



LAHDEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
Lahti University of Applied Sciences

OPTIMIZING X CENTER EXPERIENCE

Case Study: Company X

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Timo Lehtinen

Lahti University of Applied Sciences
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ABSTRACT

This Master's thesis explores customer experience management and customer experience optimization. The aim is to optimize customer experience in the case company's X Center. The thesis studies customer experience and customer experience management as a core factor in holding successful X Center events.

The study is conducted in cooperation with Company X. Company X launched a new concept called X Center in Finland 2011. X Center is a place where customers and company representatives can meet and design new innovations together for customers' needs. New X Centers have been built in Europe and China after the Finnish pilot. The development of X Center is part of the company's current key strategy.

The theoretical part of this thesis is divided into two parts. The first part defines customer experience in general. It also highlights the importance of emotions and expectations in customer experiences as well as having the right evaluation methods and metrics in measuring them. The second part of the theory deals with customer experience management as a key competence of creating good customer experiences. This part emphasizes the importance of empowered employees in customer experience and brand creation. Relevant measurement methods and indicators for managing customer experiences are also discussed as well as the importance of each touch point between a company and customers.

This study's research method is qualitative. The research was conducted by face-to-face semi-structured interviews during the spring 2014. The research included both the customers' and employees' statements. All the respondents were Company X's current customers or employees.

The outcome of this thesis is a set of development recommendations for optimizing customer experiences within the X Center concept. The company can utilize this plan as a tool for developing and improving both the current X Centers and new upcoming X Centers. The results can also be used in finding the best practices and in analyzing customer needs and expectations related to the X Center concept.

Key words: customer experience, customer experience management, customer relationship, design, customer loyalty

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ABBREVIATIONS

CE	Customer Experience
CEM	Customer Experience Management
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
CMR	Customer Managed Relations
P2P	People-to-People
B2B	Business-to-Business
B2C	Business-to-Consumer
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
ROI	Return of Investment
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an introduction to the thesis. The beginning of the chapter, paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2, concentrates on describing thesis background, objectives, research questions and scope. Paragraph 1.3 presents the research strategy and methods. The structure of the research is introduced in paragraph 1.4. The aim of this research is to study customer experience optimization within the X Center concept.

1.1 Background of this thesis

Skillful customer experience creation and customer experience management are key competences for achieving success in business life today. A global standardization of products and services creates remarkable challenges for companies to differentiate from their competitors. (Shaw et al. 2010, 10) Therefore, the delivered experiences that exceed customers' expectations can be found as the key differentiators for today's companies. Modern customers expect to get more than just an average level of service from their partner. (Soudagar et al.2012, 8-11.) Customer experience management needs to be seen as a systematic activity that has clear objectives. A performance of company's employees reflects straight to the level of created customer experiences. Thus, it is essential to pay attention also to employee experiences and to ensure their understanding of the desirable customer experiences. (Arussy 2010, 20-22) The one most important thing for a company is to recognize the needs and expectations of its customers in order to be able to create optimal experiences for them. It is crucial to genuinely explore the delivered experiences that the customers have faced instead of assuming them to be something. Leppänen (2007, 72)

The author of this thesis works for Company X, which operates in a packaging industry. Company X launched a new concept called X Center in Finland 2011. X Center, as a term, has two meanings; it is a name

of a concept that enables new innovation creation together with company's customers, and it is also a name for a physical space including certain equipment and set up. Altogether seven new X Centers have been established in company's other premises in Europe after the first pilot in Finland. Development of X Center concept is a part of company's current key strategy, which inspired for making this thesis.

Customer experience optimization in X Center processes has a crucial role in the success of concept's future. The idea for conducting this research came from the author of this thesis. The aim of this research was to recognize the features that enable customer experience optimization within the X Center concept. Both the key customers and the employees of the case company were interviewed for this research. Customer experience, as a phenomenon, was divided into twelve parts. Each part was explored as a separate theme by conducting semi-structured interviews. As a result of interviews, concrete development recommendations for optimizing customer experience within the X Center concept were expected.

1.2 Thesis objectives, research questions and scope

The primary objective of this research is to solve how to optimize customer experience in projects related to X Center concept. The target is to improve and develop the concept in order to generate optimal experiences for its users.

The main research question of this study is: **How to optimize customer experience within X Center concept?**

The scope of this thesis is to concentrate on figuring out the experiences of the users of X Center concept and study how the future experiences can be optimized. In this thesis the employees and the key customers of the case company were the respondents of the research interviews. Altogether, 13 representatives of 10 key customer companies, and 10 employees of the case company were interviewed.

The body of each interview is created based on the written and electronic resources that the researcher got acquainted with during the research process.

1.3 Research strategy and methods

Qualitative research method was chosen to use for this study. This method is ideal for researching persons' lived experiences, emotions, observations, behaviors, organizational functioning or feelings (Patton 2002, 4; Strauss & Corbin 1998, 11). Qualitative research highlights the importance of studying things in their natural setting. Researcher aims to find and provide a holistic description of a phenomenon and seeks to reveal or discover something which already exists. (Patton 2002, 4-5; Denzin & Lincoln 2005, 3.) This research concentrates on exploring case company's key customers and employees. This empirical qualitative case study seeks to give development recommendations to Company X's Customer Loyalty and Marketing team for optimizing customer experience within its X Center concept.

The data used in this study is collected through semi-structured interviews. Interviews are an excellent way to gather information from the sources because it allows a direct contact between the researcher and the interviewee. (Harisalo et al. 2002, 29). A Semi-structured interview has a conversational mode that enables two-way interactions, in which the researcher has an opportunity to gather more information than originally aimed. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 86-87.) In this research, a group of case company's key customers and employees are interviewed since the researcher wants to get as comprehensive picture of the research problem as possible.

The researcher uses thematic analysis and clustering for analyzing the research data. In the first stage, clustering is used for dividing the respondents into two groups: the employees and the customers. In the second stage, the researcher forms certain themes on the basis of the similarities found from the data. The filtered themes are recognized according to the theoretical framework as follows:

emotions and expectations, loyalty, touch points, staff performance, process structures and aims, general and first impression, entertainment factors, sXXXXry stimulation, interaction levels, portability, customization, and differentiation. In the last stage, clustering is used again for dividing the findings of each theme between positive and negative experiences. The final conclusions are created as a sum of these analyses.

Research approach and methods are described in more detail in Chapter 4.

1.4 Research structure

This thesis research consists of six main parts that each includes various chapters. Chapter 1 is an introductory part that presents the background of the thesis, research questions, objectives, scope, structure, methodology and theoretical framework. Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical framework of customer experience in more detail, whereas Chapter 3 concentrates on explaining the theoretical framework of customer experience management. Chapter 4 provides the description of the approach and methods used in this research. It also introduces the research context including the case company information. Chapter 5 focuses on the empirical part of the study and presents the results and findings of the research. The chapter includes also the evaluation of reliability and validity of the research. Chapter 6 concentrates on the conclusions based on the findings of the empirical part. It summarizes the key findings from each explored aspect and presents the development recommendations for optimizing a customer experience within X Center concept. At the end of the chapter proposals for further development and research are also presented.

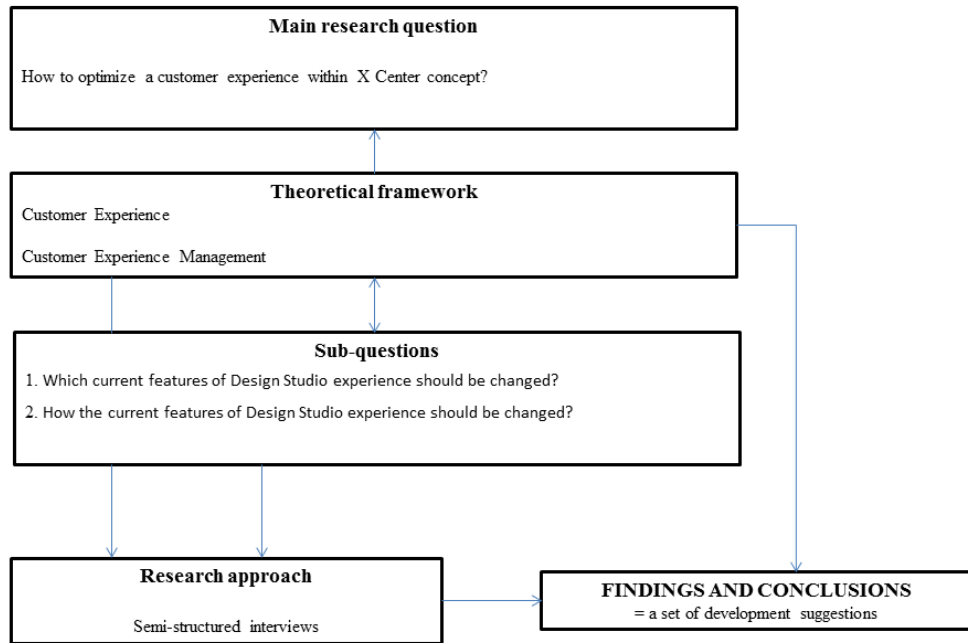


Figure 1. Structure of the research

Figure 1 shows a structure of the research. It explains the content of theoretical framework and presents the research method used in this research. The researcher aims to find answers for sub-questions by utilizing the theoretical framework and the selected research method and also attempts to create remarkable development recommendations for optimizing the customer experience within X Center concept.

2 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

It is essential to understand that a Customer Experience (CE) consists of both physical and emotional factors. Especially the emotional side of the experience has a major impact on customer relations and thus enables more profitable business. This chapter opens more the meaning and a definition itself as well as the significance of emotions and expectations in Customer Experience. There are several interpretations of critical indicators and metrics in Customer Experience measurement. This chapter also debates on the most important and relevant measurement approaches for Customer Experiences themselves. This chapter is not concentrating on explaining how to manage Customer Experiences, but what they really are. Customer Experience Management is presented in detail in chapter 3.

2.1 Definition of a Customer Experience (CE)

Customer Experiences have a crucial role in the success of today's companies. There are several opinions and views about the most important aspects of Customer Experiences. However, there are few one sentence definitions that crystallize the content of a Customer Experience in brief.

A customer experience is the sum of those encounters, emotions and images which a customer has faced by interacting with a company over the duration of their relationship (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 11).

It is the cumulative consequence of all of encounters and interactions that a customer has with a company (Soudagar et al.2012, 3).

An interaction between a customer and an organization as perceived through a customer's conscious and subconscious mind (Shaw et al. 2010, 2).

Customer experience generates profit (Arussy 2010, 5).

A customer experience is an interaction between a company and a customer (Klaus et al. 2013, 519). It is a combination of company's physical performance, emotions evoked and the senses stimulated, each intuitively measured against customer expectations throughout all moments of contact. (Shaw & Ivens 2005, 22.) A value of an experience is related to time, place and environment. People expect to meet different kinds of experiences depending on the situation. (Kuusela & Rintamäki 2002, 150.) Hur and Kang (2012, 1540) find that customer loyalty depends on each individual's own expectations and values. The value of the experience forms from a relationship between upfront expectations and the received experience itself.

It is essential to be aware of the fact that a customer experience is not fully a rational decision, but a sum of single interpretations made by a human being (Sathish & Venkatesakumar 2011, 75). Therefore it is important to realize the impact of feelings, emotions and subconsciously made interpretations on a customer experience. Mostly because of this humane behavior, it is not possible to achieve exact, beforehand planned experiences with the customers. Companies can though still choose what kinds of experiences they aim to create for their customers. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 11.) Boswijk, Peelen and Olthof (2012, 61) describe an experience as a complex of emotions that takes place either at a time or sequentially.

According to Shaw, Dibeehi and Walden (2010, 137) the rational side of the experience is strongly related to conscious perceptions as the emotional side is more about subconscious perceptions. Choices are made based on experiences which have been faced before. Therefore it is consequential to understand that an experience consists of individual's rational and emotional observations. (Kuusela & Rintamäki 2002, 13-15.) The conscious mind is what can be seen all around and can be conscious of. The subconscious instead is all about the signals that are being registered in subconscious mind, but cannot reach the conscious mind. The conscious mind is not big enough to deal with all the signals it receives, and thus only relevant messages are received by it. (Shaw et al. 2010, 4)

According to Shaw and Ivens (2005, 16-17) the physical elements form the other half of the total customer experience. Although, the emotional side of the experience has a stronger impact on the total experience, the physical side is still important. The physical is no more the primary differentiator for the companies, as it has been over centuries. Today, the customer experience and the emotions that the physical elements evoke are the key differentiators. There are certain main categories that form the physical part of a great customer experience (figure 2).

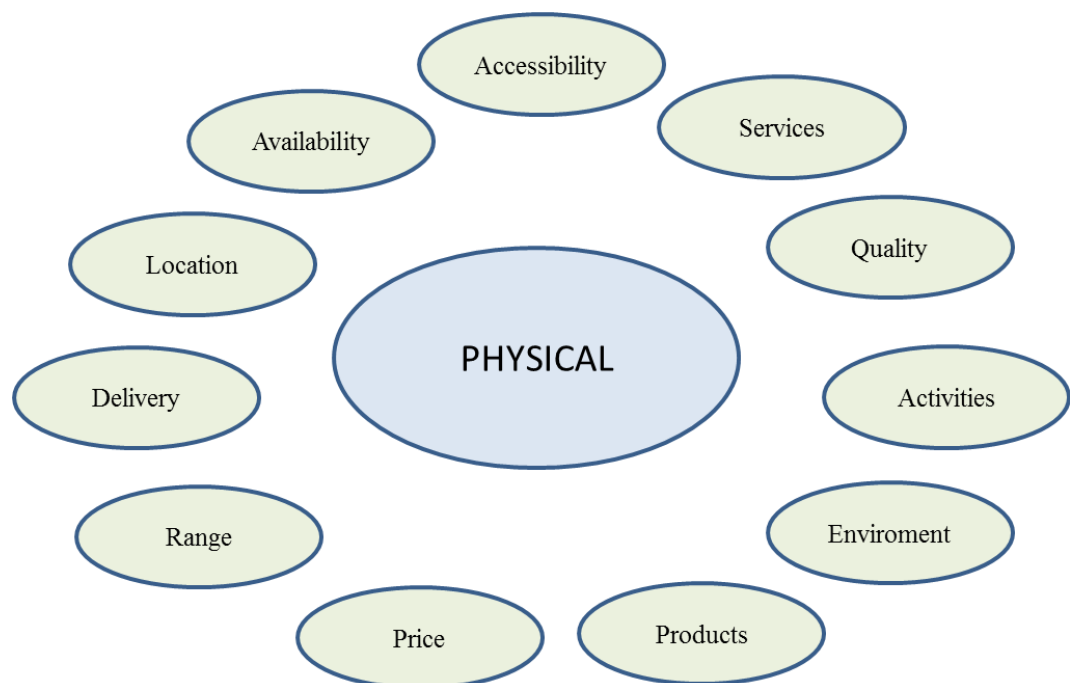


Figure 2. Physical categories that form part of a great customer experience (adapted from Shaw & Ivens 2005, 17).

Arussy (2010, 5-6) emphasizes the profitable side of a customer experience. Companies can observe the financial impact of successful customer experiences as increased bottom-line profits. Profitability is the ultimate reason for creating excellent customer experiences. There are several different benefits which companies are expecting from their customer experience initiatives. Nevertheless, each company needs to find its own approach and motivation based on its specific business model and the nature of relationships it has with specific customers. Ac-

According to Laakso (2003, 31-65) it is very difficult to increase profitability without differentiating from other competing brands in the market. Most of comparable companies are providing almost identical brands and promises to their customers. Creating new brands gets more difficult all the time since the market is full of similar existing brands. Shaw, Dibeehi and Walden (2010, 10) point out that the accelerating globalization plays also its own role in a harmonization of brands and services. In these increasingly markets, the experiential side of a product or a service may have a role as the key differentiator. Arussy (2010, 22-23) also aligns that the need for customer experiences is most of all driven by commoditization. In order to escape the commoditization there are four options to take. First one is to add pre-sales value. Second option is to innovate products or services. Third choice is to add post-sales value. Fourth chance is the least desirable, the last resort, to provide discounts.

Positive experiences create loyalty. Instead, a customer who has suffered stressful or frustrating experiences will change a company in most cases at once a better option presents itself. (Soudagar et al.2012, 7.) The positive experiences are staged by engaging customers in memorable ways. Entertaining features in experiences can strengthen the level of commitment. Entertaining aspects in experiences can be formed by customizing services and thus provide customer-unique value. (Pine II & Gilmore 1999, 29-31; 69-72.) In direct interactions with customers good stories are often the most entertainment features. Entertainment stories can thus see as the key to success. These entertainment stories make the audience curious and even create strong favorable emotions. Best stories are those which customers tell to themselves. (Apunen & Parantainen, 2011, 249-282.)

A positive customer experience is the result of an unwavering commitment to creating a comfortable and trusted relationship (Michelli, 2007, 108). According to Soudagar, Iyer and Hildebrand (2012, 17-21) a positive customer experience can be created by establishing trust between the business and the customer. They have found four cornerstones of trust as essentials of customer experience. These four customer experience essentials are reliability, convenience, responsiveness and relevance (figure 3).

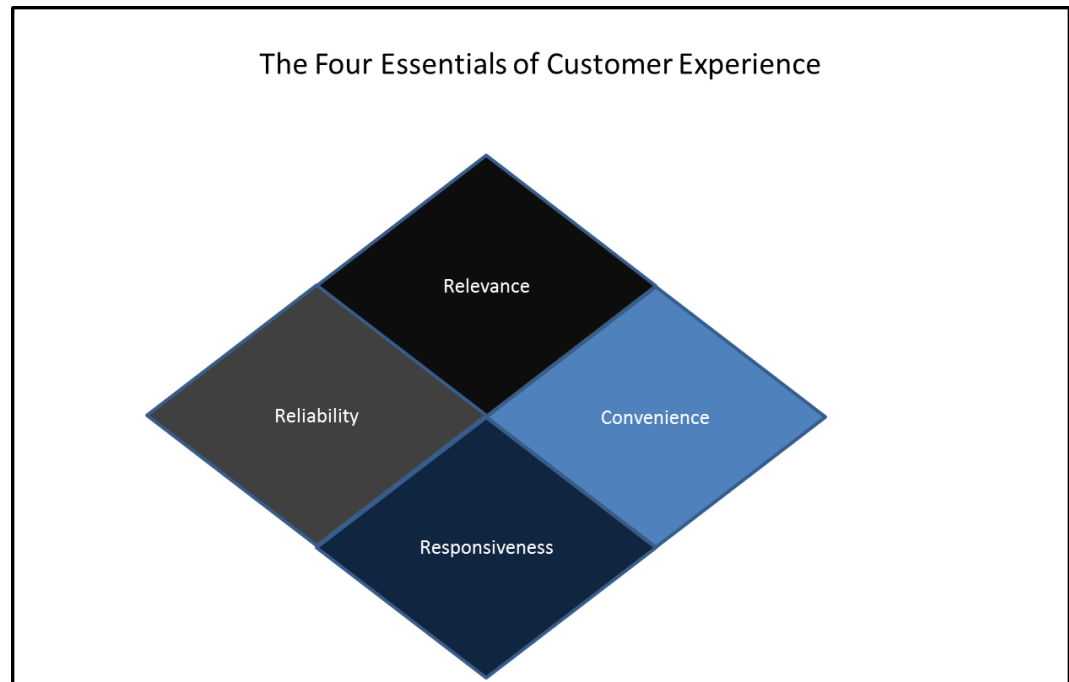


Figure 3. The four essentials of customer experience (adapted from Soudagar et al.2012, 18).

Soudagar, Iyer and Hildebrand (2012, 17-21) also open the meaning of each cornerstone of trust by sharing concrete examples how to use and utilize them (table 1). By following these cornerstones, companies are able to build long-lasting and strongly engaged customer experiences.

Table 1. Four customer experience essentials (adapted from Soudagar et al.2012, 18).

Customer Experience Essential	What It Looks Like
Reliability	Living up to your promises. Example: Consistent on-time delivery, each and every time.
Convenience	Offering choice, consistency, and timeliness. Example: Using multiple channels to engage with customers.
Responsiveness	Listening and responding quickly. Example: Changing a process or policy when feedback reveals that it causes problems for customers.
Relevance	Ensuring that offerings are personalized and meaningful. Example: Gaining insight into, and delivering, what really matters to individual customers at a particular point in time.

Shaw and Ivens (2005, 10-11) approach the subject of building great customer experiences with seven different key elements as the basics of a good customer experience (table 2).

Table 2. The seven key elements for building great customer experiences
(adapted from Shaw & Ivens.2005, 11).

Great Customer Experiences are:
1. A source of long-term competitive advantage.
2. Created by consistently exceeding customers' physical and emotional expectations.
3. Differentiated by focusing on stimulating planned emotions.
4. Enabled through inspirational leadership, an empowering culture and empathetic people who are happy and fulfilled.
5. Designed 'outside in' rather than 'inside out'.
6. Revenue generating, and significantly reduce costs.
7. The embodiment of the brand.

These seven elements enable to fraction the elements of a customer experience into its constituent parts. They highlight the meaning of the emotional side, the importance of inspirited leaders and workers, the ideology of building CE strategies from the customer's point of view instead of 'inside out' approach, the impacts for cost reducing and revenue increasing, and the connection between CE and a brand. Elements are easy to understand and can be used as aide-memoires when designing to build a great customer experience. Shaw and Ivens (2005, 24-25) also brake down the stages of the customer experience (figure 4).

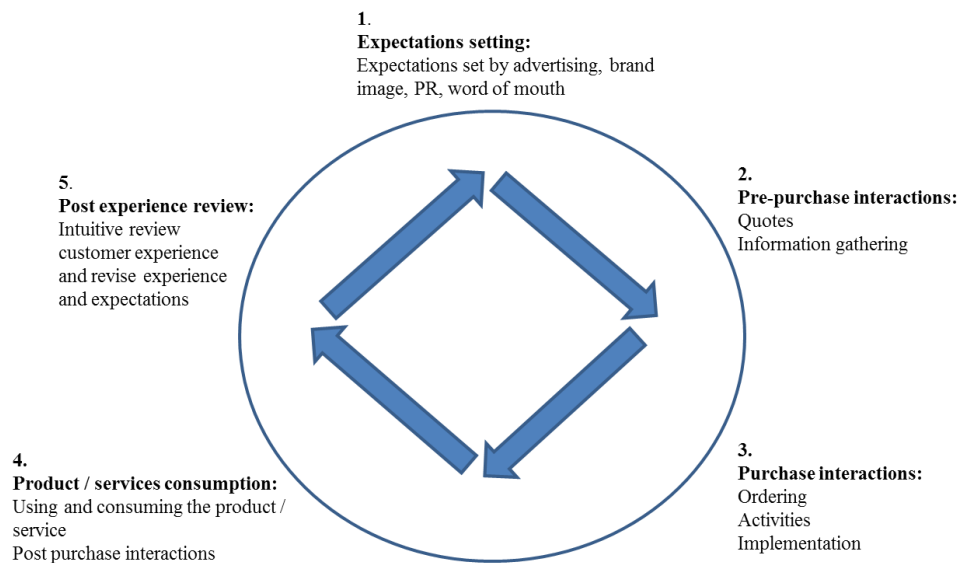


Figure 4. Stages of a customer experience (adapted from Shaw & Ivens 2005, 24).

The time laps for each stage vary, depending on the dynamic of the service or the product. Nevertheless, the stages remain similar. These five stages move ahead logically in chronological order as a cycle. First, the expectations setting stage is all about establishing expectations. The expectations are built from the brand image, publishes, other peoples comments, previous experiences of similar types of companies, and the previous experiences of other markets with similar functional aspects. Second, the pre-purchase interactions stage includes all the activities that are taken in order to get the purchasing decision from a customer. At this stage it is essential to make the customer feel confident by removing the risks of buying. Third, the purchase interactions stage starts after getting the purchasing decision from a customer. This stage is the core of the customer experience. Fourth, the product or service consumption stage is fulfilled when the product or service is actually in use. The usability needs to be effortless and meet the expectations set for the product or service. Fifth and last, the post-experience review stage materializes at the end of the customer experience. At this stage the customer intuitively reviews the performance against the expectations and then reset them. After this stage the cycle starts all over again from a stage one.

2.2 Emotions and expectations in a Customer Experience

Customer Experiences consist of both physical and emotional factors. The emotional factors impact most on the quality of an experience. This chapter covers the significance of emotions and expectations in Customer Experience creation.

According to Arussy (2010, 64-67) it takes three steps to create experiences that exceed customer's expectations. Customer experience management always starts with a core experience that a whole experience is based on. The core experience is fulfilled by supplying the basic customer needs. It is critical to ensure that the core experience is fulfilled as it is the base of the total experience. Second step is formed by expanding the core experience into an expanded experience. The expanded experience includes elements which create added value for a product or service. These added values can provide either direct or indirect benefits around the core experience. The final step is consists of adding certain elements into the expanded experience which exceed the expectations. Chris Rockwell (Lockwood 2010, 221) points out that the understanding of the interplay between expectations and the experience is the way to ensure the effectiveness of a brand. Ying, Ayelet and Ravi (2007, 567) emphasize that companies needs to encourage their customers by enabling a creation of optimistic expectations towards their future experiences. Shaw and Ivens (2005, 27-41) note that great customer experiences are created by coherently exceeding customer's both physical and emotional expectations. They demonstrate different expectation zones and their impact on the relationship between the company and customer (figure 5).

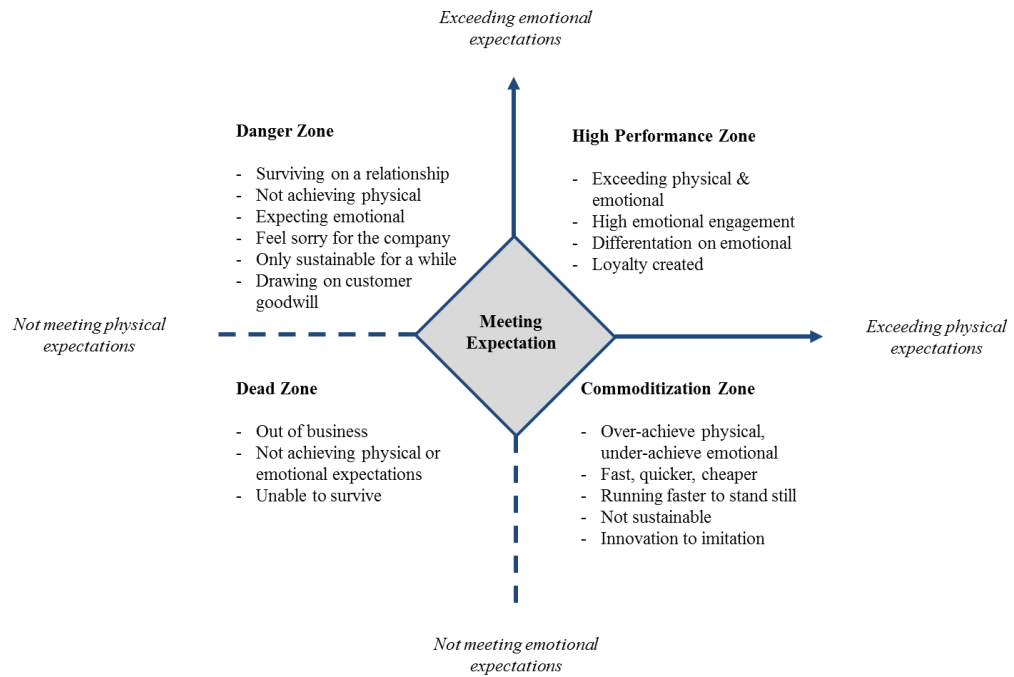


Figure 5. Customer expectations zones (adapted from Shaw & Ivens 2005, 41).

