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Deep understanding of a customer journey map at pm2am

Student Trips

Thesis
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The objective of the thesis was to visually understand the overall customer experience through a customer journey map and to build, based on a customer satisfaction survey, a customer journey map for pm2am Student Trips GmbH & Co. KG.

First part of the thesis explains theoretical framework of the customer journey map, customer experience, service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer commitment. The empirical part of the study was chosen to be implemented using a qualitative research method. The study was conducted among 90 customers of pm2am Student Trips. Based on the study results, a customer journey map was built, and suggestions were made to improve the overall customer experience.

To summarize, the study results were good, and all the stages of the customer journey map looked positive from customers’ point of view. The customer experience was a linear between the users, which shows that, in the company’s operations, there are no significant factors with adverse effects on the customer experience. Yet, some suggestions for improvement were made to further improve the customer experience at pm2am Student Trips.

Keywords: customer journey map, customer experience, service quality, customer satisfaction, customer commitment
Opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli ymmärtää visuaalisesti asiakkaan kokemus pm2am Student Trips -yrityksestä mallintamiskartan avulla. Tavoitteenä oli suorittaa asiakastyytyväisyyskysely pm2am Student Trips GmbH & Co. KG asiakkaille ja rakentaa tulosten pohjalta visuaalinen mallintamiskartta asiakkaan kokemasta palvelusta.

Ensimmäinen osa opinnäytetyöstä on teoreettinen katsaus asiakkaan mallintamiskarttaan, asiakaskokemukseen, palvelun laatuun, asiakastyytyväisyyteen sekä asiakassitoutumiseen. Työn empiirinen tutkimus toteutettiin laadullisena tutkimuksena. Tutkimustulosten pohjalta rakennettiin mallintamiskartta asiakaskokemuksesta sekä laadittiin kehittämisehdotuksia asiakaskokemuksen parantamiseksi.

Yhteenvetona voi todeta, että tutkimustulokset olivat hyviä ja käyttäjäkokemuksen mallintamiskartta näytti positiiviselta koko asiakaskokemuksen ajan. Asiakaskokemus kulki lineaarisesti käyttäjien välillä, mikä osoittaa, ettei yrityksen toiminnassa ole asiakaskokemusta merkittävästi heikentäviä tekijöitä. Muutamia paranusehdotuksia kuitenkin tehtiin asiakaskokemuksen edelleen kehittämiseksi pm2am Student Trips yrityksessä.

Avainsanat: asiakaskokemuksen mallintamiskartta, asiakaskokemus, palvelun laatu, asiakastyytyväisyys, asiakassitoutuminen
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1 INTRODUCTION

A customer has always been right ever since business has been done. Businesses typically use the phrase “The customer is always right” which is originally popularized by Harry Gordon Selfridge, John Wanamaker and Marshall Field to convince customers that they will get the service they want and empower employees that they will give customers the service they expect. (Samson, S, Granath, K. & Alger, A., 459).

As the customer is the source of the organization’s cash flows, therefore, the importance of the customer and one’s experience is valuable to organizations and the emphasis should be focused on customers.

However, nowadays the phrase “The customer is always right” should be modified into form “Customer experience tells always a truth.”

Therefore, it is vital to businesses to create excellent customer experiences to build strong relationship with customers and to be ahead of the competition in this increasing marketplace.

Typically, one can think a customer experience is just how the customer finds the product or service. It was before, however, time changes and so do consumers.

Today, customer experience is all about the customer. It is the customer’s cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses to a company. (Verhoef et al., 2009).

Customer experience is shaped by the combination of before, during and after interacting between the customer and the organization over time across touchpoints and channels. (Berry et al., 2002, 2006).

Today’s businesses interact with their customers in every stage which will lead to customer’s buying decision towards engagement and into a long-term relationship with the company. However, one single good interaction between customer and organization is not enough anymore. Customers know their level of value and they are demanding more and more from products, service and organizations. This has led to businesses to provide more opportunities than ever to meet customers’ ever-changing demands. Nevertheless, customer interactions in the entire organization becomes more important in service research priority. (Ostrom et al., 2015).
Organizations must understand what their customers value and manage the customer experience that build relationship because they face more competitive pressure in this complex and dynamic 21st business century. (Bolton et al., 2016).

