Lappeenranta University of Technology
Faculty of Industrial Management
Master in Industrial Marketing and International Business

Jesse Nurkkala

IMPROVING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT AND MEASUREMENT

1st Examiner: Professor Asta Salmi

ABSTRACT

Author: Nurkkala, Jesse

Title: Improving customer experience management and measurement

Year: 2017 **Location:** Helsinki

Master's Thesis. Lappeenranta University of Technology, Faculty of Industrial Management.

90 pages, 7 figures, 3 tables and 1 appendices

Examiner: Professor Asta Salmi

Keywords: Customer experience, customer experience management, customer experience measurement

This master's thesis is a qualitative research on customer experience, its management and its measurement. The most important aim is to improve the case company's customer experience management and measurement. This is done by reviewing how customer experience and its measurement are perceived by the case company representatives and reflecting that to the theoretical framework. The empirical research is conducted through six interviews with the case company representatives and workshop with 16 case company representatives facilitated by the researcher. The process with customer experience and its measurement has existed in the case company for a while but it has not been developed enough. The case company employees do not find customer experience as important on personal level as the company management does or what the desired level is. This needs to be clarified more by enlightening the linkage between customer experience and the financial success of the company. Also, the current scores need to be looked at more often and more carefully to understand the reasons behind them. There needs to be more in depth discussions about the topic to emphasize the importance of customer experience. This helps in ensuring all the touch points on the customer journey are well recognized. The measurement system the case company has built is reliable and offers valid data of the success with customer experience. However, the aims for measuring customer experience need to be clarified for the employees so that all the employees see it similarly.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Kirjoittaja: Nurkkala, Jesse

Nimike: Improving customer experience management and measurement

Vuosi: 2017 **Paikka:** Helsinki

Diplomityö. Lappeenrannan Teknillinen Yliopisto, Tuotantotalouden tiedekunta.
90 sivua, 7 kuvaa, 3 taulukkoa and 1 liitettä
Tarkastaja: Professori Asta Salmi

Avainsanat: Asiakaskokemus, asiakaskokemuksen johtaminen, asiakaskokemuksen mittaaminen

Tämä diplomityö on kvalitatiivinen tutkimus asiakaskokemukseen, asiakaskokemuksen johtamiseen sekä sen mittaamiseen liittyen. Tutkimuksen tärkein tavoite on kehittää asiakaskokemuksen johtamista sekä sen mittaamista case yrityksessä. Tämä toteutetaan selvittämällä, kuinka asiakaskokemus ja sen tämän hetkinen mittaaminen koetaan case yrityksen sisällä ja vertaamalla sitä aihepiirin teoriaan. Empiirinen tutkimus on toteutettu kuuden case yrityksen edustajan haastatteluiden sekä 16 case yrityksen edustajan kesken pidetyn workshopin avulla. Asiakaskokemusprosessia, sekä asiakaskokemuksen mittaamista on toteutettu case yrityksessä jo jonkin aikaa, mutta prosessia ei ole juurikaan kehitetty. Case yrityksen työntekijät eivät koe asiakaskokemusta ja sen johtamista yhtä tärkeänä henkilökohtaisella tasolla, kuin mitä yrityksen johto toivoisi. Tätä pitää kehittää valaisemalla yhdistäviä tekijöitä asiakaskokemuksen sekä yrityksen taloudellisen menestyksen välillä. Nykyisiä mittaustuloksia tulee käydä myös aktiivisemmin sekä tarkemmin läpi, jotta syitä tulosten takana voitaisiin ymmärtää paremmin. Case yrityksen johdon tulee käydä enemmän keskusteluja työntekijöiden kanssa aiheesta, jotta sen tärkeys korostuu. Täten varmistetaan myös, että kaikki kontaktipisteet asiakkaan ja yrityksen välillä tunnistetaan riittävällä tarkkuudella. Tämän hetkinen mittausjärjestelmä on luotettava, mutta syitä ja tavoitteita mittaamiselle on syytä tarkentaa yrityksen työntekijöille.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing this thesis simultaneously with a full time job has been a huge task. I would not recommend similar arrangement for any other student. However, this project has taught me a lot about myself and how I manage with two major focus areas, different from one another, simultaneously.

I want to thank all the people around me who have supported me during the writing process. The project took me longer than I expected and would have taken even a longer period of time without the encouragement of my friends and family.

This master’s thesis finalizes my over 17 years long period of studying. At the same time, a huge load falls off my shoulders but the feeling is quite nostalgic. My time in Lappeenranta University of Technology has provided me with loads of tools for the future but also a bunch of life-long friends. This is more than I dared to hope for when I started my studies in 2010. I owe my university a huge debt in gratitude.

Jesse Nurkkala
Helsinki, 22.5.2017

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

On the modern day markets, customers are getting more demanding and they are harder to please (Puccinelli, Goodstein & Grewal 2009, 1). This is, for example, due to the fact that customers have easier access to multiple service providers than they used to have. Thus, the competition between companies has increased and the competitive advantages are getting thinner all the time. Companies cannot rely on having more innovative products or services than others but rather have focus on smaller and smaller factors in order to increase and retain their customer numbers. (Puccinelli et al. 2009, 1)

Even what is commonly considered “good service” is not necessarily enough. Customers have moved from searching for value in customer service to finding value in customer experience. Customer experience is a set of perceptions of the company’s service in each of the touch points during their customer journey with specific company (Swinyard 1993). Managing the whole experience is demanding for the companies since the customer’s journey includes chapters that are not under the company’s direct control (Verhoef et al. 2009). Nowadays, the value for the customer is formed during the whole customer experience and companies can no longer “create the value” (Vargo and Lusch 2004). Getting food from a restaurant is no longer what the customer is looking for; in addition to filling the basic need, customers expect a full experience (Puccinelli et al. 2009,1).

Even though the competition has increased and the customers’ expectations have changed, it still has not changed the fact that it is crucial for a company to be able to build long term customer relationships (Gentile, Spiller & Noci 2007, 395-396). This requires the companies to appeal to the emotional side of customers’ decision-making process, which has a lot to do with the experience they are having. Good customer experience enables the company to build emotional tie with the customer (Gentile et al. 2007, 395-396). Furthermore, this means financial success for a company.

The subject theory does not offer simple instructions for the companies to create customer experience or improve it. These questions are very company-specific and require understanding of the company’s offering and services. Understanding of the customer journey, the touch points and the factors affecting the customers experience must be clarified. Understanding these factors also helps when companies want to measure their customer experience reliably.

The company in this research is operating in the staffing and recruitment industry. This means that the company has altogether shorter period customer relationships (usually recruitment services), long-lasting customer relationships (staffing services) and everything in between. The company has conducted customer experience measurement in some form for a while now but the inner process is not flawless. It is required for the company to further develop their inner processes and add the understanding of the whole concepts of customer experience its measurement. The current system includes the NPS measurement and a yearly satisfaction survey. This research will focus on researching on how the customer experience and the current measurement tools are perceived by the employees and, thus, how the process and management can be developed.

1.1 Aim of the research and the research questions

The aim of this Master’s thesis is to offer insights and understanding to the theory of customer experience management and its measurement and to utilize that theory frame within a case company surroundings. In other words, the aim is to understand how customer experience could be managed and measured better in the case company. Furthermore, improving the customer experience management will most likely improve the financial success of the case company as well. The aim will be reached by understanding the current situation in the case company and revealing the possible blind spots or development areas and suggesting actions to be taken to develop those areas.

The information will be provided to the case company management along with suggested actions to take considering customer experience management and customer experience measurement. The industry the case company is representing is very customer oriented and understanding good customer experience is essential part of the business.

The research will answer the main research question:

"How can customer experience management and customer experience measurement be improved in the case company?"

The main research question will be answered through the following sub research questions:

"How is customer experience perceived and how is it managed in the case company?"

and

"How is customer experience measurement conducted in the case company?"

1.2 Research structure

The research is divided in two main parts: the theoretical part and the empirical part. The theoretical part includes chapters 2 and 3 and the empirical part includes chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Chapter 2 presents the theory basis for customer experience. First the concept itself is clarified and then the related theories including for example service dominant logic, customer journey and touch points are explained. Also, customer experience management is presented in this chapter. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical basis for customer experience measurement. First, the concept is clarified and then different measuring methods are presented. The chapter ends with some insights to the challenges companies might have regarding customer experience measurement.

Chapter 4 starts the empirical part of the thesis. It clarifies the research method, the methods used in data collection and examines the reliability and validity of the research. The case company is presented in the end of chapter 4. Chapter 5 is the results chapter. In this chapter, the results from the data collection are presented. In the chapter 6 the results are evaluated and analyzed. Also, the research questions are answered at the end of chapter 6. Chapter 7 is the conclusion chapter. All the most important findings and results of the research are summarized in this chapter.

1.3 Limitations

Due to the limited nature of this research, this study includes only the insights from the case company representatives and the customer opinions are not taken into account. Thus, there might be some blind spots left outside of consideration. This decision was made because the researcher realized early in the writing project that despite the fact that the case company has measured customer experience for a while, the inner processes are not nearly perfect. First the inner processes and management must be developed and only after that, focus on the customer aspect.

It became clear right in the beginning of this research that the focus should be put in the managerial side of the case company and the possible improvements that are directly under the control of the case company managers. Customer interviews and other data collection will have to be conducted in order to cover the more indirect aspect as well in the future.

Research in the brand image and experimental marketing in this study is very limited. The topic is touched in the case company representatives’ interviews but further research is left out. Also, researching the brand image and the experimental marketing would most likely require customer data collection. Since this aspect in data collection was decided to be left out, also the brand image and experimental marketing aspect was left out of observation.

The customer experience can be widely influenced by the case company representatives' own opinions and situation. For example the wellbeing at work and the employee satisfaction can have massive effect on the customer experience. The researcher decided to leave this aspect out of the study. The improvements in this area can be very complicated and diverge from the other customer experience improvements so this area would need another research focus overall.

The findings of this study are very company-specific due to the nature of customer experience in general. Thus, generalizations to other companies and industries should be considered carefully. Some of the results are most probably applicable only to the customers of the case company in this research.

2 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

In this chapter, customer experience management is discussed. First the background and the concept itself is presented. Then the related theories of service dominant logic, customer journey and touch points and the customer experience management are explained.

2.1 The concept of customer experience

The competition on the modern day markets is increasingly difficult. Due to this, creating and achieving long-lasting competitive advantages has been found to be of great benefit for companies (Gentile et al. 2007, 395-396). Consequently, focus on customers has been recognized as one of the key elements in growing a thriving business (e.g. Kotler and Keller 2012). Even though customer focus is an important part of growing a business, companies need to remain the balance between serving customer goals and achieving their own corporate goals. This is illustrated below in the figure 1.

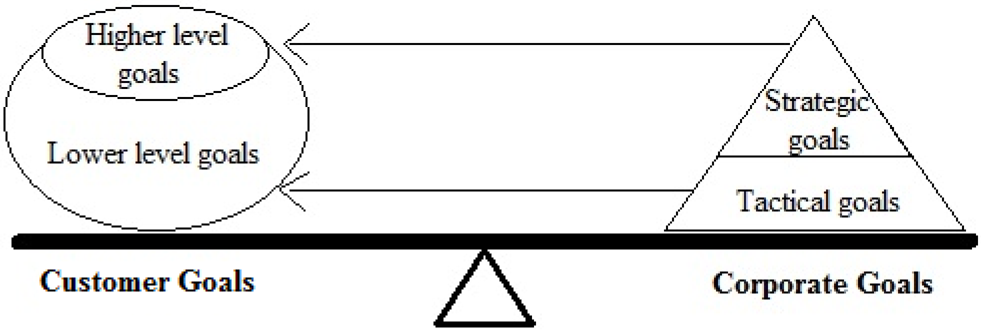

Figure 1. Balance between customer goals and corporate goals (modified from. Kumar & Shah 2004)

Holbrook and Hirschmann (1982) considered the experimental aspects of consumption and other scholars have seen experimental elements as a small part of customer relationship as well, but it was still years later when marketing literature recognized customer as a separate construct (Verhoef et al. 2009, 32). The manifold nature of customer experience has been discussed in many other researches. Harris, Harris and Baron (2003, 359-269) even developed a term “total customer experience” to further delineate the entirety of the experience and the touchpoints.

Traditionally, customer relationship has been as a transaction-based process. The typical economic theories also imply that customers are making decisions sorely on a rational basis. Recently, though, the focus and insights have shifted towards a continuous concept of customer experience and scholars have emphasized the importance of irrational and emotional side of customer behavior (Gentile, et al. 2007; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). Gentile et al. (2007, 395-396) underline the importance of monitoring the customer’s experiences in multiple interactions with the company instead of “one transaction” and also exploiting the intangible elements linked to the emotional value perceived by the customer. This was also found by Gupta and Vajic (2000, 34): they suggested that customer experience occurs every time a customer has any sensation or knowledge acquisition resulting from some kind of interaction and context created by a service provider.

Additionally, the interactions can be divided into direct and indirect contacts (Meyer & Schwager 2007, 2). Direct contact usually happens when the customer is buying the service/product or using the service/product. Indirect contact most often involves unplanned interactions with company’s products, services, brands or representatives. Indirect contact can be for example word-of-mouth recommendations or criticisms, advertising or news reports (Meyer & Schwager 2007, 2). According to Verhoef et al. (2009, 32), customer experience is formulated also during the search for product and after-sale phases in addition to just the purchasing and consumption activities. This underlines how indirect and unplanned encounters are an important part of the whole experience.

The deepest goal for a company is to make profit and increase income. Being stated so, Pine and Gilmore (2011, 3-4) pointed out that improving customer experience to a distinct level could provide companies with remarkable possibilities to increase their economic success. Additionally, Löytänä and Kortesuo (2011, 13) claimed that company's profits are directly related to the value offered for the customers. These statements are clearly backing up the theory of customer-focus being a notable way towards achieving long-lasting competitive advantages.

In many researches, the value provided to the customer by customer experience is roughly divided in two categories: the hedonic value (the experiential value) and the utilitarian value (the functional value) (e.g. Holbrook 1999; Addis & Holbrook 2001; Palmer 2010, 196-208; Frow and Payne 2007, 90-91). The utilitarian end is more straightforward and has emerged from traditional economic models (Palmer 2010, 198). The hedonic aspect, on the other hand, stems from more diverse theory base. It has often been referred to attitudinal reactions, for example "surprise" or "delight" and other stimuli that create value to the customer (Oliver, Rust, and Varki 1997; Palmer 2010, 198). Gentile et al. (2007, 395-410) found that the value proposed to customers, and recognized by them, is largely created by the experiential aspects and features of the service. They suggest that living a positive customer experience can create an emotional tie between the customer and the company and hence, indirectly improve customer loyalty (Gentile et al. 2007, 404). However, companies should not ignore the value of functionality. Contrarily, companies should find the adequate balance between the experiential aspects and the functionality (Gentile et al. 2007, 404). Then again, this does not mean that the experiential value and the functional value should be exactly the same for the customer. The balance is elucidated below in the figure 2.

