

## **Assessment of the Importance Level of the Factors Affecting CS according to the Textile Consumers**

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### **Abstract**

*Customer satisfaction (CS) is one of the major concepts that the textile industry deals with. Therefore, the goal of this research is the assessment of the importance level of the factors influencing CS in the textile industry such as perceived service quality, perceived product quality, brand image, perceived value, store image, perceived risk and customer relations. A consumer survey was applied on survey respondents and SPSS program was used for the assessment of the data obtained from the questionnaires, which was required to be analyzed statistically to determine the importance level of the seven factors affecting CS.*

**Keywords:** perceived service quality, perceived product quality, brand image, perceived value, store image, perceived risk, customer relations, textile industry.

### **1. Introduction**

Before the purchasing process customers have some expectations about the performance of the products. Satisfaction is the term which expresses that the performance and benefits of the products surpass the expectations of the customers. CS not only improves the existing customer loyalty, repurchasing process and company awareness of the people, but also reduces the price flexibility and the cost of having incoming customers and keep the customers from being affected by the competitive enterprise. A company, that satisfies their customers against its competitors, has advantage in order that its medium and long-term period profitability increases (Peter and Olsan, 2005). In spite of the company's high pricing, satisfied customers are willing to give higher price for purchasing its products.

The goal of this research is to evaluate the importance level of the factors that affect CS in the textile industry such as perceived service quality (PSQ), perceived product quality (PPQ), brand image (BI), perceived value (PV), store image (SI), perceived risk (PR) and customer relations (CR). These factors were determined and analyzed statistically in our previous studies and they were all found to have affect on CS (Gocek and Beceren, 2012a; Gocek and Beceren, 2012b). First of all, the fundamental concepts, then the field and analysis processes of the study were explained. SPSS statistical package program was employed for the statistical analysis of the survey.

#### **1.1. Customer satisfaction**

The dissatisfaction of the customers is one of the biggest problems of the companies. The customer dissatisfaction affects the relationship between the customer and the company in a negative way. In order to reveal their dissatisfaction to the people close to themselves, customers use the word of mouth as a tool. In this case it is very obvious that the company is affected negatively. Therefore, CS means a lot for the textile industry as well as for the other industries and is required to be considered in the marketing strategies of the textile companies.

#### **1.2. Customer satisfaction: as a concept and its definition**

Satisfaction is not only having pleasure by the consumption experience, but it is also achieving the satisfaction of the customers' hope of the consumption experience.

Since satisfaction is one of the most significant subjects of marketing concepts, it creates a relation between purchase and consumption processes and post-purchase phenomenon. If this relation is positively applied, it causes not only the satisfaction of the customers' demands but also the profitability of the company (Hicks, 2005). Satisfaction of the customers is crucial for the marketers, because repetitive sales, customer loyalty and positive word of mouth can be achieved only by satisfaction (Didier, 2003).

### **1.3. Customer satisfaction: its importance for the textile industry**

The most important factors possessing both negative and positive effects on CS in the textile industry are fashion, fit of the garment, and retail environment. The effect of retail environment, pricing, sales people and merchandise on dissatisfaction has been examined in recent studies (Otieno et. al., 2005). According to Babin and Darden, since negative feelings may have more impressive effect on human mind, people possessing negative feelings about a place avoid being in that environments which make them dissatisfied. The most influential factors in retail environments were found to be fashion, availability, fit, comfortable fitting rooms, admiration for cloths, personnel attitudes and body size characteristics, pricing perceptions and product exhibit (Babin and Darden, 1995). Female customers classified atmosphere of the store as a factor that affects their shopping experience in a negative way if the fitting rooms are shared, if there are no fitting rooms or if the temperature in the store is too high. In addition to this, according to these customers, the store atmosphere should not be boring and there should be feed-back options keeping them updated about the store, company and products and keeping the relations strong with the customers (Otieno et. al, 2005).

Considering CS with all of its constituents, it is clear that it is crucial for different industries as well as the textile industry. For improving CS in the textile industry, the results of the CS studies should be considerably analyzed and evaluated, the causes of dissatisfaction should be stated and the solution suggestions of the problem should be offered.

## **2. Conceptual framework and determination of the research hypotheses**

### **2.1. Factors of the customer satisfaction research**

The factors of this research, which were determined in our previous studies and which were found to have influence on CS, are PSQ, PPQ, BI, PV, SI, PR and CR (Gocek and Beceren, 2012a; Gocek and Beceren, 2012b).

