
Employee job satisfaction: an empirical assessment of marketing managers as an occupationally homogeneous group

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Abstract

Reports the findings of recent empirical research into the job satisfaction of an original sample of 1,326 UK marketing managers. Provides data on the nature and sources of job satisfaction/dissatisfaction and on the assessment of the relative importance of various intrinsic (content) and extrinsic (context) occupational characteristics. Analyses the satisfaction criteria against a variety of variables such as age, gender, tenure and career development. Discusses the implications for the marketing practitioner at the workbench level within organizations.

Introduction

It is generally agreed that job satisfaction has obtained an established position in the industrial and organizational psychology literature[1,2]. However, it is a concept which is still surrounded by controversy[3], because much of the literature is inconclusive in nature[4]. It is not surprising, therefore, that the authors were unable to find many robust definitions of job satisfaction. Nevertheless, some form of definitive framework is necessary in order to introduce the concept in the context of this study. Many writers (e.g. [5,6]) draw on Locke's definition of job satisfaction: "...a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences". Even though a plethora of formal definitions exist, the above is considered suitable for the purposes of conceptual and empirical examination in this study.

The aim of this article is to highlight the nature of job satisfaction/dissatisfaction, and assess the relative importance of various intrinsic and extrinsic factors which evoke such emotions in marketing managers. Intrinsic factors such as task specialization are associated with the function of the job in itself (content), while extrinsic concerns include items such as pay and organizational culture which indirectly impinge on the job (context).

Occupational researchers commonly distinguish between two types of job satisfaction which individuals attach to their jobs: global and facet. Global job satisfaction can be measured by simply proposing a holistic question about whether an individual is satisfied or not. Various commentators consider this too simplistic[4], although others are of the opinion that it provides a useful preliminary insight[7]. In addition, global job satisfaction is composed of constituent facets, and Weaver[8] postulates that joint (global and facet) variables are most appropriate for effective job satisfaction measurement.

Recently, much interest has been generated in this multifaceted approach, but insufficient empirical studies exist to broaden our knowledge of the area[3]. This study has attempted to apply such an approach to qualified marketing practitioners throughout the UK. Several studies have focused on occupationally homogeneous groups, but few have related job satisfaction specifically to marketing professionals. Many of the studies that have attempted the latter can be sourced to the USA, but

they link job satisfaction to other sociological and psychological concepts and thus avoid specificity [9-11]. The present research is closely related to the UK study of Elliot and Margerison [12], in that they studied marketing managers' perceptions of themselves in the context of their working relationships with other functional units. However, even though their questionnaire incorporated some orthodox job satisfaction measures, it was not strictly a job satisfaction study, and therefore comparisons with this study are not appropriate.

Empirical research

Hypotheses

In order to adopt a grounded approach to this research, a number of hypotheses were generated from a review of the relevant literatures. Also, a working research proposition was articulated around some of the issues concerning job satisfaction in the behavioural science literature. They are as follows:

H1: global (overall) job satisfaction measures will be consistent across industry sectors.

Very little conclusive academic research has been published in this domain, but at the managerial level various samples have revealed some consistency across occupation groups [13].

H2: a significant interaction will exist between global job satisfaction and age.

Herzberg *et al.* [14] found a U-shaped distribution with job satisfaction across age. That is, satisfaction starts high, declines over time, but increases with age towards the end of job tenure [14]. The researchers decided to attach a corollary to these research propositions which read:

P1: a significant interaction will not exist between global job satisfaction and gender.

Certain studies that controlled for occupation and organizational level posit this [15, 16].

Research instrument, measurement and limitations

The measures concerned with job satisfaction broadly included: a measure of global satisfaction, reasons for appeal and dissatisfaction with current position, and a 19-item (faceted) inventory rated for importance as a contributory factor to job satisfaction. From Locke's viewpoint [4], the common procedure for measuring job satisfaction is to have individ-

uals rate their level of satisfaction against a number of fixed job elements. This was indicative of this study, where job satisfaction was measured as a multidimensional phenomenon. It should be noted that this work did not encourage a "not sure" selection response throughout, because of its characteristic over use [17].

The rationale for the approach adopted in this study emanates from Barrett and Granleese [18], where research precedent hails from the distilled work of prominent writers [4, 19-23]. However, in this instance, various semantic adjustments have been made for use with a subpopulation of professional marketers.

A questionnaire was considered the most appropriate instrument to elicit this information because it is a technique formally classified as a standard direct method of measuring job satisfaction [7]. Furthermore, it has proved very revealing and popular in previous research of this kind. Nevertheless, the researchers were aware of some of the criticisms of questionnaire usage, especially Gruneberg's [6] arguments that they provide information which "approximates the truth". Furthermore, a criticism accepted by the authors is that the results are, by and large, static in that they were gathered from specific individuals at one point in time. Some allowance was made for dynamic variables (such as age and tenure), but only across the sample, as opposed to a study with longitudinal criteria. Despite this, the researchers were satisfied that there were sufficient precedents, from other recent valid job satisfaction studies that had utilized such a research questionnaire for the same purpose, to justify its use.