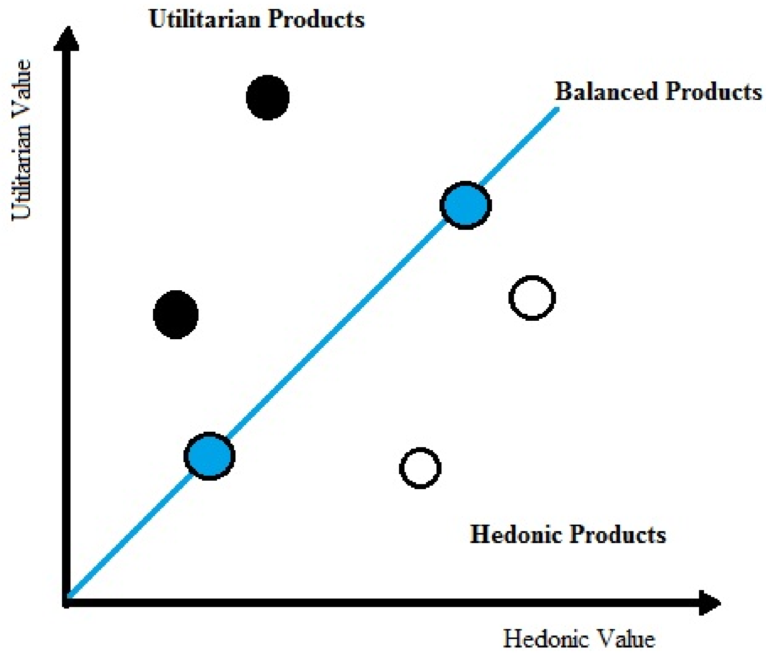

Figure 2. Hedonic and utilitarian balance (modified from. Addis & Holbrook 2001)

2.2 Service dominant logic: value co-creation

Vargo and Lusch (2004) developed service-dominant logic that challenges the traditional goods-dominant logic and proposes that the customer is an active participant in the co-production of value. The traditional model proposed that consumers and companies had distinct roles, and value was created outside the markets by the company (Prahalad and Ramswamy 2004, 5). Markets then transferred this value from companies to customers (Prahalad and Ramswamy 2004, 5). For example, Lapierre (2000, 125) divided value in three different dimensions; product, service and relationship. These dimensions were further divided in 13 value drivers (Lapierre 2000, 125):

1. Alternate solutions
2. Product/service quality
3. Product customization
4. Responsiveness

5. Flexibility
6. Reliability
7. Technical competence
8. Supplier's image
9. Trust (safety, credibility, security and continuity
10. Suppliers solidarity with customers
11. Price of the product/service
12. Time/effort/Energy
13. Conflicts

On the contrary, the concept of service-dominant logic underlines the fact that value-creation process occurs when a customer is consuming the product or service and not during the manufacturing phase (Vargo and Lusch 2004; Payne, Storbacka and Frow 2008, 83-84). Furthermore, companies are creating value propositions for customers, who then determine the actual value by consuming the product or service (Payne et al. 2008, 84).

Customer experience and service-dominant logic are closely linked since the value created has everything to do with the experience the customer is having (Payne et al. 2008, 84). If the experience perceived by the customer is positive, the co-created value is likely to be positive as well (LaSalle & Britton 2003, 30). In both customer experience management and co-creation of the value, individuals' uniqueness is highlighted: companies should create "experience environments" that enable individuals to various experiences (Prahalad and Ramswamy 2004, 5-6). In addition, customer experience and value co-creation both consist of personalized interactions and touch points which the sum up to the comprehensive experience or value (Prahalad and Ramswamy 2004, 6).

Löytänä & Kortesuo (2011, 61-63) proposed that companies could increase the value created by customer experience in two basic ways: advancing and enabling. By advancing, companies add something extra to their basic service, for example 24/7 customer service instead of just offering customer service during the office hours

(Löytänä & Kortesuo 2011, 62-63). By enabling, companies make their service more easily accessible or make their product easier to use. For example enabling the use of mobile device browsers on the company web page (Löytänä & Kortesuo 2011, 62).

2.3 Definitions of customer experience

The academic literature on customer experience has earlier been quite limited and publications on customer experience were typically found in management books or in practicioner-oriented journals (e.g. Berry, Carbone and Haeckel 2002; Meyer & Schwager 2007; Shaw & Ivens 2005). This literature has been focusing more on the managerial side and providing action-outcome combinations rather than in-depth theoretical perspective (Verhoef et al. 2009, 31-32). Afterwards however, the concept has been of more interest to scholars and more definitions have been presented.

The complex, multifaceted and holistic nature of customer experience sums up to multiple different definitions of the concept (e.g. Verhoef et al. 2009; Lemke, Clark & Wilson 2011, 846; Kim & Kim 2007, 47; Puccinelli et al. 2009, 1). The definitions have variety of both differences as well as similarities and all of them offer alternative ways to understand the concept (Kim & Kim 2007, 47). Majority of the definitions have been created quite recently. The most relevant definitions considering this thesis are presented below in the table 1.

Table 1. Definitions of customer experience.

Defined by	Year	Definition
Gupta and Vajic	2000	*"--an experience occurs when a customer has any sensation or knowledge acquisition resulting from some level of interaction with different elements of a context created by the service provider"*
Addis and Holbrook	2001	*"Customer Experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company or a part of its organization and the value that the consumer and the company gain is created through that set of interactions."*
Harris et al.	2003	*"Total customer experience emphasises the importance of all contacts that a consumer has with an organisation and the consumer's holistic experience"*
LaSalle & Britton	2003	*"A consumer experience is an interaction of series of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or its representative that lead to reaction".*
Meyer & Schwager	2007	*"Customer experience is the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company."*
Gentile et al.	2007	*"The customer experience from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction."* Modified from Addis and Holbrook
Ghose	2007	*"Customer experience is the users interpretation of his or her total interaction with the brand."*
Verhoef et al.	2009	Only adding to Meyer & Schwager's definition: *"the customer experience is holistic by nature and involves the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses to the retailer."*
Lemke et al.	2011	*"Customer experience is conceptualized as the customer's subjective response to the holistic direct and indirect encounter with the firm, and customer experience quality as its perceived excellence or superiority."*
Klaus and Maklan	2011	*"The customer's cognitive and affective assessment of all direct and indirect encounters with the firm relating to their purchasing behavior"*
Fisher and Vainio	2014	*"Customer experience is certain emotion or experience, that makes customer to come back and to tell others to his or hers experience."*

All the definitions are of the opinion that customer experience always requires two parties (customer and the company). However, Fisher & Vainio (2014) add to this by stating that the conclusive experience is finalized and occurs in customer's own mind. Schmitt (1999, 53-67) considered the same thing and found that companies can only "--provide the right environment and the setting for the desired customer experiences to emerge". Löytänä & Kortesuo (2011, 11) also found similar results and stated that company has the ability to affect the customer's experience but the experience the customer is having cannot be controlled thoroughly. Company can only decide what kind of context and, thus, experiences it tries to create for the customer (Löytänä & Kortesuo 2011, 11).

Many of the definitions state that customer experience is the result of ”all the contacts between customer and the company" but Klaus and Maklan (2011), Lemke et al. (2011) and Mayer & Schwager (2007) are the only ones to bring out the indirect encounters in their definition. None of the definitions, though, discuss the time period of customer experience. No studies or researches discussing this aspect were found either. This challenge involves primarily the indirect and unplanned contacts between the customer and the company and can, hence, be the reason for leaving it out from some of the definitions.

2.4 Customer journey and touch points

Like stated above, Addis and Holbrook (2001) propose that customer experience is formulated by a set of interactions between the customer and the company or its service/product. Overall, from the subject literature it can be concluded that the quality of customer experience deals with how the customer perceives the various interactions or touch points throughout the whole customer journey.

According to Berry et al. (2002), the customer journey starts from the assumptions the customer might have about the company, prior to the transaction phase itself. The journey continues all the way, until the customer reckons the whole experience has ended (Berry et al. 2002). The journey includes both direct and indirect touch points with the company, its service or product or its representatives (Meyer & Schwager 2007, 2). Zomerdijk & Voss (2010, 68-69) add to this by stating that touch points can occur whenever the customer interacts or has an encounter with the organization across various different channels and at multiple points in time. All the touch points have their individual characteristics and affect the customer experience either negatively or positively (Lemke et al. 2011, 846). However, Verhoef et al. (2009, 31-41) propose that earlier experience of touch points in different channels may affect the experiences in following touch points. For example, past failures in billing by the company may lead to greater likelihood of the customer to feel unsatisfied in the future as well.

Frow and Payne (2007, 99) considered this and proposed that success in customer experience management requires understanding the different stages of customer journey and the touch points as well as the linkage between different touch points. Vesterinen (2014, 53) supported this insight and developed customer journey map that presents different touch points set on a journey timeline. The timeline model takes into account all the touch points during the whole experience and, thus, the effect of earlier touchpoints is considered during the next ones (Vesterinen 2014, 53). Vesterinen's model is presented in the figure 3.

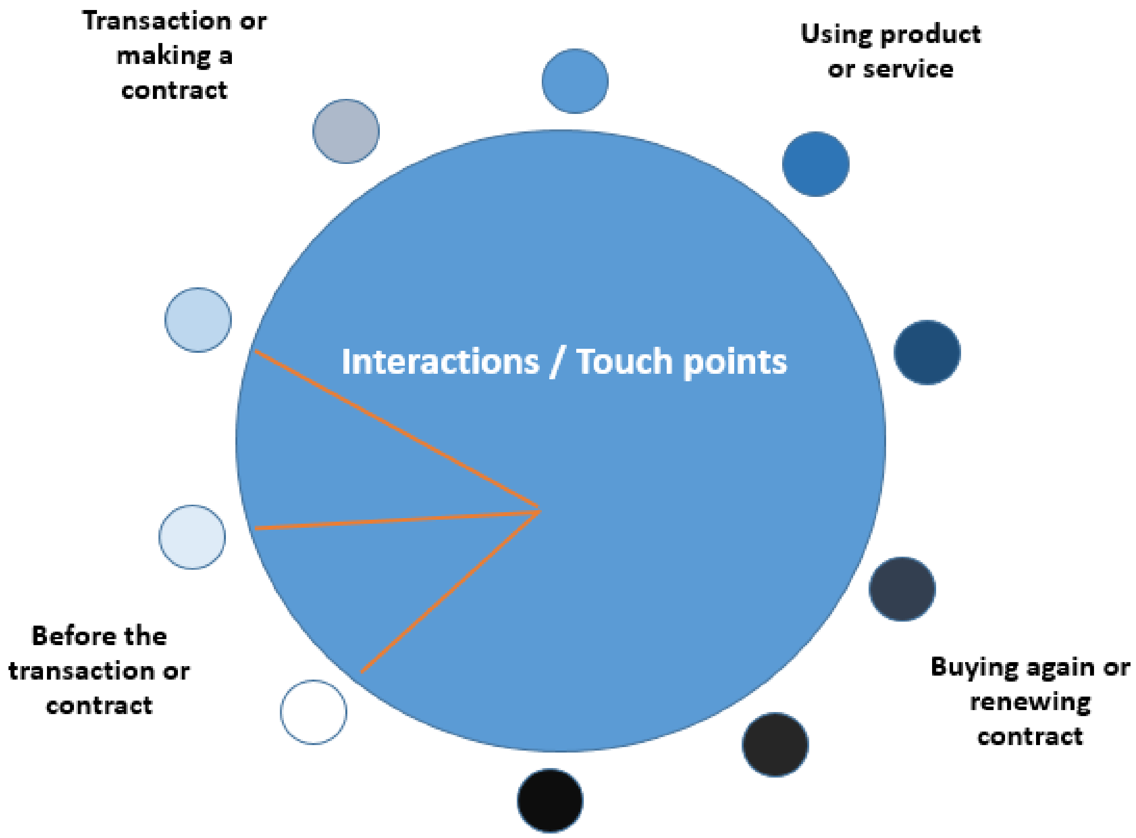

Figure 3. Customer journey map (Vesterinen 2014, 53)

Another model of different touch points between customer and a company was presented by Löytänä & Kortesuo (2011, 75). Their model is on more general level and highlights the variety of the touch points throughout a typical organization. However, it is less dynamic and the linkage between different touch points is not assessed. Löytänä & Kortesuo's model is presented in the figure 4.

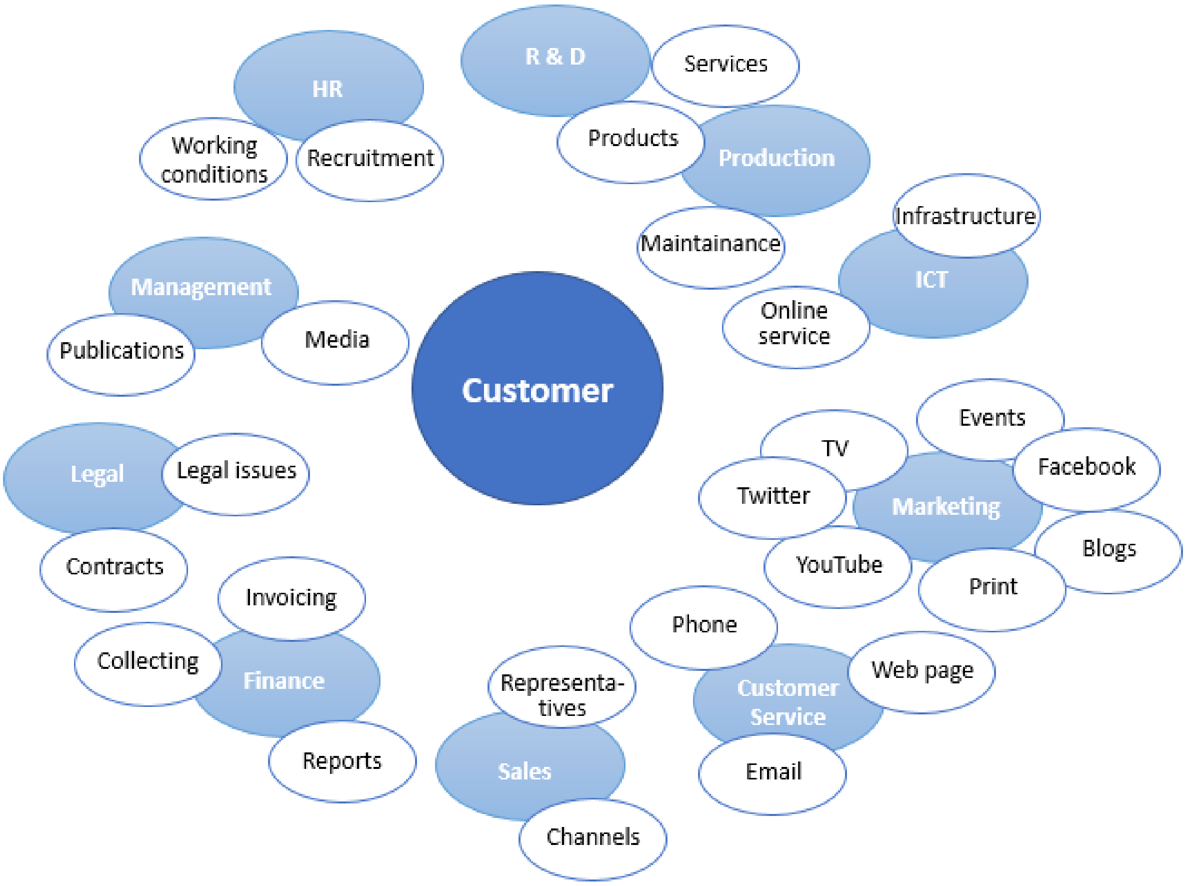

Figure 4. Various touch points between customer and a company (Löytänä & Kortesuo 2011, 75)

2.5 Managing customer experience

Customer experience has recently been of more interest to scholars but researches discussing the managing of customer experience and the value creation through it is still scarcer (Gentile et al. 2009, 397). The general definition for it, drawn from the literature, is that customer experience management refers to the engineering of the experience offered to customers in such way that it creates value both to the customer and to the company itself (Verhoef et al. 2009, 38). On the most concrete level, customer experience management is the creation of experience that keeps and possibly even exceeds the customers' expectations (Fisher & Vainio 2014, 9). In addition to this, customer experience is a dynamic concept and the surroundings are constantly changing: customer experience management requires constant efforts to sustain and improve the experience (Verhoef et al. 2009, 38-39).

Løvlie, Downs and Reason (2008) add the meaning of consistency throughout the journey by stating that the managing aims to match the experience with the expectations consistently across all the touch points during the customer journey. Klaus & Maklan (2013, 232) also discussed the importance of understanding and identifying all the touch points during the customer journey as thoroughly as possible. Consequently, this forms the basis of the management strategy and enables the most positive outcomes from customer experience management (Klaus & Maklan 2013, 232). In addition, multiple scholars state that the inputs and efforts in customer experience management should not be seen as a short-life campaign but rather as a long-term investment: it should be referred to company culture or strategy (e.g. Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014; Klaus & Maklan 2013; Vesterinen 2014). Customer experience management has linkages with customer relationship management but rather than focusing on the recorded history of the customers like relationship management, customer experience management focuses on the current experience (Verhoef et al. 2009, 38).

