

Buyer Satisfaction and Loyalty – Evidence from the Industrial Goods Market

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ABSTRACT

What makes organizational buyers of products satisfied? To what extent does customer satisfaction imply customer loyalty in the industrial goods market? Past research have shown the dire need for marketers to seek and manage the right ingredients of customer satisfaction as a vital means of building customer loyalty. Past satisfaction-loyalty studies were predominantly in the consumer goods and services contexts. This study aims to fill the dearth in research in the industrial goods context. By using evidence from a sample of buyers of one supplier of semiconductor products in the industrial goods market, this study seeks to further understand the dynamics of this complex satisfaction-loyalty relationship. The best predictor of buyer satisfaction in this industrial market is found to be cost of ownership, while other determinants – service quality, product quality and delivery aspects are found to be positively linked with overall buyer satisfaction. Suggestions for future research are also given to address the present study's limitations.

ABSTRAK

Apakah yang memuaskan hati pembeli organisasi dengan produk yang mereka beli? Sejauh manakah kepuasan pembeli ada kaitannya dengan kesetiaan pembeli di dalam pasaran barangan industri? Penyelidikan lepas menunjukkan betapa perlunya ahli pemasaran mencari dan menguruskan ramuan yang betul yang menjadikan kepuasan pembeli suatu cara utama untuk memupuk kesetiaan pembeli. Ramai penyelidik lepas yang mengkaji perhubungan kepuasan dengan kesetiaan ini adalah berasaskan konteks barangan dan perkhidmatan pengguna. Kajian ini mengisi ketandusan penyelidikan di dalam konteks barangan industri, khususnya. Bukti dari sebuah sampel pembeli produk semikonduktor dari suatu syarikat pembekal di dalam pasaran industri, menjadi bahan kajian ini. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk memahami dengan lebih mendalam tentang perhubungan yang serba kompleks ini antara kepuasan dan kesetiaan. Didapati bahawa kos pemilikan dapat meramal kepuasan pembeli dengan paling baik sekali, manakala penentu lain – yakni kualiti perkhidmatan, kualiti produk dan aspek penghantaran, terbukti mempunyai perhubungan yang positif dengan

kepuasan pembeli secara keseluruhan. Cadangan untuk kajian masa hadapan juga diberi untuk menangani limitasi kajian ini.

INTRODUCTION

The lack of research on the cues used by customers in evaluating their satisfaction level in the industrial goods market formed the basis for this study. While customer satisfaction is clearly a very pertinent marketing concept, there have been mixed findings reported by an increasing number of academic studies. This complicates efforts among managers and academics, to identify the determinants and the outcomes of businesses having more satisfied, versus less-satisfied customers (Szymanski & Henard 2001). As such, more empirical studies are needed to further understand what factors influence satisfaction *more* than others and the very nature of their impact on loyalty. Furthermore, growing market diversity and the context-specific nature of the marketing discipline itself, require a need to understand the dynamics of customer satisfaction in different product and market-specific contexts. Many studies examining customer satisfaction attributes and their link with loyalty are based on either consumer service markets (such as in retail hotel setting, for example, see Brown & Chen 2001), or in the consumer goods categories. No empirical study has been cited relating to Malaysian buyers in the industrial goods market, such as in the semiconductor business setting.

As the semiconductor industry faces increasingly intense competition from both foreign and domestic firms, greater emphasis is being placed on responsiveness to customer requirements. Thus, "keeping the customer happy" has been recognized as an effective, competitive differentiating tool. Hence, the need for customer satisfaction has emerged as an important element of competitive benchmarking, as a business objective and a standard for performance measurement (Yeung & Ennew 2001). The lack of research on this particular industrial buyer market, may be due to unwillingness to divulge their practices in striving to protect their market intelligence and buyer territories. Besides the need for customer-orientation, adhering to growing customer expectation levels is also pertinent. However, with greater market diversity without clearly understanding the individual factors driving customer satisfaction, it is impossible to strive for high customer satisfaction in all areas. These expectations and needs must be satisfied to improve overall customer retention (Day 1994). In this situation, customer satisfaction is considered a necessary condition for customer retention and loyalty and therefore helps in realizing economic goals such as turnover and revenue (Reichheld 1996; Scheuing 1995).

