



The asymmetric relationship between attribute-level performance and overall customer satisfaction: a reconsideration of the importance–performance analysis

Kurt Matzler^{a,*}, Franz Bailom^{b,1}, Hans H. Hinterhuber^{a,2},
Birgit Renzl^{a,3}, Johann Pichler^{b,1}

^aDepartment of General and Tourism Management, University of Innsbruck, Universitätsstrasse 15, A-6020 Innsbruck, Austria

^bInnovative Management Partner (IMP), Rennweg 23, A-6020 Innsbruck, Austria

Received 1 February 2002; received in revised form 1 November 2002; accepted 1 March 2003

Abstract

The importance–performance analysis (IPA) is a widely used analytical technique that yields prescriptions for the management of customer satisfaction. IPA is a two-dimensional grid based on customer-perceived importance of quality attributes and attribute performance. Depending on the interplay of these two dimensions, strategies for satisfaction management can be derived. As theoretical and empirical work has shown, the relationship between attribute-level performance and overall satisfaction is asymmetric. These findings call into question the applicability of IPA. In this paper, an empirical study on customer satisfaction with a supplier in the automotive industry was undertaken. Using a regression analysis with dummy variables, the asymmetric relationship between attribute-level performance and overall satisfaction could be confirmed. Furthermore, it is shown empirically that the managerial implications derived from an IPA are misleading. Consequently, the traditional IPA needs to be revised.

© 2003 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Importance–performance analysis; Customer satisfaction; Perceived quality

1. Introduction

Without question, quality and customer satisfaction are key drivers of financial performance. It is argued that satisfaction leads to increased loyalty, reduced price elasticity, increased cross-buying, and positive word of mouth. Numerous empirical studies confirm a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and profitability (e.g., Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994; Eklöf, Hackl, & Westlund, 1999; Ittner & Larcker, 1998).

In industrial markets, the importance of assessing and managing customer satisfaction is widely recognized (e.g., Tikkanen, Alajoutsijärvi, & Tähtinen, 2000). It is crucial to identify the critical factors that determine satisfaction and loyalty. Each company, however, is constrained by limitations on the resources they have available. Therefore, it must be decided how scarce resources are best deployed to achieve the highest level of satisfaction. An effective method to set priorities is importance–performance analysis (IPA). It analyses quality attributes on two dimensions: their performance level (satisfaction) and their importance to the customer. Evaluations of attributes on these two dimensions then are combined into a matrix that allows a firm to identify key drivers of satisfaction, to formulate improvement priorities, and to find areas of possible overkill and areas of “acceptable” disadvantages. In practice, IPA is considered a simple but effective tool (e.g., Hansen & Bush, 1999). It is very helpful in deciding how to best allocate scarce resources in order to maximize satisfaction.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +43-512-507-7185; fax: +43-512-507-2968.

E-mail addresses: kurt.matzler@uibk.ac.at (K. Matzler), f.bailom@imp.at (F. Bailom), hans.hinterhuber@uibk.ac.at (H.H. Hinterhuber), birgit.renzl@uibk.ac.at (B. Renzl), f.bailom@imp.at (J. Pichler).

¹ Tel.: +43-512-580010; fax: +43-512-580010-18.

² Tel.: +43-512-507-7181; fax: +43-512-507-2968.

³ Tel.: +43-512-507-7191; fax: +43-512-507-2968.

Two implicit assumptions underlie the IPA: (1) Attribute performance and attribute importance are two independent variables. (2) The relationship between quality attribute performance and overall performance is linear and symmetric.

Research in customer satisfaction, however, suggests that quality attributes fall into three categories: basic factors, performance factors, and excitement factors (Anderson & Mittal, 2000; Gale, 1994; Johnston, 1995; Matzler & Hinterhuber, 1998; Matzler, Hinterhuber, Bailom, & Sauerwein, 1996; Oliver, 1997). In Kano's (1984) model of customer satisfaction, the relationship between performance and importance of basic and excitement factors is nonlinear and asymmetric. Furthermore, attribute importance can be interpreted as a function of performance. Basic factors are critical when performance is low. Their influence on overall satisfaction decreases when performance increases. The opposite is true for excitement factors. They become important determinants of satisfaction when performance is high but play an unimportant role when performance is low. Thus, Kano's model of customer satisfaction disconfirms the basic assumptions of IPA and calls into question its managerial implications. The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, using data from a customer satisfaction survey, it is intended to confirm Kano's model of customer satisfaction empirically. A regression analysis with dummy variables is used to assess the asymmetric relationship between attribute-level performance and overall satisfaction. These results then are used to demonstrate that the traditional IPA is misleading and that it needs to be revised.