So far, the topic literature does not offer companies a ready set of actions or a strategy to copy in order to succeed in customer experience management. The findings and the tools presented are more on a general level (Löytänä & Kortesuo, 2011, 165). In fact, since customer experience management should be seen as a part of a company's general strategy, there cannot be one successful model that works for every company (Löytänä & Kortesuo 2011, 165). The first problem seems to be that, companies and their employees are not even thoroughly familiar with the term customer experience and do not know the effects it can have to the company's success (Gentile et al. 2009, 397; Frow & Payne 2007, 89). Management should take charge of familiarizing their staff with the concept and the meaning for the company. In general, strongly committed and an exemplary management team has been found to be one of the biggest reasons for success in customer experience management (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 51).

This kind of management team is required to achieve company-wide customer centric attitude and to commit the whole organization to the common goal of improving the customer experience in every touch point (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 81). Frow and Payne (2007, 98-99) highlight that customer experience should be managed in every touch point in a consistent manner to create coherent and excellent experience. The inconsistencies during the journey should be identified and then fixed (Frow and Payne 2007, 98-99). Management team should develop a culture of responsibility, so that every member of the organization understands the value created from excellent customer experience and, thus, gives his/hers own input to the touch points they are affecting (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 78-81).

According to Löytänä & Kortesuo (2011, 158) one of the easiest ways to improve the understanding of the importance of customer experience management is to present customer experience management in numbers. Management can calculate the costs of different touch points, for example customer service call or acquiring a new customer. Consequently, the effects of customer experience management can then be presented in income or savings. (Löytänä & Kortesuo 2011, 158) Moreover, measuring customer experience has been found to be very important part of managing customer experience (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 82). Companies should measure touch points, employee success and financial results (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 82). Results should be presented often and offered to the responsible employees in order for them to take immediate actions towards improving the experience in the touch points they are responsible for (Löytänä & Koskiakoski 2014, 82). However, managing customer experience is hard work and the results may not be seen at once (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 40-51). Once company has implemented customer experience management on their strategic level, more and better results can be expected (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 40).

3 MEASURING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

In this chapter, the customer measurement is discussed. First, the background of measuring customer experience is presented from various viewpoints to reach general understanding of the concept. Then, the purposes of measuring customer experience are discussed. To conclude the chapter, the most relevant customer experience measuring methods considering this thesis are presented.

3.1 Concept of measuring customer experience

As Verhoef et al. (2009, 32) state, customer experience was not recognized earlier as a separate construct in businesses. Due to that, companies have been focusing on measuring their service quality and the customer satisfaction rather than the whole experience (e.g. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988). In fact, customer experience was earlier seen as synonym to customer satisfaction (e.g. Frow & Payne 2007, 99). Measuring customer satisfaction is rather crude way of measuring since it is often measured only once or twice a year, the questionnaires are identical from year to year and they are supposed to be suitable for every department of a company (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 134-135). Also, customer satisfaction surveys are usually backwards oriented, giving companies results from long-time period in history (Löytänä & Kortesuo 2011, 194). Thus, the information received may not measure actual customer experience or help in improving the customer experience neither since the results are mainly used for counting the bonuses of employees (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 134-135). Later, however, customer satisfaction has been found to be formulated by all different customer experiences (e.g. Frow & Payne 2007, 99).

LaSalle and Britton (2003) presented a basis for customer experience measurement that was later used also by Shaw & Ivens (2005): “Its (customer experience) evaluation depends on the comparison between a customer’s expectations and the stimuli coming from the interaction with the company and its offering in correspondence of the different moments of contact or touch-points”. According to Löyätänä & Korkiakoski (2014) and

Schmidt-Subramanian (2013, 4-5) there are three levels of measuring customer experience: Customer relationship level, customer journey level and the touch point or interaction level. Measurement on the relationship level has common ground with customer satisfaction measurement as it indirectly measures the company's overall and "lifetime" success, whereas the other two levels measure the success in a direct manner (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 137). Customer Journey level means measuring the success during the customer's buying path's different parts. Finally, the measurement on the touchpoint level means measuring the customer's experience in the most vital interactions with the company. (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 137) The different levels are presented in the figure 5.

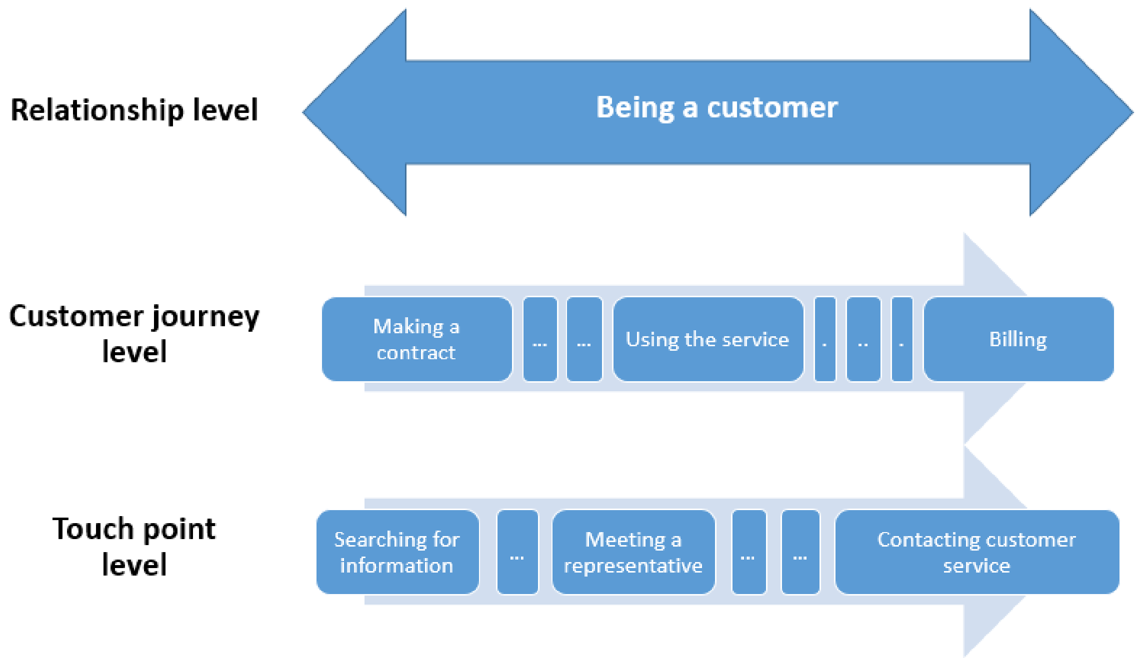

Figure 5. Three levels of measuring customer experience (modified from. Löytänä & Kortesuo 2014, 137; Schmidt-Subramanian 2013, 5)

It is highly important to include measuring to customer experience processes and to customer experience management processes (e.g. Shaw & Ivens 2002, 168). As stated earlier, the ultimate purpose of customer experience management is to improve the economical success of a company. Thus, it is vital not only to understand the customer experience but also to measure it in order to see how the related actions the company is taking are serving that purpose and increasing the income the company is making (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 133). Companies should systematically share and act on the metrics received from the customer experience measurement processes to improve the current state of customer experience (Schmidt-Subramanian 2013, 2). Results should be used as supporting data for the management's decision-making processes (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 138-139). Consequently, the deepest motivator for customer experience measurement is the desire to be able to control and plan the future and, hence, achieve advantages (Palmer 2010, 202). Overall, it is reasonable to measure the financial outcomes of customer experience, but also customer-centric measures are needed to fully understand the holistic state of customer experience offering (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 53-54).

There is, of course, a wide range of different measuring methods and thus companies should carefully review which tools and methods would be the most informative ones for their needs in terms of for example area of business (Meyer & Schwager 2007, 6). Additionally, the tools can be selected based on the precise information the company is seeking. For example, company may want to analyse past patterns, present patterns, potential patterns, or a combination of these. Measuring each of these patterns require different methods and will probably yield different kinds of insights (Meyer & Schwager 2007, 6). Additionally, since measuring customer experience usually requires contacting customers, it creates another touch point: this is another reason why companies should put thoughts in creating a suitable method of measuring just for their needs and their segments (Shaw & Ivens 2002, 168). The right methods allow companies to reveal the most critical factors of the customer experience that have the most significant effects on for example the customer retention (Palmer 2010, 202-203). All in all, one of the most important aims of measuring customer experience is to obtain reliable information in order to develop the customer experience (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 140).

3.2 Measuring methods for customer experience

In order to get results from customer experience measurement successfully, companies need a thoroughly planned and constructed measuring system, which should be integrated to the company's activities (Schmidt-Subramanian 2013, 2). It is vital to understand the current state of customer experience for companies to be able to follow-up on the long-term goals (Meyer & Schwager 2007, 7-8).

Earlier companies have been focusing more on measuring the past patterns but lately the interest has shifted more towards present and future patterns (Meyer & Schwager 2007, 7). This implies that companies are trying to improve the state of customer experience they are offering more actively. Vesterinen (2014, 47) found that it is also important to understand the characteristics of the company's target segment in order to formulate the right type of feedback or questionnaire form. According to Bowden (2009, 71) the results from customer experience measurement can be roughly divided into three categories:

1. Customer confirming the expected service quality, resulting in an intention to return

2. Customer experiencing the delight of service exceeding the expectations, leading to more committed customer and intention to return

3. Negative service evaluation, leading to a possible exit from the service brand.

In addition to the raw results, asking the question "why" is very important to get the comprehensive understanding and tools for the future development. This gives the company more insight behind the results (Vesterinen 2014, 47).

Löytänä & Kortesuo (2011, 188) state that there are passive measuring methods, active measuring methods or something in between these two. Terms active and passive refer to how actively the feedback is gathered or how actively the company is involving its customers to the measuring process (Löytänä & Kortesuo 2011, 188). Passive measuring methods include for example feedback sheets, reclamation analysis or following social media (Löytänä & Kortesuo 2011, 188). Active methods include for example customer satisfaction measures, customer panels, mystery shopping or constant feedback questionnaires in different touch points (Löytänä & Kortesuo 2011, 188). This categorization is illustrated in the figure 4.

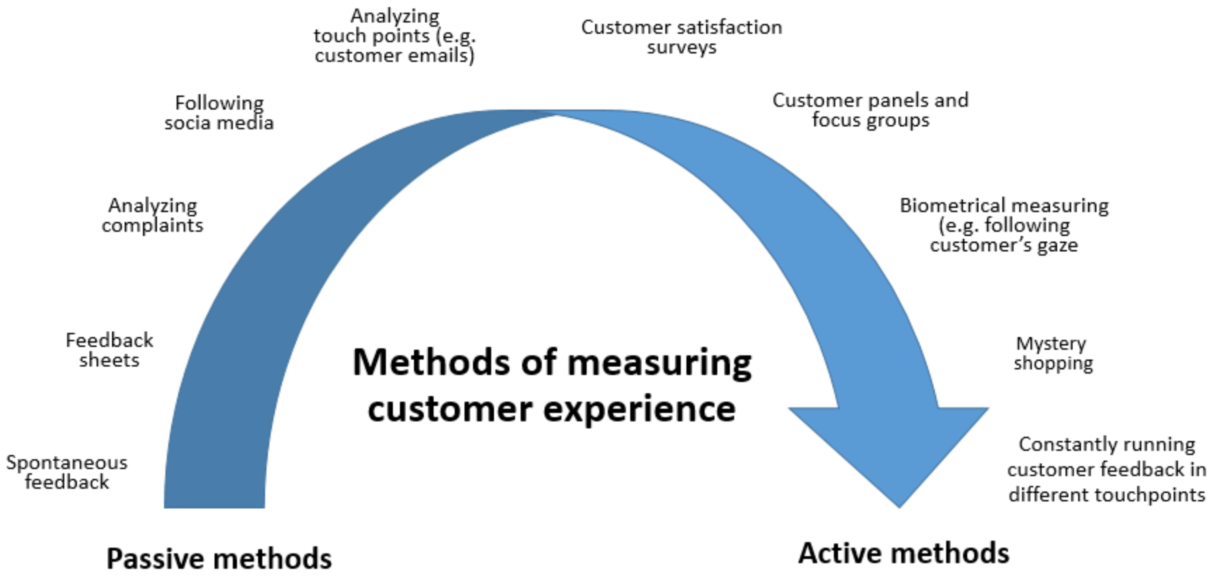

Figure 4. Different methods of measuring customer experience (Löytänä & Kortesuo 2011, 188)

3.2.1 Net Promoter score

Net Promoter score (thereinafter also NPS) has become remarkably more popular and valued measuring method for customer experience after Fred Reichheld introduced it in Harvard Business Review in 2003 (Keiningham, Cooil, Andreassen and Aksoy 2007, 39). Reichheld (2006) stated that compared to other loyalty-metrics such as customer retention and customer satisfaction, Net Promoter score is the most reliable indicator of company's future growth. Multiple studies indicate that increasing company's Net Promoter score correlates to the increase in company's growth rate as well (Reichheld

2006, 73). The amount of points improved in NPS and the corresponding improvement in growth rate are differentiating from study to study but all of them seem to agree on the fact that improving NPS, improves the growth rate (Reichheld 2006, 73).

NPS is a metric that is calculated from survey responses to a “likelihood to recommend” (e.g. Keiningham et al. 2007, 39). In its most basic form, NPS is a question asked from the customers: “On the scale of 0 to 10, how likely is that you would recommend our brand to a friend or colleague?” (Löytänä & Kortesuo 2011, 203). Number 10 represents the greatest likelihood of recommendation and 0 represents the lowest unlikelihood of recommendation.

NPS categorizes respondents into three different groups: “promoters”, “passives” and “detractors” (Löytänä & Kortesuo 2011, 203). Respondents answering 9 or 10 are classified as promoters – the most satisfied customers (e.g. Keiningham et al. 2007, 39). Respondents answering 8-7 are classified as passives and respondents answering 6 or lower are classified as detractors (e.g. Keiningham et al. 2007, 39). The final Net Promoter score is calculated by subtracting the sharepercentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters (e.g. Grisaffe 2007, 36).

For example:
Company has received answers from 100 respondents. 60 promoters (60%), 35 passives (35%) and 5 detractors (5%)
The final NPS score: 60% (promoters) – 5% (detractors) = **55**

The above mentioned scale is illustrated in the figure 5.

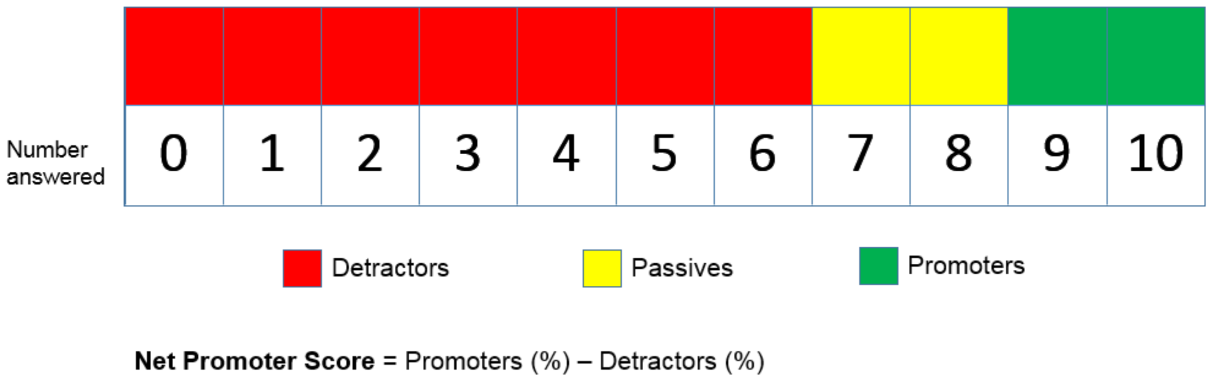

Figure 5. Net Promoter score.

