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# Planning a Reader-oriented Strategy for a Publishing Company: A Case Study<sup>†</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Scientific research in the sector of press readability and specifically magazines is not particularly extensive. This paper suggests a framework for the development of strategic decisions based on reader satisfaction measurements. The methodology is illustrated through a real-world application, i.e. customer-oriented strategy planning for the leading monthly IT magazine in Greece. This study implements the MUSA (Multicriteria Satisfaction Analysis) method to evaluate reader satisfaction, in order to support the editor in making decisions while planning his editorial strategy. Reader satisfaction was analysed based on a tree containing seven main criteria and 32 sub-criteria. Readers proved to be very satisfied and non-demanding, which results in narrower margins for efficient improvement suggestions. However, the evaluation of the MUSA results led to putting forward suggestions that could support the editor in making amendment decisions. Some of these suggestions were successfully implemented within the scope of a new strategy. This revealed the need for two separate editions, an IT magazine for pupils and students as well as an IT magazine focused on women. The decision maker received suggestions on what these new publications' features should be, deriving from the study's quantitative results. Copyright © 2007 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

KEY WORDS: reader satisfaction; quality management; MCDA

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In planning their strategies, with a view to support decision making, enterprises and organizations increasingly adopt customer-oriented decision-making methods. A customer-oriented firm commits to providing competitive products and services of exceptional quality. Its goal is to satisfy the customers' needs and desires, in a specific market sector. Such a firm analyses market characteristics in order to offer products that satisfy ascertained needs, considering its customers to be the final judges for its products.

Product quality constitutes a necessary but not sufficient condition for customers' satisfaction. Satisfaction constitutes a complex 'perception' of customers which is not directly available. Considerable effort is needed for its measurement, analysis and explanation. For this reason, custo-

mer's satisfaction measurement and analysis may contribute to strategy planning by delivering to the decision maker objective, measurable information regarding the market. This analysis can shape 'barometers' of satisfaction which at the same time (1) constitute indicators for the output of the firm; (2) contribute to the improvement of the firm; (3) point out market opportunities; and (4) shape a different perception of satisfaction, globally. Other advantages that arise from the satisfaction measurement are: the explicit determination of improvement actions; the bidirectional communication with customers, personnel, shareholders, etc.; the determination of advantages and disadvantages for the firm; and the increase in productivity (see, for instance, Engel *et al.*, 1978; Yi, 1991; Dutka, 1995; Naumann and Giel, 1995; Vavra, 1997). Strategies based on customer satisfaction could be characterized as 'therapeutic', since they try to correct undesirable conditions that have already occurred.

Scientific research in the sector of press readability and specifically magazines is not particularly extensive. However, all relative research indicates that reader satisfaction is a complex, multi-variable experience, which constitutes the

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1 resultant of a rich bunch of distinguishable  
 3 dimensions. Research that was held in 2001 in  
 5 the USA with the support of the Newspaper  
 7 Association of America and the American Society  
 9 of Newspaper Editors indicated the existence of  
 11 four ‘cornerstones’ of reader satisfaction:  
 13 ‘content’, ‘brand’, ‘service excellence’ and  
 15 ‘constructive culture’. Research in 100 USA  
 17 magazines attributed a classification of 39 dimen-  
 19 sions of reader satisfaction (Calder *et al.*, 2003).  
 21 Magazine use was found to influence 39  
 23 ‘experiences’ that readers think and feel when they  
 25 read the magazine. Some of those are ‘suspensive  
 27 factors’ for magazine’s reading and purchase,  
 29 while the rest are ‘motivational factors’. The first  
 31 five ‘motivational’ experiences were: ‘I get value  
 33 for my time and money’, ‘It makes me smarter’,  
 35 ‘It’s my personal timeout’, ‘I often reflect on it’  
 37 and ‘The stories absorb me’. Overall reader  
 39 satisfaction drivers for content area ‘Science,  
 41 technology and environment’ were ‘increased  
 43 quantity’, ‘international focus’, ‘length/complex-  
 45 ity’, ‘feature-style stories’ and ‘more, bigger  
 47 photographs’.

1 In this paper, we propose a framework for the  
 3 development of strategic decisions based on reader  
 5 satisfaction measurements. Reader-oriented deci-  
 7 sion support for the editor is a practice adopted by  
 9 press firms in an accelerated pace, making the  
 11 reader’s needs and expectations an integral,  
 13 fundamentally important part of the firm.

1 This methodology is illustrated through a real-  
 3 world application regarding the planning of a  
 5 customer-oriented strategy using multicriteria  
 7 analysis of reader satisfaction for RAM, the  
 9 leading IT monthly magazine in Greece. RAM’s  
 11 first issue was circulated in 1988. RAM extracted  
 13 fast the first rank in circulation, with a significant  
 15 range from the second magazine onwards, among  
 17 all rival publications. It has kept up this leading  
 19 role in its entire ‘circle’ as product. RAM  
 21 circulation in Greece, in the month our research  
 23 was conducted (May 2005), was 45 000 copies. The  
 25 conduct of a reader-oriented research was judged  
 27 as particularly useful for the magazine at that  
 29 particular time, because of the competition’s  
 31 increasing intensity.

1 The paper is organized as follows: Section 2  
 3 describes the publishing company’s existing strat-  
 5 egy. Section 3 presents the objectives and criteria  
 7 of readers’ satisfaction, the applied methodology  
 9 for customer satisfaction evaluation (MUSA,  
 11 Multicriteria Satisfaction Analysis system) and

1 the basic results. Section 4 outlines some proposi-  
 3 tions for decision support regarding the develop-  
 5 ment of new publishing strategies. Finally, Section  
 7 5 winds up the results and offers proposals for  
 9 future research.

