

"Contribution to the study of marketing-quality interface"

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Abstract

On the basis of an in-depth analysis of conceptual underpinnings, this study has attempted to understand the interface between marketing and quality. **It** has shown that applying a marketing approach to quality is interesting in many ways because it makes us realize that:

- ✓ Quality only makes sense when it satisfies a customer need;
- ✓ It is a mobile and evolving concept, which must follow the changes affecting the needs of consumers;
- ✓ It is a flexible notion that admits several interpretations according to the differences of the needs of the consumers;
- ✓ The costs of non-quality must take into account the external costs of customer dissatisfaction and discontent.

Keywords: Marketing, Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Needs, Innovation

The concept of quality has always attracted attention. Notwithstanding, it has acquired in recent decades an unprecedented importance with the exacerbation of competition, the improvement of the conditions of the population (education, conscience, standard of living ...), and the development experienced by several fields (technological, economic, etc.), as well as the new constraints imposed by the environment (legislative, ecological, etc.). It has been promoted to the decisive factors of competitiveness because of its multiple challenges. In addition, after being an objective in itself, especially in pre-marketing times during which companies' efforts were focused on the product, quality has now become a means to achieve customer satisfaction and a vector of change in organizations. All of these factors have made this notion increasingly popular with authors in business management and among businessmen and researchers in a wide variety of fields.

Marketing and quality, an organic relationship: The link between marketing and quality can only be close because, on the one hand, marketing cannot achieve its objective of customer satisfaction without quality *lato sensu*. On the other hand, even a good quality product can fail if it poorly meets a consumer's need. This is why quality must be the materialization of the consumer's need because, as W.E. Deming reminds us, quality aims to satisfy the consumer's needs, present and future.¹ So, as J. Teboul notes that quality is first of all compliance with specifications. It is also the adjusted response to the intended use at the time of purchase and in the long term. But it is also the extra of seduction and excellence closer to desire than to need ... Quality is the ability to satisfy needs for purchase and use, at the best cost, minimizing losses and better than the competition.² That is to say, the intervention

of marketing is becoming imperative and is beneficial on several levels. In this context, W.E. Deming states that with the improvement of quality, guided by marketing studies, the final result is not only the improvement of quality but also the reduction of costs and the improvement of competitive position.³

This is what the Japanese, concerned about improving their image in terms of quality, understood during the post-war decades. J.M. Juran reports that for this purpose they have developed means to assess customer satisfaction, competitive quality and the performance of key processes (such as the product development cycle).⁴ According to the same author, the Japanese had abandoned the old idea that control should be used to eliminate faults. They put more emphasis on consumer demands than strict compliance with specifications.⁵ W.E. Deming adds that from this period in Japan, quality in terms of consumer needs for the present and the future suddenly becomes a national watchword in all sectors of activity. In 1950 the improvement in quality became total in Japan.⁶

This quality marketing vision that the Japanese have adopted is fruitful in terms of better competitiveness of their exports. K. Ishikawa explains that the reason for the popularity of Japanese cars is simple, however. Japanese manufacturers produce cars that meet the needs of American consumers and provide the required quality. These manufacturers produce for export to the United States, cars with the steering wheel on the left because they drive on the right. These cars rarely break down, consume little and are cheaper. By contrast American manufacturers are far from manufacturing products suitable for Japanese consumers. American cars consume a lot, often break

¹ W.E. Deming, « *Out of the Crisis* », Cambridge University Press 1987.

² J. Teboul, « *La dynamique qualité* », Les Editions d'Organisation, 1990. Reported by M. Wissler et P. Hetzel, « L'organisation de l'interface marketing-

qualité pour l'amélioration de l'offre », in *Direction et Gestion des Entreprises* N° 146, mars-avril 1994.

³ W.E. Deming, op. cit.

⁴ J. Juran, « Made in U.S.A.: a renaissance in quality », in *Harv Bus Rev.* 1993 Jul-Aug.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ W.E. Deming, op. cit.

down, are expensive to maintain. The steering wheel is on the left, ignoring traffic in Japan. Besides, in the USA, this right hand drive has design flaws and is not even suitable for their own traffic. American cars are only acceptable in Japan for those who want to drive a foreign car.⁷

With this new major fact that is the reference to the needs of the customers, introduced by the Japanese, and the awareness of this close link which exists between the quality and the satisfaction of the needs of the consumers, the majority, not to say the All of the authors in the quality field were forced to review their quality approaches and approaches to take account of customer needs. This is how recent works and standards in quality management⁸ place great emphasis on studying and meeting customer needs, and even the quality process and techniques have been revised to take account of this new development.

