

METAMODEL OF CUSTOMER DISSATISFACTION

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Purpose: The principal aim of this paper is to present a conceptual metamodel of customer dissatisfaction, based on a review of the relevant literature. The metamodel includes a number of different factors, the influence of which on customer dissatisfaction may be either direct or indirect, and may be causal or merely correlative in nature.

Design/methodology/approach: Metamodel synthesizes previously validated models to propose new models and hypotheses for dissatisfaction. The metamodel explores the relationships between anger, dissatisfaction, and customer responses, providing insights into cognitive, affective, and behavioural reactions.

Findings: The paper proposes a metamodel for the construct of dissatisfaction. It aims to inspire the development of smaller, more focused models for research across various market sectors.

Research limitations/implications: The paper addresses the lack of research on customer dissatisfaction and its modelling, offering insights for researchers interested in exploring this underrepresented area. Further research can explore the impact of dissatisfaction and anger on customers' cognitive, affective, and behavioural responses.

Originality/value: The paper is based on own studies and reviews, presents own-developed metamodel which may serve as inspiration for future research in various market sectors.

Keywords: dissatisfaction, regret, dissatisfaction models, customer, satisfaction.

Category of the paper: General review, conceptual paper.

1. Introduction

Understanding customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction is crucial for any organisation. Both customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction can have significant impacts on the functioning of an enterprise, resulting in positive and negative effects.

However, achieving complete customer satisfaction is often difficult, if not impossible. There will always be groups of customers with varying levels of satisfaction, ranging from very satisfied to moderately satisfied and dissatisfied.

According to Garcia and Curras-Perez (2020), customer dissatisfaction does not always lead to resignation from services, and satisfaction does not always result in loyalty.

A significant amount of literature is dedicated to customer satisfaction, including models, influencing factors, and resulting effects. However, there is a lack of research and literature on the topic of customer dissatisfaction and its modelling. This area has not been thoroughly and systematically described in the literature. The available knowledge is scattered and unsystematised.

Researchers often neglect the study of customer dissatisfaction or regret. This may be due to various reasons, including the negativity associated with dissatisfaction, the difficulty of measuring subjective emotions like regret, and the emphasis on positive aspects such as satisfaction and loyalty. A search in the most popular scientific databases for the keywords ‘customer satisfaction’, ‘customer dissatisfaction’, ‘customer regret’ shows how great the disparity is in the amount of research and publications covering these issues (Table 1).

Table 1.

Number of results found for customer satisfaction, dissatisfaction and regret in popular science databases (years 2020-2024)

Number of results found	Customer satisfaction	Customer dissatisfaction	Customer regret
Google Scholar	77 900	11 600	82
Scopus	10 749	308	6
Web of Science (tittle search)	927	6	1
Wiley (tittle search)	35	1	0
Springer (all fields search)	18,697	1231	15

Source: own elaboration.

The aim of our paper is to use the concept of a metamodel and, based on a literature review, to propose its form for the construct of dissatisfaction. The metamodel is a synthesis of previously validated models that can be used to propose new models and hypotheses based on previous studies. This model can serve as inspiration for the development of smaller, more focused models (non-expanded models) and their validation in research across various market sectors and research areas.

2. Customer dissatisfaction and its consequences

Every consumer have their own experiences with satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Among them there are those that are remembered for a long time and those that are not remembered. All these experiences (including positive ones) influence purchasing decisions, customer expectations, satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

The concept of customer dissatisfaction, like customer satisfaction, is related to emotions and is difficult to describe unambiguously. Table 1 presents various approaches to the concept of dissatisfaction proposed by different authors.

Table 1.
Example explanations of the concept of dissatisfaction

Autors	Explanation of the concept of dissatisfaction
Bougie et al. (2003) citing Storm, Storm (1987)	Negative term, related to anger, hatred, and disgust.
Isac, Rusu (2017).	Will happen if the perceived performance falls beneath expectations, or if the perceived performance goes beyond the expectations.
Johnston (1995)	Dissatisfaction is usually elicited by tangibility or integrity problems.
Isac, Rusu (2017)	Dissatisfaction could never appear unless the evaluation process began with the customers' negative expectations.
Oliver, DeSarbo (1988)	Negative disconfirmation which may cose to a feeling of disappointment. The delight of a positive disconfirmation enhances a satisfaction judgment, while the disappointment of a negative disconfirmation decreases it.
Taylor, Burns (1999)	The function of the consumer's expectation about the product performance, and some form of comparison between the pre-purchase expectation and the post-purchase performance.
Giese, Cote (2000)	Dissatisfaction can be defined using the three components of the definitional framework: affective response, focus, and timing.
Fornell, Wernerfelt (1987)	A state of cognitive/affective discomfort caused by an insufficient return relative to the resources spent by the consumer at any stage of the purchase/consumption process.