2. DESCRIPTION OF A PUBLISHING  
 COMPANY STRATEGY

1 In order to detect RAM’s existing editorial  
 3 strategy, we interviewed the magazine’s manage-  
 5 rial executives. These are the people who suggested  
 7 the magazine’s publication and led it through  
 9 import in the market (introduction stage), growth  
 11 stage and maturity stage.

1 For the operation of RAM, the concept  
 3 ‘following the trend’ was adopted. The waves of  
 5 personal computer (PC) distribution as a mass  
 7 mean of work, entertainment and learning were  
 9 followed with intelligent, long-term acts, instead of  
 11 mechanical reactions and opportunistic tactics.  
 13 In this way, the various waves of information  
 15 technology (IT) could be exploited while the wave  
 17 was on the rise. This led to securing a new, bigger  
 19 cliental base which could maintain its size even  
 21 when the wave appeared to fade. RAM, as a  
 23 product, is shaped so as to get into the hands of a  
 25 lot of people because of the trend but later on  
 27 remain in those hands because of its real value.  
 29 The objective of RAM is to create a hyper-product  
 31 that can stay in the hands of as many readers as  
 33 possible for the maximum amount of time because  
 35 of its value.

1 The magazine’s operation is characterized by  
 3 moderate economic risk. This choice results from  
 5 the acknowledgement that the timing and the  
 7 impact of new IT trends cannot be known  
 9 beforehand—hence, continuous vigilance and  
 11 quantity survey are required for maximization of  
 13 results, exploitation of opportunities and avoid-  
 15 ance of loss. At the same time, the magazine’s  
 17 operation is the result of a beam of factors. These  
 19 include: the productive capacity; a reliable and  
 21 efficient distribution network; a mechanism that  
 23 can detect and implement the long-term strategy;  
 25 as well as the economies of scale that can be  
 27 provided by the largest press organization in  
 29 Greece.

1 The growth principles that are adopted by RAM  
 3 aim at circulation growth, revenue increase and,  
 5 finally, participation in value maximization for the  
 7 stakeholders. The adopted strategy includes two

1 stages, analysis and synthesis. At the analysis  
 3 stage, a favourable economic situation is realized  
 5 because of (a) the perennial market for hi-end  
 7 products, (b) the creation of a market for 500-euro  
 9 desktop PCs and 600-euro laptops, (c) the creation  
 11 of a new market for digital photography, (d) the  
 13 strengthened interest for IT applications in the  
 15 small to medium-sized firms, (e) an interest in  
 17 children IT specialized applications and (f) an  
 19 interest for IT introductory books. The synthesis  
 21 stage comprises the product invigoration and  
 23 expansion and afterwards its strong promotion.

### 3. MEASURING READER'S SATISFACTION

#### 3.1. Objectives and criteria of reader's satisfaction

The planning of the reader satisfaction research  
 constitutes one of the basic stages for the devel-  
 opment of a satisfaction measurement system. The  
 process of planning the satisfaction research is  
 composed of six basic steps (Kessler, 1996). These  
 include the determination of the research objec-  
 tives, the satisfaction dimensions and their hier-  
 archical structure, the measurement process, the  
 choice of the sample and of the research process,  
 the questionnaire formation and, finally, the  
 questionnaire proof.

The goal of this study was to measure, track and  
 analyse RAM reader's satisfaction and demand  
 with regard to the satisfaction dimensions. Steps  
 include checking for the existence of special  
 demand profiles in segments of the population  
 (namely students, women and readers with high/  
 low income), and finally formulation of specific  
 suggestions to the publisher, originating exclu-  
 sively from this research's quantitative, measur-  
 able results, for utilization in his strategic  
 planning.

Attention was paid to the satisfaction criteria, as  
 well as their hierarchical structure. According to  
 Keeney (1992), this structure should be 'essential',  
 'controllable', 'complete', 'measurable',  
 'operational', 'decomposable', 'non-redundant',  
 'concise' and 'understandable'. Following Dutka  
 (1995), as criteria of customer satisfaction are  
 pointed out, the characteristics of output are  
 related with: the product (price-quality correla-  
 tion, product quality, product advantages, product  
 characteristics, product design, product reliability,  
 variety of products or services); the service  
 (guarantee, delivery, complaints' management,  
 problems resolution); and the market (complexity,

communication, acquisition facilitation, fame of  
 company and sufficiency of company).

#### 3.2. Research methodology

3.2.1. *Planning of the research.* Research planning  
 was based on the following four basic steps, which  
 were designed and implemented successively (Gri-  
 goroudis and Siskos, 2002).

- (1) *Preliminary stage:* This first stage included  
 identification and definition of the need for  
 the development of a reader-oriented strat-  
 egy, followed by a preliminary analysis of  
 readers' behaviour and needs.
- (2) *Development of a questionnaire and gallop poll:*  
 In this stage, the research pattern was  
 determined, the coding of the necessary  
 information into questions was prepared and  
 the carrying out of the research took place.
- (3) *Analysis:* The third stage included data  
 processing, using MUSA methodology.
- (4) *Results:* During this last stage, the results  
 from the processing of the questionnaires  
 were estimated and evaluated.