Companies spend substantial resources to measure and manage their customer satisfaction. Zollner (1995) found that, in spite of 80 to 90 per cent

of customers studied stating that they were either very satisfied or just satisfied with the company, a high degree of customers claiming satisfaction,

“...were found to break up relationships and switch brands. Even in industries that traditionally are characterized by long term relationships – for example, the banking industry – a decrease in loyalty can be noticed, although there were a vast majority of customer scores recording high satisfaction in surveys....”

Thus, it can be argued that the increasing emphasis on customer satisfaction can in part, be attributed to *overall decline* in levels of customer loyalty or retention. This decline has been due to diverse factors including, for example, greater choice and information available to customers, the ‘commoditization’ of several products and intense foreign competition (Anderson & Fornell 1994; Schriver 1997).

LITERATURE REVIEW

A Juran Institute study indicates that less than a third of top managers of the largest U.S. corporations believe that their customer satisfaction efforts provided any economic value to their firm (Passikoff 1997). According to Jones and Sasser (1995), providing customers with outstanding value may be the only reliable way to achieve sustained customer satisfaction. The greater the satisfaction is with the supplier, the more loyal the buyers are apt to be (Biong 1993).

Firms must realize that more actions are required to convert neutral customers to satisfied customers than to convert satisfied customers into completely satisfied customers. Satisfied customers are more likely to be loyal and loyal customers are profitable. However, customer satisfaction is not a sufficient guarantee for customer loyalty. Stauss and Neuhaus (1997) questioned customers who described themselves as “basically brand loyal”, but stated that they had changed their brand lately. The result showed that the vast majority of switches did not occur due to dissatisfaction but despite satisfaction. For example, concerning coffee, the ratio of satisfied but brand-switching customers was 59% and concerning perfumes was as high as 62%.

A study by Finkelman and Goland (1990) found that the loyalty ratio of customers who are very satisfied with the service of their car dealers was only 40% among Ford and 58% among Chrysler car dealers. Similarly, Reichheld and Aspinall (1994) observed that a US car producer was permanently losing market share in the early 1980’s even though it always reached better satisfaction scores than its competitors. In this situation, about 90% of his customers who switched was satisfied or very satisfied but had found even better alternatives. In a study of the loyalty of retail banking depositors, it was found that ‘completely satisfied’ customers were nearly

42% more likely to be loyal than merely 'satisfied' customers (Jones & Sasser 1995).

On the other hand, LaBarbera and Mazursky (1983) found that satisfaction influences repurchase intentions. Dissatisfaction has been seen as a primary reason for customer defection or discontinuation of purchase. For example, Anton (1996) suggested that customers switch suppliers because they are not satisfied with the company's perceived value, relative to the competition. However, satisfaction in itself will not translate into loyalty (Jones & Sasser 1995). Satisfaction will foster loyalty to the extent that is a pre-requisite for maintaining a favourable relative attitude and for recommending and repurchasing from a store (Dick & Basu 1994).

Customer satisfaction is considered to be one of the most important outcomes of all marketing activities in a market-oriented firm. The obvious need for satisfying the firm's customer is to expand the business, to gain a higher market share, and to acquire repeat and referral business, all of which lead to improved profitability (Barsky 1992). Study by Cronin and Taylor (1992) in service sectors such as banking, pest control, dry cleaning, and fast food, found that customer satisfaction has a significant effect on purchase intentions in all four sectors. Similarly, in the health-care sector, McAlexander, Kaldenberg and Koenig (1994) found that patient satisfaction and service quality have a significant effect on future purchase intentions. Getty and Thompson (1994) studied relationships between quality of lodging, satisfaction, and the resulting effect on customers' intentions to recommend the lodging to prospective customers. Their findings suggest that customers' intentions to recommend are a function of their perception of both their satisfaction and service quality with the lodging experience. Hence it was concluded that there is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

Fornell (1992) argued that high customer satisfaction will result in increased loyalty for the firm and the customers will be less prone to overtures of the competition. However, the ability of customer satisfaction scores to predict such loyalty have not been adequately demonstrated (Higgins 1997). Anderson, Fornell and Lehmann (1994) expressed the fear that if firms are not able to demonstrate a link between customer satisfaction and economic performance, then firms may abandon the focus on customer satisfaction measurement. There are some evidence to support the contention of customer satisfaction translations into higher than normal market share growth. Practitioners and researchers have not clearly identified a theoretical framework, identifying factors that could lead to the development of customer loyalty (Gremler & Brown 1997). However, there is a consensus amongst practitioners and academics that customer satisfaction is a prerequisite to loyalty (Cronin & Taylor 1992; Gremler & Brown 1997). The technical, economical and psychological factors that influence customers to switch

suppliers are considered to be additional prerequisites of loyalty (Gremler & Brown 1997; Selnes 1993).