Source: own elaboration.

As Giese and Cote (2000, cited in: Souca, 2014) points out the dissatisfaction has three key components:

- an affective response,
- it has a clear focus point,
- it happens at a determined point in time.

Shweta and Agarwal (2022) state that the main reasons for consumer dissatisfaction are knowledge, perceived importance, and unfulfilled promises, including advertising promises.

Negative customer feelings, such as dissatisfaction, can elicit various reactions, including regret and disappointment (Jang, Kim, 2011). These emotions can also lead to frustration, anger, and even aggressive behaviour.

Customer dissatisfaction is not only a function of disappointment (negative disconfirmation), but also of regret (the performance of forgone alternatives) (Mahapatra, 2014). The point of reference of regret is the nonchosen option while the point of reference of disappointment is the expected but unrealized outcome within the same chosen option. Luckily people tend to avoid choices that could generate regret (Matarazzo et al., 2021).

Many authors associate dissatisfaction with emotions. As noted Laros and Steenkamp (2003) emotions are often conceptualized as general dimensions, like positive and negative affect (satisfaction and dissatisfaction). Nevertheless in the literature some researchers use a comprehensive set of specific emotions i.e. surprise, regret, sympathy and empathy,

embarrassment and anger. According to Isac and Rusu (2014) the satisfaction/dissatisfaction is not an emotion, but the evaluation of an emotion.

Generally, there are two ways to respond to dissatisfaction, namely active response (upset-action) and passive response (upset-no action) (Mahapatra, 2014; Farrell, 1983). In some branches (e.g. services), the negative impact of customer dissatisfaction may even be greater than the positive impact of satisfaction (Kim et al., 2017).

Consumers respond to dissatisfaction in various ways, including exit, voice, and loyalty behaviours (Farrell, 1983; Cho, Song, 2012):

- Exit behaviour: (leave, withdrawal or escape) involves leaving the relationship by not making any further purchases.
- Voice behaviour: problem solving, suggesting improvements, communicating complaints to management and suggesting improvements.
- Loyalty behaviour: accepting the situation, faithfulness, trust and exhibiting latent passive behaviour.

It is important to note that some these behaviours (e.g. exit and voice behaviours) are not mutually exclusive and can coexist.

There is difference between these types of response i.e.: voice is active and constructive, exit is active and destructive, loyalty is passive responses to dissatisfaction (Farrell, 1983).

Fig. 1 shows selected examples of antecedents and consequences of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The consequences of satisfaction and loyalty may differ from those of dissatisfaction and disloyalty (Bloemer, Kasper, 1995). Additionally, the service attributes' components are not identical and may have different impacts on satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Vargo et al., 2007; Edvardsson et al., 2005; Bloemer et al., 2002; Bianchi et al., 2012).