Customer experiences are much more about the emotional side of the customer experience than is often recognized (Shaw et al. 2010, 2). People are having both conscious and subconscious thoughts which influence their moods. The outcomes of these perceptions are emotions which define if the customer experience was pleasant or unpleasant compared to expectations. (Kuusela & Rintamäki 2002, 132-133.) Chris Rockwell (Lockwood 2010, 222) highlights the importance of emotional factors, such as anticipation, apprehension, urgency, and apathy, which are the determining factors in how people assess an experience. Rockwell adds that experiences and expectations are kinetically related, and understanding this relationship is crucial to achieving and aiding the success. Shaw (2007, 87-89) demonstrates the different emotional levels in customer experience by clustering them into four layers (figure 6). The first cluster describes negative emotions which can be seen as ‘destroying cluster’. These are the emotions that companies need to avoid to evoke. Second, ‘attention cluster’, defines emotions which are needed in order to attract more customers. By evoking these stimulating and interesting emotions, companies are able to allure new prospects and keep the current customers still excited. Third, ‘recommendation cluster’, includes emotions which

are needed to be evoked in order to retain the customers and create more loyalty. By evoking these emotions, the customers become reactive recommenders. Fourth, ‘advocacy cluster’, covers emotions which make the customers advocate the company proactively. These two last clusters are strongly linked together because the customers cannot feel ‘happy’ if they do not ‘trust’ the company.

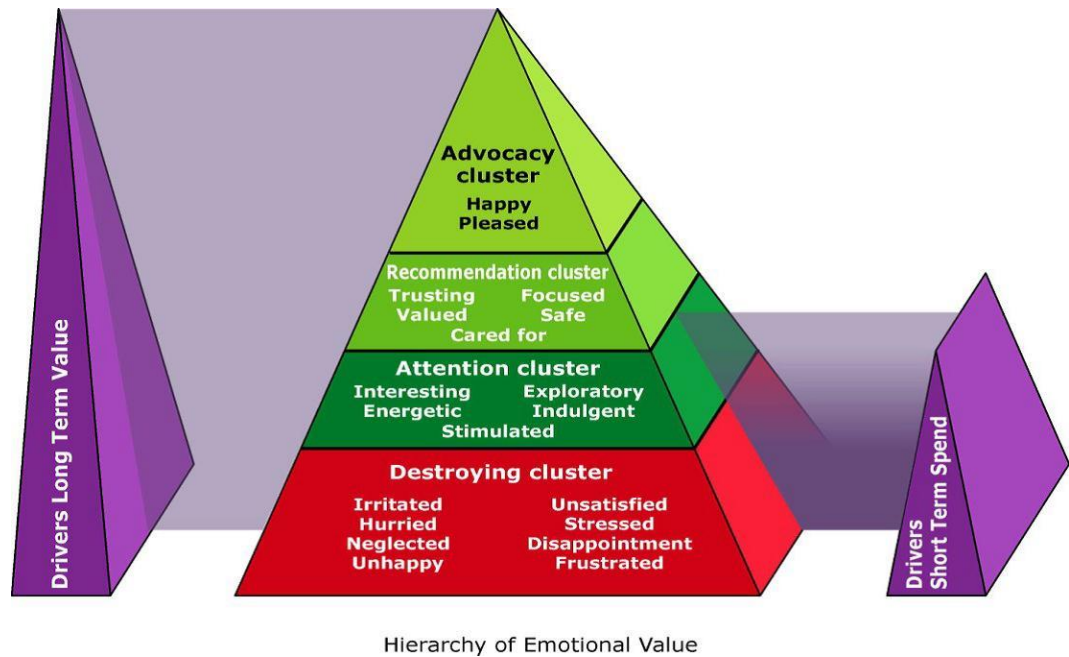


Figure 6. Hierarchy of emotional value (adapted from Shaw 2007, 88).

In order to strengthen an experience, all five senses of a human being need to be utilized. Pine II and Gilmore (1999, 59-61) present that the more sXXXXry the experience is, the more memorable it will be. Shaw, Dibeehi and Walden (Shaw et al. 2010, 3) also accentuate the consequence of all five senses as they need to be considered when designing an intentional customer experience. Boswijk (2012, 57-59) notices that the function of these five senses forms people’s knowledge of their surroundings. Therefore, companies cannot underestimate the impact of the perceptions, created by all five senses, on customers’ emotions and experiences. It is vital to understand that people rarely feel a single emotion but a combination of emotions. Hence, the sum of senses stimulates different emotions and thus has a major effect on experiences.

Emotional sacrifices are more personal and have thus much stronger influence on experiences than rational sacrifices. Nevertheless, sometimes the rational sacrifices may turn into more personal level in case that some grievance is felt as a personal insult. (Kuusela & Rintamäki 2002, 150.) Human brains are built to favor the things which cause pleasure. Human beings want to get back on things which cause a positive mood. This is a major reason to invest in positive customer experiences in order to avoid negative emotions. By creating pleasure to the customers, they want to come back and get more out of the company. (Boswijk et al. 2012, 61.)

Buying requires always some personal-made decisions and reveals consequently intimate features of a buyer. By making a decision, the customer is acting as an individual. Unsatisfactory service is thus more than just a failed performance; it can hurt the identity of the buyer. No one wants to get humiliated. Instead getting a positive experience during the buying process, it strengthens buyer's self-image and willingness to operate again with the supplier. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 43-44.)

None company can achieve success in their business relationships without any empathy. Empathy in a business relationship can be seen as a two-step process of understanding customer's feelings and then dealing them. (Broughton 2012, 72.) Mattinen (2006, 10) defines a customer empathy as a sum of listening and reacting on customer's needs. Emotional bonds are usually very strong and worth of trying to create. Soudagar, Iyer and Hildebrand (2012, 180-181) express that the most effective way to create an emotional bond is to build up a personal connection. This personal connection needs to be present regardless which channel the customer is using. The tone needs to be welcoming instead of off-putting no matter if it is on the Web or in direct customer interactions. Boswijk (2012, 11) highlights the connection between individual's emotions and meaningful experiences as they both form together one's motivations and choices. Dependent on the level of emotional bond, the customers determine with which company and how they enter into relationship. Boswijk (2012, 54) also emphasizes the importance and the meaning of personal experiences. Personal experiences can be created by building up a personal connection. These experiences shape the value that people

attach to life and they are often to be remembered for the rest of their lives. Personal experiences are often recognized as turning points in people's lives. Swift (2001, 6) points out that customers do expect that their suppliers or partners in business know and observe them. Gummesson (2008, 173) reminds of the cultural differences of understanding a term 'personal'. In some countries and cultures business requires some sort of personal relationship before any kind of business interactions can be made. And even in those countries and cultures where business with strangers is accepted, there often are references from someone that people already know beforehand. This proves the importance of creating personal experiences and relationships in business.

A general impression of a company or an organization plays a major role in experience creation. Customer's original expectations and emotions may become overran by the general impression. This means that the real features or properties of personalities, products or services may get easily mixed and blurred because of the positive general impression of the company or the organization. In order to achieve success companies need first to sell their expertise and excellence to the customer. After giving this positive and convincing first impression of the company, the provided products and services will be experienced more valuable than originally. (Apunen & Parantainen, 2011, 15-37.) One of the most important things in creating a positive general impression is always to keep the given promises. Customers expect coherent and transparent partners to operate with. These expectations need to be fulfilled and taken activities shall never be inconsistent with given promises. (Apunen & Parantainen, 2011, 181-209.) Shaw and Ivens (2005, 52-53) highlight the meaning of trust. It is impossible to have a true relationship with customers if they do not trust the partner. Trust is an emotion and very difficult to win back after losing it once. Aapola (2012, 37) notes that trustworthiness of a company basis on a synergy between given promises and taken actions.

Shaw, Dibeehi and Walden (2010, 4-14) highlight the meaning of the psychology in a customer experience. By understanding experience psychology, it is possible to understand why customers behave the way they do. Management needs always to recognize and be aware of what kinds of signals the company is giving out to

the customers. There are several conscious and subconscious signals that can be given in the experiences. Some signals define also which parts of the experience drive or destroy most value. According to this theory, the psychology of an experience has a much greater impact on its value than the concrete item or service itself. Shaw lists the top ten examples of human behavior in the context of experience psychology (table 3). These impacts go beyond the rational side and into the subconscious and emotional side.

Table 3. The impact of the experience psychology in the context of customer experience (adapted from Shaw et al. 2010, 10-14).

TOP 10 Examples of how the psychology of an experience, rather than the bought items, impacts on its value (in no particular order).
1. People make decisions based on their preconceived expectations of what an experience will be, not what it is.
2. People don't consider all the elements of an experience, only those most noticeable.
3. People identify a moral code in what they do, even if it is not directly relevant to the purchase in question.
4. Sometimes people do not know about the things that influence them, they just subconsciously perceive them.
5. Emotional twinges affect people's " <i>in the moment</i> " decision making and hence behavior.
6. People are prone to be wary of anything that threatens their well-being.
7. What people say they want is often not what they " <i>really</i> " want.
8. People's memory of an event is not perfect but subject to manipulation.
9. People like to follow the herd, be seen as part of the group.
10. People get bored with the same old. Sometimes innovation for its own sake is important.

It is absolutely vital to understand the factors that lead to positive feelings and emotions. At the same time it is crucial to understand those emotions which destroy the customer experience. These emotions can cost millions in failure costs.

By causing these emotions (figure 7) for the customers, it most likely leads to reduction in loyalty and spend. Companies need to make their best in order to avoid creating these emotions for their customers. (Shaw 2007, 46-48.)

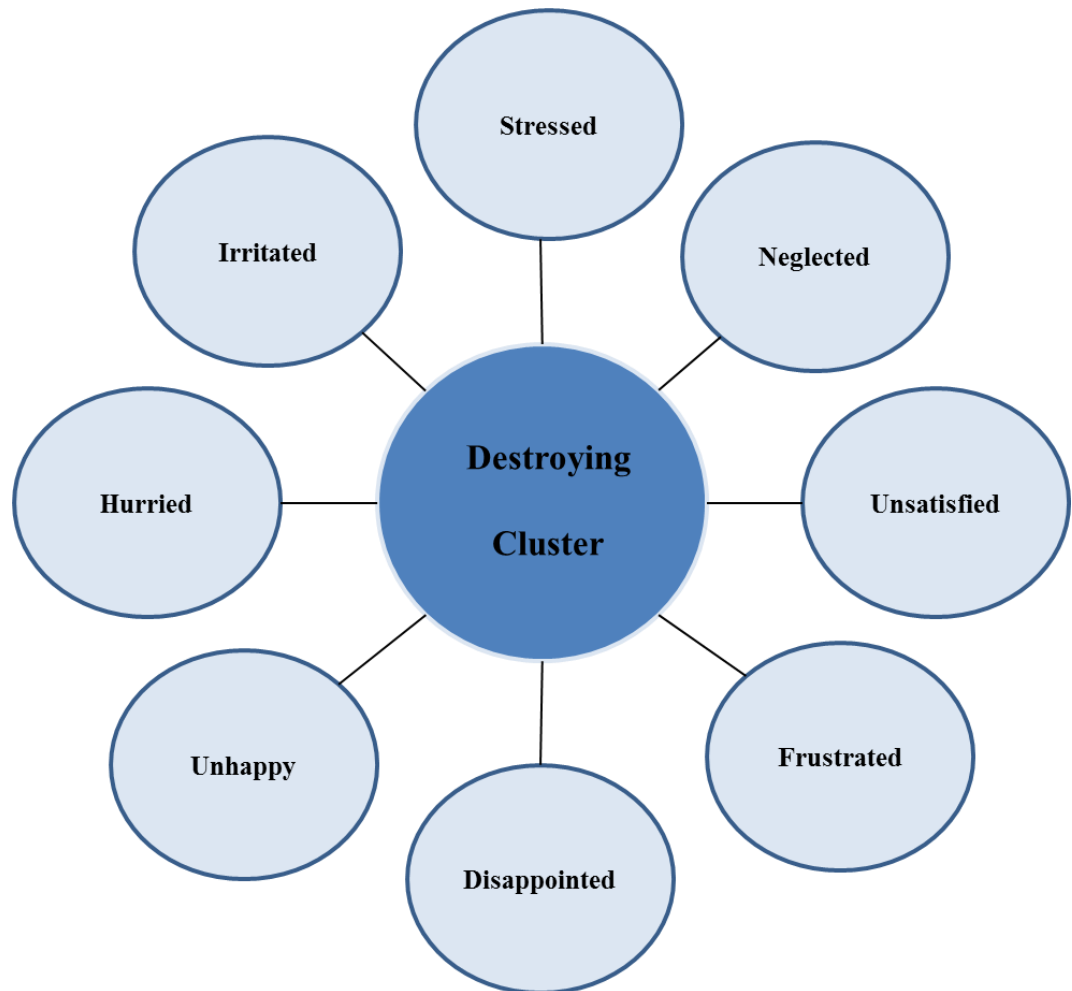


Figure 7. Destroying cluster of emotions (adapted from Shaw 2007, 47).

2.3 Measuring Customer Experiences

It is crucial to understand which essential indicators and metrics need to be used in Customer Experience measurement. This chapter deals with the most important and relevant measurement approaches of Customer Experiences.

There are two viewpoints for measuring the customer experiences. These viewpoints are either the measurements based purely on customers' experiences or the measurements based on the consequences of managing customer experiences. (Löytänä & Kortesoja 2011, 187.) This chapter is concentrating on the measurement of pure customer experiences themselves.

Nowadays, people have a certain premonition or hope that they will be surprised, even in the most mundane experiences. Surprises can be as simple as offering a little steering and the getting out of the way as people search for things that bring them joy. (Michelli, 2007, 108.) According to Shaw and Ivens (2005, 46) great customer experiences are differentiated by concentrating on stimulating premeditated emotions. Arussy (2010, 42) points out that exceptional is a synonym for the new standard and that is exactly what customers demand. Companies need to understand the demands of their customers and define how to measure them.

First of all, it is critical to understand what to measure. Companies must never trust only in their own views and presumptions in order to define customer's expectations and values in experiences. By defining wrong arguments or indicators, the wrong research is being carried out and the unconditional truth of an experience is not been solved out. This leads easily to focusing on wrong things. (Shaw et al. 2010, 6-7.) Companies are often mistakenly measuring only the half of their customers' experience. The lack of emotional measurement leads easily to typical customer satisfaction results. The phrase 'customer satisfaction' is no more relevant. Today, it needs to be replaced with 'customer experience measurement' that measures organization's physical performance and its performance against the emotions the company has determined it is trying to evoke through its customer experience strategy. (Shaw & Ivens 2005, 172-173.) Leppänen (2007, 72) high-

lights the importance of listening to the customers. In order to satisfy the customers, the companies must collect information and know what customers expect from them. The more companies are listening the more they know about their customers. With this knowledge, companies can measure and do the right things instead of guessing.

In order to accumulate honest feedback and relevant information from customers' feelings, it is essential to set all presented questions to customers from their point of views instead of company's point of view. Different kinds of surveys or questionnaires of customer satisfaction are often executed just because it has been another routine repeated periodically. On the contrary, every measurement need to be relevant and utilized in order to support business development. Companies need to avoid accumulating any customer feedback without true intentions to react on received results. The outputs shall always be used and utilized. Another important thing related to surveys is to thank the customers for their feedback and explain what kinds of impacts their answers will have on company's intentions. This way the customers are not getting the feeling of being ignored and wasting their time for insignificant surveys. (Shaw & Ivens, 2005, 162-165.) Simplest indicators for measuring customer satisfaction and experiences are most often the best ones. Complicated measures hardly increase profitability. (Arussy 2010, 267-268.)

A value of a customer experience for the customer can be defined as the difference between received benefits and made sacrifices. The value of the experience equals the benefit if there are not any sacrifices. On the contrary the value of the experience is unequal to the benefit when the amount of sacrifices is remarkable. (Kuusela & Rintamäki 2002, 133.) For this reason Kuusela and Rintamäki (2002, 148-150) recommend that companies shall impact on a value of the customer experience either by increasing the number of benefits which a customer is receiving or by decreasing the number of sacrifices that the customer is facing. Soudagar, Iyer and Hildebrand (2012, 7-8) notice that companies often use to consider a superior customer experience as a synonym for a very expensive customer experience. Anyhow this is not the exact truth at all when viewing the total profitability of a customer experience. Even superior customer experiences can be created by

doing just small right things for the customer. These activities will result in lower costs such as better product quality or better service which cause fewer claims and support calls. This way the made investments may repay in many times.

A Nobel-prized psychology Mr. Daniel Kahneman has invented a peak-end rule theory which presents that experiences are generated mostly according to the pike point and the ending point of an encounter. Pike point means a positive or a negative top of the experience. The final experience is generated by comparison between the pike and the ending points. The most important point is the ending point and it needs always to be a positive one. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 113-118; Bhargave & Montgomery 2013, 513) According to Boswijk (2012, 174) it is not possible to recall every moment of the customer journey once it has ended. Nevertheless, the low points, the peaks and the ending are going to be remembered. Michelli (2007, 150) highlights the importance of taking direct, unequivocal responsibility and following up with corrective actions, after errors are made. Shaw and Ivens (2005, 54-55) bring out the connection between the ending point and a customer loyalty. Loyalty is often tested when things go wrong; hence it is crucial to make things better immediately after defects have been recognized. Timm (2008, 129) emphasizes the importance of the first responses to customer's feedback in order to convey openness.

Arussy (2010, 252-258) presents three standpoints which can be utilized in customer experience measurements. These three standpoints are assessment, alignment and action. Assessment part includes the evaluation of the quality and priority of experience. Alignment part evaluates how the experience fits customers' lives. Action part evaluates the final results of the experience. Timing is very important when measuring experiences and collecting valuable data from the customers. Measurements need to be made in real time instead of waiting until the end of some longer time period such as a quarter or a year. Old data is worthless because it does not allow a company to react to needed changes on time.

3 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT

To be able to deliver great Customer Experiences for the customers, it requires top class skills in Customer Experience Management (CEM). Customer Experiences do not occur by itself without a systematic and designed management. CEM has two roles as a strategy builder towards a customer environment and as a facilitator for supporting company's employees. This chapter deals with the background and the role of CEM and also opens more the meaning of empowered employees in customer experience creation. The global standardization of products and services creates great challenges for today's companies to differentiate from their competitors. This chapter also highlights the importance of high-class CEM as the key differentiator and customizer for the companies. After opening the meaning of being a differentiator and customizer, this chapter explains the connection between CEM and brand management. In order to recognize a high-class management, relevant indicators for measuring the performance are required. Therefore, this chapter covers next the most relevant measurement approaches and evaluation of CEM. After that, this chapter debates on touch points between a company and customers. Each touch point requires a high-qualified performance from every employee in a company in order to deliver excellent Customer Experiences. The end of this chapter presents the theoretical framework of the thesis.

3.1 The role and background of Customer Experience Management (CEM)

Customer Experience Management has an essential influence on staging and renewing excellent Customer Experiences. There are many visions and stands how a top-class CEM can affect on company's success. Nevertheless, some short descriptions open the meaning of CEM more than long and complicated definitions.

Customer experience management maximizes the value which company provides for its customers by creating remarkable experiences for them (Löytänä & Korteso, 2011, 13).

Customer centricity cannot be achieved by one business department or even several departments acting separately or independently. The company needs to act as one united organization, presenting a single face to its customers and employees. (Soudagar et al.2012, 56.)

Companies add value to a business by enhancing the customer's experience (Michelli, 2007, 45).

The background of Customer Experience Management is strongly related to a need of better customer satisfaction. Customer experience management (CEM), as a term, is the follower of an earlier better known term called customer relationship management (CRM). The main difference between these two approaches is that customer experience management (CEM) has a much wider perspective towards the relationship between a customer and a company. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 12.) CRM is more about concentrating only on customer's rational and physical expectations (Shaw 2007, 123). CRM is often mistakenly understood just as a system that captures customer information that enables companies to personalize the interaction with an individual. Nevertheless, CRM can be seen as an entity that shows how customer experience centered a company is and how is it culturally concentrated around the customer. The CRM system itself is nothing but a technical enabler. (Shaw & Ivens 2005, 95-99.) Customers own the relationships and companies have to adjust themselves to meet this dynamic, an 'outside in' approach (Bell 2001, 48). Therefore, the term itself can actually be defined as customer managed relations (CMR) instead of customer relationship management (CRM). (Shaw & Ivens 2005, 76.) Arussy (2010, 38-39) presents that CRM concentrates on increasing revenues through a better collection and utilization of customer information.

Customer experience management (CEM) instead maximizes the value which a company provides for its customers by creating remarkable experiences for them. CEM is focusing on creating customer loyalty through better value propositions.

(Arussy 2010, 38-39) The profitability of the company can be seen as a straight proportional with the value that the company can provide to its customers. The goal of customer experience management is to create remarkable experiences and thus provide added value to its customers in order to increase company's profitability. The benefits of skilled customer experience management are concrete and it is important to recognize the utilities which can be achieved by proficient CEM. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 12-13.) Ojasalo (1999, 149) states that by providing some extra benefits for the customers, which can be free of charge, and be seen as added values, companies can actually create a cost-efficient way of strengthening the relationship.

The role of CEM can be seen as one of most important assets of a modern company. Management needs to center the customer experience in the core of competing strategy. The key element of having a customer experience in the core of competing strategy is to create remarkable experiences for the customers and thus generate profits for the company. These positive experiences provide added value to the customers and this way creates a competitive advantage for the company. Even if the key competing strategy is mainly concentrating on the core element, the customer experience, it does not block other competitive advantages outside of the strategy. It is still possible to invest in other competitive advantages simultaneously and then utilize those in order to create positive customer experiences. Typical strategic competitive advantages, besides the customer experience, are for example product innovations and pricing. (Arussy 2010, 45-50.) The company creates value for the customer in every encounter. The amount of a value varies between the encounters and grows at its best when the encounters are repeating. The value grows when the relationship becomes deeper and the trust is built. The company can create value for the relationship also by helping the customer to create value for itself. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 56-57.)

According to Soudagar, Iyer and Hildebrand (2012, 74) there are few basic rules which every company must follow when embarking on a CE initiative (table 4). The rules presented in the table can be recognized as a general check list for every company that wants to examine its competence in customer experience creation.

Table 4. Customer experience recipe (adapted from Soudagar et al.2012, 74).

Customer Experience Recipe
Set up several ways of obtaining customer feedback, in both structured and unstructured formats
Use these "listening posts" and your own internal data to get to know your customers intimately
Create continuous feedback loops to use what you learn
Segment your customers according to their value to your business
Map the customer journey and define customer touch points
Determine customer's moments of truth
Develop consistent experiences through all customer channels

Arussy (2010, 20-22) presents six basic steps for managing customer experiences (figure 8). A first step is to define company's differentiating, profitable customer experience. Wanted experiences should be natural for the company to deliver. The experience needs to solve the customer's total problems with its greatness. Second step is to develop a strategy to innovate company's customer experience across all touch points. Small featuring details must be recognized in order to develop a strategy that exists as a method of operational behavior. A strategy that is only a slogan is worth of nothing. Third step is to organize the organization to execute the customer experience strategy. Fourth step is to execute the customer experience strategy. This requires success at the moment of truth. Fifth step is to measure the progress and the impact of the strategy on customers' loyalty. The challenge is to define the right relevant metrics and ignore the irrelevant ones in order to get useful data. A last step is to redefine the strategy by continuing an on-going reinvention process. The key element is to manage the changes and forecasts around the expectations. It is crucial to lead the company and the organization in a way that it allows a creation of zeitgeist experiences.

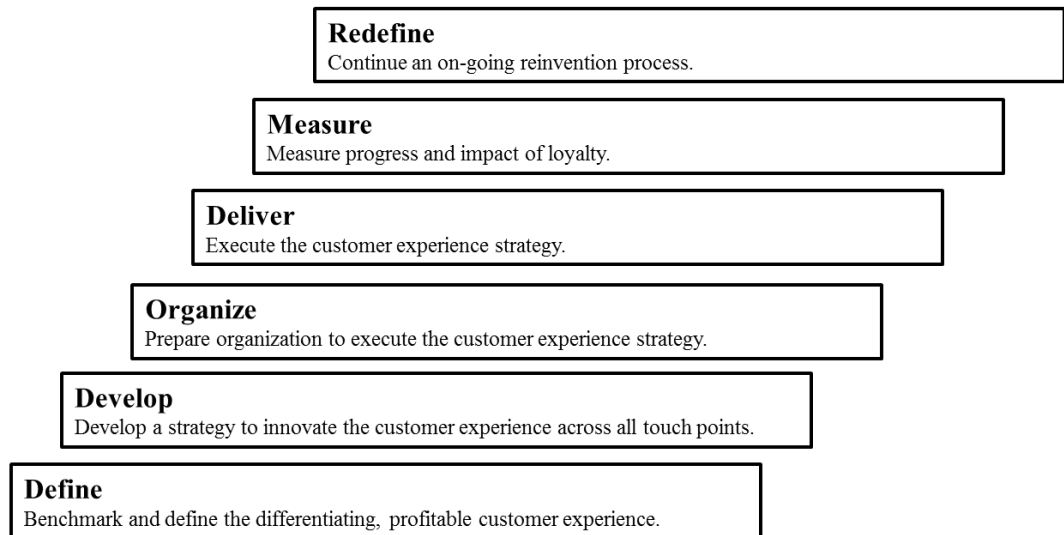


Figure 8. CEM milestones (adapted from Arussy 2010, 20).

3.2 The importance of empowered employees in CEM

A top-class CEM requires talented and capable people to deliver the wanted Customer Experiences. Without empowered employees, it is not possible to create remarkable Experiences for external stakeholders. This chapter explains the importance of empowering the employees.

Before a management can create a business or a competitive strategy around the customer experience, they must first recognize and define what kind of a customer experience the company is trying to deliver. If the management does not have a clear articulation of what they want the company's customer experience to be, the rest of the employees who are delivering it cannot know what to do. It is essential to build the organization 'outside in' by making sure that every single division and employee in the organization has a common knowledge and thus know what are the right messages and things to do. (Shaw & Ivens, 2005, 14-15.) According to Arussy (2010, 9-10) the customer experience strategy needs to maximize revenue and value to the company. Therefore it must be definable in financial terms and made clear throughout the entire company.