A customer experience can remain organization’s competitive advantage if the experience is consistent and the organization can meet customer’s expectations better than the competitors. Above all, organizations must first understand the concept of customer experience in their entire organization before being able to provide an excellent service to its customers.

1.1 Purpose of the thesis

As nowadays competition in marketplace is increasing rabidly and customers have more where to choose than ever, importance of being aware of customers, their needs and how they perceive service quality is vital to businesses in order to stand out other competitors.

The purpose of the thesis is to understand customers’ experience in pm2am Student Trips GmbH & Co. by conducting a customer satisfaction survey its customers. The aim of the research is to make a customer journey map based on the study results and understand customers’ point of view in their entire customer experience process through the visualization map. This research aims to understand customers’ feelings and motivations in every step of the customer journey map contributing a deep understanding of pm2am Student Trips’ customers and their perceived experience. Moreover, the research clarifies pm2am Student Trips’ overall performance as a tour operator.

A study questionnaire included questions about motive development, information gathering, proposition evaluation, proposition selection, acquisition and re-evaluation. Questionnaire was made based on the customer journey map. The study results can be found in chapter (8) and the questionnaire at the end of the thesis (see Appendices (1)).
The author of the thesis has always been interested in customer service and how it might solely influence either negative or positive way on the entire customer experience by reflecting her own experiences of services as a customer. Moreover, the author wanted to contribute her knowledge about customers’ experience and their perceived service quality. She had a good opportunity to conduct the thesis on her internship company whilst her internship period took place in Germany. The author was working in the field of travelling by providing excellent customer experiences around Europe. Thus, the “excellent customer experience” got a whole new meaning in terms of what it truly means to provide customers an excellent customer experience? The author, then realized she can take an advantage towards her passion and conduct the research which will deepen her skills relating to the customer service, customer experience and perceived service quality. Furthermore, the author wanted to visualize the customer experience, thus the author come up with the idea of creating a customer journey map for pm2am Student Trips.

Pm2am Student Trips does not have conducted customer satisfaction research by themselves. Therefore, a study of customers’ overall experience and their satisfaction is important to their business to be aware of their customers. Furthermore, it will give new ideas how to improve their service and how to differentiate the business from competitors.

Associated the commission company pm2am Student Trips based in Germany, Wuppertal. Specifically, the research provides a literature overview of a customer journey map in order to have better understanding about customer journey map. The literature review will give a deep insight of the subject. As customers’ expectations of service quality are changing constantly, customers are demanding more and more and the competition is fierce in every field, thus, the importance of knowing how your customers feel about the service provider continues to increase.

All in all, the purpose of the study is to understand customers’ experience through customer journey map of pm2am identifying customers’ perceived service quality and pm2am’s overall performance. Based on this research pm2am will be more aware of its customers to provide better service and improve the competitive positioning.
1.2 Research methods and structure of the thesis

The theoretical framework of the thesis is a study about customer journey map, customer experience, service quality, customer satisfaction and customer commitment. In the thesis, the data collection is qualitative method. By using qualitative research methods, better understanding of customers’ feelings, opinions and motivations are gained. Additionally, this method enables to find out reasons behind customers’ feelings and motivations in the entire customer experience in pm2am Student Trips. Researcher did a questionnaire based on the seven stages of customer journey map of pm2am. The questionnaire was conducted in English during the trip to Switzerland with 90 customers. The questionnaire is in appendix 1.

The structure of the thesis includes two parts. The first part of the thesis is theoretical part. It includes the framework of a customer journey map, customer experience, service quality, customer satisfaction and customer commitment. The second part of the thesis include empirical part which goes through of the research method, sampling method and structure of the questionnaire. Last parts of the thesis reveal the findings of the research, analysis of the findings and lastly, the recommendations are explained in chapter (10) and discussion is provided in chapter (11).