3.2.2. *Definition of satisfaction criteria.* Satisfac-  
 tion dimensions for the reader of RAM were  
 specified taking into account (a) the relevant  
 international literature (Calder *et al.*, 2003;  
 Calder and Malthouse, 2004; Carlson, 1985;  
 Katcher, 1995; Nesbitt *et al.*, 2002; Various,  
 2001, 2002, 2003) and (b) the viewpoints of the  
 magazines' executives, collected and ascertained  
 through interviews. Thus, satisfaction dimensions  
 for the reader of RAM (in total seven criteria and  
 32 sub-criteria) were determined according to  
 Figure 1. The criteria reflect the following in  
 more detail:

- (1) *Culture:* It refers to the magazine's objec-  
 tivity, its publishing independence, its response  
 to the reader's needs and expectations, the  
 variety and range in content coverage, the  
 effectiveness in the management of change  
 and the degree of participation notion  
 cultivation.
- (2) *Content:* It concerns the magazine's editorial  
 content disaggregated into editorials, science  
 and technology columns, news reports, user  
 guides, comparative tests, market guide,  
 IT introductory books, special supple-  
 ments (IT for kids, digital photography, IT  
 for SME, games and gadgets), CD-ROM

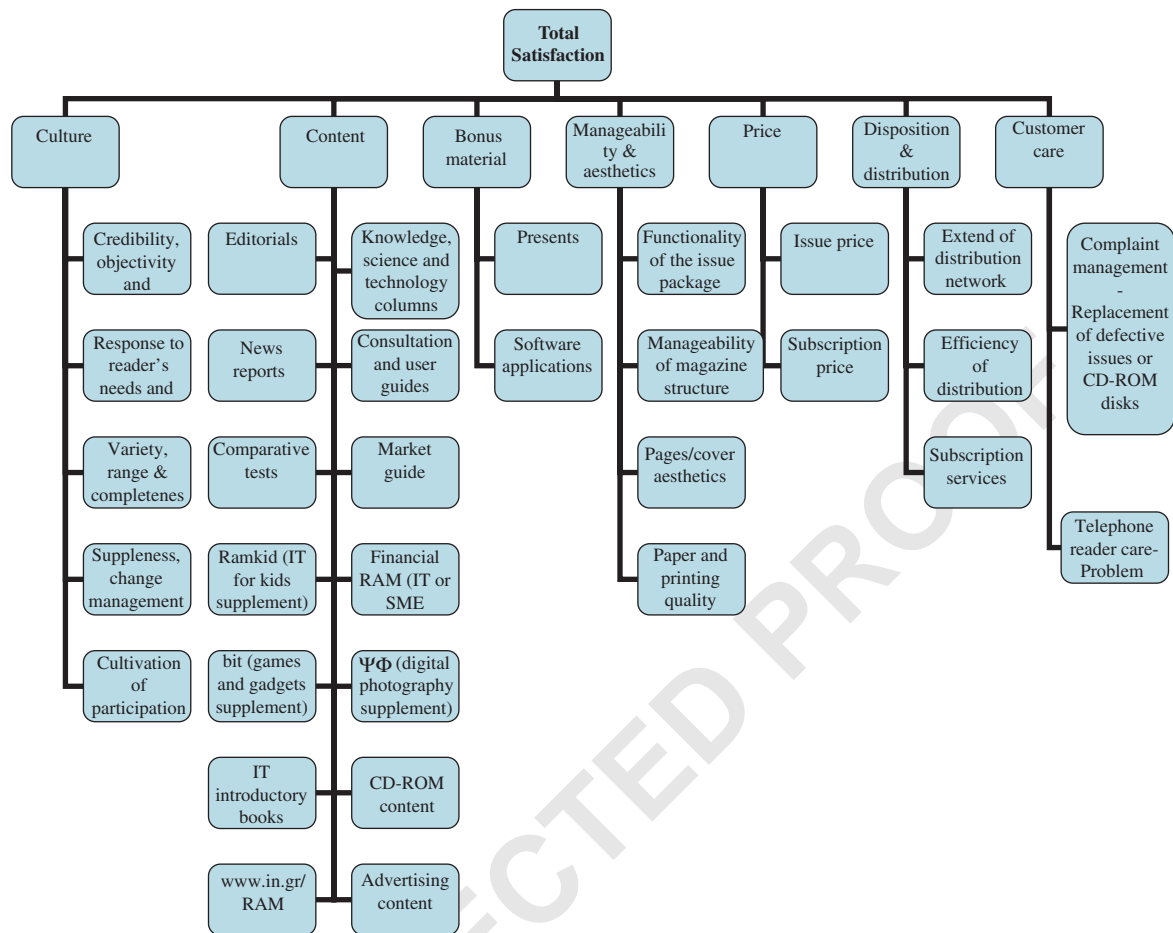


Figure 1. RAM reader satisfaction criteria and sub-criteria tree.

content, internet content and advertising content.

- (3) *Bonus material*: It comprises occasional presents (such as books and movies), and free software applications.
- (4) *Manageability and aesthetics*: This criterion refers to the functionality of the magazine issue as a 'package', the manageability of its structure, the aesthetics of pages layout and cover, and also the quality of printing and paper used.
- (5) *Price*: It refers to the reader's satisfaction from issue price and subscription price.
- (6) *Disposition and distribution*: It concerns the extent of the distribution network (area coverage), the efficiency of this network and also the satisfaction from the subscription services.

- (7) *Customer care*: It refers to the reader's satisfaction regarding complaint management, replacement of defective magazine issues or CD-ROM disks, and also telephone reader care/problem-solving services.

**3.2.3. Development of the questionnaire.** A four-page detailed questionnaire was developed, based on the above-mentioned satisfaction dimensions. It included the following three parts:

- (1) Instructions.
- (2) *Personal data*: This section includes questions regarding readers' demographic and personal data such as birth date, sex, marital status, education, income, and home address which are imperative for segmentation reasons (Dutka, 1995; Naumann and Giel, 1995; Vavra, 1997).