The old and traditional roles between the company and the customer have been mixed and changed. Companies cannot have the product centricity as their main business strategy anymore, but instead the customer centricity is the key for success. Processes need to be designed from the customer's perspective instead of company's comfort zone. Main purpose is to provide customers with relevant value instead of selling products and services. Companies need to listen to the customers instead of telling things and also incorporate the new gotten insights into the processes. Digitally engaged and always-connected customers are expecting to be served anytime convenient for themselves and also share their experiences actively in social media. (Soudagar et al.2012, 52.) Therefore, it is fundamental to design intentional and deliberated experiences for the customers (Shaw et al. 2010, 2). Shaw (2005, 209) also highlights the importance of braveness and being different when designing new customized experiences for the customers. Hence, all employees must know the common mission and messages to deliver. The whole organization needs to be empowered and allowed to perform at their best. (Arussy 2010, 20-22)

There are two different sides when studying the success and profitability of a customer experience. The customers form one side and the employees form the other. Often employees are motivated to serve and take care of the needs and desires of their customers but they are not empowered to act so. Management needs always to take care of the capabilities of workers and permit enough space to allow a fluent working environment. By allowing the employees to act as confident professionals the customers will also receive the best possible service and experiences. This way both parties will be satisfied. (Soudagar et al.2012, 4-7) Shaw, Dibeehi and Walden (2010, 62-63) have named this phenomenon of supporting the employees as an employee experience. The understanding of the employee experience is as crucial to the company as how it markets its services and products. Boswijk (2012, 212) notes that the contact with company's employees is a major factor that adjudicates the quality of an experience. Therefore, employees' behavior is crucial to the success of any experience. Cook (2011, 228) remarks that company management needs to motivate their employees by being personally committed to customer experience creation. A big challenge for the managers is to motivate people in an environment where staff numbers may be reduced strongly.

Still those who are left must work even more than before. Without motivated employees, there is no capability to achieve success in customer experience creation. On the other hand, the wrong person can totally spoil the customer experience that the company is aiming to create. The people are not the most important assets, but the right people are. (Shaw & Ivens 2005, 101) The business success is driven by the development of the interpersonal relationships. A company which can utilize its capacity to find the best people into right positions is most likely to be able to turn its service activities into remarkable experiences. Skilled characterization is one of the key capabilities of being able to create positive customer experiences. (Pine II & Gilmore 1999, 112-113; 139-140.)

Decision making is one of the hardest tasks in work. If there are too many options available, it means automatically more workload for the decision maker. Therefore empowered employees can provide concrete suggestions and solutions for their customers. Good suggestions reduce the feelings of risks from decision makers. The feeling of safety and trust leads to a positive customer experience and that in turn leads to loyalty. (Apunen & Parantainen, 2011, 41-64.) Thus, all employees in a company need to remove their customers' obstacles for making the buying decision by providing enough support for them. Uncertainty can specifically ruin any customer experience. (Broughton 2012, 75-76.) Buying decisions are often related to timing, customers make the decisions when they have a chance to do so. (Xu & Wyer 2007, 559.) Empowered employees are able to encourage the customers to participate in their common projects at early stages in order to create secured and committed atmosphere (Klaus & Maklan 2011, 1353).

3.3 CEM as a differentiator and customizer

The global harmonization of products and services as well as today's consumer behavior emphasizes the role of CEM as a key differentiator and a customizer. This chapter deals with the possibilities and means of utilizing CEM in differentiating and customizing the services.

Today, customers are having more control and information than ever. They feel empowered to define and order companies how they want to be served and treated. Globalization, mass customization technology, digitally engaged customers, internet and social media have created this new state for consumers and business buyers. People expect to get the same level customer experiences from their partners in business as well as consumers in their private lives. Therefore companies need to see their environment as people-to-people (P2P) business instead of old traditional categories such business-to-business (B2B) or business-to-consumer (B2C) environments. Treating the customers well is not enough anymore; successful companies need to offer differentiated, superior customer experiences. (Soudagar et al.2012, 8-11.) Shaw, Dibeehi and Walden (2010, 2) also emphasize that a business-to-business has the same basic ingredients as a business-to-consumer experience, as in both cases it is about dealing with people.

Management shall constantly investigate and evaluate the added value they provide for their customers by creating memorable experiences. One efficient way to explore an optimization of a created experience is to question if something would have been done differently in case some payment would have been charged instead of giving it all for free. High-class customer experience management can lead companies to situations where customers are willing to pay for selling to them. (Pine II & Gilmore 1999, 61-69.) From a service provider's point of view it is appropriate to recognize relevant matters related to customer experiences in order to develop its functions on the basis of value creation. (Kuusela & Rintamäki 2002, 15.) In order to optimize the added value for the customers, management needs to talk and visit the customers constantly. They must listen to the customers and make changes as a result of the feedback. Another important action from the management is also to tell and share customer stories. These success stories bring to life the effect the organization is having on customers. Stories also verify a common knowledge of the experiences the company has delivered. (Shaw et al. 2010, 184.) Clarkson, Janiszewski and Cinelli (2013, 1315) state that as the knowledge with experiences increases, the customer can better appreciate the benefits of the product or service. Korteso (2012, 15-16) agrees with the importance of sharing the customer stories with customers. Nevertheless, it is also effective and differentiative to share some anti-success stories too. For sharing these kinds

of personal and sensitive stories, it surely proves that the company can be critical to itself and able to operate openly.

Customer segmentation has a remarkable role in customer experience management when enabling the balance between purpose and profit. Basically management needs to focus their services and products on the best segment they can serve, and within that segment, they need to focus on delivering what matters most to allure and retain customers. As a consequence companies need to eliminate those customers who cost too much to serve and who might be better served by other suppliers or product lines. (Soudagar et al.2012, 94-95.) Ala-Mutka and Talvela (2004, 52) state that companies need to consider their segmentation strategy from different point of views depending on the appropriate needs.

Löytänä and Korteso (2011, 121-122) remind that original customer segmentation was done by simply dividing companies' customers into two categories: business-to-business (B2B) customers and business-to-consumer (B2C) customers. The first mentioned segment included other companies and the second one involved the private consumers. After the first level of customer segmentation companies have noticed that they need to divide customers into more detailed groups in order to utilize more personalized services and solutions in business. New target groups added to previous ones were segmented as internal customers and public sector organization's customers (citizen customer). In addition public health care has started to recognize their patients as customers (patient customer). The customer role of each individual can vary depending on time and place. Same person may act as a consumer (B2C) when shopping in a supermarket, be a business customer while making sourcing decisions related to work (B2B), is recognized as internal customer when needing IT-support in work, be a government's taxpayer and therefore act as a citizen customer.

Different types of customers need different kinds of experiences. One of the most relevant matters of customer experience management is to find the right ways to create differentiated experiences. Customer segmentation is a key issue for successful differentiation of experiences. In order to utilize customer segmentation it needs to be clear and simple enough for every employee to recognize different

defined segments. From customer experience management's point of view two different viewpoints to explore segments can be appointed. These two aspects are customers' profitability and lifestyle. Segmentation models which are based on customers' profitability are often used and seen extremely useful. It is essential to recognize needed cognition and the profitability of customers when creating experiences to them. Customers can be divided into four segments based on their profitability. These four segments can be named as profit bringers, misunderstood ones, lost ones and candidates. Profit bringers are active and profitable customers. They are the best customer groups for companies. These customers increase turnovers strongly but do not allocate supplier's resources significantly. This group needs to be served in best possible ways and expectations need to be exceeded. It is worth to activate these customers even more because every encounter with them can increase the profitability. Misunderstood ones are passive but profitable customers. These customers rarely communicate with supplier and thus are easily to be misunderstood. By activating these customers it is possible to turn them to act as profit bringers. Therefore it is essential to focus on this segment in order to increase the profitability. Lost ones are passive and non-profitable customers. There can be several reasons for these customers to be in this segment. These customers simply cannot be located in any other segments. It is essential to make clear if it is reasonable to use energy for trying to upgrade the status of these customers or then just let competitors have them. Candidates are active but non-profitable customers. These customers can make lot of troubles for suppliers. They spend enormously supplier's resources but do not bring money into supplier's cash. Typically they are very price orientated customers. It is crucial to change these customers into profit bringers or let competitors have them. (Arussy 2010, 115-132.)

Lifestyle based segmentation instead is usually founded on supplier's baseline. Customers are divided according to the products, services or sourcing channels they have used. The basic idea of lifestyle segmentation is that customers are segmented based on their life situation, lifestyle, values, personality or opinions. In order to be able to create personalized experiences it is essential to know customers better and also understand their lifestyles and values. (Löytänä & Kortesus 2011, 133-134.)

3.4 CEM in brand managing

CEM and brand management have a strong connection. Brands can be supported and created by delivering remarkable Customer Experiences for the target group of a brand. This chapter explains the synergy between CEM and brand management.

Chris Rockwell (Lockwood 2010, 221-222) brings out the brand management's point of view, where successful companies recognize the cumulative effect the customer experiences have on the brand. These companies contain experiential research and design thinking to preclude customer need, identify areas of emotional resonance, and discover desired experiences. Shaw and Ivens (2005, 137) warn that if the actual customer experience does not meet the expectation set by the brand, it will become a poor experience. Clatworthy (2012, 108) underlines that the customer experience is still the embodiment of the brand. The brand and the experience need to be homologous and the given promises must be fulfilled every time. Löytänä and Korteso (2011, 32-34) complement this view by presenting that the value adding makes often the difference between successful brands and the others. The added value might be just a simple element which provides unexpected and positive feelings to its user. Empty promises can harm the customer relationship radically and often brands are not even close to what is promised. Therefore it is critical to keep all the promises which are given to a customer. By following these key elements of customer experience management, brands can be differentiated and get new content. Lehtinen (2009, 79) emphasizes the meaning of a familiar and trusted brand when customers are receiving enormous amount of commercial messages. They cannot analyze each received message and thus the trusted and well-known brand has a major role when choosing a product or service to buy. Arussy (2010, 26-27) accentuates the connection between a brand and a customer experience. Many companies fail to live up to their brand promises because they fail to deliver and operationalize their customer experiences. There is a clear link between a customer experience framework and a brand performance platform. In order to enable employees to deliver branded cus-

customer experiences there are certain actions which must be taken. The actions are presented below (table 5).

Table 5. A brand performance platform (adapted from Arussy 2010, 26-27).

A BRAND PERFORMANCE PLATFORM

Understanding the brand and its impact on the customer.
Ensuring that the whole organization understands the performance required to fulfill the brand.
Recognizing the mission and roles to living up to the brand promise.
Empowering employees with the tools, information and authority to fulfill the brand promise.
Measuring every department against the delivery of the brand promise.
Aligning employee understanding of their role in the brand performance through customer experience delivery.
Motivating employees to execute the brand promise.
Removing all obstacles to living by the brand promise and values to free employees to perform.

3.5 Measuring Customer Experience Management

It is necessary to recognize the essential factors that need to be measured in CEM in order to monitor it. This chapter debates on the most important and relevant measurement approaches of CEM.

With unlimited resources any company is able to create and provide superior experiences to its customers. Anyhow, with a skillful customer experience management a company can differentiate from its competitors in consistent and most of all profitable way. The investment need to be valuable enough to make customer become loyal advocates who want to engage with the company. The offered value needs to be delivered in a cost-effective way that leads to competitive differentiation and profit increase. Without financial driver there is no sense to do it. (Soudagar et al.2012, 15-17.) Shaw, Dibeehi and Walden (2010, 2) support this view by encouraging companies to focus on the things that strengthen or demolish value to get the win-win of improving the experience for the customer and increasing profit.

The most concrete proves of the benefits achieved by successful customer experience management can be presented in numbers. These numbers measure and verify achieved savings and profits. The concrete benefits of CEM are for example; increased share of wallets, customers' strengthened commitment to the company, increased customer satisfaction, increased numbers of references, increased possibilities for cross-selling and extra sales, extended customer life cycle, customers' strengthened willingness to recommend the company to others, increased amount of ideas for new innovations from the customers, increased brand value, more engaged employees, cut numbers of lost customers, decreased numbers of negative feedback from the customers, and reduced customer acquisition costs.(Arussy 2010, 5-7.) Shaw and Ivens (2005, 198-199) point out that a great customer experience management and strategy is revenue generating and can substantially reduce costs. Outcomes of the successful customer experience strategy are increased loyalty, improved customer retention, increased coverage, and re-segmenting and branding with emotional values that allow a price premium. According to Arussy

(2010, 47) companies measure the outcomes often too short-sighted. Many companies focus on quarterly based results and spend less capital investing long-term relationships with their customers. The strategy of minimizing investments in customer relationships, while trying to collect more money from them is not a functional formula. When evaluating customer experience management it is essential to measure how much there are long-term investments in progress. Payne (2008, 303) reminds of the fact that no matter which metrics are the most relevant, companies need to always clearly define the most important key performance indicators (KPIs). There are indicators that are relevant at an operational level and some of the indicators are relevant at a strategic level. The strategic level's indicators are critical to the success of the business and thus needed to be supervised constantly at top management level.

Soudagar, Iyer and Hildebrand (2012, 95-98) see that customer segmentation is a driver of customer experience's return of investment (ROI). According to them it is essential that companies distinguish between their most profitable and least profitable customers. If not, return of investment (ROI) will be reduced. By eliminating frustrating or irritating experiences or by turning negative experiences around, companies can actually take cost out of the organization. Soudagar, Iyer and Hildebrand (2012, 194) have also created new customer experience metrics (table 6) which reflect the main principle of running the business better by serving the customers better.

Table 6. New customer experience metrics (adapted from Soudagar et al.2012, 194).

Customer Experience Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Primary Financial Metric Influenced	Secondary Financial Metric Influenced
Net promoter score	Increased revenues	Pretax income
Customer satisfaction survey scores	Increased revenues	Pretax income
Traffic on FAQ, knowledge base, and other online self-help resources	Reduced support costs	Selling, general, and administrative (SG&A) costs
Percent of orders considered perfect	Pretax income	Increased revenues
Increased sales to existing customers	Revenues	Pretax income
First-call resolution	Pretax income	Revenues
Number of help-desk calls per 1,000 users	Pretax income	
Number of customers that had been detractors who are now promoters	Revenues	Pretax income
Abandoned shopping cart frequency	Revenues	Pretax income
Site abandonment	Revenues	Net income
Website usability	Revenues	Pretax income
Online conversion rate	Revenues	Pretax income

It is crucial to understand how to conduct a useful customer survey in order to get relevant information for the company. Without knowing what to ask, there is no

sense to do it at all. Nevertheless, it is easy to define the wanted outcomes by understanding which expectations the company is trying to create and fulfill. The management's skills can be measured based on their capabilities to recognize the relevant matters in setting up the right kinds of questionnaires. (Arussy 2010, 267.)

Arussy (2010, 50-51) defines five relevant factors which are influenced by the experience the company delivers to its customers. Firstly, preference of company or product captures the number of new customers in a given year. These customers are not referred by company's existing customer. Secondly, promotion of company or product captures the number of new customers who buy company's products or services based on referrals of company's existing customers. Thirdly, permanence of overall relationship quantifies the time customers continue to purchase company's products or services. Fourthly, portion of overall customer budget combines customer's total budget and the portion of that budget spent on the certain company. Fifthly and last, premium price quantifies customer's willingness to pay a higher price for company's products or services than for its competitors. According to these factors it is relatively easy to calculate the customer experience revenue opportunity (figure 9).

$$\text{Revenue Opportunity} = \text{Preference} + \text{Promotion} + \text{Permanence} + \text{Portion} + \text{Premium Price}$$

Figure 9. Revenue opportunity formula (adapted from Arussy 2010, 51).

3.6 Managing the interactions in each touch point

Every encounter with a company leaves a memory track in customer's mind. Therefore, it is vital to understand the importance of each touch point between a company and a customer. This chapter debates on the meaning of a top-class performance provided in each touch point.

In order to create positive customer experiences, it is essential to recognize the importance of every touch point between a customer and a company (Teixeira et al. 2012, 372; Prewitt 2009, 54). Touch points are situations or places where customers are having encounters with the company. Encounters might be either active or passive ones. Active ones are for example physical meetings and phone calls. Passive ones are for example situations where a customer sees the company logo on the street or in commercial. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 74.) Active experiences occur when customers are having a direct interaction with a company while passive experiences can be defined as indirect interactions (Brakus et al. 2009, 53; Hamilton & Thompson 2007, 546). Often touch points are recognized as the critical key to customer loyalty and satisfaction (Rawson et al. 2013, 98). Chris Rockwell (Lockwood 2010, 223) presents that a customer experience with a product or service interaction is a function of the experiential outcome in the context of the customer's expectations across different touch points. Thus, the outcome of each interaction eventually defines the customer experience. Shaw (2007, 9) reminds of the fact that a customer experience is across all moments of contact and therefore many parts of the organization are involved.

Modern companies have mainly changed their business strategy from product-based thinking to customer-based approach. Therefore more several functions in a company form touch points with customers. Every function in a company must adapt its new role to be able to create positive customer experiences together with other internal functions. (Hellman&Väriä 2009, 57-63.) A company can never forget the fact that its internal performance influences straight to external relationships. Work can be seen as a theatre where every single employee, no matter on which organizational level, has its own role and acts according to that role in or-

der to turn every interaction with a customer into an experience. (Pine II & Gilmore 1999, 103-108.) It is old-fashioned to study a company structure as a sum of several independent business departments operating for their own goals without internal connection and communication between the other departments. Today, companies must provide a single face to customers and employees which mean acting as one united organization. There must be consistency across all customer touch points and communication channels in order to ensure the organic treatment for the customer in spite of selected method of interaction. Goals and strategies need also to be aligned and synchronized among all business functions including one organization-wide sense of purpose, mission and values. After these variables are embraced by everyone, they are better able to cooperate with each other. (Soudagar et al.2012, 56-57.)

Customer's path through the touch points can be described as a customer journey. Customer journey shows what kind of experiences is faced in each touch point. This is relevant information in order to measure and improve customer experiences in each encounter. This information allows also a possibility to view those touch points which do not exist yet but should be there. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 113-118.) Shaw and Ivens (2005, 65-67) notice that the prime moments of contact will change as the customer travels through the stages of the customer experience. Companies develop many moments of contact in order to provide another mechanism to talk to the customer, as a response to a competitive move, to increase sales by adding more distribution points, to reduce costs, to increase coverage, to improve the customer experience, or just be forced by mergers or acquisitions. In each stage there are certain prime moments of contact (figure 10).

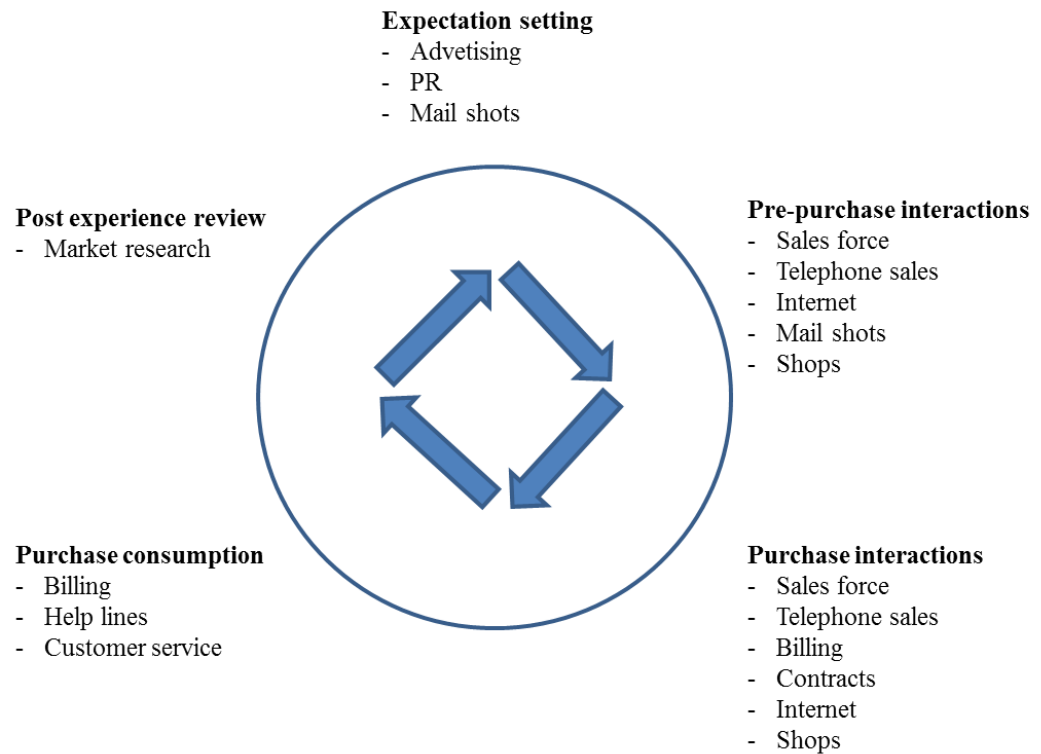


Figure 10. Primary moments of contact during stages of customer experience (adapted from Shaw & Ivens 2005, 66).

Arussy (2010, 29-31) verifies the fact that all touch points impact the customer experience. It is essential to understand that the chain is as strong as its weakest link, in this case the weakest touch point. Also recognizing the most important touch points to the customers is crucial in order to make right investments. Overall, it is pivotal to perceive the impact of each touch point and means to manage them in a right strategic way. The ovals above the line (figure 11) represent touch points outside the company's grip. Companies cannot design and direct these touch points since they form purely from customers' opinions and shared experiences via internet. With these touch points companies must know how to contribute positively because they cannot actually control them. Good interaction skills in social media are required from every modern company that wants to create remarkable customer experiences.

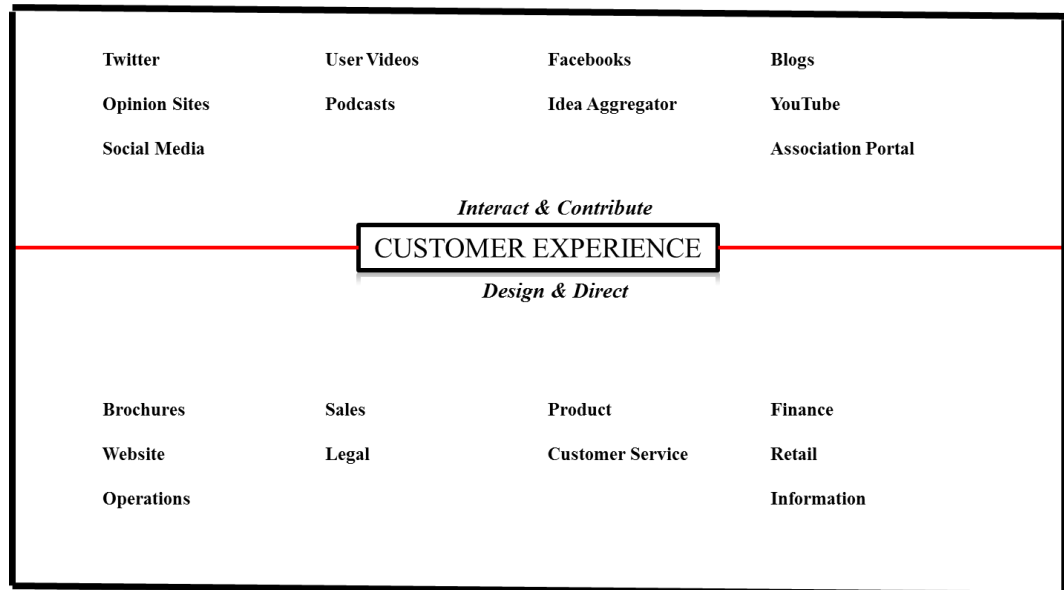


Figure 11. Touch points analysis (adapted from Arussy 2010, 30).

Valvio (2010, 19) highlights the meaning of electronic customer experiences today. Internet, social media and high-tech technology have defined new levels of customer encounters. Customers expect to get fast and effective service easily online. Companies must adapt and figure out how to respond to the expectations. Therefore, companies must create excellent experiences for their customers also online.

3.7 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this thesis consists of theories of customer experience and customer experience management. These theories were chosen since they will assist in answering the main research question. The chosen theories also express a deeper comprehension of the subject study and can be applied excellently to the design services which Company X is producing within its X Center concept. The chosen research methods and a structure of the interview used in the empirical part of this thesis are based on the gathered knowledge from the theoretical framework. The undermentioned books were used as prime sources: Löytänä and Korteso (2011). "Asiakaskokemus", Soudagar, Iyer and Hildebrand (2012) "The Customer Experience Edge", Shaw, Dibeehi and Walden (2010) "Customer Experience: Future Trends and Insights", Shaw and Ivens (2005) "Building Great Customer Experiences", Shaw (2007) "The DNA of Customer Experience", Shaw (2005) "Revolutionize your Customer Experience" and Arussy (2010) "Customer Experience Strategy". Above-mentioned sources express a proper base to the theoretical framework used in this thesis.

According to the theoretical framework a customer experience and customer experience management can be explored and defined relatively comprehensively by dividing them into 12 aspects. These 12 recognized themes are: emotions and expectations, loyalty, touch points, staff performance, process structures and aims, general and first impressions, entertainment factors, sXXXXry stimulation, interaction levels, profitability, customization, and finally differentiation.

Customer experience

The first part of the theoretical framework focus on opening the definition and the meaning of a customer experience, the meaning of emotions and expectations in customer experiences and the most relevant approaches to measure customer experiences.

Customer experience management

The second part of the theoretical framework concentrates on clarifying the background and the role of customer experience management, the meaning of empowered employees in customer experience creation, the possibilities how to utilize CEM in differentiation and customization of services, the connection between CEM and brand management, the most relevant approaches to measure CEM and the importance of each touch point between companies and customers.

4 RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODS

This chapter presents the research approach and methods in more detail. First, in paragraph 4.1, the objectives, questions and scope of the research are described in detail. Secondly, the research context is presented, including both the case company and the case concept. Company X and the X Center concept are introduced in paragraph 4.2. Thirdly, the research approach is described in paragraph 4.3. Fourthly, the acquisition of the research data is explained in paragraph 4.4. Next, in paragraph 4.5, the research data analysis methods are presented. Finally, in paragraph 4.6, the research execution is described in detail.

4.1 Research objectives, questions and scope

The primary objective of this research is to solve how to optimize customer experience in projects related to X Center concept. The target is to improve and develop the concept in order to generate optimal experiences for its users. This research concentrates mainly for optimizing the experiences for company's customers, but also employee experiences are considered as supporting elements of the total X Center experience.

The main research question of this study is: **How to optimize customer experience within X Center concept?**

In the process of exploring the research problem, two sub-questions were addressed:

1. Which current features of X Center experience should be changed?
2. How the current features of X Center experience should be changed?

The scope of this thesis is to concentrate on figuring out the experiences of the users of X Center concept and study how the future experiences can be optimized.

In this thesis the employees and the key customers of the case company were the respondents of the research interviews. Due to the primary objective of this study it was essential to get the perspectives of both parties in order to reach a full understanding of the examined subject. For this reason the researcher selected these two groups as study groups. Altogether, 13 representatives of 10 key customer companies, and 10 employees of the case company were interviewed. The employees of the case company came from several departments: Sales, Business Development, Design, Production, Quality, and Product Management. The body of each interview was created based on the written and electronic resources that the researcher had got acquainted with during the research process. The results and conclusions of this research aim to present concrete development recommendations to the Customer Loyalty and Marketing team of Company X. This research does not give answers to all of its development recommendations in detail, but reveals the critical features that need to be reconsidered compared to present state. This research is meant to serve mainly the owner of the X Center concept; however it also contributes to the whole Company X's organization in a creation of optimal customer experiences.

