

## USE OF ABRAHAM MASLOW'S MOTIVATION THEORY FOR SETTING CONSUMERS' SATISFACTION-NON- SATISFACTION

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### Abstract:

Behind a consumer's decision to purchase a product/service there is always a reason or a complex of reasons, and behind rejecting a product/service there is always the consumer's conclusion that, by its competences, that respective product/service will not fulfil that respective need at the level one desires. In order to explain the internal origins of consumers' behaviour, the contemporary psychology applies to the concepts of "needs" (necessities) and "motivations". The relation between these two categories consists in the needs which become antecedent conditions for determining the occurrence of motivations.

**Keywords:** need motivation, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, perceived quality, reality expected.

### Introduction

At the origins of the process of purchase, there is a "problem" based on the individual's needs, which occurred when the individual feels a difference between its actual situation and an ideal one (expected or desired by the individual). Consumers' need is in fact the "state of stress" resulting from them. Motivation represents the force pushing the consumer to act, to manifest oneself in order to reduce this state of stress[3].

### Contents of research

There are various theories in a consumer's motivation psychology namely:

- *Maslow's theory of values* highlighting a ranking system of needs;
- *theory of balance*, according to which the human being searches for stability, which is affected by the environment and which represents a strong source of balance. In order to re-establish the balance, the human being can change his/her perception of reality, or to reject the information of the environment, which are in conflict with one's mental structures;
- *theory of the concept itself*, according to which the human being acts depending on the idea he/she has about his/her own self;
- *theory of attribution*, which deems that the human being's attitude comes from observing the act "when we want to know what a person feels, we look at what one feels".

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One of the most known contributions to developing the motivation theory belongs to A. Maslow and consists in trying to structure the basic needs into five categories (physiological, security, affiliation, esteem, self-accomplishment), ranked in the shape of a pyramid (Fig. 1), which has the following hypotheses at its base: a human being knows various needs, which, having different importance, can be ranked; one is motivated to satisfy its need which seems to be the most important; when the need of order “k” has been satisfied, the individual will be motivated to satisfy his/her need of order “n+1”. [4]

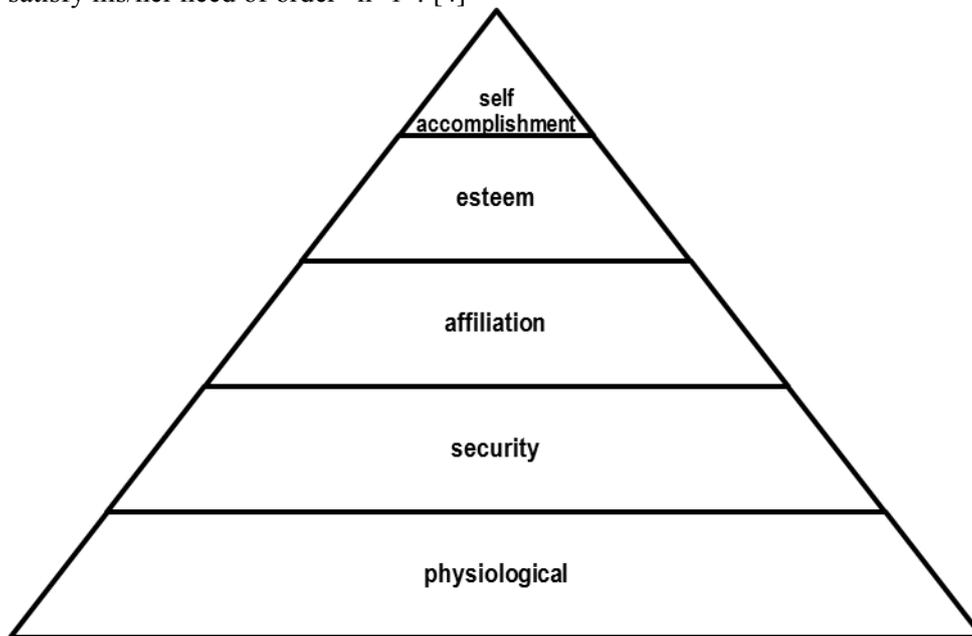


Figure 1. Abraham Maslow's pyramid of needs

*Theory on the hierarchy of needs* is one of the oldest theories about the human being's needs and behaviour, as well as one proving the utility and value even to this day. The theory is based on the image according to which people have a series of well defined needs, with a different degree of emergency and which can be structured practically in the shape of a pyramid of human needs[1].