In the following sections, IPA and Kano's (1984) model of customer satisfaction are described briefly. Then, the results of the empirical study are presented. In the final section of the paper managerial implications of the findings are discussed.

2. Importance–performance analysis

IPA, originally introduced by Martilla and James (1977), yields insights into which product or service attributes a firm should focus on to achieve customer satisfaction. Typically, data from satisfaction surveys are used to construct a two-dimensional matrix, where importance is depicted along the *x*-axis and performance (satisfaction) along the *y*-axis. Customers are asked to rate each attribute on its performance. Attribute importance is measured using some form of self-stated importance (e.g., rating scales, constant sums scales, etc.) or derived importance (multiple regression weights). The means of performance and importance divide the matrix into four quadrants. The following recommendations for customer satisfaction management emerge (see Fig. 1).

Attributes in Quadrant I, evaluated high in both satisfaction and importance, represent opportunities for gaining or

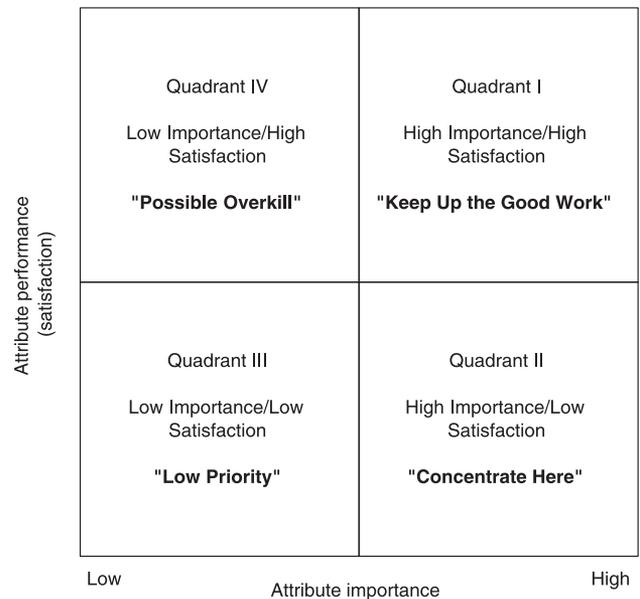


Fig. 1. Importance–performance analysis (IPA).

sustaining competitive advantage. In this area a firm should “keep up the good work.” Low satisfaction on highly important attributes demand immediate attention (Quadrant II). To enhance overall satisfaction, a firm should concentrate on these attributes. Ignorance of these attributes poses a serious threat to the firm. Quadrant III contains attributes both low in satisfaction and importance. It is not necessary to focus additional effort here. These product or service attributes are of “low priority.” Attributes located in Quadrant IV are rated high in satisfaction but low in importance. This implies that resources committed to these attributes would be better employed elsewhere. High performance on unimportant attributes indicates a “possible overkill.”

The IPA has been used in a variety of settings (e.g., Sampson & Showalter, 1999). In literature, some modifications and extensions have been presented. Yavas and Shemwell (1997), for instance, suggest including competitor's performance and attribute salience to extend the analysis. In principle, however, the underlying assumptions have remained the same. Attribute importance and performance are the key decision factors. They are thought to be independent and it is assumed that the relationship between attribute-level performance and overall satisfaction is linear and symmetric. There is growing evidence, however, that this relationship is more complex.

3. Three-factor theory of customer satisfaction

The dominant model in customer satisfaction research is based on the disconfirmation of expectations paradigm (Oliver, 1980, 1997). According to this model, satisfaction is formed through a cognitive comparison of perceived

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات