



**CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN INSURANCE COMPANY'S CLAIMS
TAKEOVER**

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ABSTRACT

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Customer experience in insurance company's claims takeover

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When competition is highly rival today in most industries, providing superior customer experience and creating customer value acts as a path to differentiation from competitors, which results in customer loyalty. Creating a good customer experience demands knowledge of customers' expectations so these can be met efficiently. Good customer experience creates long-term customer relationships and a positive image of the company and the brand. Creating positive and memorable customer experiences has become the core of service offerings and the leading managerial objective.

This master's thesis examined a Finnish insurance company's claims takeover model from the perspective of customer experience. The focus of this thesis is on the business-to-consumer (B2C) and only those customers, and their expectations and experiences are studied in this thesis. The main objective for this master's thesis was to create a better understanding of the takeover model and how it is working from the customers' perspective. In addition, this thesis aimed to uncover customer's experiences and expectations of the model and service, and find ways to minimize the gap between experiences and expectations. Lastly, the aim was to uncover what kind of problems customers face and propose development ideas. This study was a case study that used mixed methods, and the data collection method was an email survey with both open-ended and close-ended questions. The theoretical part of this thesis focused on investigating concepts of customer experience and customer journey, customer value and service process.

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Koska kilpailu on kovaa nykyään useimmilla toimialoilla, ylivertaisen asiakaskokemuksen tarjoaminen ja asiakasarvon luominen toimii tienä kilpailijoista erottautumiseen, mikä taas johtaa asiakasuskollisuuteen. Hyvän asiakaskokemuksen luominen edellyttää asiakkaiden odotusten tuntemista, jotta niihin voidaan vastata tehokkaasti. Hyvä asiakaskokemus luo pitkiä asiakassuhteita ja positiivisen kuvan yrityksestä sekä brändistä. Positiivisten ja ikimuistoisten asiakaskokemusten luomisesta on tullut palvelutarjonnan ydin ja johtamisen tavoite.

Tämä pro gradututkielma tutki suomalaisen vakuutusyhtiön vahinkojen haltuunoton mallia asiakaskokemuksen näkökulmasta. Työ keskittyy yrityksen ja yksityisen kuluttajan väliseen suhteeseen. Tämän tutkielman päätavoitteena oli luoda parempi käsitys yrityksen haltuunoton mallista ja sen toimivuudesta asiakkaiden näkökulmasta. Lisäksi oli tarkoitus tutkia asiakkaiden kokemuksia ja odotuksia haltuunottoon ja palveluun liittyen, sekä löytää tapoja kokemusten ja odotusten välisen eron minimointiin. Viimeisenä tavoitteena oli havainta ongelmia, joita asiakkaat kohtaavat ja mahdollisesti ehdottaa kehitysideoita. Tämä pro gradututkielma toteutettiin sekä laadullista että määrällistä tutkimusmenetelmää käyttäen. Datan keräys tapahtui kyselyn avulla, jossa käytettiin avoimia ja suljettuja kysymyksiä. Työn teoreettinen osuus keskittyi tutkimaan asiakaskokemuksen ja asiakaspolon, asiakasarvon ja palveluprosessin konsepteja.

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I am very excited about the future but at the same time, feeling a little bitter sweet. Now, at least for some time, I will leave studies behind and focus on building my career.

Tampere 3.9.2022

Ella Välitalo

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1 Introduction

Almost in every business field the competition is growing, and customer expectations are increasing, which makes it difficult to succeed (e.g., Gentile et al. 2007, 395; Woodruff 1997, 139). Nowadays, customers also have many more alternatives in the markets, which results in complex daily choices (Meyer & Schwager 2007, 118). Multiple channels and different encounters through which the choices are communicated arise challenges not only for the companies but also for the customers (Meyer & Schwager 2007, 118). Surviving in this kind of environment demands abilities to differentiate from the competitors and understand the customers deeply (Gentile et al. 2007, 395). Differentiation is possible by offering better customer experiences than competitors, which will eventually lead to increased customer value. Increased customer value is seen as a key to long-term survival, growth, and competitive advantage for companies (Terho et al. 2012, 174; Shaw & Ivens 2002, 9; Woodruff 1997, 139). Especially for service firms, customer experience is an important strategic objective since it is seen as a competitive advantage and a key to long-term survival.

The primary goal of service provider companies is to deliver services that please consumer needs. Managing to please the consumers better than competitors can lead to competitive advantage and open a runway to survival in the competition (Gentile et al. 2007, 395; Zeithaml, 1981). However, before achieving success, the service providers need to develop a consensus on how and why consumers choose their offerings (Zeithaml, 1981). There is a consensus that high customer value levels and satisfaction are associated with company and brand loyalty, sales, profitability, and market share (Woodruff, 1993, 33). Loyal customers usually buy more often and with a bigger volume. They can also affect other consumers' perceptions and purchasing habits by recommendations of a particular provider or service.

Investigating customer experience is enchanting since customer experience is a part of mutual value creation (Voss et al. 2008, 248). In other words, superior customer experience is expected to be a win-win situation for the customers and the company. Customers that face good or, in the best case, superior customer experience become pleased. There is evidence which suggests that merely satisfied customers are likely to shop around for a better price or more convenient offerings (Voss et al. 2008, 247). From this, we can come to the consensus that fully satisfied customers are more likely to become loyal customers. Due to

these, it is highly important for companies to understand the importance of customer experience and value. Because of the benefits that good customer experience and value creation can offer, companies should focus on their customers and needs. Building long-term customer relationships is a crucial asset for companies and good experiences enable companies to build emotional ties with the customers (Gentile et al. 2007, 395-396, 404).

This master's thesis is conducted for a Finnish insurance company and the focus is on the business-to-consumer (B2C) field. This thesis focuses only on the private customers' point of view and the company's current claims takeover model, not overall customer experience, for example, in customer service encounters. The focus of this study is on the customer experience and expectations that are related to the company's claims takeover model. The goal of this study is to better understand how the company's claims takeover model works from the customers' perspective. The aim is to discover if it creates a good customer experience and also value or not. Furthermore, the aim is to uncover customers' experiences and expectations of the model and service, and find ways to narrow down the gap between experiences and expectations. In addition, this study aims to gain knowledge of the problems related to the takeover model. The current model for claims takeover has been in use for a little over a year now. Before the model was reviewed, claims advisors took care of the claims handling and takeovers. Now customer advisors are involved in the takeover model and the goal is to achieve once-in-order results.

This master's thesis is a case study that uses a mixed method research approach. A case study was chosen because the study will focus on one specific company. The chosen research method for this master's thesis is an email survey that has both open-ended and close-ended questions. However, this study is not a typical case study since the data got from the surveys will be both qualitative and quantitative and this means that mixed methods will be used in the data collection part. This study uses content analysis to analyse the data from the survey.

1.1 Previous research

The main theoretical concepts of this master's thesis are customer experience including customer journey, customer value, and service process. The customer experience and value concepts are not new topics for researchers. Both of these concepts have been relatively

widely studied in the past and there are several different definitions for both of the concepts. (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, 70) To explain why there are many different definitions of customer value, Holbrook (2006, 715) stated that due to the subjectivity of customer value, it is hard to have a common understanding of its definition (Holbrook 2006, 715). To create a superior customer experience and value, companies need to understand what these concepts mean and how experiences are formed.

The customer experience has deep roots. In 1955, Abbot made an observation that people are seeking experiences over satisfying products (Abbot 1955). While the importance of customer experience is recognized, some companies do not fully understand how customer experience is formed or why it is important to care about it. Other companies have acknowledged the need to gather customer experience data but then do not know how to use the data got (Meyer & Schwager 2007, 118). The academic literature on customer experience is limited to journals targeted to management (Verhoef et al. 2009, 31). Verhoef et al. (2009, 32) reported that customer experience management and construct needs a theory-based conceptual framework (Verhoef et al. 2009, 32).

Scholars who have studied customer experience agree to some degree that the experience is a sum of all interactions with the company and each of these interactions creates an experience. Many studies highlight the customers' dimensions that are cognitive, sensory, social, physical, and emotional (Gentile et al. 2007, 397; Schmitt 1999, 53; Verhoef et al. 2009, 32). There is a common consensus that a customer experience is a multidimensional form that involves emotional, cognitive, social, sensorial, and behavioural responses to direct or indirect interaction with the company's created stimuli (Gentile et al . 2007, 397; Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 70-71, 74; Schmitt 1999, 53, 57; Verhoef et al. 2009, 32).

Generally, customer value is split into two categories: the value of goods and services (offerings) and the value of buyer-seller relationships (Lindgreen & Wynstra, 2005, 733; Lindgreen et al. 2012, 208). From the various definitions of customer value, one common theme is that it can be identified as a trade-off between gained benefits and made sacrifices or costs perceived by the customer (Anderson et al. 1993, 4-5; Blocker, 2011, 534; Blocker & Flint, 2007, 250; Ulaga & Chacour, 2001, 258).

Both the customer experience and customer value have been highlighted as important subjects for companies. Pine and Gilmore (2011, 3-4) stated that improving customer

experience to a distinct level can provide companies with extraordinary possibilities to increase their economic success (Pine & Gilmore 2001, 3-4). According to Lemon and Verhoef (2016, 69), understanding the customer experience is critical for companies (Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 69). Similarly, understanding the idea of value creation for customers is critical as customer value is seen as a key to long-term survival and growth for companies (Terho et al. 2012, 174; Woodruff, 1997, 139). Competitive advantage can be achieved by truly understanding the customers and their needs and creating better and greater experiences and value than the competition (for example, Gentile et al. 2007, 395; Shaw & Ivens 2002, 9; Ulaga & Chacour, 2001, 529).

Customer journey is a crucial issue for companies, since all elements affect the customer experience. Companies should have a clear understanding of the customer journey and its touchpoints so that managing and creating value for the customers is possible. Customer journey is described in the literature as a process that a customer goes through to access or use a company's offering (Følstad & Kvale 2018, 207; Tueanrat et al. 2021, 336). Customer journey mapping is a tool that can be used to analyse and identify customer experiences (Ludwiczak 2021, 28). The customer journey map is a visual drawing of the series of events through which the customer may interact with the service company during the whole purchasing process and it includes all the possible touchpoints through which the customer may encounter the service provider (Rosenbaum et al. 2017, 144).

A service-dominant logic has been underlined in the marketing and service management literature. These publications highlight the need to understand what value customers obtain from services. Due to the domination of services in the world economy and customers' demand for holistic service offerings, there is growing attention on creating and providing meaningful and superior customer experiences (Grönroos 2000, 28). Consumers also spend more on services than on tangible goods (Carrillat et al. 2007, 472-473). To provide quality services to the customers, the provider needs to understand the customers' expectations (Kim & Kim 2001, 139).

Overall, services differ from goods in their characteristics. These characteristics are intangibility, heterogeneity, and inseparability (Grönroos 2000, 47; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1985, 42). According to Zeithaml et al. (1996, 4), service is a process, act, or performance that one person or persons provides to another (Zeithaml 1996, 4). Most often, services are abstract and intangible. The service process then again, is a series or chain of

activities required to produce the service. The service process includes all of the processes that provide value to the customer. Customer participation is necessary for the service process. Edvardsson & Olsson (1996, 145) state that customers contribute to the result in terms of quality and added value (Edvardsson & Olsson 1996, 145).

All in all, it seems that no dominant terminology, definitions, models or theory of customer experience does not exist so far. The literature offers various and differing ideas and perspectives on what customer experience is and how it is formed (e.g., Gentile et al. 2007, 397; Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 70-71; Verhoef et al. 2009, 32). Similar to customer experience, customer value is widely studied, yet many find it hard to define or demonstrate what creates value to the business (Anderson & Narus 1998, 53; Lindgreen & Wynstra 2005, 733). Researchers have studied customer experience in different contexts such as retailing (Verhoef et al. 2009,), yet not many have studied customer experience and customers' experiences in bank and insurance contexts.

Although these concepts are widely studied, there are not many studies that have focused on the gap between experiences and expectations and, moreover, how to narrow this gap. In order to be able to provide even a good customer experience, the expectations need to be known. When they have been acknowledged, processes can be developed to meet the expectations more efficiently. This study aims to fill the following research gaps by researching customer experience and value in the insurance company's claims takeover model and identifying how the gap between experiences and expectations can be narrowed. The phenomenon in this study is the company's claims takeover model, and with a case study, the aim is to study this specific phenomenon in its real context.

1.2 Research objectives and questions

Like many other companies, the case company is very customer-oriented, and they are aiming to create a superior customer experience. The main goal of this thesis is to develop a better understanding of the model and how it is working from the customers' point of view. As said before in chapter 1, the current model has been in use for now, a little over a year. Previously, the claims handling and takeover have only been the claims advisors' responsibility. At the moment, both customer and claim advisors are involved in the process

and the goal is to get the claim handling done at once in the best case. This study aims to uncover customers' experiences and expectations for the model and service, as well as find out ways to reduce the gap between experiences and expectations. Moreover, the study aims to uncover problems related to the process and propose development ideas. This thesis has one main research question and three supportive questions to answer the research objectives. The main research question is:

‘‘How can the gap between experiences and expectations be minimized?’’

This question aims to provide ideas of how the customers' expectations could be met more efficiently. Supportive, more narrow questions are created to support the main question and answer the other objectives of this research. The supportive questions address how customers are experiencing the current model and service, what are the main expectations that customers have, and the problems faced by customers within the service process. The first supportive question is built as:

‘‘How do customers experience the quality of the service process at the moment?’’

The objective of this first supportive question is to clarify how customers experience the model and service now. The main research question is supported by the supportive questions. Later on in this study, the main research question is partly answered by these supportive questions. The second supportive question is built as:

‘‘What are the main expectations for the service process?’’

The second supportive question is created to clarify and uncover customers' expectations, and based on them, find ways to minimize the gap between experiences and expectations. The third supportive question aims to clarify what kind of problems are faced by the customers during the service process. This supportive question was taken into this thesis so that the problems can be identified and, later on, addressed. The question is built as:

‘‘What are the main problems that come along with the service process?’’

The following chapter introduces this master's thesis research design, including a description of the two main parts, theoretical and empirical parts, and their contents. Later on, in chapter 3, research methodology, data collection and analysis, reliability, and validity issues are presented.

1.3 Research design

Research design means the strategy and methods, procedures that are chosen by the author to integrate the different components of the study to ensure that the study addresses the research problem or problems. Both qualitative and quantitative methods will be used in this thesis. This thesis is a case study that focuses on one company, with the goal of getting a better understanding of how the model is working from the customers' perspective. The aim is to uncover whether it is creating a good customer experience and value. In addition, the goal is to uncover customer experiences and expectations and find ways to reduce the gap between experiences and expectations. Moreover, this study aims to find out possible problems faced in the takeover model.

This master's thesis has two main parts: theoretical and empirical. The theoretical part of this thesis focuses on the concepts and previous studies of customer experience and journey, customer value, and service process. In the study's empirical part, a survey with both open-ended and close-ended questions is sent to the customers who have interacted with the claims takeover service in the past year to gain deep insights into the customers' perspectives, expectations, and experiences. This thesis' research questions will be answered based on the survey's data. The survey is conducted with the company's customers in the spring of 2022 between 9.5–20.5 of May. Only those customers will be contacted who have interacted with the insurance company due to claim issues during the past year and have given permission to email marketing. The survey will be conducted with the company's survey tool and will be sent via email to the recipients. The questions focus on both customers' experiences and expectations of the service, and problems faced during the process. The survey also gives an opportunity for the customers to give development ideas for the takeover model or overall service. Based on the study's findings, recommendations and development ideas for the future will be made.

1.4 Key concepts

This part introduces the key concepts of this master's thesis to create an in-depth understanding of them. The key concepts of this thesis are customer experience, including customer journey, customer value and service process. The literature review in chapter two explicates deeper these concepts.

Customer experience

There are several definitions of the customer experience concept. One essential issue in the customer experience is the interaction between two parties. Customer experience consists of the feelings, past experiences and beliefs that arise for the customer (Fischer & Vainio 2014, 178). To simply conclude, customer experience can be thought to happen when a customer interacts with a company. Customer experience is a holistic phenomenon that consists of all the interactions between the customer and the company (Gentile et al. 2007, 397; Verhoef et al. 2009, 32).

In this master's thesis, the definition by authors Gentile et al. (2007, 397) and authors Verhoef et al. (2009, 32) is used to define customer experience:

“Customer experience is holistic in nature. It originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction. This experience is strictly personal and implies the customer's involvement at different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial, physical, and spiritual). Its 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 touchpoints ” (Gentile et al. 2007, 397 & Verhoef et al. 2009, 32).

Customer journey

Customer journey is seen as a process that a customer goes through to access or use a company's offering (Følstad & Kvale 2018, 207; Tueanrat et al. 2021, 336). The customer journey involves all the activities or events related to the delivery of a service from the customer's perspective (Zomerdijsk and Voss 2010, 74). Touchpoints are a substantial part

of the customer journey concept. Authors Meyer & Schwager (2007, 119) refer to touchpoints as the instances of direct or indirect contact either with the product or the service itself. The customer journey is seen as a three-stage process that includes pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase phases (Nam & Kannan 2020, 29; Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 76). In this thesis, the ,customer journey is reviewed through the above-described phenomena.

Customer value

Holbrook (2006, 715) stated that customer value is a subjective concept and due to that, it is hard to have a common understanding of the definition. Customer value can be the value that a customer provides to a company or the value that the company provides to the customer. A common theme among customer value definitions is that customer value is a trade-off between gained benefits and made sacrifices or costs perceived by the customer (Anderson et al. 1993, 4-5; Blocker 2011, 534; Blocker & Flint 2007, 250; Ulaga & Chacour 2001, 258). In addition, customer value is not set by the seller, it is something that the customer perceives (Han & Sung 2008, 811).

In this thesis, customer value is reviewed through the following definition: a trade-off between gained benefits and made sacrifices or costs perceived by the customer (Anderson et al. 1993, 4-5; Blocker, 2011, 534; Blocker & Flint, 2007, 250; Ulaga & Chacour, 2001, 258).

Service process

At the simplest, a service process is a series or chain of activities that aim to provide value for the customer. Most often these activities are interactions between the customer and the service provider company (Edvardsson & Olsson 1996, 145; Grönroos 2000, 46). In this thesis, the service process is reviewed by the above-mentioned description by Edvardsson & Olsson (1996, 145) and Grönroos (2000, 46).

1.5 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework describes and helps to understand the key concepts of the research. The theoretical framework of this master's thesis is constructed around three major concepts and the theoretical part is divided into three parts. As this master's thesis focuses on the private customers' perspective and experience of the used takeover model, the theoretical topics focus on customer experience and journey, customer value, and service process. The theoretical part is built to support the research aims and objectives. The theoretical part of this master's thesis is presented extensively in chapter two.

1.6 Limitations

To keep this master's thesis in the right and given framework, this study has some limitations. This study is done in the context of B2C, which is why the business-to-business (B2B) context is not considered. Another limitation is that the results only include the private customers' insights, and the opinions of the business customers and company's employees are not taken into account. The currently used claims takeover model is under research, so opinions, experiences, and expectations for previously used models are not under investigation. The survey respondent amount was limited as this study will only focus on customer experience and private customers' expectations for the takeover model and service. Therefore, the findings should not be fully generalized. If the respondent number would have been bigger, there might have been different kinds of answers and more variation in them. Only those customers are contacted who have interacted at that time when the current model has been in use.

The results and possible development ideas are only relevant for the current claims takeover model and should not be generalized to other processes in the company. As the concept of customer experience is linked to concept and individual, usually two people cannot have the exact same experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 99), which means that the results of this study are probably only applicable to the case company and their customers. However, the results can be in some ways mirrored to the company's B2B field and customers if the process in claims takeover is similar and follows the same procedures. To mention, this study should

not be generalized to other companies or industries since the findings are related to the case company, their customers and their experiences and expectations of the used model. Nonetheless, the results can be to some point relevant to other companies in the same industry if they have similar processes, but applications to other fields or businesses should be carefully considered.

1.7 Structure of the study

This thesis consists of five main chapters. The structure helps the reader to easily go through the whole thesis. The first chapter starts with an introduction, followed by sub-chapters reviewing: previous studies, research objectives, and questions, research design, key concepts, theoretical framework, and limitations of the study. The whole structure of this thesis is presented in figure 1 at the end of this chapter.

The second chapter takes a look at the key concepts of literature. The main theoretical concepts in this thesis are customer experience and journey, customer value and service process.

The third chapter introduces the research design and methods, including the research methodology of the empirical study. The data collection, data analysis, and reliability and validity issues are also explained in chapter three.

After this, the fourth chapter focuses on the empirical findings of the study. The last chapter of this master's thesis includes discussion and conclusions, more precisely, theoretical and managerial implications and suggestions for future research.

References and appendices of this thesis can be found at the end of this study.



Figure 1. Structure of the master's thesis.

As we can see from figure 1, this master's thesis consists of five main chapters. The next chapter of this master's thesis is a literature review, and it includes concepts of customer experience and journey, customer value and service process. The concepts are examined and defined.

2 Literature review

This chapter is the theoretical part of the master's thesis. The chapter includes the key concepts of this thesis which are; customer experience and journey, customer value and service process.

2.1 Customer experience

There are several different definitions of the customer experience concept, and these are presented in chapter 2.1.1. For researchers, customer experience is not a new topic, and the literature on customer experience is growing fast (Gentile et al. 2007, 395). A notable amount of literature on the customer experience concept has been published. These published studies highlight customer experiences' importance for companies and as a management objective (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, 69). The roots of 'the customer experience' go back almost 70 years to the year 1955. Abbott (1995) made an observation that people are not seeking satisfying products, but experiences. While the importance of customer experience is recognized by people from different fields of business, the academic literature on this subject is to some extent limited to journals, which are targeted to management (Verhoef et al. 2009, 31). In addition, customer experience research is developing into an important concept in the marketing field, as believed by Ismail et al. (2011, 205), customer experience is evolving to be an imperative research objective in the marketing field (Ismail et al. 2011, 205). Gentile et al. (2007, 397), identifies similar kinds of issues.

Previous studies of customer experience have been to some degree theoretical (Gentile et al. 2007, 395). As reported by Verhoef et al. (2009, 32), the customer experience management and customer experience construct possess a need for a theory-based conceptual framework that could be applied to customer experience construct and management studies (Verhoef et al. 2009, 32). There is light shed by scholars on the complicated issues related to the phenomenon; the customer experience models lack common terminology, mindset, and conceptualization of the concept of customer experience (Gentile et al. 2007, 397; Ismail et al. 2011, 205; Shaw & Ivens 2002, 150; Palmer 2010, 196). The literature in retailing, service

management, and marketing has not reflected customer experience as an individual construct. Rather, the focus has been on assessing service quality and customer satisfaction (Verhoef et al. 2009, 32).

The concept of customer experience is heavily linked to the customer satisfaction concept (e.g., Meyer & Schwager 2007, 118). The concepts of customer experience and satisfaction are not the same even though they are usually used as synonyms. According to Meyer & Schwager (2007, 118), customer satisfaction is a set of many customer experiences. Satisfaction occurs when the gap between customers' expectations and the following experiences have been closed (Meyer & Schwager 2007, 118).

For the most part, the scholars of the customer experience concept agree that the experience is a sum of all interactions with the company and each interaction creates an experience. The customer experience is the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social, and physical responses to the company (Verhoef et al. 2009, 32). The experience is created from the elements that the company cannot control (e.g., the others) and elements that the company can control, e.g., service interface or price. Both of these can influence the total customer experience (Verhoef et al. 2009, 32). In addition, it seems that scholars have agreed at some level that a customer experience is a multidimensional form that involves emotional, cognitive, social, sensorial, and behavioural responses to direct or indirect interaction with the company's created stimuli (Gentile et al. 2007, 397; Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 70-71, 74; Schmitt 1999, 53; Verhoef et al. 2009, 32).

2.1.1 Definitions of customer experience

The academic literature offers various definitions of customer experience (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, 70). Despite the vast interest in customer experience, there are several definitions. Authors Pine and Gilmore (1998, 98-99) state that customer experiences are inherently personal and that they exist only in the individual's mind who has been engaged on some level (Pine & Gilmore 1998, 98-99). Due to this, two people cannot have the same experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 99). Typically, customer experience is seen as a complex construct (Gentile et al. 2007, 398; Verhoef et al. 2009, 32). Moreover, Verhoef et al. (2009, 32) state that customer experience is holistic by nature (Verhoef et al. 2009, 32). Because

customer experience is a context-based individual's experience, there is no one right answer to define customer experience.

Recent studies have been defining customer experience as a phenomenon that includes all the aspects of a company's offerings and consumers' responses to these offerings, whether it is direct or indirect contact (Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 70; Meyer & Schwager 2007, 118). The offering of a company includes the quality of customer care, advertising, packaging, product, and service features (Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 70; Meyer & Schwager 2007, 118). Choudhury & Singh (2021, 12), stated that customer experience is the sum of all experiences that a customer has with a supplier of goods or services, over the duration of their relationships. The same authors also stated that customer experience is a journey that starts from the first contact and continues through the whole relationship (Choudhury & Singh 2021, 12). Authors Fischer & Vainio (2014, 9), defined customer experience as a certain emotion or experience that makes the customer come back or tell others about the positive experience (Fischer & Vainio 2014, 9).

As explained by Shaw & Ivens (2002, 6), customer experience means interaction between a company and a customer, where the company's physical performance and the customers evoke emotions, stimulated senses and expectations blend across all moments of the contact (Shaw & Ivens 2002, 6). The same authors, Shaw & Ivens (2002, 23-27) also broke customer experience into five stages: expectation setting, pre-purchase interactions, purchase interaction, product or service consumption, and post-experience review, which are seen in figure 2 below.

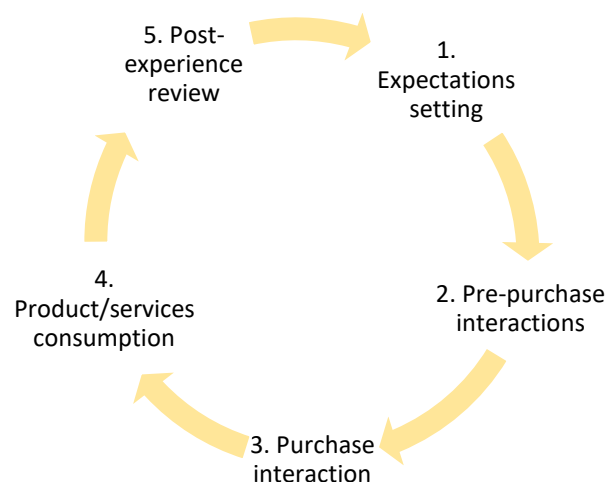


Figure 2. Stages of customer experience. (Obtained from Shaw & Ivens 2002, 23)

Authors Gentile et al. (2007, 397), compiled their definition from the various authors including that “The Customer Experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction. This experience is strictly personal and implies the customer’s involvement at different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial, physical and spiritual). Its 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 touchpoints”. (Gentile et al. 2007, 397.)

The definition related to the above definition of customer experience is by Meyer & Schwager (2007, 118-119), “customer experience is the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company. Direct contact generally occurs in the course of purchase, use, and service and is usually initiated by the customer. Indirect contact most often involves unplanned encounters with representatives of a company’s products, service or brands that take the form of word-of-mouth recommendations or criticisms, advertising, news reports, reviews and so forth”. (Meyer & Schwager 2007, 118-119.)

Schmitt (1999, 53) defined customer experience as a multidimensional concept that emerges from sensory, affective, physical, cognitive, and social-identity experiences (Schmitt 1999, 53). Similarly, Verhoef et al. (2009, 32) defined customer experience as a holistic and multidimensional concept that involves the customer’s affective, emotional, cognitive, social, and physical responses to the retailer (Verhoef et al. 2009, 32).

As we can see from the different definitions of customer experience, some of these definitions highlight the different dimensions of customer experience. Some authors share similar thoughts about the dimensions. Similar dimensions are presented by authors Schmitt (1999), Verhoef et al. (2009) and Gentile et al. (2007). All of these authors share to some part similar views of the dimensions of customer experience, and these are collected in table 1. below.

Table 1. Dimensions of customer experience.

Author(s)	Dimensions
Schmitt (1999, 53)	Sensory, affective, cognitive, physical, social identity
Gentile et al. (2007, 397-398)	Sensorial, emotional, cognitive, pragmatic, lifestyle, relational
Verhoef et al. (2009, 32)	Affective, cognitive, emotional, social, physical

The interactions that customer experience has can be split into direct and indirect contacts (Meyer & Schwager 2007, 118-119). Direct contacts include buying or using a product or service. While indirect contacts are often unplanned interactions with the company and its products, services, representatives, or brands. Examples of indirect contacts are recommendations, criticisms, advertising, or word-of-mouth (Meyer & Schwager 2007, 119). Verhoef et al. (2009, 32), state that the experience is drawn up also during the search and after-sale phase, not only in the purchase or usage phase (Verhoef et al. 2009, 32).

2.1.2 Elements affecting customer experience

As stated before, customer experience is a result of interaction usually with the service provider company, experienced by the customer (Fischer & Vainio 2014, 178). According to Verhoef et al. (2009, 32), customer experience grows from the customers' perceptions from all the interactions with the company (Verhoef et al. 2009, 32). Customer experience is a co-creation between the customer and the service provider that includes different types of interaction. To create good or superior customer experiences, the company needs to have an understanding of the customer's needs and desires. Since all elements affect the customer experience, all of these need to be managed carefully by the company. The evaluation of experience 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 interface or touchpoints (Gentile et al. 2007, 397). The formation of customer experiences is affected by the customer's expectations of the service. In order to

create good or superior service for the customers, companies need to understand customer expectations (Robledo 2001, 26-28). If a company does not know the level of customer expectations of the customers, it is impossible to know how to match these expectations (Robledo 2001, 26-27). The same author also stated that expectation management helps to ensure that customer expectations are realistic, and the company has the chance to fulfil them (Robledo 2001, 28).

Verhoef et al. (2009, 32) identified several determinants of customer experience. The determinants included the social environment, the service interface, the atmosphere, the assortment, and price and promotions (Verhoef et al. 2009, 33-34). Authors Choudhury & Singh (2021, 13-14) have studied factors that influence the customer experience in the bancassurance industry. They identified several factors affecting customer experience from different literature. We hereby go through some of these factors that are relevant when concerning insurance companies. These factors include the satisfaction of service, service quality, pleasant, and welcoming branch environment, multiple service delivery channels, past experiences, brand and prices, and reliability of the channel. According to the authors Choudhury & Singh (2021, 13-14), all of these affect the customer experience and they have been in the attention of different researchers (Choudhury & Singh 2021, 15).

2.1.3 Creating 'perfect' customer experience

As we have already looked at the different definitions of the customer experience, we can simply say that it is an interaction between the customer and the company and the formation of it is the entity of perceptions of the customer. In the following chapter, we review the formulation of a 'perfect' customer experience.

Frow & Payne suggested several issues in their study that companies should focus on to deliver a perfect customer experience (Frow & Payne 2007, 98-100). First, they highlighted that companies that want to deliver a superior or perfect customer experience should perform research on the customer's perceptions of the service and based on that, identify improvements and opportunities (Frow & Payne 2007, 98). The same authors point out identifying opportunities for co-creation and the usage of mapping tools like process mapping and service-blueprinting to improve the customer experience (Frow & Payne 2007,

98). Managing individual customer touchpoints carefully is also highlighted in their study. The benefits of managing each customer touchpoint and its contribution to the improved customer experience are demonstrated in the study's cases (Frow & Payne 2007, 98-99). Ensuring consistent customer experience across and within multiple channels and appropriate metrics for measuring the customer experience are also presented by the authors Frow & Payne (2007, 99). Gross-functional integration between different departments in a company helps to ensure that customer experience is successfully delivered. Also, understanding the economics of customer segments in order to deliver the perfect customer experience (Frow & Payne 2007, 99). Consistency of brand communication across various channels is highlighted as an important issue in providing perfect or outstanding customer experiences. In addition to these, a better understanding of the customer needs increases employees' performance and motivation to deliver improved customer service and satisfaction. (Frow & Payne 2007, 99-100.)

2.1.4 Customer experience management

As we acknowledged in the previous chapter, how to create a 'perfect' customer experience, it can be conducted that there are several ways to improve and create a better customer experience. (Frow & Payne 2007, 98-100). Based on this, creating a positive customer experience calls for management. Around the globe, retailers have embraced the customer experience management concept (Srivastava & Kaul 2014, 1028). The concept of customer experience is growing interest among scholars (e.g., Frow & Payne 2007, 89; Gentile et al. 2007, 395), and the concept is being explored from a theoretical viewpoint, but still, researchers debate about customer experience management and value creation through it are still scarce (Gentile et al. 2007, 395). Similarly, Lemon & Verhoef (2016, 82), state that the literature on customer experience management is quite scarce (Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 82). To be able to manage customer experience, companies need to understand what customer experience means (Grewal et al. 2009, 2).

According to Frow & Payne (2007, 89), customer experience management aims to strengthen relationships with customers and build customer loyalty. Customer experience management acts as an important part of customer experience success as several management actions can help the company to provide a perfect customer experience (Frow

& Payne 2007, 89-101). Customer experience management's general definition in the literature refers to customer experience engineering in a way that it creates value both for the customer and the company (Verhoef et al. 2009, 38). Customer experience management is different from customer relationship management in a way that customer experience management focuses on the current customer experience, rather than the documented history of the customer (Verhoef et al. 2009, 38). While customer relationship management focuses on knowing the customer, customer experience management focuses on capturing what customers think about the company (Meyer & Schwager 2007, 120).

As authors Grewal et al. (2009, 1) explained, customer experience management is a business strategy designed to manage the customer experience (Grewal et al. 2009, 1). Customer experience management is defined as a cultural mindset toward customer experience, strategic precepts for designing customer experience, and the company's ability to constantly renew customer experience, to be able to accomplish and sustain long-term customer loyalty (Homburg et al. 2017, 384). According to authors Fischer & Vainio (2014, 176-177), customer experience management means experience creation that keeps or perhaps even exceeds the customers' expectations (Fischer & Vainio 2014, 176-177). Since the customer experience is a dynamic concept, customer expectations and surroundings are changing constantly (Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 74). This is why customer experience management requires continual efforts to sustain and refine experiences. The chance to achieve a competitive advantage through customer experience (Shaw & Ivens 2002, 9), makes customer experience management crucial to companies. As claimed by Shaw & Ivens (2002, 149), the key to success is planning, thinking, implementing, and reviewing (Shaw & Ivens 2002, 149). In order to properly manage customer experiences, companies need to understand what customer experience is and how it is formed. In addition, companies need to know and understand the customer journey and touchpoints through which customers interact with the company.

The State of Connected Customer report conducted by Salesforce (2022, 10) points out that 88% of the customers say that the experience a company creates is as important as the product or the service (The State of Connected Customer report 2022, 10). This percentage has risen eight percent from the year 2020 (The State of Connected Customer report 2022, 10). This growth speaks for the growing importance and demand for meaningful experiences. From this we can say that it is not enough to focus on creating and offering

good or great products since the experience matters as much to customers and they are demanding greater experiences. The same report shows that 94% of the customers say that a positive customer service experience makes the customers more likely to make another purchase (The State of Connected Customer report 2022, 21). Moreover, the same report shows that the quality of customer service has affected the customers' purchasing decisions, 78% of the customers said that they have made purchase decisions based on the quality of customer service (The State of Connected Customer report 2022, 21). We can deduce that an excellent customer service experience creates customer value and loyalty, which leads to repeated purchases. Based on the report's findings and because customer experience is a dynamic concept with ever changing customer expectations, we can say that customer experience is a highly important asset for companies. The benefits and advantages that can occur through great customer experiences are something that every company should pursue. However, without proper customer experience management, the best outcomes are hard to achieve.

2.1.5 Customer journey

As acknowledged, the customer experience is an interaction between the customer and company, and it is formed from the customer perceptions that are built from all of the interactions with the service provider company. Since all of the elements affect customer experience, it is important to understand the customer journey and its touchpoints in order to be able to manage the customer experience and value creation. In the literature, the term customer journey is described as a process or journey of consuming a service and during the journey, the customer comes across different touchpoints. A quite simple description of the customer journey is that it is a process that a customer goes through to access or use a company's offering (Følstad & Kvale 2018, 207; Tueanrat et al. 2021, 336).

Touchpoints are described by authors Meyer & Schwager (2007, 119) as follows: "the instances of direct contact either with the product or the service itself or with representations of it by the company or some third party" (Meyer & Schwager 2007, 119). The customer journey involves all activities and events related to the delivery of a service from the customer's perspective (Zomerdijk and Voss 2010, 74). It can be used in the service designing process to understand how customers behave across a journey, what they are

feeling, and what their motivation and attitude are across the journey (Zomerdijk and Voss 2010, 74).

Authors Nam & Kannan (2020, 29) consider a customer journey a three-stage process that includes pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase (Nam & Kannan 2020, 29). Similar stages are identified by authors Lemon & Verhoef (2016, 76). Nam & Kannan (2020, 29) add that customers may interact between these stages or end the journey at any point of the stages (Nam & Kannan 2020, 29). The first stage includes e.g., need identification, information search, and evaluation of alternatives (Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 76; Nam & Kannan 2020, 29). The second stage, the purchase stage includes customer interactions during the purchase event, and characteristics like choice, ordering, and payment is involved (Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 76; Nam & Kannan 2020, 29). The last stage, post-purchase comprises customer interactions with a platform after the purchase and behaviours like usage and consumption, post-purchase engagement, service requests, and word-of-mouth (Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 76; Nam & Kannan 2020, 29).

Customer journey is an important concept to understand customer behaviours and gaining insights into customer experiences (Tueanrat et al. 2021, 336). To be able to sustain a competitive advantage, the importance of customer experience needs to be acknowledged (Stein & Ramaseshan 2016, 8). It is crucial to understand how the experiences are formulated and in what situations. Experiences are formed every time a customer interacts with any part of the product, service, brand, or organisation and this can happen across multiple channels and at various points in time (Stein & Ramaseshan 2016, 8-9). The same authors state that the moments between the customer and any part of the company are called ‘touchpoints’ (Stein & Ramaseshan 2016, 8). The customer journey that the customer takes to achieve some tasks, for example purchasing a product, is formed by multiple series of touchpoints (Stein & Ramaseshan 2016, 8).

2.1.6 Customer journey mapping

Customer journey mapping is a tool for identifying and analysing customer experiences (Ludwiczak 2021, 28). Rosenbaum et al. (2017, 143), stated that customer journey mapping can be used to better understand the customer’s experience that is related to the interactions

with the company (Ludwiczak 2021, 28; Rosenbaum et al. 2017, 143). The idea behind customer journey mapping is quite simple. It is a visual drawing of the series of events through which customer may interact with the service company during the whole purchasing process. Customer journey mapping includes all the possible touchpoints through which customers may encounter the service provider (Rosenbaum et al. 2017, 144). With a clear understanding of the customer touchpoints, management is able to employ different tactics, to foster service innovation and by these tactics the goal is to enhance service provider interactions by improving the customer experience within each touchpoint (Rosenbaum et al. 2017, 144). According to Richardson (2016), customer journey mapping is a powerful method to improve the experience. The maps clarify what customers are trying to do, how they feel during each interaction, and what barriers they may face (Richardson 2016). The simplest the customer journey map can be as illustrated in figure x below. From figure 3 we see that this illustration is linear, and it is one option of what a customer journey map can look like.

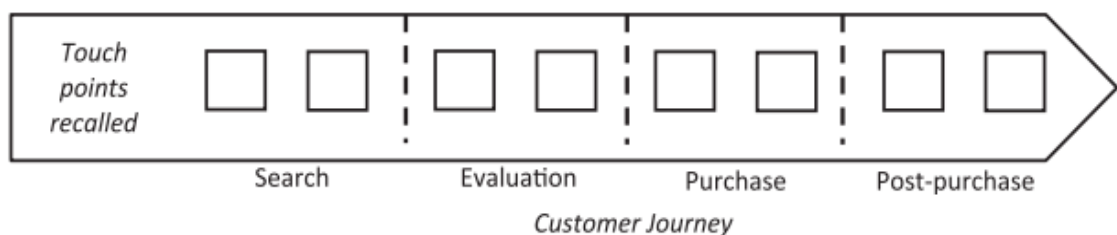


Figure 3. A simple customer journey map. (Obtained from Stein & Ramaseshan 2016, 9).

To conclude the concepts of customer experience and customer journey, both of these are highly important for companies that aim to achieve or sustain competitive advantage, differentiate from competitors, or create customer value. Understanding these concepts thoroughly ensures companies deliver good or superior experiences and manage these experiences. When all of the touchpoints in the customers' journey are acknowledged, companies can provide successful and meaningful customer experiences. The following chapter reviews the customer value concept.

2.2 Customer value

Customer value can be seen in both ways, the value a customer provides to a company or as a value that the company provides to the customer. In this master's thesis, customer value is reviewed as the value that the company provides to the customer. This chapter reviews the customer value concept, its definitions, and issues related to managing and measuring customer value.

The customer value concept has been widely studied in the past years and several definitions and understandings of the concept can be identified. The concept of customer value can be viewed from different categories or perspectives so the definition of it is not unambiguous. The customer value concept is recognized as a key concept in the marketing literature (Lindgreen et al. 2012, 207-209; Ulaga 2011, 928). The concept also has an important role in management studies. Holbrook (2006, 715) stated that customer value is a subjective concept, why it is hard to have a common understanding of its definition. Eggert & Ulaga (2002, 107) stated that customer value is not a new concept but there are many ways to create customer value since the interaction between the customer and the provider company is changing often (Eggert & Ulaga 2002, 107). In addition, Holbrook (2006, 715) stated that customer value is the foundation of all effective marketing activities (Holbrook 2006, 715). The core marketing building blocks, like segmentation, positioning, value proposition, and pricing products and services, all rely on customer value as a key foundation (Ulaga 2011, 928). As a consequence, marketers must understand how to create, communicate, and deliver value for customers (Ulaga 2011, 928). Even though customer value has received interest in literature, firms, suppliers, and customers find it hard to demonstrate or define what creates value for their business (Anderson & Narus 1998, 53; Lindgreen & Wynstra 2005, 733).