Having received larger foothold in the markets, NPS has been taken increasingly often into official reporting (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 59). This is mostly due to its simplicity: one simple question and easy to answer (Löytänä & Kortesuo 2011, 203). Compared to complex algorithm-based feedback, with such simple measuring system as NPS, it is easier to find the weak spots and for managers to help employees improve their score (Reichheld 2003, 2). NPS also offers input for development operations inside a company but to really benefit from the input, companies need constant follow-ups and preferably a company-wide customer focus (Vesterinen 2014, 49; Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 59).

NPS gives companies excellent way to benchmark their actions. Companies can compare the scores region to region, branch to branch or for example representative to representative. In addition, company's competitors can be a valuable target for benchmarking. (Reichheld 2003, 1) Reichheld (2003, 1) also states that Net Promoter scores of employees should be transparent throughout the whole organization. This way companies can emphasize the importance of NPS more easily and tie, for example, a rewarding system to score improvement. In addition to acquiring new promoters, companies should also focus on turning existing passives and detractors into promoters. This requires paying attention to company's promoters and detractors and finding the reasons behind their answers. That information can be used in improving the experience of other customers as well. (Feeney 2015, 11)

NPS has, however, been arousing some criticism (e.g. Keiningham et al. 2007). The general opinion is that NPS alone does not provide the reasons behind one's answers (Meyer & Schwager 2007, 7). Also, due to its single-item nature the NPS can give the company an inaccurate prediction of their performance compared to other multiple-item measurement tools. Furthermore, it can be hard for the respondents to anticipate the circumstances that would encourage them to "recommend a specific product/service/company to a friend" and thus it may affect the answer they are giving (East, Hammond & Lomax 2008, 8). Löytänä & Korkiakoski (2014, 59) present that NPS should be combined with few other questions to get comprehensive understanding of the achieved results. Additionally, it is rather difficult to determine a "good value" for NPS. According to Löytänä & Kortesuo (2011, 203) the results vary a lot from industry to industry: for example in luxury hotels with excellent customer experience management processes the NPS can set between 80-90 whereas in the airline industry the corresponding score can be around 0-20. On some industries, such as the airline business, there are lots of variables, that are not depending on the company itself and this is one reason explaining the variation in NPS between different industries (Löytänä & Kortesuo 2011, 203).

3.2.2 Additional measurement methods

Customer Effort Score was developed in 2010 by Forrester (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 59). Customer effort score is based on the idea that for example reaching and receiving service should be as effortless to the customer as possible and hence it is more aimed for the B2C markets (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 59-60). The measuring itself is rather similar to NPS measuring: customer is asked a question "On scale 1 to 5, how much effort did you go through in order to get your issue taken care of?" (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 59-60). British Telecom developed customer effort score to match their needs better and created Net Easy Score (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 60). This measurement asks the question "Overall how easy was it to get the help you wanted today?" (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 60). Contrarily to NPS or the customer effort score, in net easy score lowest number is the best result (see figure 6). Even though neither customer effort score or net easy score are that commonly in use at the moment, Löytänä & Korkiakoski (2014, 50-51) recognize potential in both of them and advise companies to use them as an additional tool for, example given, NPS.

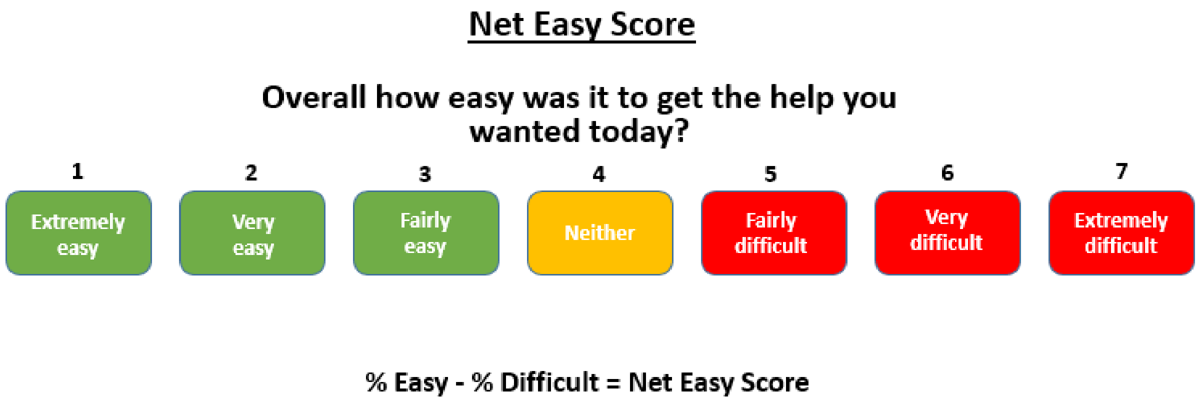

Figure 6. Net Easy Score (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 60)

Useful way to fulfill the measurement system is to add questionnaires to the mix (Shaw & Ivens 2002, 168). With questionnaires, the key is to put the time and effort to designing and constructing the questionnaire (Shaw & Ivens 20072168). This way companies can ensure that they get the minimum amount of answers and the information is what they need (Shaw & Ivens 2002, 168). For example, short questionnaires, like text message feedbacks or pop-up windows, are more likely to get more answers from customers (Vesterinen 2014, 40). In addition to the contents of a questionnaire, companies should also focus on the visual design of the questionnaire: customers can form an image of the company based on the looks of their questionnaires (Shaw & Ivens 2002, 168).

Companies can have a massive effect on the results received from a questionnaire (Vesterinen 2014, 42-43). Due to this, companies should use for example focus groups to improve their understanding of customers' needs and desires (Shaw & Ivens 2002, 17). Multiple choice questionnaires need to have suitable answering options for the targeted segment and the possibility of misunderstanding the questions or answering options needs to be minimized (Vesterinen 2014, 42-43). The preparations need to be done properly since companies cannot know how they succeeded with the questionnaire afterwards: customer's answers and actions might not be in line with each other (Vesterinen 2014, 42-43).

3.3 Some of the challenges in customer experience measurement

Creating and selecting the most efficient measurement tool is very problematic. The biggest issue is the complexity of context specific variables (Palmer 2010, 202). The whole value creation to a customer is dependent of the experience of that specific customer, at a specific point in time and location in that specific content of an event (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2003, 14). The measurement tool has to be able to take into account all these factors to be of managerial use.

The second problem with customer experience measurement is the non-linear nature of the metrics. It is hard to measure the difference between two experiences or to decide whether they are different from each other in the first place (Palmer 2010, 203). Some characteristics has been found in context specific experiences and some models of rational manner can be drawn but typically the value of an experience can only be quantified as a likelihood of an event occurring (Holbrook 2006). Another problem with customer experience measurement is the difficulty to find the optimal level of experience (Palmer 2010, 203). Of course, for the scales of quality and satisfaction, there is usually an assumption that consumers will prefer outcomes with higher scores. However, the whole experience is more complex entirety and the above-mentioned non-linearity may cause some lower cut-off points. On these occasions "more" experience can be seen in a negative light (Palmer 2010, 203).

Companies should not rely solely on one measurement tool. In fact, companies should create a completely suitable measuring system for their needs (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 140). In addition, Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2009, 42-44) found similar and suggest that using multiple measuring methods helps companies to overcome many of the challenges associated with customer experience measurement.

4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The focus and the aim in the empirical part of this research will be on clarifying the current process with customer experience and its measurement and how it is perceived in the case company. Consequently, the researcher uses the acquired information for studying how the process regarding customer experience management can be improved. In this chapter, the most critical points of the theory framework are concluded briefly.

Customer experience is formulated during all the direct and indirect touch points between the customer and the company or its representatives. First of all, it is important to understand how customer experience and the customer journey is formed in the company. Company representatives should ensure that all the touch points are recognized properly. Company management should create the context for customer experience so that all the employees understand customer experience similarly and the appreciation of customer experience is on high level among the employees. Customer experience should be measured with system of more than one measurement tool. Companies should select the most suitable measurement methods carefully to gain reliable data. Company management should actively go through the measurement scores and use them to create road maps for improving the customer experience in the future.

5 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

5.1 Research method

There are two general categories for the methods used in empirical studies: quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative method is usually based on statistics and aims to reveal causalities and correlations, whereas qualitative method is based on interpretative research and aims to understand certain phenomenon. (Metsämuuronen 2003, 161-162) The general goal of qualitative study is to understand the topic in question. That means understanding the phenomenon researched in this particular context. This does not mean finding ultimate facts that are generalizable for all other contexts similar to the research in question. The research can involve only one case or several cases. However, more comprehensive and holistic understanding of the topic can be reached if the research is limited to only small number of variables. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2000, 168) Qualitative research is not supposed to build theory but to discover different elements that the analysed research data from the natural surroundings has revealed (Hirsjärvi et al. 2007, 176-177). In qualitative research, getting the best possible quality for the data/sample is vital, whereas quantitative research emphasizes the quantity of the data/sample (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 16-18).

According to Palmer (2010) the qualitative research methods should be preferred in studies concerning customer experience due to its multi-dimensional and the situation-specific nature. Thus, the qualitative method was chosen for this study. Furthermore, this research is a single case study. In single case study the researcher creates in depth understanding of one specific target (e.g. one company) (Yin 1994, 38-39). Studying multiple companies would not add to the understanding of research topic any better in this research.

5.2 Data collection

The most typical methods for data collection in qualitative research are interviews, observation, text analysis and transcribing (Metsämuuronen 2003, 161-162). Researcher may use one method or several methods simultaneously or combined (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 71). The data for this research was collected in two different phases. The main data collection method were the interviews conducted to the company representatives. Interviews took place between October 2016 and February 2017. The secondary data collection method was an observation through a customer touchpoint workshop.

The researcher is currently working in the case company as a sales team manager. This will be considered during the data collection. This can be helpful in for example understanding the interviewees but also harmful if the personal opinions of the researcher will affect the study. It is good to recognize this when conducting the interviews and the workshop.

5.2.1 Interview

As Metsämuuronen (2006, 113) states, interview has the following characteristics:

- It is planned in advance, it is started and led by the interviewer
- The interviewer is motivating the interviewee
- Interviewee knows his/her role
- Interviewee can trust that the given information is handled confidentially

Compared with e.g. questionnaire, interview is more flexible since both the interviewee can explain their choice of words of repeat answers/questions. Interview is an intellectual interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 72-74)

Interviews aim to systematically gather information around the research topic and they can be divided in four categories: structured interviews, half-structured interviews, theme interviews and open interviews. In a structured interview the order and format both the questions and answers are predetermined. Thus, the interview will not contain any free discussion. The difference to structured interview in a half-structured interview is that the answers are not predetermined and the interviewees are allowed to give free, open answers. In theme interviews only the topic areas for discussion are prepared, and hence the interview leaves room for more open answers. An open interview can be referred to a normal conversation as the discussion is informal. Thus, some of the topic areas may be left out of the discussion with some interviewees. (Eskola & Suoranta, 2003, 85-86)

This research includes six interviews as stated later in the table 2. The interviewees were selected from different positions and different seniority levels (Account Managers, Consultant Managers and Team Managers). All of them have wide connection to the customer interface and thus responsibilities in the creation of customer experience. The chosen category for the interview was half-structured interview to leave some room for additional and more detailed questions. The length of the interviews was around 45 minutes.

Interviews were held in Finnish (the native language for the interviewees) so that the interviewees could explain themselves in a most effortless way. Also, this prevented all sorts of misunderstandings regarding the questions and the answers. The interviews consisted of two main themes (based on the research questions):

1. *How is customer experience perceived and how is it managed in the case company*
2. How is customer experience measured in the case company

The questions and the classification under these themes can be seen in the appendice 1: The interview form.

Table 2. The interviewees.

Nr. of interviewee	Title	Years in the company	Gender
1	Account Manager / Team Manager	3,5	Male
2	Consultant Manager / Team Manager	3	Female
3	Account Manager	1	Male
4	Account Manager	2	Male
5	Consultant Manager	0,5	Female
6	Consultant Manager	1,5	Female

5.2.2 Customer touchpoint workshop

The customer touchpoint workshop was facilitated by the researcher in the Academic Work's Helsinki office on 22.6.2016. Total of 16 persons took part in the workshop including senior employees and junior employees that are operating in the customer interface. Also, the sales management took part in this workshop. The topic and the timetable for the workshop were predetermined and the information was available for the invitees. The workshop was part of the case company's process to develop the employees but simultaneously it was planned to support this research. The general topic of customer experience was decided with the company management but from there, the researcher got the permission to plan the more specific topic and content of the workshop. The workshop was conducted before any interviews so that all the representatives would have similar premises regarding the topic.

The aim for the workshop was to create understanding of the customer journey and touchpoints in the Academic Work processes. Additionally, it was conducted to reveal how aware the employees with customer responsibilities are of the different direct and indirect touchpoints that the customer might have with Academic Work. The results were compared with the theory to possibly discover some blind spots in the employees' understanding of the touchpoints. The tool of customer touchpoint journey is not being currently used in the case company. This being said, the aim of this workshop was also to create the basis for the organization for utilizing this tool in the future.

The researcher opened the workshop by going through the topic and the aim for the workshop. Then the group was divided into four smaller teams in order to enable more active discussion and to discover a few different insights. All the groups were asked to document their discussions and results and they were given ten minutes to present and explain their findings for the whole group. The researcher then gathered all the documented results for the further analysis.

5.3 Reliability and validity of the research

Basically, the reliability of a research refers to the ability to produce similar results in multiple repeated researches with the supposition that the researcher and the research method are different from research to research. This, however, is not applicable to most qualitative researches. In qualitative researches, the reliability is achieved when the whole research path and all the phases are transparently presented to the audience. Validity of a qualitative research is reached when the respondents (or interviewees) of the research are selected from the area of research so that they are involved with the business problem the researcher is trying to solve. (Stenbacka 2001)

The researcher has previous knowledge and, thus, also opinions of the case company which might be one of the biggest challenges regarding the reliability and validity of the research. The researcher is working as a team manager in the case company. This can have affect both in the interviews and the analysis the researcher will do. Of course, this challenge is well recognized and the impact can be somewhat minimized. This was emphasized in the interviews by advising the interviewees to ignore the fact that the researcher works in the same company.

Considering interviews as a data collection method, it is always possible that the interviewees understand the questions differently than they are supposed to. However, the half-structured method allows some discussion and clarification to specify the meaning of certain questions so this challenge can be tackled to a good extent.

One challenge might be that the interviewees will phrase or formulate their answers according to what is expected of them regarding the topic. Additionally, they can formulate their answers according to what is socially acceptable. Researcher needs to take this into consideration during the analysis and exaggeration of, at least the radical opinions of the interviewees, should be avoided. Although these challenges can be tackled to at least some extent, generalizing of the results of this study should be considered carefully.

5.4 The case company

The case company in this thesis is Academic Work. Academic Work is Swedish based company operating in the staffing and recruitment industry. Three students in Stockholm founded the company in 1998 in order to employ themselves and their fellow students. Academic Work executives decided to target especially “young professionals”, including the segments of students and graduated academics with up to five years of relevant, professional experience. Hence, the clientele consists mainly of white-collar businesses and positions. Hereafter, the company has grown aggressively and now consists of a total 22 offices in six countries (Sweden 1998, Denmark 2004, Norway 2007, Finland & Germany 2008, Switzerland 2015). This thesis solely concerns Academic Work Finland Oy.