4.2 Research context: Company X introduction

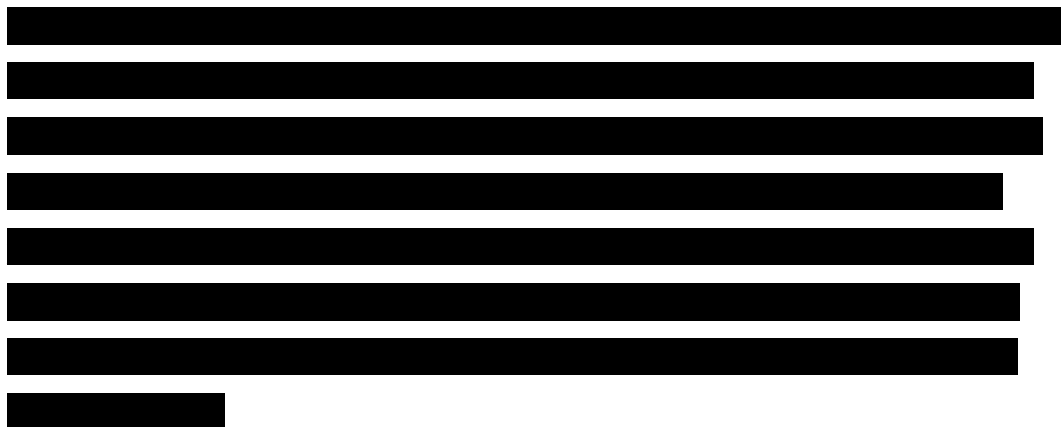




Figure 12. Basic facts from 2013 (Author's design).



Company X launched a new concept called X Center in Finland 2011. X Center, as a term, has two meanings; it is a name of a concept that enables new innovation creation together with company's customers, and it is also a name for a physical space including certain equipment and set up. The concept supports brand owner's business through the company's global design network. X Center and the related workshop culture speed up and streamline packaging design and production processes. Customers are closely involved right from the start of packaging development processes. Future trends and consumer demands are explored and new cross-sector perspectives on packaging can be gathered by utilizing the concept. Altogether seven new X Centers have been established in company's other premises in Europe after the first pilot in Finland. Development of X Center concept is a part of company's current key strategy, which inspired for making this thesis.

4.3 Research approach

Qualitative research method was chosen to use for this study. This method is ideal for researching persons' lived experiences, emotions, observations, behaviors, organizational functioning or feelings (Patton 2002, 4; Strauss & Corbin 1998, 11). Qualitative research highlights the importance of studying things in their natural setting. Researcher aims to find and provide a holistic description of a phenomenon and seeks to reveal or discover something which already exists. (Patton 2002, 4-5; Denzin & Lincoln 2005, 3.) This research concentrates on exploring case company's key customers and employees. The researcher works for the case company and thus, has a strong understanding of the research environment. Qualitative research focuses on a specific group of people and enables the researcher to conduct in-depth studies about a wide series of topics. The method fits for the purpose of this particular research as it has an ability to illustrate the opinions and visions of the participants in a study. (Yin 2011, 4-6). People are seen as key instruments for data collection in qualitative research. This research is an inductive research. Inductive reasoning is a process where several small observations are used to infer a larger theory. (Hirsijärvi et al. 2008, 160; Uusitalo 1999, 20.) This research concentrates on the observations and experiences of both case company's key customers and employees. This empirical qualitative case study seeks to give development recommendations to Company X for optimizing customer experience within its X Center concept.

4.4 Research data collection

The data used in this study was collected through semi-structured interviews. Interviews are an excellent way to gather information from the sources because it allows a direct contact between the researcher and the interviewee. (Harisalo et al. 2002, 29). A Semi-structured interview has a conversational mode that enables two-way interactions, in which the researcher has an opportunity to gather more information than originally aimed. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 86-87.)

These interviews are not strictly scripted; there is only a mental framework of study questions. The researcher selected and presented the wanted themes to be discussed about, but did not ask any certain questions from all interviewees. Only the same themes were presented to all interviewees. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 47-48.) This approach allowed more flexibility and chances to create new viewpoints around the topics (Yin 2011, 4-6: Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2003, 75-76). Theme interviews required that the researcher had a basic knowledge of the subject to be explored. The selected themes cannot be formed without a decent understanding of the background and the theoretical framework of the study. The researcher of this study worked for the case company and, thus had a strong understanding of the study environment. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 79.)

The researcher used an interview guide (appendix 1), in which the explored questions and issues were listed. The guide ensured that the same basic topics were to be discussed with each person interviewed. The guide acted as a supportive tool for the researcher, but it was not a strict script for the interview. The listed questions were not being showed to the interviewees. (Patton 2002, 343.)

In this research, a group of case company's key customers and employees were interviewed since the researcher wanted to get as comprehensive picture of the research problem as possible. Altogether, 13 representatives of 10 key customer companies, and 10 employees of the case company were interviewed. The employees of the case company came from several departments: Sales, Business Development, Design, Production, Quality, and Product Management. It was essen-

tial to collect experiences from several viewpoints to get a holistic picture of the research problem, and in order to be able to answer to the research questions.

Face-to-face interviews were held in several locations in Finland during the spring 2014. All the interviews were documented, first by recording and then by transcribing. The researcher used a digital voice recorder. The length of interviews varied between one and three hours.

4.5 Research data analysis

Thematic analysis is one of the most commonly used methods of qualitative analysis. As with all qualitative analysis, it is absolutely necessary that the researcher is very familiar with the data. Therefore, it is recommended that the researcher conducts the data collection oneself and also transcribe the data oneself. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2008, 271-219.) Typically, the researcher codes the gathered data with some symbols in order to divide the data in certain parts. Nevertheless, there are no rules about the procedure and some analyses may be more compactly coded than others. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 140-141; Patton 2002, 452-453.) In thematic analysis, the researcher is constantly editing and modifying the analysis as the study develops and ideas become clearer. After coding the data, the researcher aims to identify themes which can be connected to each other based on the common codings. The researcher needs to be able to clarify the substance of each theme in order to ensure that others understand exactly what the theme is. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 175-182.)

Clustering is used for grouping the findings into separate clusters. Each object in a certain cluster has one or several common features with each other. Each cluster consists of certain type of objects, meaning that every cluster difference from each other. Clustering works extremely well when the researcher has a large amount of data. With this approach, it is easy to make the data more structured. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2003, 95; Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 147-149.)

In this study, the researcher used both thematic analysis and clustering for analyzing the research data. In the first stage, clustering was used for dividing the respondents into two groups: the employees and the customers. In the second stage, the researcher formed certain themes on the basis of the similarities found from the data. The researcher used colors as codes for the themes. The themes from the semi-structured interviews supported and contributed to structure the gathered data. The filtered themes were identified according to the theoretical framework as follows: emotions and expectations, loyalty, touch points, staff performance, process structures and aims, general and first impression, entertainment factors, sXXXXry stimulation, interaction levels, portability, customization, and differentiation. In the last stage, clustering was used again for dividing the findings of each theme between positive and negative experiences. The final conclusions were created as a sum of these analyses.

4.6 Research execution

The empirical part of the research was executed in six months, beginning from March 2014 to September 2014. The researcher started to plan the basic themes and questions for the semi-structured interviews based on the information absorbed from the theoretical framework. The aim of the interviews was to get answers for the research questions. The researcher made an interview guide (appendix 1), in which the explored questions and issues were listed. The guide ensured that the same basic topics were to be discussed with each person interviewed. The guide acted as a supportive tool for the researcher, but it was not a strict script for the interview. The listed questions were not being showed to the interviewees.

The researcher conducted the first interview in May 2014 and the last one in June 2014. Altogether, 13 representatives of 10 key customer companies, and 10 employees of the case company, were interviewed. The employees of the case company represented several departments: Sales, Business Development, Design, Production, Quality, and Product Management. It was essential to collect experiences from several viewpoints to get a holistic picture of the research problem,

and in order to be able to answer to the research questions. Face-to-face interviews were held in several locations in Finland. All the interviews were documented, first by recording and then by transcribing. The researcher used a digital voice recorder. The length of interviews varied between one and three hours. The researcher highlighted the confidentiality of the interviews which supported a relevant data collection from the respondents. Each interview was agreed, on time, via phone calls or physical meetings. The researcher presented the required minimum time for each face-to-face interview already beforehand to all respondents. This approach ensured that all respondents had reserved enough time for a comprehensive interview. The objective role of the researcher was emphasized in each interview by explaining that researcher's current position in a company had no impact on the study.

After each interview, the researcher transcribed the recorded data into a Word document. Each transcription was made either during the same day or latest a day after, since the information was still fresh and easy to remember. The researcher transferred the recordings to a computer after each interview was assessed. Different colors were used to register each respondent's statements. This phase was done between May 2014 and June 2014.

After transferring the classified data into computer, the researcher started to analyze the data in order to perceive findings and conclusions. This phase started during the researcher's summer holiday in July 2014. The researcher used both thematic analysis and clustering for analyzing the research data. In the first stage, clustering was used for dividing the respondents into two groups: the employees and the customers. In the second stage, the researcher formed certain themes on the basis of the similarities found from the data. The researcher used colors as codes for the themes. The themes from the semi-structured interviews supported and contributed to structure the gathered data. The filtered themes were identified according to the theoretical framework. In the last stage, clustering was used again for dividing the findings of each theme between positive and negative experiences. The final conclusions were created as a sum of these analyses. The analysis phase was made between July 2014 and August 2014.

As a result, the researcher was able to create concrete development recommendations for optimizing customer experience within the X Center concept (appendix 4). Therefore, the research had a practical consequence for Company X business unit. The final copy typing was made during September 2014.

5 RESEARCH RESULTS

This chapter introduces the research results. Following paragraphs, named after the research themes, present the key findings of each theme. The end of the chapter, in paragraph 5.13, examines the reliability and validity of the research. Quotes from the interviews are presented in appendix 5.

5.1 Emotions and expectations

Boswijk (2012, 54) emphasizes the importance and the meaning of personal experiences. Personal experiences can be created by building up a personal connection. These experiences shape the value that people attach to life and they are often to be remembered for the rest of their lives. Personal experiences are often recognized as turning points in people's lives.

Almost without exception, the customers think that the X Center events have a strong personal touch to them. The X Center environment inspires strongly all parties present. The attitude of the company's employees is very active, and they are willing to create significant results in X Center. These elements inspire the customers very much. The strong personal touch experienced by the customers in the workshops and the possibility to design packages together with the experts of the supplier asserted the customers' engagement to the company. The customers also think that their own personal contribution has become more significant in X Center. A few customers did not experience any personal touch during the X Center events. This was due to the natures of the events - the sole purpose of the events was to get to know the features of X Center and to Company X as a company.

Nearly all employees have had a very strong personal touch during the X Center projects. The X Center projects are clearly more personal than other design projects. The concept makes the persons involved in the project automatically engaged on a very strong personal level. The creation work performed with the cus-

tomers in the same premises makes the event significantly more personal for each participant compared to working alone. A few employees who did not feel any strong personal touch, or who did not feel it to a varying extent, have participated in the processes only randomly. The purpose of a person's role in the project is significant. Primarily, the designers and the sales representatives have always an active role in the actual creation process. Therefore, they have a strong personal touch to the projects. They see their own contribution in the events as significant and crucial with regard to how successful the whole process is. The employees whose roles are limited primarily to expert tasks supporting the projects, do not necessarily always see the projects as strongly personal. Also in their cases, the personal approach correlates strongly with the time spent on the project and with their contribution. In cases where the employees who provide support functions did not have any strong personal touch, they were not provided with comprehensive initial and background information about the project. The participation in the project was usually limited to giving a general presentation of their special subject area, regardless of the nature of the project. It should also be noted that all employees experience that the level of the personal touch is higher if they are provided with comprehensive and sufficient initial information about the project and the related customership already at the beginning of the project.

One of the concrete benefits of skillful customer experience management is customers' or employees' strengthened willingness to recommend a company or a service to others (Arussy 2010, 5-7).

The customers recommend the X Center concept mainly because it enables that the members of all the required interest groups can be gathered simultaneously in the same premises. The customers also see the utilization of external expert parties used by means of the concept as a significant additional value. According to the customers, a physical encounter creates better conditions for networking with the other projects group members and for utilizing also non-verbal communications between the members. By working together, the customers reckon also that they could learn something new from the other members of interest groups. The concept enables significant efficiency and time saving compared to an operations model where each member is working on one's own part of the project separately

from the other members. The customers recommend the concept to be used especially in complex and challenging projects which require the participation of several experts from both parties. The customers do not recommend the concept for simple basic projects whose sole purpose is to make a small change in the current solution. The customers feel that the concept is too heavy and time-consuming to be used in these projects. They also feel that the use of the concept is risk-free because it is free of charge. For this reason, they are ready to boldly recommend the concept to others too. The customers reckon that X Center is an inspiring environment. Therefore, it can be recommended especially to be used in such projects that require innovation.

The employees recommend the concept to be used in demanding design work which requires the participation of several interest group members both from Company X's and the customer's side. The X Center concept enables building of new and valuable networks between several experts, as well as learning new viewpoints between different participants. By working physically in the same premises, for a common aim, it is easier to get to know to partners and to strengthen the engagement of all parties. X Center also gathers often people who would not otherwise have an opportunity to meet each other face-to-face. This creates depth in the existing relationships. The concept enables significant efficiency and time saving when all the required participants have an opportunity to share their viewpoints at the same time in the same place. This also ensures that everyone's opinions are taken into account in different stages of the project. The employees also recommend X Center because of its nice, relaxed and innovative atmosphere. The environment and its atmosphere create excellent settings for creative work. The employees' recommendations are also based on the customers' opportunity to be concretely involved in the design work and to see Company X's packaging references displayed in the premises. The packaging references offer the customers an opportunity to compare and test solutions that have already been developed for their current need. The representatives of Company X see the premises as representative for customer visits, and they believe that the premises also give a modern and an innovative impression of the company outside. The employees do not recommend the X Center concept for simple design projects. The concept requires plenty of resources to be used. Therefore, it is not worthwhile to use

scarce resources for such projects that can be managed by means of basic design processes. The employees do not think that it is worthwhile to use the concept in situations where Company X and the customers do not have a clear aim or reason to use the concept. The employees do not recommend that the X Center projects are launched without proper initial information and aims.

According to Boswijk (2012, 174) it is not possible to recall every moment of the customer journey once it has ended. Nevertheless, the low points, the peaks and the ending are going to be remembered.

The customers have had both highlights and disappointments during their X Center experiences. The majority of the highlights are related to concrete advantages which the customers have been able to achieve during the experiences. The concrete highlights are related to new innovative packaging solutions which have been managed to create for them in X Center. Examples of the concrete highlights are physical packaging models prepared for them in advance, new production-ready and complete packages created at the end of the workshops, single enhancement mechanisms that can be utilized technically, as well as references of implemented package solutions displayed in the showroom. Other highlights experienced by the customers have been the opportunity to learn and work directly together with real experts, positive and innovative atmosphere in X Center, as well as the participation of third expert parties in the project. The disappointments are often related to the poor aftercare that Company X provides for the projects. The workshop events are often promising and supportive, but the customers see that the projects do not progress after this. Some customers have been disappointed with the lack of Company X's innovativeness because they have expected the company to utilize the available material to a greater extent, as well as providing more creative solutions. The customers have also been disappointed with the lack of presented concrete examples of the opportunities to utilize X Center. The unexpectedly high price of the innovations developed during the workshops has also often experienced as a disappointment among the customers. A few customers are also disappointed with the quantity of the displayed package references because the quantity of them has been smaller than expected.

The highlights that the employees have had during the X Center processes have mainly been the moments when they have been able to develop something completely new or otherwise a significant solution to the customer's current problem. These emotions have been supported by the customers' positively surprised reactions and direct recognitions face-to-face. The employees have felt particularly good when they have exceeded the customer's expectations in a positive way. Some employees mention that their highlights are the situations where they have learned something new either from the customers or via some external expert party. The disappointments experienced by the employees are related to the situations where they and the customer have not had clear common aims. As a result, the projects have been without concrete advantage or decision. In terms of the internal processes, the disappointments are related to an unclear structure and to aims that have been set unclearly. The employees were also disappointed with some of the projects which they saw as too simple to be handled via the X Center concept. In terms of these projects, the employees saw them as frustrating and thought they were a waste of resources. Some employees were disappointed with too tight schedules for the agreed actions.

A Nobel-prized psychology Mr. Daniel Kahneman has invented a peak-end rule theory which presents that experiences are generated mostly according to the pike point and the ending point of an encounter. Pike point means a positive or a negative top of the experience. The final experience is generated by comparison between the pike and the ending points. The most important point is the ending point and it needs always to be a positive one. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 113-118; Bhargave & Montgomery 2013, 513)

The endings of the X Center experiences have varied heavily among the customers. The majority of them mention that they experience the endings as negative. The biggest reason for this is Company X's poor aftercare in the projects. The customers mention that many of the excellent intentions that are started together in the workshops remain unfinished. Some customers think that nothing concrete and significant has been achieved during the X Center events. Some customers see the endings as positive. They mention that some excellent solutions have been developed during the workshops and that these solutions have been taken all the

way to the production. These customers have also noticed the poor quality of Company X's aftercare.

In terms of the workshops, all employees think that the endings of their X Center experiences have mainly been positive or very positive. Positive emotions have arisen as a result of the outcomes that have been successful and, more importantly, concrete. Some employees saw direct feedback they received from the customers after the workshop as a very positive thing. However, it is significant that most of the employees are not aware how the whole process has ended. They have to limit their experience to the workshop day held in X Center. Meanwhile, the employees who have involved in the whole process have experienced that the endings of the events held after the workshop sessions have been variable or negative. The negative experiences are caused the poor aftercare provided by the project managers. In practice, this means that the documentation has been insufficient, the distribution of the work tasks has been unclear and the information on the progress of the project has been shared to the working group members poorly.

It is essential to be aware of the fact that a customer experience is not fully a rational decision, but a sum of single interpretations made by a human being (Sathish & Venkatesakumar 2011, 75). Therefore it is important to realize the impact of feelings, emotions and subconsciously made interpretations on a customer experience (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 11).

The emotions that the customers have experienced during the X Center processes vary strongly from positivity to negativity. It is significant that the majority of the customers' positive emotions are related to the middle stage of a process, i.e. to the workshops held in X Center. Meanwhile, the amount of the negative emotions is at its highest when processing the endings of the processes. The emotions vary considerably between different projects, as well as within individual projects. The individual emotions that have surfaced most powerfully are enthusiasm, interest and success. In addition to these, the customers have also often experienced disappointment, frustration and failure. Some customers have occasionally had emotions that relate to the sense of community, suspiciousness, learning, joy and trust. The scale of the customers' emotions has usually progressed from positive trust,

interest and enthusiasm experienced at the beginning of the projects to learning. Before the feeling of learning, the respondents have occasionally had felt frustration and suspiciousness if the desired solution is not created quickly enough. During the workshops in X Center, the atmosphere has mainly been communal and relaxed. This has helped in achieving desired end results and the feelings of success after the workshops. The joy experienced by the respondents has often changed to disappointment and failure at the end of the projects as a result of the poor aftercare provided in the workshops.

Almost without exception, the emotions that the employees have had during the X Center processes have been positive. The scale of emotions has strongly varied between different projects, as well as within individual projects. By far the most powerfully surfaced emotions have been success, realization, enthusiasm and interest. In addition to these, the employees have quite often had felt frustrated, relaxed and engaged. During the processes, some employees have occasionally had felt tense, open and motivated. The scale of the emotions has often progressed from interest and enthusiasm at the beginning of the projects to realization. Occasionally, the employees have felt frustrated before they have experienced emotions related to realization if the desired solution is not created quickly enough. During the project working, a relaxed atmosphere has been strongly present in X Center. This has helped in creating commitment between the participants. Almost without exception, the feeling of success has surfaced after the desired solution has been created.

Hur and Kang (2012, 1540) presents that customer loyalty depends on each individual's own expectations and values. The value of the experience forms from a relationship between upfront expectations and the received experience itself.

The customers' expectations on the X Center experience have been different. The expectations have been met to a varying extent. The customers mention that the expectations have basically been relatively moderate. Most of the customers limit the fulfillment of their expectations to the end of the workshop day, but the majority of the customers feel that their expectations are not met after this process stage. The customers reckon that the biggest reason for their disappointments and why

the expectations are not met is the poor aftercare provided by Company X after the workshops.

The employees' expectations on the X Center experiences have been met, almost without exception. A few employees have felt that their expectations have been met to a varying extent between the experiences. However, none of the employees thought that their expectations have been exceeded. For the majority of the employees, the fulfillment of the expectations seems to be affected by rather moderate initial expectations.

Shaw and Ivens (2005, 11) have listed the seven key elements for building great customer experiences (page 12). An excellent customer experience is, according to them, created by consistently exceeding customers' physical and emotional expectations. The customers' expectations during the X Center processes could be exceeded by providing them something genuinely new and unique. Most of the customers would feel that their expectations are exceeded if Company X presented more its innovative packaging references created in X Center, as well as success stories. The customers experience that their expectations could be exceeded also by displaying other packaging manufacturers' innovative packaging solutions from all over the world. More thorough preparations and, above all, better aftercare provided for the projects would exceed the customers' current expectations. Most of the customers would be positively surprised if they had an opportunity to work with their hands during the workshops. The expectations of some customers would be exceeded if Company X was able to arrange workshops where different brand owners would solve each other's problems in cooperation with Company X's experts.

The employees' expectations during the X Center processes could be exceeded by giving them better initial and background information on the project to be started and on the related customership. Most of the employees experienced this as a significant method to exceed their expectations. In addition to better background information, the employees' expectations could be exceeded by finding some totally new, unique packaging solution for the customer as an outcome of the workshop. Some employees would be positively surprised if the customer trusted them

so much that the customer would be committed to order the outcome already before the launch of the project. The employees who have not been able to participate in the final stages of the processes would be surprised if they could witness the customers' positively surprised and grateful reactions face-to-face in X Center. The expectations of some employees would be exceeded if they had more resources and time than now for their design work. The employees also mentioned that they have expected that the significance of the production and its possibilities would be presented more actively to the customers.

One efficient way to explore an optimization of a created experience is to question if something would have been done differently in case some payment would have been charged instead of giving it all for free. High-class customer experience management can lead companies to situations where customers are willing to pay for selling to them. (Pine II & Gilmore 1999, 61-69.)

Nearly all customers feel that it is a negative or very negative alternative if the X Center concept becomes subject to charge. The customers reckon that the concept should be provided as a free-of-charge additional service to the partners of the company. According to the customers, the current additional value provided by the concept is not worth paying. The customers mention that they would not use the service so easily anymore if it became subject to charge. Consequently, the customers' threshold to use the service would be significantly higher. The customers believe that they would start to acquire services more actively from Company X's competitors if the X Center service was not free of charge anymore. The customers emphasize that the competitors provide corresponding services for free. If the service was subject to charge, it would also cause pressures on the expectations and requirements set for the projects. Therefore, Company X would have to present the customers very accurately the concrete numerical advantages that each project enables. Especially the first times during which the service is used should be free of charge. A few customers believe that after positive experiences they could consider paying a moderate fee for the use of the concept.

All employees feel that it is more a negative than a positive alternative if the X Center concept becomes subject to charge. If the concept is subject to charge,

there is a risk that the usage rate of X Center will drop. The employees believe that the customers' threshold to use X Center would be higher if they had to pay for it. If the service was subject to charge, the employees believe that it would be very difficult to get new customers to use the service. A few employees believe that the customers who have already achieved excellent results by means of the service would possibly pay a moderate compensation for the service in the future. Some employees believe, however, that financially challenging times and several customers' decreased consumption supports the elimination of any new expenses. As a result of the charge, the employees believe that the relaxed and innovative atmosphere currently present in X Center would disappear. If the service was subject to charge, it would cause a growing pressure on all parties to get each time concrete value for the paid money. As a result, the creativity and innovativeness would disappear. The employees want to keep the concept as part of the comprehensive service provided to the customers, instead of changing it to a separate service subject to charge. The only positive effects that the charge could possibly have are clearer aims and schedules set for the projects, as well as the documentation. Some employees emphasize that the charge would bring a growing need to concept the service more clearly. According to the employees appropriate pricing and segmentation would have to be done very carefully if the service became subject to charge.

5.2 Loyalty

Positive experiences create and increase loyalty. Instead, a customer who has suffered stressful or frustrating experiences will change a company in most cases at once a better option presents itself. (Soudagar et al.2012, 7.)

Nearly all customers think that the X Center experiences have increased their loyalty towards Company X. The customers feel that the concept increases their duty to acquire the products they have designed together with Company X from the company, not from their competitors. The majority of the customers feel that X Center may probably have a crucial role in that they also start their next, more demanding design projects with Company X. The customers emphasize the signif-

importance of people in creating the experience and loyalty in X Center. According to the customers, the premises in themselves provide a good framework, but familiar staff and its contributions are the most significant factors in terms of developing the relationship between the customers and the company.

All employees believe that the customers' X Center experiences have increased their loyalty towards Company X. Most of them believe that the experiences have increased their loyalty to a considerable extent. Meanwhile, some employees think that the experiences have increased their loyalty to some extent. They believe that by working together in X Center the customers learn to know the working methods of both the employees and the company better than before. By working together, the customers are committed to the company and their threshold to start new projects with Company X is lower. The cooperation also makes the customers see and understand better all the efforts that the company makes for the customers' projects. The employees believe that the grown loyalty has also increased the amount of the customers' purchases from Company X. According to the employees, some of the biggest global companies have, however, concentrated their purchases far from local units. Therefore, the loyalty of these local units is not always very significant when making purchase decisions.

Soudagar, Iyer and Hildebrand (2012, 17-21) have found four cornerstones of trust as essentials of customer experience. These four customer experience essentials are reliability, convenience, responsiveness and relevance (page 11). By following these cornerstones, companies are able to build loyalty between themselves and the customers.

According to the customers, their loyalty towards Company X could be further increased via the X Center experiences. Most of the customers experience that the excellent outcomes created as results of the workshops could significantly increase their loyalty towards the company. The customers think that the significance of the company staff's competence is in a crucial position with regard to their loyalty possibly becoming stronger. According to the customers, the loyalty can become stronger if they learn to know some representatives of the staff on a wider scale, as well as working more often with the persons they know. Most of

the customers also feel that their loyalty would be increased if Company X improved its aftercare for the projects. Some customers report that their loyalty would be increased if Company X could present in X Center more concrete success stories and packaging references to support their own needs. Only a few customers experience that their loyalty cannot be increased by means of the X Center concept. These customers mention that the biggest reason for this is that their loyalty towards Company X has already achieved its peak.

According to the employees, it is possible to further increase the customers' loyalty by means of the customers' X Center experiences. Nearly all employees experience that their loyalty would be increased if the structures and aims of the common projects were specified better. Better specification of the work task distributions, schedules and goals enables that more such significant customized and concrete outcomes that the customers expect to have can be achieved in the projects. To support the structures and aims, documents about the agreed matters should be drafted better in the future. The employees think that it is important to share information to all project group members better. The loyalty of the customers could be increased especially by providing them with better internal initial information and improving the aftercare for the projects. Some projects have been without an appropriate ending. Therefore, the customers have had an unreliable impression of the company. After the projects are completed, the company should ensure that the customers are satisfied by asking them systematically to submit feedback. Some employees also experience that by adding several touch points between the company and the customers would increase the loyalty. The loyalty could also be increased by sharing more actively the success stories achieved in X Center.

5.3 Touch points

Before a management can create a business or a competitive strategy around the customer experience, they must first recognize and define what kind of a customer experience the company is trying to deliver. If the management does not have a

clear articulation of what they want the company's customer experience to be, the rest of the employees, who are delivering it, cannot know what to do.