1.3 Problem statement, objectives, goals and limitation of the thesis

The problem statement of the research is to find out if there is a considerable difference between the actual and desired situation when looking at pm2am Student Trips customer journey map from customers’ point of view. Desired situation describes the perspective of the management and the actual situation describes the perspective of the customers.

The objective of the study is to understand customers’ overall experience through customer journey map of pm2am Student Trips. Based on the research, pm2am Student Trips will be more aware of their customers and how they perceive and
evaluate their experience in pm2am Student Trips. Additionally, if there is a considerable difference between the actual and desired situation, the objective of the study is to optimize the overall customer experience by making improvements on the perceived service quality. Based on the gathered information, the researcher tries to improve the competitive positioning of pm2am Student Trips and recommend solutions based on the analysis of the data collected.

The research questions are formulated as follows:

- How does the customer journey look like from customers’ point of view?
- How likely customers recommend pm2am and its service? (Net Promoter Score)

1.4 COMMISSIONING COMPANY: pm2am Student Trips

Pm2m Student Trips GmbH & Co. KG is a tour operator specialized in organizing trips for students and young-professionals from Germany and all over the world. Company was founded in 2013 by three students, Andreas Klein, Alexander Klein and Björn Werner. Operation of the company is based in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands and the trips takes place all around Europe. Pm2am has more than 50 destinations in Europe and more than 40,000 customers. (pm2am Student trips [ref. March 2019]) pm2am is a multinational company by having variety of nationalities working in pm2am. Currently, there are 2 full-time employees and two interns working in pm2am Student Trips.

According to pm2am’s founders the company was created for endless passion for travelling around Europe. The founders, who were also students understood students’ and young professionals’ budget limitation when travelling, thus, the founders wanted to offer budget-friendly trips to international young people between 18 to 35 years old in order them to have possibility to travel in Europe. Based on the story of pm2am, their idea of the business is to offer trips to students who want to maximize their exchange period abroad and travel around the Europe with a low-budget but also to bring people together and make friends from all over the world.
Students who are traveling with pm2am are able to meet like-minded people while traveling and make friends for a lifetime. Pm2am Student Trips’ customers are mainly from outside Europe, meaning that its customer base is wide diversity of ethnicities, which can be seen over 50 different nationalities per one trip. According to pm2am’s website, company’s vision is to add destinations on their trip portfolio, grow bus network and be valued among students and young professionals as a European travel partner. (pm2am Student Trips [ref. March 2019])

Business model is business-to-consumers (B2C) online sales. Customers book and buy trips online via pm2am Student Trips website. Business model is cost-efficiency but also feasible for customers as they can book the trip 24/7. In addition, company sells merchandises as extra products/services to maximize the trip experience such as twin rooms, boat trips, Hop-On Hop-Off bus tours or pub crawl excursions. Merchandises is sold online before the start of the trip and offline when the trip takes place. Pm2am offers variety of destinations which are seen on the official website of pm2am.

Picture 1 The look of pm2am’s official website (pm2am Student Trips)

Pm2am uses social media and online marketing channels. Facebook, Instagram and Google are most used channels for marketing. On Facebook company has
more than 111 000 page likes. Pm2am has always concentrated on carefully organized and planned trips, excellent partners and professional tour guides, which are major reasons of the high quality of service on a budget-friendly price.

1.5 Tour operator

Tour operator is a company established providing trip packages including wholly designed ideas for holiday, planned itinerary, transport, accommodation, tour leaders and guides. Meaning that tour operators plan everything on behalf of customers. Tour operators markets their own designed ready-to-go tour packages and sell them directly to customers typically via online. Tour operators can create and plan also extra activities and excursions, in other words, so-called merchandises and sell them to customers to maximize their stay in the chosen destination. The core-service of the company is the planned trips and the main source of income to the company, thus the company’s cash flow is dependent on the organized trips. However, tour operators, sometimes, are likely to face some unpredictable conditions which lead to trip cancellation. As a result, these trip cancellations cause troubles to the operation of the company and destabilizes the cash flow due to trip cancellation. The trip might be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances such as environmental, political or financial factors. Meaning that, the tour operators holds full responsibility for the trip packages which they have created and it is liable to cover the cost to the customers if tour operator cancels or fails to arrange the trip.
2 CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAP

Businesses have analysed customer pathways to identify problems in their service operation for mapping a customer journey for many years. (Samson, S, Granath, K. & Alger, A., 460). A customer journey map is a clear visualization of customers physical and emotional steps customer go through including customers’ behaviour, feelings and motivations from initial step towards engagement and into a long relationship with the company. It is a valuable tool, which indicates the myriad interactions potential customers and customers face with the company during the journey. Furthermore, customer journey maps are applied to conduct the customer research of the service quality. (Dubberly et al., 2008).

Based on the customer journey map companies can strengthen the customer experience across the entire service process by developing an achievable plan which focuses only on the perspective of customers to improve their experience. The goal of improvement is to be constantly great from the initial interaction to the process of a long-term relationship and engagement. When focusing on the improvement of the customer experience, companies might gain a competitive advantage compared to their competitors which increases their competitiveness.

With the use of customer journey map will be obtained great benefits to the companies. First of all, a customer journey map simply helps to understand better customers. Business leaders will think about their business operations from the shoes of customers and consider customers’ point of view of their feelings during the customer journey process. Thus, this activity gains deeper understanding of their customers’ and their buying behaviour, feelings, emotions and motives. The customer journey map not only helps to understand better customers but it also reveals information of the customers when doing the mapping process. Companies are not able to identify the problems customers may have with the product or service. A customer journey map is used for solving problems for customers at every point that they interact with company. Companies will be informed of their customers’ way of looking for at each stage of their journey by gaining information through conducted customer feedback and satisfaction surveys. Moreover, businesses are able to provide greater value to customers when they know what customers value and what is their
priorities in terms of customer experience. Furthermore, customer journey map helps to identify operational inefficiencies of the company and areas which need to be developed, changed or removed. Operational inefficiencies often cause disbenefits to the company’s operation such as waste of time and extra expenses. A customer journey map helps to show companies which factors should be removed in order to provide better service and save company’s money. Moreover, it creates a differentiated experience for company’s service. With the use of customer journey map it helps identifies areas in which company have opportunity to differentiate the customer experience. Above all, high-performing companies indicate a customer journey map to be a critical strategy to the success of their overall performance.

2.1 Elements of the customer journey map

The customer journey map (CJM) can be visualized in multiple ways. The important aspect of the map is that it identifies the interaction steps users go through to become customers and also their feelings in each stage of the journey. However, the customer journey map starts before user is even a customer of the company. Three essential elements of a customer journey map are identified: customer actions, touchpoints and experience. However, the journey begins in the stage of awareness. The initial stage is when the buyer hears for the first time of the company and its service and starts to google the company. In this stage, buyers become aware of their needs and they identify their opportunity they want to pursue. The next step is consideration, where the buyer is excited and also uncertain of the company so the buyer repeats website visits in order to gain more knowledge of the company and to define the goal clearly in order to move to the next step to decision. In this stage, the buyer takes the action whether to buy this service. A buyer become a customer when he is committed to buy the service from the company. Last step of the journey is post-decision, where the customer discuss with influencers on social media of the service quality and the service provider itself. Customer can be excited, happy or dissatisfied with the service. The emotions and the perceived service quality influence whether the company has opportunity to build loyalty and customer will be engaged and have a long-term relationship with the company. (SilverTech, Inc., 12,14).
Customers experience things differently, thus the experience might not be on a linear on the customer journey map. It is also possible that customers skip stages or they do not even become customers in the process of customer journey map.