The whole staffing and recruitment industry in Finland is about one billion euros business. During the last few years, the industry has grown around 5 to 12 percent yearly and the growth is expected to continue in the near future as well. (HPL 2016) The whole Academic Work concern reported a turnover of 230 MEUR in 2015 (9 % growth from 2014). The corresponding figure for Academic Work Finland Oy was 15

MEUR in 2015 (19 % growth from 2014). The growth figures have been similar for Academic Work Finland Oy for several years now. (Academic Work 2016)

Some 70 to 80 % of the turnover comes from staffing services and the remaining percentage from recruitment services. Yearly, the Finnish organisation employs around 1500 persons through staffing and recruitment services. Academic Work Finland Oy has, at the moment, around 85 own employees and the number has been growing rapidly during the latest years. (Academic Work 2016)

The current results of Academic Work Finland Oy in the customer experience measurement are on a good level. The measurement system is not new for the employees or for the organization. It has been used for couple of years now with the customers and with the staffing consultants of the company. The NPS statistics for the year 2015 were 16 detractors, 97 neutrals and 239 promoters. This sums up to a NPS score of 63. The answers came from both staffing service customers and from recruitment service customers. The NPS survey is sent to the recruitment customers once, right after the assignment is filled. The staffing service customers can get the survey multiple times during the staffing period, depending on the length of the staffing period. (Academic Work 2016)

6 THE RESULTS

The results from the interviews and the touch point workshop are presented in this chapter.

6.1 The status of customer experience and its management in the case company

The interviews were started with a short introduction to the interview method and the general instructions for the interviewee. Then, before any introduction to the research topic of customer experience, the first question; “what are the most important factors in the financial success of the company you are representing?” was asked. This arrangement was chosen in order to get the most authentic answers without the interview topic impacting them. After this first question, the research topic and some of the terms used in the research were introduced. Questions to clarify the topic were allowed.

Customer experience or customer satisfaction were mentioned in some context altogether in five interviews (interviews 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6). These five interviewees were answering more from the company perspective and not a lot personal opinions were shared. Interviewee 3, who did not mention customer experience, answered on a more practical level. He mentioned for example the importance of the account managers’ activity and the professionalism of the consultant managers among the most important factors. The most common answer and the factor that was presented first in multiple interviews was the inner personnel and their know-how.

“Well first of all, our inner personnel is of course our most important resource and their capability to perform especially. -- also the satisfaction of our clients is critical in my opinion and particularly in the longer run. That’s where the money comes from after all.” (Interviewee 6)

All the interviewees that mentioned customer experience in their answers were asked a follow-up question; “how does customer experience impact the financial success in the company you are representing?”. All the answers were rather similar and connected to long term customer relationships and building reference base for the future. It was pointed out that the proper financial success is achieved only through true and long term companionship with the customers and not just through vast amount of one-time deals.

“Well of course the satisfied customer is more willing to buy again than the disappointed customer. Usually the big money and like the prosperous customer relationship is achieved after a bit longer co-operation. -- Additionally, the word about our excellent service does spread around through our customers more effectively than for example through our marketing people. And that way it’s even more credible for the future customers, I think.” (Interviewee 1)

Considering the whole industry of staffing and recruitment services, the meaning of customer experience is regarded generally important. According to the interviewees, historically, the reputation of staffing industry has been rather bad and the companies in this industry have been perceived to even exploit the temporary employees. Even though the truth is far from this, glimpses of this old mentality can be detected every now and then. According to the interviewees, this is why the excellent customer experience of the modern day customers of the staffing industry is vital for the whole industry.

“-- considering that the reputation of the industry hasn’t always been that good, the experiences of the current customers of all the companies in the industry are quite important, you know. Like, one company can sort of ruin it for other companies as well. It feels like we still have to reimburse the old reputation, sort of.” (Interviewee 2)

The meaning of customer experience is considered essential for the case company itself as well. Four interviewees (interviewees 2, 3, 4 and 6) pointed out that the NPS scores are one of their two process goals (common goals for everyone in the company to measure the performance, set by the management) and thus the meaning is huge. The two interviewees who did not mention process goals both linked the importance straight back to the financial success and ability to acquire more profitable customers through references.

"It is vital for the whole company, I mean, it's one of my process goals. And that goes for all of our employees that are working straight with the customers. That has got to mean something, right? The other process goal is basically the amount of money that is received through my work and the NPS score is right next to that. Feels like the company management wants to emphasize the meaning of good customer service." (Interviewee 4)

On the personal level the importance the importance is perceived slightly differently. Even though the linkage between customer experience and the financial success of the company and thus the salary levels of the employees is recognized to some extent, the personal opinions of its importance are inconsistent. The interviewees emphasized all the factors that are in direct connection with the salaries in a bit more short-sighted way. However, this inconsistency is recognized at times by the employees themselves.

"Honestly, I don't know. I can't say that it's among the most important things to me in this job. Like, if I compare for example the facts that I'm getting a large salary and I'm getting high scores in NPS, I would never say that I was happier about the NPS scores. Or if I had to choose a larger salary or the most satisfied customers in the company, I would take the salary any day." (Interviewee 1)

Then again, interviewee 6 proposed that good customer experience is more personal achievement than for example the financial successes.

"It's not the most important thing to me. I believe in it, though, but you know for example my salary level is more important to me. -- On the other hand, getting good results in NPS for example feels more personal thing to me. You know, that is my

personal merit and I feel like it's me personally who caused the customer to have a good experience and not Academic Work as a whole." (Interviewee 6)

Regarding the type of customer experience the case company representatives are trying to create, there are two things that were commonly stated by most of the interviewees: the feeling of professionalism and quality at all times and the easiness of the service for the customers. Other scattered types mentioned were for example the tailored or unique feel, effective in means of time consumption, innovative, and pleasant, joyful and cheerful.

"Excellent, of course. I think that this comes from the professionalism of the account manager and the consultant manager so that the customer always feels like we really know what we are doing and can even advice the customer, in a way. -- Also, the experience must feel easy for the customer. Otherwise he/she won't necessarily use the service in the future so we need to ensure that it feels simple and easy for our customers." (Interviewee 5)

Again, regarding the ways to ensure this type of customer experience, the interviewees were rather unanimous. The know-how and training of the case company representatives as well as the investments by the case company in order to achieve those were mentioned in every interview. All the interviewees were of the opinion that improvements in the customer experience are achieved through the employees' development.

"I believe that we must invest in our personnel, like, making sure that they are being trained enough and that the training is continuous. After all, the representatives have the most comprehensive effect on the whole experience for the customer. -- We need to make sure that all the account managers and the consultant managers leave similarly a good image for our customers." (Interviewee 1)

Interviewee 4 was the only interviewee to mention indirect touch points in his answer in addition to the personnel's training.

"In my opinion, it's important to ensure that the way we seem in the eyes of our customers and potential future customers is positive. It has an effect on the experience if Academic Work has a generally good reputation and for example the visibility of our search processes has to be in good spirit. -- Maybe this is not the most important thing but anyway." (Interviewee 4)

When asked about the rate and methods the customer experience is discussed with manager or with larger group in the company, the interviewees referred mainly to the act of going through the measurement scores. The researcher then clarified that this questions does not refer to the measurement scores but rather to the topic overall, the touch points and the forming of the customer experience. None of the interviewees then said to have discussed the topic alone without the presence of the scores with their manager but, at times, the topic is reflected as a part of a discussion.

"I don't remember discussing the customer experience topic in general without the focus being on measurement scores. In fact, that's a good question because now that I think about it, I kind of feel that even when we have been discussing about my scores and how I could improve them, we never discuss about the actual experience, if you know what I mean. -- like for example, my manager might advise me to talk more about the importance of the NPS with clients or stuff like that." (Interviewee 4)

According to the interviewees, there has not been a lot of common discussions about the customer experience in general. Most of the interviewees referred to the touch point workshop facilitated by the researcher. In addition, interviewees 2 and 4 thought back to earlier workshops held by the country management but neither of them was certain about it. Multiple interviewees, however, stated that at times there are some discussions about the topic in team meetings for example.

"The only group discussions about the topic have been with our team in the weekly team meetings. I don't remember the last time though. -- Many times that discussion

is more like sharing best practice or like comparing the top performers' methods to others'. I think it's quite useful sometimes though." (Interviewee 3)

6.2 Touch points and the customer journey in the case company

The customer journey and the touchpoints were researched through the customer touchpoint workshop and additionally through the interviews. The group was divided into four smaller teams for the workshop and each of the four teams did their individual discussion and created their own view and visuals for the customer journey and touchpoints. Most of the results from the workshop and from the interviews had lots of common similarities but some differences could still be found. Like stated earlier in the theoretical background, regarding customer experience, it is essential to recognize and understand all the touch points during the customer journey (Frow and Payne 2007, 99). Hence, the aim for this part is to research the state of touch point understanding in the case company.

Two of the workshop teams found that the first touch point on the customer journey happens before any direct contact from the case company. This was noted by four of the interviewees (interviewees 1, 2, 4 and 6) as well. The two teams presented that the first touch point usually involves a customer's presumption of the case company through an advertisement, reference from a colleague or friend, knowledge from the industry or competitors or for example a car with case company logos. Job adverts done for other companies by the case company were seen as the most typical first touch point. This was also seen as a method for the customer company to categorize Academic Work against its competitors even before having any own personal experience of the company. This kind of touch point can set the tone for the first direct contacts with Academic Work and can, thus, be quite crucial.

"Before Academic Work contacts the customer, the customer probably has some knowledge of the company through his/her personal network or for example digital media. -- it is critical to understand that the customer's perspective about Academic Work might be twisted or even flawed." (Interviewee 1)

The next touch point found was the first direct contact from the case company - the phone call. This was found by all the teams and all the interviewees. The idea of this phone call is to book a meeting between the customer and the case company representative. Most of the time it will be a so called cold call (the customer and the case company representative do not have any earlier direct experience with each other) and the aim is to do a short introduction to Academic Work and the topic in question and propose a time for the meeting. Typically, the phone call is made by an account manager and it lasts about two to four minutes.

The two teams and four interviewees that pointed out the touch point prior to the phone call noted that the tone of the phone call might vary a lot depending on the image the customer has constituted about the case company.

"Even if the topic is highly relevant, the customer can make a sort of a principal decision not to accept the meeting suggestion just because of the image he/she has about Academic Work beforehand. Of course, the decision might be contradictory if the image is different." (Interviewee 4)

There are multiple factors that impact the customer experience during the phone call. The workshop teams emphasized for example the energy level, attitude and expertise of the case company representative. Also, the feeling of uniqueness for the customer was seen as an important part of creating a good customer experience. This relates to for example the representative's knowledge of the customer's company and industry.

Only one of the workshop teams and one of the interviewees (interviewee 1) acknowledged the customer's preparation for the meeting as the next touch point. According to the workshop teams, the preparation can include for example visits to the case company's website or the representative's LinkedIn account or going through the email agenda the representative has sent during the first phone call. According to interviewee 1, the preparation phase can set the tone for the actual meeting, similarly to the first touchpoint affecting the first phone call.

"-- and things like the account managers LinkedIn account or the Academic Work website may either strengthen or weaken the customer's view of Academic Work or the representative prior to the meeting. Fortunately, these are quite easy things to enhance in order to improve the customer experience." (Interviewee 1)

The next touch point - the meeting - was acknowledged by all the workshop teams and all the interviewees similarly to the first direct touch point, phone call. Usually the meeting is conducted by the account manager within a month from the phone call. The basic aim of a customer meeting for the representative is to gain a good understanding of the customer's company, the challenges they might be facing, their aims and for example their experience from recruitments and staffing. According to the data, the ultimate goal is to use the gathered information in order to sell the services of the case company to the customer.

The workshop teams and the interviewees recognized a wide range of different factors that have an effect on the customer experience in the meeting. The suggested factors included for example the looks of the case company car, the looks of the case company representative, the ability of the representative to reflect the customer's persona, the manners of the representative, the balance between how much the customer and the representative are speaking, how the genuine interest of the representative is transmitted to the customer and the representative's ability to suggest a solution for the customer's company. According to the data, the vast majority of the highlighted factors are associated strictly with the case company representative. Furthermore, interviewees proposed that at this point, the case company is strongly personified to a single representative.

"During the meeting, the customer's view of Academic Work is often influenced quite a lot by the personal attributes of the account manager. And this can be unnoticeable even for the customer himself." (Interviewee 4)

The meeting touch point was also seen as an important source of information about the aspects appreciated by the customer. Moreover, the case company representative can acquire lots on insight in which ways to enhance the customer experience during the rest of the customer journey regarding this specific customer. Interviewee 6 stated that using the acquired info about the features that are important in the customer's opinion later in the process can engender a feeling of uniqueness for the customer which often improves the overall experience for him/her.

Going forward on the customer journey, all the workshop teams and all the interviewees acknowledged some kind of combination of reflection period for the client (after the meeting), going through the client agreement (contract) and placing the order as the next touch points. According to the data, these three touch points are usually overlapping each other. Typically, the client agreement is not underwritten during the meeting but the account manager emails the pre-filled agreement to the customer afterwards. The data shows that the most important thing with this phase of the journey is that the agreement, the terms and for example the pricing are in accordance with the discussions in the meeting.

"Surprises in the agreement and its terms can easily arouse distrust in Academic Work and the account manager by the customer and even knock down the deal. All needs to be prearranged face to face in the meeting." (Interviewee 3)

According to the data, other factors affecting the customer experience at this point are for example the format and styling of the agreement, clarity of the agreement, and delay in receiving the agreement by email and in answering the possible questions by the customer. Both the workshop teams and the interviewees agree on the fact that these touch points are usually rather important and vital for the customer but too often only seen as formalities by the case company representative.

"-- account manager might not realize that this phase needs to be handled carefully even though it can feel like a technical formality. Especially in Finland, it feels like

customers pay a lot of attention to the contracts and how they are handled." (Interviewee 3)

At the next stage, the second contact person, the consultant manager, is introduced to the customer. He or she will make a so called profile phone call in order to fine down the requirements for the person to be hired and to get to know to the customer a bit more. This touch point was found by four interviewees (2, 3, 5 and 6). However, only one workshop team brought this touch point to their journey timeline. Especially the interviewed consultant managers emphasized the importance of this touchpoint since so far the customer has met, discussed and signed the agreement with one representative and now the case will be forwarded by another. Additionally, the importance of co-operation between the account manager and the consultant manager is highlighted.

"At this point (profile phone call) the consultant manager starts to fulfill the sales promises the account manager has made and since he/she is a new contact person the trust needs to be built again." (Interviewee 2)

The next set of touch points are, according to the data, overlapped to some extent as well. Drawn from the interviews and the workshop teams, the next part of the journey consists of the job advertisement created and published by the consultant manager, communication during the search process, the marketing and the visibility of the search process, presenting of the potential candidates and the job interviews with the customer. These touch points happen simultaneously and some of them happen multiple times during one customer journey (e.g. multiple interviews with the customer and multiple emails during the process). Basically what happens is that the consultant manager publishes the job advertisement and the marketing process for the advertisement is started in for example digital media The consultant manager then starts to interview the potential candidates and will select the best candidates to be presented for the customer to interview at their office. Thus, it is the very fundamentals of the whole service sold by the case company. However, most of the interviewees and the workshop teams emphasized the importance of this phase also from the customer perspective because the case company will now operate in the name of the customer.

"In this phase, Academic Work publishes a job advertisement often carrying the customer company's name and logo. It feels like customers are often on their toes at this stage and it's completely natural since everybody wants to make sure their company is presented in a good light." (Interviewee 6)

The next touch point – the start of the employment of the chosen candidate - was commonly found by all the workshop teams and all the interviewees. In this phase, the customer has made his/her choice of the most suitable candidate for the job and the employee now starts the employment. The chosen candidate has either signed the contract of employment with the case company (staffing services) or straight with the customer's company (recruitment services). The workshop teams and interviewees stated that it is only at this stage when the customer actually finds out how well the process to fulfill the position has succeeded. The teams and the interviewees all highlighted that now the chosen candidate is the new face of the case company (in addition to the two representatives).