Maslow deems the first step of the human needs is represented by the so-called *basic needs* or *physiological needs*, defined as those the satisfaction of which provides the individual's existence and comprise: the need for food, water, air etc. Here, sex is also included, as an important function of the human being, which ensures the survival of the species and its growth.

The next step is represented by the *safety* or *security needs*, which comprise the need of being dressed, the need of having shelter, of living at an adequate temperature etc.

The *needs of affiliation*, which take into account the fact that the human being is a social being and feels the desire to be with other fellow human beings. This is a strong stimulus determining people to survive in smaller or greater groups, together with other people sharing a vision and certain mutual objectives.

On a higher step, there is the *need of esteem*, which is represented on a double plane: The need of self-perception as a valuable person and the need of being appreciated by those around. Frequently, this need of esteem is translated by the human being's desire of benefiting by lots of affection, shown under various forms, inside the family, as well as in the groups where one belongs. Another form of manifestation consists in the status which one can earn or which can be attributed depending on the various criteria such as performance, age, experience, duration in the organisation etc. and which individualise him/her, offering another position in relation to the other member of the group where he/she belongs.

On the highest step, there is the *need of self-fulfilment*, which implies the human being's desire of fully using all qualities one has to reach the maximum level that can be attained. As it is difficult to define this limit, the need of self-fulfilment is deemed to be impossible to satisfy, being that part determining us to continuously be open to new, to accept challenges and progress.

The mechanism the operation of the Maslow's motivational theory is based on consists in gradually satisfying the set of human needs. Practically, it is deemed that any person starts by adopting certain decisions and developing certain actions which would result in satisfying the *physiological needs* and which question the individual's survival itself[2].

Under the current condition of the global more and more competitive market, the economical entities can only survive by means of an activity performed at the highest level, and the consumers are confronted with the existence of a great number of product/service suppliers that try to satisfy their needs and desires. Thusly, the essential factor of an economical entity's success is represented by knowing and satisfying the consumers targeted by a higher offer, and only its orientation towards marketing will allow the segments of the targeted consumers to be defined, as well as the best modalities of satisfying their needs and desires at a competitive and profitable level.

In the vision of marketing, the concept of consumer's satisfaction is a key element. As its importance is demonstrated by the continuous specialists' preoccupations regarding its research and shaping, including the ISO 9000 norms to be taken into account, which highlight the consumers' (clients') satisfaction, respectively the introduction of total quality management system, starting from the consumers' exigencies[3].

The concept of consumers' satisfaction has three components: *the answer of emotional, cognitive and/or conative nature; the assessment of the product based on certain standards or on the consumption experience; the moment of stating the answer* – before choosing the product, after the consumption of after the accumulation of an experience.

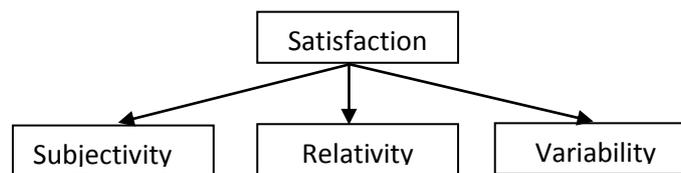
As the approach of the contents of each of the three components previously presented may be based on various opinions in trying to elaborate an inclusive definition of the satisfaction concept is difficult and cannot be deemed as having a clear manifestation.

Regarding the consumers' opinions, these are generally similar to those of the specialists, there existing however certain notable differences in this problem.

By synthesising such points of view, satisfaction is featured by the following elements: It is a response of emotional nature of variable intensity; it is based on the attributes/ benefits/performances of the product, the experience of purchase and consumption and/or other elements – needs, desires, expectations etc; it is manifested at a certain moment: before purchasing, after purchasing but before consumption, during the consumption or after the consumption.

Having as starting point the correlation of the specialists' vision with the consumers' opinions, it is deemed that satisfaction is a *compendious emotional response with a variable intensity* (the type of answer and the intensity level is explicitly defines by the researcher depending on context), *stated by a certain moment with a limited duration regarding certain aspects of the purchase and consumption of products*[2].