There is a consensus that creating outstanding customer value is a key to long-term survival and growth for companies (Terho et al. 2012, 174; Woodruff, 1997, 139). Firms that gain a deeper understanding of value creation can possess superior value propositions in the competitive marketplace (Blocker & Flint, 2007, 249-250; La et al. 2008, 274). Companies can achieve a competitive advantage when understand customers properly and create better value than the competition (for example Gentile et al. 2007, 395; Ulaga & Chacour 2001, 529). Customer value is seen as a crucial issue for companies because without it there cannot be shareholder value. Shareholder value is one of the main reasons why companies exist.

A proper understanding of how customers see the company, its services, and products are needed in order to be able to create value. Creating and delivering value to the customers better than the competition will help to gain a competitive advantage (Gentile et al. 2007, 395; Lindgreen & Wynstra 2005, 737; Ulaga & Chacour 2001, 529). Heinonen, Strandvik & Voima (2013, 108) identify three aspects of value creation:

- 1) value is created by either the company, by the customer and the company together, or by the customer;
- 2) value creation where the customer is a passive or active actor; or
- 3) value creation as being an activity-based experience or mental experience (Heinonen, Strandvik & Voima 2013, 108).

The levels of customer value from the customers' perspective are the expected level, the desired level, and the unanticipated level (Butz and Goodstein 1996, 67-69). The expected level or basic level means the level that all company offerings should fulfil. The second level of customer value is desired level. This means features that add value for the customers but are not expected by them. The desired value can easily become the expected value. The last level, unanticipated value is added value beyond the customer's expectations or desires (Butz and Goodstein 1996, 67-69).

2.2.1 Definitions of customer value

Although the customer value term is widely used in the existing literature, there seems to be only a little agreement among scholars about the definition of customer value. Generally, customer value is divided into two categories, the value of goods and services (offerings) and the value of buyer-seller relationships (Lindgreen & Wynstra 2005, 733; Lindgreen et al. 2012, 208).

Zeithaml (1988, 14) defined customer value as "consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on a perception of what is received and what is given" (Zeithaml 1988, 14). Anderson et al. (1993, 6) defined value as "perceived worth in monetary units of the set of economic, technical, service, and social benefits received by a customer firm in exchange for the price paid for a product offering, taking into consideration the available

alternative suppliers' offerings and price" (Anderson et al. 2009, 6). Authors Ulaga & Chacour (2001, 528) define value as "centrally held enduring core beliefs, desired end-states, or higher-order goals of the individual customer or customer organization that guide behavior" (Ulaga & Chacour 2001, 528).

Similar definition to authors Anderson et al. (1993, 5) definition, authors Ulaga & Chacour (2001, 530) defined customer value as "a trade-off between the multiple benefits and sacrifices of a supplier's offering, as perceived by key decision makers in the customer's organization, and taking into consideration the available alternative suppliers' offerings in a specific-use situation" (Ulaga & Chacour 2001, 530). A notion by authors Terho et al (2012, 175) is that customer value requires to be viewed as benefits that the customer gets from the usage of the offering. Authors Han & Sung (2008, 809) define customer value as follows: "An industrial buyer's overall appraisal of the net worth of a particular transaction, based on the buyer's assessment of what is received (benefits provided by the transaction) and given (costs of acquiring and utilizing the transaction)" (Han & Sung 2008, 809).

Despite the authors' focus on the value of relationships or the value of offerings, some common themes in the definition of customer value concept can be recognized. One common theme in customer value definitions can be identified as follows: customer value is a trade-off between gained benefits and made sacrifices or costs perceived by the customer (Anderson et al. 1993, 4-5; Blocker 2011, 534; Blocker & Flint 2007, 250; Ulaga & Chacour 2001, 258). Authors Woodruff (1997, 141) and Han & Sung (2008, 811) shared a notion that customer value is not set by the seller, it is something that the customer perceives. There is also consensus that the customer's perception of value is dependent on particular usage situations which is why the value of the same offering might be different for different customers (Lindgreen et al. 2012, 208; Lindgreen & Wynstra 2005, 737; Ulaga & Chacour 2001, 529).

Due to the subjectivity of the customer value concept different customers and different market segments perceive different values within the same product. This makes it hard to know what are the specific customer perceptions of the company and its offerings. Customer value cannot be generalized which leads to difficulties in value creation and management.

2.2.2 Measuring and managing customer value

A company needs to understand how customers see the company and its products and services so that the company can measure customer value and create it properly. As mentioned, customer value is a subjective concept and value is different for each customer and market segment. According to Ulaga & Chacour (2001, 529), to cover the diversity of different customers, companies need to think about different kinds of customers, like former, present, and potential customers (Ulaga & Chacour 2001, 529). When customer value is being evaluated, the whole experience that the customer faces when interacting with the service provider company should be included. Customer value cannot be evaluated by only evaluating the product or service. Authors Payne & Holt (2001, 173) stated that customer value creation and management comprises three different actors; the customers, the company's employees, and the external stakeholders (Payne & Holt 2001, 173). It can be conducted that customer value is managed and created by different actors and in different phases.

The knowledge of what customers currently value will not hold into the future (Blocker & Flint 2007, 249). Anticipating what customers will value in the future acts as a key role in building and maintaining a sustainable advantage (Blocker & Flint 2007, 249). In order to understand the value that the company provides to the customers, detailed information about the customers' processes should be gathered. In addition to this, information on how the company's market offering affects customers should be acquired. This kind of information can be acquired by for example surveys, interviews, and by benchmarking. (Anderson et al. 2009, 63-67).

The data got needs to be then analyzed well and made actions should be based on the results got. As explained by Anderson et al. (2009, 70), customer value management is a practical approach with two main goals: to deliver superior value to targeted segments or customers, and get an equitable return on the value delivered (Anderson et a. 2009, 70). Customer value management relies on customer value assessment to gain a deep comprehension of customer preferences and requirements, and what it is worth in monetary terms to fulfil them (Anderson et al. 2009, 70). Authors Anderson et al. (2009, 116-117), state that value management means that the company is managing its operations by the value it generates.

To conclude, simply defined, customer value is the value that the customer gets in relation to the benefits and costs of the purchased product or service. The got benefits can be monetary or non-monetary, sacrifices are related usually to time, money, effort, or energy. Different issues affect customer value formation and its formed based on many interactions. As the concept is subjective, it means that every customer has different values toward products or services. Because of this, creating customer value needs a great deal of information about the customer and their perceptions combined with a proper management. As stated, creating superior customer value is a way to achieve competitive advantage (Gentile et al. 2007, 395; Ulaga & Chacour 2001, 529).

2.3 Service process

Lastly, this literature review takes a look at service process. At the beginning, this chapter identifies what service is and after that, the service process concept is reviewed.

2.3.1 What is service

The world economy has become mostly service-based, and the consumers spend more on services than on tangible goods (Carrillat et al. 2007, 472-473). Customers are not only looking for goods or services, but they also demand a more holistic service offering, that includes everything from information about how to best use a product, to delivering, installing, repairing, updating, maintaining, and correcting solutions they have bought (Grönroos 2000, 28). Customers demand this, and a lot more, to be delivered in a friendly, trustworthy, and timely manner (Grönroos 2000, 28).

The concept of service can be discussed and reviewed from many different perspectives. There are also several definitions of services. As an example, Grönroos (2000, 46) defines services as processes that consist of a series of more or less intangible activities that aim to provide value for the customer (Grönroos 2000, 46). The activities are most often indirect or direct interactions between the customer and the service provider that aims to find a solution to customers' problems (Grönroos 2000, 46). However, there are also situations, where the customer does not interact with the service provider company (Grönroos 2000,

46). In addition to this Grönroos (2000, 46) stated that situations where interactions do not seem to happen nevertheless do happen, e.g., when a car is taken in by the garage and later on, delivered to the customer (Grönroos 2000, 46). Zeithaml et al. (1996, 4) briefly stated that service is a process, an act, or performance that one person or persons provides to another. The above mentioned is specified by them that the service activity results in an intangible benefit that is produced and consumed at the same time, and that provides value to its consumer. Most often services are intangible and abstract.

The characteristics of services are different from goods. Grönroos (2000, 47) pointed out the differences between services and physical goods e.g., tangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability, and storability (Grönroos 2000, 47). The same characteristics are presented by authors Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1985, 42). The characteristics of services, intangibility, heterogeneity, and inseparability are presented in figure 4 below (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1985, 42). Many services are intangible, they cannot be counted, touched, tested, stored, or measured (Zeithaml, 1981; Upah 1980, 60; Shostack 1984, 134). This characteristic makes it difficult to understand how consumers perceive the company's service and assess the service quality (Zeithaml 1981 & Regan 1963, 58). High labour content services are usually heterogeneous, which means that their performance can vary from producer to producer or from customer to customer. The last characteristic inseparability, the production, and consumption of the service are inseparable (Garmen & Langedard 1980; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1985, 42; Upah 1980; Zeithaml et al. 1996, 4; Shostack 1984, 134) Customer is not only a receiver of the service, since the customer participates in the service process as a production resource (Grönroos 2000, 48). Because of the characteristics of services, they cannot be stored like physical goods and that is why it is harder to meet the inconsistent customer demand.

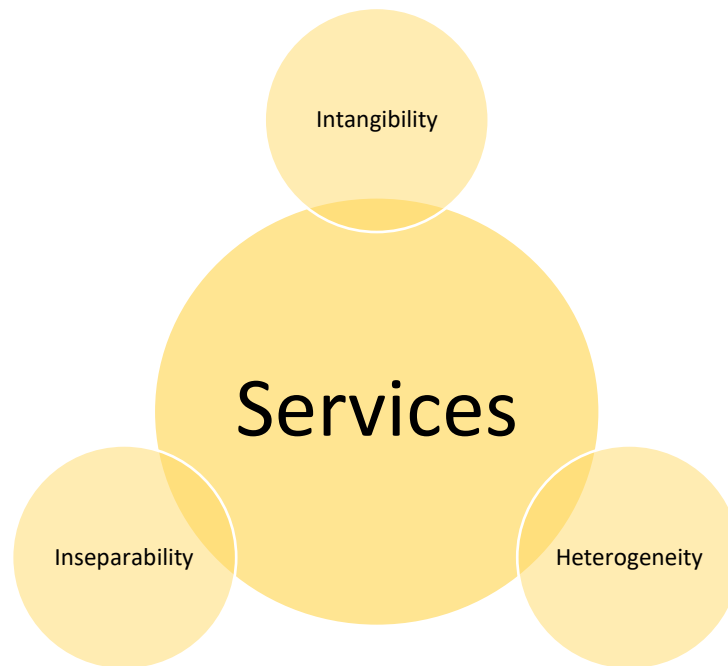


Figure 4. Characteristics of services. (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1985)

Figure 4 presents the characteristics that separate services from goods, intangibility, inseparability, and heterogeneity. These characteristics makes it harder, for example, harder to understand the consumer perceptions of the service and meet the consumer demand since services cannot be stored. The following chapter will examine the service process concept.

2.3.2 Service process

A service-dominant logic has been underlined in the marketing and service management literature. These publications highlight the need to understand what value customers obtain from services, as the value is determined and perceived by the customer and not by the seller, on the basis of value in use (Vargo & Lusch 2004, 7). As mentioned by Kim & Kim (2001, 139), satisfying customers are the best method for organisations to gain a competitive advantage (Kim & Kim 2001, 139). Mayer et al. (2003, 621) stated that the process is more than lining people up in a queue, putting them through a delivery system, and having them emerge from the system with a service experience (Mayer et al. 2003, 621). Edvardsson & Olsson (1996, 145) stated that the concept of service should be viewed from the customer's perspective (Edvardsson & Olsson 1996, 145).

The service process is a series of activities required to produce the service. All of the processes that provide value to the customer are included in the service process. The service process demands customer participation, and without the customers' participation, the service process cannot take place. Customer contributes to the result in terms of added value and quality (Edvardsson & Olsson 1996, 145). To provide quality services to customers, the company or service provider needs to understand customers' expectations (Kim & Kim 2001, 139). Since the service process demands customers' participation, it should also be considered when analysing the service process. A critical issue for companies is to understand how services are evaluated by the customers or users to be able to identify ways to manage these evaluations and influence them in desired direction (Grönroos 2000, 62). Some of the service processes parts are visible to the customers and some are not. As determined by Geum et al. (2009, 435), service process covers the steps, tasks, and mechanisms that are necessary for service delivery to occur (Geum et al. 2009, 435). Mayer et al. (2003, 621) stated that the result of a process is a customer outcome, which is, that the customer is either satisfied or dissatisfied with the service delivery experience (Mayer et al. 2003, 621).

The concepts of service process and customer journey can be linked together, and they can also be seen as the different sides of the same coin. Both of these concepts are described as a process that includes different activities or touchpoints, viewed from the customers' point of view or from the company's point of view. As we previously went through, customer experience is formed from the perceptions that are built from the interactions with the service provider company. All of these interactions can be drawn up to a customer journey that includes touchpoints that describe all of these interactions. The customer journey has been described as a process that a customer goes through to access or use a company's product or service. (Følstad & Kvale 2018, 207; Tueanrat et al. 2021, 336). The customer journey includes all of the activities and events that are connected to the service's delivery from the customers' perspective. (Zomerdijk and Voss 2010, 74) Similarly, the service process is described to be a series of activities that are needed to produce the service, and all activities that provide value to the customer, are included in the service process. The service process describes the actions the company needs to make to provide the service and value to the customer and the customer journey describes the steps and encounters that the customers have with the company. Both of these concepts are important for companies to understand since they give valuable information to the company. Identifying the service process helps

to fully uncover how the service is provided, what kind of actions are needed, and how the value is created. Drawing or identifying customer journey helps to understand how and when the customer interacts with the company, to gain insights into customer experiences and behaviours. If the company wants to provide quality services, then customers' expectations need to be understood (Kim & Kim 2001, 139) which leads to proper customer experience and value management, and customer journey identification. Combining all the concepts together maximises the company's ability to achieve or sustain a competitive advantage and offer the best services to the customers.