"The employee found by us (Academic Work) is now like the business card of Academic Work and the success of our service becomes more concrete for the customer." (Interviewee 5)

"Even though period of employment might be as long as 12 months, the customers usually draw conclusions right after the first days and weeks of the employment period. That is why it is important to have your finger on the pulse right in the beginning of the assignment." (Interviewee 2)

This statement leads us to the next touch point that was only found by one interviewee (interviewee 4) and one workshop team in addition to the interviewee 2. The touch point is so called two-to-five-days-follow-up. The two interviewees said that this follow up is part of the process and the aim is to hear some first impressions from the customer and to make sure that everything is clear and going according to the expectations. Usually this follow up is made by the account manager. Surprisingly, interviewee 4 stated that this follow up is often forgotten or not seen as a necessity by the case company representatives even though frequent communication in the beginning of the employment is usually appreciated by the customer.

"Honestly, I don't know how many of us completes this follow up with the customer. It is easy to forget and oversee as there is the return-visit-buyer coming up in few weeks anyway." (Interviewee 4)

The return-visit-buyer interviewee 4 is referring to, is the next touch point and this was found by all the interviewees and all the workshop teams. Return-visit-buyer is a meeting between the customer, the account manager and the consultant manager. The aim for the case company is to receive feedback for the search process, communication and the beginning of the employment of the chosen candidate. Usually the meeting is scheduled to take place after the new employee has been working for at least two weeks. According to the data, asking for feedback is very important regarding the future customer experience, since this is a way to show interest towards the customer's opinions and act on them. This is also often the first time the customer will meet the consultant manager face to face. Thus, the return-visit-buyer is seen as a highly important part of the customer journey and possibility to strengthen the customer relationship.

"RVB (return-visit-buyer) is the first time the consultant manager meets the customer face to face. This is essential so that we can have a feedback discussion and the customer feels like his/her opinions are taken into account. Asking for feedback for example via email wouldn't necessarily serve the same purpose." (Interviewee 2)

Also, two interviewees (1 and 4) proposed that the return-visit-buyer is an excellent opportunity to plant seeds for the future co-operation as well.

"It is a good chance to use the facetime for our advantage and talk about future needs as well. Of course receiving feedback is the main target but still." (Interviewee 1)

Additionally, the interviewees pointed out that the representatives tend to use the return-visit-buyer as a chance to talk about the NPS survey. According to the interviewees there is no uniform way the representatives talk about customer experience or NPS but usually the customer is asked to answer the survey if he/she has not completed it yet. Also, the importance of the customer experience and the NPS results for the case company are often emphasized during the return-visit-buyer.

Two of the workshop teams and two interviewees (3 and 4) saw the return-visit-buyer as the last touch point on the customer journey whereas the two remaining workshop teams and four of the interviewees (1, 2, 5 and 6) had still one more step on their timeline – the ending of the employment period. This concerns mainly the staffing services since most of the employment periods through recruitment services are valid until further notice. At this stage, the consultant manager usually calls or emails the customer that the employment period is coming to an end and makes the final follow up about the performance of the case company consultant. Also, the customer is usually asked for comments about the employee so that the consultant manager is able to write the certificate of the employment for the employee.

According to interviewees 1 and 2 the customer journey as a whole, can be affected drastically if it is not the first customer journey for the specific customer with this specific case company.

"-- it (customer experience) can be very different and different factors may have an effect on it if the customer has used Academic Work services earlier. Either in a good way or bad way. The first round experience must be kept in mind to be able to improve the future experience." (Interviewee 2)

All the touch points found by the interviewees or the workshop teams are presented in chronological order in the figure 7. Also, the most important touch points are presented in the table 3. The most important touch points were discovered by asking this in the interviews and drawing conclusions from the workshop teams' presentations. To be on the list of most important touch points the touch point had to be mentioned by at least five different parties (interviewees' most important touch points and workshop teams' timelines). There were a total of 10 research sources: 4 workshop teams and 6 interviewees. Thus, the percentage presented in the table 3 illustrates the percentage of the research sources that mentioned the touch point in question. As mentioned earlier, only the touch points that were mentioned by at least 5 research sources were selected to this table.

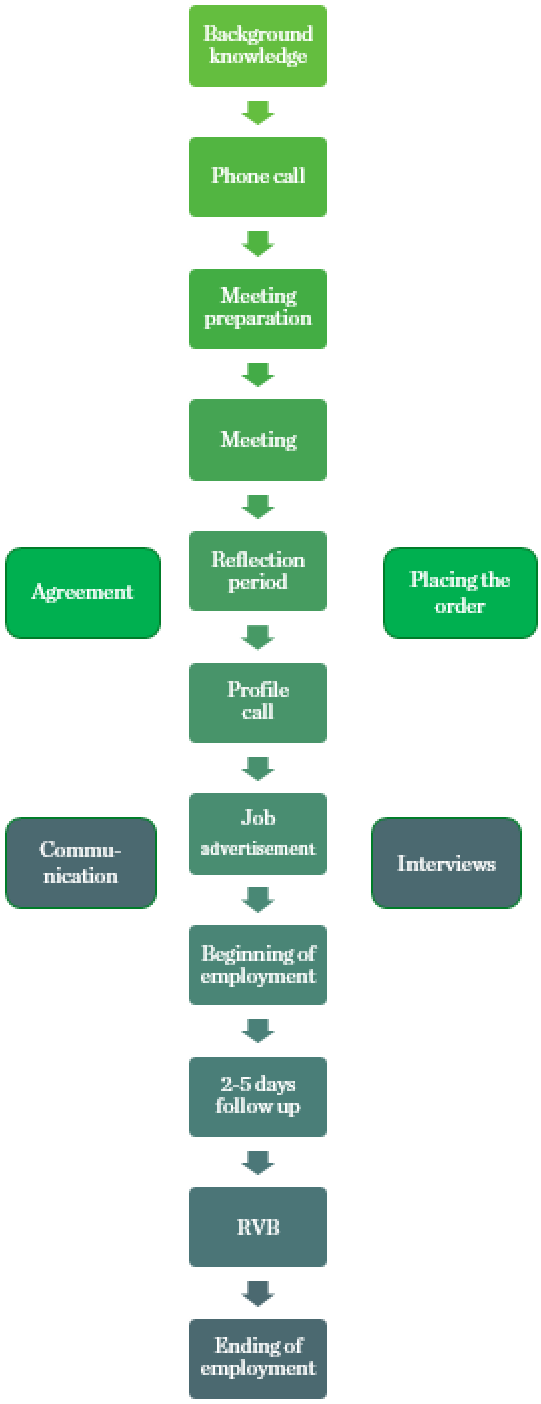

Figure 7. The customer journey and the touch points.

Table 3. The most important touchpoints.

Touch point	Performed by	Times mentioned
Phone call	Account Manager	10 (100 %)
Meeting	Account Manager	10 (100 %)
Reflection, agreement & order	Account Manager	8 (80 %)
Profile call	Consultant Manager	5 (50 %)
Beginning of the employment	Employee	10 (100 %)
Return visit buyer	Account manager & Consultant Manager	10 (100 %)

6.3 Measuring customer experience in the case company

The current customer experience measurement methods were researched through the six interviews conducted for the company representatives. Below is presented the current methods and the opinions of the company representatives regarding the system and possible improvements.

All the interviewees presented the current measurement system similarly. There are two different methods in the system: NPS survey and a yearly questionnaire called the yearly satisfaction survey (hereinafter referred as the YSS).

The NPS survey is conducted in connection with every assignment. The customer receives the NPS survey via email after the employee that was selected starts the employment period. Also, in staffing services, the NPS survey is sent again quarterly during the employment period. In recruitment assignments, the NPS survey is sent for the customer only once. The timetable According to the interviews, the NPS survey is an automated email that is sent from the account managers’ email address. The survey is open for two weeks after it has been sent for the customer. However, none of the interviewees were sure why the survey closes down in two weeks.

"I'm not sure why, but the (NPS) survey is open for two weeks only. And I don't know whether we can change that or not. A reminder email will be automatically sent if the client hasn't answered the survey after one week, though." (Interviewee 4)

Only the three most senior interviewees (1, 2 and 4) were familiar with the timetable regarding the NPS send outs and the closing times. The other interviewees were either unsure about the timetables or didn't mention the timetables at all.

The YSS is a yearly questionnaire sent to all the customers that have bought the services of the case company during a calendar year. The questionnaire is conducted at the turn of the year and results are received usually in February. Account managers and consultant managers decide the customer contacts the YSS is sent to. The contact list is generated automatically from the case company CRM system and then sent for account managers and consultant managers for comments.

"We can change the list of customer contacts the YSS is sent to so that the right person from each customer company gets the survey. Otherwise the survey might be sent to for example the customer contact who has signed the agreement but not co-operated with us in any other way during the assignment." (Interviewee 2)

The YSS is divided into few different sections. Most of them are concerning the case company and the service as a whole but there are also sections concerning the role of account manager and the role of consultant manager as individuals.

The two most senior interviewees (1 and 2) remembered that the NPS survey replaced the previous customer satisfaction survey. It was a one question method sent via email, as well. However, neither of them could identify the reasons behind the change. Only that the system seems to work better now. The NPS method itself, though, has been modified quite recently so that the answers are non-anonymous.

“-- so that it (NPS survey) was first non-anonymous but quite quickly, I think, it was changed to anonymous. Then, this year, it was changed back to non-anonymous. I guess we noticed that it is hard to act on the results if we don’t know who has given them, or something.” (Interviewee 2)

Also other interviewees (1, 3, 4 and 6) proposed that removing the anonymity was a positive change.

In general, the interviewees shared rather similar, mainly positive views about the current system. As the merits of this system, were mentioned for example the use of two different methods, the year-round coverage, easiness and the global recognition of NPS. All of the interviewees expressed in some way that the combination of NPS regularity and quickness and the more chewed and reasoned feedback from the YSS forms a functional system.

“The methods (NPS and YSS) support each other quite well in my opinion, like, the other one is sent evenly during the year and is quick and easy to answer and the other one is sent only once but includes wider range of questions and more to think about.” (Interviewee 6)

In most interviews the global recognition of NPS was linked to the possibility of using the NPS results as a reference material in sales. This was mainly seen as a good thing. However, interviewee 1 pointed out that this can also create unnecessary challenges regarding the reliability of the NPS results.

“This (reaching for higher NPS results just to gain reference material) can of course provoke the Academic Work representatives to softly encourage the customers to, you know like, answer either nine or ten. And then the results are falsely influenced and the reliability of the results is weakened.” (Interviewee 1)

According to the interviews, there are not many actual challenges in the current systems but rather some areas to develop. For example interviewee 5 and interviewee 1 questioned the method of sending the NPS survey via email.

“One thing I have pondered is that we send the NPS survey via email. Would we maybe get more answers if it was some even easier channel, for example text message? I don’t know.” (Interviewee 5)

Interviewee 1 continued that the regular, year-round survey could maybe be even simpler than the NPS.

“I don’t know whether it would be even more efficient if the NPS question was switched to some, like more straightforward question with less answering options. On the other hand, the results wouldn’t be comparable anymore. Just an idea.” (Interviewee 1)

The number of answers received was also considered an area of development. None of the interviewees saw the amount as critically low, however. For example, interviewees 3 and 4 stated that in the beginning of an account manager career it is almost impossible to get high number of answers since the number of clients is always rather low. According to interviewee 4, the low number of answers can be challenging since the effect of one detractor or neutral becomes a lot more significant. None of the consultant managers lifted up the amount of answers as a problem.

Especially the more junior interviewees (interviewees 5, 6 and 3) pointed out that they are unsure about the timetables for the NPS survey. All three interviewees emphasized that it would be easier to follow the results and the amount of answered surveys if this was clarified. Also, for example interviewee 3 proposed that a reminder of the NPS survey sent to a customer would be an excellent improvement.

"-- for example, it would be cool to get a reminder to my email when the NPS survey is sent out. It could include for example the contact info of the customer contact so that I could call and ask him/her to answer the survey." (Interviewee 3)

In addition, some incentives for the customer to answer both the NPS and the YSS were seen as an interesting possibility by interviewee 1. However, interviewee 1 could not name any examples of reasonable incentives for the customer and thus, this idea was still a bit green.

Regarding the YSS, interviewee 2 suggested that the feedback could offer more valuable insight if the account managers and consultant managers could affect the question form.

"The YSS questions could be developed for example in a workshop together with the account managers and the consultant managers and not use, like, a standard form of questions. Of course, the same form is apparently used in all the countries so it wouldn't be possible to compare them then. But then again, I think the most important result of the YSS is the feedback the account managers and the consultant managers get and not the ability to compare for example Sweden and Finland." (Interviewee 2)

According to the interviews, there is some differentiation on how often the customer experience or the results from the measurements is discussed. Interviewees 1 and 2 stated that they hardly ever talk about the customer experience and the measurement scores with their manager. Interviewee 1, however, pointed out that earlier his manager brought up this topic more often but nowadays the situation is very different. Nonetheless, interviewee 1 stated that the topic rises to the unofficial coffee table discussions sometimes. Interviewees 1 and 2 both mentioned that they should go through the topic more often with their own team members. Both shared similar experiences that usually the time with their team members is so limited and there are some more vital and fundamental issues to discuss that the topic of customer experience is often left out. Also, interviewee 5 said that the topic is not discussed or emphasized that much due to the seniority level being still so low.

“The topic altogether has been discussed maybe once during my time here, if I haven’t forgotten about the other times or something. But anyway, I haven’t discussed the results with my manager, though. I guess it’s because I’m still rather new here.” (Interviewee 5)

Accordingly, interviewee 3 stated that there is no need or possibility have a proper discussion about the results since there are still so few answers.

“The topic bounces up every now and then but the discussion is about three words long or so. -- I get so low number of NPS answers that there is really not much to talk about and also the scores fluctuate pretty much.” (Interviewee 3)

Interviewees 6 and 4 go through the results a bit more often. Both interviewees said that a short discussions about the measurement results with their manager take place about every other month.

All the interviewees, except for interviewee 5, noted that the measurement scores are brought up for the whole company once in a quarter. The managing director in Finland presents the prevailing NPS score for the whole company. However, individual scores are not shown in this context. According to the interviews, the individuals with NPS score 100 are shown monthly on the monthly review of top performances for the whole company.

“The total (NPS) score for the whole company is shown in the quarterly review but it’s not a really a discussion, though, but more like demonstration of the results. Our scores have been quite high so I don’t know whether the situation would be different with worse results. Maybe there would be more to it then. Same goes for the individual monthly scores. The guys with NPS 100 are presented like ‘here’s who got a 100’ and that’s it.” (Interviewee 4)

According to the interviewees, larger discussions happen rarely. The topic has been part of a workshop sometime earlier but none of the interviewees recall this precisely. Interviewees 1, 2 and 6 mentioned that some discussion rises usually during the end of the year since the account manager and the consultant manager with the best NPS scores for the whole year are rewarded in a company awards gala in February.

"-- at the end of the year the discussion accelerates since the awards are getting closer and everybody wants to win. It's more like speculation, thought, and not like official discussions." (Interviewee 6)

Most of the interviewees had some difficulties to recognize how the measurement results are specifically acted on due to the sparsity of the topic related discussions. Interviewees 1, 2 and 6 all mentioned that most of the actions are based on individual efforts so that the individual is instructed to focus on this area and for example prioritize the measurement score development. Interviewee 1 pointed out that actions are taken only if the results are low. Interviewee 4 had already earlier stated very similar opinions about the discussions with his manager and now interviewee 1 fully agreed with those statements.

"Some actions might be planned if the results have been low but usually they seem like quite short-sighted plans and I think, at least in my case, the plans have been aiming to raise the number and not improve the customer experience, you know what I mean? -- one example could be that I start talking about the NPS more to my customers and tell them how important it is for me to achieve good results. -- I might get more answers and maybe better scores but nothing about the service has changed." (Interviewee 1)

Interviewees 2, 3 and 6 also agreed that actions might be taken more if the scores were low. Furthermore, interviewee 4 questioned whether his manager has knowledge of the open comment section of the NPS results for his/her team members. He stated that the manager probably knows his NPS score but not necessarily the comments and reasons behind it.

Following up on the results goes hand in hand with the rather irregular discussions about the whole topic. According to the interviews, single actions are not followed up but rather the development of the NPS score is followed.