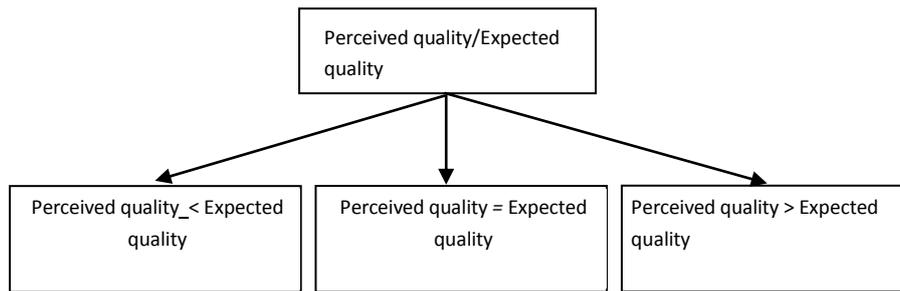
Consequently, it may be deemed that the main features of satisfaction are (Fig. 2): *subjectivity* (it depends on the consumer's perception regarding the products or services, a perception differing from the objective reality); *relativity* (it varies depending on the level of consumer's expectations); *variability* (it varies in time depending on the consumer's expectations and performances of the product in the various phases of its life cycle).



**Figure 2. The main features of satisfaction**

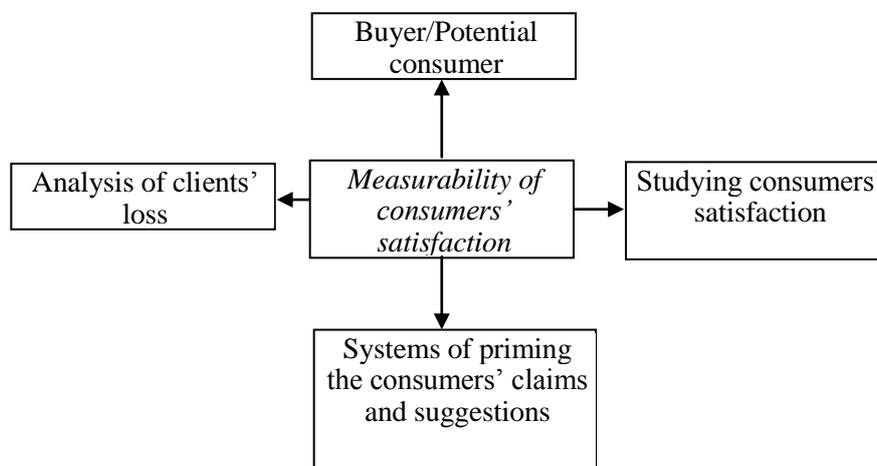
Therefore, consumer's satisfaction depends on the extent where the performances of the product/service correspond to the consumer's expectation connected to them. If the performances of the product are placed away from the buyer's expectations, one will be *unsatisfied*, and if these correspond to the expectations, one will be *satisfied*, when the performances of a product will overpass the buyer's expectations, one will be *pleased* (Fig. 3). These feelings will or will not determine the said product to be re-purchases, as well as the transmittance certain favourable or unfavourable information about the product, to people known [4].

In the case where the consumer has been satisfied, the probability that one would purchase again the product is higher. A satisfied consumer will also tend to confess to those around him/her regarding his/her positive opinions on a product [1]



**Figure 3. The correlation satisfaction - non-satisfaction**

Thusly, for any economical entity, there is the need of regularly measuring the consumers' satisfaction degree, by using a manifold of methods (Fig. 3).



**Figure 4. Methods of analysis and measurability of consumers' satisfaction**

*The systems of receiving claims and suggestions* must ease the consumers the possibility of making suggestions and claims, by making available for them special forms, the filling-in of which they inform about their satisfactions or dissatisfactions or free phone lines in order to ease the transmittance their requests, suggestions or claims. These flows of information represent an important source of ideas for those respective manufacturer, allowing them to solve the potential problems more rapidly.

*Studying the consumer's satisfaction* allows the direct evaluation of the satisfaction degree of the consumers' needs by periodic survey. The economical entity sends questionnaires or telephonically contacts a number of subjects chosen randomly from the new clients, in order to find out their reactions regarding various aspects of its activity. The modalities of measuring the satisfaction degree are: *direct report of satisfaction* by answering to the question: indicated to what extent they

are satisfied by the X product, by using a scale from Very satisfied to... Very dissatisfied; *derived dissatisfaction*, when subjects are asked to indicate the level of their expectations for various features of one product, as well as their actual level; *the analysis of the problem*, when subjects are asked to indicate all problems which they were confronted with regarding the offer and to also specify the improvements which could be made according to their opinion; *the evaluation of the importance/performance*, when subjects are asked to rank the various elements of the offer by means of the importance which it assigns to each one of them and to evaluate the degree by which the economical entity has satisfied each element separately.

