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# Measuring Customer Satisfaction

*A study regarding measuring customer satisfaction at Volvo Penta's  
authorized dealers*

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## **Abstract**

Nowadays measuring customer satisfaction constitutes an important part of a company's business since it provides valuable information about customers' expectations, preferences and experiences. By measuring customer satisfaction, a company can gain essential insights on how to improve their business. Satisfied customers are of utmost importance for a company since they are more likely to become loyal customers. This is desirable for a company based on the fact that loyalty promotes growth and profit. In order to achieve high customer satisfaction, it is important that the company has information about what underlying factors that are most valuable to measure.

This study aims to describe why measuring customer satisfaction is important and how Volvo Penta could work with measuring customer satisfaction. This includes describing essential factors that should be measured as well as the implications that a measurement can result in. The study has applied a qualitative approach where the empirical data has been collected through nine interviews and internal meetings at Volvo Penta. The empirical findings together with the theoretical framework have formed the basis for the analysis.

The main result of the study shows that measuring customer satisfaction is important, and that it is something that both companies and customers appreciate. Measuring customer satisfaction is essential in order to keep a business successful. This can be explained by the fact that a measurement results in a company having the opportunity to identify areas that they can improve. To create satisfied customers and maintain them over time has been shown to be necessary in order to create customer loyalty. Finally, the study also finds that it is essential to measure the right factors to gain valuable insight from the customers. These factors have been found to be quality, availability, timeliness, communication, employee courtesy and retailers.

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## **Definitions**

*In this section, some definitions repeatedly used in this study are presented.*

### **Customer satisfaction**

Customer satisfaction is defined as how well a service or a product satisfies the needs and expectations a customer has (Hill & Alexander, 2000).

### **Customer loyalty**

Customer loyalty is a customer's tendency for keep buying the same brand or product over time (Reynolds & Darden, 1974).

### **Volvo Penta Center and Volvo Penta Service dealers**

Volvo Penta Centers and Volvo Penta Service dealers constitute two different kinds of authorized dealers in the Volvo Penta organization.

## **Key Words**

*Customer satisfaction, Customer loyalty, Measuring customer satisfaction, Survey*

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# 1. Introduction

*In this section a presentation of the background is highlighted, followed by a problem discussion to give the reader an introduction to the subject in this study. This is then linked to the purpose and the problem statement that the study is supposed to encompass. Finally, the introduction underlines the delimitations of this study.*

## 1.1 Background

Measuring customer satisfaction is nowadays an important part of a company's work, since it provides valuable information and insights for a company about customer experiences. A company should invest in improving performance in areas that contribute to customer satisfaction, like quality and customer service (Hill, 2000). Customer satisfaction measurements are essential, but needs to be translated and organized into measures of what a company should do internally, to achieve satisfied customers. It is important to remember that customers take several factors into account when purchasing, not just price. Factors such as quality, time and service delivery also plays a crucial role (Kaplan & Norton, 1992).

Measuring customer satisfaction makes it possible for a company to obtain credible market information about the company's current position and identify future market opportunities. It may also help a company to identify and understand customer expectations, needs and preferences. Through this, a company can identify factors that need to be improved and in what way this improvement can be reached. It may also create a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment for the employees that are involved in the customer service process, which can motivate the employees to achieve higher levels of productivity (Woodruff & Dutka, 1994).

Customer satisfaction is an important aspect that helps to create long-term customer relationships, as well as customer loyalty. Satisfied customers are more likely to become loyal customers, which means they will continue to purchase the same brand next time they are going to buy the product. Loyalty is, in fact, one of the primary reasons for growth and profit for a company (Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser & Schlesinger, 1994).

Volvo Penta is part of a larger group, and is the world's leading supplier in marine and industrial applications when it comes to engines and complete power systems. They are

globally active, operating in 130 countries around the world, consisting of more than 5,000 dealers. A lot of the company's work consists of providing the right services and high quality products to their customers. Volvo Penta has a department, Market Unit Nordic, which is in charge of the Nordic and Baltic countries. The unit consists of approximately 40 workers, distributed over the local offices in Gothenburg, Helsinki, Oslo and Copenhagen (Volvo Penta, 2017). This unit is the point of origin for this thesis.

Volvo Penta does not own any of its service centers, instead they work together with authorized dealers that are responsible for the service and aftermarket of the company's products. Volvo Penta's organization can be divided into different levels, with Volvo Penta itself, as the highest instance. This is followed by Volvo Penta Centers, and finally Volvo Penta Service dealers. Moreover, all of the Volvo Penta Service dealer operations can be divided into three different segments, consisting of marine leisure, marine commercial and industrial. It is important to point out that marine leisure has another type of customers than the other two segments of dealers. Marine leisure works with private customers, instead of working business to business, as the other two segments do. It is of utmost importance to clarify that the marine leisure's business is dominated by a high season, which starts in the middle of spring and lasts until the beginning of autumn. However, the other two segments have an even distribution throughout the year (Volvo Penta, 2017).

## **1.2 Problem discussion**

There is a lot of previous research in the area of customer satisfaction, and it shows that there are many different perceptions about customer satisfaction and its meaning. Much of the previous research describes factors that are needed to create customer satisfaction, which in most cases leads to customer loyalty. One example of a researcher who devoted his exploration to customer satisfaction and loyalty is Magnus Söderlund (2001). Several researchers have devoted their investigation into trying to map a relationship between customer satisfaction and profitability (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Fornell, 1992). It has been shown many times, in earlier research, that there is a connection between customer loyalty and increasing profits. This is primarily because of the fact that it is more expensive to find new customers than keeping the existing ones (Hill, Brierley & McDougall, 1999). A model developed to discover different gaps between customer expectations and delivery from a service company, is the conceptual model of service quality (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1985). This model has been used to describe problems with tracking gaps that affect customer



satisfaction in more research later on, by among others Hill & Alexander (2000). The previous research mentioned in this paragraph is considered to be a good framework to build this thesis on.

Customer satisfaction is a condition in the customer's head, which arises as a result after a provided service. This condition is something that a company actively needs to access. Measurements are an attempt to achieve this, and are the starting point to comment on the level of customer satisfaction. Measurements can also help to find out how customer satisfaction is related to other variables. If a company wants to achieve high customer satisfaction, they must have information about what underlying factors that leads to it (Söderlund, 1997). Therefore, one of the problems when working with customer satisfaction is to know which variables that are the most valuable for a company to measure. Söderlund (1997) claims that the company's view of reality is not always identical to the customer's view, making it difficult to predict whether the customers have the same definition of customer satisfaction as the company has. Therefore this study considers both the authorized dealers' and their customers' perspective when it comes to the terms customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Furthermore, the study focuses on the psychosocial customer satisfaction.