2.2 Service blueprint

Service blueprinting was developed in the 1980s by Shostack. Service blueprint has been used as a method to support service management (Bitner et al., 2008), and service design (Polaine et al., 2013), with the purpose of visualizing the relationships between different service components like people, physical evidence and processes that relate to touchpoints in a specific customer journey map. Blueprint demonstrates the customer's role in the service process. (Bitner et al., 2008, p. 71). Service blueprint is described as a flow-chart showing the line of interaction and visibility between customers and service provider. (Shahin, A. 2010). Blueprint includes, the line of the visibility, which shows the activities which occurs directly to customers of the front office. Whereas, journey map describes customer’s interaction with the organization's touchpoints in front office. What happens in front office or in other words on stage are visible to the customer. The service blueprint describes also what happens in the back office of the company. Backstage is internal interactions, which is out of the customers’ view. In service blueprinting the touchpoints and backstage processes are aligned to the customer experience. A customer journey map requires to see the business from customers’ point of view, whereas, the service blueprint can be seen as part two to customer journey map, which take further step to think what operations are needed to make customer experience the best it can be.
Figure 1 pm2am Student Trips' Service Blueprint
3 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

In this rapidly growing business century, businesses success is not anymore determined by solely on quality, reliability, pricing or brand. These are considered self-evident when providing service to customers. Competition in every field is becoming increasingly fierce, thus, businesses can no longer compete on product or price alone. Therefore, today success is determined by the businesses ability to offer compelling and emotionally engaging customer experiences all the time for all customers which is impossible for competitors to replicate. (Shaw, C. & Ivens, J., 6). An excellent customer experience is a key to the success of the company. Therefore, it requires a strategic way of thinking, which aims to exceeding customers’ emotional and physical expectations to enable a new competitive advantage to compete with.

3.1 What is a customer experience?

To understand the customer experience, companies need to recognise the whole meaning of customer experience and its fundamental role in their entire organization. A customer experience, is often seen solely as a customer service. It is more, it’s about sales, marketing, website, online systems, processes, personnel and after sale service including all the interaction customer face with the company. (Shaw, C. & Ivens, J., 7). However, personnel and all people working inside the organization proves the most value to the customer experience. (Shaw, C., Qaalfa, D. & Walden, S., 10). Customer experience (CX) are customers’ perceptions of the company’s ability to deliver exceptional customer service, personalizing interactions, and exceeding customers’ expectations. Today’s business world, products, people, pricing and technology is similar. Thus, the competition is fierce in this commoditized market. Therefore, brand, the feel of a company and experiential side which will be experienced through the customer experience will differentiate a company from other competitors. However, as already mentioned, customer experience in linked to the whole organization. Below is a figure which shows all the parts of customer experience in the organization.
3.2 Elements of customer experience

Customer experience is a complex process, which includes several elements to function together in the organization. Thus, those elements can be divided into seven categories: physical, setting, functional, technical, operational, experiential and emotional elements. (DiJulius, J., 2012). Physical elements in a customer experience are fixed, or in other words, long-term elements which are difficult to be changed such as building of the company, its location and structure. Setting, whereas refers to a company’s communication provided its customers. The setting of the company has either positive or negative effect on sight, sound, touch or taste of the customer. Whereas, functional is linked to the way of doing business, such as policies of the company, payments options, security, availability of the customer support, design of the website, just to name few. Technical element is the expertise of the employees, meaning that, how well the employees know about the product or service. Operational elements are actions which employee must complete before, during and after a customer’s experience such as paperwork, preparation, processing orders, dress code, answering the phone and checking people out. Experiential elements are seen as an actions employee does when interacting with the customer such as employee’s willingness to help, hospitality and anticipating customers’ needs. However, experiential elements can make a customer reacting delightfully amazed, which are reasons why customer would come back and adds
value to the customers. Last but not least, emotional elements. Whereas, emotions exist within each and every one and all people experience emotions constantly. Conversely, in the business world emotions are underestimated and often overlooked aspects, even though customer remembers the most how the company made them feel. Thus, emphasis should be concentrated more on experiential and customers' feelings and emotions since they have a great impact on the overall customer experience. As consequently, it’s impossible to entirely influence on the way the customer perceives and formalizes its customer experience. However, businesses have sole decision power to choose whether they are going to make effort by effecting positively on customers’ feelings and emotions which contributes the positive or even, an excellent customer experience.