3 Research design and methods

The following chapter introduces the research methodology and design used in this master's thesis. This chapter starts with explaining the research methodology and later on, this chapter describes how the data for the study was collected and analysed. Reliability and validity are discussed at the end of this chapter.

3.1 Research methodology

The following chapter will reason why certain research methods were chosen for this thesis. The main goal of this study is to create a better understanding of the takeover model and how it is working from the customers' perspective. This study aims to find out if it creates good customer experience and value or not. Furthermore, the goal is to gain knowledge of customers' expectations and experiences for the takeover model. This study also aims to find ways how to reduce the gap between experiences and expectations and uncover the problems related to the takeover model from the customers' perspective. To get the best knowledge of customers' expectations and experiences, and problems in the takeover model both qualitative and quantitative research methods were chosen to clarify these issues.

The data was gathered with an email survey where both open-ended and close-ended questions were used. This study was a single case study, intended to understand, describe, and interpret a phenomenon (Kananen 2015, 18) in an insurance company and therefore, this thesis used a mixed method combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

There are two different types of research, qualitative and quantitative (Adams et al. 2014, 6). The researcher can choose to do either qualitative or quantitative research, or use both of them and do mixed method research (Saunders et al. 2015, 165). Qualitative study uses words and sentences whereas quantitative study is based on numbers (Kananen 2015, 18; Saunders et al. 2016, 165). Using a mixed method means that the author collects and analyses both qualitative and quantitative data in the same study. Using mixed methods, the author can tackle such research problems that only qualitative or quantitative approaches could not by themselves fully answer (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 78).

The empirical part of this study utilizes a single case study method to uncover and gain knowledge of customers' experiences and expectations of the takeover model. As the focus of this study was on the customer's point of view, a mixed method, using both qualitative and quantitative methods was an appropriate method to gather data from the customers. By doing this, the study can take advantage of the strengths that qualitative and quantitative methods offer. Mixed method research is a good way to deeply understand different issues and uncover the participants' own voices, experiences, and expectations. Empirical data for this research was collected with email survey using open-ended and close-ended questions and was sent to the insurance company's customers who have interacted with the claims services during the last year.

Eisenhardt (1989, 534) has defined case study approach as follows: "a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings" (Eisenhardt 1989, 534). In addition, generally, case studies integrate data collection methods like interviews, questionnaires, observations and archives (Eisenhardt 1989, 534-535). Similarly, Metsämuuronen (2008, 16-17) points out that case studies often utilize several data collection methods in order to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon (Metsämuuronen 2008, 16-17). There is not a big difference between a case study and a qualitative study, and a case study uses qualitative study methods in the data collection and analysis phase (Kananen 2013, 56).

A single case study method is suitable for studying certain phenomena and it helps the author have a deeper understanding and insights into the explored subject (Gustafsson 2017, 11; Farquhar 2012, 5). Using case study research, the researcher has the opportunity to look at the phenomenon in context. This means collecting data or evidence about that phenomenon where it actually happens, for example in a company or in a country, when doing business research (Farquhar 2012, 5). As the case study is concerned to be studying a phenomenon in context, the findings create awareness of how the phenomenon takes place within a certain situation (Farquhar 2012, 6). This also applies to this study since this study focuses to research on the customer experience and customer expectations related to the current claims takeover model of the case company. A single case study focused on the issues that emerge in case company and to deeply understands customer experiences and value creation in the company's processes.

When the author wants to study a person or a group of people, it is good to do a single case study. Single case studies can provide rich descriptions of an existing phenomenon (Gustafsson 2017, 11). As this study is focusing on a certain group of customers, a single case study gives an opportunity to gain a comprehensive understanding of those customers' expectations and experiences with the takeover model. Moreover, this study aims to uncover potential problems or challenges that customers face, this is strongly linked to the company's operations and industry, which emphasises the case's uniqueness.

Qualitative data can provide rich and accurate descriptions of phenomena, but the data usually focuses on fewer cases than quantitative data. Usually, the information and data gathered for qualitative study are nonquantitative which consists of different textual materials like documents, interview transcripts, and fieldnotes that document experiences in social actions (Saldaña 2011, 4). In this study, the aim is not only to understand the customer experience and service process in the insurance company but to understand and interpret how customers are experiencing the service and what are their main expectations. The objective is to gain a deeper knowledge of the takeover process from the customers' perspective, and in addition gain knowledge of customer expectations and experiences. If needed and possible, based on the findings the aim is to provide development ideas for the takeover process.

Quantitative data can provide a breadth information on large number of cases, but it is less in-depth compared to qualitative data. Quantitative data can also be generalized better than qualitative data. Usually, the data and information collected for the quantitative study consist of numeric data and statistics and it answers to questions like "what", "how often" and "how many". (Bhandari, 2020; Fullstory, 2022). The most common data collection methods for quantitative data are surveys, experiments and observations. The statistical tests can be used for the analysis of quantitative data. As mentioned, the aim of this study is to gain knowledge of customers main expectations and experiences but also gain statistical knowledge and information on how customers review the current takeover model.

3.1.1 Data collection

The most commonly used data collection methods for qualitative studies are interviews, observations, surveys and data gathered from different documents (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 83). Also, questionnaires and focus groups can be used to collect data for qualitative studies. Qualitative research can also use more than one method to collect data (Saunders et al. 2015, 166). The mentioned data collection methods are not only methods for qualitative studies, but they are also applicable for quantitative studies (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 83). For quantitative data, the most used data collection methods are surveys (Kananen 2015, 197). Also, interviews and questionnaires can be used. Surveys can be sent for example via email and SMS. Interviews can be conducted via F2F, online or by phone. (Fullstory, 2022; QuestionPro, 2022)

A survey, and more precisely, a survey with open-ended and close-ended questions was chosen to be used for the empirical part of the research. When a researcher wants to know what a person thinks or why he acts the way he does, it makes sense to ask him (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 72). A survey can provide rich and deep answers to the topic to be researched. A survey was chosen for this study to get an in-depth understanding of the customer's expectations and experiences regarding the claims takeover model. The survey questions can be found from Appendix 1.

Usually, open-ended questions produce long-form written unique answers and the goal is to develop an understanding of a topic, problem, or issue from an individual perspective. Open-ended questions are designed to uncover for example opinions and experiences expressed in respondents' own words, which is why the method is suitable for this study. Open-ended questions cannot be answered with yes or no, instead, the questions require the respondent to elaborate on their points. Open-ended questions can be answered with sentences, stories, or lists. Asking open-ended questions can help to uncover more than the author anticipates uncovering since participants may share more than expected. It can be conducted that open-ended questions help the author to see things from the customers' point of view and this is what we want to achieve with this study. (Deakin University 2021; Farrell 2016; SurveyMonkey 2022). Using this method in this study helps to see things from the customers' perspective and uncover their real opinions and experiences rather than getting

answers based on pre-determined choices. Surveys can provide a deep exploration of participant emotions and experiences towards the used model in a takeover at the moment.

To get a good amount of answers, also close-ended questions were asked. Close-ended questions can be answered with yes or no answers. There are different ways to structure close-ended questions (SmartSurvey 2022). Examples of different close-ended questions are multiple-choice questions, checklists, rating scales, likert scales, and dichotomous questions (SmartSurvey 2022). From these methods, this study used multiple choice questions and rating scales. These question methods make the survey more 'light' and easier and faster to answer which determines today partly if people are willing to answer or not. At the beginning of the survey, one multiple choice question was asked concerning the age of the participants. Rating scale questions were used to ease up the answering so that not all of the questions won't require answering by own words and sentences. By using a rating scale, the study can quite easily uncover how people feel about certain issues or phenomena. Another benefit that close-ended questions offer, is that the questions are easy to understand by the participants. To some questions, participants can choose multiple answers based on their preferences. The survey questions were carefully constructed keeping in mind the research questions, the main goals of this study, and the theoretical part of this research.

It is recommendable to choose those individuals who have the motivation to answer, knowledge, or experience of the issue which is being researched (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 85-86). An elite sample is a method where individuals with the most relevant information regarding the research are taken into as participants in the research. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 86). In this study, the method was used, and survey recipients were chosen based on their interactions with the insurance company. The recipients were judiciously chosen from the insurance company's customer base and those were chosen as the recipients who have interacted with the company by the means of claim issues in the past year. The survey was formed via insurance company's survey tool and was sent via email to the recipients. The study took advantage of the insurance company's gathered data about the customer interactions with claims processes from where the recipients could easily be selected. Only those individuals could be contacted who have given permission to email marketing, so the preliminary data of recipients was then cross compared with the email marketing permissions of each individual.

The number of recipients for the surveys was limited since the survey could not be sent to all of the insurance company's customers who have encountered the company at some point. As this study focuses on the model currently used and as said, it has been in use now for a little over a year, so the recipients were chosen based on the interactions that happened during this timeline. Also, since the email marketing permission needed to be given, the recipient amount shrunk. Based on these issues, the total amount of recipients for the survey was 450. Due to invalid email addresses or other invalid information, the total amount of who received the survey was 448. The survey's answering time was between 9.5.2022–20.5.2022. 100 recipients opened the link to the survey and the total amount of answers during the answering time was 66, which means that the response rate was 14.7 %.

3.1.2 Data analysis

As this study is a case study, the data analysis will follow the typical way to analyse case studies. A case study does not have its own analysis methods since it is well based on qualitative studies (Kananen 2013, 103). The simplest description of a case study's qualitative data analysis is that the qualitative data is broken down into factual content, and then the material is recombined into a researcher's view and a good description of the phenomenon (Kananen 2013, 103).

Content analysis is a popular approach of analysing qualitative data (Adams et al. 2014, 159). The purpose of content analysis is to narrate the respondents' comments systematically and classify the several meanings expressed by the respondents (Adams et al. 2014, 159). The chosen method for analysing the collected data in this study will be content analysis. Content analysis has three different classification principles for data classification, these are presented in figure 5 below. Theory-based classification, data-based classification, or a combination of both of these can be used to classify case data (Kananen 2013, 103). This study will utilize the data-based classification where the classification framework emerges from the data (Kananen 2013, 103).

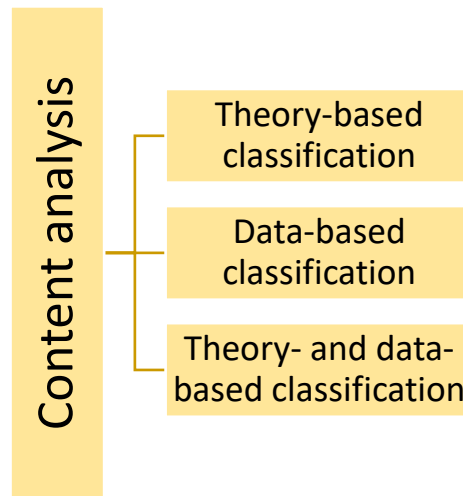


Figure 5. Content analysis classification principles. (Obtained from Kananen 2013, 104).

The most common and simplest ways to present the results in a quantitative study are direct distributions, cross-tabulation, and various distribution and key figures (Kananen 2015, 288). Examples of more advanced and slightly more challenging analysis methods include correlation analysis, regression analysis, factor analysis, and cluster analysis (Kananen 2015, 288). These more advanced ways to analyse data were not used in this study, since the quantitative questions mainly concerned background information of the participants, how well the participant got information during the claims opening process, and how likely they would recommend the service to others.

Next, the different steps of analysis are explained. All of the data from the survey was in one excel file. As the data from surveys was already in text format, there was no need to transcript it again. However, the survey was conducted in Finnish since the service language in the company is Finnish and Swedish, meaning that when direct quotes are used, those parts that are taken into this thesis will then be translated into English.

After the survey's answering time ended, the following step was to review and read the data multiple times to get a proper picture of it and the answers. The answers to each question were cut down into their own parts and sections.

The following step was to find simplified expressions from the answers. The simplified answers were combined into groups based on similarities to get a clear picture of the main points that were mentioned several times. As the chosen analysis method was content

analysis, it can use three different classifications, which are mentioned in figure 5 above. In this study, classification and the groups emerged from the data. Simple, direct distributions of the data were made to clarify the empirical findings and their understanding.

3.2 Reliability and validity

In their studies, the authors try to avoid making mistakes that would affect the reliability and validity of the study. However, still, not all studies are similar in their reliability and validity. This is why it is important to evaluate the reliability and validity of the performed study.

Validity means the appropriateness of the measures used, generalisability of the findings, and accuracy of the analysis of the results (Saunders et al. 2015, 202). Whereas reliability is retrieving the repeatability of the results (Saunders et al. 2015, 202). According to Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2009, 136), the usage of these concepts in qualitative studies is criticized to a certain extent because they are developed in the quantitative study field. Despite this, reliability and validity are discussed and evaluated in this chapter.

Generally, reliability issue concerns a measurement method's ability to produce the same research result over and over again (Stenbacka 2001, 552). However, this is not applicable to most of the qualitative researches. According to Stenbacka (2001, 551-552), reliability can be achieved when the whole research and its different phases are presented to the audience in a transparent way. The validity of a qualitative study can be achieved when the respondents are chosen from the area of research in such way that they are involved with the problem the researcher tries to solve (Stenbacka 2001, 551-552).

One issue that might affect the reliability and validity of the research is that the researcher has some previous knowledge and experiences regarding the topic to be studied. The researcher is currently working in the company as a customer advisor. This could affect the study's analysis phase. However, this challenge is recognized, and its impact is minimized. Personal opinions or experiences of the researcher will not be expressed in the surveying phase or in the analysing process. Another issue that can affect to the study's reliability is the limited number of responses to the survey. As the recipient amount was limited, naturally, the respondent amount was not huge. This is why it can affect to the reliability and the findings should not be entirely generalized.