(Shaw & Ivens, 2005, 14-15.) Arussy (2010, 20-22) presents six basic steps for managing customer experiences (page 28). A first step is to define company's differentiating, profitable customer experience. Wanted experiences should be natural for the company to deliver. The experience needs to solve the customer's total problems with its greatness.

None of the customers has experienced that Company X indicates clearly what kind of experience the company aims at staging for them within the X Center concept. According the customers, the events in X Center have mainly been positive, but they have not had any clear impression of the experience staged for them in X Center. Some customers see the concept as a copy of the concept used by a competitor of Company X. These customers assume that Company X aims at staging for them an experience that is similar to the competitor's experience. According to the customers, staging experiences does not belong to Company X's strengths.

None of the employees is aware what kind of experience the employer should create for the customers. None of the customers knows what the company's official definition of its customer experience is. The employees mention that they have used their own best consideration when creating an experience. The employees wish to have a clear definition of the customer experience that Company X is trying to deliver. This would help them creating a consistent experience and understanding better the common aims that should be achieved.

Today, companies must provide a single face to customers and employees which mean acting as one united organization. There must be consistency across all customer touch points and communication channels in order to ensure the organic treatment for the customer in spite of selected method of interaction. Goals and strategies need also to be aligned and synchronized among all business functions including one organization-wide sense of purpose, mission and values. After these variables are embraced by everyone, they are better able to cooperate with each other. (Soudagar et al.2012, 56-57.) Hence, all employees must know the common mission and messages to deliver (Arussy 2010, 20-22).

Nearly all customers think that Company X's representatives have not aimed at clearly creating for them a consistent experience in X Center. According to the customers, the nature of the experience to be achieved has not been specified for them clearly at any point. The customers experience that the messages of Company X's representatives related to the experience are occasionally in contradiction with each other. Some customers think that Company X does not find it necessary to invest in the experiences that are aimed at them.

In their own estimation, the employees have not managed or aimed systematically at creating a consistent customer experience for the customers. The employees think it is impossible because the employer has not outlined any desired customer experience for them. According to the employees, everyone has done their best and used their own consideration on a case-by-case basis. The employees believe that the quality and level of the customer experiences have varied strongly from one event to another.

Customer's path through the touch points can be described as a customer journey. Customer journey shows what kind of experiences is faced in each touch point. This is relevant information in order to measure and improve customer experiences in each encounter. This information allows also a possibility to view those touch points which do not exist yet but should be there. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 113-118.) Shaw and Ivens (2005, 65-67) notice that the prime moments of contact will change as the customer travels through the stages of the customer experience (page 42).

The customers have been in contact with Company X's representatives physically, by phone, by e-mail and via video calls. During the preparation stages of the X Center projects, most of the customers have been in contact only with Company X's sales manager. These encounters have mainly occurred by telephone and e-mail. Only a few customers have been in contact with Company X's designers during the preparation stage. The customers would like to have a designer participating in the preparation stage along with the sales representatives. After the preparation stage, the customers have met Company X's representatives physically in

the events held in X Center. The customers mention that a large group of representatives from different departments of the companies are often present in these events, including the representatives of external expert parties, if required. The customers experience that the atmospheres of the events held in X Center are positive and relaxed. According to the customers, the encounters are, up until these stages of the projects, professional and rewarding. After the physical X Center meetings, the customers have been in contact with the representatives of the company to a variable extent via various channels. The customers reckon that Company X has a lot to be improved in terms of these encounters. The customers think that the projects are often unfinished and Company X's communication is too passive. They also think that the used communication channels are often unclear during the projects. They are not sure with whom they should communicate and at which point of the project.

For most of the employees, direct encounters with the customers during the processes are limited to physical meetings in X Center. In most projects, the employees have been in direct contact only with one representative of the customer company. When working with the largest customer companies, the customer has been mostly represented by more than one person. Some employees have been in direct contact with the customer's designers or project manager after the workshop day, either by e-mail or phone. A few employees have also participated in physical workshops held after the workshop day in the customer's premises. Related to the preparations of the X Center events, only the sales representatives have been in direct contact with the customers. Encounters have mainly occurred by phone or e-mail. Usually, the basic framework, date, participants and a rough schedule have been agreed in these preliminary meetings. In these encounters, the customer is usually represented by one contact person, either from the purchasing department or the packaging design department. When working with the biggest customer companies, the customer is represented by several persons also during the preparations. Most of the employees experience that it would be useful to have, for example, the responsible designer present in the customer encounter already during the preparations. All employees reckon that the sales representative should provide as comprehensive initial information as possible to the rest of the project

group before the project is started in X Center. Nearly all employees experience that there is a lot to be improved in sharing the initial information.

5.4 Staff performance

Cook (2011, 228) remarks that company management needs to motivate their employees by being personally committed to customer experience creation. A big challenge for the managers is to motivate people in an environment where staff numbers may be reduced strongly. Still those who are left must work even more than before.

The customers experience that the representatives of Company X are mainly engaged in staging the experiences up until the early and middle stages of the processes. Only a few customers think that the representatives are engaged during the whole process. Most of the customers think that the engagement decreases considerably after the workshops held in X Center. This is indicated by unfinished projects. Each representative's engagement in the project and in creating the experience could be indicated by means of a better documentation.

The employees have mainly experienced that they are engaged in staging the customer experience throughout the entire X Center process. According to the employees, the concept in itself creates automatically a strong engagement towards the projects that are handled by means of the concept if the customer's own contribution has a significant role for the outcome of the process. Approximately half of the employees feel that the level of their engagement in creating the experience has varied according to the quality of the project and to their own role. In those cases where the employee has solely had an expert role supporting the process, the level of the engagement has been poor or very poor. The engagement in creating the experience has also been poor towards such projects that the employees have seen as too simple to be handled via the X Center concept.

Boswijk (2012, 212) notes that the contact with company's employees is a major factor that adjudicates the quality of an experience. Therefore, employees' behavior is crucial to the success of any experience.

All customers experience that using the representatives of Company X during the X Center projects is very positive. According to the customers, the representatives have acted professionally and openly. The customers find working with the representatives to be very pleasant. Some customers experience that the behavior of the representatives has changed into positive direction in the course of years. The customers are of the opinion that Company X's strength is mainly based on its correctly behaving staff that is capable of creating a relaxed and constructive atmosphere.

All employees think that their colleagues have acted appropriately and professionally in the presence of the customers during the X Center events. The majority of the employees have also experienced that their colleagues have managed to create a nice and relaxed atmosphere in the events held in X Center. Only a few employees think that the behavior of some of their colleagues has sometimes become disrespectful and rude during the internal processes related to the X Center projects. However, all employees experience mainly that the behavior of their colleagues has been very positive and appropriate during the internal processes too.

Often employees are motivated to serve and take care of the needs and desires of their customers but they are not empowered to act so. Management needs always to take care of the capabilities of workers and permit enough space to allow a fluent working environment. By allowing the employees to act as confident professionals the customers will also receive the best possible service and experiences. (Soudagar et al.2012, 4-7)

All customers experience that the employees of Company X have been sufficiently empowered to perform their duties in the X Center projects that take place in Finland. The customers report that there have been some noticeable delays in the agreed actions. The customers believe that this is due to some kind of lack of resources within Company X. On the basis of the customers' experiences, the repre-

representatives of Company X have not always been satisfied with their own outcomes because they have not had enough time to finish them the way they have wanted. With regard to global projects, the customers feel that the local representatives of Company X are not empowered enough to perform all the needed actions fluently.

All employees feel that they are free and empowered enough to perform their duties that they have during the X Center events. Despite of this, they feel that there is a lack of resources. This is seen, according to the employees, as delayed works and as a huge workload. Most of the employees are capable of performing their duties related to X Center according to given schedules, but they finish other projects late because of this. The employees prioritize the X Center projects over other projects. Some employees experience that they are incapable of performing their X Center-related duties according to the schedules. These employees mention that the biggest reason for this is unclear goals set for the projects and unrealistic schedules.

Without motivated employees, there is no capability to achieve success in customer experience creation. On the other hand, the wrong person can totally spoil the customer experience that the company is aiming to create. The people are not the most important assets, but the right people are. (Shaw & Ivens 2005, 101)

Nearly all customers think that the approach of Company X's employees to the X Center projects is very positive. The designers and the sales representatives, in particular, are praised by the customers for helpful and active attitude. Some of the customers feel that the production representatives' attitudes are slightly negative. A few customers have occasionally experienced that the attitudes of the company representatives show clear signs of stress.

All employees experience that they have a good and positive attitude in the events held in X Center. According to the employees, they manage to create a relaxed and innovative atmosphere in X Center. The employees mention that their attitudes reflect motivation along with desire to develop something genuinely new. Internal disturbing factors, such as hurry and stress, have not been visible to the customers. The sales and design representatives, in particular, receive particular

praise from the employees for their good attitude. A few employees experience that there are big differences in the attitudes between the sales managers. Some employees experience that the production representatives' attitudes towards the concept itself is occasionally negative.

Another concrete benefit of skillful customer experience management is the increased amount of ideas for new innovations (Arussy 2010, 5-7). According to Shaw (2010, 10-14), people get easily bored with the same old. Sometimes innovation for its own sake is important (page 19).

The majority of the customers experience that Company X needs to improve its innovativeness. However, most of the customers see Company X as relatively innovative or as an innovative player in the packaging industry. Several customers feel that the company representatives are relatively innovative when taking into consideration the limitations set by the material.

All employees experience that their colleagues are innovative factors within their industry. Some employees suspected that the competitors have succeeded in marketing themselves as more innovative than Company X. The employees feel that the company is more innovative than or at least as innovative as its competitors. Most of the employees believe that their customers see them as an innovative player. A few employees experience that the company's innovativeness suffers because of the internal bureaucracy. According to them, the energy that should be used in the innovation is spent in performing internal actions of the organization. These employees suspect that also customers have noticed this.

Decision making is one of the hardest tasks in work. If there are too many options available, it means automatically more workload for the decision maker. Therefore empowered employees can provide concrete suggestions and solutions for their customers. Good suggestions reduce the feelings of risks from decision makers. The feeling of safety and trust leads to a positive customer experience and that in turn leads to loyalty. (Apunen & Parantainen, 2011, 41-64.) Thus, all employees in a company need to remove their customers' obstacles for making the buying decision by providing enough support for them. Uncertainty can specifically ruin any customer experience. (Broughton 2012, 75-76.)

The customers experience mainly that they receive sufficiently help from Company X when they are making decisions. According to the customers, the company provides them with sufficient facts to support the decision making, but it does not try to influence the final decision making. The customers appreciate the company's expertise and way to support its customers whenever needed.

Nearly all employees experience that they have helped the customers in making decisions in the X Center-related processes. According to the employees, they have managed to give their customers the required facts and background support for making decisions. As the background support the company often uses, according to the respondents, concrete examples of similar previous cases. The employees mention that the company has managed to maintain honesty and openness with customers. This promotes the company's credibility as a supporter for decision making.

5.5 Process structures and aims

Shaw and Ivens (2005, 24-25) break down the stages of the customer experience (figure 13). All customer experiences consist of different stages. It is crucial to understand the importance of having relevant structures and aims for the experiences.

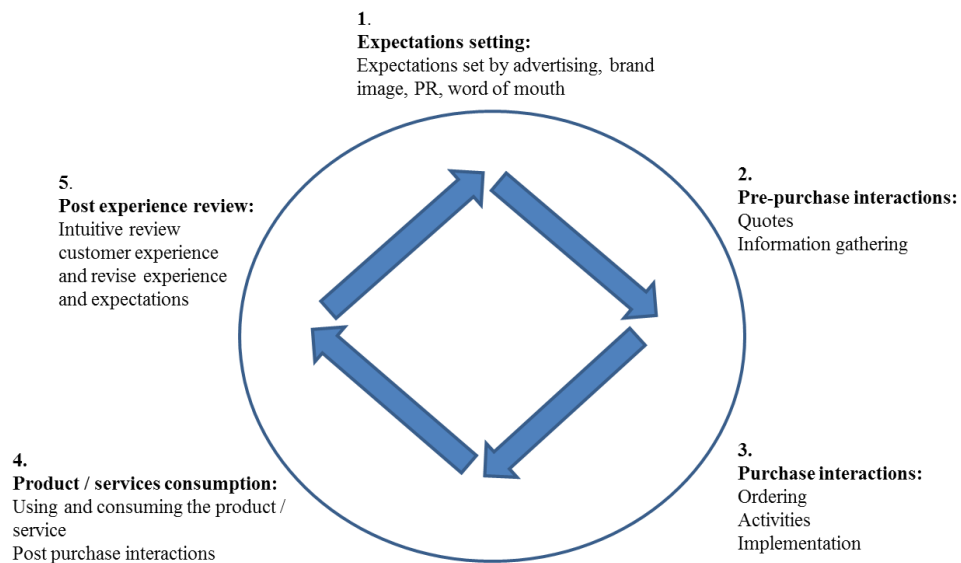


Figure 13. Stages of a customer experience (adapted from Shaw & Ivens 2005, 24).

According to most of the customers, the specification of the structures and aims of the X Center processes have sometimes been unclear at the beginning. The company should improve the handling of the schedules, distribution of tasks, common aims and project monitoring from the current situation. The customers experience that a better and more systematic documentation could crucially improve the perception and monitoring of the structures and aims of the X Center processes. The customers reckon that the biggest challenges the X Center projects currently have are, in particular, monitoring and completing the projects.

According to all employees, the specification of the structures and aims of the X Center processes have sometimes been unclear at the beginning. According to the employees, the schedules, distribution of tasks, aims and initial information on the project should be specified better in the future. In addition, they should be shared to all project group members. From the employees' point of view, the problem is the poor-quality or sometimes non-existent documentation of the agreed structures and aims. Often, the structures and aims become clearer when the project is well under way. Consequently, a time is lost and energy is wasted on wrong things. The employees have also experienced situations where the common aims of the

projects have not been presented at any point to all project group members clearly. The employees feel that the structures and aims should be clearly specified by the sales manager leading the project.

Shaw and Ivens (2005, 52-53) highlight the meaning of trust. It is impossible to have a true relationship with customers if they do not trust the partner. Aapola (2012, 37) notes that trustworthiness of a company basis on a synergy between given promises and taken actions. All agreed things, such as schedules, agendas or timings, need to be followed.

The customers feel that the agendas and schedules of individual workshop days held in X Center have been clear to a very variable extent. Approximately one half of the customers think that the given agendas and schedules are clear, while the other half of the customers think the agendas and schedules are unclear.

According to the employees, individual workshop days held in X Center have been clear to a very variable extent. Approximately one half of the employees feel that they have received clear invitations to the events with clear agendas and schedules, while the other half of the employees think the agendas and schedules have been unclear. According to the employees, the sales manager leading the project should be responsible for sending the workshop day invitations to the participants and for making the schedules and the agendas.

Arussy (2010, 20-22) presents six basic steps for managing customer experiences (figure 14). A last step is to redefine the strategy by continuing an on-going reinvention process. The key element is to manage the changes and forecasts around the expectations. It is crucial to lead the company and the organization in a way that it allows a creation of zeitgeist experiences.

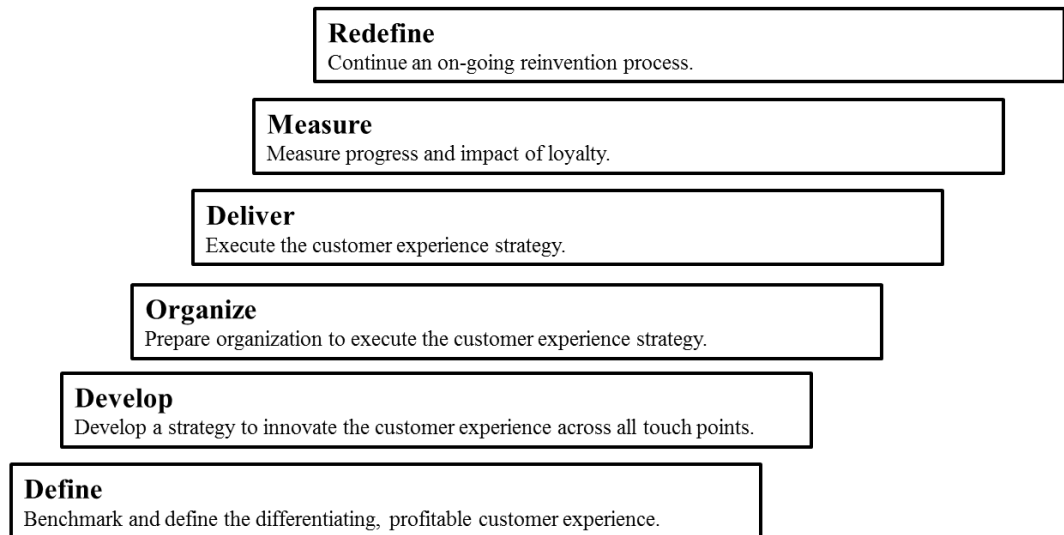


Figure 14. CEM milestones (adapted from Arussy 2010, 20).

The customers wish that the current structures of the X Center processes would get changed. According to the customers, the company should present all the possibilities that can be achieved by means of the X Center concept in the early stages of the processes. The common specification and aims of the project to be started should be specified after this. Company X should more systematically ensure that the specified initial information is shared to all members of the project group and that the information is understood. The customers expect that Company X takes more responsibility for implementing the projects and presents the leading project manager clearly. The events held in X Center should have clearer agendas and schedules before the beginning of the events. After the workshops, the customers expect that the company makes considerable improvement in implementing the agreed actions and following the schedules. According to the customers, the projects should be documented better than now. Thus, the customers could monitor the agreed actions more easily. Well-made documentations also provide information on the deadlines and the responsibility areas of each project group member. In addition to these, the customers wish that they could submit feedback on the finished projects. It would be very valuable to systematically forward the comments submitted by the end-users of packed products also to the package supplier. These comments could be used in possible new projects with X Center.

The employees are not satisfied with the current structures of the X Center processes. All employees think that more comprehensive initial information on the forthcoming project should be provided to the members of the project in the early stages of the processes. The employees wish that short internal meetings could be held more often before the projects. In these internal meetings, the initial information could be shared between all participants. According to the employees, the aims are usually specified unclearly when the projects have started. According to them, the aims should be definitely specified before the start of the project together with the customers. According to the employees, it should also be ensured that all project group members have understood the aims set for the project. According to the employees, the sales manager responsible for the customers is responsible for leading the processes. The employees wish that the sales manager would have a backup person in case of possible hindrance. The employees wish to have better summaries and more systematic documentation on the agreed matters and actions at the end of the events. The majority of the employees feel that they have not received any information on the progress of the projects after their own work phase. Some employees also wish that the project leaders would use their consideration better in terms of resources. The employees do not find it very useful to have one single expert engaged in the event for a whole day if the things that are worked have nothing to do with this person's job description and contribution in the project.

In order to create positive customer experiences, it is essential to recognize the meaning of each step during the experience (Teixeira et al. 2012, 372; Prewitt 2009, 54).

The customers describe that before they gather in X Center, their only contact person is mainly Company X's sales manager. Together with the sales manager, the customers usually specify the problem that has to be solved, as well as the start time for the project, participants and a rough schedule for the implementation of the project. The customers receive an electronic invitation to the X Center event from the sales manager after this. Most of the customers would find it useful if a representative from the designing department could also participate in the initial meetings. According to the customers, the projects where the designer has

been actively present from the beginning have been more successful on average. According to the customers, the majority of the encounters before gathering in X Center have occurred via phone or e-mail. A few customers have physically discussed with the representatives of Company X about the launch of the project. According to the customers, the initial information on the project is usually unclear. Therefore, they feel that Company X needs to invest more in them. The majority of the customers experience that after the event held in X Center things have not gone as expected. After the event, the responsibility for the progress of the project is left to Company X. Most of the customers experience that the actions agreed in X Center are not performed in accordance with the agreed schedules and that the documentation of the events is not on the desired level. The customers mention that Company X does not keep them very actively updated on the progress of the projects. The customers experience that it is very negative that they have to find out themselves about progress of the projects. Most of the customers have mainly been in contact with Company X's sales manager and no one else. According to the customers, the direct contact they have had with the representatives of Company X's designing department has been very little. They have communicated mainly via phone, e-mail or physical meetings. The projects, in which a designer has been actively participated, also after the X Center events, have been more successful.

According to the employees, only the sales manager responsible for the customers has been in contact with the customer before gathering in X Center. The sales manager and the customer define together the problem that has to be solved, as well as the start time for the project, participants and rough schedule for the implementation of the project. Most of the employees think that the initial information they have received from the sales manager are often insufficient. According to the employees, it would be useful if other project group members who have an important role in the project could participate in the initial meetings. After the discussions, the sales manager sends an electronic invitation to all members of the project group. The subject and schedule of the project, as well as the participants, are mentioned in the invitation. Most of the project group members have to find out themselves information on the customer that they will meet. They search information e.g. by using the internet. The next project stage is the physical meeting

with the customers at an agreed time in X Center. The employees describe that after the physical X Center event, the members of the project group start their personal actions agreed in the workshops. Usually at this point, the employees are working on physical models for the customers to be tested, unless they have already finished the first models for the customers during the workshop. Most of the employees have been, at this point of the project, in direct contact by e-mail and phone with the customer's packaging development person before the customer approves the final form of the model. The employees stress the importance of giving real-time information to the sales manager who leads the project. Thus, the sales manager is kept informed about the state of the designing. Consequently, the employees experience that all but the sales managers do not have any information about the progress of the project. The employees do not think that the sales manager informs them enough on the final ending of the project or if the model created during the project goes into production.

A value of a customer experience for the customer can be defined as the difference between received benefits and made sacrifices. The value of the experience equals the benefit if there are not any sacrifices. On the contrary the value of the experience is unequal to the benefit when the amount of sacrifices is remarkable. (Kuusela & Rintamäki 2002, 133.) Soudagar, Iyer and Hildebrand (2012, 7-8) notice that even superior customer experiences can be created by doing just small right things for the customer.

The aims set for the X Center projects have in most cases remained unfinished. Most of the customers reckon that the reason why the aims have not been achieved is Company X's poor aftercare provided after the workshops. According to the customers, the aims intended for finding new ideas are rather often achieved, but they are not often processed into concrete products. Some customers think that the set aims have been achieved completely. On the whole, the customers experience that the aims are achieved to a variable extent because the levels of the set aims vary significantly from one project to another.

The majority of the employees cannot comment on how the aims related to the whole process have been achieved because they often do not receive any infor-

mation on the final result of the project. Most of the employees think, however, that the aims set for the projects have been achieved for the parts that relate directly to their own personal work contributions in the projects. According to the employees, the set aims have not often been specified precisely or they are otherwise unclear.

5.6 General and first impression

In order to achieve success companies need first to sell their expertise and excellence to the customer. After giving this positive and convincing first impression of the company, the provided products and services will be experienced more valuable than originally. (Apunen & Parantainen, 2011, 15-37.)

The customers' first impressions of X Center are mainly neutral or positive. A clear contrast between the modern X Center and some other old-fashioned factory building is the first surprising observation. The packaging references set on display in the premises attract strongly the attention of nearly all customers at the beginning by arousing the feeling of interest. For some customers, the simplicity and cleanliness of the premises has affected their first impression of X Center positively. According to some customers, the labyrinthine route leading to the premises has had a slightly negative effect on their first impression of X Center.

The employees' first impressions of X Center are positive. Upon entering into X Center, the premises cause a strong contrast between the modern and inspiring X Center and some other old, conventional and grey factory building. Cozy couch sets and modern meeting premises create a relaxed starting point for innovating activities. Nearly all employees experience that the displayed packaging references are strongly noticeable upon entering the premises.

A general impression of a company or an organization plays a major role in experience creation. Customer's original expectations and emotions may become overran by the general impression. This means that the real features or properties of

personalities, products or services may get easily mixed and blurred because of the positive general impression of the company or the organization. (Apunen & Parantainen, 2011, 15-37.)

The customers' general impressions of the X Center concept and the physical premises are positive. Most of the customers experience that the concept is necessary and worth of developing further. The customers experience that the staff's ability to create a positive, innovative and relaxed atmosphere is the most important single factor affecting their impression of the whole concept. According to the costumers, the concept should be utilized only in such projects that are demanding and require the participation of several interest group members. The concept is too heavy to be used for small and simple projects. The concept reminds the customers of efficiency because the concept enables that several experts can be gathered to work simultaneously in one place. The concept creates a good learning environment for packaging designing both for professionals and for beginners. The customers experience that both the concept and the premises provide good opportunities for creating innovative solutions. The majority of the customers experience that the division of X Center into a meeting segment and showroom premises is a factor that is positive and creates clarity. The customers also mention the importance of displayed packaging references in X Center when the customers have their first impression of X Center. The packaging references are, according to the customers, some of the most important factors in utilizing X Center and finding new ideas. Some customers that have worked in global projects are impressed by the opportunities for having video discussions between different X Center premises located in different countries. According to these customers, the identical appearance of the premises creates a consistent discussion atmosphere, regardless of the physical location.

The employees' general impression of the X Center is positive on the whole. The concept represents the same old core competence and the service that the company representatives have always provided to their customers. With the birth of the X Center concept, the service is now better conceptualized. The positive attitude of the staff towards the customers, as well as the ability to create a relaxed and cozy atmosphere, has a significant effect on the impression of the concept. The concept is

suitable, in particular, for challenging design projects in which several persons both from the customer's and the company's side participate. The employees experience that the concept enables better efficiency and significant savings of time both for themselves and for their customers. Most of the employees also experience that the concept makes its users automatically more committed to each other. The process structures that are part of the concept need to be clarified and developed so that the concept would provide the best possible advantage. The modern and inspiring premises support the service concept extremely well. The employees see the premises as bright, spacious, clean and simply representative. The premises in themselves create a relaxed and an innovative atmosphere for the events. The displayed packaging references manufactured by the company can be easily noticed in the premises. The references arouse interest and give the customers new ideas and direct often on-going projects to a certain direction. Many employees think that the current placement of the displayed references is too incoherent. Therefore, the references need to be displayed according to a more coherent grouping. It is very important to renew the premises on a regular basis so that the premises remain fresh and modern in the future too.

5.7 Entertainment factors

Entertaining features in experiences can strengthen the level of commitment. Entertaining aspects in experiences can be formed by customizing services and thus provide customer-unique value. (Pine II & Gilmore 1999, 29-31; 69-72.)

There are not many entertainment factors in Design Center. Half of the customers cannot name any certain element that would make their visit in X Center more comfortable. According to the customers, the most significant entertainment factor in X Center is the displayed packaging references. Some customers also feel that the current snacks and soft drink pool are significant entertainment factors. A few customers see the couch sets in the premises as clearly an entertainment factor. Nearly all customers would like to have more entertainment factors in X Center. The majority of the customers wish that the use of 3D technology would increase.

The customers see this as a very important factor in terms of increasing the entertainment factors. The majority of the customers wish to see in the premises also more other packaging companies' physical packaging references from around the world, especially those ones that Company X can also manufacture if needed. In addition to physical models, several customers wish to have a handicraft corner where it is possible for them to model new innovations also by hand. Several customers wish that the contents of the served snacks would be more diverse. Especially fresh and healthy snacks are preferred. Some customers wish that the current projectors would be replaced with large screens and that more active program would be provided during the breaks.