(3) *Questions concerning satisfaction:* This is the questionnaire's main part, comprising questions related to the degree of the reader's satisfaction from each criterion and sub-criterion. More precisely, for the questions aimed at the readers' satisfaction evaluation for each and every criterion, and sub-criterion a 5-point ordinal (qualitative) scale was used comprising the gradations: 'Dissatisfied', 'Rather dissatisfied', 'Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied', 'Rather satisfied', 'Satisfied'. This same scale was used for the measurement of 'global satisfaction' from the magazine as a whole, which comprises a key issue for the MUSA method evaluation). Graphics representing feelings and opinions (⊗ ⊕ ⊙) were used as an additional guide, in order to facilitate the questionnaire filling.

Sample questionnaire questions:

(a) Regarding the criterion 'Bonus Material' with sub-criteria 'Presents' and 'Free software applications'

Q. How satisfied are you from 'Bonus Material' in total?

Possible answers (choose one from): 'Dissatisfied', 'Rather dissatisfied', 'Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied', 'Rather satisfied', 'Satisfied'

Q. How satisfied are you from 'Presents'?

Possible answers (choose one from): 'Dissatisfied', 'Rather dissatisfied', 'Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied', 'Rather satisfied', 'Satisfied'

Q. How satisfied are you from 'Free software applications'?

Possible answers (choose one from): 'Dissatisfied', 'Rather dissatisfied', 'Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied', 'Rather satisfied', 'Satisfied'

(b) General final question regarding global (overall) satisfaction from RAM

Q. Taking into account all of the above, how satisfied are you from 'RAM' in total?

Possible answers (choose one from): 'Dissatisfied', 'Rather dissatisfied', 'Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied', 'Rather satisfied', 'Satisfied'

*3.2.4. Implementation of the research.* Prior to the questionnaire distribution, a trial was carried out in a sample of 20 readers. Corrections were carried out based on the observations. Those included a differentiation in the wording of certain questions

to become clearer, and to avoid errors and misapprehensions.

Finally, the questionnaire was distributed to RAM readers along with each copy of the May 2005 issue (45 000 questionnaires). For readers' participation encouragement, the mailing of the answered questionnaire back to the magazine's offices was offered free of charge. Furthermore, 10 annual subscriptions for RAM were offered as a present, drawn among the readers who would participate in the survey.

A total of 893 answered questionnaires were returned completely and consistently filled. A number of 24 questionnaires with missing values and/or inconsistent answers were disregarded. Observation of personal data affirmed that readers from a vast demographic spectrum (in terms of age, sex, income, education, home address, etc.) were well represented in this sample.

*3.2.5. Preliminary processes.* The collected questionnaires were registered in an especially developed MS Access database. A validation check for typo mistakes was performed in a sample. The outcome showed a very low possibility of typing mistakes and it was decided not to perform further proofing.

**3.3. The MUSA system**

The collected data were analysed using MUSA methodology which was proposed by Grigoroudis and Siskos (2002). This methodology produces results that may be used directly for the formulation of specific proposals for the magazine's editorial policy regarding the planning of reader-focused strategy.

MUSA method is based on the multicriteria preference disaggregation philosophy that fully respects the qualitative form of customers' satisfaction data. Input data can be easily collected using a simple and short questionnaire. The basic principle of MUSA is the aggregation of individual judgements into a collective value function, assuming that customer's global satisfaction depends on a set of criteria representing service characteristic dimensions (Figure 1). The global satisfaction is denoted as a variable  $Y$  and the set of criteria is denoted as a vector  $\mathbf{X} = (X_1, X_2, \dots, X_n)$ .

The MUSA system uses a preference disaggregation model (Jacquet-Lagrèze and Siskos, 2001). In the traditional aggregation approach, the criteria aggregation model is known *a priori*, while the global preference is unknown. On the contrary,

the philosophy of disaggregation involves the inference of preference models from given global preferences.

This preference disaggregation methodology is implemented through an ordinal regression-based approach in the field of multicriteria analysis used for the assessment of a set of marginal satisfaction functions in such a manner, that the global satisfaction criterion comprised as much as possible customers' (in the case of this paper readers') judgements. Each customer is asked to express his/her own judgements, namely his/her global satisfaction ( $Y$ ) and his/her satisfaction with regard to a set of discrete criteria ( $X$ ). The problem is then approached as a problem of qualitative regression and solved via special linear programming formulations where the sum of deviations between global satisfaction evaluation explicitly expressed by customers and the estimated value function is minimized (see Appendix A).

The MUSA system is a survey-based software, which is able to provide complete and effective results to the user, through the evaluation of concrete and understandable indices of customer satisfaction (see also Grigoroudis and Siskos, 2003; Koilias, 2005; Siskos and Grigoroudis, 2002; Siskos *et al.*, 2000, for some real-world applications).

The determination of criteria weights is a typical issue of the multicriteria analysis that must be effectively confronted. In this study, the weight (importance) of every criterion and sub-criterion is provided directly as a result of the 'MUSA for Windows' software.

Through the 'MUSA for Windows' software application, the MUSA methodology also provides a series of normalized indices that may help in the in-depth analysis of the satisfaction measurement problem. These indices include (Grigoroudis and Siskos, 2002) the following:

- *Satisfaction indices*: These average indices show, in the range of 0–1, the level of customer global or criteria satisfaction; they may be considered as the basic average performance indicators (globally or per criteria) for the business organization.
- *Demanding indices*: They show in a range of –100% to 100%, the demanding level of customers globally and per specific criterion/sub-criterion, according to the following:
  - demanding index 100%: extremely demanding customers
  - demanding index 0%: 'normal' customers

- demanding index –100%: non-demanding customers

- *Improvement indices*: The average improvement indices are normalized in the interval [0, 1] and show the improvement margins on a specific criterion; the output of improvement efforts depends on the importance of the satisfaction dimensions and their contribution to dissatisfaction as well.