A survey as a data collection method can possess a challenge to the study. As the participants are individuals, everyone can understand the questions in the survey in their own way. A problem occurs if the questions are understood differently than they are supposed to. This can affect the reliability and validity of the study. In order to avoid any misunderstandings, the questions will be structured in a way that the participant can easily understand what is meant by the specific question. A better understanding of the questions can be ensured by conducting the survey in the native language. Using close-ended questions also decreases misunderstandings related to the questions. The survey is tested in advance and proofread many times to avoid any misunderstandings. The questions are presented and reviewed before sending the survey to get feedback on the survey overall and how the questions are understood. Based on the feedback, the questions are modified. However, even when these precautions are made, all of the participants can still understand the questions slightly or fully wrong.

4 Empirical findings

The following chapter presents the results of the empirical part of this study. At the beginning of the chapter, the survey questions are introduced, followed by a brief introduction of the case company and its claims takeover model.

The findings of the study are presented in the order that the survey questions were presented to the respondents. Firstly, customers' expectations for the model and service are presented and after that, the chapter moves to customer experiences, and lastly, going through the problems related to the takeover model and service. Some of the answers are cross compared with this year's insurance research (Vakuutustutkimus 2022), to get a picture of the industry in general. However, since the insurance research was a bigger study with more respondents, the results of these two studies should not be completely connected.

4.1 Survey questions

The survey had 13 questions and some of the questions had additional specified questions based on the answers to the main questions. The survey included both open-ended and close-ended questions as mentioned before. The first survey questions concerned respondents' background information; age, customer history, and previous contact with the company over the past year. The following questions included questions regarding customer expectations, experiences, possible problems faced by the customers, and their opinions about the service quality and process. Lastly, the respondent could give ideas or development suggestions for the opening and handling of the claims. All of the questions were the same for all of the respondents. The survey questions can be found in appendix 1.

4.2 Case company and claims takeover model

The case company in this thesis is a Finnish insurance company. The company is owned by its customers and the company serves private, farm, entrepreneurial, corporate customers

and organisations. The products and services include non-life, life and pension insurances as well as savings and investment services. The history of the company goes way back to the 1700 and 1800 centuries. The current model that is in use in the company, has been described shortly in this thesis already. However, to get a proper idea of how the model works, this chapter introduces the model more deeply.

The model has been in use a little over a year. Before, the whole responsibility for claims takeover and handling was on the company's claim advisors' hands. All of the claims were opened and handled from the beginning to the compensation decision by the claim advisors. After the model was reviewed, customer advisors started to open the claims to the company's system and then the opened claim moved to the claim advisors' queue for handling. If needed, claim advisors contact the customers again for further clarification or information about the damage. If further clarifications or information are not needed, claim advisors give customers their compensation decisions and information of how to proceed. The reviewed model can be called a two-stage model where both customer and claim advisors are involved in the customer's claims process. However, the aim was that this two-stage process would not be visible to the customers. The current channels through which customers can report their damages are through phone and web service and by visiting the company's offices.

4.3 Respondents background information

The survey started with basic questions concerning the respondents' age, customership with the company, and previous contact with the company over the past year. Those who answered yes to the question concerning whether they have been in contact with the company during the past year got an additional question about the contact, how many times, and what kind of damage led to the contact.

Appendix 2 presents the age distribution of the respondents and their customership with the company. The respondents' middle age is quite high, almost 44 % of the respondents were 64 years or older. The second biggest age group among the respondents was 55-64 years old ones. High middle age can affect the answers to the remaining questions, and it is kept in mind when analysing the answers. From the same table, we can also see that more than 90 % of the respondents have been the company's customers for more than two years.

From the table, in appendix 3 we can see that 54 of the respondents have been in contact with the company over the past year and 12 have not. Although the survey respondents were chosen based on earlier interactions with the company, the study still got 12 responses that stated that they have not been in contact. There is a possibility to handle insurance or claim issues with a power of attorney, so someone else from the household may have been in contact with the company concerning claim issues. The survey was sent to the policy holder's email address which partly explains the answers that someone not been in contact with the company. To get additional information, those respondents who have been in contact with the company were asked the reason for their contact and how many times this happened. The answers covered all of the company's different damage types, including property damages (building, movables, and animal), vehicle damages, and health damages. The answers regarding how many times respondents have been in contact with the company varied from one time to a few times and often.

4.4 Expectations

This subchapter goes through and opens the customers' expectations of the takeover model and service. The following questions in the survey were formed to uncover the main expectations for the claims takeover model and service. After having acknowledged the expectations, they are compared with the current experiences of the takeover model and service to see how well expectations are met. From the respondents' answers, seven main points were detected as main expectations for the service and takeover model (see table 2 below). Repetition and similarities were noticeable in most of the answers.

Table 2. Expectations for the service.

Fast (32)	Smooth (13)	Easy (13)
Guidance (9)	Communication (7)	Compensation decision (7)
Appropriateness (5)		

'I hope that my issue will always be dealt as fast as possible, but thoroughly and reliably'

Fast was the most repeated expectation for the company's claim service by the respondents. According to the answers, fast handling of the matter and providing compensation decisions as fast as possible were among the main expectations. Even though fast service was mentioned by most of the respondents, appropriate and reliable service seems to be still important for the customers. Compensation decisions should be handled and delivered fast, but the service and its quality must not suffer from this.

‘I expect that doing business with the company runs easily and smoothly’

Insurance and compensation matters can be tricky to understand, which is why easiness and smoothness of the process are needed. Also, in the event of damage, everything may seem complex or challenging, so easy service and ways to report the claim ensure that the customer gets a peaceful feeling. Clear, easy, and smooth processes ensure that the customers won't feel confused or unaware of the coming. Based on the findings, it can be stated that the respondents demand easy and smooth ways to report claims without sudden interruptions or difficulties.

‘I expect that during the same call, if possible, I will receive a compensation decision and correct information on how to proceed’

Getting the compensation decision at the first contact or with a quick schedule was among the main expectations for the service. Alongside this, many of the answers revealed that proper information and guidance should be provided at the time of contact so that customers won't feel uncertain of the future and following steps. Appropriate and sufficient guidance and information on the following steps would decrease the additional calls or contacts to the company. The respondents demanded open and fast communication from the company and its representatives. Appropriateness in handling the claim matters and proper customer service were also mentioned.

All in all, it seems that these seven issues that emerged from the answers simply describe the service that the customers would like to face when they interact with the company. The service should work so that the customers would not need to contact the company again after the first contact is made. After the contact, customers should have a feeling that the matter is taken care of, knowledge of what happens next, and how the issue will be handled.

To be able to develop the service to meet customer's expectations and wishes, they need to be acknowledged and understood. From the answers to the question, what kind of issues customers would like to get done within the first contact with the company, three main issues were highlighted by the respondents.

“All the things that need to be taken care of”

“I want to provide all possible information in the easiest possible form, so that any important information will not be missing”

The respondents pointed out that they would like to do everything that is necessary for the claim issue within the first phone call, office visit, or web service. This includes getting done everything that is necessary for the specific claim issue. For example, giving all the needed information related to the damage, delivering the needed documents in an easy format, and providing everything so that the compensation decision would be given as fast as possible. An ideal situation for the customers would be that only one contact would be enough for the compensation decision.

“The most important thing is to get an immediate answer of the compensation”

“For example, does any of my insurances cover the damage or will it be excluded from the compensation”

“That I know if I will receive compensation and how much and how long it will take to deal with the compensation”

The respondents hope to get information on whether they have the right to any kind of compensation or not, and if possible, get the compensation decision within first contact. This is connected to the earlier answers, where respondents hoped that everything would be done within the first contact, including information of the compensation schedule or even better, getting the compensation decision. The answers to the question that aimed to find out is it important to get the compensation decision within the very first contact with the company are also supporting the above-mentioned issues. More than 33 percent of the respondents answered that it is very important to get decisions and 47 percent of the respondents

answered that it is important (see appendix 4). Having information about the compensation or getting the compensation decision within the first contact seems to be an important factor for the customers.

“Instruction on how the claim issues proceeds, what I need to do, and you will do. Clearly stated operating methods or, for example, co-operation parties who are responsible for practical matters, repairs, etc.”

“As clear information and possible on how the matter is progressing and possible instructions on how to proceed”

The respondents stated that the process of reporting a claim should be easy and also, when the claim has been reported, clear instructions and information on the following steps and processes should be provided to them. After the first contact, respondents would like to have knowledge of what happens next, how the process moves on, and what they are supposed to do next if there is a need to do something. Time estimates or schedules of the compensation processing times should be provided for the customers so that she or he knows what to expect and when. Right and proper information about the coming steps could prevent additional contacts, where customers call or visit offices to get information about their claim’s situation or possible compensation.

To develop the service to better meet customer expectations and needs, the respondents were asked their preferred channels through which they would like to be in contact with the company concerning claim issues. Respondents could choose one or more options, which were phone, chat, web service, office, and email. As appendix 5 shows, the phone channel was the most popular channel among the choices. This can be explained partly by respondents’ high middle age. Phone service is more popular among older people compared to digital channels, as the digital channels can be more tricky to use. The problems that occur on the web service make it hard to report the claim or handle ongoing claim issues, which also partly affects the phone channel’s popularity.

Office and email channels both received 25 votes, which was quite surprising. Personal, face-to-face services are preferred among older customers who may not use digital services as much as younger customers. The popularity of email can be explained by its easy usage. It does not include as many problems or failures as the web service, and it is easy to use

anywhere with an internet connection. Of the 66 respondents, 23 gave vote for the web service, which was the second most unpopular channel after chat. A contributing factor that affects the popularity of these channels are the problems in the service.

The findings of this year's Vakuutustutkimus are quite in line with this study's findings. However, it should be noted that this study's question focused on preferred channels for handling claims whereas Vakuutustutkimus aimed to uncover the most popular channels to handle insurance matters. According to Vakuutustutkimus, the most popular channel for handling insurance issues is the internet and the second most popular channel through which customers interact with insurance companies is by phone (Vakuutustutkimus 2022, 98-99). The difference between these two studies can be explained by this study's high middle age. Similarly, to this study, in the industry, handling insurance issues in the offices is quite popular, as it was the third most popular (Vakuutustutkimus 2022, 98).

4.5 Experiences

The next questions in the survey focused on customer experience, service quality, and the whole process related to claim issues. The questions were built to get a better knowledge of how customers experience the current takeover model and service.

What it comes to the overall service quality level, close to 85 % of the respondents said that the service has been adequate, including that they got enough information, the issues were taken care of, and they got the compensation decision fast enough (see appendix 6). It seems that most of the respondents are pleased with the company's takeover model and service. Similarly, in the industry in general, it appears that most of the respondents are happy with the claims services. In general, 87 % got good customer service in the event of an accident, and 66 % kept the service very good (Vakuutustutkimus 2022, 113).

As can be seen from table 3 below, most of the respondents appear to be satisfied with the company's service related to claims takeover, as half of the respondents said that the service has met their expectations very well and almost 38 % said that the service has met their expectations well. The company is able to fulfil most of the respondents' expectations related to the service.

Table 3. How well the level of service has met expectations.

Grade	Pcs	Share
Very well (1)	33	50.0 %
Well (2)	25	37.9 %
I cannot say (3)	1	1.5 %
Poorly (4)	4	6.1 %
Very badly (5)	3	4.5 %
Total	66	100 %

At this point the survey included an additional question so that the respondent could explain where the company has succeeded or what has gone wrong. Below mentioned citations are taken straight from the survey answers and they describe where the company has succeeded.

‘‘The service events have been smooth, and I have received help when needed. In the phone service, I have received good, personal service’’

‘‘Fast answer to the phone, fast compensation, very friendly service’’

The respondents emphasized good or excellent service and customer advisors. The adjectives that the respondents used to describe the service were, for example, fast and friendly. The respondents also pointed up fast service regarding the compensations. It depends on the specific claim whether it is possible to give compensation fast or not, so these answers should not be generalized so that all of the claims should be or were solved fast.

As appendix 7 shows, nearly 79 % of the respondents estimated that they got information very well or well when reporting a claim or handling a claim issue with the company. The easiness of reporting a claim affects a lot to the customer experience, naturally, if everything is difficult or problems occur all the time, the experience is not good. Although few respondents felt that they did get too little or little information in the event of reporting or handling claims, they still felt that it is very easy or easy to report and handle claims. Close to 29 % of the respondents stated that reporting a claim and handling claim issues is very easy and a little over 59 % stated that it is easy (see appendix 8). There is a connection between getting a good amount of information and easiness to report or handle claim issues.

In general, it seems that reporting a claim or handling claim issues with the company is easy for most of the respondents.

Word-of-mouth is a powerful and inexpensive marketing tactic for companies. If the customers are pleased and happy with the service, they will recommend and tell it to others. Of course, this also works the other way around. If the service is bad or something has gone wrong, these will be told. Recommendations are a powerful way to increase the company's popularity and win customers from competitors. The survey's last question was included into the survey to get information about how likely the respondents would recommend the company's claim service to their friends. More than half of the respondents answered 10 and 9, as can be seen from appendix 9. This also supports the before mentioned answers regarding the customer's current experiences for the takeover and service.

Good feedback on the model and service also rises from the feedback section. The open feedback emphasizes good service and professional customer advisors. All in all, a large share of the respondents felt that the service has been adequate, and it is pleasing most of the respondents. Handling and reporting a claim has been easy for most of the respondents and many of them would very likely or likely recommend the service to others.

When comparing the main expectations for the service with current experiences, we can see similarities among these answers. We can say that the company can meet quite well the customers' expectations at the moment. However, although on the surface it seems that the model and service are working fine, meeting customers' expectations and creating a good experience, we can state that there is still a need for development. The development could focus, e.g., on proper information, guidance and communication. Although it seems that most of the respondents are pleased with the service, it should be kept in mind that this study and the number of participants was just a small share of the company's customers.

4.6 Problems

If there is a problem, it needs to be recognized before it can be solved. After having acknowledged the possible problems, the company can try to solve and minimize it or develop their processes such that these kinds of problems would not occur.