Out of the entertainment factors in X Center, the employees mention the displayed packaging references, especially the ones that have been awarded. Cozy couches and seats give the customers a chance to relax, for example during the breaks. The premises in themselves are spacious which enable free movement there. The employees experience that the regularly served snacks and the open soft drink pool have a significant effect on the customers' comfortability during a long working session. The employees would like to have more entertainment factors in X Center. Also in the future, the company should definitely invest more in the developing 3D technology. The technology has a significant entertainment value for the customers. The employees wish to have more diverse and better-quality snacks, e.g. something fresh and light. The employees think that it is worth trying to create a neutral sound world in X Center. The background music could be nature sound, for example. During the breaks, the sound world could be something more powerful, for example music. According to the employees, the old video projectors should be changed into modern large screens. In addition, the employees wish that the company would acquire a proper sound system. Different kinds of handicraft corners would be very practical because they would provide opportunities to concretely innovate with their own hands together with the customers. The displayed shop shelf with its packaging references is not a sufficient shop environment simulator. The employees would like to see, for example, a small-scale mini market view in the premises. During the breaks, the employees would like to have some kind of activity that enables exercise, for example playful games or quizzes. During the playful games, blood circulation becomes more active and the feeling

of togetherness increases. The employees would also like to have different kinds of game simulators as entertainment during the breaks. Approximately half of the employees think that another positive entertainment factor would be if also other packaging companies' innovative solutions were displayed in X Center. With regard to these solutions, those should be such that Company X can also implement if needed.

5.8 SXXXXry stimulation

Boswijk (2012, 57-59) notices that the function of all five senses forms people's knowledge of their surroundings. Therefore, companies cannot underestimate the impact of the perceptions, created by all five senses, on customers' emotions and experiences. It is vital to understand that people rarely feel a single emotion but a combination of emotions. Hence, the sum of senses stimulates different emotions and thus has a major effect on experiences.

According to the customers and the employees, the most stimulated senses in the X Center events are sight, touch and hearing. The customers experience that all five senses are stimulated during the X Center events. Some of the senses are stimulated more than the others. The stimulation of the senses of smell and taste during the working is very little, but they have a significant role staging the experience.

According to the employees, all five senses are stimulated during the events. Some of the senses are sometimes stimulated indirectly, such as the sense of smell when the premises have been cleaned and there are not any unpleasant smells. Correspondingly, the smell of the coffee served in connection with the snack serving can stimulate the sense of smell directly.

In order to strengthen an experience, all five senses of a human being need to be utilized. Pine II and Gilmore (1999, 59-61) present that the more sXXXXry the experience is, the more memorable it will be. Shaw, Dibeehi and Walden (Shaw et

al. 2010, 3) also accentuate the consequence of all five senses as they need to be considered when designing an intentional customer experience.

The majority of the customers feel that the overall stimulation of all five senses during the experience is important. According to the customers, some of the senses do not have to be stimulated all the time during the whole experience, but it is important to have all senses stimulated at least in some part of the experience. The majority of the customers believe that positive experiences are created by the sum of all senses. The customers expect that all senses can be used in X Center as comprehensively as possible. The sense of touch can be exploited by providing enough innovative packaging references to be touched and tested by hands. The importance of the air conditioning is emphasized by the customers to a great extent in terms of the sense of touch. The sense of sight should be stimulated by using a visually exciting and light work space. The importance of the displayed packaging references is very high also with regard to sight. The packaging references should be impressive and distinctive from other mass so that they are clearly noticed by means of the sense of sight. The importance of the cleanliness in the premises is crucially important with regard to the sense of smell. X Center should be fresh and well air-conditioned in order to avoid undesirable smells. The possible use of fragrances in the premises divides the customers' opinions powerfully. Approximately half of the customers think that the use of fragrances X Center is worth trying. The rest of the customers experiences that fragrances are unpleasant. Nearly all customers experience that creating a sound world in X Center for the background of the working is worth trying. In order to stimulate the hearing, neutral sounds that do not disturb the concentration should be used. The customers mention that different sounds of nature are extra interesting alternatives. The diversity and freshness of the snacks served in X Center are crucial with regard to exploiting the sense of smell and taste.

According to the employees, it is essential and important to exploit all five senses when staging the experiences. A single sXXXXry matter that has nothing to do with the actual core need can leave a positive memory track. According to the employees, senses should be exploited and stimulated in X Center as diversity as possible. In order to exploit the sense of hearing, it is absolutely worth trying to

create a peaceful sound of nature as the background for the working, as well as using more powerful music during the breaks. In order to stimulate the sense of touch, the company should provide as many physical packaging references as possible to the customers to be touched and shaped. When exploiting the sense of sight, the premises should be clean, light and visually inspiring. The sense of hearing should be taken into account by means of flowing and rewarding communication and interaction. The sense of smell can be exploited by serving good-smelling coffee and by avoiding unpleasant smells by taking care of the cleanliness. Several employees also think that using customized fragrances in X Center would also be worth trying. The sense of taste should be exploited by serving diverse and tasting snacks.

5.9 Interaction levels

Work can be seen as a theatre where every single employee, no matter on which organizational level, has its own role and acts according to that role in order to turn every interaction with a customer into an experience. (Pine II & Gilmore 1999, 103-108.)

Nearly all customers experience that they have had enough opportunities to participate and interact during the X Center events. According to the customers, they and their opinions have been taken into consideration particularly well during the workshops.

The employees experience that they have given their customers plenty of opportunities to participate and interact in X Center. According to the employees, they usually let their customers direct powerfully their projects from the initial stages onwards. The employees think that one of the best features in the X Center concept is designing and working together. This means that every participant's opinions are taken into consideration. Only the events that took place during the initial stages in the launch of the concept did not give the customers

enough opportunities to interact. Therefore, the events consisted more of feeding data to the customers than of shared discussions.

Positive experiences create loyalty. Instead, a customer who has suffered stressful or frustrating experiences will change a company in most cases at once a better option presents itself. (Soudagar et al.2012, 7.)

The interaction situations in X Center have been rewarding for the customers. The customers feel that they have enough reasons to the opinions of Company X's representatives also in conflicting situations. Some customers think the interaction situations have also been educational. However, the customers are disappointed with the interaction situations that have occurred after the events held in X Center.

The employees assume that the customers have experienced that the interaction situations with the employees in X Center have been rewarding. Some employees believe that the customers have occasionally seen the interaction situations also as frustrating, especially in the first events after the launch of the concept.

Mattinen (2006, 10) defines a customer empathy as a sum of listening and reacting on customer's needs. Leppänen (2007, 72) highlights the importance of listening to the customers. In order to satisfy the customers, the companies must collect information and know what customers expect from them. The more companies are listening the more they know about their customers. With this knowledge, companies can measure and do the right things instead of guessing.

The majority of the customers experience that the Company X's representatives listen to them genuinely during the X Center events. The customers see this as a very important matter with regard to a functioning business relationship. Some customers think that this is one of Company X's absolute strong points.

The employees assume that the customers have mainly experienced that they have genuinely listened to the customers' hopes and needs. Some employees believe that there also cases where the customers have not felt like this.

Timm (2008, 129) emphasizes the importance of the first responses to customer's feedback in order to convey openness. Arussy (2010, 252-258) reminds that old data is worthless because it does not allow a company to react to needed changes on time.

The customers think that the Company X's representatives have given them all the answers related to the X Center projects without undue delay. The majority of the customers experience that occasionally they have waited too long for the answers.

The employees have mainly experienced that they have been able to give the customers the answers to the questions presented in X Center without undue delay. According to the employees, certain questions related to global projects have occasionally required an undue long time for the answer. According to the employees, the risk for that the answers are provided with undue delay or not at all lies in the poor-quality documentation of the events.

5.10 Profitability

Arussy (2010, 5-6) emphasizes the profitable side of a customer experience. Companies can observe the financial impact of successful customer experiences as increased bottom-line profits. Profitability is the ultimate reason for creating excellent customer experiences. Löytänä and Korteso (2011, 12-13) presents that the profitability of the company can be seen as a straight proportional with the value that the company can provide to its customers. The goal of customer experience management is to create remarkable experiences and thus provide added value to its customers in order to increase company's profitability.

The majority of the customers do not experience that their profits have increased by means of the X Center concept. The majority of the customers experience that the outcomes of the projects have been non-existing or unfinished. Unaccepted outcomes cannot be exploited as new commercial products. Some customers have not participated in the actual workshops so in these cases it has not been appropri-

ate to search for opportunities to increase the productivity. A few customers think that they have clearly got more profits by means of X Center. All customers believe that they can achieve financial benefits by means of X Center in the future. According to the customers, it is very difficult to evaluate in advance the financial benefits that can be possibly achieved via the X Center process. Most of the customers experience that cost savings are often easy to calculate and specify as a result of the X Center process. Possible overall advantages to financial figures are, however, difficult to evaluate in advance according to all customers. Some customers experience that the X Center enables them to produce sample lots that form the base for concluding how a possible change affects the final sales figures. According to the customers, defining and calculating possible financial benefits requires very strong trust between them and Company X.

All employees strongly believe that the customers have got more profits by utilizing X Center. Half of the employees mention that they know for certain that the customers have increased their profits by using the concept. According to the employees, the customers have earned more profits as a result of cost savings and other factors. The employees also think that customers' productivity can be improved either by using new concrete packaging solutions the concept enables or by using the valuable information provided by the networks created during the concept. According to the employees, it is generally difficult or very difficult to evaluate in advance the financial advantages that the customers can possibly achieve by means of the X Center project. Certain clear cost saving calculations, for instance in conjunction with the decrease of basic raw material, are easy to calculate. Nevertheless, evaluating financial overall effects is often impossible according to the employees. The employees experience that a possible ability to better present the customers' financial advantages in the initial stages of the project would be very significant in terms of the customer's commitment.

According to Arussy (2010, 64-67) the expanded experience includes elements which create added value for a product or service. These added values can provide either direct or indirect benefits around the core experience. Ojasalo (1999, 149) states that by providing some extra benefits for the customers, which can be free of charge, and be seen as added values, companies can actually create a cost-efficient way of strengthening the relationship. Löytänä and Korteso (2011, 32-

34) complement this view by presenting that the value adding makes often the difference between successful brands and the others. The added value might be just a simple element which provides unexpected and positive feelings to its user.

According to the customers, the X Center concept enables other added values in addition to increased productivity. According to the customers, the concept provides them an excellent opportunity to create new valuable contacts and networks with different experts. Nearly all customers experience that the concept enables considerable time saving and efficiency in the project working. By means of the concept, the employees can learn lots of new things about packaging design and different operations models in the packaging industry in general. According to the customers, the concept can be used for achieving packages that are more impressive and that function better technically. At their best, these packages are more innovative solutions compared to those of their competitors. The concept is at its best also a functioning channel for the customers to submit feedback to the supplier.

According to the employees, the concept also enables other added values besides increased productivity. By utilizing the concept, the customers can create new valuable contacts and networks. The employees experience that the concept also enables considerable time saving and efficiency in the project working. By working together, each participant can learn something new and develop into a better professional. Also, trust and commitment to other participants becomes stronger by cooperating and learning. As a result of using the concept, the customers' packages are more impressive and they function technically better. X Center provides a neutral and an equal environment to the customer's internal interest groups to discuss about topical matters with each other in the presence of the supplier. The concept works at its best also as an excellent channel for the customers to submit feedback to the company.

5.11 Customization

Shaw (2005, 209) highlights the importance of braveness and being different when designing new customized experiences for the customers. Soudagar (2012, 8-11.) express that people expect to get the same level customer experiences from their partners in business as well as consumers in their private lives. Therefore companies need to see their environment as people-to-people (P2P) business instead of old traditional categories such business-to-business (B2B) or business-to-consumer (B2C) environments. Treating the customers well is not enough anymore; successful companies need to offer customized, superior customer experiences.

The majority of the customers have not experienced that the X Center events are very customized. According to the customers, the events seem to be structured according to one basic concept that is provided to all participants. The majority of the customers wish that the events would be more customized, i.e. events where their own needs have been taken into account. The customers expect that Company X would present more actively packaging references from its own industry during the events. A few customers think that the events are customized enough. According to them, this is greatly affected by the packaging models that Company X has manufactured in advance and that have been set on display before the customers arrive to X Center.

The employees' experiences are divided strongly into two segments with regard to the customization of the X Center events. Approximately one half of the employees experience that the events have been planned and implemented so that they take into consideration certain needs of the customers in question. The other half of the employees experience that the events have been rather generic when compared to one another. The expectations of the employees are also divided strongly into two segments when they evaluate how customized the customers see the X Center events. One half of the employees assume that the events have been sufficiently customized for the customers and the other half suspects that the customers have seen the events a non-customized. The employees recognize the preparations of projects and the specification of common aims as the most important development targets in terms of improving the customization.

Shaw and Ivens (2005, 198-199) point out that the outcomes of successful customer experiences are for example; increased loyalty, improved customer retention, increased coverage, and branding with emotional values that allow a price premium.

The majority of the customers think that the outcomes created at the end of the projects are customized enough. It should be noted that most of the customers experience that the concrete outcomes are not often created at all or they are unfinished. The customers emphasize that they have evaluated in this interview such outcomes that have been ready. Over half of the customers experience that they have got a unique outcome at the end of their X Center experience. Most of the customers experience that they have got outcomes that have been at least as good. All outcomes have not been physical products, but some of them have been unique ideas for future needs. A few customers have not participated in the actual workshop in X Center so they have not got any unique outcomes.

The employees feel that the outcomes created in the projects are mainly solutions that have been customized enough. A few employees experience that all created outcomes cannot always be very customized. According to the employees, they have managed to create unique outcomes to their customers with the X Center projects. These outcomes are evidenced by international awards in the packaging industry. According to the employees, unique outcomes are not achieved very often.

5.12 Differentiation

Shaw, Dibeehi and Walden (2010, 10) point out that the accelerating globalization plays its own role in a harmonization of brands. In these increasingly markets, the experiential side of a product or a service may have a role as the key differentiator. Shaw and Ivens (2005, 137) warn that if the actual customer experience does not meet the expectation set by the brand, it will become a poor experience.

Arussy (2010, 26-27) accentuates the connection between a brand and a customer

experience. Many companies fail to live up to their brand promises because they fail to deliver and operationalize their customer experiences. There is a clear link between a customer experience framework and a brand performance platform. In order to enable employees to deliver branded customer experiences there are certain actions which must be taken. The actions are presented below (table 7).

Table 7. A brand performance platform (adapted from Arussy 2010, 26-27).

A BRAND PERFORMANCE PLATFORM

Understanding the brand and its impact on the customer.
Ensuring that the whole organization understands the performance required to fulfill the brand.
Recognizing the mission and roles to living up to the brand promise.
Empowering employees with the tools, information and authority to fulfill the brand promise.
Measuring every department against the delivery of the brand promise.
Aligning employee understanding of their role in the brand performance through customer experience delivery.
Motivating employees to execute the brand promise.
Removing all obstacles to living by the brand promise and values to free employees to perform.

The customers do not see X Center as an independent brand. According to the customers, the concept is Company X's additional value provided as part of company's service bundle. The customers experience that Company X is trying to build a brand out of X Center. The majority of the customers believe that the concept has possibilities to become a brand.

The employees do not see X Center as an independent brand, but more as a productized and free-of-charge additional service which is part of the company's service bundle. The employees believe that the concept has good opportunities to become a brand in the future.

Ying, Ayelet and Ravi (2007, 567) emphasize that companies needs to encourage their customers by enabling a creation of optimistic expectations towards their future experiences.

All customers experience that predicting future scenarios is a very important area of expertise which the packaging provider is wished to have. The customers would appreciate Company X as an expert of its industry even more if the company could provide more future scenarios to its customers. Most of the customers emphasize particularly predicting global consumer behavior and packaging trends as crucially important abilities which could help Company X to distinguish positively from its competitors. Some customers have experienced how Company X's competitors are able to provide their customers with future scenarios of the packaging industry. Company X should control its prediction better than its competitors so that it has an additional value. According to a few customers, they have themselves very comprehensive resources for the purpose of clarifying consumer behavior within its own industry. Therefore, they require that the packaging supplier would be able to provide them with future scenarios related to global packaging trends. The customers believe that abilities like these also make certain projects faster and strengthen the commitment between the companies.

The employees experience that predicting future scenarios is a very important differentiation factor in a very competitive industry. According to them, the competitors invest in this kind of competence strongly. The employees believe that skills like these strengthen their position significantly compared to their competitors if they could be provided to the customers better than the competitors provide, for example in conjunction with the X Center events. Understanding consumer behavior and predicting packaging trends are seen as crucially important abilities. The employees believe that a possible cooperation with the customers for clarifying future scenarios would be an appropriate method to make the customers more committed to the company. The employees see that the challenge in clarifying future scenarios is major customerships' very comprehensive resources for the operations in question within their industry. The employees believe that having abilities requires lots of resources and investments. The employees see the utilization of networks as a good alternative. Therefore, Company X could offer its customers services of real experts within the industry in X Center.

According to Laakso (2003, 31-65) it is very difficult to increase profitability without differentiating from other competing brands in the market. Most of com-

parable companies are providing almost identical brands and promises to their customers. Creating new brands gets more difficult all the time since the market is full of similar existing brands.

The majority of the customers experience that the X Center concept is very similar to the corresponding service concept of Company X's competitor. Some customers think that Company X has copied the concept from its competitor. The customers emphasize that the competitors develop also their concepts fast. According to the customers, Company X should now invest in the concept powerfully in order to keep it as competitive.

The employees have relatively little personal experience of the competitors' corresponding service concepts. On the basis of the feedback received from their customers, the X Center concept reminds very much of one competitor's concept. Most of the employees have received customer feedback according to which the X Center concept seems to be a copy of a concept that Company X's competitors has launched earlier. The employees wish that the concept would distinguish more clearly from their competitors' corresponding concepts in the future.

Positive experiences provide added value to the customers and this way creates competitive advantages for both parties (Arussy 2010, 45-50). The company can create value for the relationship by helping the customer to create value for itself. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 56-57.)

According to the customers, they have received several competitive advantages by using the X Center concept. The customers report that they have achieved more impressive designs for their packages. Thereby, their products have been more distinctive from their competitors' products. Also, the coverage in stores has improved. Technical improvements and new innovations have enabled that the customers experience that they are able to provide more user-friendly packages to the store staff and the end- users of their products. The customers have also managed to achieve better internal production efficiency, lower reclamation costs, as well as savings in logistic and packaging material costs. According to the customers, their sales have increased thanks to better packages.

According to the employees, the customers have achieved several competitive advantages by using the X Center concept. The employees report that their customers have achieved more impressive designs for their packages. Thereby, their products have been more distinctive from the competitors' products. Also, the coverage in stores has improved. Technical improvements and new innovations have enabled that the customers have been able to provide more user-friendly packages to the store staff and the end-users of their products. In addition, the customers have managed to achieve faster production lead times, lower reclamation costs, as well as savings in logistic and packaging material costs. According to the employees, the sales of the customers have increased in several cases and the productivity has improved as a result of the new advantages. According to the employees, major customer companies' internal conflicts related to different packaging solution choices have decreased because the concept has enabled that a larger number of interest group members have been able to participate in and influence the creation processes of the designed packages.

5.13 Reliability and validity of research

Validity and reliability needs to be covered in all studies. The purpose of the study is to avoid mistakes, and to collect only as reliable and valid information as possible. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2003, 131.) Reliability describes the stability of the research results, in other words the results should always stay same even if the research is executed repeatedly. Reliability can be pointed out by achieving similar research results from two different researchers, or by showing similar results after researched the same object during different time periods. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 186; Uusitalo 1999, 84.) Validity describes the ability to measure the right object (Hirsjärvi et al. 2008, 226). A valid research needs to have properly collected and decoded data so that the conclusions precisely reflect and describe the real environment that has been studied (Yin 2011, 78).

The credibility of research depends on the trustworthiness of a researcher (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 211). The researcher needs to create a comfortable atmosphere and to build a strong connection with the interviewees. It is crucial that the researcher understands how one's presence affects the observations, interpretations and behavior of the respondents. Time is a remarkable factor when aiming to acquire trustworthy data. In order to collect trustworthy data, the researcher needs to spend enough time in interviewing and building firm relationships with the respondents. (Patton 2000, 566-567.) Researcher needs to be ready to defend and stand for one's findings in case of contest. This requires that the researcher has in-depth understanding of how the study is located in its environment, and that the collected data has truly an objective view and approach. The personal skills of researcher have a major impact on reliability and validity. It is essential to describe any personal and professional information that may have had impact on analysis, interpretation and data collection. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2003, 133; Yin 2011, 78.)

In this study the researcher worked for the case company, and thus had an intense personal connection with the study environment. Besides a strong working history with customer experience management, the researcher focused on exploring both customer experience and customer experience management for over a year by reading several books and articles of the topics. Researcher had automatically a strong personal connection with all respondents from the case company. The researcher aimed strongly to build trustworthy relationships also with the respondents from customers' side of the case company. Because of researcher's background, there were several common business acquaintances and familiar persons with the respondents which helped to create a comfortable and jovial atmosphere in the interviews. The researcher also highlighted the confidentiality of the interviews which supported a relevant data collection from the respondents. Each interview was agreed on time via phone calls or physical meetings. The researcher presented the required minimum time for each face-to-face interview already beforehand to all respondents. This approach ensured that all respondents had reserved enough time for a comprehensive interview. The objective role of the researcher was emphasized in each interview by explaining that researcher's current position in a company had no impact on the study.

Researcher needs to clearly express the progress of the whole data collection process and open the analysis methods in detail. The amount of research data needs to be comprehensive enough to be relevant. Relevancy also means that the research has a general, but most of all, a practical consequence. Researcher needs to introduce arguments for the choices and conclusions made in the research. Interpretations and findings cannot be based on just some random pickings from the data. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 213-216.)

The data used in this study was collected through semi-structured interviews which allowed a direct contact between the researcher and the interviewees. In this research, a group of case company's key customers and employees were interviewed since the researcher wanted to get as comprehensive picture of the research problem as possible. Altogether, 13 representatives of 10 key customer companies, and 10 employees of the case company were interviewed. The employees of the case company came from several departments: Sales, Business Development, Design, Production, Quality, and Product Management. It was essential to collect experiences from several viewpoints to get a holistic picture of the research problem, and in order to be able to answer to the research questions. Face-to-face interviews were held in several locations in Finland during the spring 2014. All the interviews were documented, first by recording and then by transcribing.

The researcher used both thematic analysis and clustering for analyzing the research data. In the first stage, clustering was used for dividing the respondents into two groups: the employees and the customers. In the second stage, the researcher formed certain themes on the basis of the similarities found from the data. The filtered themes were identified according to the theoretical framework. In the last stage, clustering was used again for dividing the findings of each theme between positive and negative experiences. The final conclusions were created as a sum of these analyses.

The conclusions of the study are presenting concrete development recommendations for the case company's representatives. In that sense, the research is having a practical consequence for the case company.

6 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter introduces the conclusions of the study. In paragraph 6.1, the most important key answers for the research questions are presented. Next, in paragraph 6.2, all the conclusions found from each research theme are explained. The conclusions are recommendations for developing customer experience within the X Center concept. The presented development recommendations are summarized in appendix 4. At the end of this chapter, paragraph 6.3 describes the proposals for further development and research.

6.1 The key answers for the research questions

The main research question of this study was: **How to optimize customer experience within X Center concept?** In addition, two sub-questions were addressed:

1. Which current features of X Center experience should be changed?
2. How the current features of X Center experience should be changed?

Several recommendations for optimizing customer experience were found out as results of this study. All the recommendations are listed in appendix 4. However, some of the recommendations can be recognized as the most important and relevant ones.

First of all, the company should specify in a clear manner the customer experience that is aimed to be created systematically for the customers, and make sure that every employee is certainly aware of the matter. Only after this major action, the experiences can be created without uncertainty, and the employees can create consistent customer experiences.

The company should thank, support and encourage the employees more strongly to maintain their active and open approach towards customers in X Center. This allows maintaining the comfortable and innovative atmosphere for the events cre-

ated by the representatives of the company. This also ensures employees' adequate motivation for persevering willingness to serve. Customers experience that as a key loyalty factor in X Center service. The company should also aim at providing them with more resources so that they can perform their duties.

It is recommendable to invest in selecting only complicated and demanding designing projects with the participation of several members of both interest groups to be handled via the X Center concept. Simple and routine-like projects should be left outside the concept because they are seen too heavy and resource-binding to be handled by means of the concept. The projects without clear common initial goals or insufficient initial information should be rejected more actively.

The company should enable positive outcomes from X Center processes by ensuring sufficient preparations for the projects. It is crucial to improve the specification of the common aims and structures of the projects to be started, and ensure that everyone involved in the projects are aware of the mutually agreed matters. It is recommendable to ensure more active participation of designers in the preparations. The customers experience that the presence of designers makes the definition of the initial information easier, whereas employees think that this helps considerably in gathering sufficiently comprehensive initial information. It would also be beneficial to hold systematically internal meetings preceding the workshops. This way the initial information on the projects and the agendas for the workshop days can be discussed between all internal members during these meetings. The goal of this improvement is to turn the employees' disappointments of facing unclear processes into positive and productive experiences. Also the personal touch of employees is much stronger if they have comprehensive and sufficient initial information concerning the project to be started and the related customership. It is recommendable to invest more in producing concrete, i.e. physical, outcomes, as well as concrete packaging models manufactured in advance during the preparations of the project. Concrete solutions are precisely seen as the highlights of the X Center experiences.

Not only the preparation phase of the project needs to be re-thought, but the company should also invest more in the completion of the projects and in the related

after work. The aim of this action is to turn the customers' disappointments of facing a poor after-care into positive experiences. It is recommendable to create a procedure according to which the project manager should systematically return to the outcomes of the projects together with the customers after a certain time period from the conclusion of the projects. In addition, the company should develop better channels for submitting feedback on the finished projects in order to gather systematically comments from the customers and the end-users. By using the gathered data, the company can learn something new from these comments and also make calculations that can be presented as references when new projects are starting. This way the customer's loyalty can be further increased by means of their X Center experiences. The loyalty can be strengthened by creating the customers more excellent outcomes at the end of the projects as well as better after-care for the processes.

It is recommendable to invest more in presenting concrete examples of how the X Center concept can be used and the advantages that the concept enables. Before starting the processes, present more systematically, especially for the new customers of the concept, all the opportunities that can be utilized by means of the concept. In addition, the company should share more actively concrete success stories achieved by means of the concept. This performance can turn customers' uncertainty of concept's possibilities into positive experiences. It also proves that the customers' expectations can be exceeded and increases the loyalty of the customers. The share of concrete success stories also strengthens the company's image as an innovative supplier. Besides the general success stories, it is recommendable to present some calculations where the customers who have utilized X Center have managed to increase their profit level. These presentations would help the customers to evaluate possible financial advantages, which the concept enables, especially in the initial stages of the projects.

A better documentation of mutually agreed things with the customers is highly recommendable. The company should invest considerably more in the documentation of both the project preparations and the actions agreed during the workshops, and specify the common goals, schedules, responsibilities and feedback channels in a clear manner. A proper documentation would help the customers to monitor

the contribution and engagement of each project group member in order to implement the agreed actions. Employees could better monitor the actions expected from them and be more engaged in creating the projects when they understand the importance of their own roles in the whole process. It would also ensure that the projects would be finished and the communication with the customers would get more active. The communication channels, and the persons to be communicated with, would be clarified during the projects. After the projects have been completed, the company should make a common summary and share it to all members of the project group. With this operational model all participants could get an overall picture of the finished projects and the related outcomes.

