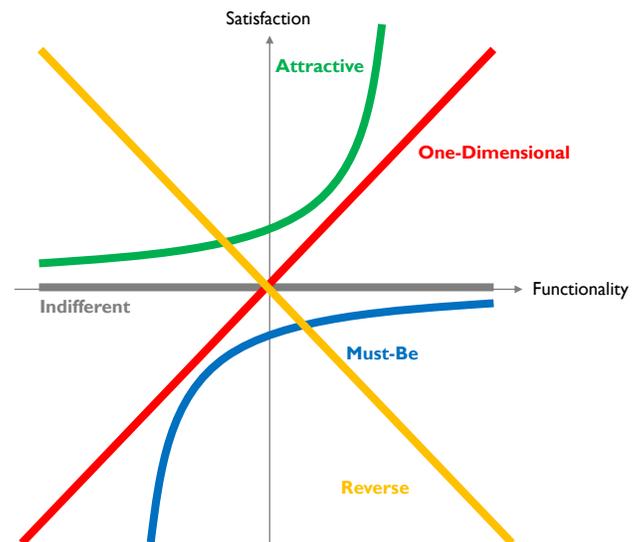


Kano analysis



Developed in 1984 by Japanese Professor Noriaki Kano, The Kano Model is one of the more obscure tools I tend to use. Some of the strategists I've worked with know about it, but few have found a practical use for it. Personally, I love it and think it's one of the most important things you need to have in your head if you ever find yourself looking down a list of variables ranked by importance.

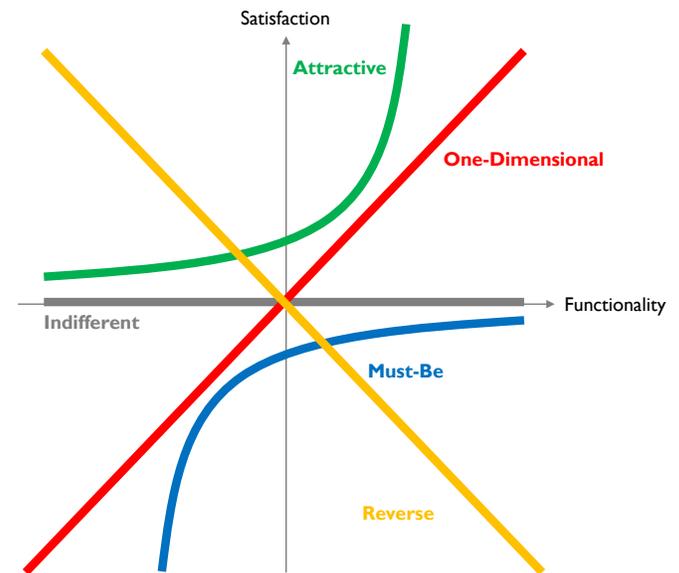
The Kano Model builds on the work of American occupational psychologist Frederick Herzberg, who in 1959 studied how 200 accountants and engineers felt about their work. Participants in the study were asked to share experiences in which they felt either very negative or very positive about their jobs. Comparing these two types of experience, Herzberg identified that satisfaction and dissatisfaction at work nearly always arose from two different sets of factors:

- **Motivators:** were identified with positive experiences and tended to relate to the content of the job, such as achievement, recognition, responsibility and advancement.
- **Hygiene factors:** were identified with negative experiences and tended to relate to the context of the job, such as interpersonal relationships, salary, supervision and company policy.

Herzberg's study challenged the idea that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are simply opposite ends of the same spectrum. Hygiene factors prevent dissatisfaction, but they do not lead to happy, fulfilled employees. On the other hand, motivating factors are capable of driving job satisfaction. This 'two factor' theory of motivation means that organisations who care about the happiness and motivation of their staff need to make sure they are delivering on hygiene factors, as well as introducing motivating factors that will drive high work satisfaction.

Noriaki Kano evolved Herzberg's work in at least two important respects. First of all, he was concerned with customer satisfaction rather than employee motivation and wanted to understand whether the features of a product or service (or experience) might function in a similar way to the motivators and hygiene factors identified by

Herzberg nearly three decades earlier. In fact, he moved beyond two factors to create a four factor model of motivation, illustrated below:



Kano's work classifies features into five categories, depending on their ability to drive customer satisfaction:

One-dimensional Attributes

Some features behave as we would intuitively expect: customer satisfaction improves as functionality improves. In many cases, price is a performance attribute; we're generally happier the less we have to pay for something.