Admittedly, this close and organic link between marketing and quality obliges these two functions to demonstrate close collaboration, but without any confusion. More concretely, in my opinion, quality intervenes at the operational level of marketing. The latter fixes the target customer (Who?), And the need to be satisfied, that is to say the product to offer (What?); quality must find the appropriate way and techniques to produce (How?). Quality is responsible for designing the attributes and characteristics of the offer, capable of satisfying the needs of consumers, and finding the most suitable production, management and control methods.

Marketing and quality are therefore complementary. If marketing has mainly external concerns (study of needs, study of the competition, choice of a target ... and monitoring of the evolution of these

elements), quality has concerns especially internal to the company (mobilization, motivation of staff, reduction of non-quality ...). It is the business of engineers, product managers, designers ... and managers, who, in general, have for primary task the adaptation of the company as a whole to the external environment, object of interest of the marketing, and to concretize in a product and / or service the answer which the latter wants to give to the consumer's needs in the most rational way. Furthermore, with this quality marketing approach, it is like a process. Upstream of this process, quality is any process, technique, organizational and managerial method, which, by reference to the consumer's need, must translate into total quality in order to achieve perfection and excellence in and of business. Downstream, quality is the degree of satisfaction of the consumer's need for the product and / or service. It is the downstream side of this process that must justify the upstream side, give it meaning and meaning, and even constitutes its *raison d'être*. Without this downstream side, all techniques, managerial methods ..., and whatever the quality of the product, will only be foolish and futile efforts.⁹

Indeed, for any quality action to succeed, it must, as noted by H. Takeuchi And J.A. Quelch, be focused first on the customer and not on technology, production or competition.¹⁰ M. Wissler and P. Hetze explain that if the quality function must ensure the regularity of production by minimizing non-conformities and dysfunctions, it is still necessary that the specifications used as references in the

⁷ K. Ishikawa, « Le TQC ou la qualité à la japonaise », Editions Afnor Gestion 1981.

⁸ Among these works, we can cite :

- W.E. Deming, op. cit.
- J.M. Juran, « Planifier la qualité », Editions Afnor Gestion 1988.

⁹ A. Kouchih, « Marketing et compétitivité : Essai d'analyse des comportements marketing des entreprises exportatrices de la conserve végétale », Thèse de Doctorat, Université Hassan II – Aïn Chock, Faculté des sciences juridiques, économiques et sociales Casablanca 2010.

¹⁰ Takeuchi, (H). and Quelch, (J. A.), "Quality is more than Making a Good Product", in Harvard Business Review, July-Aug 1983.

company are consistent with the requirements target customers.¹¹

With this quality marketing approach, the latter is no longer an objective; it's a way to achieve customer satisfaction. This is how certain companies having become aware of this reality are no longer limited to giving, or even, no longer giving guarantees on the quality of their products and, on the other hand, increasingly giving a guarantee on the level of satisfaction promised. Hence, the appearance of certain new formulas or clauses such as that of "satisfied or reimbursed". This clearly shows that quality without customer satisfaction no longer matters. This means that worrying about quality in the traditional sense of the word means entering into the "product logic".¹² In the latter case, there is a fixation that takes place on the technical, functional and objective dimension of quality to the detriment of the perception of the attributes of the offer by the user and ultimately of the value that the user this accords to the product-service couple to which it has access.¹³ However, as we have just seen, quality in the modern and marketing sense of the term takes as a basis the consumer's need and as an objective the satisfaction of this need.

Quality, a definition by the customer: As noted by Aristote already in antiquity, it is not the cook, but the guests that it is up to judge the quality of the feast¹⁴, and as M. Lahbabi summed it up eloquently, there is only quality recognized by the consumer. [...] This means that the level of quality achieved by the firm depends on its ability to identify and meet consumer expectations. The higher the satisfaction rate,

the higher the quality label.¹⁵ In the end, we can say, like W.J. Abernathy, K.B. Clark and A.M. Kantow, that quality is established not by experts, but by the market.¹⁶ Therefore, whatever the level of quality of a product or service, it remains insignificant for the consumer if the product does not meet any need at home. Therefore, as W.E. Deming specifies, the manager decides on the specifications and characteristics of the current and future offer, the client judges this offer.¹⁷ Quality therefore only makes sense from a marketing perspective.