The company should express more clearly the responsibilities of each participant, as well as the required equipment at a desired time. In addition, the internal operations models and persons in charge of global projects should be specified more clearly. Also the backup person for the project manager should be always presented to the whole project group. The aim of these actions is to ensure that all project group members know what is expected, and to fix the faced problems related to the delayed actions and the complexity of global assignments. In addition, these improvements ensure that all project group members know who is taking full responsibility of leading the process.

It is highly recommendable to make and start using a global check list where the basic starting points of the processes are specified before the projects or events are started. By following the check list, the project managers can go through the basic variables that should be taken into consideration when starting projects. Thus, more consistent-like events can be arranged, regardless of the project manager or the geographical location of X Center.

There are not enough entertainment factors available in X Center. The company should definitely invest in adding more entertainment factors into X Center. The aim of this action is to provide enough elements that make the customers enjoy their stay in X Center more, also after a heavy work session. The company should invest in using the 3D technology more strongly. Customers expect that the company is providing the advantages enabled by the 3D technology in X Center. The

company should also update the packaging references more regularly and display them with more coherent style. These actions would help to make a great first impression, as the customers' first impression is effected strongly by the displayed packaging references. It is recommendable to add a neutral background sound, such as a sound of nature, during the workshops in X Center. In addition, some music could be added to relax the atmosphere during the brakes. It is extremely important to concentrate more strongly on evoking the stimulation of all five senses at least in some part of the experience. This way it is possible to stage holistic experiences which are absolutely created by the sum of all senses.

More representatives of the customers' different departments, as well as the company's own experts should be invited to the X Center events. It is also recommendable to have external expert partners participated more actively in the events. The aim of this action is to strengthen customers' general impressions of X Center as an excellent place to learn new, to network with other experts, and to save time, as well as, to increase the efficiency in project working.

The company should create common model cases, specified for all major customer segments, which can be utilized in all X Center locations. The aim of this action is to provide customized events, as the current ones are too often seen as events that have been structured according to a certain basic concept which is provided to all participants in X Center.

It is highly recommendable to invest more in clarifying future scenarios, especially global consumer behavior and packaging trends, and presenting them to the customers. These competences could help in distinguishing positively from the competitors, as customers expect this kind of expertise from their packaging provider.

6.2 Conclusions of the study

The aspect of emotions and expectations:

Both the employees of Company X and the customers experience that the X Center events have a strong personal touch. The participants should participate in the working more actively than now. The company should ensure that the customers can more actively participate concretely in the design work. The company should provide more opportunities for working with hands because several respondents think the personal touch is the result of their own concrete contribution. The representatives of the company have been able to create a very comfortable and innovative atmosphere for the events. The company should support and encourage its employees to maintain their active and open approach. The employees of the company experience, without exception, that the events have a stronger personal touch if they have comprehensive and sufficient initial information concerning the project to be started and the related customership. The company should invest in sharing more sufficient initial information to all the participant members of the project group. In the events where the sole purpose is to present how X Center can be used or to present the company generally, it is recommended to present the customers such a fictional problem-solving case that concerns them. This enables that events with a stronger personal touch can be created for the customers.

The X Center concept is recommended to be used for demanding design work where the participation of several members of interest groups, both from Company X's and the customer's side, is required. In the future, the company should invest in selecting only projects like these to be handled via the X Center concept. Simple and routine-like projects should be left outside the concept because both the company's employees and the customers see them as too heavy and resource-binding to be handled by means of the concept. The company's employees do not recommend the concept to be used if the company and the customers have not set clear common initial goals for the projects or the provided initial information is insufficient. This is another reason why the company should ensure that the common aims and initial information of the X Center projects are better specified and presented to each member of the project group in the future. The customers think

that the utilization of outside expert services in X Center is very rewarding. The company should more strongly than now market the possibility to utilize outside expert partners in conjunction with the X Center projects.

The highlights that the customers and the company's employees have had during the X Center experiences are often related to the concrete advantages achieved in the projects. The company should invest more in producing concrete, i.e. physical, outcomes, as well as concrete packaging models manufactured in advance during the preparations of the project. Good ideas invented during the workshops receive praise from the customers. However, concrete solutions are seen as highlights of the X Center experience. The biggest disappointment related to the customers' X Center experiences has been Company X's poor performance after the workshops. In the future, the company should invest more in the completion of the projects and in the related after work. The disappointments that the company's employees have had are often related to poor-quality initial information on the projects and to unclear aims. The employees believe that these insufficient factors often lead to situations where concrete outcomes are not achieved in the projects. The company should see to that the structures and common aims of the X Center processes are specified better in the future. The customers are also disappointed with the shortage of concrete examples describing the utilization of the X Center service. In the future, the company should invest more in presenting concrete examples of how the X Center concept can be used and the advantages that the concept enables. The company should also increase the number of the packages displayed in X Center.

The customers' experiences related to the endings of X Center experiences vary heavily from positive to negative. The customers reckon that the negative endings are greatly affected by the poor aftercare that Company X provides for the projects, as well as the lack of concrete outcomes. The negative endings experienced by the company's employees are related to breakdowns in communication on the stages of the projects after the workshop days. These experiences also indicate that the company should invest more in the aftercare provided for the projects after the workshops. By improving the specification of the structures and common

aims, the company could increase the number of concrete outcomes in the X Center projects.

The X Center experiences have caused both positive and negative emotions in all participants. The positive emotions experienced by the customers are mainly related to the middle stage of the project. This means that the workshop events held in X Center are mainly seen as positive. The customers' negative emotions are most strongly related to the events occurring after the workshops. The division of the scale of the emotions that the customers have had supports the recommendation on that the company must improve its actions both in the preparations for the projects and, especially, in the stages following the workshops.

The expectations that the customers have set on their X Center experiences are usually met up until the workshop days. After the workshop days, the customers' expectations are not often met anymore. The expectations set by the company's employees are also met mainly up until the workshop days. The fact that the expectations are met only up until the workshop days reflects the company's need to focus, in the future, on improving the actions following the workshop days are performed.

The expectations that the customers have set on their experiences can be exceeded by creating them more concrete outcomes at the end of the projects. This is another reason why the company should better than now specify the common aims and structures of the projects to be started, as well as ensuring that everyone involved in the projects are aware of the mutually agreed matters. By directing the projects this way, the number of concrete outcomes will be increased. In order to meet the customers' expectations, the company should present more global packaging references in X Center, as well as sharing success stories achieved by means of the concept. In accordance with the customers' wishes, the company should also display packaging references of innovations that are created by Company X's competitors, but which Company X is also able to manufacture to its customers, if needed. The company should consider building a handicraft corner in X Center so that the customers can participate in the design work by using concretely their hands. The company should also consider using X Center in social events in

which several customers would participate at the same time to resolve their packaging-related problems together with Company X's experts.

The customers and Company X's employees see that the X Center concept becoming subject to charge is a negative alternative. The concept should remain, for the time being, as a free-of-charge additional service, provided as part of the company's service bundle. The X Center service becoming subject to charge would very likely lower the usage rate of the concept, as well as the customer's threshold to search for corresponding service from Company X's competitors. In the future, after more concrete success stories have been achieved by means of the concept, it is possible to consider introducing gradually some kind of charge for the concept.

The aspect of loyalty:

The customers experience that the utilization of the X Center concept have increased their loyalty towards Company X. The customers emphasize, in particular, the effects of the company staff's positive performance on their increased loyalty. The company should support and encourage its employees' current open and friendly operations model in conjunction with the workshops. The company should more often thank its employees for a good job because positive feedback received only from the customers is not an adequate motivator for persevering willingness to serve.

The customer's loyalty can be further increased by means of their X Center experiences. The loyalty can be strengthened by creating the customers more excellent outcomes at the end of the projects. This is another reason why the company must improve the specification of the common aims and structures of the projects to be started, as well as ensuring that everyone involved in the projects are aware of the mutually agreed matters. The customers' loyalty could also be increased to a considerable extent if Company X improved its aftercare for the projects. Also in terms of making the loyalty stronger, the company should pay more attention to the actions after the workshops, as well as to monitoring them. In addition, the customers experience that their loyalty would become stronger if they learned to know more representatives of Company X's different departments. The customers

also wish that they could work repeatedly with the same company representatives they know. The company should have more representatives from different departments participating in X Center projects. It is also recommended to invite more representatives from the customers' side to the projects. Therefore, more touch points can be created between different companies. In addition to this, the company should see to that the customers who participate in the X Center projects have as often as possible the same representatives from Company X working with them. It is worth having, more clearly than now, own key account working teams for the most important customerships. Success stories achieved by means of the X Center concept should be shared more actively to the customers because they think that these stories increase their loyalty towards Company X.

The aspect of touch points:

None of the interviewed respondents can specify the customer experience that Company X tries to create for its customers. The employees of the company are not aware what kind of customer experience they should aim at creating for their customers at each point. The employees use their own consideration case-by-case when creating experiences. The interviewed customers did not recognize what kind of experience the company has aimed at creating for them during different stages of the processes. The customers do not think that creating experiences belongs to Company X's strengths. The company should definitely specify in a clear manner the customer experience that it aims at creating systematically for its customers. The company should also make sure that every employee is certainly aware of the matter. Thereby, the experiences can be created without uncertainty, and the representatives of the company can create consistent customer experiences.

The encounters during the preparations of the X Center processes have often been limited to the encounters between the representatives of the customer and Company X's sales manager. The representatives of the design department should more actively participate in the preparations. The customers experience that the presence of Company X's designer makes the definition of the initial information easier, whereas Company X's employees think that this helps considerably in gather-

ing sufficiently comprehensive initial information. The employees of the company experience that the initial information received from the sales managers is often insufficient. If the company is represented in the preparations by only the sales managers, they should ensure that sufficient initial information is documented and that the information is shared to all project group members. The customers are of the opinion that the events held in X Center after the preparations are often rewarding. The company should, also in the future, ensure that representatives from as many departments as possible are present in X Center. The company should also consider using more often external expert partners. The company should support and encourage its employees to continue creating a relaxed and an innovative atmosphere in X Center. After the physical X Center meetings, the respondents are often in contact with the representatives of the company to a variable extent via various channels. The company has a lot to be improved in terms of these encounters. The projects remain often unfinished and the communication from the company to the customers is too passive. The communication channels are often unclear during the projects. Therefore, the customers are not sure with whom they should communicate. The company should invest considerably more in the documentation of both the project preparations and the actions agreed during the workshops. In terms of the projects, the company should specify the common goals, schedules, responsibilities and feedback channels in a clear manner. In addition, the company should ensure that all project group members have received and understood this information. The project managers should also better see to that all the company's internal members of the project group are aware how the project progresses. The company should also be more actively in contact with the customers and keep them informed of the stages of the projects. In addition to these, the company should give its customers more opportunities for submitting feedback during the whole process.

The aspect of staff performance:

The customers experience that the employees of Company X are strongly engaged in staging positive experiences only up until the end of the workshops held in X Center. After this, the customers feel that the engagement decreases which is indicated by several unfinished projects. The employees experience that they are en-

gaged to stage positive experiences for their customers throughout the whole process if they reckon that they genuinely have opportunities to influence on the progress of the project. In the future, the company must document better all the things that have been mutually agreed with the customer. Thus, the customers can monitor the contribution and engagement of each project group member in order to implement the agreed actions. By means of the improved documentation, also the internal members of the project group in the company can better monitor the actions expected from them and engage in them easier. The employees of the project group must be better than now informed of the significance of their contribution for each project. Thus, the employees can be more engaged in creating the projects when they understand the importance of their own roles in the whole process.

The behavior and attitude of the Company X staff receives praise from the customers. According to the customers, the strength of Company X lies in its correctly behaving staff which is capable of creating a relaxed and an innovative atmosphere in X Center. The employees of Company X are, according to the customers, primarily very helpful and active. The respondents think that the attitudes of the production representatives have occasionally been slightly more negative compared to those of the others. The employees think that the attitudes of their colleagues are positive and encouraging. Occasional stress situations and the lack of resources within the company have not been visible to the customers. The company should support and encourage its employees to continue on the same representative line. The production representatives should be reminded of and trained how important the customer encounters are for the whole company. The company should remember to thank its employees more often for good performances and aim at providing them with more resources than now so that they can perform their duties.

The customers and the Company X employees experience that the employees of the company are sufficiently empowered to perform all the domestic actions that come into existence during the X Center projects. Despite of this, the delayed actions with regard to the agreed schedules and the complexity of global assignments are seen as problems. The customers suspect that the delays are caused by

the lack of resources in Company X's design department. The employees of the company often experience lack of resources. As a result, workloads are often heavy and the expected actions are delayed. The employees reckon that the factors affecting the delays most are unclear aims set for the projects and unrealistic schedules. In terms of the projects to be started, the company should considerably improve the specification of the aims, schedules, responsibilities and feedback channels so that the agreed actions can be implemented in the best possible way. The specified initial information should also be documented and shared to all members of the project group so that they can better perceive the schedules and the actions they are expected to perform. The company should investigate its current design resources and perform the required actions in order to increase the resources. In addition, the company should specify, in a clearer manner, internal operations models and persons in charge of global projects.

The customers experience that Company X must improve its innovativeness, although they reckon that the employees of the company are relatively innovative players in the packaging industry. The company should aim at decreasing its internal bureaucracy as much as possible so that the designers' energy can be channeled more to the actual innovation. The employees of Company X experience that they are innovative players within their own industry. They believe that their customers feel the same. The company should focus more on improving and diversifying its external marketing. The company should also invest more in creating the image of innovativeness and, more importantly, it should be done more systematically than now. Company X has received several international awards for its packaging innovativeness, but it has not managed to share these success stories actively enough. The company should more actively and bravely share global success stories it has achieved by means of X Center. The company should tell its customers about these success stories, for example in conjunction with the events held in X Center.

The customers experience that they have received enough support from Company X for their decision making. The customers do not need too active guidance from Company X, but they expect that they receive sufficient facts from experts in the packaging industry. The company should continue on its current line which sup-

ports and, if necessary, guides the customer. During the X Center projects, the influence on the customers' decision making should not be too active.

The aspect of process structures and aims:

Both the customers and the company's employees think that the structures of the current X Center processes need to be changed. In addition to clarifying the structures, the common aims set for the processes should be specified considerably better than now. Before starting the processes, the company must more systematically present, especially for the new customers of the concept, all the opportunities that can be utilized by means of the X Center concept. The company should make and start using a global check list where the basic starting points of the processes are specified before the projects or events are started. By using the check list, the project manager can go through the basic variables that should be taken into consideration when starting projects. Thus, more consistent-like events can be arranged, regardless of the project manager or the geographical location of X Center. In the initial stages of the processes, the company should pay more attention to the preparations. Along with the sales managers responsible for the customers, the representatives of the designing department should also have a more active role in the preparations. The presence of the designers makes, according to the customers, listing the variables essential to the projects easier. In addition, it helps the employees of Company X to obtain initial information. The common aims, schedules, responsibility areas and the channels for submitting feedback should be specified during the preparations clearly better than now. The mutually specified initial information should be documented and informed to all project work group members. Besides the documentation and information sharing, the project manager should also ensure that each member of the work group has understood the mutually agreed things.

The schedules and agendas for the workshop days held in X Center are often too unclear. The project manager should see to that the invitations are sent and that the schedules and agendas are carefully made. The invitations should be sent in good time so that everyone who has been invited has enough time to react and, if necessary, ask for further information. When making the agendas and schedules, it

is recommended to ensure that all the internal interest group members who have been invited are available at the time in question. The agenda should have breaks that are long enough so that the events are rhythmically as fluent as possible. In addition, the agenda must clearly indicate the responsibilities of each participant, as well as the required equipment at a desired time. The company should more often have internal meetings preceding the workshops. The initial information on the projects and the agendas for the workshop days can be discussed between all internal members during these meetings. The company should clearly present to the whole project group a responsible project manager and the backup person who has the full responsibility for the common project. In addition to this, the company should specify the customers the right contact persons for different project sectors so that the customers are always aware who they can contact when needed.

The project managers should consider more thoroughly the use of available resources in the X Center events. It is not rational to have an individual expert engaged in the event for a whole day if the things that are worked have nothing to do with this person's job description or contribution in the project. The project manager should ensure the documentation and that it is shared to all members of the project group, also during the progress of the project. Better documentation enables that the progress of the projects can be monitored and the agreed actions can be implemented. Better documentation is a tool for both the customers and the company's internal project group members. Thereby, the projects can be finished more carefully and systematically.

In addition to these changes, the company should ensure that its customers have better channels for submitting feedback on the finished projects. It is most desirable for the company to gather systematically via their customers the end-users' comments for their own use. The company can learn something new from these comments and they can be utilized in new projects in the future. After the projects have been completed, the project manager should make a common summary and share it to all members of the project group. Thus, all participants can get an overall picture of the finished projects and the related outcomes.

The aspect of general and first impressions:

The customers' first impression of X Center is mainly neutral or positive. The company should mark the route to X Center more clearly than now because several customers think that the route is very labyrinthine. Also the interior decorations in X Center should remain modern because the customers think that the strong contrast between the modern X Center and an otherwise old factory building is very positive. Modern and cozy couch sets in the premises create a cozy atmosphere upon arriving there. The customers' first impression of the premises is also effected strongly by the displayed packaging references. Regular update of the packaging references along with more logical display is very recommendable. Special attention should be paid to the cleanliness and tidiness of the premises because nearly all respondents think they are the most important factors affecting their first impression.

The customers' general impression of the X Center concept and the physical premises is generally positive. The concept is seen as necessary and worth of developing further. The most important single factor in giving a positive impression is the staff's ability to offer and create an innovative atmosphere in X Center. The company must support and encourage its employees to continue using the same good actions. The company should also remember to thank its employees more often than now for a good job. Therefore, the motivation of the staff can be kept on a better level. Generally, the customers experience that X Center is an excellent place to learn something new and to network with other experts. The general impression of the concept also reflects efficiency and time saving in the project working. The company should invite more representatives of the customers' different departments, as well as some of its own experts to the events. It is also recommendable to have external expert partners participated in the events. This increases significantly the opportunities for networking, engagement and learning something new. Simultaneous working of several interest group members in the shared premises increases also significantly efficiency and saved resources. The X Center premises have been divided into two sections: into a meeting segment and showroom premises. The company should keep the premises divided according the current model because the customers experience that this gives a clear and

spacious general impression of the premises. The packaging references displayed in the premises have also a strong effect on the general impression of the premises. The customers' first general impressions are another reason why the company should update the packaging references on a regular basis, as well as grouping them in a style that is more coherent than the current style. The opportunities for having video conferences between similar X Centers premises located in different countries create, according to the customers, a modern and consistent general impression of the X Center concept. The company should present and use these opportunities more actively than now.

The aspect of entertainment:

The amount of the current entertainment factors in X Center is very little, according to both the customers and the employees of the company. The entertainment factors refer to such elements that make the customers enjoy their stay in X Center more, also after a heavy work session. The respondents think that the displayed packaging references are entertainment factors to some extent. Therefore, the company should ensure the references are updated regularly and that they are grouped according to a grouping that is more consistent than now. The company should also ensure that the soft drink pool is filled on regularly and that snacks are served during the events. The couch sets in the premises should be kept and renewed on a regular basis.

More entertainment factors are required in X Center. The company should invest in using the 3D technology in the future. All respondents reckon that the advantages enabled by the 3D technology are very entertaining. Nearly all the interviewed persons think that more diverse packaging references would be very entertaining elements. The company should also consider presenting such packaging innovations that are manufactured by its competitors, but which the company can manufacture itself if needed. Several customers would like to have an opportunity to model by own hands during the workshops. The company should consider building a small handicraft corner where the customers can concretely participate in the designing work by their hands. The snacks served in X Center should be more varied than now. Instead of conventional cakes and sandwiches, the re-

spondents expect to have, in particular, light and healthy snacks. The company should pay more attention to the quality of the served snacks. Several respondents think that large and modern screens are more practical than the current projectors and that they give a more modern impression of X Center. The company should consider adding these screens to X Center. Using music during the breaks and creating background sounds in X Center is very recommendable. This requires that a more enhanced sound system is acquired and installed in the premises. The company should consider building a better shop environment simulator in X Center. The current shop shelf with its packaging references is not seen as a sufficient simulator for this purpose. For the breaks, the company should acquire some kind of game simulator that can be used for playful games which help the customers to forget for a moment their heavy job. The games also create a good team spirit between the participants. The company should improve its methods for collecting and documenting the success stories that have been achieved by means of the concept. The company should also share these stories more actively in the events held in X Center. The success stories have a significant entertainment value in the X Center environment.

The aspect of sXXXXry stimulation:

The senses stimulated by far strongest in X Center are sight, touch and hearing. Stimulating the sense of smell and taste during the working is rather little. However, they have an important role in staging the experience. According to the respondents, stimulating all five senses during the overall experience is important. The company should take into account that some senses do not have to be stimulated during the whole experience, but it is important to have all senses stimulated at least in some part of the experience. The majority of the respondents believe that positive experience is created by the sum of all senses.

The company should take into account that all senses are stimulated during the X Center experience. The company should ensure that the air-conditioning in X Center is functioning because it has a significance effect on the observations made by the sense of touch. With regard to stimulating the sense of touch, it is most important to provide physical packaging references that are more diverse than

now and that can be touched and tested. Also with regard to stimulating the sense of sight, physical packaging references that are more unique and diversity are essential. The company should pay particular attention to the lights in X Center and the visual look so that it stimulates the sense of sight the best possible way. A light space with inspiring elements keeps the participants lively and innovative. The most important thing with regard to stimulating the sense of smell is the cleanliness of the premises. The company should make sure that the premises are clean, as well as stress the project groups' duty to clean up after themselves before another project group enters into the common premises. Using artificial fragrances in X Center is not recommendable. The most important factor affecting the stimulation of the sense of hearing is correct and polite communication, as well as active interaction with the customers. Adding a neutral background sound in X Center is very recommendable. A recommended background sound could be a sound of nature that does not take the participants' attention away from the subject under discussion. During the breaks in the center, it is recommendable to add music to relax the atmosphere. With regard to stimulating the sense of taste, it is most important to ensure that the serving of snacks in X Center is regular and that the snack selection will become more diverse in the future. The company should serve, in particular, fresh, light and healthy snacks instead the current selection of cakes and sandwiches.

The aspect of interaction levels:

The company's employees provide, according to the respondents, enough opportunities to participate and interact in the events held in X Center. They experience that the company's employees also listen to them genuinely during the X Center events. The customers see this as one of Company X's absolute strong points and as a tool for functioning business relationships. Only the events in the early stages of the concept launch have not provided enough opportunities to the customers for genuine interaction. The company has learnt exemplary from its mistakes and improved its performance in terms of the interaction during the X Center events. The company should support and encourage its employees to continue on the current well-tried way. The company should remember to thank its employees more often for good work.

The respondents experience that the interaction situations with the company's employees are rewarding in the events held in X Center. Instead, the interaction situations after the X Center workshops are often seen as frustrating. This is another reason why the company should invest more in its actions taken after the workshop days. The company should definitely improve its documentation and communication on the progress of the projects. The company should show the customers clear channels and contact persons for communication and for following the projects.

The customers feel that the company's employees answer, without undue delay, to the questions raised during the X Center processes. The delays are often due to the poor-quality documentation of the events. The company should pay more attention to the documentation of the events so that all the raised questions can be discussed within the company as soon as possible. Without proper documentation, some questions may be forgot which means that the answers cannot be provided without undue delay.

The aspect of profitability:

The majority of the interviewed customers do not experience that the X Center concept have really increased their profit for the time being. The biggest reason for this is the poor-quality of the outcomes created during several projects or the fact there has not been any outcomes created at all. For this reason, the customers' X Center experiences do not either generate the profits of Company X in an optimal way. When the company produces better outcomes at the end of the projects, the level of customer experiences is improved and new innovations generate commercial benefits. All respondents believe, however, they are able to achieve financial benefits in the future by means of the concept. This is another reason why the company should focus in the future on developing the structures of the X Center processes, by taking into account the recommendations mentioned in this research.

Possible financial advantages that the X Center concept enables are difficult to evaluate in the initial stages of the projects, according to the interviewed respondents. The company should present to its customers more implemented cases where the customers who have utilized X Center have managed to increase their profit level. This requires that the company improves its documentation and after-monitoring of the projects after they have been completed. It is very recommendable to create a procedure according to which the project manager should systematically return to the outcomes of the projects together with the customers after a certain time period from the conclusion of the projects. By using the gathered data, it is possible to do calculations that can be presented as references when new projects are started.

In addition to financial advantages, the X Center concept provides also other additional values to participants. The customers generally experience that X Center is generally an excellent place to learn something new and to network with other experts. In addition to these, the concept provides significant efficiency and time saving in project working. The company should invite more representatives of the customers' different departments along with its own experts to the events. It is also very recommendable to make external expert partners participate more actively in the events. According to the customers, the concept enables excellent requirements for creating more innovative packaging solutions. These solutions enable that they can distinguish from their competitors and thereby achieve significant competitive advantages. During the X Center processes, the company should develop structures so that the projects enable the creation of more innovative outcomes to the customers. At its best, the concept is seen a good feedback channel between the customers and the company. The company should develop these channels during the project so that they are more efficient. The company should inform its customers more clearly of the right contact persons for each stage of the project, as well as informing them more actively about the stage of the project progress. At the end of the projects, the company should gather more actively feedback from its customers' about the work that has been done. X Center also provides a neutral and an equal environment to the customers' internal interest groups to discuss about the topical matters with each other in the presence of the

supplier. The company should also support and encourage its employees to continue creating a relaxed and trustworthy atmosphere in X Center.

The aspect of customization:

The X Center experiences are, according to the interviewed participants, not customized enough. The events held in X Center are too often seen as events that have been structured according to a certain basic concept which is provided to all participants. The company should more actively display packaging references of the customers' industries during the events. For the customers visiting X Center, it is very recommendable to have some alternative packaging solutions displayed when the customers arrive to the events. Thus, it is possible to create a customized look especially for the customers in question in the events. The customers' experiences of the customized X Center events can be strengthened this way. Model samples made for the customers in advance require that the company improves its preliminary work for the projects and that the common aims for the projects are specified. In order to improve the preparation stage and the definition of the aims, it is highly recommendable to use the renewing model for process structures, proposed in this research. According to the interviewed respondents, the outcomes of the X Center projects have mainly been customized enough.

The aspect of differentiation:

The interviewed respondents do not experience X Center as an actual brand. According to the respondents, X Center has, however, very good opportunities to become an independent brand in the near-future. The company should further develop the concept and aim at promoting it more powerfully, if possible.

All the interviewed respondents experience predicting future scenarios is a very important area of expertise and differentiation factor which the packaging provider should have. Predicting global consumer behavior, in particular, and packaging trends is seen as crucially important ability that enable that Company X could distinguish positively from its competitors. In addition, the customers think that these kinds of abilities could make the handling of the projects faster and

strengthen their commitment to their partners who have abilities. The company should invest more than now in clarifying future scenarios and, above all, presenting them to their customers. A recommended alternative for the company is more efficient exploitation of its current networks. By exploiting expert networks more actively, the company could offer its customers services of real experts in X Center.