If a company wants to know their customers, they need to collect and analyze information. This information must then be applied in a way that supports the decision-making. Many times, problems arise when a company does not develop useful knowledge from the information collected (Wayland and Cole, 1997). Thus, if a company does not measure customer satisfaction, and transform it to knowledge, it leads to difficulty in understanding the customer experience. Thereby, it also leads to lack of knowledge in what the customers needs and demands.

Söderlund (2001) points out that customer loyalty is something that can be developed from customer satisfaction. This means that if a company that supplies products and provides services can satisfy customers, they also have an opportunity to create customer loyalty. According to Oliver (1999), it is difficult to maintain loyalty development without customer satisfaction.

The problem in the study takes its point of origin in the absence of a consistent way of measuring customer satisfaction at Volvo Penta's authorized dealers. Volvo Penta also faces difficulty in developing a way to easily measure customer satisfaction at their authorized dealers. Even though the problem is supposed to be solved on Volvo Penta's behalf, it can also be a significant solution for similar companies that can enhance their business by measuring customer satisfaction. As customer satisfaction has become an increasingly significant factor in companies, Volvo Penta has seen a growing need to put more attention to this. The study focuses on Volvo Penta's authorized dealers in Sweden, with a desire that the same approach of measuring customer satisfaction can be applied and used at their dealers in the rest of Europe.

### **1.3 Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to describe why Volvo Penta should measure customer satisfaction and how they can work with measuring customer satisfaction at their authorized dealers.

### **1.4 Problem statement**

The study is intended to answer the following problem statement:

- How could Volvo Penta work with measuring customer satisfaction at their authorized dealers, in order to gain knowledge about how satisfied their customers are?

## **2. Theoretical framework**

*The following section provides a theoretical framework regarding the theories and models used in this study. These have been the basis for subsequent empirical data collection and analysis in order to answer the problem statement in this study.*

### **2.1 The importance of satisfied customers**

Compared to winning new customers, keeping existing ones are cheap and more profitable (Hill & Alexander, 2000). This is one of the reasons why companies should work with customer satisfaction. Even though satisfaction is not the only reason for a customer to become loyal, a satisfied customer is more likely to become a loyal customer than a dissatisfied customer. Loyal customers are of utter importance for a company, since loyalty is one of the main reasons for growth (Heskett et al., 1994). Furthermore, strong customer loyalty should be reflected in the company's economic returns, because it ensures a steady stream of future cash flows (Fornell, 1992). For each year a customer stays loyal, the more profit the company will generate; which means the longer a company keeps a customer, the more money they earn (Reichheld & Sasser 1990). Besides the fact that high customer satisfaction may point out increased customer loyalty among current customers, it could also indicate lower costs of attracting new customers, as well as an enhanced reputation for the company (Fornell, 1992).

### **2.2 Customer satisfaction**

Söderlund (2001) states that customer satisfaction reflects how well a service satisfies a customer's needs and preferences. When talking about customer satisfaction as a subjective reality, it is important to understand that the reality of a customer might be different from the reality that the company perceives as real. Customer satisfaction may also vary between customers, depending on differences in terms of what customer satisfaction actually is to them (Söderlund, 1997).

Furthermore customer satisfaction can be divided into two different parts, the economic satisfaction and the psychosocial satisfaction. The economic satisfaction is the economic benefits a customer gets from buying a product or a service. The psychosocial satisfaction is different psychosocial benefits customers get from buying the product or the service; such as

the location of the shop or how well they are treated while consuming the product or service (Söderlund, 2001).

### **2.3 Customer loyalty**

Customer satisfaction is the primary reason for customer loyalty, even though there are other factors affecting it as well. A loyal customer is more likely to buy the same brand, product or service the next time, and therefore this type of customer is important for a company (Söderlund, 2001). Moreover, Lydahl (2010) claims that a satisfied customer might buy from a company again, but a loyal customer will always buy from them again. According to Hougaard and Bjerre (2009), it is of utmost importance to have the ability to preserve customers in the long run. This aims to the fact that a company must constantly create motivations and factors to keep customers coming back for repeat business. Satisfied and loyal customers often speak well about a company's products and services, and positive word-of-mouth is another great way for a company to gain new customers (Söderlund, 2001).

### **2.4 Measuring customer satisfaction**

Measuring customer satisfaction is necessary in order to know which expectations the customers have. It is important to be accurate when measuring the satisfaction level, to find exactly what expectations the customers have. As earlier mentioned, customers expectations can often be different from what people working with a service believe them to be and they can also vary between customers. Due to this, it is important to keep in mind that the quality and accuracy of the questions asked, will determine the quality of the answers. The price is usually not the most important thing for a customer, there are often other underlying factors that determine how satisfied they are. In general, how well a customer is treated is the single most important factor for them to be satisfied, and recommend a service or product to others (Lydahl, 2010).

While measuring customer satisfaction, a common mistake is that the survey is too long, which leads to complexity for the customers when participating (Reichheld & Markey, 2011). For the most part, there are two different types of questions that can be used when measuring customer satisfaction, closed and open questions. One of the most common ways to measure customer satisfaction with closed questions is with a survey based on a numerical scale. A question like *“How satisfied are you with our service?”* and an answer interval between *“1-10”*, where 10 is a really satisfied customer and 1 is a really dissatisfied customer, is a typical

way of measuring customer satisfaction (Söderlund, 2001). The main reason for why closed questions with a numerical scale is recommended, is due to the fact that it is easy for the respondent to give answers, and that it is simple to analyze and work with the answers given (Hill, Brierley & McDougall, 1999). Open questions on the other hand will give a broader perspective and a possibility to catch more of the nuances in the answers, but the results are more difficult to interpret (Söderlund, 2005). Some people, however, claim that only one question is not enough since it will not capture the entire customer experience and therefore not lead to an accurate enough answer. It is instead recommended to use a combination of questions, and from them create an average score, in order to show the customer satisfaction level (Söderlund 2001). Regarding how the survey is performed, Lydahl (2010) claims that it is always better to talk to the customers, either face-to-face or by telephone. However there are certain benefits to online questionnaires, such as the cost, time efficiency, and ease in analyzing the data collected (Reichheld & Markey, 2011).

While measuring customer satisfaction, it is important to know that it is the customers who have the answers that can lead to improvements for a business. It is recommended to measure customer satisfaction regularly, since the market is always changing (Lydahl, 2010). Furthermore, Lydahl (2010) argues that it is important to make the customers feel appreciated. Therefore, every customer satisfaction survey should start with thanking the customers for using the product. There should also be a short explanation included, to why the survey is done. Getting feedback from the customers enables the company to improve themselves, and their business, for the future (ibid). It can be problematic if a company only measures customer satisfaction to create a report, and does not use the result to improve learning and behavior (Reichheld & Markey, 2011).