Research methodology

The sample selected for this piece of research was identified for the authors by the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) through access to its computer database containing the names and addresses of CIM members. As requested by the researchers, the stratified random sample was representative of the overall National Membership roster, and consisted of 1,326 members drawn from: marketing managers, marketing services managers, marketing planning managers, retail marketing managers, trade marketing managers and marketing development managers. The CIM administered the mail despatch to named individuals in the sample, as this was considered advanta-

Table I Mail survey design

Facilitation technique	Used	Not used	Description
Preliminary notification		+	
Foot-in-the-door		+	
Personalization	+		Addressed to CIM member
Anonymity	+		
Response deadline		+	
Appeals		+	
Sponsorship	+		CIM support
Incentives	+		Findings reported
Follow-ups	+		Reminder letter CIM
Type of postage – outgoing			First class
Type of postage – return			FREEPOST
Questionnaire length			11 back-to-back
Questionnaire size, reproduction and colour			A4, black and white

Note: overall response rate = 29.86 per cent; usable response rate = 25.41 per cent

geous[24]. Three weeks after the initial despatch, the CIM sent a reminder letter to the sample, requesting completion of the questionnaire. In response to the call for more accurate mail-survey design information[25], Table I summarized the design used.

The overall response rate amounted to 396 questionnaires (29.86 per cent). However, not all responses were usable, and only 337 questionnaires (25.41 per cent) satisfied the researchers criteria for analysis.

Research evidence and discussion

Of primary concern in the preliminary analysis was the direction in which respondents felt they were satisfied or not. On inspection, Table II reveals that there was a high incidence, across all industry sectors, of generally satisfied marketing managers.

Table II Global job satisfaction – in general, are you satisfied with your current employment?

Industry sector	Yes	No
Public	9	5
Education	2	2
Manufacturing	103	47
Service	88	40
Other	31	8
Total (per cent)	233(70)	102(30)

Notes: Pearson $\chi^2 = 2.817$; $df = 4$; $p = < 0.588$; $n = 355$

However, job satisfaction was not directly related to industry sector in that a χ^2 comparison was not statistically significant ($p = < 0.588$). The sample was offered a variety of responses to the open question around which aspect of their job most appealed. Table III illustrates the distribution of responses around six classifications.

Not surprisingly, day-to-day variety of work was the most popular response. Of particular interest to many marketers was the concern with their relative importance in terms of aligning marketing decisions with direction-setting strategic concerns; this illustrates that marketing, rather than being a dominant function, makes a significant contribution to corporate decision making. The converse proposition was put to the sample in order to shed some light on the possible reasons for dissatisfaction (Table IV).

Table III What aspect of your current marketing position appeals to you most?

Response	Frequency	%
Variety	92	28
Strategic input	71	22
Responsibility and autonomy	63	20
Creativity	51	16
Challenge	19	6
(Other)	(26)	(8)
	$n = 322$	100

Table IV What is the major reason for your dissatisfaction with your current employment?

Response	Frequency	%
Board-level ignorance of marketing	35	32
Lack of pay/promotion	22	20
Lack of responsibility	18	16
Clash with organization culture	11	10
(Other)	(24)	(22)
Total	<i>n</i> = 110	100

It is especially interesting to note the somewhat passive role that marketing is given to assume at the corporate level. This could be indicative of the chief marketing executive not being positioned at board level, or possibly a cultural non-acceptance of the marketing concept. It is commonly accepted that pay and promotion factors are positively related to job satisfaction [7, 21], and this study provides evidence in support of this.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to mention Herzberg's two-factor theory, which considers that any job has elements which provide satisfaction (but in their absence, not dissatisfaction – Table IV). On the other hand, if elements which contribute to job dissatisfaction are absent, then job satisfaction is not a natural consequence. For example, Herzberg *et al.* [26], consider pay (financial reward) to be a potential dissatisfier, that is, if pay is lower than the perceived level of expectancy, then job dissatisfaction is exhibited (Table V). While, if a high level of pay is awarded, then this compensation does not directly lead to job satisfaction. Therefore, in terms of job design, what is required is that a balance is struck between ensuring that job satisfiers or

motivating factors are present in an individual's occupational tasks, while their dissatisfying elements are kept to a minimum. Tables III and IV illustrate a number of these factors which can be tailored to the marketing professional in such a way.

Previous studies have concluded that age is related to job satisfaction although not always statistically significantly so [27]. Our study supports this contention in that Table V describes the distribution of both satisfied and non-satisfied respondents across various age bands. In addition, it has been reported elsewhere [28], that job satisfaction is reduced to the latter phase of working life, as individuals near retirement. This proposition finds support in this research (see Table V).