Customer loyalty is a complex construct that is difficult to define. According to Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000), 'a loyal customer' is a customer who repurchases from the same service provider whenever possible, and who continues to recommend or maintains a positive attitude towards the service provider. Bloemer and Kasper (1995) distinguished between 'true' brand loyalty and 'spurious' brand loyalty. They suggest that loyalty not only concerns the repurchase behaviour, but also takes into account the actual behaviour's antecedents. 'True loyalty' is biased (non-random) behavioural response (purchase) expressed over time with respect to one or more alternative brands, which are a function of psychological processes resulting in brand commitment. 'Spurious loyalty' on the other hand, is repurchasing due to inertia. Thus, while repurchasing itself is not loyalty, it influences loyalty as an antecedent.

Researchers measure loyalty using either the behavioural or attitudinal approaches. However, using a combination of these resulting in a composite measurement, depicts a more accurate measure since using the first two approaches unidimensionally, has its limitations. For instance, the behavioural approach considers consistent, repetitious purchase behaviour to signal loyalty, but repeat purchase alone does not always mean buyer commitment (TePeci 1999). Bowen and Chen (2001) argued using the hotel context, that for some customers who hold a favourable attitude (i.e. have strong allegiance/engagement) toward a hotel, and recommend the hotel to others, but feel the hotel was too expensive for him/her to use on a regular basis. Therefore, favourable attitude alone does not also assure loyalty. In combining the two, the composite approach measures loyalty by customers' product preferences, propensity of brand-switching, frequency of purchase, recency of purchase and total amount of purchase. This composite measure has been applied as a valuable tool to predict loyalty in diverse fields including retailing, upscale hotels and airlines (Backman & Crompton 1991; Pritchard, Howard & Havitz 1992; Pritchard & Howard 1997). This justifies the need for marketers striving to know how to build customer loyalty.

In attaining a loyalty measure with better predictive ability, Olsen (2002) broke free from other researchers' measures using merely re-patronize commitment or repurchase *intentions* (such as Oliver 1997), by defining it as 'self-reported repurchase behaviour'. Olsen (2002) proposed a model with satisfaction as a mediator between quality and repurchase loyalty, which was representative of the data across four seafood products. It was also found that, measuring the quality, satisfaction and loyalty linkage showed a much stronger relationship using relative attitudes towards a product, rather than using individual evaluation of the product. Mittal and Lassar (1998) further contributed significantly to this discipline by questioning

the assumption that satisfaction *alone* can guarantee customer loyalty. They found satisfaction among service customers, to be driven more by 'technical quality' (the quality of the work performed) than by 'functional quality' (how the service work was delivered). For low-contact services, once satisfaction is achieved, loyalty is driven more by functional quality than by technical quality. But the reverse pattern is found for high-contact services. To what extent is this applicable for industrial goods or for the 'B2B' context is unknown. Given that the buying situation for industrial goods such as semiconductors, unlike consumer goods, involve more complex buying processes (e.g. several company managers participate in the purchasing decision), we seek to investigate this phenomenon further. In sum, customer satisfaction has been proven to be a necessary, but *not sufficient* condition to foster customer loyalty. Measurement and method factors that characterize the research on this subject often moderate the relationship strength between satisfaction and its antecedents and outcomes (Szymanski & Henard 2001).

What constitutes 'buyer satisfaction' in the Malaysian industrial market has not been examined prior to this study. And, as no empirical evidence linking buyer satisfaction with buyer loyalty has been found to be applicable to this industrial goods context, this study aims to fulfill these two objectives:

1. To understand what factors drive customer satisfaction among buyers of semiconductor products in this market; and
2. To detect the nature of relationship between buyer satisfaction and buyer loyalty.

METHODOLOGY

Interviews with several industry experts were conducted in Malaysia to identify variables that are relevant as determinants of buyer satisfaction in the semiconductor industry. Operationalization of two elements – product quality and service quality have been adapted from literature, while the other three proposed determinants were generated from insights raised from the expert interviews.