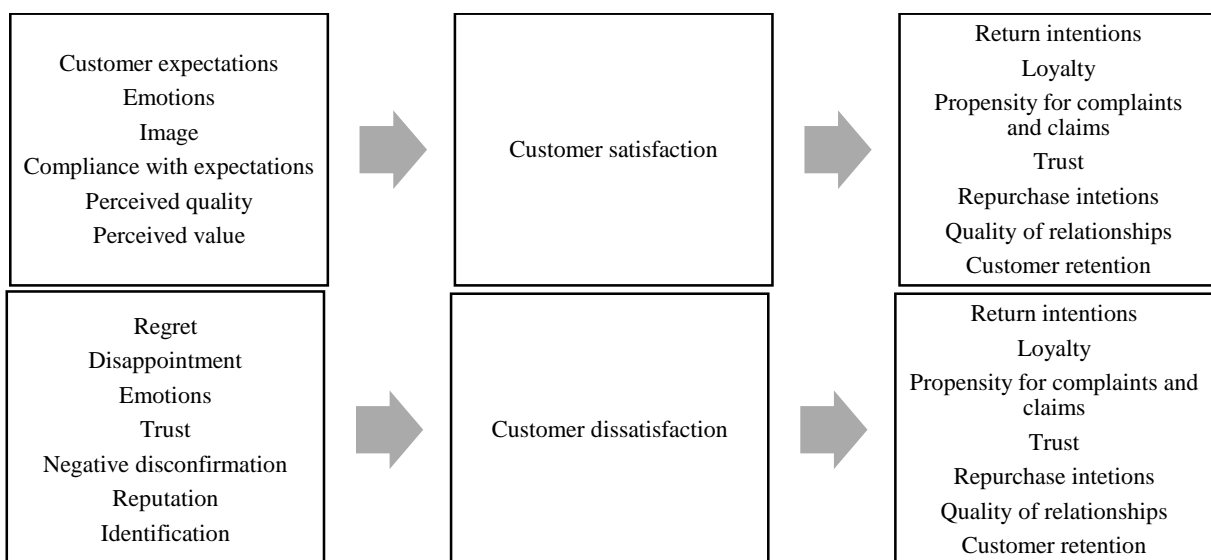


Figure 1. Selected examples of antecedents and consequences of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction – comparison.

Source: own based on: Biesok, Wyród-Wróbel (2016), Cho, Song (2012), Boadi et al. (2017), Bui et al. (2011), Kim et al. (2017), Pascual-Nebreda et al. (2021), Zeelenberg, Pieters (1999).

Dissatisfaction is directly related to regret, and regret is more associated with switching behaviour and affect on decision-making (Zeelenberg, Pieters, 1999, Inman et al., 1997, Bui et al., 2009). Whereas dissatisfaction may not necessarily induce complaining and some satisfied customers may still complain (Nimako, 2012).

As notice Oliver (1999), dissatisfaction is loyalty's Achilles tendon, because of its important role in ending the customer-company relationship.

3. Metamodel of customer dissatisfaction

The modelling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction aims to uncover and validate the relationships between elements that have or can impact satisfaction, as well as its effects. These relational structures can be explored through various modelling methods, such as structural equation modelling.

Models illustrate the relational connections, typically causal, between the constructs being studied. This relationship assumes the existence of influential factors, also known as explanatory, independent, or causal variables, that affect the behaviour of dependent or effectual factors, also known as explanatory or effectual variables. It is also possible for these factors to influence each other (Biesok, Wyród-Wróbel, 2016).

The multiplicity of research results forces researchers to structure the state of knowledge on an ongoing basis. One way of doing this is to create metamodels. A metamodel is a synthesis of previously validated models from which one can propose one's own models and influential hypotheses, and suggest how they have been supported in previous studies. In its form, it is a diagram of relationships showing the relationships between different factors and satisfaction that have been explored and confirmed by subsequent authors. The metamodel illustrates a cross section of hypotheses that have been positively validated in previous studies, provides an understanding of the place of the construct being analysed in a broader context than would be apparent from individual models, and inspires one to propose one's own hypotheses and related model forms (cf. Biesok, Wyród-Wróbel 2018).

In order to better understand its context and the links of negative satisfaction, the authors, built a dissatisfaction metamodel based on detailed models presented in the literature. To this end, more than 80 publications covering dissatisfaction and consumer regret were collected and reviewed. This is a considerable number, given that relatively few researchers (cf. Table 1) address these issues in their studies.

In the metamodel, the authors synthesised 10 studies on customer dissatisfaction. The authors focused on those studies that proposed and/or validated dissatisfaction models.

These models could be categorised as:

- Simple models – involving a small number of constructs and relationships between them (Bougie et al. (2003), Lee, Kim (2020), Nam et al. (2020), Putri et al. (2020)),
- Complex models – showing more elaborate relationships (Boadi et al. (2017), Cho, Song (2012), Kim et al. (2017), Lee et al. (2015), Lu et al. (2012), Pascual-Nebreda et al. (2021)).

The studies included in the metamodel were selected to ensure the maximum variety of models used, which should ensure the cross-sectional shape of the metamodel created from them.

The model proposed by Bougie et al. (2003) is based on two studies of the experience and consequences of anger and dissatisfaction in response to unsuccessful service encounters. The aim of Study 1 was to assess the specific feelings, thoughts, tendencies, actions and emotional goals that differentiate the experience of anger and dissatisfaction. In contrast, Study 2 examined the impact of service dissatisfaction and anger on customers' cognitive, affective and behavioural responses.

