PERCEIVED QUALITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN THE BUSINESS CONTEXT OF VERY LOW INCOME COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to show the effects of perceived quality (of products and/or services) on customer satisfaction in very low-income countries. The approach here is qualitative and data collection is realized with some semi-structured interviews, on various customers of two (2) private companies. The qualitative data is transcribed by hand, and then a content analysis is made. The results show that product quality or service quality has some effects on customer satisfaction in the context. The recommendation is that companies in the context should offer high quality products and quality services to increase customer satisfaction.

Keywords: Quality, Customer satisfaction, Products, Services, Marketing, Burkina Faso.

INTRODUCTION

There are various studies on the effect of equity on customers’ satisfaction in the West African context (Olsen, 2002; Morrisson, 2005; Nassè, 2016; Nassè, 2020). In addition, Carbonell, and Nassè (2021) have shown that entrepreneur leadership, adaptation to the African context, efficiency, and strategic positioning are some key elements for companies to survive. For
Further, Zongo and Nassè (2019) have shown that the easiness to use a website, the responsiveness of the website, the website design and responsiveness are some determinants of customer satisfaction in the sector of airline services. A research by Tahir (2021) has revealed that some factors such as trust and website design quality affect customers purchase intention on the online shopping products. In the West African context context, most of the companies do not put some efforts to provide quality products or quality services to their customers. Thus, this situation leads many customers to file some complaints.

Up to now, the effects of quality on customer satisfaction especially in the African private companies’ context are not significantly considered. Thus, this research is putting a light on the sound effects of quality products or quality services on customers’ satisfaction. Thus, to understand the business context, it is necessary to consider the following key question: What is the effect of product quality or service quality on customer satisfaction? The main objective of this research is to examine the effect of quality on customer satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

- **Quality**: Hoe and Mansori (2018) recognize that the construct of quality is complex and multiplex. For some authors, quality refers to the capability and to the propensity of meeting customers’ core needs and wants (Reeves & Bednar, 1994; Nassè, 2021; Hoe & Mansori, 2018). In addition for Lovelock and Wright (2003) and Souki (2008) quality refers to a long-term perceived cognitive assessment of a given product or service.

- **Customer Satisfaction**: The concept of customer satisfaction refers to the perception of how happy customers are with a given company's products or services (Ladhari, 2005; Nassè, 2019; Nassè, 2020). Customer satisfaction can be high or it can be very low, and the level of satisfaction may help companies to best improve or changes their products and services to address customer core needs and expectations. Customer satisfaction is all about their feelings and emotions about a given company's products or services that the customer is assessing or evaluating with buying intentions.

Theoretical Framework

- **The Theory of Quality**
  For Kotler and Dubois (2003), Van Laethem and Body (2008), Nassè, (2014). customer relationship management entails a manufacturing of good quality products and prices that meet the customer's expectations. These authors emphasize the theory of quality by showing that the customers also take into account not only a fundamental criterion which is the quality of the product, but also another fundamental criterion which is the quality of the services induced. Therefore, it is perceived that quality in its various aspects is very important for customers, and some of them even include the brand quality.

The above theory is in line with the research as it declines customer’s motivations to purchase products and services. The framework proposes that the perception of quality features on a particular product, a particular service or a particular brand gives satisfaction to the customer (joy, comfort, happiness, confidence, engagement). Satisfaction entails that there is an effort form the company to deliver quality products or services.
Research model and proposition

- Proposition: Quality influences customer satisfaction.

![Figure 1- Research model (Adapted from Nassè, 2022)](image)

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Research Design:** This research is exploratory for the fact that in the Burkinese context, the subject has not yet been studied. Thus, some semi-structured interviews are conducted with customers of two private companies in Burkina Faso, one in the sector of professional training, one in the sector of printing. Some face-to-face semi-structured interviews are conducted. According to Roche (2003, p. 47) qualitative research shows a deep understanding of interviewees’ need, and more importantly, their motivations, their attitudes, their behavior, their real expectations or their language. To better the knowledge and the understanding of the studied topic, the epistemological posture adopted is constructivist.