Apart from the insignificant measure of the satisfaction-age relationship in this study ($p = < 0.200$), conflicting evidence abounds in the literature, so confident argument is made impracticable. Nevertheless, we favour the debate which suggests that there is no direct link between age and job satisfaction. Further upholding this conclusion, is the fact that we have a sufficient core number of individuals in each age category, between 26-55, to make such a claim.

Very few studies of homogeneous occupational groups take career development determinants into account. Table VI illustrates the pattern of distribution of job satisfaction across various career bands.

However, no statistically significant relationship was found ($p = < 0.209$) between the two variables. In order to develop this *dynamic* line of inquiry, it was considered appropriate to measure for a possible job satisfaction relationship with tenure (that is, length of service in current organization). Quinn *et al.* [29], have previously advocated such a relationship. Our analysis was conducted and a χ^2 comparison revealed a similar statistically significant comparison ($p = < 0.023$). Results are shown in Table VII.

The configuration of mean scores indicates that a U-shaped satisfaction profile prevails. When individuals in our sample first entered their organizations and after a decade, (mean) satisfaction scores are similar. However, the mid-point in tenure (four to nine years) shows the highest concern with regard to unsatisfied employees. This has numerous implications for characteristic employee development programmes, and as such, future training needs analysis must be aware of the fact that

Table V Job satisfaction across age

Age (years)	Satisfied (frequency)	Not satisfied (frequency)
21-25	11	10
26-30	56	32
31-35	54	24
36-40	36	17
41-45	34	10
46-55	31	7
56-65	10	2
66+	1	–

Note: $\chi^2 = 0.976$; $df = 7$; $p = < 0.200$;
n = 353

Table VI Job satisfaction across career development

Started career	Satisfied	Not satisfied	Mean ^a	SD ^b
1950-59	5	2	1.28	0.49
1960-69	25	5	1.17	0.38
1970-79	60	23	1.28	0.45
1980-89	141	69	1.33	0.47
1990+	–	1	2.00	0.00
	231	100		

Notes:

^a Are you satisfied with your current employment? 1 = yes, 2 = no

^b SD = Standard deviation

$\chi^2 = 5.873$; $df = 4$; $p = < 0.209$; $N = 331$

tenure is a contributory element to employee retention and turnover.

Since an increasing proportion of the UK workforce consists of women, the last decade has yielded a number of comparative gender studies in the job satisfaction field. However, research findings are often unclear and there is little consensus about the relationship between gender and job satisfaction[30]. This study found a statistically significant relationship from a χ^2 comparison ($p = < 0.0006$) between the two factors (Table VIII).

Further analysis using a multivariate procedure revealed that men were consistently more satisfied in their jobs than women. Mainstream evidence with professional managerial samples have previously commented on this statistical main effect[31,32].

Table IX outlines the 19-item inventory incorporated into the questionnaire to elicit the overall perceptions that the sample had of various intrinsic and extrinsic facets. It should be emphasized that it was the perceptions that

Table VII Job satisfaction across tenure

Tenure (Years)	Satisfied	Not satisfied	Mean ^a	SD ^b
<1	51	13	1.20	0.40
1-3	90	44	1.33	0.47
4-9	48	33	1.41	0.50
10-19	27	8	1.23	0.43
20+	17	3	1.15	0.37
Total	233	101		

Notes:

^a Are satisfied with your current employment? 1 = yes, 2 = no

^b SD = Standard deviation

Pearson $\chi^2 = 13,007$; $df = 5$; $p = < 0.023$; $N = 334$

Table VIII Job satisfaction across gender

Gender	Satisfied		Not satisfied	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Male	183	54	65	18
Female	52	16	37	11
Total	235	70	102	30

Note:
Pearson $\chi^2 = 7.324$; $df = 1$; $p = < 0.006$; $n = 337$

were being measured, and therefore some incongruence may exist between this and objective reality. Nevertheless, Table IX shows the configuration of mean importance in rank order.

The fact that the “innovative” facet was considered the most important (mean = 7.99) could be explained by the very nature of the marketing activity. That is, if the ideology of marketing is adopted and implemented, then by virtue of its existence, change and innovation will take place in the organization. Other high-ranking concerns included “autonomy”, and various “responsibility” measures (such as, “recognition of one’s own contribution to the organization”) are obviously very much related to their appeal (Table III) in respondents’ current marketing positions.

Immediately apparent from inspection of Table IX are the two unimportant facets. These include, perhaps not surprisingly, “company social facilities/activities” are the least important closely followed by the requirement of “working office hours only”. This seems to indicate that, certainly at a managerial level, UK marketers are resigned to the need for flexible working hours which their jobs demand.