Moreover, in the context of the MUSA methodology and with the aid of 'MUSA for Windows' software, a series of additional diagrams may be developed, based on the aforementioned results.

- *Action diagrams*: These 'Performance/Importance' diagrams are developed through the combinations of criteria weights and satisfaction indices; they are similar to SWOT analysis and may represent the strong and the weak points of the business organization and indications regarding the satisfaction dimensions that should be improved.

- *Improvement diagrams*: Combining improvement and demanding indices, a series of improvement diagrams may be developed that may be used to rank improvement priorities; since the action diagrams can only indicate which satisfaction dimensions should be improved, these diagrams can determine the output or the extent of improvement efforts.

In this study, the collection of a large number of answered questionnaires (893) gave the opportunity of implementing MUSA in specific segments of the total population of RAM magazine readers for the production of conclusions useful in understanding the manner in which the satisfaction parameters of readers belonging to different segments are altered.

### 3.4. Basic results

Global satisfaction for the readers of RAM magazine was found to be 94.510% (Figure 2), while the demanding index was found to be –76.898%. These results denote 'very satisfied' and 'non-demanding' readers. All criteria weights and partial satisfaction indices are shown in Figures 2 and 3. Sub-criteria weights and partial satisfaction indices are summarized in Table I.

Moving on to conclusions and improvement suggestions to the editor, we note that there is a strong indication of leverage opportunity regard-

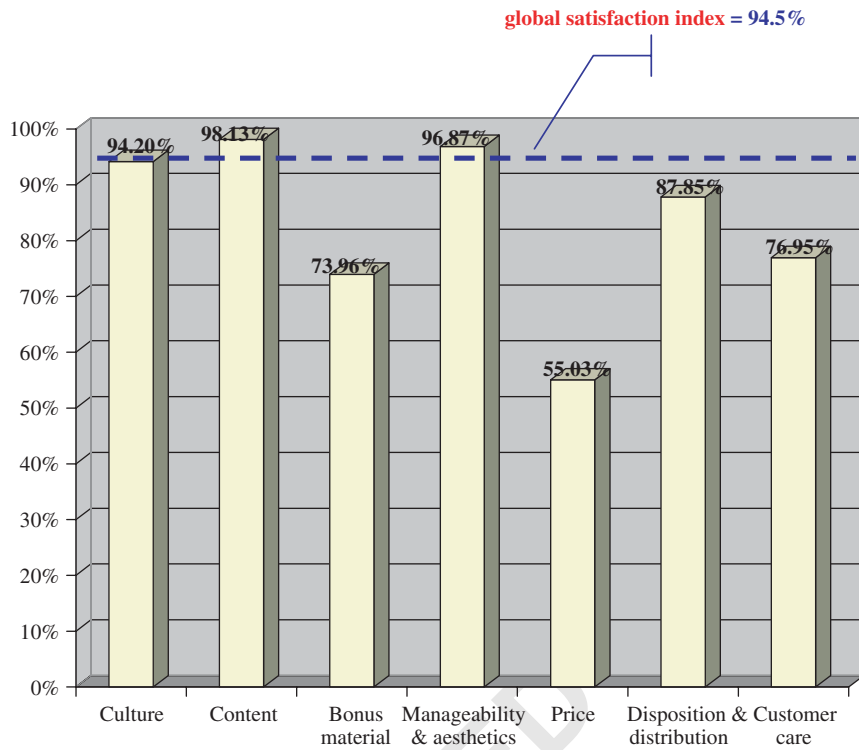


Figure 2. Average satisfaction indices per criterion (all readers).

ing criteria ‘Content’, ‘Manageability and aesthetics’, and ‘Culture’ as all three are found to be criteria of both high performance and high importance. There is action opportunity regarding ‘Bonus material’, ‘Price’ and ‘Customer care’ which are criteria of relatively high importance but with moderate performance. Resources should be transferred from ‘Disposition and distribution’ (criterion of high performance and low importance).

Regarding sub-criteria there were findings in the ‘tree’ of each and every criterion, with the most remarkable being those relating to ‘Content’. Specifically, a leverage opportunity was denoted for ‘News reports’, ‘Consultation and user guides’ and ‘IT introductory books’; action opportunity arises for the improvement firstly of the magazine’s website (‘www.in.gr/ram’) and secondly for ‘Comparative tests’, ‘Digital Photography’ supplement, ‘Knowledge, science and technology columns’ and ‘Editorials’. Resources should be transferred from the expensive ‘ramkid (*IT for kids*)’ supplement. Regarding sub-criteria of ‘Bonus Material’ there is leverage opportunity

for ‘Presents’, and resources should be transferred from ‘Software applications’.

Another interesting finding has to do with ‘Price’, specifically with sub-criterion ‘Issue price’, which has a weight of 94.6% and satisfaction index of 85.8%. Therefore, the potentiality of funding a reader-oriented improvement of the magazine by a rise in price could be examined, since readers do not denote ‘dissatisfied’ with the current issue price ( 7.50).

Combining weights and satisfaction indices, a ‘Performance/Importance’ diagram was developed. This action diagram shows that there are no criteria located in the critical (bottom-right) quadrant (Figure 4). On the other hand, the improvement diagram indicates that the dimensions that should be improved at 1st priority are: Price, Bonus Material and Customer Care since these dimensions are highly effective and readers are not demanding (Figure 5).