3.3 Managing the customer experience

Customer experience management (CEM) become common way of thinking in the organizations in the late 2000’s to manage the customer experience by maximising value to the customers in every interaction customer has with the company through the overall experience. The key idea of a customer experience management is that companies head their attention on customers by focusing on their emotional, subconscious and rational experience to design more appealing service. In customer experience management, all operations are always looked at from customer’s point of view, then a company does not put its focus on unnecessary things which does not add value to its customers. CEM aims to produce a customer experience to its customers as customers would like to experience. The focus is emphasized only on the customers, because the money comes to the company from customers, therefore they are most valued. Paradoxically, companies tend to focus on their products, services, growth and new innovations instead of focusing on their core source of income: customers. However, when companies adopt the customer experience management way of thinking, better results are gained through increased customer satisfaction and customer commitment. Later, these concepts are explained further in the following chapters.
4 SERVICE QUALITY

The growing domination of services in today’s world increases the need to emphasize the importance of an excellent and world-class service. Thus, service quality is considered as a target value to organizations. Businesses started to pay attention to the quality of the service they deliver their customers when they began to understand the service quality. The better results are gained through the understanding of service, how service delivery quality is experienced by customers and what is the role of the employees when delivering the service. (Schneider, B. & White, S., 2004). The topic of service quality seems simple to understand, since everyone has experienced it. Naturally, every customer is expecting service quality but the quality expectations of the service varies a lot between customers.

To start with, service climate is considered to be one important aspect to start initiative to deliver excellent service quality. The service climate consists of employees’ experience in regards of service delivery. Meaning that, employees experiences about excellent service quality within the company motivates them to provide excellent quality service also to the customers.

However, the service quality is estimated based on the dimensions of the service quality. The service quality dimensions are following: proficiency and competency. (Rissanen, T., 2005). Meaning that customers examine the proficiency of the service provider and his competency to produce the provided service to the customer. Secondly, customers estimate the service quality based on reliability. In other words, service is being produced perfectly in a way which creates reliability of the service provider to the customer. Thirdly, credibility is valued among customers. Service provider should provide the service in the interest of the customer, which adds credibility of the service provider. Fourthly, customer evaluate company’s availability, or in the other words, the easiness of getting the service. Meaning how speedy the service is being produced to the customer. Lastly, customers evaluate company’s politeness. In other words, service provider’s dress code, behaviour and his personality reveals his willingness to provide the service as well as his appreciation of the customer. However, evaluation of excellent service is not that straightforward. It depends on every customer’s way of experience the service.
5 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Customers are in the center of business operations. Customers have vast impact on company’s image, status and profit. Therefore, to deliver customer satisfaction has become a strategic objective to businesses. Customer satisfaction is a measurement of a company’s ability to meet customers’ needs and exceed their expectations. (Hill, N. & Brierley, J., 2017).

Customer satisfaction cannot be achieved until the customer has an overall good customer experience with the company. The level of satisfaction is measured based on the overall service quality influenced by a wide range of additional factors including all the steps customer goes through from communication with the company to after sales service. However, the more customer is satisfied with the company and its operation the stronger the relationship lies between the customer and the company which, will tie up customer with the company leading to customer commitment. Moreover, customer satisfaction is seen as an important aspect to focus on in terms of business growth, profitability and competitive market share.

