
ENSURING CONSUMER SATISFACTION THROUGH QUALITY OFFERINGS: ROLES OF THE GOVERNMENT & ORGANIZATIONS

Mohammad Tahir Siddique*

Introduction:

A product is anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy a want or need. Products can be physical goods such as books, cars; services such as hair cut, concerts; person such as Bill Clinton, Mahathir Mohammad; places such as Cox's Bazar; organization such as Diabetic Association of Bangladesh & ideas such as family planning, safe driving. Consumers expect their purchases to meet their needs and expectations. But the question is how far these products satisfy a want or need of consumers. It is the quality which is built into the products is important to the consumers. Quality control is of prime importance in ensuring the produced commodities meet the consumer needs and satisfaction. Quality control means checking & inspecting the products to ensure the quality by comparing them to established standards. The parameters could be appearance, constituents, performance, weight etc. Such comparison can sometimes be done in a separate area which is called quality control department or laboratory.

Inspection is not only means for just rejecting or removing the non-standard products but also meant for stopping further production of imperfect items. A very common method is statistical quality control which relates to the problem of how items of large quantity should be inspected to determine a probability that the total number conforms to quality standards. To do this, representative samples are collected randomly from the whole lot of material which can ensure reliable results.

Any organization, be it small or large, must have quality policies regarding all the activities involved in running the business affairs & must make sure that every body in the organization have clear understanding about quality. There must be ways of communicating & training the employees to support the quality goals.

Global market leaders of quality consumer products:

McDonald's theme is quality, service, cleanliness & value (QSC&V). Mc Donald's top management even personally inspects store on QSC&V. It is said that people do not go to McDonald's shops because they love hamburger rather they go there for QSC&V. That is why, well over with 7000 restaurants are serving millions of consumers throughout the world.

Digital's corporate philosophy states that, "Growth is not our principal goal. Our goal is to be the quality organization & do a quality job. As we achieve quality, growth comes as a result."

*The Author is Technical Manager, Glaxo Wellcome Bangladesh Ltd. and a participant of Executive MBA Program. IUC.

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Hewlett Packard believes that, "If we don't keep our quality momentum, the Japanese will leapfrog our position. So doing it right is the only way."

Xerox guarantees "total satisfaction & will replace at its expense any dissatisfied customer's equipment for a period of three years after purchase with the same or comparable product.

Marks & Spencer refund the money to its customers even the customer change their mind after any purchase.

Caterpillar deliver machine parts within 48 hours any where in the world and they say, " If we can't deliver it within 48 hours, you get the part free."

Bangladesh Scenario:

With a few exceptions, a vast quantity of consumer items produced locally are of low quality, fake and even harmful and are selling unabated in Bangladesh. Absence of government regulations and control, the problem has been aggravating rapidly. The conditions of cheated & dissatisfied consumers are worsening day by day. Producers have no commitment for quality. Unscrupulous businessmen are producing products which in some cases not only getting consumers dissatisfied but also resulting high incidence of falling. Every year hundreds of people die taking spurious medicine, food and falling prey in the hands of unscrupulous businessmen & wasting their hard earned money. For being cheated & victimized, there is no fair justice as if it is the fault of the consumers part not of the sellers or suppliers. During early nineties more than 200 people died of taking low quality sub-standard paracetamol syrups manufactured by some unscrupulous manufacturers. It has become a regular feature of people becoming sick taking contaminated food, drinks, medicines etc. People are being frustrated of finding their purchases fake after taking them home.

Such products are being manufactured by uncontrolled & non-regulated manufacturing organizations in all sectors and even some big companies are producing low quality products. Government has no control over their activities. Surely this type of industrial growth is against the public interest in the country. The unethical businesses in our country have got the consumers frustrated & consumers lack trust in any of their products. Consumers are always in an anxious mode whether they are purchasing No. 2 goods (fake) instead of No. 1 (real).

Roles of Government:

It is important that government takes into account the uncontrolled business units & bring them under regulatory bodies. At the same time government should formulate policies for checking the activities of manufacturing units to ensure free flow of quality goods in the market places. As a result some existing business units might disappear but others will surely be encouraged to ethical businesses.

Bangladesh Standard Testing Institution (BSTI) should develop standard specifications in line with international standards for all the consumer items. Government regulatory bodies should take measures for making all business units follow products standard specifications during the manufacturing process. Each manufacturing units must have both production & quality control facilities at their factory premises & must have adequate facilities for production & quality control.

