone of satisfaction (Fig. 1.7). Customer delight is the customer’s “positive emotional reaction” on receiving a product or service that not only satisfies them but also provides unexpected value leading to sense of surprise. “Outrage and pain” result when a customer receives unexpected poor product or service (Chitturi et al. 48-50; Kwong and Yau 257; Schneider and Bowen 35). Dissatisfaction occurs when

![Fig. 1.6. A Model of Dissatisfaction, Outrage, Satisfaction, and Delight (Source: Berman 135)](image-url)
the product or service falls below the customer’s expectations. However, when a customer’s expectations are met and exceeded, he or she feels satisfied and have a moderately high intention to repurchase the item. Valenzuela, Mellers and Strebel (476) have described delight as a “combination of affect (pleasure and happiness) and surprise (contrast with expectations)”. Besides, delight is also referred to as the combination of “surprise and happiness” when any product or service exceeds customer expectations on key criteria” (Crotts et al. 463). These “criteria create memorable and emotional responses” that strongly drive overall satisfaction intention to repurchase the product or service (Crotts et al. 463).

Crotts and Magnini (721-722) have established that surprise is an important element of customer delight. Magnini et al. (535-545) have also stated that delight occurs whenever a customer obtains a “positive surprise beyond his or her expectations”. Crotts and Magnini (720) and Oliver, Rust and Varki (318) have noted that surprising positive performance of a product leads to arousal in the mind of the customers which causes positive effect on the latter. This in turn leads to customer delight. Berman (134) has opined that “joy”, “surprise” and “high levels of arousal” may lead to customer delight. This fact has also been focused by Crotts and Magnini (720) and Kwong and Yau (255-257). Thereby the antecedents of customer delight are surprising positive performance, arousal and positive effect (Fig. 1.8). This fact has been supported by Kumar et al. (18).

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**Fig. 1.7. Perception of Service among Customers in the Hotel Industry**
(Source: Berman 132; Crotts et al. 464)

**Fig. 1.8. Antecedents of Customer Delight**
(Source: Rust and Oliver 87)
The above concept of customer satisfaction and delight has been further exemplified by Finn (19) who had conducted a thorough analysis of the model by Oliver et al. (318) referred to as ORV (Oliver, Rust and Varki) Model. The ORV Model is an integrative model of the behavioural basis for customer delight and satisfaction including hypothesized antecedents and consequences of delight (Fig. 1.9).

As per the viewpoint of Finn (19), unexpectedly high level of performance or satisfaction of any product (surprising consumption experience) causes arousal in customers (refer to Fig. 1.9). This results in positive affect which leads to customer delight. Thereby “both a surprising experience and arousal” can “also be considered as direct antecedents of customer delight”. In addition through the efforts of Finn (30), it has been found that there is an additional direct effect of disconfirmation on arousal. Accordingly, in case of hotels, surpassing of guests’ expectations, their pleasant surprises and resultant happiness coupled with their perceived excitement (arousal) and perceived positive feelings may lead to customer delight (Crotts et al. 463; Crotts and Magnini 719-722; Finn 19; Magnini et al. 535-545; Rust and Oliver 87; Torres and Kline 290).

Rust and Oliver (88) have classified customer delight into the following categories on the basis of the function of human memory:

i. **Assimilated Delight**: It involves consumers recollecting delighting facets of consumption and thereby coming to accept them as normal through “raised expectations”. In short, this type of delight raises customer expectations. In terms of the rings, this would imply that a previously delighting feature of a product would move to the level of the “satisfier” attribute or “must”
attribute. This raises the bar and would eventually force the firms to compete at this new level. This type of delight can create customer loyalty through attraction (Rust and Oliver 88). This has also been accepted by Torres and Kline (293).

ii. **Reenacted Delight:** It involves customer delight that a person experiences when a favorite movie or song is being played. This type of delight emotion decays but its memory is retained. The person in this case retains memories of the delight and can also experience the delighting stimulus at will or when available through the movie or song. In case of reenacted delight, firms can win customer loyalty through reenacting memories of the delight. It is “appreciated once on receiving by the customer” and “may be sought again by the same customer” (Rust and Oliver 88). Such value addition of reenacted delight may result in happiness or enjoyment to a customer while using products of a firm. In future, this results in their repeat purchase of products of the same firm. In case of hotels, reenacted delight may be possible through similar value addition during guests’ subsequent visits to the hotels. This may result in their happiness leading to repeat visit to the same hotels in the future. Thereby, guest loyalty and guest delight is maintained in the hotels for such guests (Rust and Oliver 88). This has also been supported by Torres and Kline (293).