The results show that dissatisfaction is a significant predictor of switching, even when anger is taken into account. Conversely, anger is a significant predictor of supplier switching, complaint behaviour, negative WOM and third party complaints. As the authors of the paper suggest, while most dissatisfied customers do not complain, angry customers exhibit a range of different responses aimed at discouraging the supplier from continuing to do what is causing their anger or correcting the service failure.

Another example is a model that examines the effect of dissatisfaction on WOM and distrust (Nam et al., 2020). Dissatisfaction leads to negative eWOM and distrust of pre-existing electronic WOM, and ultimately distrust of the review site itself.

The model proposed by Lu et al. (2012) shows that dissatisfaction has a significant direct and indirect effect on repurchase intention, and exerts a strong influence on the negative emotions that lead customers to leave their suppliers.

Another example of a dissatisfaction model is the model proposed by Kim et al. (2017), called the “dissatisfaction-attitude-negative behavioural intention model”. The findings indicate that an individual's attitude towards the service provider plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between dissatisfaction and its negative consequences. Furthermore, the results show that dissatisfied customers form negative attitudes towards the hotel, which resulted in an overall unsatisfactory experience.

A metamodel synthesising these research findings is presented in Figure 2. The metamodel presents the hypotheses verified by the cited researchers of the relationship between dissatisfaction and its antecedents and consequents. The arrows show the direction of influence or outcome between the factors. The metamodel reveals a network of links between dissatisfaction and other constructs, enabling the construction of one's own models for their confirmation.