5.1 How to measure customer satisfaction?

Companies need to identify if customers are satisfied or dissatisfied with their operation by measuring how well customers perceive company’s performance. Thus, companies are able to improve the level of customer satisfaction accordingly. Customer satisfaction measurement can be conducted as different types of survey, interviews or questionnaire. Moreover, Net Promoter Score is often included in the customer satisfaction surveys to get a clear picture of the satisfaction level. The Net Promoter Score question is a single question, which finds out how likely customers are willing to recommend the measured service to other people. Response is scaled on a scale of 1 to 10. Furthermore, to gain a maximum value of the measurement it should identify at least the following objectives: customers’ priorities, company’s own performance and priorities for improvement.
5.1.1 Customers’ priorities

According to Soudagar, Iyer and Hilderbrand (2012) it is necessarily required to meet customers’ needs and wants to success and compete in the marketplace. Conversely, it is obvious that customers’ needs are not equal, meaning that they have wide range of priorities, which are important them to feel satisfied. Some priorities play more important role to the customer than others. However, based on the customer survey the service provider put the customers’ priorities in order to invest to the priorities which matters most to the customers. Thus, customer survey must identify the importance of each priority of customer.

5.1.2 Company’s own performance

Soudagar, Iyer and Hilderbrand (2012) emphasis that the main objective of the survey is to find out company’s overall performance perceived by its customers. Typically, customer take into account two aspects when they evaluate company’s performance. Firstly, customers evaluate how well company’s performance correspond customers’ priorities. Secondly, how well company performs compared to competitors. Therefore, company’s performance must reveal how well company performs in regards of customers’ priorities and competitors’ performance.

5.1.3 Priorities for improvements

Lastly, Soudagar, Iyer and Hilderbrand (2012) recommend companies find out which priorities matters most when making improvements to the operation of the company. Based on the results, companies should put its resources to the priorities of the customer which will lead improvements of the company and its operation, as a result the level of customer satisfaction will be increased in the measured company.
6 CUSTOMER COMMITMENT

Companies struggle with how they find customers and how the customers can be engaged and committed to the company. Customer commitment is often seen solely as customer's satisfaction in regards of operation of the company. However, the concept customer commitment is much more. It is a buyer-seller relationship where customer has intentions to act with the company in the future. (Heli Arantola, 5). Customer commitment is also glamorizing the company and sharing the same values. It includes developing a long-term relationship with a customer, meaning that the customer will recommend the company and its operation to the other people and they will actively participate to the development of product or service by providing feedback to the company. The main objective is to make customer spiritually committed. Meaning that, customer will always buy from the company when there is a need of customer to buy something. Customer commitment is considered to be even more important aspect than customer satisfaction based on the several study results which reveals that satisfied customer does not guarantee customer commitment. Meaning that, customer can be fully satisfied with the company and its operation but not having any intentions to commit to the company. Therefore, customers should be made to be committed to the company.

6.1 How to measure customer commitment?

Commitment can be measured business-to-consumer (B2C) relationship following:

1. How many customer complaints about personnel the company receive?
2. Do the customers talk in a positive or negative tone when they are talking about the company?
3. What is the frequency of using the company vs using competing companies?
4. What is the level of involvement towards the company? (e.g. providing feedback, reading news)
5. How long is the relationship between the customer and the company?
6.2 What leads to customer commitment?

Customer commitment requires customer’s glamorizing the company, its service, product or personnel. How customer feels about the company and which values company and the customer share, mainly defines the factors which might lead to the customer commitment. However, below the figure 4 illustrates which leads to customer commitment. Before becoming committed to company, normally customer has a positive repeat buying behaviour, meaning that when the customer continues to repeat buying, he will become a loyal customer. Customer loyalty is defined customer's positive attitude to buy repeatedly from the same company. (Arantola, H., 2000). When customer comes to the point where he is loyalty to the company and he has behaviour or attitudinal intentions to continue the relationship with the company, he becomes to the stage which is identified customer committed.

\[
\text{Repeat buying} + \text{Positive attitude} = \text{Loyalty} + \text{Future orientation} = \text{Commitment}
\]

Figure 3 Definitional structure of customer commitment. (Heli Arantola, 9).
7 RESEARCH METHOD AND IMPLEMENTATION

The first part of the research is empirical part, which goes into detailed of the purpose of the conducted study, the main key concepts of the study, which relate strongly to the subject of the thesis and the thesis process is explained thoroughly. After empirical part, the study continues with the chosen research method. The research method was chosen to be the qualitative research method, which will be explained more detailed in this chapter. This chapter examines also the reliability and validity of the research and it goes through the structure of the questionnaire. The questionnaire is attached in appendixes 1.