#### **2.1.1. Perceived Service Quality**

In this paper, SQ is defined as the level of perfection and excellence of SQ perception. As usual, SQ is known as the most important and the basic factor that forms profitability and achievement of the company. The important effects of SQ are based on two different causes: One of them is that SQ creates service differentiation and competition advantage that help to gain customers by affecting the market share. The other one is; SQ makes the customers repurchase, purchase the new services, purchase with the lower price flexibility and use positive word of mouth (Aydın and Özer, 2005). If the customer makes positive evaluation about SQ of the company, then the relationship between the company and the customer becomes stronger. On contrary, if the customer makes negative evaluation about SQ of the company, then the relationship between the company and the customer becomes weaker. SQ is the probability of recommendation of the products or the services (Sivadas and Baker-Prewitt, 2000). The higher level of SQ means higher level of CS and results in better customer loyalty and high level of profitability (Ghobadian et. al.1993). To transfer the quality to service means satisfying customers' requirements. So that, the companies aspiring to adopt the customer oriented approach should determine the customer requirements and associate the customer requirements with service design and capabilities (Chow-Chua and Komaran, 2002). Products' features and prices, speed of delivery, friendliness, experience of personnel are the identifiers of CS (Didier, 2003). The positive attitudes of sales personnel, availability of advertised product and the suitability of store lay-out are very important points of CS (Burke, 1994). It is stated that as sale personnel's services; introducing new products and seasonal trends, suggesting advise on purchase alternatives for the preferred goods of the customers, explaining fabric care, presenting promotions and as service aspects; expertise, appearance, polite manner, low pressure selling tactics have significant impact on CS and loyalty (Ma and Niehm, 2006).

### **2.1.2. Perceived Product Quality**

When considering a marketing perspective, quality denotes a product's ability to satisfy a customer's requirements. In this respect, this definition focuses entirely on the customer and how the customer thinks a product will fit that purpose (Didier, 2003). Consumers use product's specific intrinsic cues to evaluate PQ. Intrinsic cues like flavor or color etc. are an inseparable and highly integral part of the product. Simultaneously, consumers also trust the relevant extrinsic product cues such as price, brand name and store name as indicators of PQ. In other words, cues associated with, but not belonging to, the actual physical product are used as signals to imply overall PQ (Zeithaml, 1988).

### **2.1.3. Brand Image**

Branding is an evident promise to the consumer by giving assurance that the products will be delivered to them with all of the characteristics described. Branding means reliability, understanding, communication and satisfaction. Companies are identified by brands and brands bring specific value to the market (Didier, 2003). When the company, on the basis of its view of the market, creates brand and translates this brand into the BI as perceived by customer, this strategy develops greater CS furthermore greater brand loyalty (Royle et. al., 1999, Dodds et.al., 1991; Baker et. al., 1994; Sirgy et. al., 2000).

### **2.1.4. Perceived Value**

Value has many different meanings for the customers such as:

- \* Value is the low price.
- \* Value is the benefits and the serviceability expected by the customers from the product.
- \* Value is the quality compared to the paid price (quality vs. paid price).
- \* Value is the sum of all the benefits that are acquired versus all the costs (expenses) (Warrington, 2002).

PV can be defined as the total evaluation of the consumer about the benefit acquired from the product based on the perceptions related with what is gained and what is expended. PV can also be defined as the quality for price (Warrington, 2002). So to speak, the variable PV covers the assessments of customers related with the quality of products and services in post-purchase process versus the price and the price paid versus the quality or the price paid versus the performance of product or service. While PV can be price/performance ratio, it can be also assessed as perceived quality/price ratio. In both of the situations PV has a positive effect on satisfaction (Grewal et. al., 1998).

### **2.1.5. Store image**

Physical ambient conditions such as store atmosphere and order and arrangement in a store are known to have effect on consumer behavior. These kind of attributes are the most important components of SI and have crucial influences on CS. It is proven that even small changes in store environment can have an effect on customer perceptions. More specifically, it is stated in some researches that store entrance, cash points and the arrangement style of customer service field can make the customer unwilling to stay in the store. The physical and social environment that constitutes the service are the most important and necessary component of retail store image. Furthermore, physical and social environment are known to have influence on sense and emotions of the people. Store atmosphere is related with the image that the customer has about store settings, service personnel and retailer. Inside and outside setting plans help to create store atmosphere that is necessary for the success. The details such as popular music and vivid decor prepare the store to the target market. Store atmosphere includes store setting arrangements that provide shopping convenience, fast cash opportunities and serviceability of the fitting rooms [Newman and Patel, 2004].