"Usually we just look at the score and whether it has developed or not, like, I don't know how much we focus on the things I have done to improve the score. Sometimes we discuss that, though. -- if my score is high, then the topic won't probably rise in the next discussion." (Interviewee 6)

The three most junior interviewees (interviewees 3, 5 and 6) found that the current system is reliable and the results are valid even though there still might be some areas to develop. Interviewees 2 and 4 were a bit unsure whether the system is fully reliable but did not mention any specific drastic flaws. Interviewee 1 was the most skeptical of the reliability of the system.

"Probably the system is reliable most of the time but regarding the NPS I feel like people do speak very differently about it for their customers. Like, I know that some people encourage their customers to give better numbers for them and I kind of understand that because we are awarded generously for the best results. -- I think that the system itself is reliable if it is used correctly and honestly." (Interviewee 1)

7 DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the results from the interviews are being analyzed. The analysis is done by reflecting the results to the theory section. Similarities and differences are searched.

Also, the research questions will be answered in this chapter. The sub questions will be answered first and then the main research question will be answered through the sub questions.

7.1 Evaluation of the status and management of customer experience

In the following, the sub research question “How is customer experience and its management perceived in the case company?” is answered. The answer will be compiled from different, smaller observations and thus a straight forward answer cannot be stated.

Five out of six interviewees placed customer experience among the most important things in creating financial success for the case company. Despite of the fact that it was not the most common factor to be stated as the most important factor, the state of customer experience appreciation is excellent. This relates well to the findings of Pine and Gilmore (2011, 3-4) and Löytänä and Kortesuo (2011, 13) of the effects of customer experience to the company’s success. On the company level the appreciation seems to be in good shape and the representatives seem to emphasize the importance of customer experience for the whole industry as well. The interviewees all considered customer experience as a more long term factor and investment which has multiple linkages to the theory as well (e.g. Gentile et al. 2007, 395-410; Klaus & Maklan 2013; Vesterinen 2014). One of the biggest reasons behind the customer experience appreciation on the company level is that the case company management has made customer experience one of the representatives’ two main goals. That is, of course, rather clear signal that customer experience is an important topic on the managerial level.

However, some deviation was found in the personal opinions of the interviewees. This can be related to the fact that the main goals are not set by the representatives themselves but the management. It can be concluded that the representatives do not necessarily find the main goals internally motivating. On the personal level, the representatives appreciate more the factors that have straight linkages to their salaries. Seems that the company management has succeeded in planting the idea of the importance of customer experience for the company in the long run but the activities on the practical level are still more short-sighted. Obviously, the linkage between excellent customer experience and the financial success of the individual representatives is not clear. The management should close the gap between representatives' personal financial success and the company's financial success. If the representatives understood this linkage better, the personal opinions could improve as well. Drawn from the theory part; it is the management team's responsibility to commit the whole organization to a common goal of improving the customer experience in every touch point (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 81). Also, the theory part suggests that the financial outcomes of customer experience should be measured and shown to the employees (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 53-54). This could help closing this gap.

The meaning of professionalism and easiness recurred multiple times in multiple interviews regarding the type of customer experience that the case company is aiming for. Furthermore, ensuring the know-how and thus the professionalism of the representatives was the most common method to secure the quality of the experience. It seems that the representatives strongly prefer the utilitarian values over the hedonic values. The functional values are perceived as very important factors and the experiential values are ignored. Taking the experiential values, such as, emotional ties, surprise and delight more into consideration, could improve the customer loyalty and especially the long-term customer relationships like the theory part suggests (e.g. Holbrook 1999; Addis & Holbrook 2001; Palmer 2010, 196-208; Frow and Payne 2007, 90-91). Seems like the balance is now a bit off and the hedonic values should be brought up by the managers more often.

The interviewees rarely discuss the customer experience topic in general with their managers. The discussions usually focus on the measurement scores. According to the theory (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 82) this is not necessarily bad situation, since bringing up the numbers seems to be one of the most efficient ways of managing customer experience. However, combined with the above mentioned fact that the representatives do not fully understand the linkage between their success and the customer experience, the general discussions could be a useful thing to do.

The more junior representatives and especially the junior account managers seem to get less answers for their NPS surveys. This was seen as one of the reasons behind the fact that managers discuss the whole topic (generally or through numbers) even more rarely with them. Obviously, the main goals are same for the junior representatives as well but the habit of managers ignoring the customer experience discussions in the beginning of the career sends a very different message. The focus seems to be in totally different areas in the beginning of the career. Obviously, this could be a reason for the forming of personal opinions about the importance of customer experience. The representatives are getting the understanding that customer experience is a company level goal but still not that important in the practice.

Even though the representatives might not get that many answers or their scores fluctuate due to the sparseness of the answers, the managers should have some focus on the customer experience. Otherwise, the practical level and the company level are in great conflict with each other. Even if the managers start putting more focus on the topic later in their subordinates' careers, the personal idea of the importance of customer experience has already been formed. Regularly had, general discussion could be beneficial regarding the experience management in other ways as well. Like Verhoef et al. (2009, 38-39) suggested, customer experience management requires constant efforts to sustain and develop. Bringing up the topic could serve as the apparent first step regarding these constant efforts.

7.1.1 Evaluation of the touch point recognition

In general, the touch points were recognized rather similarly among the representatives. The lack of dispersion conveys that the touch points that have been recognized are true to the reality. However, this does not guarantee that all the relevant touch point have been recognized.

According to the interviews, the direct touch points were well recognized and the factors affecting the customer experience during them were emphasized widely by all most of the representatives. Slight blundering was noticed in the account managers' answers. They were more uncertain about the touch points that the consultant manager is responsible of. For example, only one account manager recognized the profile call touch point. The interviewed consultant managers were, however, far more certain and aware of all the account manager touch points in addition to their own. Compared with the theory and figure 4 (Löytänä & Kortesuo 2011, 75), there are still some direct touch points that the representatives did not mention. For example online customer service and chat that the case company offers, the use of the IT systems the case company offers as a part of their service and the invoicing and collecting. The other ones are only minor touch points but the invoicing is usually rather meaningful from the customer point of view. Like stated in the theory, failures in billing may lead to a greater likelihood of the customer feeling unsatisfied in the future as well (Verhoef et al. 2009, 31-41).

As this is one of the most important touch points for many clients, it should be important or even mentioned by the representatives as well. The invoicing is solely the responsibility of neither account manager nor consultant manager and this could be the reason for the oblivion. Combined with the blundering of account managers' understanding of consultant managers touch points, the customer journey could be more clear for the representatives. After all, according to the theory (Klaus & Maklan 2013, 232) understanding the touch points is the base for creating excellent customer experience. The management could for example emphasize the co-operation between the marketing department and the company representatives. Marketing department has usually a lot to do with the indirect touch points.

The indirect touch points were more troublesome for the representatives to perceive. The more senior representatives recognized the indirect touchpoints better than the junior ones. It also seems that the senior representatives have more comprehensive view of the journey and can identify the linkages between touch points better. All in all, the representatives emphasize the direct touch point over the indirect ones. Additionally, as table 2 shows, there are no indirect touch points among the most important touch points. Understanding of indirect touch points and their effect on the customer experience should be added. This could for example mean a general discussions of the customer journey or more workshops similar to the one facilitated for this research. The fact that junior representatives don’t recognize the indirect touch points as easily as the senior ones can be again traced back to the lack of focus on the customer experience with their manager in the beginning of the career.

7.2 Evaluation of customer experience measurement

In overall, the measurement system itself is very clear and well understood among the representatives, independent of the seniority level or the position. Seems that the system has been clarified well to all the employees. Also, the management has obviously done good job in explaining the reasons behind the use of this specific system. The representatives shared a view that this system of two different methods is more reliable than one method system. Especially the different nature of questions in both of the methods was considered an excellent thing. Also the year-round timetables for the system was considered an advantage. All this relates very well to the theory of the importance of having multiple-method measurement systems (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 42-44).

The previous changes made to the system were not that clear to everyone. Most of the representatives acknowledged some changes, like the removing of anonymity and they were considered solely good changes. Seems that the changes made to the system have only been positive since none of the representatives had negative feedback on them. There were not many ready development suggestions but rather some random ideas of small enhancements to the system. Some of the ideas brought up were for example changing the NPS channel from email to text message and changing NPS question or the amount of answering options to make it easier. These ideas were not well prepared and thus not considered essential. Also, this conveys that there is not a lot of dissatisfaction to the current system.

The measurement scores seem to be widely used as a reference material and selling point for potential customers. It seems that the company management even emphasizes the importance of the measurement scores as a reference material and thus the aim of the customer experience measurement might be rather unsound in the eyes of the account managers and the consultant managers: is the aim to get as high scores as possible to convince the future customers or is the aim to get as reliable results and feedback of the customer experience as possible to improve the experience in the future? This can create problems regarding for example the reliability of the scores if the representatives try to influence the customers' answers too much. Like Löytänä & Korkiakoski (2014, 140) state in the theory part, one of the most important aims overall in measuring customer experience is to obtain reliable information to further improve the customer experience in the future.

Seems that the case company management needs to clarify the most important aims of measuring the customer experience and start emphasizing the reliability of the measurement more. This means reaching a better balance between the most important aims of the measurement and the use of the scores as a customer reference.

The low number of NPS answers received emerged multiple times in the interviews. The number of answers in not by any means critically low, but higher number would still benefit the representatives and the case company. This challenge is not necessarily related to the chosen measurement system itself but rather to the methods and timetables of sending the NPS question. The three most junior representatives interviewed were not sure, when the NPS questions are being sent. Thus, they might not remember to remind the customer to answer the survey if they have not done that right after the survey has been sent. For the more senior representatives the schedule was more clear. The idea presented in the interview of a reminder email for the representative once a NPS survey is sent out for their customer would actually be rather effective. This way the representatives would remember to ask their customers to answer the survey and thus add the number of received answers overall.

In general, the NPS survey raised more questions than the YSS questionnaire. The representatives brought up very few challenges and development ideas regarding the YSS. According to the interviews the questionnaire is built in Sweden and it could be useful to be able to work on the questions and the form in a for example workshop group. This idea is well grounded by the theory of questionnaires. As Shaw & Ivens (2007, 168) presented, it is essential put time and effort in designing and constructing the questionnaire. The representatives did not have knowledge of how the questionnaire is designed in Sweden so it is of course possible that this kind of workshop has already been conducted in order to design the current questionnaire.

Based on the interviews, one of the most critical challenges regarding the customer experience measurement and management is the fluctuating rate of the topic related discussions with the managers and the company overall. This is important factor as stated in the theory part as well: companies should systematically share and act on the metrics received from the customer experience measurement processes to improve the current state of customer experience (Schmidt-Subramanian 2013, 2).

Both team managers interviewed acknowledged that they should have more discussions about customer experience and the measurement scores with their team members. They both agreed that this topic is, for some reason, not among the top priorities and since their time is very limited, the topic gets easily left out. On the other hand, they both stated that their manager has these discussions with them hardly ever.

The most junior representative interviewed stated that the topic has been discussed only once during her time in the company. She thought that this might be because she is so new in the company. Also, the more junior account managers stated the same. As mentioned above, the number of answers is usually rather low in the beginning of one's career and this was seen as a reason not to talk about the whole topic. All this is very contradictive to the earlier answers of the importance of customer experience and to the fact that the measurement scores are one of the two main goals of representative. Seems that the employees acknowledge the idea but have not absorbed this on practical level after all.

In addition, the interviewees stated that the company wide discussions are usually rather shallow. The management usually shows the results of a certain quarter or month and the individual with the top scores are shown. The reason for the current situation according to the interviewees seems to be the good level of the scores and thus the no existing need for in depth discussions. According to Palmer (2010, 202-203) in the theory part, one of the aims of measuring customer experience is to reveal the most critical factors of the customer experience that have the most significant effects on for example the customer retention. This proves that discussions should be had even when the scores are good so that the representatives could better understand what makes the customers return.

When the discussions with managers do occur, the quality of the actions taken was not appreciated. Multiple interviewees stated that the actions are usually either rather abstract or focused on raising the number artificially. The actions were seen as short-sighted ways to enhance the score but not necessarily the experience itself. Similarly to the above, this is in contradiction to the theory part. None of the interviewees said to have gone through the touch points with their manager in order to find possible reasons for lower scores. Managers should absolutely do this more often. This could offer solutions for the above discussed touch point recognition as well. Managers could then follow up on the actions taken considering for example specific touch points and not only follow up on the score development.

The representatives thought that the current system is reliable overall. The interviewees, however, stated that the system is not 100% perfect but as mentioned in the theory part, this is only natural. Only one specific flaw jeopardizing the reliability of the system was mentioned: the honesty of the representatives. This, however, is part of any system and companies have to trust their employees to be honest with their actions. This reflects the fact that the employees do trust the system and that is, of course, the foundation of measuring the customer experience.

7.3 State of customer experience and possible improvements

Drawn from the discussion above, the answers to the sub research question “How is customer experience perceived and how is it managed in the case company?” can be stated as follows:

The employees seem to understand the idea of the importance of customer experience for the company and this is well supported by the management. However, this has not been fully channeled to the practical level and thus the personal opinions of the importance of customer experience management differ from the idea planted by the management. Thus, the linkage between the financial results of the company and the customer experience is not as clear as it could be. The managers are not emphasizing the importance of customer experience enough on the practical level so that it would support the idea of the importance. This problem is more visible with the more junior employees.

The employees recognize the functional values of customer experience better than the experimental values. This goes hand in hand with the fact that especially the junior employees have more difficulties in recognizing the indirect touch points and the touch points that they are not involved in on the customer journey. The importance of recognizing the touch points and the journey of a customer should be more clear for the representatives. The customer experience should be seen more as a comprehensive entirety rather than as a “mix of different representatives’ duties”. Seems that the managers are not putting enough effort in ensuring that all the representatives have clear image of the whole customer journey and the factors that influence the customer’s experience.

The answer for the other sub research question “How is customer experience measurement conducted in the case company?” is the following:

The current measurement system includes a monthly NPS survey and a yearly questionnaire (Yearly Satisfaction Survey). The system and the two methods have been well clarified for the employees. Based on the results, the system is basically very reliable, functional and there are only very minor details that could be developed. However, the managerial side of the customer experience measurement is a clear development area. The aims of measuring customer experience are not clear for the employees. Balance between the customer reference use and the development of the customer experience is uneven at the moment.

The discussions with managers - individual or company wide - take place irregularly. The discussions are more typical when the scores are low. If the scores are high, discussions happen only rarely. Also, the discussions of the results are shallow and do not necessarily aim to improve the actual customer experience but the score received. This means that for example the planned actions are short-sighted and concentrate on “artificial” ways to enhance the score. Actions are rarely related to making changes or developments regarding specific touch points. This supports the conception of the measurement scores being only material for customer references.

The main research question “How could customer experience management and its measurement be improved?” can now be answered based on the sub research questions:

Firstly, the well understood idea of the importance of customer experience should be transported to the practical level as well to really influence the personal opinions of the employees. The employees are the core of forming the customer experience so in addition to the idea being planted, it needs to be seen on the practical level as well. The management should clarify the reasons, preferably with examples, for customer experience being one of the representatives’ two main goals. This also enables the employees to understand the linkage between excellent customer experience and the financial success of both the company and the representatives better.

Secondly, the representatives' understanding of customer journey needs to be further clarified. It is essential that the representatives recognize all the touch points and the factors - both direct and indirect - influencing the experience. This way improvements for each encounter can be made efficiently. Also, this makes it easier for the representatives to recognize the reasons for possible low scores in customer experience measurement or the reasons for the customers to return.

Thirdly, the aims for collecting measurement data of customer experience should be clarified for the employees thoroughly. Currently, the representatives are uncertain about the actual goals of the measurement in addition to getting material for customer references. The management should emphasize the aim of adding understanding of the state of customer experience, developing it and, thus, indirectly improving the financial success of the company. Getting material for customer references should be considered a nice bonus in addition to that.