As appendix 6 shows, just over 15 % of the respondents claimed that the service has not been adequate, meaning they did not get enough information, the issue was not taken care of, and they did not get the compensation decision fast enough. To get a deeper understanding of this, the respondents could express what has gone wrong and why the service has not met their expectations. Four main issues emerged from the answers that affected the service's failure to meet their expectations.

“The handling of the matter was slow, and the slow handling also slowed down the repair of the damage”

“The compensation decision took a little too long, the agreed contact had to be waited, and when the decisionmaker person finally called, the matter was completed during the call”

Slow processing and handling were mentioned a couple of times. This affects the possible repair time, which sometimes should be done at a very fast schedule. The respondents mentioned that it takes too long to process the matters or to provide compensation. Compared with industry in general, 15 % stated that they completely or partially disagreed with the fact that the compensation application was handled without delay (Vakuutustutkimus 2022, 113). This is partially in line with this study's findings. However, it should be noted that the question in the survey concerned whether the service was adequate, and it included different aspects, so the findings cannot be fully linked together. The sampling size also affects this and should be kept in mind.

However, even though slow processing times and providing compensation decisions to the customers were mentioned several times, some of the respondents also emphasized that the company has succeeded in offering fast service and compensation decisions fast. The individuality of each claim needs to be remembered, as every claim is its own kind, and for some claims, it may take more time to process than others.

“Call requests were not answered, strange explanations, transfer of responsibility to a third party”

“Completion of the claim was slow, and I was unable to provide all the necessary information because the online service did not receive the PDF attachments (although they were supposed to work in the service)”

The respondents pointed out bad, inefficient and unclear communication from the company’s representatives. Those who felt that the service was not adequate pointed out that it was hard to get in touch with the person in charge of the claim, left call requests were not taken care of, agreed contacts needed to be waited and the service was unclear. Naturally, unclear service or communication leaves the customer feeling unaware and unsatisfied with the service. Also, problems that occur with the web service make it difficult to report the claim and lead to multiple contacts with the company. Technical problems cannot be fully excluded when dealing with digital services. However, the service should work like it is supposed to and customers should be able to deliver the necessary documents for the claim. Wrong kind of compensation or no compensation at all was mentioned by a couple of respondents. Of course, these kinds of issues affect the expectations for the service and customers may feel that the service is not adequate or proper, but this study does not take a stand on these issues.

Claim issues can sometimes be difficult and complex to understand. This is why providing enough information to customers is necessary. Little over 10 % of the respondents answered that they got little information and 4.5 % answered that they got too little information in the event of reporting a claim (see appendix 7). It should be kept in mind that if a customer reports a claim via a web service, they are not in direct contact with the customer advisors or claim advisors, and additional information cannot be provided to them at this point.

If a customer does not get enough information or guidance when they report a claim or handle a claim issue, these can feel hard or complex. One would think that if the customer does not get enough information or guidance when reporting a claim or handling issues related to it, this would also affect the easiness to report and handle a claim issue. However, only a few answers spoke in favor of this. A few of the respondents said that they received too little or little information and guidance, and that it was hard to report a claim or handle claim issues. It seems that although some of the respondents felt that not enough information or guidance was not provided to them, the process of reporting or handling claim issues is quite easy. Respondents could estimate the ease of reporting or handling claim issues on a

five-point scale. As appendix 8 shows, just a little over 6 % of the respondents pointed out that it is hard to do these issues and 3 % said that it is very hard. Technical problems with the web service affect the ease of reporting a claim or handling issues related to it. Also, unclear processes and inefficient communication were mentioned as the factors that affect the easiness to handle claim issues or report a new claim.

5 Discussion & implications

The following chapter will answer the research questions. Moreover, this chapter will present the theoretical implications of the study, followed by a managerial implications section that will address who could benefit from the survey findings. Lastly, suggestions for future research are presented.

5.1 Discussion

The concept of customer experience is a very context-based individual's experience and there are no one right or wrong answers to define it. As mentioned by Lemon & Verhoef (2016, 70), the academic literature offers several definitions of customer experience. This master's thesis followed the definitions by authors Gentile et al. (2007, 397) and Verhoef et al. (2009, 32). The authors stated that customer experience is holistic by nature and that the experience is strictly personal and originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a company (Gentile et al. 2007, 397; Verhoef et al. 2009, 32). This can also be indicated by the survey's findings. Every respondent had their own experiences and thoughts on the company and its service, and none of them were exactly the same. Of course, similarities were found, although each of the respondents is individual and has different a background.

Every customer has its own experiences but also expectations for the service and the formation of customer experience is affected by the customer's expectations for the service. This means that every customer has a different experience, and it is partly formed from their expectations of the service. If the company aims to create good customer experiences and service, they need to acknowledge customer expectations (Robledo 2001, 26-28). However, what it comes to the customers' experience towards a service, it is harder to understand the perceptions the customers have of the service and how to meet these, because services are different than goods with their characteristics. Customer experience management has an important role in customer experience success. There are several actions that companies can make to provide a better or superior customer experience. If a company wishes to properly manage customer experiences, there is a need to understand the concept fully and identify

factors that affect the creation of customer experience. Customer journey, touchpoints and mapping these help the company to identify all of the phases through which customers interact with the company. After these are identified, there is an opportunity to uncover problems and develop processes to better meet the customers' expectations.

Customer experience and value are highly important concepts for companies. They are seen as a way to differentiate from competitors, which is why they are a source of competitive advantage. Authors who have studied customer value shared a common theme in defining it. It is seen as a trade-off between gained benefits and made sacrifices or costs perceived by the customer (Anderson et al. 1993, 4-5; Blocker 2011, 534; Blocker & Flint 2007, 250; Ulaga & Chacour 2001, 258). As the customer experience is a context-based individual's experience, similarly, the customer's perception of value is dependent on particular usage situations, meaning that the value of a particular offering might be different for each customer (Lindgreen et al. 2012, 208; Lindgreen & Wynstra 2005, 737; Ulaga & Chacour 2001, 529).

Creating or delivering superior customer value demands customer value management. Creating customer value demands a huge amount of information about the customers and their perceptions. However, this information is not enough alone, customer value management is also needed. What it comes to the evaluation of customer value, the whole experience should be included, evaluating only a product or service is not enough. As a consequence of this, the answers of this study are not alone enough to evaluate customer value and its creation since customer value is created by many different actors and in different phases. However, we can draw some conclusions based on the answers. The answers enable us to draw conclusions on how the company's claims takeover model contributes to overall customer value and its creation.

5.1.1 Answering the research questions

This thesis intended to study customer experience in the insurance company's claims takeover model. The thesis was built around four research questions. The research questions were formed during the study's first phase. The following part will answer the research questions in the order that they were presented in chapter 1.2.

As said before, there are several factors that determine customer experience. It should be kept in mind that everyone has their own experience and that they are all personal. To someone, the service or the used model in the company can seem very easy and clear and to someone, it may be unclear or leave a bad experience. Similarly, each customer can have different values towards services and the values can be different for each one. The perception of value is dependent on a particular situation. The findings risen from the answers cannot be straightforwardly understood so that all of the customers feel the same way about everything. For example, even though slow processing and handling times were mentioned, it does not mean that all of the customers felt that way or that the compensation decision should be ready within a day or on the first contact. For some claims due to their nature, it is not possible to give the decision within the first contact or within a week. The handling of each claim is very dependent on the occasion and many different factors can affect it. The answers did not reveal any major linkages between a bad experience and specific damage or claim type, since every damage and claim is its own kind. Next, the main research question is answered, followed by answers to the supportive questions.

'How can the gap between experiences and expectations be minimized?'

The main research question is partly answered by the findings of the three supporting research questions. To answer the above-mentioned research question, as authors Frow & Payne (2007, 98) and Robledo (2001, 26-28) stated, if companies wish to deliver a perfect customer experience or create superior service to the customers, companies need to know the customers' perceptions and expectations for the service. Based on the detected expectations, companies can develop their service and operations in a way that expectations are better fulfilled. If the customers' expectations are not known, companies cannot address these expectations. What it comes to the case company and the respondents' expectations of the service, the main expectations concerned the quality of the service and claim process, how they would like to handle issues, and how the company should operate.

With customer journey mapping, the company could identify and analyse the customer experiences. Mapping is an easy way to understand the phases through which customers interact with the company and also understand customer experience better (Rosenbaum et al. 2017, 143). When aiming to clarify the whole customer journey, all of the touchpoints should be included in the journey, starting from the very first contact when the customer

acquires insurance from the company. After these are identified, more closer attention could be paid to the phases related to the claims takeover model to uncover the possible failure points. Drawing the map would clarify the process and touchpoints through which customers encounter the company. Usually, these are to some point acknowledged, but drawing the map from the customers' point of view could reveal new issues.

To better meet the customers' expectations, the company should be able to give appropriate and clear information and guidance to the customer when the customer contacts the company to report or handle a claim. Properly guiding the customer through the process and the following steps would minimize misunderstandings and unclarity, which affect the customers' experience towards the model and service. Reporting a claim should be as easy as it can be for the customers. In the case of damage, clear, easy, and smooth service and different ways to report the claim would increase the customers' satisfaction with the company. In order to maximize easy and smooth service, and to decrease the second contacts with the company, there could be a contact person for each reported claim, so if there is a need to ask anything or provide more information, the customer could contact the right person. This would also increase the service's personalization where the customer feels that he/she is served as an individual.

As mentioned, the email channel for reporting or handling claim issues was as popular as the office channel. To meet the customers' wishes, the company should consider whether it is possible to start using the email channel as one of the channels through which customers could report their claims. If this is not possible, at least emphasize the usage of email when delivering additional documents for the claim, because it is an easy and fast way. Email addresses could be given to customers when they report a claim so, if there is a need to deliver additional information, the customer would know where to deliver them. Also, keeping the offices open for the customers is important, not only for the customers but also for the company. Today, many banks and other insurance companies have limited their office opening hours, so this is an opportunity for the company to serve their customers better than others and gain more customers by offering local services. What it comes to the other channels, the phone was the most popular channel to report and handle claim issues. Phone service should be fast and efficient, long waiting should be avoided so that customers can easily get in touch with the company's representatives. Advisors should be able to provide professional service with proper guidance to their customers as they have now already.

Trying to solve or even minimize the problems that occur on the web service would increase its usage. This is not usually dependent on the company, and they are not easy to solve. However, a properly working web service would decrease the number of phone calls when customers would be able to report their claims without calling the company. Digital services and their usage are increasing all the time, which is why it would be important to have a properly working web service. Having an easy-to-use web service through which customers could open their claims and send more documents or other needed information would also affect to the customer experience in a positive way.

Information of has the customer even a right to compensation, an estimate of the compensation amount, or when the compensation decision will be given would help the company to better meet the customers' hopes and expectations. Giving this kind of information to the customers is not an easy job to do, but at least clearly informing the customers do they even have a right to compensation is better than waiting for the negative decision of the compensation. If it is possible, giving information of the coming compensation, the handling schedule, or in the best case, giving the compensation decision to the customer at the first contact, would affect the customer experience and satisfaction level and also, decrease the number of following contacts concerning the handling schedule or compensation decision.

If the company could estimate how long they usually process different kinds of claims and how fast compensation decisions are given for the customers, it would be great to inform the customer, so he/she knows what to expect. These kinds of estimates are not easy to give but one option would be to gather data of different claims and then analyse how long it takes to handle the claims and how fast the company is able to provide compensation decisions for the customers. To get reliable information, this would require a good amount of data about the different claims and their handling times. Taking the average handling times would act as a directional estimate that could be given to the customers when they report a claim for the first time. However, as every claim is different, it should be remembered that even if the average handling time of some claim would be e.g., 7 days, many factors, not dependent on the company, can affect the schedule. When giving the estimates to the customers, it should be pointed out that the estimate may not necessarily be accurate.

How do customers experience the quality of the service process at the moment?

The study's empirical findings suggest that the model under this study's investigation is partly meeting customers' expectations and needs. The company has succeeded in developing such a kind of model where most of the customers feel that they got good, fast, and friendly customer service. For the most part, compensation decisions are provided for the customers fast enough. The company's representatives have managed to provide customers guidance and information on the process and compensation adequately. The process of reporting or handling a claim seems to be easy for most of the respondents and no major problems are related to the company's operations.

Many different factors influence customers' experience. As Choudhury & Singh (2021, 13-14) stated, customers' expectations and satisfaction with service and its quality are among those. As the formation of customer experience is affected by the customer's expectations for the service, meeting these expectations as efficiently as possible ensures that the customer has a good experience. The empirical findings showed that the service meets respondents' expectations very well and well for most of the part. If we compare the answers to the questions where the company has succeeded with the main expectations, we can come to the consensus that the company is somewhat able to fulfil some expectations that the respondents mentioned. The current experiences and expectations for the service included similarities concerning fast service and handling the compensation. 85 % of the respondents felt that the service had been adequate, where they got enough information, the issues were taken care of, and they got the compensation decision fast enough, so overall, most of the respondents claimed that the quality of the service is good.

Based on the answers, it seems that some of the expectations are met, and most of the respondents are pleased with the service and its quality. It can be said that the takeover model and service are creating, for the most part, good customer experience and contributing to the overall customer value creation in a positive way, excluding some individuals who feel that the service has not met their demands and expectations.

What are the main expectations for the service process?

Although most of the respondents seemed to be satisfied with the model and service, the answers revealed that there is still a need for development to meet the expectations more

efficiently. There were seven points that were most repeated as the expectations for the service. Customers emphasized the importance of fast, easy, and smooth service. However, this should not affect the quality and handling of the claim issues and the compensation decision should still be made thoroughly. Clear and appropriate information and guidance from the company's representatives in the event of reporting or handling a claim issue were also among the expectations. Related to this, information about the right for compensation or an estimate of it were not only expectations towards the service, but they also seemed to be very important factors for most of the respondents. Lastly, providing the compensation decision as fast as possible to the customer was among the main expectations.