### **2.1.6. Perceived risk**

PR is defined as the expectation of the results, outcomes or events to happen that are negative and suspicious. PR is expecting the subjective loss. PR is a term that possess various risk types. These risks are financial risk, performance risk, time risk, psychological risk and social risk. Both CS and PR have a common effect on consumption emotions. CS is influenced by PR negatively [Johnson et. al., 2005]. At any time when the customers purchase a product, they take a risk.

The price of a product plays a great role in the risk level that the customer feels. Therefore, this is the reason or the cause of the attempt of the customer to purchase a product that benefits more from PRs. Nowadays, retailers emphasis on customer education, warranties and satisfaction strategies very much. It is observed that if the warranties are provided for the consumer that purchases a product, CS of the consumer improves and objection to purchase the product decreases. More specifically, when consumers perceive the product more risky, warranties become the requirements that are unavoidable. The consumers that purchase a product having more perceived risk expect warranties that can lower the risk level in purchase process [Hicks, 2005]. Warranties determine the customers' expectations and help the expectations to be better. This means that warranties are one of the most important factors that decrease the PR [Didier, 2003].

### **2.1.7. Customer Relations**

Customer relations is a very practical and beneficial way of obtaining customer information that can be used for making strategic and tactical decisions and prompt feedback of the company and CR prevents customer loss [Prashanth, 2000]. Data obtained from the customers can be used for improving management, strategies and applications of customer relations [Muffatto and Panizzolo, 1995]. The relation with the customer is formed at the time of purchasing and this relation is better to be maintained as a post purchase service. It is obvious that there will be no customer when the relations are destroyed. The complaints providing feedback from the customers are great opportunities for the companies to sustain the relations with their customers. With these complaints, companies can increase their sales by finding various ways of offering service to their customers, since through the feedback from the customers, enterprise can improve its service or can create new service possibilities. Therefore, dissatisfaction that might be encountered in the future is stopped before it happens. Another benefit of customer relations for the company is showing the customers that they are their partners or associates of their business and the company itself desires to sustain and improve the relationship between each other [Plymire, 1991]. Therefore, a positive relationship is formed between the customer and the enterprise, since the customers feel that they are important for the enterprise. This indicates that an opportunity is created for the companies in order to provide CS [Aydin and Özer, 2005].

### **2.2. Procedure of the analysis & research hypotheses**

Research hypotheses were created based on the importance level comparison of the factors affecting CS. By the importance level comparisons, which factor is more important than the other according to the customers was tried to be determined. Paired samples t-test was applied on these hypotheses in importance level analysis, since the relations between the seven different independent factors were tried to be examined in terms of importance level comparison.

H1<sub>0</sub>: PV is not more important than BI according to the customers.

H1<sub>1</sub>: PV is more important than BI according to the customers.

As shown in Table 1, when the relation between PV and BI was analyzed in terms of importance level, the value of the significance level was found as "0.007". Since the significance value is less than 0.05 for 95% confidence interval, there is no sufficient evidence to reject H1<sub>1</sub> hypothesis which implies that PV is more important than BI according to the textile consumers. As a result of this analysis, it was found that PV is more important than BI.

H2<sub>0</sub>: PV is not more important than SI according to the customers.

H2<sub>1</sub>: PV is more important than SI according to the customers.

When the importance level relations of PV and SI are considered, according to Table 1 the significance level is "0.002" which is less than 0.05 for the confidence interval 95%. Therefore, it can be said that there is no sufficient evidence to reject H2<sub>1</sub> and it can be concluded that PV is more important than SI according to the textile consumers.

The other results that were acquired by applying paired samples t-test are as follows (Table 1):

H3<sub>0</sub>: PV is not more important than CR according to the customers.

H3<sub>1</sub>: PV is more important than CR according to the customers.

There is no sufficient evidence to reject H3<sub>1</sub>, thus PV is more important than CR according to the textile consumers.

H4<sub>0</sub>: PV is not more important than PR according to the customers.