Fourthly, the discussions about the measurement scores should be had regularly regardless of whether the scores are high or low. Both scores can offer valuable insights for further development of customer experience and good scores should not be overlooked. The aim of the discussions should be shifted from short-sighted score-centric method towards revealing the touch points that require development and taking actions to improve the experience through them.

On the managerial level the most crucial actions to be taken based on the research are:

1. Explaining the reasons for customer experience being so important for the company and showing the financial outcomes of the customer experience and its development

2. More regular and in-depth discussions of the topic and the whole customer journey and the experience overall including the touch point analysis with both junior and senior employees
3. Immersing in the high measurement scores as well as in the lower scores to reveal the reasons behind both of them
4. Explaining the reasons for measuring customer experience and clarifying the aim of it

8 CONCLUSIONS

The competition on the global markets today is increasing and finding competitive advantages has become more and more difficult for the companies (Puccinelli et al. 2009, 1). Due to this, development in customer focus has become an essential requirement for companies. Unlike the traditional economic theories suggest, customers do not make their decisions solely on a rational basis and the emotional and irrational factors affect their decision-making processes. (Gentile et al. 2007) The markets have shifted from filling the basic needs and serving customers to offering experiences for the customers to for example appeal on their emotional side as well (Puccinelli et al. 2009, 1). However, companies do not create the experience alone for the customers to “consume”. Companies and their customers are co-creating value through the whole customer experience. (Prahalad and Ramswamy 2004, 5-6; Payne et al. 2008, 84)

There are multiple different definitions for customer experience. Majority of them present that customer experience forms from the set of interactions and touch points - direct or indirect - between the customer and the company or its product or service (e.g. Addis and Holbrook 2001; Meyer & Schwager 2007). Customer journey refers to the set of all these encounters and touch points. It starts from the assumptions the customer might have of the company even prior to being in any direct contact with them and continues all the way until the customer reckons the experience has ended. (Addis and Holbrook 2001; Berry et al. 2002).

Companies should measure their customer experience in order to get concrete results of their success in the area (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 133). The results should be systematically shared and acted on to make constant improvements to their customer experience (Schmidt-Subramanian 2013, 2). There is a variety of different methods to measure customer experience and companies should build their own system of more than one method to measure the customer experience. This will make the measurements more reliable. (Meyer & Schwager 2007, 6; Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 140)

The act of companies engineering the experience and the customer journey the way that it offers more value to both of the parties, is called customer experience management (Verhoef et al. 2009, 38). It is hard to find a ready set of actions for general improvements in customer experience on different industries and for different companies. This is why companies need to look into their own surroundings and touch points so that the experience they are offering the customers can be enhanced.

The aim of this thesis was to add understanding of the current situation regarding customer experience for the case company managers so that the customer experience, its management and its measurement could be improved. To begin with, the research answered the sub research questions and then the main research question was answered using the answers to sub research questions:

"How is customer experience perceived and how is it managed in the case company?"

The importance of customer experience was understood rather well on the conceptual level and the idea is clear company-wide. However, this has not been channeled to the practical level among the employees. Personal opinions of the importance of customer experience are differing from the idea that the management has planted. The linkage between customer experience and the financial success of the company is not as clear as it should be in order to transport the idea to practical level. Also, the customer journey and the touch points are still not clear enough for the employees. The management should take more responsibility in walking the employees through the whole customer journey so that all the factors influencing the customer experience would become more clear for the employees.

"How is customer experience measurement conducted in the case company?"

The current measurement system in the case company includes two different methods: the monthly NPS survey and a yearly questionnaire for the customer satisfaction. The system itself is reliable and covers the year-round schedule well. Also, the two different methods support one another rather well. The aims of measuring customer experience are not clear for the employees. Now the employees see the measurement scores mainly as a source of customer reference material to be used to land more customers in the future. The aim should be shifted more towards getting understanding of the current experience the customers are having and thus improving the whole experience.

Discussions about the measurement scores are, however, too irregular, shallow and do not aim to improve the experience but rather just the score in a short-sighted way. The actions related to measurement scores should be more focused in the long term development of the customer experience in each of the touch points and not just enhancing the score “artificially”.

“How could customer experience management and its measurement be improved?”

There are four different aims for the case company to be reached in order to improve their customer experience management and measurement. Firstly, the management needs to clarify the reasons for having customer experience as one of the employees’ two main goals. Also, the linkage between the customer experience and the financial success of the company needs to be clarified preferably with examples. Secondly, the managers need to clarify the whole customer journey for the representatives so that they recognize all the touch points and factors influencing the customer experience. Thirdly, the reasons and aims for measuring customer experience need to be explained for the employees. The managers need to emphasize the importance of collecting data in order to improve the customer experience in order to indirectly improve the financial success of the company. It needs to be clear that the ability to use the measurement scores as a customer reference comes only after this and is rather like a bonus. Finally, the in-depth discussions about the customer experience and the measurement scores need to be regularly had regardless of whether the scores are high or low. The focus in these discussions has to be changed to revealing the touch points that are requiring development and taking actions towards developing the experience in them.

Reflecting the findings of this research to the topic theory, it can be seen that none of the suggested development actions is overwhelmingly difficult to conduct. Most of them are linked to the basis of customer experience theory and are rather easy to back up. Thus, the situation in the case company seems bright and taking into account the already achieved level in customer experience measurement scores, the case company seems to be on an excellent path towards great customer experience and achieving long term customer relationships.

Similar research should be conducted in other companies as well to review the value of these findings. Even though these findings are not overwhelmingly difficult to conduct, they could be applicable in many companies and industries in addition to this case company.

Further research should be done regarding the customer aspect. Once the process with customer experience and its measurement inside the company has been developed thoroughly, the focus should be shifted towards the customer. This will, however, require collecting customer data and, thus, revealing how customers are perceiving the current experience with the case company.

9 REFERENCES

Acdemic Work. (2016) Country Managers report for the company management.

Addis, M. and Holbrook, M. B. (2001) On the conceptual link between mass customization and experiential consumption: An explosion of subjectivity. *Journal of Consumer behavior.* Vol. 1, No.1, pp. 50-66.

Berry, L.L., Carbone, L. P. and Haeckel, S. H. (2002) *Managing the Total Customer Experience. MIT Sloan Management*. Vol. 43, No.3, pp. 85-89.

Bowden, J. (2009) The process of customer engagement: a conceptual framework" Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, vol. 17, no. 1 (winter 2009), pp. 63–74.

East, R., Hammond, K. and Lomax, W. (2008), "Measuring the impact of positive and negative word of mouth on brand purchase probability", International Journal of Research in Marketing. Vol. 25, pp. 215-224.

Eskola, J. and Suoranta, J. (1998). Johdatus Laadulliseen Tutkimukseen. Vastapaino, Tampere.

Eskola, J. & Suoranta, J. (2003) Johdatus laadulliseen tutkimukseen. 6. painos. Jyväskylä. Gummerus Kirjapaino Oy

Feeney, T. (2015) Listening to the customer. Three ways to apply data to data in order to improve customer experience. *Smart Business Columbu*s. Vol. 23, No. 4, pp. 11.

Fisher, M. and Vainio, S. (2014) Potkua palvelubisnekseen. Asiakaskokemus luodaan yhdessä. Helsinki, Talentum.

Frow, P. and Payne, A (2007) Towards the 'perfect' customer experience*. Brand Management.* Vol. 15, No.2, pp. 89-101.

Gentile, C., Spiller, N. and Noci, G. (2007) How to Sustain the Customer Experience: an Overview of Experience Components that Co-Create Value with Customer. *European Management Journal.* Vol. 25, No. 5, pp. 395-410.

Ghose , K .(2007) ‘ The strength of the brand value chain is the strength of the brand anchor ’, paper presented at Thought Leaders International Conference on Brand Management, Birmingham Business School, April.

Grisaffe, D. (2007). “Questions about the ultimate question: Conceptual considerations in evaluating Reichheld’s Net Promoter Score (NPS)”. Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior, Vol. 20, pp. 36-53.

Gupta, S. and Vajic, M. (2000), “The contextual and dialectical nature of experiences”, in Fitzsimmons, J.A. and Fitzsimmons, M.J. (Eds), New Service Development: Creating Memorable Experiences, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 33-51.

Harris, R., Harris, K. and Baron, S. (2003), “Theatrical service experiences: dramatic script development with employees”, International Journal of Service Industry Management, Vol. 14 No. 2, pp. 184-199

Henkilöstöpalveluyritysten liitto. (2016) Suhdanteet 7/2016, liikevaihtotiedot 6/2016. [WWW-document]. Available: http://www.hpl.fi/tilastot/top-20-liikevaihtotiedustelu.html

Holbrook, M. B. and Hirschman, E. C. (1982) The Experiential Aspects of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings, and Fun. *Journal of Consumer Research*. Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 132-140.
Holbrook, M.B. (1999) Consumer Value. Routledge, London

Holbrook, M.B. (2006), “Reply to Bradshaw, McDonagh, and Marshall: turn off the bubble machine”, Journal of Macromarketing, Vol. 26 No. 1, pp. 84-88.

Keiningham, T., Cooil, B., Andreassen T. and Aksoy L. (2007). “A Longitudinal Examination of Net Promoter and Firm Revenue Growth,” Journal of Marketing, Vol. 71, pp. 39-51.

Kim, H-Y. and Kim, Y-K (2007) Opportunities and threaths. Deutscher Universitäts-Verlag, GWV.

Klaus, P. and Maklan, S. (2011) Customer Experience: Are We Measuring the Right Things, *International Journal of Market Research*, Vol. 53, No. 6, pp. 771-792.

Klaus, P. and Maklan, S. (2013) Towards a better measure of customer experience. *International Journal of Market Research*. Vol. 55, No. 2, pp 227-246.

Kotler, P. and Keller, K. L. (2012) Marketing Management. 14th edition, Pearson.

Kumar, V. and Shah, D. (2004). “Building customer loyalty for the 21st century,” Journal of Retailing No. 80, pp. 317-330.

Lapierre, J. 2000. Customer-perceived value in industrial contexts. Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, vol. 15, issue 2/3, pp. 122-145.

LaSelle, D. and Britton, T. A. (2003) Priceless: Turning ordinary products into extraordinary experience. Harward Business School Press, Boston. (e-book)
https://books.google.se/books?hl=fi&lr=&id=8LN6fx6b0M4C&oi=fnd&pg=PR11&dq=Priceless:+Turning+ordinary+products+into+extraordinary+experience.&ots=2S9cO3i723&sig=p8hkDv_tPQjB-3F8y1DbvkNzviM&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Priceless%3A%20Turning%20ordinary%20products%20into%20extraordinary%20experience.&f=false

Lemke, F., Clark, M. and Wilson, H. (2011) Customer experience quality: an exploration in business and customer context using repertory grid technique. *Academy of marketing science.* No. 39, pp. 846-869.

Løvlie, L., Downs, C., & Reason, B. (2008). Bottom-line Experiences: Measuring the Value of Design in Service. Design Management Review, 19(1), 73-79.

Löytänä, J. and Kortesuo, K. (2011) Asiakaskokemus Palvelubisneksestä Kokemusbisnekseen. Talentum.

Löytänä, J. and Korkiakoski, K. (2014) Asiakkaan aikakausi. Rohkeus + rakkaus = raha. Talentum.

Metsämuuronen, J. (2003). Tutkimuksen tekemisen perusteet ihmistieteessä. Jyväskylä: Gummerrus Kirjapaino Oy.

Metsämuuronen, J. (2006) Laadullisen tutkimuksen käsikirja. Gummerus Kirjapaino Oy, Jyväskylä.

Meyer, C. and Schwager, A. (2007) Understanding Customer Experience. *Harward Business Review.* pp. 117-126.

Oliver, R.L., Rust, R.T. and Varki, S. (1997), "Customer delight: foundations, findings, and managerial insight", Journal of Retailing, Vol. 73 No. 3, pp. 311-336.

Palmer, A. (2010) Customer Experience Management: a Critical Review*. Journal of Services Marketing.* Vol. 24, No. 2, pp. 196-208.

Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A. and Berry, L. L. (1988) SERVQUAL – A Multiple-Item scale for Measuring Consumer Perceptions of Service Quality. *Journal of Retailing.* Vol. 61, No. 1, pp. 12-140.

Payne, A. F., Storbacka, K. and Frow, P. (2008) Managing the co-creation of value. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science.* Vol. 36, No. 1, pp. 83-96.

Pine, B. J. and Gilmore, J. H. (2011) The experience economy. Massachusetts, Harward Business Review Press.

Prahalad, C.K. and Ramaswamy, V. (2003), “The new frontier of experience innovation”, MIT Sloan Management Review, Vol. 44 No. 4, pp. 12-19.

Puccinelli, N. M., Goodstein, R. C., Grewal, D., Price, R., Raghubir, P. and Stewart, D. (2009) Customer experience management in retailing: Understanding the buying process. *Journal of Retailing*. Vol. 85, No.1, pp. 15–30.

Reichheld, Frederick F. (2003), “The One Number You Need to Grow,” Harvard Business Review, 81, pp. 46–54.

Reichheld, Frederick F. (2006). “The Ultimate Question, with Fred Reichheld,” a MarketingProfs Virtual Seminar, (July 11, 2006), (accessed July 18, 2016), [available at http://www.marketingprofs.com].

Schmidt-Subramanian, M (2013) Seven Steps To Successful Customer Experience Measurement Programs. Forrester Research Inc. [e-document] [Retrieved 31.3.2015] Available: http://success.qualtrics.com/rs/qualtrics/images/7-Steps-to-Successful-Customer-Experience-Measurement-Programs.pdf

Schmitt, Bernd (1999), “Experiential Marketing,” Journal of Marketing Management, 15 (1–3), 53–67.

Shaw, C. and Ivens, J. (2002) Building Great Customer Experiences. New York, Palgrave MacMillain.

Stenbacka, C. (2001) Qualitative research requires quality concepts of its own. Management Decision, 39(7), 551-555.

Swinyard, W. R. (1993). The effects of mood, involvement, and quality of store experience on shopping intentions. Journal of Consumer Research, 20, 271-80.

Tuomi, J. and Saraajärvi, A. (2009) Laadullinen tutkimus ja sisältöanalyysi. 5th edition, Jyväskylä, Gummerus Kirjapaino Oy.

Vargo, S. L. and Lusch, R. F. (2004) Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing. *Journal of Marketing.* Vol. 68, pp. 1-17.

Verhoef, P. C., Lemon, K. N., Parasuraman, A., Roggeveen, A., Tsiros, M. and Schlesinger, L. A. (2009) Customer Experience Creation: Determinants, Dynamics and Management Strategies. *Journal of Retailing.* No 85, pp. 31-41.

Vesterinen, J. (2014) Committed to customers. A 5-Step model for delivering a great customer experiences. Suomen Liikekirjat.

Zomerdijk, L. G., & Voss, C. A. (2010). Service design for experience-centric services. Journal of Service Research, 13(1), 67-82.

APPENDICES

Appendice 1: The interview form

How is customer experience perceived and how is it managed in the case company:

- What are the most crucial things that affect the company’s financial results?
- How does customer experience affect the financial results of the company? (If mentioned in answers to the above)
- What does customer experience mean in the company you are representing? In the whole industry?
- Why is customer experience important/not important? (based on the previous answer)
- Personal opinion, how important is creating good customer experience?
- What kind of customer experience are you aiming to create?
- How do you ensure that?
- On which encounters does customer experience form in the company you are representing? You may list the encounters in chronological order.
- Which ones are the most important encounters?
- How and how often do you discuss about customer experience with your manager/management? Company-wide?

How is customer experience measured in the case company:

- How do you measure customer experience in the company you are working in? Be as specific as possible.
- Have the measurement methods been modified during your career in this company?
- What is going well? What kind of challenges do you see in the current measurement system?
- How would you like to improve the measurement system?

- Do you go through the results from customer experience measurement in the company you are representing? How, when and with whom?
- How do you act on the results received from the measurements?
- How do you follow up on them?
- Do you personally believe that the current customer experience measurement system offers reliable results or should it be developed somehow?