Interpreting the results of this study, the editor of RAM did decide to proceed to a number of changes in the magazine’s editorial strategy. These included the issue of a separate publication of



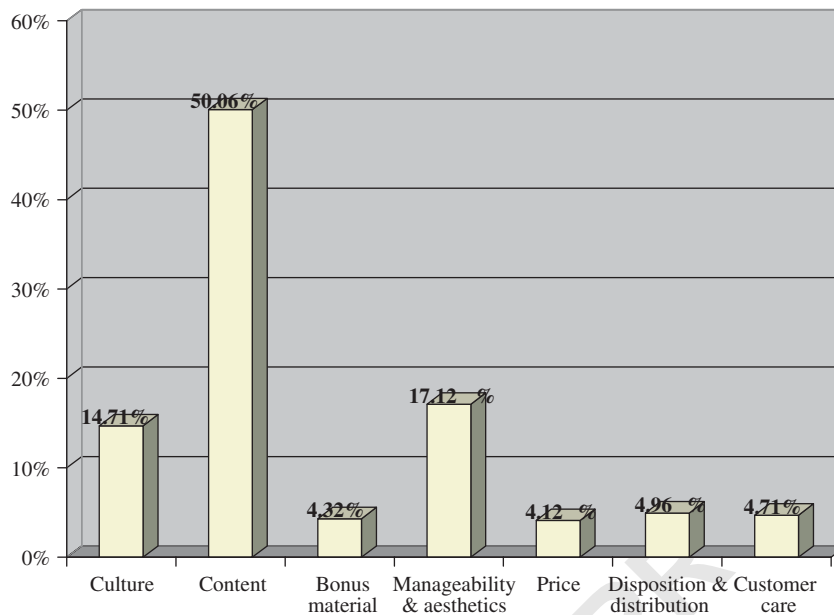


Figure 3. Weights of the criteria (all readers).

‘ramkid’ (for which our study suggests a ‘transfer of resources’), specifically focused on kids, as well as the deletion of ‘Financial RAM’ supplement which, according to this study, has one of the smallest weights among the sub-criteria of ‘Content’ (4.50%) and also one of the most moderate partial satisfaction indices (70.70%). Resources that were spared were used to reinforce supplements ‘Consultation and user guides’ and ‘IT introductory books’, for which this study indicates, ‘Leverage opportunity’.

The successful outcome of these changes (i.e. a boost of nearly 20% in circulation and the achievement of above average advertising profits in a time period of decline for other Greek IT magazines’, both circulation and revenues) showed the credibility of this study.

#### 4. DECISION SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW PUBLISHING STRATEGIES

##### 4.1. Proposal of reader-oriented strategy for the segment ‘Pupils & Students’

According to the demographics’ findings of our survey, the participation of ‘Pupils & Students’ in the total population of RAM readers is rather small, equaling to a percentage of 18.25%. The

quite different values of criteria weights and partial satisfaction indices for this specific segment in comparison to the total (see Tables II and III) suggest that ‘Pupils & Students’ is a segment with characteristics that divert significantly from the rest of the population. It is obvious that a single strategy, which would satisfy both parties to a maximum degree, does not exist.

Therefore, we ascertain the existence of a market’s need—which, of course, at the same time is an opportunity for the editor—for the separate edition of an IT magazine focused on pupils and students, in other words a ‘RAM for students’. Pupils & students reflect, as leverage opportunity of RAM, the criterion ‘Content’ and would like ‘RAM for students’ to have the lowest possible price, well looked-after ‘Editorials’, ‘Consultation and user guides’ and ‘Comparative tests’. For the implementation economy of this specific strategy, resources could be transferred from actions involved in ‘Knowledge, science and technology columns’, ‘News reports’, ‘bit’, ‘Digital Photography’ and ‘IT introductory books’.

##### 4.2. Proposal of reader-oriented strategy for the segment ‘Women’

The participation of ‘Women’ in the total population of RAM readers is also small, equaling a percentage of 11.42%. The different set of criteria

Table I. Weights of sub-criteria and satisfaction per sub-criterion (all readers)

	Weight (%)	Satisfaction index (%)	Weight (%)	Satisfaction index (%)
<i>Culture</i>				
Credibility, objectivity and publishing independence	5.024	84.949	91.050	95.054
Response to reader's needs and expectations	20.200	95.329	8.950	83.747
Variety, range and completeness in content coverage	6.196	88.560		
Suppleness, change management	64.213	97.778		
Cultivation of participation notion	4.368	67.819		
<i>Content</i>				
Editorials	5.104	85.433	5.254	91.442
Knowledge, science and technology columns	5.811	90.663	4.814	92.731
News reports	25.617	97.037		
Consultation and user guides	10.879	92.289		
Comparative tests	6.335	88.898	94.596	85.820
Market guide	4.353	74.457	5.404	58.546
Ramkid (IT for kids supplement)	4.468	80.335		
Financial RAM (IT for SME supplement)	4.463	70.637	80.025	98.904
bit (games and gadgets supplement)	4.575	74.867		
ΨΦ (digital photography supplement)	5.868	86.688	12.780	94.213
IT introductory books	9.660	91.102	7.195	85.816
CD-ROM content	4.341	74.028		
www.in.gr/RAM	4.156	66.576	50.250	93.508
Advertising content	4.370	66.549	49.750	95.674

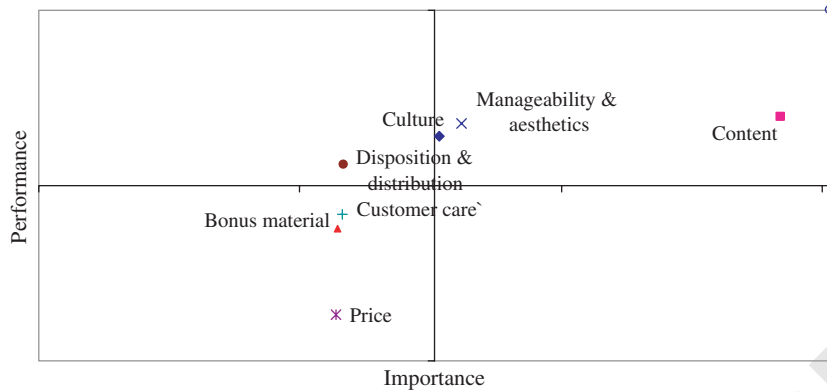


Figure 4. Action diagram.