PRODUCT QUALITY

Definition of product quality is 'identifying or exceeding customer requirements and expectations' (Shen, Tan & Xie 2000). This study incorporates five customer requirement items as indicators of 'product quality' – the degree to which the product met the following measures: (a) the required unit per-hour (PQ1); (b) mean time between assist (PQ2); (c) uptime (PQ3); (d) mean time between failure (PQ4); (e) change over time (PQ5) and (f) continuous improvement (PQ6).

SERVICE QUALITY

Service quality is considered a critical determinant of competitiveness. It can help an organization to differentiate itself from other organizations and gain competitive advantage. Superior service quality is a key to improved profitability (Ghobadian, Speller & Jones 1994). The customer should determine what aspects of the service are the most beneficial, rather than the service provider dictating these aspects (Babakus & Boller 1992). This study defines 'service quality' as the degree of alignment between customers' expectations and their perception of the service received (Bearden, Malhotra & Kelly 1998). Five items are developed to measure the degree of satisfaction with the supplier's product in terms of: (a) being proactive in problem solving (SQ1); (b) having a system to determine customer satisfaction (SQ2); (c) being responsive to changing customer needs (SQ3); (d) corrective action resolved within the agreed time (SQ4); (e) providing required technical (SQ5); and (f) responding within requested time frame (SQ6).

OTHER DETERMINANTS

Based on the buyers' company policy and supplier measurement specification as stated in the 'supplier's quest for gold' (National Semiconductor (1995)) and vendor performance system manual, three other elements crucial as determinants of customer satisfaction have been identified – delivery (DL), cost of ownership (CO) and system (ST) aspects. The 'quest for gold' is based upon the total quality methodologies outlined in the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. However, due to environmental differences between U.S.A. and Malaysia, the criteria has been adjusted to fit the specifics of the Malaysian semiconductor industry. Table 1 lists all items used to measure the three variables derived from the expert interviews. A four-point interval scale was used (1=very dissatisfied, 2=dissatisfied, 3=satisfied and 4=very satisfied).

In 2002, a convenient sample of five companies as buyers of semiconductor products was drawn from a target population of industrial goods companies operating in Malaysia. Each company received 50 questionnaires, to be filled in by target respondents working there, who are known to participate in the organizational buying decision process. In this industrial market, purchasing decisions are made collectively by either the company's purchasing managers responsible for the purchase coordination, or engineers or managers involved in the evaluation process as well as directors making the final decision. Thus, the sampling units comprise of the following individuals – the purchaser who buys the product, the equipment manager who evaluates the product, the operational manager who uses the product, and the director who approves the purchase (Table 2).

To ensure speedy and maximum output of data collection, the self-administered questionnaires were sent to the respondents either through e-

TABLE 1. Itemised measures of 'delivery', 'cost of ownership' and 'system' variables

Construct	Code	Measures
Delivery	DL1	Has the best lead time in the commodity group
	DL2	Flexible in scheduling
	DL3	Meeting all committed delivery dates
Cost of ownership	CO1	Provided documented results demonstrating significant cost-of-ownership improvement within the preceding 12 months
	CO2	The products are priced competitively
	CO3	Ongoing project to reduce cost of ownership
	CO4	Products provide yields better than competitors
	CO5	Has established analysis to systematically review cost elements of manufacturing for cost-of-ownership improvement.
System	ST1	Has initiated FMEA (Failure Mode and Effects Analysis) for quality accident prevention.
	ST2	The company demonstrated quality systems.
	ST3	Established systems to improve its production processes.
	ST4	All improved processes were well-documented.
	ST5	Has the technological capability to advance future process and product development.
	ST6	Has an established level five statistical process control (SPC) process.
	ST7	Has demonstrated elimination of special cause variation.

mail, or were delivered by hand. For the e-mail survey, the respondents were given one week to respond and for the drop-off method, a research assistant picked up the completed questionnaires after five days. Follow-up e-mails and telephone calls were used to remind the subjects after three days. A 75.2% response rate of usable questionnaires was obtained (188 out of 250).