## **2.5 Word-of-mouth**

Word-of-mouth occurs when an individual transmits information about a product or service to other individuals. Negative word-of-mouth is weighted more heavily than positive comments about a product or a service (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard & Hogg, 2013). This means that dissatisfied customers that spread negative word-of-mouth, can be devastating for a company. However, a satisfied customer is more likely to spread positive word-of-mouth about their experience with the good or service. Word-of-mouth is a very effective way for a company to gain new customers. This is because of the fact that people often trust their friends, family and

other persons in their vicinity, in a way that they would not trust commercials and similar communication from the company itself (Ranaweera & Prabhu, 2003).

## **2.6 Turning negatives around**

Dissatisfied customers are a dangerous type of customers for a company, since they are likely to disappear and never return, without giving any feedback. Complaining customers are preferred to dissatisfied customers, due to the fact that they give the company feedback on what to improve, and therefore a chance is given to turn their opinion around. This is one of the reasons why it is important to measure customer satisfaction; if it is measured, dissatisfied customers get their chance to give feedback, and the company has the opportunity to change and become better, without losing customers (Lydahl, 2010). It is important for a company to try to reduce customer defections, even though it can be difficult to eliminate all of them. A company must be able to detect customers who disappear, and find out the reason for the deviation in order to enable analysis and actions based on the information provided (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990).

## **2.7 The conceptual model of service quality**

A lot of studies have shown that it can be problematic with the “service gaps” that might occur while developing and providing a service (Hill & Alexander, 2000). The conceptual model of service quality is a model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985). This model is intended to describe different gaps that reflect the reasons for customers' dissatisfaction with a service. The model can be divided into five different gaps (ibid).

The first gap refers to differences between customer expectations and the management's perception of the expectations. This gap arises due to the fact that the company has little understanding of what the customers consider to be meaningful and expects to obtain with the service. To provide services that meet customer satisfaction, it is necessary for a company to understand customer's demands and desires. It is also necessary for the company to put themselves into the customer's needs and expectations (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990).

The second gap is the difference between the management's perception about customer satisfaction and the quality specification of the service. This gap is likely to occur, since it is a

difficult process to involve the customer when specifying the service. This can occur due to a bad process of developing the service or the belief that it will not be worthwhile (ibid).

The third gap refers to the difference between the quality specification of the service and the actual service delivery. This gap depends on factors such as how well trained the personnel are in performing the service or lack of technical support (ibid).

The fourth gap can occur between the service delivery and the external communication of the service. This gap occurs due to misunderstandings about the service caused by commercials, lack of communication within the company or that somebody promised more than they could deliver (ibid).

The fifth and last gap refers to differences between the expected service and perceived service. This gap arises when the customer expects something different from the service, than what they actually experienced. This is due to marketing, price, or other similar factors that misleads customer expectations (ibid).

## **2.8 Summary**

The theories about customer satisfaction are highly relevant in the study in order to describe the subject. Satisfied customers often talk about a company and their products to friends, family and other people around them. The phenomenon word-of-mouth is therefore well suited to the subject in the study since it describes possible consequences of satisfied and dissatisfied customers. It is important for a company to know how satisfied or dissatisfied their customers are, which can be done through measuring customer satisfaction. The theories describing how to turn negatives around are connectable to how Volvo Penta can work with measuring customer satisfaction. These theories can help them identify factors that might cause dissatisfaction and thereby they are given a chance to turn the customers' opinions around. The conceptual model of service quality can help identify different gaps that can lead to dissatisfaction. This model is relevant in the study since it will create an understanding about where the gaps between the authorized dealers and their customers can occur. Some of the theories in the chapter show that there are several approaches of measuring customer satisfaction and that they are beneficial in different ways. The different approaches are relevant in the study in order to be able to determine how Volvo Penta and their authorized dealers can work with measuring customer satisfaction.

### **3. Method**

*This section summarizes the methodologies used in the implementation of the study and collection of empirical data. This section also describes the procedure applied when analyzing the data as well as reasoning about the credibility of the study. Finally, this section ends with an ethical statement regarding the empirical data collection.*

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In order to describe why customer satisfaction is important for Volvo Penta to measure and how they can perform measurements, a deductive approach has been used. This approach involves comparing theory with observations and obtained results (Bryman & Bell, 2013). This means that a broad foundation of theories, regarding customer satisfaction and loyalty, as well as measuring customer satisfaction, is presented in this study to create an understanding of these areas and provide relevant information. Some interviews have been conducted to collect additional information, which then have been compiled and analyzed by being compared to the theoretical background to find similarities and differences. This analysis has been made to facilitate understandings in order to answer the problem statement.

#### **3.2 Scientific approach**

In the design and implementation of this study, a qualitative approach has been used. The choice of applying a qualitative approach was made based on the purpose of the study and with respect to the prevailing problem statement. Qualitative studies put weight on words in the collection and analysis of data. This type of approach is transparent, inductive and interpretive (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Furthermore, this approach is flexible and enables unexpected events. Another advantage of applying this approach is that it does not limit the answers (Jacobsen, Sandin & Hellström, 2002). This is something that was seen as beneficial in this study since it created opportunities to capture different details, descriptions and other valuable factors from the respondents. A disadvantage with this approach is that it is resource intensive. This means that interviews can take some time, which can limit the number of respondents that will be interviewed during a study and affect the scope of the information collected (ibit). This has been taken into consideration in the study and therefore the respondents have been carefully selected in order to get width in the data collected.



### **3.3 Literature study**

Data that has been collected by previous researchers, institutions and organizations can be primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary data can also be data that is collected on its own (Bryman & Bell, 2013; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). In this study, data from previous research related to customer satisfaction and loyalty has been studied. The reason for that was primarily to create an insight and understanding of the subject and its relevance, but also to see if there were any additional areas that should be highlighted in the study. In order to find relevant literature, searching for the most cited scientific articles within the subject has been made. Keywords such as customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and measuring customer satisfaction have been used in order to find existing theories and models.

In the theoretical framework data collected from books, articles and academic journals from generally accepted databases has been used. By doing so, it has resulted in that the sources are enhanced in its quality. Even though some of the literature used in the theoretical framework is older, it is still considered to be relevant to the subject. This literature has also been supplemented with newer sources to create a width within the theoretical framework. In addition to this, some data in the form of information from the company's website and intranet has been collected. Furthermore, primary data has been used in the empirical data section in the shape of interviews and observations. When designing the method section and the structure of the interviews, inspiration from, by among others, Bryman and bell (2013) has been drawn to create a respondent-friendly environment.

### **3.4 Empirical data collection**

#### **3.4.1 Selection of interview population**

To increase the knowledge in a particular field, empirical data can be collected (Jacobsen, Sandin & Hellström, 2002). In order to answer the problem statement, it seemed natural to use qualitative interviews to collect empirical data. The interview population in this study consists of both staff at the authorized dealers and their customers. In other words all of the respondents are either working with service of the product or are end users of the product and service. The selection of interview population was based on the objective to get a broader perspective of the terms customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. In connection with the selection of interview population, suitable respondents have been received from Volvo Penta in order to collect comprehensive and useful information.

Nine interviews have been held with representative persons at Volvo Penta's authorized dealers, and their customers in Sweden, mainly in the neighboring areas to Gothenburg. Regarding the selection of authorized dealers, three out of the six respondents work with business to consumer while the other three work with business to business. This selection was made to enable that the answers could be weighted equally. The three customers represent each of the three business areas; marine leisure, marine commercial and industry. This has been supplemented with internal meetings with eight employees at Volvo Penta and one at another company in the group. All of these employees work in the field today or have a significant connection to the subject. With respect to the purpose and problem statement in this study, it was experienced that empirical saturation was achieved after these interviews were conducted.

### **3.4.2 Interview approach**

In this study, qualitative interviews in the shape of semi-structured interviews have been conducted. In a semi-structured interview, an interview guide is often used with relatively specific themes that are being touched during the interview, but where the interviewees are given much freedom to design the answers in their own way (Bryman & Bell, 2013). In this study, an interview guide has been used, formalized and adapted to the different interviews in order to make them appropriate for the respondent. The questions were designed to reflect the subject in this study and were asked in such a way that the respondents had the opportunity to develop their arguments and thoughts. In connection with the interviews, a presentation of the subject and the purpose of this study were presented to the respondents. This was made to ensure that all respondents should be aware of the subject and to eliminate any ambiguities.

According to Jacobsen, Sandin & Hellström (2002), face-to-face interviews can provide more open and enriching dialogues compared to telephone interviews. However, telephone interviews can be an effective way of conducting interviews that lead to time and resource saving (ibid). In this study, three face-to-face interviews have been conducted, as well as three telephone interviews, with Volvo Penta's authorized dealers. All interviews with the customers have been conducted by telephone. However, even though face-to-face interviews would have been preferred in all cases, this was not possible to manage due to the geographical location of the respondents combined with time limitations.

### **3.4.3 Recording and transcription**

Interviews should be recorded on tape if possible (Jacobsen, Sandin & Hellström, 2002). By doing so the interviewer can put more attention to the interview instead of writing notes. Recording and transcribing interviews facilitates a thorough analysis of what people have said. Transcription is a complete document concerning the interview that allows comparison between different respondents answers (Bryman & Bell, 2013). In this study, all interviews conducted were recorded in order to focus on the dialogue with respondents. This resulted in that the risk of missing important information and details was minimized since it has been possible to listen to the interview afterwards. However, some notes have been taken during all interviews to capture important information and factors mentioned. This also facilitated the transcription afterwards.

According to Bryman and Bell (2013), there are problems that may arise in connection with translation of interview data. Even though the interviews were performed in Swedish, translations have been secured in different ways. This was made primarily by the fact that the same persons that conducted the interviews also translated them to catch all of the nuances of the answers. Secondly all translations have been made shortly after the interviews took place, to ensure that nothing would be forgotten or missed.

### **3.5 Empirical data analysis**

The use of a qualitative approach in this study led to a large amount of collected material. According to Jacobsen, Sandin & Hellström (2002) the collected empirical data should first be categorized, which makes it easier to embrace and analyze. Based on this, the empirical data gathered during the interviews has been categorized under appropriate headings. Thus, the data has been treated in a structured and organized way in order to distinguish relevant aspects and create a clearer picture. This ensures that the processing of data was done in the same way in all interviews, which made the collected material more accessible.

### **3.6 The credibility of the study**

Validity and reliability are two important terms used to identify the quality of a study, as well as any problems that may arise in connection with the application of a qualitative approach.

### **3.6.1 Reliability**

According to Bryman and Bell (2013), the term reliability refers to the extension in which a study can be replicated. Since only a small number of respondents have been interviewed, this study may somewhat be limited in terms of reliability. By including more respondents there is a possibility that the result would have been different due to the fact that individuals have various perceptions of reality. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) there are some threats to the reliability of a study. One of them is that the interviewees might be worried about what their superiors think about their answers and therefore not answer the questions truthfully. This has been avoided in the study by keeping all of the respondents anonymous. Another threat to the reliability of a study is that it might be observer errors during interviews (ibid). To avoid this it has been two participating interviewers in all of the interviews in order to secure understanding of the answers.

### **3.6.2 Validity**

The term validity can be divided into two parts, internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to in which extent the theoretical background and the empirical findings correlates (Bryman & Bell, 2013). In this study a high validity has been ensure by comparing the collected empirical data with relevant theories and models presented in the theoretical framework. The conducted interviews have also been recorded in order to ensure that no empirical findings were missed or forgotten in order to achieve high validity and precision. External validity refers to which extent a study can be generalized to other settings and situations (ibid).

### **3.6.3 Generalization**

According to Bryman and Bell (2013) it can be difficult to generalize qualitative studies and apply them in another context. However, it is the quality of the conclusions drawn from the theoretical background in combination with empirical findings, which is relevant in the assessment of the generalization (ibid). By combining the empirical data with the theory in the analysis, the findings are provided with a greater width (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2008). Consequently this has been applied in this study due to the fact that a deductive approach has been used, which has enabled a better generalization. This makes it conceivable to apply the study's contributions in other fields. Finally, it is essential to emphasize that the importance of customer satisfaction might vary between different industries.

### **3.7 Ethical statement**

When performing qualitative interviews in academic research, it is important to remember the ethical issues as a research can implicate. This study has constantly strived to live up to the ethical rules advocated by researchers. Below are some numbers of ethical principles that are usually taken into account.

- Information requirement. Which means that all the respondents should be informed about the purpose as well as getting information about the study in its entirety.
- Consent requirement. Refers to that the participation should be voluntarily and that all participations have the right to cancel their attendance if they wish.
- Confidentiality and anonymity requirements. The information shared by the respondents should be treated with high confidentiality and no unauthorized persons should be able to take part of it.
- Utility requirement. The information collected should only be used for academic purposes and is not to be used for anything else than what is agreed upon.

(Bryman & Bell, 2013)

In this study, these points have been taken into account by presenting the background to the study as well as the purpose of the study for all respondents in order to clarify the intention of this thesis. Furthermore all respondents have given their consent, thus none of them have been forced to participate. Information that the individual has the right to cancel the interview at any time has also been clarified for all respondents. All respondents have been asked if the interviews could be recorded and informed about that no unauthorized persons will be able to access the material. None of the respondents opposed this as long as the material was treated with the highest possible confidentiality. Together with the supervisor at Volvo Penta, a joint decision has been made to keep the respondents anonymous, in order to show the participants respect. Moreover, all respondents have received information about why they are studied and that all collected information only will be used for this study to be completed.