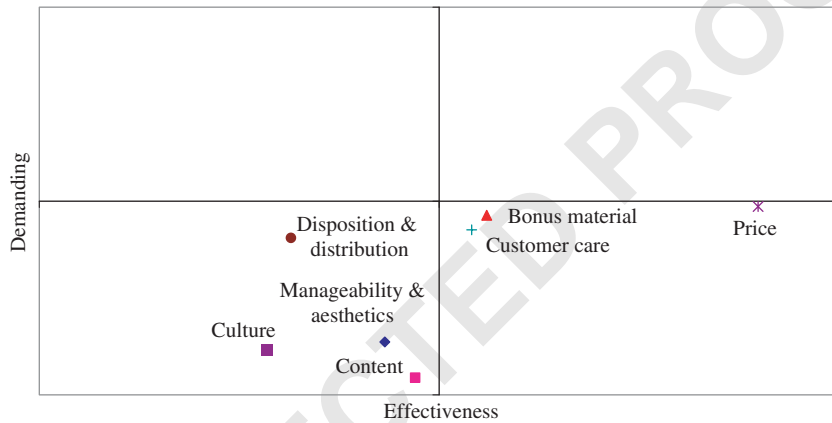


Figure 5. Improvement diagram.

Table II. Criteria weights and partial satisfaction indices for segment 'Pupils and Students'

	Criteria weights (%)	Partial satisfaction indices (%)
Culture	5.357	85.53
Content	52.295	98.651
Bonus material	4.339	74.546
Manageability and aesthetics	14.286	97.552
Price	4.08	47.695
Disposition and distribution	14.286	96.307
Customer care	5.357	80.834

Table III. Comparison of 'content' sub-criteria weights: 'Pupils & Students' vs 'all readers'

	Weight (total) (%)	Weight (students) (%)
Editorials	5.10	41.44
Knowledge columns	5.80	4.77
News	25.60	4.62
User guides	10.90	5.25
Comparative tests	6.30	5.25
Market guide	4.40	4.16
Ramkid (IT for kids)	4.50	4.17
Financial RAM (IT for SME)	4.50	4.28
Bit (Games and gadgets)	4.60	4.42
Digital photography	5.90	4.62
Introductory books	9.70	4.39
CD-ROM content	4.30	4.21
www.in.gr/ram	4.20	4.08
Advertising content	4.40	4.35

weights and partial satisfaction indices for this specific segment in comparison to the total (see Tables IV and V) suggests that 'Women' is a segment with characteristics that divert significantly from

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Table IV. Criteria weights and partial satisfaction indices for segment 'Women'

	Criteria weights (%)	Partial satisfaction indices (%)
Culture	50.69	98.49
Content	17.07	95.62
Bonus material	4.19	76.44
Manageability and aesthetics	14.33	96.55
Price	4.18	57.15
Disposition and distribution	4.77	88.33
Customer care	4.77	79.29

the rest of the population. A single strategy, which would satisfy both parties to a maximum degree, cannot be achieved.

Therefore, we ascertain the existence of a market's need and an editor's opportunity for the separate edition of an IT magazine focused on women, a 'RAM for Women'. Women reflect, as leverage opportunity of RAM, the criterion 'Culture' and secondarily 'Content' and 'Manageability and aesthetics'. They appear elastic in terms of price. According to their preferences, leverage opportunities of 'Content' are the sub-criteria 'Editorials', 'News reports', 'CD-ROM applications', 'IT introductory books' and 'Consultation and user guides'. For effective financing of this separate edition, resources can be transferred from 'Knowledge, science and technology columns', 'Comparative tests' and 'Digital Photography'.

### 5. CONCLUSION

In the frame of the present study, the MUSA method of multicriteria satisfactory analysis was implemented for the satisfactory evaluation of monthly IT magazine's RAM readers, aimed at supporting the editor's decision making for his editorial strategy planning. The relative satisfaction dimensions were realized and they were impressed in a tree of seven criteria and 32 sub-criteria. Readers of RAM were found very satisfied and non-demanding, a fact that narrows the margins for efficient improvement suggestions. Despite this, the evaluation of MUSA results allowed proposals for the support of the editor in amendment decision making. The adequacy of a number of these proposals was practically verified, after which a new strategy implementation was based on them. In certain segments of the

Table V. Comparison of 'content' sub-criteria weights: 'Women' vs 'all readers'

	Weight (total) (%)	Weight (women) (%)
Editorials	5.10	22.97
Knowledge columns	5.80	5.11
News	25.60	9.64
User guides	10.90	7.14
Comparative tests	6.30	5.13
Market guide	4.40	4.71
Ramkid (IT for kids)	4.50	4.71
Financial RAM (IT for SME)	4.50	5.05
Bit (Games and gadgets)	4.60	4.71
Digital photography	5.90	4.71
Introductory books	9.70	7.78
CD-ROM content	4.30	9.64
www.in.gr/ram	4.20	4.36
Advertising content	4.40	4.35

population (RAM readers), opportunities were ascertained for the separate edition of an IT magazine focused on pupils and students, and also for an IT magazine focused on women. Suggestions were made to the decision maker for the particular characteristics these new publications should have, in line with the quantitative results of this study.