*The "potential" buyer or client* refers to the situation where the services of certain people are applied to, whom would play the role of "mysterious" buyers, to report afterwards the results obtained and to assess which are the strong and weak points of that economical entity, as well as of its competitors. These people can even simulate various difficult situations in order to test the personnel's reaction and manner in which it solves the problem.

*The analysis of losing clients* occurs when the economical entities must get in touch with those clients who have ceased to purchase their products or have chosen another supplier, in order to find out the causes which led to this situation. In this case, it is important to run certain interviews, as well as to especially calculate and control the rate of clients' loss, which, by its decrease, it indicates the incapacity of the economical entity of satisfying its own clients.

Regardless of the method chosen to analyse and measure the consumers' satisfaction, when evaluating the consumer's satisfaction, certain important aspects must be taken into account, and namely: when a consumer shows one's satisfaction, one operates with different criteria; two consumers may be declared as very satisfied for various reasons: one may be easily satisfied constantly, the other may be a client difficult to satisfy, but who was declared as please in a certain situation; the clients of an economical entity may be declared intentionally discontent in order to obtain additional concessions[4].

In the opposite situation, the dissatisfied consumers react differently. They will try to reduce the disaccords, having available several possibilities of action: to abandon or return the product; the search for that information which would confirm the superior value of the product; to avoid that information which could confirm the low value of the product.

Consumers can manifest their dissatisfaction in various ways, and the range of dissatisfied consumers' reactions must be taken into account.

Consumers have a choice between reacting and not reacting. In the first case, they can act at a *public level* or at a *personal level*. Among the public actions which a consumer can apply to, there are: transmission of discontents to the culpable supplier, contacting the supplier and claiming the dissatisfaction to it, contacting a lawyer or transmitting the discontents to other groups that could help one to get the desired satisfaction (governmental or nongovernmental organisations).

At a personal level, the consumer may cease to purchase that respective product, *the option of withdrawal* or can warn one's friends, *the option of communication*. In order to minimise the dissatisfaction degree after purchase, suppliers must create efficient channels of communication with clients and use their reactions in order to continuously improve their performances.

### Summary

The economical entities must be preoccupied by knowing and subsequently satisfying the consumers' needs, targeted for their sales depend on two categories of clients: *new and old*. It is much more difficult and expensive to attract new clients than to maintain the old ones, and making clients faithful implies to accordingly satisfy their needs[5].

A satisfied client has the following features: purchases more and becomes a faithful client; purchases new products or newly released; represents an efficient advertising means; gives less importance to the products of the competition and are less sensitive to the price factor; offers ideas of new products/services to the economical entity.

In conclusion, an economical entity oriented towards the client will periodically analyse the level of consumers' satisfaction and will establish objectives for improving it, if applicable. The consumers' higher and higher degree of satisfaction is the best indicator regarding the future profits of an economical entity.

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### WYKORZYSTANIE TEORII MOTYWACJI ABRAHAMA MASŁOWA W KSZTAŁTOWANIU SATYSFAKCJI BĄDŹ DYSSATYSFAKCJI KLIENTÓW

**Streszczenie:** Każda decyzja klienta dotycząca nabycia produktu lub usługi poparta jest jakimś powodem lub zespołem takich powodów. Rezygnacja z produktu/usługi wiąże się z wnioskowaniem klienta, który dzięki swoim kompetencjom wie, że dany produkt /usługa nie spełni jego indywidualnych potrzeb na wymaganym przez niego poziomie. Aby wyjaśnić pierwotne pochodzenie zachowania konsumentów, współczesna psychologia stosuje koncept *potrzeby* oraz *motywacji*. Związek pomiędzy tymi dwoma kategoriami wywodzi się od potrzeb, które są czynnikami poprzedzającymi wystąpienie motywacji.

#### 运用马斯洛理论来设置消费者满意与非满意度

**摘要:** 在消费者做出购买商品或者服务的背后会有一个或多个复杂的原因, 同时在拒绝购买的背后常常是消费者进行比较后得出的结论, 各自的产品和服务不能满足各自的需求水平。为了更好的阐明消费者行为的内部根源, 我们运用当代心理学来揭示“需求”和“动机”的概念。