## **4. Empirical data**

*In this section of the study, the information obtained from the interviews conducted with different respondents is presented. The answers have been categorized under headings based on the areas the study intended to investigate. Finally, a short paragraph regarding the internal view on customer satisfaction is presented. The interview guides used in connection with the interviews, with both the dealers and customers, can be found in appendix 1 and 2.*

### **4.1 The importance of customer satisfaction for Volvo Penta's authorized dealers**

All of the dealers representing marine leisure pointed out the fact that their customers need to feel safe and be able to use the product without any trouble in order to be satisfied. Based on this, one of the respondents mentioned that part of what is important for their customers, is to ensure that the risk of accidents or unexpected breakdowns is minimized. Due to this, it is important to get everything right the first time. The short usage period of the product within the marine leisure segment led to the fact that all of the respondents brought up the time aspect of the service as one crucial factor within customer satisfaction. Additionally, all respondents from the marine leisure segment mentioned that availability also is a significant factor, which cannot be overlooked when it comes to customer satisfaction.

The respondent from the marine commercial segment mentioned that customer satisfaction is the reason for their existence. Satisfied customers often returns which is what keeps their business profitable. This respondent also pointed out that the most important factors for their customers to be satisfied are speed in the process and quality. Since their customers have their ships for commercial use, a longer stagnation causes a major loss of income. The same phenomenon exists in the industry segment, since it is expensive for their customers to have their machinery standing still. For the same reason, the respondents from both the marine commercial and the industry segments also highlighted the importance of getting it right the first time. Moreover, the respondents from the industry segment emphasized the importance of customers being able to easily get in touch with them. Availability is a factor that the respondent from the marine commercial also mentioned as significant for their customers, in order to get help as fast as possible.

Regardless of which segment the respondents represented, all of them agreed to the fact that it is essential to provide the service according to the agreed terms. Therefore most of the respondents highlighted the importance of communicating with the customers regarding additional work or changes in price and delivery time. All respondents also emphasized how important it is to work in a preventive way to create functionality, as well as to avoid shortcomings and errors that can lead to dissatisfied customers. Five out of six respondents emphasized that in order to achieve transparency, it is essential to have a descriptive reasoning regarding what is included in the service. Based on that, the dealers think that they can minimize the risk of dissatisfied customers that might arise due to expectations exceeding what the service actually includes.

## **4.2 Measuring customer satisfaction**

### **4.2.1 Current measurement of customer satisfaction at Volvo Penta's authorized dealers**

When looking at how the dealers work with customer satisfaction today, none of them are measuring it, neither regularly nor in a structured way. Despite this, all of the respondents pointed out the fact that customer satisfaction is the single most important thing in their business. Five out of the six interviewed dealers mentioned that their way of measuring customer satisfaction is to look at repeat business, in other words how many of their customers that returns. To get repeat business, all of these five respondents mentioned how they try to get direct feedback from their customers. This is done by maintaining a continuous dialogue with the customers while delivering the product after a service.

The respondents representing the marine commercial and industry segments mentioned that since they only have a few really big customers, they already have a close relationship. This has resulted in regularly communication with their customers, which makes it easy to know what to improve for next time, even though they do not measure customer satisfaction today. Due to this fact, the respondent from the marine commercial segment mentioned that it might be redundant to measure customer satisfaction with a survey as well. However, the respondents from the industry segment were of another opinion, they see a need for measuring customer satisfaction in a more structured way. In both of these two segments, marine commercial and industry, the respondents agreed that it is not the price that is the most crucial factor. A service or repair is always cheap for their customers compared to having ships or machinery standing still, which makes price less relevant when looking at customer satisfaction. Thus, they find it more important to identify other factors to measure.

#### **4.2.2 Approaches to measuring customer satisfaction**

All three respondents from the marine leisure segment were positive to start measuring customer satisfaction in a more structured way. Since they have a lot of different customers, they are well aware of the fact that the risk of missing something is high without measuring customer satisfaction. Thus if customer satisfaction is measured, they are given a chance to reduce this risk. Based on this, all of the respondents agreed upon the fact that if they are going to start measure customer satisfaction, they should measure all customers. All three respondents from the marine leisure segment also pointed out the need of compiling the collected information after their high season. The respondents argued that it might be difficult to reach customers and measure customer satisfaction during the high season. An advantage with conducting the measurement after this period is that the customers have had time to use the product and see how it works. Therefore, the respondents from this segment argued that it might be better to perform measurements in the fall.

All respondents regardless of which segment they represent emphasized the importance of creating a survey that is easy for the customers to participate in. One of the respondents representing the industry segment argued for that a survey needs to be short and consistent, otherwise the customers will not take their time to answer it. Looking at the survey itself and who should be the consigner of it, there were some disagreements among the respondents. Of the two respondents from the industry segment, one wanted themselves to be the consigner since it shows that they care about their customers. The other respondent on the other hand, reasoned about that Volvo Penta themselves should be the consigner, since they believed that the end customer might answer more accurately in that case.

#### **4.2.3 Difficulties associated with measuring customer satisfaction**

Some of the respondents see certain problematic aspects of continuously measuring customer satisfaction in their operation. As earlier mentioned, the marine leisure's operation is characterized by a high season, making it difficult to carry out surveys during this period. All of the respondents pointed out that it can be difficult to measure customer satisfaction the same way for all three segments. They argued that the type of customers differ between the segments, looking at business to business or business to consumer. Since the marine commercial and the industry segments have relatively similar customers, all respondents suggested that these two segments should have the same survey. In their opinion, the marine leisure segment should have their own. Furthermore, some of the respondents also admitted



that they lack sufficient knowledge in how to handle and process the results generated by a survey appropriately.

### **4.3 Positive outcomes of measuring customer satisfaction**

In order to provide valuable insights and information from their customers, all of the respondents from the marine leisure segment see a need of measuring customer satisfaction. One of the respondents has previously sought a structured way of measuring customer satisfaction in order to improve different business areas. One of the respondents from the marine leisure segment mentioned that some customers only disappear if they are dissatisfied, and never return again. Therefore this respondent argued that it would be valuable to investigate the cause of the dissatisfaction in order to improve their business, and avoid losing future customers.

Both of the respondents from the industry segment stated that they would work with the results and information gathered during a survey. They see it as a necessity in order to reach out to more customers. One of them also mentioned that if customer satisfaction is measured and the results are not used for improvement, it would be seen as something negative instead of positive.

All of the respondents regardless of which segment they represent, also pointed out that it is important with high customer satisfaction in order to strengthen the brand value of Volvo Penta and create a good reputation. According to them, customers that are satisfied with a Volvo Penta service are more likely to recommend the brand to other people. This is something that all of the dealers see as a factor possibly leading to more Volvo Penta products on the market, which will improve their business.

## **4.4 The customers' view on customer satisfaction**

### **4.4.1 The importance of satisfaction**

The customer representing marine leisure clearly emphasized that customer satisfaction is an important factor while choosing a service dealer. The customer mentioned that since it is a service on a luxury product, the primary factor for satisfaction is not the price. The two main factors, which were referred to as particularly important, were quality and communication. Quality for the respondent refers to that the right parts is used during the service, that the service is delivered under agreed terms and that the dealers get it right the first time in order

to avoid similar problems later on. Communication involves getting information about extra things that needs to be fixed in connection to the service, but also information regarding delayed deliveries.