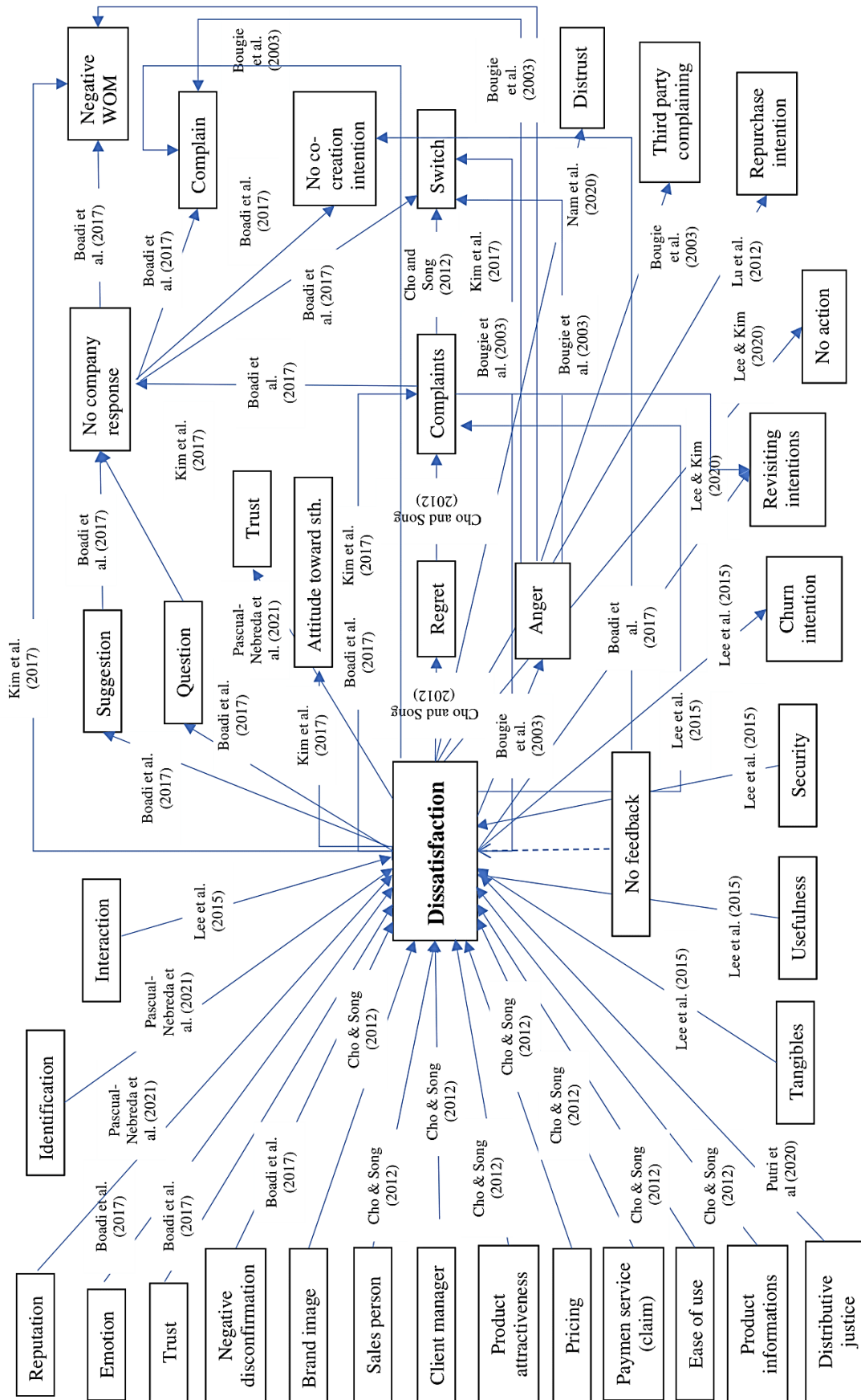


Figure 2. Proposed metamodel of customer dissatisfaction.

Source: own based on referenced studies.

4. Conclusion

The topic of dissatisfaction and consumer regret remains relatively under-researched within academic circles, often overshadowed by the extensive focus on customer satisfaction. Despite their profound impact on consumer behaviour and business performance, they do not receive proportionate attention in academic research. This may be caused by the fact that customer satisfaction is a positive emotional state and has positive association with customer loyalty and profitability.

Dissatisfaction has its own types, causes and consequences (Table 2). Each of these is an interesting research area. Exploring them enables overlooking critical insights into product or service shortcomings, customer dissatisfaction drivers, and opportunities for improvement.

Table 2.

Exemplary areas, causes and consequences of dissatisfaction that can be the subject of academic research

Areas of dissatisfaction	Causes of dissatisfaction	Consequences of dissatisfaction
Dissatisfaction with product quality	Unmet expectations	Negative word of mouth
Dissatisfaction with usability	Product defects	Switching intentions
Dissatisfaction with performance	Poor service	Complaints
Dissatisfaction because of expectations	Competency	Inertia
Dissatisfaction with customer service	Poor communications	Regret
Dissatisfaction with institution	Lack of training and information	No co-creation intentions
	Lack of customer focus	No consumer engagement
	Attitude problem	

Source: own elaboration based on: Biu et al. (2009), Boadi et al. (2017), Lahey (2023).

Failure to consider dissatisfaction and consumer grievances risks overlooking critical insights into product or service shortcomings, customer dissatisfaction drivers, and opportunities for improvement.

Dissatisfaction often arises from unmet expectations, so studying it can help businesses align their offerings with what customers expect and it is a significant predictor of supplier switching, even when anger is taken into account. Except it, dissatisfied customers may exhibit various responses aimed at discouraging the provider from continuing the service failure. Dissatisfaction leads to negative electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) and distrust of pre-existing eWOM, ultimately leading to distrust of the review website itself.

Studying customer dissatisfaction is essential for several reasons. It provides insight into areas for improvement: Dissatisfaction can provide valuable insights into areas of a product or service that require improvement. It helps businesses understand what is not working and how they can enhance their offerings.

By understanding the causes of dissatisfaction, businesses can take proactive measures to address these issues, thereby preventing customer churn and improving customer retention. This is particularly important for reputation management. In the era of social media, dissatisfied

customers can easily share their negative experiences, which can potentially damage a company's reputation. By studying dissatisfaction, businesses can better manage these situations and protect their brand image.

In order to gain insight into the phenomenon of dissatisfaction and the factors that create it, it is necessary to propose and confirm original models of dissatisfaction, regret and consumer anger. Further research can explore the impact of dissatisfaction and anger on customers' cognitive, affective, and behavioural responses. The proposed metamodel can support researches in these activities.

In conclusion, studying customer dissatisfaction is a challenging yet essential aspect of business research that can provide valuable insights for improvement and growth. This field deserves more attention from researchers. There is a compelling need for researchers to dedicate more attention to understanding and addressing these aspects of the consumer experience in order to foster more comprehensive and effective strategies for enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

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