iii. **Transitory Delight:** In this case, “considering the time frame” the delighting experience of a customer in relation to any product or service is soon forgotten. Such a delight may be attributed to “fate, randomness or serendipity” (Rust and Oliver 88). In case of transitory delight, firms should put together a number of such delights in such a way that the consumer remembers the experience as “delighting moments and not as individual moments” (Rust and Oliver 88). Such value addition of transitory delight may lead to customers’ happiness or enjoyment while using services and/or products of a firm. According to Rust and Oliver (88), this might result in their repeat procurement of these products of the same firm. The same scholars, in their study, have also explained transitory delight through the example of a child getting a “lollipop after an initial doctor visit” and then getting “a small plastic toy” in the next visit. Therefore, in case of hotels,
transitory delight may be possible through changes in value addition during guests’ subsequent visits. This may make them happy. As a consequence, they can repeatedly visit the same hotel in the future. Thus, guest loyalty and guest delight is maintained in the hotel for such guests (Rust and Oliver 88). This has also been accepted by Torres and Kline (293).

1.1.1 Important Requirements for Guests in Hotels:

Studies conducted by many researchers at different locations have indicated that hotel guests usually lay high importance on food and beverage quality, availability of food and beverage “variety”, “hygiene” of food and beverage, quality of the restaurant, welcoming atmosphere in the hotel, “cleanliness” and tidiness of the hotel, room furnishings and appearance, cleanliness of the room, “room service”, reasonable price for the room, availability of the hotel staff to provide prompt service, friendliness and helpfulness of the hotel staff, “security of belongings including valuables inside the room”, “responsible security personnel” and overall comfortability (Choi and Chu 116-119, 121-124; Heung 311; Mohsin and Lockyer 161, 164, 166; Poon and Low 219, 222; Tsang and Qu 320). This fact has been supported by other scholars who have established that “cleanliness, comfort, service, value and facilities” and “ambience, food and service” are the main factors leading to guest delight in hotels (Lynch, 1). Schneider and Bowen (35) have stated that “customer delight and outrage originate” from “security, justice and self-esteem”.

This fact has been further substantiated by Kwong and Yau (260-262) who have stated that customer delight is associated with justice, esteem, security, trust and variety. Groenenboom and Jones (14-16) have highlighted the importance of security for guests in hotels. Hasan, Raheem and Subhani (510-515) have established that customer delight in a bank is possible through “unusual ambiance”, “problem solving gestures”, “caring” for every customer, “giving undue favour”, “bypassing the system” to help customers, helpfulness and willingness to help customers, “prompt feedback” and “giving a VIP feel for every customer”. Some researchers have also highlighted the importance of free gifts, special foods and free access to facilities among the guests in the hotels (Poon and Low 219, 222). In addition properly trained and empowered employees in any hotel may also result in guest (customer) delight.
(Management Development Review 112-113) and thereby create greater guest loyalty (Castro, Armario and Ruiz 27-30).

1.2 Statement of the Problem:

As noticed from the above discussion, several studies are there concerning customer delight (Arnold et al. 1133; Crotts et al. 463; Crotts and Magnini 719-722; Donovan and Samler 38; Fuller and Matzler 116; Kanji 44-45; Keiningham et al. 54-64; Keingham and Vavra 25; Kumar et al. 14; Magnini et al. 535-545; Mascarenhas et al. 486; Raut 623; Schneider and Bowen 35; Torres and Kline 290; Zeithaml et al. 100-101). But these observations on customer delight are presently at the conceptual level. However, unless the sequence leading to customer delight is established through market feedback, these will remain at the hypothetical stage.

It has been stated by some scholars that attractive additional features should be offered along with the basic product to create customer delight (Berman 137; Crotts and Magnini 719; Keingham et al. 54-64; Keingham and Vavra 25; Kumar et al. 14; Zeithaml et al. 100-101). Unless this is done cleverly with the passage of time, these delighter features get assimilated with the satisfier features of any product leading to issues regarding profitability and survivability (White 16). Because, with every successive purchase, customers tend to expect the earlier delighter features (Rust and Oliver 87, 92). Thereby, this may pose a serious problem in case of any firm trying to delight customers. However, to gain customer loyalty it is a priority for the establishment to practice such concepts like customer delight. This poses a problem to which a solution in the form of a strategy of management of customer delight is urgently needed.

References


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