The responding customers from the marine commercial and industry segments agreed on that the most important factors during a service or repair are the time aspect, competence of the workers and availability. The time aspect of the service includes speed in the process and that agreed delivery times are held as agreed upon. They mentioned a few other factors as well, such as communication and employee courtesy. Neither of the responding customers from the industry or the marine commercial segments brought up price as a main factor for satisfaction.

#### **4.4.2 Appreciation on measuring customer satisfaction**

The customer representing the marine leisure segment emphasized that it would be appreciated if customer satisfaction was measured. However the respondent also mentioned that if customer satisfaction is to be measured, the customers have to feel that the dealers will work with the result and improve upon what is brought up. Which kind of survey the authorized dealers use was not the most important factor to the responding customer from the marine leisure segment, although telephone interviews were preferred. It was more important to know that the answers were appreciated and that improvements were made after taking time giving the company information on faults that might exist.

Both the responding customers from the industry segment and the one from the marine commercial segment said that they would appreciate if the dealers were measuring customer satisfaction. Both respondents also said that they would take part in a survey, as long as it was short and easy to conduct. The respondent from the marine commercial segment explained that a survey that take longer than five minutes would not be desirable to participate in. Both of these respondents were torn on how they would prefer the survey to be conducted. However they agreed upon the fact that a questionnaire online is preferable, since they can do it at an appropriate time. The respondent from the industry segment also reasoned that a survey with closed questions and a numerical scale would be preferred, and believed that the participation would be lower if the respondents have to come up with the answers by themselves.

## **4.5 Volvo Penta's internal view of customer satisfaction**

### **4.5.1 The significance and importance of customer satisfaction**

Customer satisfaction at Volvo Penta is of great importance in order to maintain a successful business. Factors considered to be significant for customer satisfaction were highlighted during the internal meetings with the employees at Volvo Penta. The employees at Volvo Penta have seven different areas that they believe are important to pay attention to while measuring customer satisfaction. These refers to the time aspect, communication, availability, quality and getting things right the first time, access to spare parts, employee courtesy and the competence of the employees. Price was also brought up as an important factor, but not how much the repair or service cost. Instead the price aspect, in the opinion of the Volvo Penta employees, falls under communication. This because the important thing in their opinion, is if the final price of a service complies with the promised from the beginning. This due to the fact that price changes without communication to the customer could lead to dissatisfaction and possibly anger.

### **4.5.2 Volvo Penta's view on measuring customer satisfaction**

All employees who participated have emphasized the importance of measuring customer satisfaction to be able to ensure satisfaction and create long-term relations. All employees also discussed about different ways of measuring customer satisfaction, and some of them mentioned that telephone interviews is a good idea due to the fact that people feel obligated to answer. They also pointed out that there might be differences in approaches for the different segments. Moreover, all of the employees emphasized the importance of the survey being short and concise in order to not scare the customers. One of the employees sees a need of using closed questions and a numerical scale in the survey. It was also mentioned that if customer satisfaction was to be measured, it is important that the dealers really work with the information collected to improve themselves. They all pointed out the importance of continuous improvements and actions based on the result from measuring customer satisfaction.

Other companies in the same group as Volvo Penta do measure customer satisfaction regularly today. They do this by letting an external company be responsible for the survey, which is conducted by phone. The external company also analyzes the answers before they receive them. According to one of the employees at the other company in the group, this kind

of survey has given them a really high response rate, which can be difficult to ensure while conducting surveys.

#### **4.6 Summary of the empirical findings**

The Volvo Penta employees, the authorized dealers and their customers all agreed that customer satisfaction is really important and that measuring customer satisfaction is something that should be done. Despite the fact that some of the authorized dealers try to estimate their customer satisfaction today they see a need of measuring it in a more structured way. Even though they have different views on customer satisfaction, some factors were agreed upon between the three different responding groups. However, in none of the segments price is seen as an important factor for customer satisfaction. All respondents from the authorized dealers agreed to the fact that a survey must be short and concise in order to reach a high participation level. Even though some of the respondents see several problems with measuring customer satisfaction, they realize that conducting a survey can help them to find areas that they can improve. The customers would appreciate if customer satisfaction was measured, as long as the authorized dealers try to improve based on the result of the survey. The type of survey conducted is not of great importance to the customers, as long as it is kept short.

## **5. Analysis**

*In this section, the collected empirical data is analyzed in relation to the theoretical framework. The analysis is based on the areas that the interviews have affected.*

### **5.1 Customer satisfaction**

According to the empirical investigation, all respondents from the authorized dealers are aware of customer satisfaction and its importance. According to Söderlund (2001), customer satisfaction is a measure of how well a company's products or services satisfy customer expectations and preferences. Because different customers have different factors that are crucial to their satisfaction, it is important for a company to identify and manage them in a desirable way (Lydahl, 2010). All respondents from the authorized dealers have clearly described factors that they consider to be essential for creating customer satisfaction. Factors such as quality, availability, speed in the process and explanation about the work carried out have been mentioned as particularly important. This reflects having the ability to do the right thing the first time, be able to identify and fix problems quickly, always be contactable and explain the work carried out in an understandable way. Provide quality also minimizes the risk for accidents or unexpected breakdowns. This reflects the need of working in a preventive way to create functionality in order to avoid shortages and errors that can cause dissatisfied customers. Based on what the customers described as crucial factors, the price is less important. Instead, factors like quality, availability, time aspect of the service, continuous communication, employee courtesy and competent workers has been considered to be of greater importance. These factors can be linked to what Söderlund (2001) denotes as psychosocial satisfaction. The factors mentioned above correspond with the factors that the employees at Volvo Penta mentioned as important, except that they also brought up access to spare parts as an essential factor.

In terms of customer loyalty, all respondents emphasize the importance of having returning customers. Even though satisfaction is one of the primary reasons for a customer to become loyal, other factors can affect as well (Heskett et al., 1994; Söderlund, 2001). According to the empirical investigation, returning customers constitutes a large part of the authorized dealers business. Hougaard and Bjerre (2009) points out the need to have the ability to preserve customers in the long run.

