

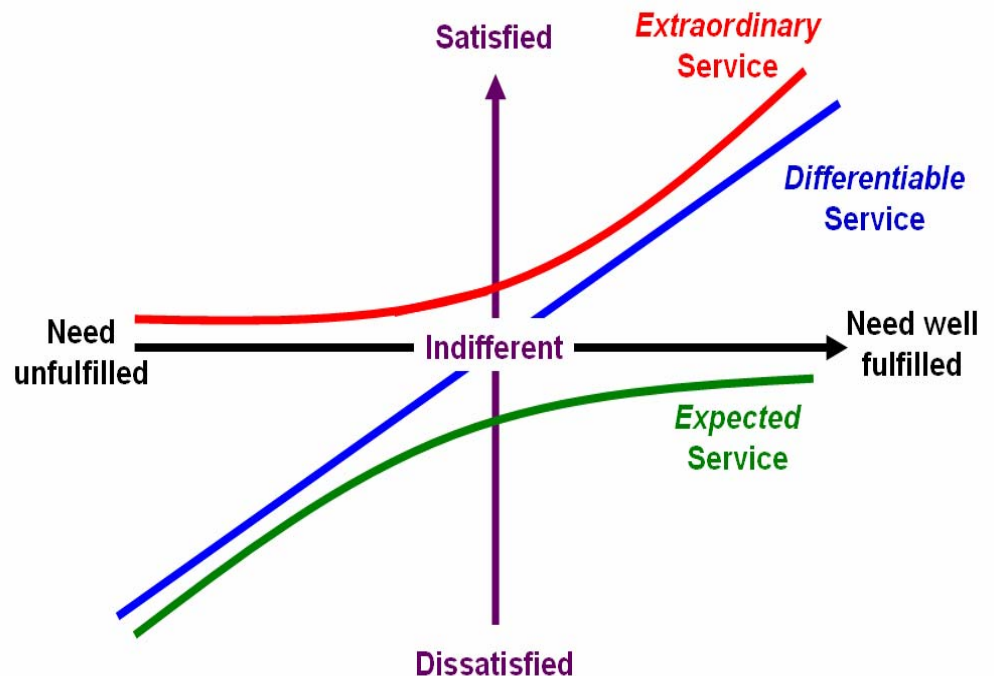


Applying the Kano Satisfaction Model to Emergency Care

Customer satisfaction expert Noriaki Kano's work becomes a useful model for maximizing emergency department patient satisfaction. Kano is a retired full professor who formerly headed the Department of Management Science at the Tokyo University of Science. His honors include the Deming Prize and ASQ Medals of Distinction. Kano challenged the conventional belief that improving each and every facet of an organization's services is necessary to increase satisfaction. He demonstrated that not all deliverables are equal, that some create higher levels of customer appreciation and loyalty than others.

Kano's model categorizes satisfaction characteristics into three service categories – *Extraordinary*, *Differentiable*, and *Expected* – based upon customer expectations. This helps determine if an existing service feature is good enough, can be improved, or is sensational.

Kano Satisfaction Model



Expected services represent everything required from the perspective of emergency department patients. Once satisfied, patients usually do not reflect on them any further. Failing to fulfill an *expected* service, however, is a major patient dissatisfier. For instance, being called back that a radiology over-read found a rib fracture is *expected* (even when medically inconsequential), and so if a patient finds out the result days later from his or her primary care physician, it is no surprise when a complaint results.

Differentiable services are those that directly correlate with patient satisfaction. For example, a short door-to-doctor time (less than 30 minutes) paves the way for a positive experience and a long door-to-doctor time (greater than 60 minutes) forecasts a negative experience. Many emergency department benchmarks (e.g., patient flow and test turnaround times) are *differentiable* attributes. The value a customer places on going to a certain emergency department correlates with best practices in these metrics.

Extraordinary service usually takes the form of added extras that positively excite the customer and result in extreme patient satisfaction. No one is disappointed when these elements are missing since they were not anticipated in the first place. A next-day patient wellbeing check by telephone is an example of a pleasant surprise that fortifies patient satisfaction. Also, an *expected* service can be extended to *extraordinary*. For example, parking nearby the emergency department is an *expected* feature, while free valet parking at the emergency department entrance is *extraordinary*. In a competitive marketplace providing *extraordinary* services offers a distinct competitive advantage.

Satisfaction improvement requires a three-step approach.

1. Shore up the *expected* must-haves
2. Optimize *differentiable* measures through benchmarking
3. Add *extraordinary*, “wow” features to clinch a great experience

With rising emergency department co-payment requirements, it is important to add value to every visit in order to sustain a solid patient base and build a great reputation. The Kano satisfaction model creates a valuable framework for maximizing patient satisfaction.