H4<sub>1</sub>: PV is more important than PR according to the customers.

There is no sufficient evidence to reject H4<sub>1</sub>, thus PV is more important than PR according to the textile consumers.

H5<sub>0</sub>: PV is not more important than PSQ according to the customers.

H5<sub>1</sub>: PV is more important than PSQ according to the customers.

There is no sufficient evidence to reject H5<sub>1</sub>, thus PV is more important than PSQ according to the textile consumers.

H6<sub>0</sub>: PV is not more important than PPQ according to the customers.

H6<sub>1</sub>: PV is more important than PPQ according to the customers.

There is no sufficient evidence to reject H6<sub>1</sub>, thus PV is more important than PPQ according to the textile consumers.

H7<sub>0</sub>: PPQ is not more important than BI according to the customers.

H7<sub>1</sub>: PPQ is more important than BI according to the customers.

There is no sufficient evidence to reject H7<sub>1</sub>, thus PPQ is more important than BI according to the textile consumers.

H8<sub>0</sub>: PPQ is not more important than SI according to the customers.

H8<sub>1</sub>: PPQ is more important than SI according to the customers.

There is no sufficient evidence to reject H8<sub>1</sub>, thus PPQ is more important than SI according to the textile consumers.

H9<sub>0</sub>: PPQ is not more important than CR according to the customers.

H9<sub>1</sub>: PPQ is more important than CR according to the customers.

There is no sufficient evidence to reject H9<sub>1</sub>, thus PPQ is more important than CR according to the textile consumers.

H10<sub>0</sub>: PPQ is not more important than PR according to the customers.

H10<sub>1</sub>: PPQ is more important than PR according to the customers.

There is no sufficient evidence to reject H10<sub>1</sub>, thus PPQ is more important than PR according to the textile consumers.

H11<sub>0</sub>: PPQ is not more important than PSQ according to the customers.

H11<sub>1</sub>: PPQ is more important than PSQ according to the customers.

There is no sufficient evidence to reject H11<sub>1</sub>, thus PPQ is more important than PSQ according to the textile consumers.

H12<sub>0</sub>: PSQ is not more important than BI according to the customers.

H12<sub>1</sub>: PSQ is more important than BI according to the customers.

There is no sufficient evidence to reject H12<sub>1</sub>, thus PSQ is more important than BI according to the textile consumers.

H13<sub>0</sub>: PSQ is not more important than SI according to the customers.

H13<sub>1</sub>: PSQ is more important than SI according to the customers.

There is no sufficient evidence to reject H13<sub>1</sub>, thus PSQ is more important than SI according to the textile consumers.

H14<sub>0</sub>: PSQ is not more important than CR according to the customers.

H14<sub>1</sub>: PSQ is more important than CR according to the customers.

There is no sufficient evidence to reject H14<sub>1</sub>, thus PSQ is more important than CR according to the textile consumers.

H15<sub>0</sub>: PSQ is not more important than PR according to the customers.

H15<sub>1</sub>: PSQ is more important than PR according to the customers.

When the value in Table 1 about the importance level relation between PSQ and PR is considered, the significance level was found to be "0.697" which is greater than 0.05 for the confidence interval 95%. Therefore, it can be said that there is no sufficient evidence to reject H15<sub>0</sub> which implies that PSQ is not more important than PR according to the customers. It can be concluded that there is no significant difference between the importance level of PSQ and PR.

H16<sub>0</sub>: PR is not more important than BI according to the customers.

H16<sub>1</sub>: PR is more important than BI according to the customers.

There is no sufficient evidence to reject H16<sub>1</sub>, thus PR is more important than BI according to the textile consumers.

H17<sub>0</sub>: PR is not more important than SI according to the customers.

H17<sub>1</sub>: PR is more important than SI according to the customers.

There is no sufficient evidence to reject H17<sub>1</sub>, thus PR is more important than SI according to the textile consumers.

H18<sub>0</sub>: PR is not more important than CR according to the customers.

H18<sub>1</sub>: PR is more important than CR according to the customers.

When the value in Table 1 about the importance level relation between PR and CR is considered, the significance level was found to as "0.142" which is greater than 0.05 for the confidence interval 95%. Therefore, it can be said that there is no sufficient evidence to reject H18<sub>0</sub> which implies that PR is not more important than CR according to the customers. It can be concluded that there is no significant difference between the importance level of PR and CR.