Ultimately, any company concerned with its competitiveness should only produce the quality sought by the customer because quality in itself has no meaning. It more or less acquires a meaning only when it more or less perfectly satisfies a need in the consumer. As an example of companies that have become aware of this reality, we can cite the case of the Kodak firm, which is committed to being a world leader in the quality of its products, and which judges the level of quality achieved according to the how it anticipates and meets the needs of its customers.¹⁸

Quality, a dynamic concept: Taking into account the versatility of the consumer and the evolving nature of his needs, the perception of quality, as W. Deming points out, is not static, it varies.¹⁹ As a result, quality is organic, and it is constantly evolving according to those who are, in the final analysis, the sole judges: customers.²⁰ Monitoring changes in needs will allow the company to direct efforts to improve the quality of its products in the right direction;

¹¹ M. Wissler et P. Hetzel, op. cit.

¹² For more details consult. Ph. Kotler et B. Dubois, « Satisfaire la clientèle à travers la qualité, le service et la valeur », in *Revue Française du Marketing* – n° 144-145, 1993.

¹³ M. Wissler et P. Hetzel, op. cit.

¹⁴ Reported by D. Lindon et F. Jallat, « Le marketing : Etudes, moyens d'action, stratégie », Editions Dunod 2005.

¹⁵ M. Lahbabi, « Création marketing », Editions le fenec 1991.

¹⁶ W.J. Abernathy, K.B. Clark et A.M. Kantow, « La nouvelle compétition industrielle », in *Harvard-L'Expansion/Printemps* 1982.

¹⁷ W.E. Deming, op. cit.

¹⁸ R.M. Grant, R. Shani, and R. Krishnan, "TQM's Challenge to Management Theory and Practice" in *Sloan Management Review*, Winter 1994.

¹⁹ W.E. Deming, op. cit.

²⁰ J.-P. Deschamps et P. R. Nayak (Arthur D. Little, Inc.), « Les maîtres de l'innovation totale », Editions d'Organisation, 1997.

that of the reduction of residual dissatisfactions of the client, often increasing due to the evolution of their needs. In short, recognizing that the expectations of its customers are changing and constantly reviewing its standards are, for a company, the only ways to maintain its market share.²¹ According to the 2001 Consumer Reports sector survey, despite the nearly 80% drop in the defect rate between 1980 and 2001, the commercial performance of American car manufacturers has not improved and their shares of market continued to decline compared to their Japanese competitors. This is explained by the fact that in recent years, consumers have changed their vision of what defines quality [...]. If the decisive quality in purchasing decisions was yesterday the absence of defects, now consumers are more attached to a small number of product advantages - for example, driving pleasure, design and vehicle line.²² Thus, the problem of the American car manufacturers finds its origin in the fact that they did not perceive the evolution of the foundations of the quality in their sector, and concentrated their efforts on aspects which do not base any more on it.

Quality is not universal: As R.D. Buzzell and F.D. Wiersema eloquently put it: like beauty, quality is relative.²³ Each client interprets the quality according to the specifics of their needs and the level of satisfaction they seek at a given time.²⁴ Two

consumers can, for example, appreciate the same product by considering different characteristics and attributes. On the other hand, a product considered by one consumer to be of good quality can be considered by another as a product of poor quality. Taking this reality into account, quality is not a notion and a rigid, absolute assessment. It arises in relative terms.

From technical quality to "responsible" quality: Currently, even the notion of customer satisfaction, which was the basis of marketing, is losing its importance more and more. The emergence of new concerns for humanity and the awareness of the seriousness of the problems facing the planet, especially at the beginning of this century, such as the scarcity of resources, demographic pressure, the deterioration of the environment ecological, inequalities and injustices in terms of trade, have upset the marketing concept. We have especially become aware that the production and consumption of certain products are prejudicial, and contribute to the deterioration of the physical and / or moral, immediate and / or latent well-being of consumers. That is to say, consumers no longer judge and gauge products based on the level of satisfaction they get. But, also and above all, depending on the side and undesirable effects of the production and consumption of these products on their long-term well-being and the well-being of the various parties to the trade and on society in general. Consequently, being a discipline of adaptation, traditional marketing has given way to marketing with an ethical dimension and hence new constraints of an ecological, social, equity order ... now impose quality. It

²¹ H.J. Harrington, « Le coût de la non-qualité », Editions Eyrolles 1990.