TABLE 2. Respondents by company and job type

Job Type	Company A	Company B	Company C	Company D	Company E	Total
Director	0	1	2	1	2	6
Manager	7	5	7	12	8	39
Engineer	18	20	23	12	13	86
Purchaser	1	2	2	2	2	9
Supervisor	10	13	5	7	13	48
Total	36	41	39	34	38	188

FINDINGS

Table 3 shows that the Cronbach alpha statistics (testing the internal consistency) of the five proposed factors are within the acceptable range (Sekaran 2000). Then, the mean factor scores for each element were computed and Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated against the overall customer satisfaction and overall customer loyalty scores.

TABLE 3. Reliability coefficients for each factor

Factor	Number of items	Reliability coefficient
Product Quality (PQ)	6	0.56
Service Quality (SQ)	6	0.59
Delivery (DL)	3	0.71
Cost of Ownership (CO)	5	0.70
System (ST)	5	0.52

Note: Covariance analysis found items ST4 and ST6 fell outside the ST factor group and these were omitted. The resulting alpha statistic was improved to 0.52.

Overall customer satisfaction (CSAT) is measured using a single item that captures the buyer's overall satisfaction towards the company. Using this overall satisfaction measure is consistent with past research such as those reported by Bitner (1990), Bolton and Drew (1991), Cronin and Taylor (1992) and Mittal and Lassar (1998). Following Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000)'s work, customer loyalty is operationalized in this study as the act of repurchasing from the same service provider whenever possible, and the buyer who continues to recommend or maintain a positive attitude towards the service provider. Specifically, customer loyalty is measured here with three items using a four-point Likert scale, asking buyers about their repurchase intention, recommendation and switching intentions. The 'overall customer loyalty' score (overall CL in Table 4) is obtained by calculating the average mean for all the questions (i.e. a composite measurement).

TABLE 4. Correlation between buyer/customer satisfaction (CSAT), buyer/customer loyalty (CL) and other variables

Variables	r(CSAT)	r(CL)
Overall PQ	0.43**	0.42**
Overall SQ	0.58**	0.57**
Overall DL	0.48**	0.46**
Overall CO	0.58**	0.49**
Overall ST	0.24**	0.25**
Overall CL	0.91**	1.00

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (two-tailed)

Table 4 indicates that there is positive correlation between buyer satisfaction and loyalty. Since this paper seeks to detect any association between these two constructs, this positive correlation cannot be interpreted to mean that once satisfaction is attained, this will clearly lead to customer loyalty. With the exception of 'systems', the other four constructs appear to be good indicators of buyer satisfaction. A simple linear regression analysis was also employed to determine how well the independent variables (i.e. overall PQ, overall SQ, overall CO and overall ST) predict the dependent variable (i.e. CSAT).

Table 5 indicates that the most important predictor for buyer satisfaction (CSAT) is cost of ownership (overall CO) wherein this variable appears in all four regression models. Furthermore, model 1 above indicates that 34.2% of the variability in buyer satisfaction will be explained by changes in cost of ownership. This is aligned with Table 4's correlation results, where the overall cost of ownership records the highest correlation coefficient value relative to other variables. Surprisingly, this regression analysis shows that overall delivery is not included in any of the four models. The exclusion of 'overall DL' indicates that this variable is not a good predictor of buyer satisfaction CSAT in the semiconductor industry, even though a significantly positive relationship between buyer satisfaction and system is found.

TABLE 5. Linear regression model for buyer satisfaction

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Constant	0.80	-0.00***	-0.42	-1.07***
Overall CO	0.70***	0.46***	0.44***	0.42***
Overall SQ	-	0.56***	0.44***	0.44***
Overall PQ	-	-	0.28	0.25**
Overall ST	-	-	-	0.25**
R ²	0.34	0.43	0.45	0.47

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

DISCUSSION

In general, respondents expressed that they are merely satisfied with overall company performance, and the possibility for them to switch to other supplier(s) cannot be discounted. In fact, the tendency to switch is definite when there is a better alternative available. This finding must be viewed seriously by the management. Immediate action must be in place to improve on the actual product quality, service quality, delivery, and cost of ownership, which are found to be among good predictors for customer satisfaction. Perhaps, special attention must be focused on the delivery aspect of the product offered since it is found that a majority of the sampled buyers are

not satisfied with the current product performance (with a mean value of 1.88 out of 4.00). This study found evidence of a positive relationship between product quality, service quality, cost of ownership and delivery, with buyer satisfaction (Table 4). However, the 'system' construct was found to have the weakest relationship with buyer satisfaction. The finding is further supported by 97.3% of the respondents' ranking 'system' as the least important of all the factors. Therefore, we can conclude that the most essential elements contributing to buyer satisfaction in semiconductor industry are cost ownership, the service quality, the delivery aspect, and product quality.