**Duration of Interviews:** The interviews (lasting twenty to thirty minutes) are performed during interviewees’ free time. The recordings are conducted using a "SONY Voice Recorder" and then they are transcribed by hand using the audio software "SONY Sound Organizer" to facilitate their content analysis in order to highlight deemed relevant themes.

**Research Instrument:** The interview guide has five themes. The research instrument has been pre-tested, and some corrections have been made before collecting the final data (Nassè, 2018). Three lecturers validate the interview guide. Post-validation of data is made and the respondents reiterated the same views.

**Data Collection and Data Analysis:** The entire sample is composed of 37 respondents (23 interviews from the first company that is in the sector of professional training, and 14 interviews from the second company that is in the sector of printing). The criterion of saturation is used to stop the collection of data, because usually, the last interview does not provide more information. The data is collected in French and local languages and then translated into English for the necessity of the present research. The technique that is used to analyze the data is a content analysis.

**Ethical Considerations:** Some ethical measures are observed in this research. The answers of the respondents and their identity are kept confidential. The answers are used for the purpose of this research only.

**RESEARCH RESULTS**

The following table contains the details of the participants to the present research.

| Company                          | Men | Women | Total |
|----------------------------------|-----|-------|-------|
| Training, teaching and research center | 9   | 14    | 23    |

*Source: Fieldwork (2014-2015)*
The content analysis of the 37 semi-structured interviews brought out 4 themes. After, the verbatim content is partitioned into different themes, thus a categorical thematic content analysis is made; a commonly used analysis (Zarrad & Debabi, 2012) is used to check our propositions and provide answers to our initial questions. The present study demonstrates that quality has effects on customer satisfaction.

### Quality and customer satisfaction

When customers perceive that an offer of a particular company is of a good quality, hence they can be satisfied with the transaction or purchase. In the first company, it is found that most customers are satisfied. Here are the words of some customers:

"Well, I would say that I am pretty happy because the cost is not very high like that but the teaching is good, that it is teaching with quality." *(Respondent 5)*

In the second company, the perception of quality has also brought the customers to be more satisfied.

*Ok, about quality, I can say that the quality is great! It is better! Myself, I was called by a friend as we are headmasters; that means for our year-end reports, we look for quality services for the same ministry to appreciate the scriptures and I was invited by a friend and we came together, and I am really satisfied.* *(Respondent 24)*

*Uh! I would say that the quality is good that's why I always come back every time (...) frankly, I don't know what to say but, value for money here there is. Yeah, the [SIC] quality is there and the price is also affordable it's open to everyone so I find myself here what.* *(Interview 25)*

*I think the quality of copies here is better, as compared to the investment being made. For example, the copy is fifteen francs per page, and it is very readable, so that is good. I am satisfied.* *(Respondent 28).*

### DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

#### Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Some authors have shown the influence of company fair practices on growth (Perreti, 2004; Hondeghem & Perry, 2009; Nassè, 2012), and profitability (Nassè, 2019). For Gandhi (2011), customer satisfaction is determined by employee’s satisfaction. Other authors such as Tarigan et al. (2020) emphasize the link between customer satisfaction and shareholders’ value, while Abbasi et al. (2019) bring out the relationship between on service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty and Nassè et al. (2020) emphasize the relationships between equity and customer satisfaction.
satisfaction in relation to product quality through a quantitative analysis. Nevertheless, the present research rather shows the effects of quality on customer satisfaction in the West African context. The perception of quality leads the customer to expression satisfactory emotions (joy, happiness, gladness and delight).

CONCLUSION

The present research has shown that both quality of products and quality of services affect customer satisfaction in the business context of West Africa. Customer behaviors and attitudes that are portrayed, when customers receive fair and impartial offers. Thus, quality and the best management practices are some specific factors of success in the context. The research enriches the concept of quality, and the concept of customer satisfaction. It also allows the verification of theoretical assumption on quality management practices and customer satisfaction within the context of West Africa to boost profit.

• **Recommendations for Companies:** Avoiding poor quality practices can rebalance business exchanges between customers and companies by significantly increasing customer satisfaction.

• **Future Research:** It would be useful to extend this research to very big companies.

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