## **5.2 Measuring customer satisfaction**

Measuring customer satisfaction is essential in order to know which expectations and perceptions the customers have (Lydahl, 2010). There are a lot of different approaches to measuring customer satisfaction. Various measurement methods will lead to differences in response rates, as well as in costs. Theoretically the response rate will be higher and the answers more accurate if a company talks to their customers, either face-to-face or by telephone (ibid). During the empirical investigation, all respondents pointed out the importance of conducting a short and concise survey. According to that, primarily one of the responding customers and a Volvo Penta employee argued that a survey with a numerical scale is preferred in order to establish simplicity. These arguments are in line with the theory that Söderlund (2001) presented and are connectible to using closed questions while measuring customer satisfaction. During the interviews with the respondents from the authorized dealers, they made it clear that it is essential for them to be able to easily analyze the information collected. Due to the fact that simplicity in analyzing and work with the answers from a survey is important, numerical scales are preferred (Hill, Brierley & McDougall, 1999). There are several benefits to using online surveys or questionnaires (Reichheld & Markey, 2011). However, Lydahl (2010) highlights the fact that it is always better to talk to the customers, if not face-to-face then at least by telephone. Based on the empirical investigation, it was found that the customers have different preferences regarding on how the survey should be executed. In this matter, none of the respondents from the authorized dealers has a specific requirement. Another perspective on the approach of the survey is the question of who should be the consigner. The respondents reasoned differently around if Volvo Penta should be responsible for the entire survey or if the dealers themselves should send out the survey and collect the answers.

Both the responding customers and authorized dealers see a lot of difficulties with measuring customer satisfaction. One difficulty is to find out what factors to measure, since they often differ from what the company expects them to be (Söderlund, 1997). It is important to remember that it is the customers who have the answers on how to improve a business. The fact that the market is always changing makes it necessary to measure customer satisfaction regularly (Lydahl 2010). However, some of the respondents see a difficulty in measuring customer satisfaction regularly since their business is dominated by high season. This makes it hard for them to perform a survey during this period due to the fact that it is a time

consuming process. Despite this, almost all respondents see a necessity to continuously measure customer satisfaction in order to not lose important information from their customers. However, all respondents from the authorized dealers reasoned about the fact that it might be problematic to measure customer satisfaction in the same way for all three segments.

During the empirical investigation, one responding customer pointed out the importance of knowing that the survey is done to make improvements for the customers. This can be linked to Lydahl's (2010) reasoning about that it is essential to make the customers feel meaningful and clearly describe the reasons why the survey is done. Since it is the customers who have the answers that can improve a business, it is important to have in mind that the quality and accuracy of the questions asked determines the quality of the answers (Lydahl, 2010).

### **5.3 Effects of satisfied and dissatisfied customers**

A really satisfied and loyal customer often speaks well about a company's good or service. A positive word-of-mouth is also a great way for a company to gain new customers (Ranaweera & Prabhu, 2003). The authorized dealers seem to be well aware of this, as some of them mentioned that it is important that Volvo Penta has a good reputation. This is because of the fact that a good reputation can give the authorized dealers more jobs, and thereby also a chance to promote and develop their business. An enhanced reputation is according to Fornell (1992) one of the reasons for why customer satisfaction is important. The respondents pointed out that if more people are satisfied with the product itself, as well as everything around it, they will spread positive words regarding the company. This is connectable to the earlier mentioned theory about word-of-mouth, which Ranaweera and Prabhu (2003) claims to be one of the most trustworthy methods of spreading a positive atmosphere around a company. On the other hand, negative word-of-mouth is less desirable since it could mean that dissatisfied customers spread their opinions, which can be a disaster for a company (Solomon et al., 2013).

Furthermore, dissatisfied customers constitute an undesirable type of customers since they are more likely to leave a company without notice. Even complaining customers are preferred in comparison since they express their opinion. This enables the company to address the response and act on it (Lydahl, 2010). One of the respondents reasoned about the difficulty that some customers just disappear without the company actually knowing the reason why.

This respondent was the only respondent that reflected around why customers left, and mentioned that therefore it would be valuable for them to find out the reason for customers disappearance. Based on this, the respondent sees an opportunity to improve certain areas to avoid losing future customers. If the company receives feedback from dissatisfied customers by conducting a survey, they are able to work with improving relevant areas and turn their negative opinion around (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Lydahl, 2010).

According to Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1990) different gaps can occur between the customers and the service company. One of the gaps can occur due to differences between the customer expectations and the management's perception of expectations. Because of this, the company can face some trouble with understanding what the customers consider to be meaningful and expects to obtain with the service (ibid). Even though the responding customers had almost the same expectations on the service as the respondents from the authorized dealers thought they would have, there were some differences. All of the responding customers defining quality as one of the most significant factors for their satisfaction, which refers to the importance of providing the right service the first time. This is connectable to the gap between the quality specification of the service and the actual service delivery in the conceptual model of service quality (ibid). Furthermore, all responding customers also define continuous communication as a primary factor when it comes to customer satisfaction. Continuous communication to the customers refers to getting information about additional work, service delays or price changes which might occur during the performance of the service. If this is not provided, a gap between the service delivery and the external communication of the service can arise which is not desirable (ibid).

#### **5.4 Business improvements**

Besides that high customer satisfaction may result in customer loyalty, it can also lead to reduced costs of obtaining new customers (Fornell, 1992). This is comparable to Hill and Alexanders' (2000) argument that it is more profitable to have returning customers than trying to attract new ones. The respondents from the authorized dealers emphasized the importance of having returning customers, because that is what makes their business successful. Loyal customers are necessary from several perspectives. This is partly due to the fact that customer loyalty can help create growth and affect a company's economic returns in a positive way (Fornell, 1992; Heskett et al., 1994). Keeping customers coming back doing repeat business will also create a possibility to generate higher profits (Reichheld & Sasser 1990). Creating



long-term relations is something that the employees at Volvo Penta mentioned as an essential factor for future success.

During the empirical investigation some of the respondents stated that they saw some difficulties in analyzing the information collected during the measurement. They claim that they do not possess the knowledge required to interpret the results. This can be linked to the problematic aspect as Reichheld and Markey (2011) highlight. If a company has difficulty in handling the result, it might be hard to improve their business. Furthermore a measurement just to create a report is not recommended. If customer feedback is collected, it has to lead to change (ibid), which is something as the employees at Volvo Penta are well aware off.

## **6. Conclusion**

*In this section, a conclusion based on the results obtained from the analysis as well as the answers to the problem statement in the study are presented. In addition, recommendations regarding measuring customer satisfaction and suggestions for future research within the subject are given.*

### **6.1 Theoretical and empirical contributions**

This thesis provides answers to why Volvo Penta should measure customer satisfaction and how they can work with measuring customer satisfaction at their authorized dealers. The theoretical framework and empirical findings in this study shows that it is of utmost importance for the authorized dealers to have satisfied customers and maintain them in the long run. Consequently, it is essential for Volvo Penta and their authorized dealers to measure customer satisfaction in order to gain valuable insights and carry out actions to achieve improvements.

The study shows that satisfied customers is one of the most necessary factors for the authorized dealers' businesses. This can be explained by the fact that satisfied customers are more likely to become loyal customers. Since returning customers is of utmost importance for the authorized dealers, it is significant for them to preserve customers in the long run and thereby create loyalty. This is due to the fact that loyalty can contribute to growth and increasing profits.