The positive correlation between buyer satisfaction and customer loyalty found here is consistent with Biong's (1993) findings. However, the willingness of a customer to choose the specific supplier again is influenced by the extent to which the individual will heighten expectations and actively demand their fulfillment (Stauss & Neuhaus 1997). Therefore, this implies that buyer satisfaction alone does not lead to customer loyalty. Thus, firms should not rely solely on buyer satisfaction measures for building a customer retention program. The linear relationship found in this study contrasts with the asymmetrical relationship between satisfaction and loyalty found by Bowen and Chen (2001) and Oliva, Oliver and MacMillan (1992). Bowen and Chen (2001) developed and implemented a method to identify attributes that will increase customer loyalty. Perhaps the differing nature of these markets (consumer versus industrial), and products (manufactured products versus services) may explain the contrasting relationship. The different measurement of loyalty employed would also yield different results.

Even though in general, the customer would be satisfied with overall services, there is no indication of what specific attributes need improvement which buyers would value more. Understanding and assessing the factors are important because every improvement means additional costs that need to be incurred. In this situation, in order to make our plan more cost-effective, measures should be taken to identify the right ingredients of customer satisfaction. Therefore, it is suggested that the customer measurement system should be available in companies which endeavour to be customer-oriented for sustainable competitiveness.

The results also confirm that customer satisfaction will lead to customer loyalty. Based on this, semiconductor managers must set quality standards that would guarantee all customer determinants, i.e. cost of ownership, product quality, service quality, the system as well as its delivery. Given that the cost of ownership (i.e. the customer-delivered value) is found to be the most important customer satisfaction determinant, internal marketing and management efforts should be planned to ensure that these customers will actually be obtaining the value, as expected. Similarly, the vital role of other determinants should not also be neglected to ensure delivery of adequate service yielding an acceptable satisfaction level.

CONCLUSION

Given the acutely under-researched nature of the Malaysian 'B2B' buyer and industrial goods markets, as well as the obvious difficulty to gain access for data into this industry, the authors duly acknowledge several limitations of this study. In view of this, the potential for generating insights from best practices and building new theories are vast in this area. To address some of these limitations, broad suggestions on improving the conceptual design and methodology of future work on this subject are given here as follows.

To identify contextual differences, future research designs can be treated to understand the degree in which satisfaction attributes and the satisfaction-loyalty relationship differs and/or are similar among consumer markets, industrial goods market, service products and consumer goods contexts. This will generate rich insights that will make a most significant conceptual contribution to marketing knowledge, since marketing is a very context-specific discipline (Seth & Sisodia 1996). The conceptual and operational definition of the buyer satisfaction and loyalty constructs need to be improved and refined. The role of satisfaction as a mediating variable between perceived quality and customer loyalty need to be investigated (e.g. see Summers 2001). This discipline can also benefit from researchers using qualitative techniques to develop improved theoretical rationale for the existing satisfaction-loyalty linkage established, as well as to understand the contextual differences pointed out earlier.

Due to time and monetary constraints, and if a single cross-sectional survey technique remains the only cost-effective research method that can be done, then researchers should attempt to increase generalizability of the findings. This would greatly improve the methodology rigour. One way to do this is to employ more appropriate sampling procedures other than mere convenience sampling of buyer companies of one particular, large supplier. In this way, the dynamics of what actually influence satisfaction specifically tied to diverse buying situations in that particular market, can be better captured. Yet another opportunity to contribute significantly to methodology, is to enhance the construct validity of "buyer satisfaction" and "buyer loyalty" (as its key measures here). This can be done by devising a more complete or refined multiple-item set of measures, rather than "overall" scores computed from the variable sets. Researchers have also called for greater incorporation of an attitudinal framework to better measure the quality-satisfaction-loyalty linkage that so far has been so dependent on customers' self-reports. The challenge for researchers undertaking this endeavour thus, would also lie in creatively using measurement approaches that *won't* rely entirely on such self-reports.

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