Must-be Attributes

These are equivalent to Herzberg's hygiene factors: they are features that a customer would expect as standard, like the steering wheel on a car, or the sole on a shoe, or the plug in a bath.

Attractive Attributes

These are closer to Herzberg's motivating factors: features that the customer may not expect, but which are capable of causing delight if they are delivered. Kano noted that features which begin as attractive attributes often migrate over time to become one-dimensional and then must-be drivers as customers come to see them as standard. When I was growing up, most of the kids I went to school with lived in homes without a landline telephone. Now it would be considered a form of child abuse for pupils not to have their own smartphones and unlimited data plans. And for anybody rolling their

eyes at this point and uttering “OK Boomer” under their breath: I’m not a boomer; I’m from Cumbria.

Indifferent Attributes

Often unintentionally, there are features towards which customers feel completely indifferent: their absence or presence has no effect on satisfaction. There’s really not much more to say about these except to try to avoid investing any time or effort in these sorts of features or attributes.

Reverse Attributes

These are very rare, but they do exist: attributes where improved functionality actually reduces satisfaction. I’ve only encountered this type of attribute once in over two decades.

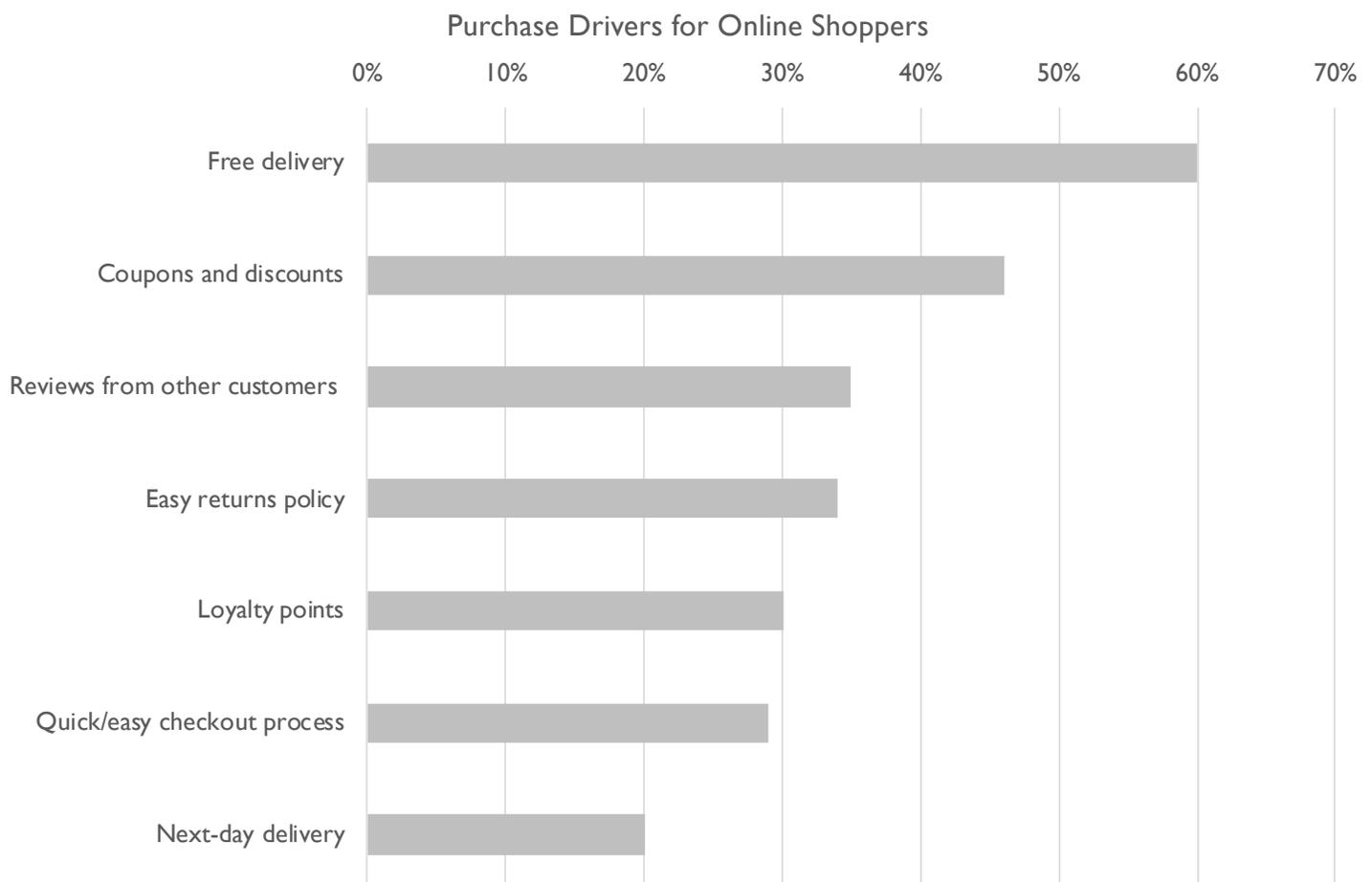
Here’s why I think Kano’s work is so vital for anyone in brand strategy to know about: it demonstrates that drivers of satisfaction are often non-linear, which means that you can’t simply rank them in order of importance. Here’s a fairly typical example of the sort of ranking I’m talking about:

Let’s imagine we worked for an online retailer who wanted to use this data to work out how to delight its customers. The simple ranking indicates we should invest in making delivery free. But Kano analysis suggests we should think twice about this; if free delivery is a must-have feature for online shoppers then it might help to combat dissatisfaction, but we will need to invest elsewhere if our goal is to inspire delight.

So, how can we tell the difference between these different categories of attribute?

Noriaki Kano devised a questionnaire to help researchers categorise attributes. This effectively involves asking people paired questions about each attribute in turn:

- How satisfied they feel if the brand performs well on a given attribute (‘Functional’)
- How dissatisfied they feel if the brand performs poorly on a given attribute (‘Dysfunctional’)



Based on the combination of answers to the 'Functional' and 'Dysfunctional' questions, we can infer which category an attribute belongs to:

FUNCTIONAL			DYSFUNCTIONAL			CATEGORY
Neutral	+	Dissatisfied	=			Must-Be
Satisfied	+	Dissatisfied	=			One-Dimensional
Satisfied	+	Neutral	=			Attractive
Neutral	+	Neutral	=			Indifferent
Dissatisfied	+	Neutral / Satisfied	=			Reverse

This is a VERY simplified example. The truth is that designing a questionnaire to accurately capture the nonlinear nature of drivers is somewhere between an art and a science. Often, the best you can hope for is a directional view on the categories and you can burn up a lot of precious survey time asking two additional questions about each feature, in addition to understanding how important it is and how well the brand is perceived to perform. Developing a more sophisticated understanding of the drivers of brand satisfaction and loyalty inevitably comes at a cost. This explains why most of the brand strategy people I've spoken to about the Kano Model (or at least those who are aware of its existence) tend to see it as an object of intellectual interest rather than a practical tool.

If you are designing a customer survey (or an employee survey for that matter) and you have space, then I would recommend introducing Kano questioning in some form as a way to help you interpret the data. If you don't have this luxury (or if you didn't design the survey) then I would at the very least recommend keeping the Kano Model in mind when you're analysing survey results, to avoid assuming that 'importance' data is linear and to guard against naïve interpretation. The Kano Model might not be the most practical tool in a brand strategist's kit, but it is intellectually vital; Frederick Herzberg and Noriaki Kano's work encourages us to think three-dimensionally about the attributes of the products, services and experiences that we design and deliver.

(As a postscript, I have found the Kano Model to be very helpful in interpreting qualitative 'Voice of the Customer' style feedback. B2B brands often rely on this type of survey as they are unable to survey customers in sufficient number to gather reliable quantitative data. These surveys are also less tedious for clients of B2B businesses to respond to as they typically involve an NPS-style question, accompanied by a small number of open-ended questions about what's working well, what's not and what should be improved. If you've got survey data of this nature, then it's possible to run a Kano-lite analysis. It's a fiddly business but if you're interested and have the patience then please get in touch and I can spill the geeky beans)