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Customers' conscious experience in a coffee shop

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Abstract

Starbucks™Coffee Company has more than 21,000 stores in 65 countries and is the premier roaster and retailer of specialty coffee in the world. Starbucks' slogan is that they strive to bring their customers exceptional experiences. The new trend in large international companies is to have a strong brand and serve customers in a special way. It is no longer customer satisfaction which is important but the customer experience, along with the products or services,which carries a lot of weight in customers' final decision making. The purpose of this research was to examine the formation and measuring of customer experience in services in the B2C environment. This research was made with the permission of the management of the Starbucks™ Coffee Shop in Poznan, Poland. The research shows clearly the possibilities to improve the degree of customer experience as well as areas of the customer experience. The application was tested with a student group of 24. Furthermore, the test results and feedback gathered from the test group were used to verify and validate the usability and structure of the ontology and application created. The application operated well and the test group was satisfied with both the operation of the application as well as the collective results, which are presented in this research. Finally, some possible future actions relating to the customer experience are suggested.

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1. Introduction

Starbucks™ Coffee Company has more than 21,000 stores in 65 countries and is the premier roaster and retailer of specialty coffee in the world. Starbucks' slogan is that they strive to bring their customers exceptional experiences. The new trend in large international companies is to have a strong brand and serve customers in a special way. It is no longer customer satisfaction which is important but the customer experience, along with the products or services,which carries a lot of weight in customers' final decision making.

The purpose of this research was to examine the formation and measuring of customer experience in services in the B2C environment. The timeliness and importance of studying the subject is highlighted by the fact that companies are currently trying to measure customer satisfaction at an increasing rate but using the wrong tools to do so. The conventional understanding of marketing and its tools, which stress rational customer behavior, are not suitable for measuring customer experience.

A diverse collection of publications relating to customer experience, consumer services, and consumer psychology was studied in the literature review of this research. Subsequently, a holistic and comprehensive ontology of customer experience was built. The ontology considers customer experience from the perspective of the customer's consciousness and the company's service environment. The research instrument is based on Pearl, an ontology-based management and leadership application. The Pearl application is further based on the holistic Concept of Man metaphor and the Circles of Mind metaphor [19]. The whole application operates on the Internet and the application has been constructed usingEvolute methodology andfuzzy logic, cf. [5] [6] [7].

The literature review and ontology building revealed the breadth and complexity of the concept of customer experience. A clear distinction has to be made between customer experience and customer satisfaction. In addition, the role of customer experience as a more significant antecedent for customer loyalty needs to be understood. Customer experience has to be seen holistically as the cross-section of the customer's consciousness and the company's service environment. This is why creating a generic tool for measuring customer experience was challenging. Nevertheless, the testing of Pearl revealed that measuring customer experience develops understanding of the holistic customer experience. Traditional measurement of service quality focuses entirely on the service interaction itself and ignores all the other elements of the experience between customer and company.

This research was made with the permission of the management of the Starbucks™ Coffee Shop in Poznan, Poland. The research shows clearly the possibilities to improve the level of customer experience as well as areas of the customer experience. The application was tested with a student group of 24.

Furthermore, the test results and feedback gathered from the test group were used to verify and validate the usability and structure of the ontology and application created. The application operated well and the test group was satisfied with both the operation of the application as well as the collective results, which are presented in this research. Finally, some possible future actions relating to the customer experience are suggested.

1. Customer experience

The concept of customer experience has evoked debate in recent years and has been mentioned as forming a new paradigm of marketing, e.g. [9,13,15]. In the last few years an increasing amount of publications have emerged around the subject. At the same time companies are trying to attract their customers through different kinds of experiences resulting from various triggered stimulations in the consumers' senses and mind. This brings an immediate need for marketers to measure the experiences that customers experience subjectively too. However, the measuring tools and the complete traditional sense of marketing should also evolve to a new level. This means that marketers should question the focus on plain functional-centered thinking and rational decision making with narrow product categories and traditional analytical models [13]. Also, the traditional division of goods and services is becoming blurred as physical goods are becoming "servicified" and consumers are more eager to participate in co-creating value together with companies [3,4,20].

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