The respondents wish to encounter a service where only one contact with the company would be enough to get the process started. The respondents would like to provide all the necessary information for compensation at once and also, receive clear instructions and information on the following steps so that there is no need to contact the company again for further information or send more documents. This requires the company to know what kind of information is needed for the compensation decision so that they can be asked from the customers at the first contact. The answers also revealed that getting the compensation decision right away is an important factor or if it is not possible, at least getting information is there right to compensation and getting an estimate of the handling schedule. It can be conducted that respondents want to avoid uncertainty and they should get a feeling that they are aware of the following steps without a second contact.

What are the main problems that come along with the service process?

The last supportive research question was built to get knowledge of the possible problems in the takeover model and service in order to minimize or avoid these kinds of problems in the future and provide even better service for the customers. The answers to this research question are somewhat inconsistent with the previous research question answers. However, it should be kept in mind that experience is strictly personal, meaning that everyone has their own thoughts and experiences of the takeover model and service, as different factors affect it.

The answers indicate that the biggest problems are related to handling and processing times. However, the answers do not reveal any special connection between a specific claim or

damage and slow handling or processing. The answers revealed that compensation decisions should be provided faster for the customers. Another problem appeared to be inefficient or unclear communication and information of the claim handling and compensation. This causes uncertainty among the customers and usually, they call for information or updates about the issue. The web service and its problems were mentioned by a couple of the respondents. The problems that occur on the web service usually lead to a phone call to the company or visit to the office, since the customer cannot report their claim via web service. This then affects the customer's overall experience because they need to make more effort to report the claim or send more documents. A small part of the respondents felt that it is hard or very hard to report the claim or handle claim issues. An explanation for these answers included technical problems that slowed down or prevented the customer from reporting or handling claim issues, unclear processes, and inefficient communication that led to uncertainty.

5.2 Theoretical implications

The theoretical implications of this research are quite minor. However, this research contributes to the existing literature by reinforcing the assumption that customer experiences are naturally personal, that they only exist in the individual's mind and that two people cannot have the exact same experience (Pine & Gilmore 1998, 98-99). The study's empirical findings support this assumption. Not exactly the same answers or comments were found among the answers. Similarities naturally existed but still each individual had their own feelings, experiences and expectations.

This study also reinforces the assumptions and propositions that customer expectations need to be known if a company wishes properly to meet these and deliver superior service and customer experience (Frow & Payne 2007, 98; Robledo 2001, 26-28). There is a possibility to know some of the expectations without researching them, but by conducting research, the company has the chance to meet and fulfil the expectations more efficiently and deliver superior customer experience. Developing processes or making strategic changes is easier when the company has uncovered how customers feel and what they expect.

The study also strengthens the assumption that customer experience is a phenomenon that includes all the aspects of a company's offerings and consumers' responses to these, whether its direct or indirect contact, and that the experience is a sum of all experiences that the consumer has with the supplier, over the duration of their relationships (Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 70; Meyer & Schwager 2007, 118; Choudhury & Singh 2021, 12). The company's offering is not only the product or service, but it also includes the quality of customer care, advertising, and service features (Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 70; Meyer & Schwager 2007, 118), meaning that in this case, the company's takeover model and service are not the only factors that contribute to the creation of customer experience. Insurance companies usually offer insurance with different coverages, the right for compensation depends on the insurances coverage. If customers are not familiar with coverage, they may expect compensation and when receiving a negative decision, they may feel that the insurance is worthless to them. In the event of damage, the customer usually has more than one contact with the company, either direct or indirect. This means that the customer experience is formed from all of these interactions and from the other factors mentioned above. A good experience in the event of first contact does not ensure a good customer experience, as the following contacts can change this. Service and model can work properly and the process of reporting or handling the issue can feel easy to a customer, but for example, negative compensation decision can turn the customer experience from good to bad.

5.3 Managerial implications

Regardless of this study's limitations and the fact that the study was quite small, this study has managerial implications for managers and companies working in the B2C banking and insurance industries. Even though this study accompanies only similar kinds of businesses and was quite limited, the insurance and banking industries are growing and changing, and therefore this study is beneficial. As authors Frow & Payne (2007, 99-100) stated, employees' performance and motivation to deliver improved customer service and satisfaction can be increased by understanding customers' needs better.

Creating and managing the customer experience is a path to differentiation and competitive advantage. Due to the complex nature of customer experience and value, creating and maintaining the proper level demands proper management. There is a need for customer

experience and value management and the focus should be on uncovering emerging challenges and all of the issues affecting customers' experience. By identifying issues affecting customers' experience, the issues can be managed, and operations adjusted. By overcoming challenges, companies can better meet the customers' demands and properly please them. Customer experience helps to create or increase customer value, which can lead to customer loyalty.

5.4 Suggestions for future research

This study focused only on the customer experience related to the company's claims takeover model and service. As the middle age of the respondents was high, future research for the company could focus on the younger customers, presenting the same or modified survey to them and then comparing the findings with this study. Another group of respondents could be those who have not yet been in contact with the company's claim service. Also, since this study focused only on the B2C field, the B2B field is an open field for research concerning customer experience or value.

As the concepts of customer experience and value are complex and dynamic, these can be studied from many different perspectives. It would be interesting to study the insurance company from the customer value viewpoint, where value is created, and what kind of factors affect it. As the competition is growing all the time and customers have much more from to choose, more research and studies of customer experience and customer value are needed to uncover the important factors that can lead to differentiation from others. These concepts and their impacts on a company's success need to be acknowledged and this is why future research is needed.

6 Conclusions

This master's thesis studied customer experience in a Finnish insurance company's claims takeover model and service. The goal of this study was to investigate the company's claims takeover model and service from the customers' point of view and find out if it is creating a good customer experience and value. The study's aim was to gain a better understanding of the customers' experiences and expectations, as well as find ways to minimize the gap between experiences and expectations. Moreover, the aim was to uncover the problems related to the model. The survey addressed customers' expectations, experiences, and problems related to the takeover model. The research used both qualitative and quantitative methods in the data collection phase and that's why the research was conducted using mixed methods. The results allow the company to adjust its operations and processes to better meet the customers' expectations.

To best get the customers' own voices heard and uncover their expectations and experiences, the data for this study was collected via an email survey that was sent to the company's customers in May 2022. The survey had a total of 13 questions and a few additional questions based on the respondents' answers. In total, 66 answers were got. The data from the survey were analysed using content analysis where the classifications emerged from the data. The number of answers was not huge, but using close-ended and open-ended questions, the survey provided insights into the customers' expectations and experiences of the takeover model and service. With a bigger sample, this study may have got different results.

As a conclusion of the main findings of this study, the investigated model seems to create adequate customer experience and contribute to the overall customer experience and value creation in a positive way. Most of the respondents (close to 85 %) are satisfied with the model under investigation and the company's service. What it comes to the expectations and the company's ability to fulfil them, it seems that the company is managing quite well to meet the expectations, as more than half stated that the service has met their expectations very well. To get more perspective, the findings were compared with the newest insurance research (Vakuutustutkimus 2022). However, these two studies cannot be fully compared as Vakuutustutkimus had many more respondents and it focused also on insurance issues, not only claim matters. Similarities, however, were found between these two studies. The main

expectations concerned the service's quality and how the issues should be managed. Clear and efficient communication and guidance seem to be important factors for the customers, as well as getting information or an estimation of the compensation. The best scenario for the customers would be getting the decision within the first contact. The main problems noted from the responses were related to the handling times of the claims and compensation decisions as well as inefficient or unclear communication and information in the event of contact.

This study's one limitation was that it only focused on B2C and B2B was not concerned. The study was limited to only private customers and their experiences and expectations of the model and service. Another limitation was that not all of the customers could not be taken into as the recipients for the survey as this study focused on the specific claims takeover model. Hence, the results should not be generalized or linked with other processes.

The middle age of this study was quite high, so this leaves an open research gap for studying the younger customers, their experiences, and expectations for the takeover model and service. Another interesting thing to study would be the company's B2B field. Due to the complex and dynamic nature of the customer experience and value concepts and their importance for a company's success, there is a need for future studies.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Survey questions

1. Mikä on ikäsi?
2. Oletko ollut LähiTapiola Pirkanmaan asiakas yli kaksi vuotta?
3. Oletko ollut meihin yhteydessä korvausasioihin liittyen viimeisen vuoden aikana?
 - Kuinka usein ja mihin vahinkoon liittyen?
4. Millaisia odotuksia sinulla on korvausasiointiin liittyen?
5. Millaisia asioita haluat saada hoidettu, kun olet meihin ensi kertaa yhteydessä korvausasioissa?
6. Kuinka tärkeää sinulle on, että saat korvauspäätöksen heti ensimmäisen yhteydenoton aikana?
7. Mitä kautta asioisit mieluiten korvausasioihin liittyen? (voit valita useita vaihtoehtoja)
8. Onko palvelun taso ollut riittävä asioidessasi kanssamme? Saitko tarpeeksi tietoa, hoituiko asia, saitko päätöksen riittävän nopeasti?
 - Haluatko kertoa, missä onnistuimme?
 - Mikä on mennyt pieleen? Mitkä asiat vaikuttivat huonoon kokemukseesi?
9. Kuinka hyvin saamasi palvelu vastasi odotuksiasi korvausasioinnissa?
10. Kuinka hyvin seuraava väittämä pitää paikkansa: Saan tarpeeksi tietoa ja toimintaohjeita vahingon avaamisen yhteydessä.
11. Miten arvioisit vahingosta ilmoittamisen ja korvausasioiden hoitamisen helppoutta?
12. Kuinka todennäköisesti suosittelisit korvauspalveluamme tuttavillesi?
13. Onko sinulla ideoita ja kehittämisehdotuksia korvaus- ja vahinkoasioiden avaamiseen ja hoitamiseen liittyen? Otamme niitä mielellämme vastaan!

Appendix 2. Age distribution of the respondents and customership with the company

Age	Pcs	Share
Under 18	0	0.0 %
18-24	1	1.5 %
25-34	3	4.5 %
35-44	5	7.6 %
45-54	11	16.7 %
55-64	17	25.8 %
64 -	29	43.9 %
Total	66	100 %
Customer more than two years	Pcs	Share
Yes	61	92.4 %
No	5	7.6 %
Total	66	100 %

Appendix 3. Earlier contact with the company

Have been in contact with the company over the past year	Pcs	Share
Yes	54	81.8 %
No	12	18.2 %
Total	66	100 %

Appendix 4. How important it is to get compensation decision within the first contact

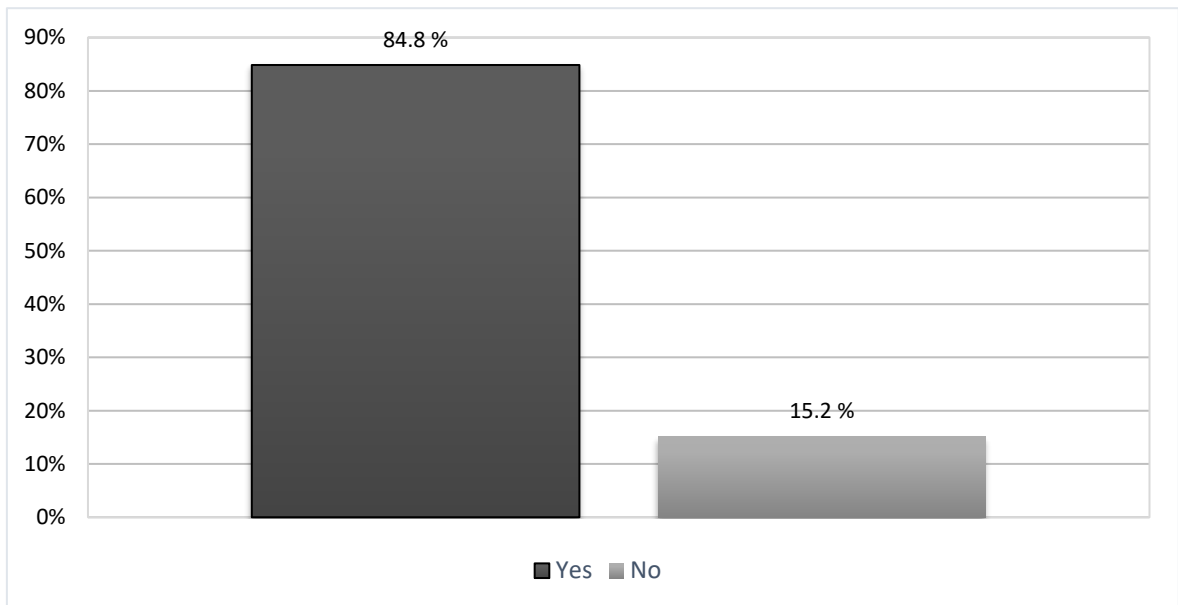
(1= very important, 2= important, 3= I cannot say, 4= somewhat important, 5= not important at all)

Grade	Pcs	Share
1	22	33.3 %
2	31	47.0 %
3	1	1.5 %
4	11	16.7 %
5	1	1.5 %
Total	66	100 %

Appendix 5. Most preferable channels

Channel	Pcs out of 66 respondents
Phone	56
Chat	7
Web service	23
Office	25
Email	25

Appendix 6. Has the level of service been adequate



Appendix 7. How well customers get information when reporting a claim

(1= too little information, 5= very well information)

Grade	Pcs	Share
1	3	4.5 %
2	7	10.6 %
3	4	6.1 %
4	27	40.9 %
5	25	37.9 %
Total	66	100 %

Appendix 8. The Ease of reporting and handling claim issues

(1= very easy, 2= easy, 3= I cannot say, 4= hard, 5= very hard)

Grade	Pcs	Share
1	19	28.8 %
2	39	59.1 %
3	2	3.0 %
4	4	6.1 %
5	2	3.0 %
Total	66	100 %

Appendix 9. Willingness to recommend company's claim service

(0= not willing to recommend, 10= very likely to recommend)

Grade	Pcs	Share
10	20	30.3 %
9	22	33.3 %
8	12	18.2 %
7	3	4.5 %
6	2	3.0 %
5	2	3.0 %
4	0	0.0 %
3	1	1.5 %
2	2	3.0 %
1	0	0.0 %
0	1	1.5 %