It is also necessary to strengthen the activities of BSTI with adequate skilled manpower & testing facilities. Moreover, the establishment of BSTI primarily at all districts level with adequate manpower & testing facilities can help grow quality industrial units.

Branch units of BSTI as well as head office should conduct survey on consumer products & should take legal actions against those organizations which fail to produce product meeting the required specifications. BSTI should recommend for suspending or canceling the manufacturing licenses of those business organizations. In Japan, only 3 to 4% companies are of giant size, like Toyota, Mitsubishi, Sony, Panasonic, etc. and 96 to 97% of the companies are either middle or small sizes. But any product, be it from a giant company or from a small company will give almost same level or performance i.e., same level of consumers satisfaction. The only reason is that producer of each company produces his/her products following the same national standard specifications and products are passing through the similar types of quality control test.

As regards the industrial policy the government should emphasize on compulsory adoption of BSTI specifications for manufacturing consumer goods by the companies and the present laws should be reviewed and provision for punishment measures should be taken forthwith for the companies who fail to comply with the laws. Government regulatory authorities should be given more power to take stringent measures against the firms who are claiming their products quality conform to BSTI standards but in reality it is not.

Finally, quality awareness among the manufacturers & employees should be brought. In doing this, vocational training education should be administered either through the educational institutions or particular institution established for the purpose which can offer tailor-made courses to the participants. In Bangladesh most of the people are unskilled or semiskilled. The principal goal of such training education should be to make them learn manufacturing technology, quality control procedures, knowledge about products specifications, standards etc. & making efficient work force to ensure higher productivity.

Roles of Organizations:

The organizational leaders should have commitment for producing quality products and must have quality policy. The company management should communicate the vision & goal to the employees so that they can be well aware of the company goals & objectives.

Each & every manufacturing unit must establish quality control office/laboratory so that products must pass rigorous quality control tests before releasing them to the market places.

Maximum emphasis is to be put on Total Quality Management (TQM). This concept fosters continual & relentless improvement in quality of all aspects of an organization.

It is the responsibility of the top management to make sure that every body in the organization understand that quality is the key element. Necessary communication opportunity must be used to develop system & training that support quality goals. For this, organization should conduct regular in house training for the employees on the manufacturing & quality control practices & to let them understand the importance of quality practices in their respective duties.

TQM is the brain child of industrial engineer Dr. W. Edwards Deming. In his study, Dr. Deming observed that 85% of quality problems in organizations are caused by factors which are beyond the operator's control and can only be corrected by management initiatives. So,

management's role is of prime importance in ensuring product's quality.

Federal Express Corporation, the world's largest express transportation company, wants 100 percent satisfied customers. The company communicates this vision & goal to employees, ensures the right type of measurement systems in place & focus training throughout the organization on the quality issues.

The organizations should have quality management policy to foster innovations improving quality and increasing productivity. The overall target should be to develop organizational capability to make them able to compete with the global competitors in the new millennium.

Manufacturing firms should establish their own R&D facilities so that they should have the scope to improve the quality of goods to meet the upcoming need of consumers. In this respect, the companies need to acquire proper technology & technical-know-how for production of goods and services needed by the consumers.

Finally, the companies should welcome the market complaints, measure the complaints & take corrective measures so that no bad product goes to the market place. There should be a provision of refunding the money or replacing the commodity to the consumers which can ensure consumer loyalty thereby satisfied customers. Proctor & Gamble get the results of world-wide surveys of consumer satisfaction & dissatisfaction on each of their major brands, compared to their competition.

Conclusion:

The unethical business practices are increasing day by day in Bangladesh. People are losing confidence on Bangladeshi consumer products. The world wide trend towards liberalization in consumer market has stimulated entrepreneurs to produce better quality products in developed countries & this has helped increased competition in the consumer market. Our manufacturers must realize this hard truth and should produce and offer products which bring consumers satisfaction. Otherwise, the whole consumer sector will go into the hands of foreign suppliers. Such a situation will not only give rise unemployment but also lead to loss of government revenue. Moreover, it will not only sabotage the economic progress of the country but also undermine all efforts at human resource development and industrial growth of the country. Only government cannot check all the unethical businesses and get people rid of from the hands of unscrupulous businessmen.

The organizational leaders must have commitment for producing quality products. Keeping in view the need to protect consumers right, the government organizations and non-government organizations should endeavor to fight against all the unethical business practices to allow the consumers get the value for money spent for the goods.

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