²² Reported by N. Ganguli, T.V. Kumaresh et A. Satpathy, « Le nouveau défi des constructions de Detroit », in L'Expansion Management Review / Juin 2003 N° 109.

²³ R.D. Buzzell et F.D. Wiersema, « Nouvelles stratégies pour accroître sa part de marché », in Harvard-L'Expansion/Été 1982.

²⁴ For the explanatory determinants of the customer's perceptions of quality, consult:

- E. Ben hanana, et S. Houfaïdi, « Contribution de la qualité perçue à la satisfaction et la confiance des usagers envers les collectivités territoriales Marocaines », in International Journal of Engineering Science Invention www.ijesi.org ||Volume 6 Issue 2|| February 2017.

- P. Zindy, R. Halawany-Darson et A. Hauwuy, « Perception et attitude des consommateurs vis-à-vis des produits de terroir : implications pour les fromages », in INRA Productions Animales, 2017, N° 3.

- O. N. Bessaid et B. Chaïb, « Le management de la qualité totale outil efficace pour la satisfaction et la fidélité des clients », in Revue du Contrôle de la Comptabilité et de l'Audit, Numéro 6 : Septembre 2018.

has become multidimensional; social, societal, ethical...

Marketing costs of non-quality:

When calculating the cost of non-quality, we must not only take into account direct and indirect costs²⁵, visible and hidden inside the company. We must also take into account marketing costs (external costs) which are not, in my opinion, always apparent (loss of market share, turnover, costs of litigation with customers, costs of repairing damage, etc.) . Other costs are mostly hidden or at least difficult to measure (customer dissatisfaction, negative word of mouth, etc.). W.E. Deming even considers that the latter category of costs is the most important. He believes that no one can imagine the commercial loss resulting from consumer dissatisfaction. The cost of replacing a defective item on the production line is easy to estimate. But the cost of a defective item that goes to the consumer defies all measures.²⁶ Indeed, a survey, carried out in September 1986, showed that, according to the executives of large American firms, the financial impact of non-quality was the greatest in terms of decrease in sales (46% of the people questioned) , far ahead of returns to manufacturing (21%), scrap (14%) and repairs (10%).²⁷ This is due to the fact that non-quality manifests itself directly in customer dissatisfaction, the consequences of which can be ruinous for the company because it affects its reputation, turnover, market share and even survival.²⁸

To conclude, it can be said that, now, quality is an essential variable in the competitiveness of business and nations. These virtues are manifold: cost reduction, mobilization and motivation of staff, improvement of products and processes, reduction of malfunctions ... All these virtues

have the potential to have positive effects on the company and its competitiveness. However, this notion remains empty of any meaning whatever the definition given to it and the approach by which we want to obtain it, and all its virtues are reduced to nothing if it is not recognized by the client. because he is the only one to establish the true standards and the only judge having the latitude to award the price for quality by buying the product of the company and being satisfied after use to re-buy it.

Obviously, even here, marketing finds a fertile field of application. It must guide efforts in terms of quality so that they have a positive effect on the competitiveness of the company. It should be noted, however, as rightly mentioned by W. Werther and J. Kerr, that the quality of products would have become an asset on the market, a "strategic minimum", a necessary but not sufficient condition for differentiation.²⁹ Hence, the need to take active measures, likely to anticipate competition, through forward-looking strategies.³⁰ In this context, innovation plays a very important role.

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²⁵ For more details on the direct costs of non-quality (costs linked to dysfunctions within the company) and the indirect costs of non-quality (costs linked to the effects of non-quality on the customer) see : H.J. Harrington, op. cit.

²⁶ W.E. Deming, op. cit.

²⁷ Reported by H.J. Harrington, op. cit.

²⁸ A. Kouchih, op. cit.

²⁹ W. Werther, and J. Kerr, "The Shifting Sands of Competitive Advantage", in Business Horizons, May - June, 1995.

³⁰ Ibid.

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