Based on the theoretical and empirical findings, the study shows the importance for the authorized dealers to focus on the customers' expectations and preferences. Since a company's expectations of customer requirements can differ from reality, one of the fundamental difficulties with measuring customer satisfaction is to know which factors to measure. In the study, several factors that are significant to measure have been identified. Some of these factors are equivalent to the customers, Volvo Penta's employees and their authorized dealers while some of them differ. The necessary factors for Volvo Penta and their authorized dealers to measure have been found to be quality, availability, the time aspect, communication, employee courtesy and dealer competence.

The study also shows that the phenomena word-of-mouth is of utmost importance for the authorized dealers since it can help them to create a positive reputation around the brand Volvo Penta and thereby expand their business.

Another finding from the study is that since the authorized dealers' dissatisfied customers tends to leave without notice, measuring customer satisfaction would give them a chance to catch these customers and receive feedback from them. By doing so the dealers also has the opportunity to improve and turn their opinion around. In the case a company succeeds in turning a customer's opinion around, there is a possibility that the customer will return in the future.

According to the theoretical and empirical findings, a conclusion is that it is essential for the authorized dealers to be aware of where gaps between the customers and themselves can occur. If they have this in mind, the risk for misunderstandings that can lead to gaps can be minimized, and thereby dissatisfaction among their customers avoided.

Another important finding from the study is that the customers want to feel appreciated if they participate in a study. This means that the authorized dealers have to work actively with improvements after conducting a survey. If the correct actions are not taken after gaining information from customers, the survey will be seen as something negative and time wasting.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

Based on the theoretical and empirical contributions, the study points to the fact that Volvo Penta should measure customer satisfaction in a consistent way at their authorized dealers. Since the dealers admitted that they do not possess enough knowledge to perform and analyze the surveys themselves, it leads to the conclusion that it might be better to use an external firm specialized in surveys in order to carry out measurements. This would also eliminate the problem with finding time to conduct surveys during the high season that dominates the marine leisure segment.

Since all of the empirical findings points to the fact that a short and concise survey is important to both dealers and customers, the recommendation is to use closed questions and a numerical scale. A numerical scale with even numbers is preferred, such as a scale from one to ten, so that a default value in the middle cannot be chosen. There are benefits to both

telephone surveys and online questionnaires, and the customers have been torn regarding what they prefer. Therefore an external firm, working with surveys, should be used as an advisor for which type of survey to use. This would also lead to the opportunity to conduct regular measurements, which is a necessity in order to work with continuous improvements.

As earlier mentioned, six important factors for Volvo Penta and their dealers to measure have been found. Since the factors for customer satisfaction have been almost the same between the three segments, a general survey should work for all Volvo Penta customers. This would also make the process in analyzing and comparing the results easier. Finally, to get comparable results, Volvo Penta should tentatively be the consigner of the survey even though an external company performs it.

### **6.3 Suggestions for future research**

Primarily, this study has focused on how to measure customer satisfaction at Volvo Penta's Swedish authorized dealers. Including an international perspective would have given an increased understanding within the subject. Thus, a broader research that involves international dealers would be interesting to conduct. Furthermore, this study has only taken the psychosocial customer satisfaction into consideration. Therefore, an investigation of the economic customer satisfaction could be done in future research.

Conducting a research within a similar company could be done in order to identify differences and similarities. Finally, since this study has focused on customer satisfaction at Volvo Penta's authorized dealers, which are service companies, it would be of interest to conduct a similar research at a manufacturing company.

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## Appendix

*In this following section, the interview guides that have been used in the interviews with both the dealers and customers are presented.*

### **Appendix 1 - Interview questions intended for dealers**

As mentioned earlier, a presentation of the subject has been carried out in connection with the interviews. The presentation has primarily focused on explaining our purpose with this study. Following questions have been asked:

1. Vad betyder kundnöjdhet för er?
2. Jobbar ni aktivt med att mäta kundnöjdhet efter en service idag?
3. Vad är viktigast för er om ni i framtiden skall börja mäta kundnöjdhet?
4. Vad tror ni är viktiga frågor att ställa till kunderna för att fånga upp så mycket som möjligt av deras upplevelse?
5. Bortsett från priset, vilka faktorer tror ni är mest avgörande för en kund när det gäller kundnöjdhet?
6. Har ni något som kunder ofta tar upp eller nämner gällande service som de anser vara viktigt?
7. Hur ofta skulle ni finna det lämpligt att genomföra mätningar?
8. Vid vilket tillfälle skulle ni uppskatta att göra mätningarna?
9. Om ni skulle börja mäta kundnöjdhet, skulle ni föredra att själva vara avsändare till mätningen eller vill ni att Volvo Penta står som avsändare?
10. Skulle ni uppskatta att sammanställa svaren regelbundet eller när högsäsongen är över?
11. För vilka kunder anser ni att mätningar bör genomföras?
12. Hur skulle ni föredra att jobba med resultatet?
13. Slutligen, är det något annat ni vill tillägga för att komplettera det som tidigare nämnts?

### **Translation of the interview questions for the dealers**

1. What does customer satisfaction mean to you?
2. Do you work actively with measuring customer satisfaction after a service today?



3. What is essential for you if you are going to measure customer satisfaction in the future?
4. What do you think is important questions to ask the customers in order to get as much information as possible about their experience?
5. Besides price, what factors do you think are most important for a customer when it comes to customer satisfaction?
6. Is there anything that customers usually bring up or mention about service that they think are important?
7. How often would you find it suitable to conduct a survey?
8. At which point in time would you appreciate to conduct the survey?
9. If you were to start measuring customer satisfaction, would you want to be the designer yourselves or would you appreciate if Volvo Penta were the designer of the survey?
10. Would you appreciate to compile the results regularly or after the high season?
11. In your opinion, which customers should be participants in the survey?
12. How would you prefer to work with the results?
13. Finally, is there something else that you would like to add to what is already mentioned?

## **Appendix 2 - Interview questions intended for consumers**

As mentioned earlier, a presentation of the subject has been carried out in connection with the interviews. The presentation has primarily focused on explaining our purpose with this study. Following questions have been asked:

1. Vad är viktigt för dig som kund för att du skall vara nöjd med en service?
2. Bortsett från priset, vad är den enskilt viktigaste faktorn vid en service för dig?
3. Skulle du uppskatta om kundnöjdhet mättes hos verkstaden du gick till?
4. Om kundnöjdhet mättes, skulle du kunna tänka dig att delta i kundundersökningen?
5. Har du några önskemål om hur en kundundersökning skall vara utformad?
6. Slutligen, är det något annat ni vill tillägga för att komplettera det som tidigare nämnts?

### **Translation of the interview questions for the customers**

1. What is important for you, as a customer, to be satisfied with a service?
2. Except for the price, what is the single most important factor for you during a service?
3. Would you appreciate if customer satisfaction were measured at your service dealer?
4. If customer satisfaction were measured, would you participate in the survey?
5. Do you have any desires regarding on how a survey should be formed?
6. Finally, is there something else that you would like to add to what is already mentioned?