Interpretation of the univariate analyses (using gender as an independent variable) revealed that gender was found to interact positively with five of these 19 facets. Women consistently rated the following facets higher than men in the perception of importance in their work: “friendly colleagues” ($p = < 0.003$); “good working environment” ($p = < 0.009$); “having a fair boss” ($p = < 0.023$); and being given the “chance to develop leadership skills” ($p = < 0.035$). Men, however, consistently rated the importance of a good company “pension plan” higher than women did ($p = < 0.007$). Varca *et al.*[33] believe that gender differences in job satisfaction can revolve around organizational rewards. We authors applied multivariate analysis across a

Table IX Perception of importance factors related to job satisfaction

How important do you consider the following for your job satisfaction?		
Facet	Mean ^a	SD ^b
The chance to be innovative	7.99	1.13
Autonomy over one's work	7.96	1.04
Recognition of one's own contribution to the organization	7.73	1.32
Chance to demonstrate skills	7.55	1.31
Having a fair boss	7.51	1.58
Good promotion prospects	7.50	1.76
Good working environment	7.42	1.45
High financial rewards	7.36	1.40
Feedback on performance	7.11	1.65
Friendly colleagues	7.10	1.55
Chance to develop leadership skills	7.07	1.73
Chance to take risks	6.64	1.70
Job security	6.54	2.00
Being in charge of others	6.11	1.99
Company perks	5.78	1.98
Good pension plan	5.72	2.36
Travel on company business	5.62	2.41
Company social facilities/activities	3.64	1.99
Working office hours only	2.83	2.00

Notes:

^a 1 = not at all important; 9 = very important

^b SD = Standard deviation

number of organizational reward measures ("perks", "promotion prospects", "financial rewards" and others) and found a very strong main effect for gender ($p = < 0.005$).

In today's ever-changing social environment, any conclusions about the relationship between gender and elements within organizational contexts can never be completely robust owing to the multitude of contingency variables. Nevertheless, we believe that, with the restructuring of the male/female working environment, more research in this area needs to be conducted in order to develop our knowledge of gender differences, and men and women in management

Conclusions

This study has hopefully achieved its aim of uncovering a wide variety of important concerns surrounding the issue of job satisfaction as applied to professional marketing managers.

Empirical evidence has been provided to indicate that in general, 70 per cent of our respondents are satisfied with their current

employment (Table II). Support was found for *H1* in that no significant differences in job satisfaction were found across industry sectors. We must emphasize that the sample was managerial in kind and thus implications are not comparable with employees at other organizational levels across sectors.

The factors which most appealed to marketing managers (Table III) were the "variety of their work" (28 per cent) and the "ability to provide strategic input" to their organizations (22 per cent). Furthermore, 20 per cent of managers enjoyed the relative "responsibility and autonomy" of their employment, while 16 per cent perceived the "creative nature of the job" as more appealing. Reasons for dissatisfaction (Table IV) varied from "board-level ignorance of marketing" (32 per cent), to dissatisfaction with "pay and promotion" (20 per cent).

H2 stated that age would significantly interact with global job satisfaction. No significant relationship was found, thus no direct support was evidenced. Table VII reveals the similar U-shaped distribution hypothesized

for age, but replaced by tenure. As such, job satisfaction and tenure have statistically significant distributions ($p = < 0.023$).

The proposition (P1) cited that job satisfaction would not significantly interact with gender. Evidence was not found to support this, in fact the opposite was illustrated (Table VIII). Men were consistently more satisfied in their work than were women ($p = < 0.006$). In addition, significant gender differences were found around the importance of a number of intrinsic and extrinsic job characteristics (Table IX).

Some examination of the consequences of job satisfaction/dissatisfaction in the work setting is of vital importance to this enquiry. On the negative side, job dissatisfaction is likely to evoke an array of emotions such as frustration, employee absence and turnover [34], deterioration of mental [35] and physical health [36], and intra-organizational conflict [7]. The converse discussions suggest that there is positive relationship between job satisfaction and individual performance [37], physical and mental health [6, 38] and life satisfaction [39]. Thus, managers need to recognize that behavioural influences such as job satisfaction have a very important impact on total organizational wellbeing and effectiveness.

Job satisfaction studies have often tended to develop grandiose generalizations, applicable to a generic set of employees or managers. As far as we are aware, no study of this size has ever targeted a sub-population of UK professional marketers (in strict isolation at least). Thus, this study has been pioneering in the sense that it contributes to a bedrock of literature and information that job design specialists and marketers will not only find interesting, but more to the point, also find of consequence in the role of marketing management. Therefore, this study has revealed that the implications of the management of job satisfaction are not far removed from the principles of internal marketing. All the authors can hope is that this research contribution has added some value to the controversy surrounding job satisfaction in occupationally homogeneous groups.

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