H19<sub>0</sub>: CR is not more important than BI according to the customers.

H19<sub>1</sub>: CR is more important than BI according to the customers.

There is no sufficient evidence to reject H19<sub>1</sub>, thus CR is more important than BI according to the textile consumers.

H20<sub>0</sub>: CR is not more important than SI according to the customers.

H20<sub>1</sub>: CR is more important than SI according to the customers.

There is no sufficient evidence to reject H20<sub>1</sub>, thus CR is more important than SI according to the textile consumers.

H21<sub>0</sub>: SI is not more important than BI according to the customers.

H21<sub>1</sub>: SI is more important than BI according to the customers.

There is no sufficient evidence to reject H21<sub>1</sub>, thus SI is more important than BI according to the textile consumers.

### ***3. Field process & collection of the data***

In order to comprehend the importance level of the factors affecting CS in the textile industry, the field process of this research covers the selection of sampling technique and data collection, handing out the prepared survey to the sample that is considered to respond, suppositions and constraints of the research and finally entering the data gathered from the respondents to SPSS program for determining the details of the sample.

#### ***3.1. Sampling technique***

The sampling technique used in this research is non-probability sampling. Convenience sampling, one of the non-probability sampling technique, was chosen for this study.

Since the application of convenience sampling is easy, and does not require a lot of time, while gathering the data convenience sampling was preferred and as a requirement in the collection of the survey the desired minimum number of the survey respondents was 100.

#### ***3.2. Collection procedure of the data***

When applying the previously prepared survey forms, both face to face and e-mail techniques were used. The data collection method was determined by considering the factors such as sampling technique, sampling size and characteristics, number of questions and the time constraint.

#### ***3.3. Analysis of the data***

In order to evaluate the relationship hypotheses based on the importance level comparison of seven independent factors affecting CS, the paired samples t-test was used.

### ***4. Results and discussions***

When the results of this study are considered, it can be observed that two different importance level orders for the factors affecting CS were obtained, since according to the evaluation of the hypotheses it was obtained that PSQ is not more important than PR and PR is not more important than CR according to the customers meaning there is no significant difference between the importance level of PSQ - PR and PR - CR. According to the results, the two different orders are PV-PPQ-PSQ-CR-SI-BI and PV-PPQ-PR-SI-BI from higher importance to lower importance level, respectively.

Therefore, it is obvious that PV and PPQ are the most important factors that have impact on CS according to the textile consumers. However, SI and BI were found to have the lowest effect on CS by the textile consumers. Accordingly, although all of these seven factors were found to have direct effect on CS and strategies of the textile companies are required to be based on these seven factors, PV and PPQ should never be ignored by the textile companies both in their marketing and sales strategies and both of these should be considered by them in order to increase the number of customers and create loyal customer profile, since these have the highest effect on CS according to the perception of the textile consumers.

### **5. Conclusions**

The factors, PSQ, PPQ, BI, PV, SI, PR and CR were found to have effect on CS in the textile industry in the previous works. In order to access customers and create marketing and sales strategies based on the needs and expectations of their customers, the textile companies need to determine which factors are the most influential ones on CS as well as identifying the factors affecting CS. Since PV and PPQ were found to be the most influential factors of CS according to the results of this study, they must never be forgotten to be considered by the textile companies.

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**Table 1. Paired samples t-test results referred to hypothesis 1-21**

Paired Samples T-Test											
Hypothesis			Sig. 2-tailed	Hypothesis			Sig. 2-tailed	Hypothesis			Sig. 2-tailed
H1	PV	BI	0.007	H8	PPQ	SI	0.003	H15	PSQ	PR	0.697
H2	PV	SI	0.002	H9	PPQ	CR	0.004	H16	PR	BI	0.017
H3	PV	CR	0.001	H10	PPQ	PR	0.001	H17	PR	SI	0.010
H4	PV	PR	0.009	H11	PPQ	PSQ	0.000	H18	PR	CR	0.142
H5	PV	PSQ	0.011	H12	PSQ	BI	0.008	H19	CR	BI	0.019
H6	PV	PPQ	0.000	H13	PSQ	SI	0.007	H20	CR	SI	0.014
H7	PPQ	BI	0.005	H14	PSQ	CR	0.038	H21	SI	BI	0.006