The interviewed employees do not have any personal experiences of the competitors' service concepts. According to the customers, the X Center concept is very similar to a service concept developed. Some respondents are of the opinion that the X Center concept has been copied directly from the company's competitor. The company should now invest more powerfully in marketing and developing the X Center concept. The concept should distinguish more clearly from the corresponding services of the company's competitors. In the future, the company should create such services for the concept that its competitors do not offer. To follow its competitors more systematically would be a very recommended action for the company.

At the end of the X Center projects, unique outcomes have been created for the company's customers. The company should invest more in that the designers maintain their motivation and cope with their workloads. The company can influence these factors by increasing designing resources and by thanking its employees more often for a good job.

According to the respondents, the customers have achieved several competitive advantages by means of the X Center concept. The X Center experiences enable that Company X can achieve more competitive advantages compared to its competitors if the company invests in developing the conceptual work and creating customer experiences in the future. The concept should distinguish more clearly from corresponding services provided by Company X's competitors. In addition, the concept should enable that more concrete outcomes are created for the customers. The specification of customer experiences and its implementation to the employees of the company is very important so that the company will be able in

the future to create such customer experiences that are consistent and that exceed expectations.

6.3 Proposals for further development and research

This paragraph presents only few possible future studies for the development of the X Center concept and customer experiences. Some of these ideas were found during the execution of this research. This research can be utilized as a basic study for several future researches.

The first suggestion for the future study would be finding out how to define and implement the ideal customer experience that Company X wants to systematically deliver for the customers. This study would also describe the needed actions to be taken in order to ensure that every employee is certainly aware of the matter.

The second suggestion would be investigating how to optimize the external marketing in order to create an innovative image of the company. This study would focus on the ways and practices how to ensure external stakeholders' awareness of company's achievements and innovativeness.

The third suggestion would be solving how to create a modern workshop culture. This research would concentrate on the workshop culture related issues. The aim of this research would be finding out the factors and practices that enable establishing ideal and, most of all, modern type of workshops with the customers.

The fourth suggestion would be explaining how to create a global check-list to project managers for starting new X Center projects. This study would include a new process modelling for X Center related projects. The check-list document would be created based on the renewed process model, in which all the basic variables would be taken into consideration for starting projects. Thus, more consistent-like events can be arranged, regardless of the project manager or the geographical location of X Center.

The fifth suggestion would be examining how to utilize the latest 3D technology in design work. This study would focus on clarifying the current available 3D technologies in packaging industry. The study would also open how these technologies could be utilized in internal design work, as well as with the customers during the workshops. The potential future applications of 3D technologies would also be included in this study.

The sixth suggestion would be figuring out how to create relevant future scenarios for the customers. This study would be focusing on future prediction, especially in consumer behavior. The study would open the most suitable forecasting methods for this purpose. These scenarios could be presented during the X Center events.

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List of interviews

Customer 1
12.5.2014

Customer 2
15.5.2014

Customer 3
21.5.2014

Customer 4
22.5.2014

Customer5
22.5.2014

Customer6
23.5.2014

Customer7
28.5.2014

Customer8
28.5.2014

Customer9
28.5.2014

Customer10
28.5.2014

Customer11
10.6.2014

Customer12
12.6.2014

Customer13
16.6.2014

Employee1
2.6.2014

Employee2
2.6.2014

Employee3

2.6.2014

Employee4

2.6.2014

Employee5

2.6.2014

Employee6

5.6.2014

Employee7

9.6.2014

Employee8

9.6.2014

Employee9

11.6.2014

Employee10

23.6.2014

LIST OF APPENDICIES

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APPENDIX 3 – Company's awarded packages

APPENDIX 4 - Summary of development recommendations

APPENDIX 5 - Interview quotes

APPENDICIES

APPENDIX 1: An interview guide

EMOTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

- Has there been any personal touch during the processes?
- Is there any particular reason for recommending the X Center concept in a positive / a negative way?
- What have been the highlights / disappointments of the X Center experiences?
- Have the endings of X Center experiences been positive or negative?
- Describe the emotions during the X Center processes?
- Has the experience met the expectations?
- How would it have been able to exceed the expectations?
- What kind of impact it would have if the X Center concept was not free of charge?

LOYALTY

- How X Center experience can impact on the loyalty towards Company X?
- Has the experience increased the loyalty towards the company?

TOUCH POINTS

- What kind of encounters there have been during the processes?
- Have all Company X's employees tried to create the same kind of experience?
- Has it been clear what kind of experience had been aimed to be delivered?

STAFF PERFORMANCE

- Has the staff been consciously engaged in the process of staging the experience?
- How the staff has acted?

- Has the staff been empowered to make all the needed actions without undue delay?
- How has the attitude of the staff been?
- Have the company employees been innovative?
- Have the company employees helped to make decisions?

PROCESS STRUCTURES AND AIMS

- Have the structures and aims of the processes been clear?
- Have the agendas / schedules been clear?
- How the structure should be changed?
- How have the steps been before the X Center event?
- How have the next steps been after X Center event?
- Have the aims been achieved?

GENERAL AND FIRST IMPRESSION

- What are the most memorable and unique impressions upon entering into X Center?
- What is the general impression of X Center concept and premises?
- What influences the impressions about X Center?

ENTERTAINMENT FACTORS

- Has there been any unique entertainment provided in X Center?
- What kind of entertainment should be provided?

SXXXXRY STIMULATION

- Which senses are most stimulated in X Center?
- Is the meaning of stimulating all the senses in X Center important?
- Which senses should be stimulated and how?

INTERACTION LEVELS

- Have there been enough provided opportunities to interact?
- Have all the needed answers given without undue delay?
- Have the interactions been more rewarding or frustrating?
- Have the company representatives really listened to the hopes and needs?

PROFITABILITY

- Have participants got clearly more profits because of utilizing X Center event?
- Is it seen that X Center concept can increase the profitability?
- Is it easy to evaluate the financial benefits / outcomes related to X Center events?
- Are there any other added values provided by X Center?

CUSTOMIZATION

- Have the X Center events been made for one's specific needs?
- Have the X Center experiences been customized enough?
- Have all the needed specifications been considered?
- Have the outcomes of the event been customized enough?

DIFFERENTIATION

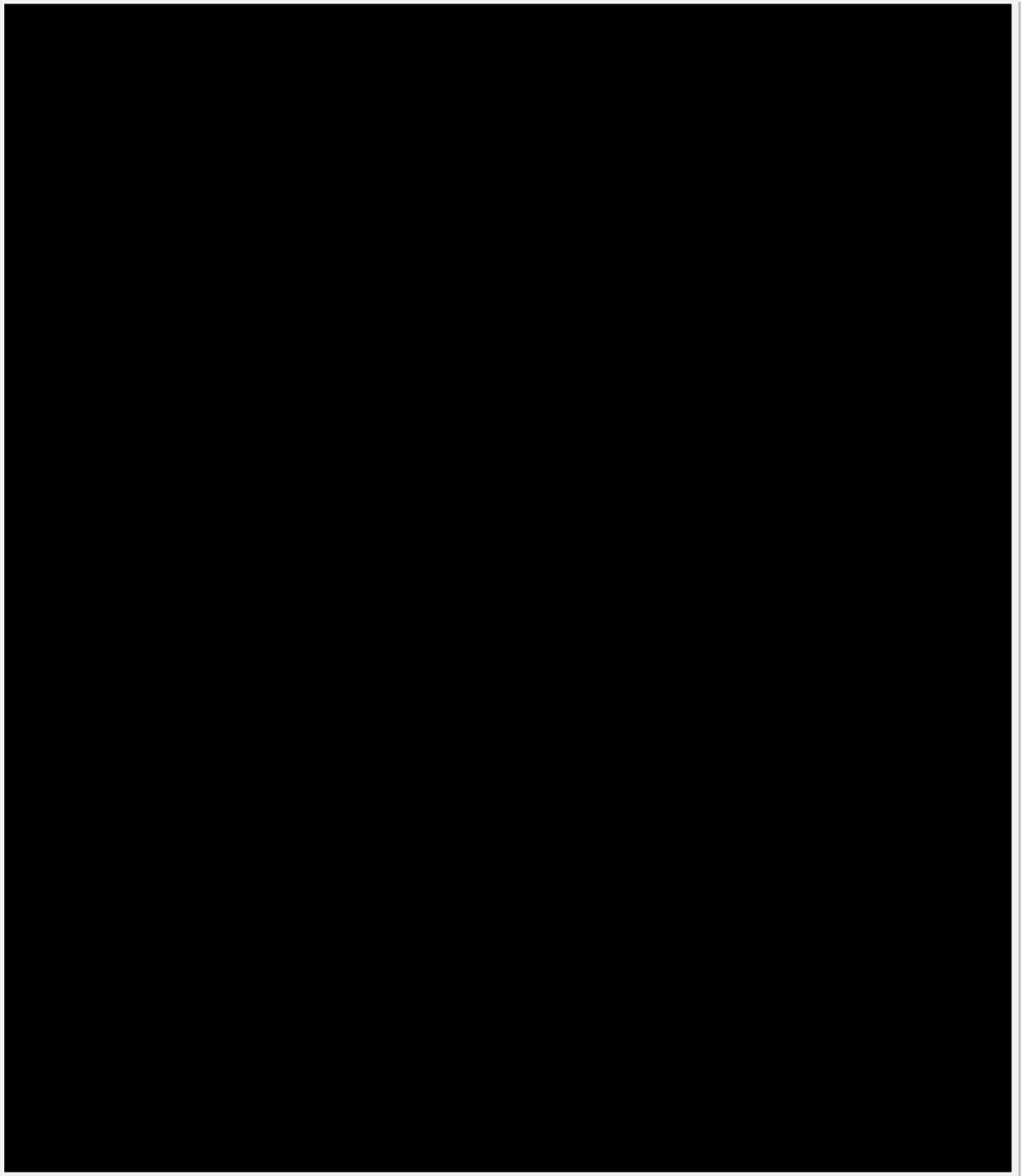
- How the X Center is seen as a brand?
- Is it important if the company is able to provide future scenarios?
- Does the X Center experience differentiate from its competitors' design service concepts?
- Have there been unique outcomes achieved during the X Center experiences?
- What kinds of competitive advantages have been achieved?

APPENDIX 2:



history

APPENDIX 3: Company X's awarded packages



APPENDIX 4: Summary of development recommendations

Aspect	Recommendation	Aim
EMOTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS	Build small ‘handicraft corners’ that allow hand-made design work.	The personal touch of customers’ is much stronger when designing with own hands.
EMOTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS	Support and encourage the employees strongly to maintain the active and open approach.	Maintaining comfortable and innovative atmosphere for the events created by the representatives of the company.
EMOTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS	Invest in sharing more sufficient initial information to all the participant members of the project group.	The personal touch of employees is much stronger if they have comprehensive and sufficient initial information concerning the project to be started and the related customership.
EMOTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS	Always present the customers such a fictional problem-solving case that concerns them, when presenting the features of X Center.	This enables that events with a stronger personal touch can be created for the customers.
EMOTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS	Invest in selecting only complicated and demanding designing projects with the participation of several members of both interest groups to be handled via the X Center concept.	Simple and routine-like projects should be left outside the concept because they are seen too heavy and resource-binding to be handled by means of the concept.

EMOTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS	Reject the projects without clear common initial goals or insufficient initial information.	Avoiding the unclear projects in order to prevent irrelevant outcomes.
EMOTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS	Ensure that the common aims and initial information of projects are better specified and presented to each member of the project group.	Enabling positive outcomes by ensuring sufficient preparations for the projects.
EMOTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS	Market more strongly the possibility to utilize outside expert partners in conjunction with the X Center projects.	Supporting customers' rewarding experiences of the utilization of outside expert services in X Center.
EMOTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS	Invest more in producing concrete, i.e. physical, outcomes, as well as concrete packaging models manufactured in advance during the preparations of the project.	Ensuring concrete solutions, which are seen as the highlights of the X Center experiences.
EMOTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS	Invest more in the completion of the projects and in the related after work.	Turning the customers' disappointments of facing a poor after-care into positive experiences.
EMOTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS	The structures and common aims of the processes must be specified better.	Turning the employees' disappointments of facing unclear processes into positive and productive experiences.

EMOTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS	Invest more in presenting concrete examples of how the X Center concept can be used and the advantages that the concept enables.	Turning customers' uncertainty of concept's possibilities into positive experiences.
EMOTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS	Increase the number of global packaging references displayed in X Center. Add some references that are created by Company X's competitors, but which Company X is also able to manufacture, if needed.	Responding to customers' expectations of showing more remarkable global packaging references.
EMOTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS	Share more success stories achieved by means of the concept.	Showing that the customers' expectations can be exceeded.
EMOTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS	Organize social events in which several customers would participate at the same time to resolve their problems in X Center.	Responding to customers' expectations to utilize X Center in multi-workshops with several brand owners.
EMOTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS	Maintain the concept, for the time being, as a free-of-charge additional service for the customers.	Reject the risk of lowering usage rate of the concept and customer's lowering threshold to search for corresponding service from the competitors.
LOYALTY	Thank and encourage	Ensure employees' ade-

	strongly employees' current open and friendly operations model in conjunction with the workshops.	quate motivation for persevering willingness to serve because customers experience that as a key loyalty factor in X Center service.
LOYALTY	Improve the specification of the common aims and structures of the projects to be started, and ensure that everyone involved in the projects are aware of the mutually agreed matters.	The customer's loyalty can be further increased by means of their X Center experiences. The loyalty can be strengthened by creating the customers more excellent outcomes at the end of the projects.
LOYALTY	Pay more attention to the actions after the workshops, as well as to monitoring them.	The customers' loyalty could be increased to a considerable extent if the company improved its aftercare for the projects.
LOYALTY	Invite more representatives from the customers' side to the projects, as well as own employees from several departments.	Customers' loyalty would become stronger if they learned to know more representatives of company's different departments.
LOYALTY	Establish specified key account teams more actively for the most important customerships.	Ensuring that the customers who participate in the projects have as often as possible the same company representatives working with them.
LOYALTY	Share more actively the success stories achieved	The customers think that these stories increase

	by means of the X Center concept.	their loyalty towards the company.
TOUCH POINTS	Specify in a clear manner the customer experience that is aimed to be created systematically for the customers, and make sure that every employee is certainly aware of the matter.	The experiences can be created without uncertainty, and the employees can create consistent customer experiences.
TOUCH POINTS	Use more often external expert partners.	Customers experience the service of external experts' rewarding.
STAFF PERFORMANCE	Document better all the things that have been mutually agreed with the customer.	The customers can monitor the contribution and engagement of each project group member in order to implement the agreed actions. Employees can better monitor the actions expected from them and engage in them easier.
STAFF PERFORMANCE	Inform the employees better of the significance of their contribution for each project.	The employees can be more engaged in creating the projects when they understand the importance of their own roles in the whole process.
STAFF PERFORMANCE	Support and encourage the employees to contin-	Strengthening the customer's experience that

	<p>ue on the same representative line. Also thank the employees more often for good performances and aim at providing them with more resources so that they can perform their duties.</p>	<p>the key asset of the company is correctly behaving staff which is capable of creating a relaxed and an innovative atmosphere in X Center.</p>
STAFF PERFORMANCE	<p>Remind and train the production representatives how important the customer encounters are for the whole company.</p>	<p>Changing the attitudes of the production representatives which have occasionally been seen slightly more negative compared to those of the others.</p>
STAFF PERFORMANCE	<p>Investigate in current design resources and perform the required actions in order to increase the resources.</p>	<p>Securing the resources of designing department. Preventing too heavy workloads and delays during the projects.</p>
STAFF PERFORMANCE	<p>Specify clearly the internal operations models and persons in charge of global projects.</p>	<p>Enabling to fix the faced problems related to the delayed actions and the complexity of global assignments.</p>
STAFF PERFORMANCE	<p>Improve the innovativeness by decreasing the internal bureaucracy.</p>	<p>Channeling the designers' energy more to the actual innovation.</p>

STAFF PERFORMANCE	Focus more on improving and diversifying the external marketing. Invest systematically more in creating the image of innovativeness.	Ensuring external stakeholders' awareness of company's achievements and innovativeness.
STAFF PERFORMANCE	Share more actively and bravely global success stories achieved by means of X Center.	Ensuring customer's awareness of these success stories in order to create the image of being innovative.
STAFF PERFORMANCE	Continue on the current line which supports and, if necessary, guides the customers in their decision making.	Ensuring that the customers are having enough support for their decision making. During the X Center projects, the influence on the customers' decision making should not be too active.
PROCESS STRUCTURES AND AIMS	Always specify and clarify the structures and the common aims set for the processes carefully to all project group members.	Ensuring that all project group members know what is expected.

<p>PROCESS STRUCTURES AND AIMS</p>	<p>Before starting the processes, present more systematically, especially for the new customers of the concept, all the opportunities that can be utilized by means of the X Center concept.</p>	<p>Ensuring that all project group members know what can be created by means of the X Center concept.</p>
<p>PROCESS STRUCTURES AND AIMS</p>	<p>Make and start using a global check list where the basic starting points of the processes are specified before the projects or events are started.</p>	<p>The project managers can go through the basic variables that should be taken into consideration when starting projects. Thus, more consistent-like events can be arranged, regardless of the project manager or the geographical location of X Center.</p>
<p>PROCESS STRUCTURES AND AIMS</p>	<p>Ensure more actively participation of designers in the preparations.</p>	<p>The customers experience that the presence of designers makes the definition of the initial information easier, whereas employees think that this helps considerably in gathering sufficiently comprehensive initial information.</p>

PROCESS STRUCTURES AND AIMS	Ensure that sufficient initial information is documented and that the information is shared to all project group members.	The employees experience that the initial information received from the sales managers is often insufficient.
PROCESS STRUCTURES AND AIMS	Invest considerably more in the documentation of both the project preparations and the actions agreed during the workshops, and specify the common goals, schedules, responsibilities and feedback channels in a clear manner.	Ensuring that the projects will be finished and the communication with the customers will get more active. The communication channels, and the persons to be communicated with, will be clarified during the projects.
PROCESS STRUCTURES AND AIMS	Ensure that project managers take care of sending the invitations in good time and making the schedules and agendas carefully.	Ensuring that the schedules and agendas for the workshop days held in X Center are clear and all participants are available.
PROCESS STRUCTURES AND AIMS	Ensure that the agendas have breaks that are long enough so that the events are rhythmically as fluent as possible.	Creating and practical comfortable events in X Center.

PROCESS STRUCTURES AND AIMS	Express clearly the responsibilities of each participant, as well as the required equipment at a desired time.	Ensuring that all project group members know what is expected.
PROCESS STRUCTURES AND AIMS	Hold internal meetings preceding the workshops.	The initial information on the projects and the agendas for the workshop days can be discussed between all internal members during these meetings.
PROCESS STRUCTURES AND AIMS	Present clearly a responsible project manager and the backup person for the common project to the whole project group.	Ensuring that all project group members know who is taking full responsibility of leading the process.
PROCESS STRUCTURES AND AIMS	Consider thoroughly the use of available resources in the X Center events.	It is not rational to have an individual expert engaged in the event for a whole day if the things that are worked have nothing to do with this person's job description or contribution in the project.

PROCESS STRUCTURES AND AIMS	Ensure that documentation is done properly and shared to all members of the project group, also during the progress of the project.	Better documentation enables that the progress of the projects can be monitored and the agreed actions can be implemented. Better documentation is a tool for both the customers and the company's internal project group members. Thereby, the projects can be finished more carefully and systematically.
PROCESS STRUCTURES AND AIMS	Develop better channels for submitting feedback on the finished projects in order to gather systematically comments from the customers and the end-users.	The company can learn something new from these comments and they can be utilized in new projects in the future.
PROCESS STRUCTURES AND AIMS	Make a common summary and share it to all members of the project group, after the projects have been completed	All participants can get an overall picture of the finished projects and the related outcomes.
GENERAL AND FIRST IMPRESSION	Mark the route to X Center more clearly than now.	Helping to make a great first impression.

GENERAL AND FIRST IMPRESSION	Retain the modern look and renew decorations of X Center regularly.	Emphasizing the strong, positive, contrast between the modern X Center and an otherwise old factory building.
GENERAL AND FIRST IMPRESSION	Update the packaging references regularly and display them with more coherent style.	Helping to make a great first impression, as the customers' first impression is effected strongly by the displayed packaging references.
GENERAL AND FIRST IMPRESSION	Pay special attention to the cleanliness and tidiness of the premises.	Helping to make a great first impression, as nearly all respondents think they are the most important factors affecting their first impression.
GENERAL AND FIRST IMPRESSION	Invite more representatives of the customers' different departments, as well as own experts to the events. It is also recommendable to have external expert partners participated in the events.	Strengthening customers' general impressions of X Center as an excellent place to learn new, to network with other experts, and to save time, as well as, to increase the efficiency in project working
GENERAL AND FIRST IMPRESSION	Keep the premises divided into a meeting segment and a showroom segment.	Giving a clear and spacious general impression of the premises.

GENERAL AND FIRST IMPRESSION	Present and use the opportunities for having video conferences between similar X Centers premises, located in different countries, more actively.	Creating a modern and consistent general impression of the concept.
ENTERTAINMENT FACTORS	Invest in adding more entertainment factors into X Center.	Providing enough elements that make the customers enjoy their stay in X Center more, also after a heavy work session
ENTERTAINMENT FACTORS	Ensure that the packaging references are updated regularly and that they are grouped according to a grouping that is more consistent than now.	Taking care of the displayed packaging references as they are seen as entertainment factors to some extent.
ENTERTAINMENT FACTORS	Ensure that the soft drink pool is filled on regularly and that snacks are served during the events.	Taking care of the servings as they are seen as entertainment factors.
ENTERTAINMENT FACTORS	Invest in using the 3D technology in the future.	Providing the advantages enabled by the 3D technology.
ENTERTAINMENT FACTORS	Build a small handicraft corner where the customers can concretely participate in the designing work by their hands.	Providing an opportunity for the customers to model by own hands during the workshops
ENTERTAINMENT	Pay more attention to the	Providing more diverse

FACTORS	quality of the served snacks.	servings, including light and healthy snacks.
ENTERTAINMENT FACTORS	Replace the current projectors with large and modern screens.	Providing more practical and modern approach. Give a more modern impression of X Center.
ENTERTAINMENT FACTORS	Acquire and install more enhanced sound system in the premises.	Using music during the breaks and creating background sounds in X Center.
ENTERTAINMENT FACTORS	Build a better shop environment simulator in X Center.	Replacing the current shop shelf with its packaging references with more comprehensive solution. The current solution is not seen as a sufficient simulator for this purpose anymore.
ENTERTAINMENT FACTORS	Acquire some funny game simulator for the breaks.	Creating a good team spirit between the participants by providing a nice opportunity to forget the heavy job for a moment.
ENTERTAINMENT FACTORS	Improve the methods for collecting and documenting the success stories that have been achieved by means of the concept.	Enabling the more active share of these stories in the events held in X Center as they have a significant entertainment value.

SXXXXRY STIMULATION	Evoke the stimulation of all five senses at least in some part of the experience.	Staging holistic experiences which are created by the sum of all senses.
SXXXXRY STIMULATION	Ensure that the air-conditioning in X Center is functioning sufficiently.	Creating a comfortable atmosphere by considering the sense of touch.
SXXXXRY STIMULATION	Provide more diverse physical packaging references.	Ensuring the sufficient amount of rousing samples that can be touched and visualized.
SXXXXRY STIMULATION	Pay attention to the lights and the visual look so that it stimulates the sense of sight the best possible way.	Keeping the participants lively and innovative by providing a light space with inspiring elements.
SXXXXRY STIMULATION	Make sure that the premises are clean and stress the project groups' duty to clean up after themselves before another project group enters into the common premises.	Creating a comfortable atmosphere by considering the sense of smell and sight.
SXXXXRY STIMULATION	Avoid the use of artificial fragrances in X Center.	Creating a comfortable atmosphere by considering the sense of smell.
SXXXXRY STIMULATION	Add a neutral background sound, such as a sound of nature, in X Center.	Creating a relaxing and comfortable atmosphere by considering the sense of hearing.

SXXXXRY STIMULATION	Add music to relax the atmosphere during the brakes.	Creating a relaxing atmosphere by considering the sense of hearing.
SXXXXRY STIMULATION	Ensure that the serving of snacks is regular and that the snack selection will become more diverse.	Creating a pleasant atmosphere by considering the sense of taste.
INTERACTION LEVELS	Support and encourage the employees to continue on the current well-tried way. Thank the employees more often for good work.	Maintaining the strength of a company, as the customers see this as one of company's absolute strong points and as a tool for functioning business relationships.
INTERACTION LEVELS	Invest more in the actions taken after the workshop days.	Improving the interaction situations after the workshops, as they are often seen as frustrating.
INTERACTION LEVELS	Improve the external documentation and communication on the progress of the projects.	Showing the customers clear channels and contact persons for communication and for following the projects.

<p>INTERACTION LEVELS</p>	<p>Pay more attention to the internal documentation.</p>	<p>Ensuring that all the raised questions can be discussed within the company as soon as possible. The delays are often due to the poor-quality documentation of the events.</p>
<p>PROFITABILITY</p>	<p>Focus on developing the structures of the X Center processes.</p>	<p>Enabling better outcomes at the end of the projects, as the level of customer experiences is improved and new innovations generate commercial benefits.</p>
<p>PROFITABILITY</p>	<p>Present more actively success stories and calculations where the customers who have utilized X Center have managed to increase their profit level.</p>	<p>Helping to evaluate possible financial advantages, which the concept enables, in the initial stages of the projects.</p>

PROFITABILITY	Create a procedure according to which the project manager should systematically return to the outcomes of the projects together with the customers after a certain time period from the conclusion of the projects.	By using the gathered data, it is possible to do calculations that can be presented as references when new projects are started.
CUSTOMIZATION	Select the displayed packaging references more carefully during the events.	Creating customized events based on the customers' industries.
CUSTOMIZATION	Prepare some model samples in advance for the customers arriving in X Center.	Creating a customized look especially for the customers in question in the events.
CUSTOMIZATION	Improve the preliminary work for the projects and specify the common aims for the projects clearly.	Enabling to produce model samples for the customers in advance.
CUSTOMIZATION	Create common model cases, specified for all major segments, which can be utilized in all X Center locations.	Providing customized events, as the current ones are too often seen as events that have been structured according to a certain basic concept which is provided to all participants.

DIFFERENTIATION	Keep on developing the concept further and promote it more powerfully.	Enabling the concept to become an independent brand in the near-future.
DIFFERENTIATION	Invest more in clarifying future scenarios, especially global consumer behavior and packaging trends, and presenting them to the customers.	Distinguishing positively from the competitors, as customers expect this kind of expertise from their packaging provider.
DIFFERENTIATION	Utilize the current expert networks more actively.	Offering the services of real experts in X Center and saving own resources by outsourcing some special services.
DIFFERENTIATION	Invest more powerfully in differentiating the concept more clearly from the corresponding services of the competitors.	Changing the opinions that the concept has been copied directly from the company's competitor.
DIFFERENTIATION	Create such services for the concept that the competitors do not offer.	Differentiating the concept more clearly from the corresponding services of the competitors.
DIFFERENTIATION	Follow the competitors more systematically.	Reacting on needed changes fast enough, if necessary

DIFFERENTIATION	Invest more in that the designers maintain their motivation and cope with their workloads.	Securing that the unique outcomes can be created also in the future.
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APPENDIX 5: Interview quotes

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10. PROFITABILITY

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11. CUSTOMIZATION

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