Concluding with proposals for future research we would like to note that it would be interesting, as much as scientifically rewarding, to develop an implementation of MUSA for the quantification of reader satisfaction in the total product mixture of a large, vertically organized press organization. This would include newspapers (morning, evening and Sunday editions; classified ads), magazines (weekly, monthly, men's, women's, special), new media (on-line publications, internet portals), etc. A departmental application of MUSA in a segment of the Greek publishing sector would also be interesting, i.e. a comparative reader satisfaction study for all IT magazines or for all Sunday newspapers.

### APPENDIX A: BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE MUSA METHOD

The preference disaggregation model MUSA assesses global and partial satisfaction functions  $Y^*$  and  $X_i^*$ , respectively, given customers' judgements  $Y$  and  $X_i$ . Following the principles of ordinal regression analysis under constraints using

linear programming techniques, the ordinal regression analysis equation is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \tilde{Y}^* &= \sum_{i=1}^n b_i X_i^* - \sigma^+ + \sigma^- \\ \sum_{i=1}^n b_i &= 1 \end{aligned} \tag{A1}$$

where  $\tilde{Y}^*$  is the estimation of the global satisfaction function  $Y^*$ ,  $X_i^*$  are the partial satisfaction functions,  $\sigma^+$  and  $\sigma^-$  are the overestimation and the underestimation error, respectively, and  $b_i$  is the weight of the  $i$ th criterion (Figure A1).

It should be noted that  $Y^*$  and  $X_i^*$  are monotonic functions normalized between 0 and 100. Also, in order to reduce the number of mathematical constraints, the following transformation equations are used:

$$\begin{aligned} z_m &= y^{m+1} - y^m \quad \text{for } m = 1, 2, \dots, \alpha - 1 \\ w_{ik} &= b_i x_i^{*k+1} - b_i x_i^{*k} \quad \text{for } k = 1, 2, \dots, \alpha_i - 1 \\ &\text{and } i = 1, 2, \dots, n \end{aligned} \tag{A2}$$

According to the aforementioned definitions and the assumptions, the basic estimation model can be written in a linear program formulation as follows:

$$[\min] F = \sum_{j=1}^M \sigma_j^+ + \sigma_j^-$$

under the constraint  $s$

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{k=1}^{x_i^j-1} w_{ik} - \sum_{m=1}^{y_j^j-1} z_m - \sigma_j^+ + \sigma_j^- &= 0 \\ &\text{for } j = 1, 2, \dots, M \\ \sum_{m=1}^{\alpha-1} z_m &= 100 \\ \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{k=1}^{\alpha_i-1} w_{ik} &= 100 \\ z_m \geq 0, w_{ik} \geq 0 &\quad \forall m, i \text{ and } k \\ \sigma_j^+ \geq 0, \sigma_j^- \geq 0 &\quad \text{for } j = 1, 2, \dots, M \end{aligned} \tag{A3}$$

where  $M$  is the number of customers,  $n$  is the number of criteria and  $x_i^j, y_j^j$  are the  $j$ th level on which variables  $X_i$  and  $Y$  are estimated.

The preference disaggregation methodology consists also of a post-optimality analysis stage in order to face the problem of model stability. The final solution is obtained by exploring the polyhedron of near optimal solutions, which is

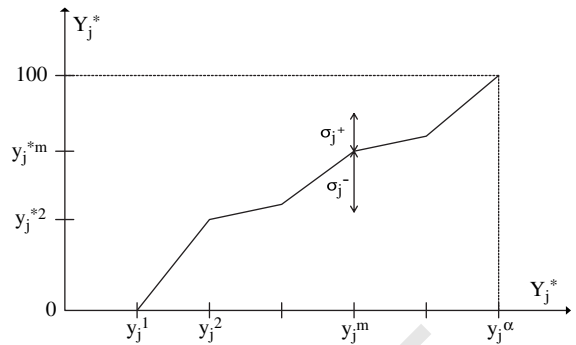


Figure A1. Satisfaction function and error variables for the  $j$ th customer.

generated by the constraints of the above linear program. This solution is calculated by  $n$  linear programs (equal to the number of criteria) of the following form:

$$\begin{aligned} [\max] F^i &= \sum_{k=1}^{\alpha_i-1} w_{ik} \quad \text{for } i = 1, 2, \dots, n \\ &\text{under the constraint } s \\ F &\leq F^* + \varepsilon \\ &\text{all the constraints of LP (3)} \end{aligned} \tag{A4}$$

where  $\varepsilon$  is a small percentage of  $F^*$ . The average of the solutions given by the  $n$  LPs (4) may be taken as the final solution. In the case of non-stability this average solution is less representative.

The assessment of a performance norm may be very useful in customer satisfaction analysis. The average global and partial satisfaction indices are used for this purpose and can be assessed according to the following equations:

$$S = \sum_{m=1}^{\alpha} p^m y^{*m} \quad \text{and} \quad s_i = \sum_{k=1}^{\alpha_i} p_i^k x_i^{*k} \tag{A5}$$

where  $S$  and  $s_i$  are the average global and partial satisfaction indices, and  $p^m$  and  $p_i^k$  are the frequencies of customers belonging to the  $y^m$  and  $x_i^k$  satisfaction level, respectively.

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