7.1.1 Research method

The data collection method for this research was chosen to be qualitative method. Qualitative research (QR) is about understanding people’s experiences. (Silverman, D. 2006., 3). The ground for the research method was that researcher would understand customers in much greater depth. Meaning that, customer experience is perceived mostly through feelings, therefore, the chosen research method will collect the data which is necessary for understanding how customers feel in the entire customer experience process and the researcher will be able to build the map based on the study results.

7.1.2 Qualitative research

The objective of the scientific research is to find a solution to a problem. Research design is formulated by choosing the data of collection method. Qualitative research and quantitative research are most common used data of collection methods. However, as stated earlier, the researcher chose qualitative method, which is described as exploratory research as the qualitative research aims to understand people’s experiences, feelings, motivations, opinions and reasons behind the studied issue. Qualitative method dives into deep to the minds of the participants.
Qualitative research consists in three separate parts: observations, interviews and lastly, the research analyses the study results. (Pathak, V., Jena, B. & Karla, S., 2013).

7.1.3 Questionnaire

Questionnaire is used to gather data from the respondents who answer to different questions included in the questionnaire both in qualitative or quantitative in nature. (McLeod, S., 2018). Questionnaire provides a large amount of information from the respondents depending on the nature of the question. Questionnaire can include, closed-ended-, multiple-choice or open-ended – questions. The questionnaire includes some advantages such as low cost and speed of data collection. Whereas, disadvantages are following: respondents might choose or answer randomly due to the level of interest to that subject or environmental factors such as time or peer pressure might influence to the answer of the respondents. Moreover, respondents do not have possibility to add their additional opinions, feelings or motivations towards the studied issue if the questionnaire does not include additional questions which are relevant for the studied issue. Thus, the researcher will lose important information of the respondents.

7.1.4 The structure of the questionnaire

Questionnaire (see Appendices 1), was conducted as physical questionnaire to customers during the trip to Switzerland. The questionnaire consists of a total of 22 questions, which are divided into seven categories; demographical questions, motive development, information gathering, proposition evaluation, proposition selection, acquisition and re-evaluation questions relating to customer journey map process. The questions are formulated as they serve best customer journey map and based on the forms of the questions the customer journey map can be built. All the questions relate strongly to customer experience, service quality, customer satis-
faction and customer commitment questions, since these concepts are strongly connected to the customer journey map. Questionnaire is done by anonymously, which means that respondents are not recognizable.

The first questions are demographic questions, which contains three questions (questions no 1-3). Nationality (no 1) is set to be an open question, which means that respondents write their own nationalities. Age and gender are asked as a multiple-choice question. (no 2-3). Age has three options, age group 18-23, age group 24-29 and age group 30-35. Age groups are formulated based on the company’s age policy regarding its clients age. Gender has three options, male, female and including “other”, which is suitable for respondents who does not feel belonging male or female categories. Apart from demgraphical questions (no 1-3) other questions in the questionnaire are open-ended questions, which enables respondents answer more deeply and write their motivations and feelings. The questionnaire continues with motive development questions (no 4-6), which shows how respondents’ motivation has evolved towards the company and why they decided to travel with the company. The questions (no 7-10) are information gathering questions, which indicates the satisfaction of the company’s available information. Proposition evaluation questions (no 11-13) ask the criteria of the company evaluation. Proposition questions (no 12-13) ask which things should be taken into consideration in order to make the company evaluation process easier online. Questions (no 14-16) continues with proposition selection questions. The question (no 14) indicates the reasons the company selection is done. Whereas, the questions (no 15-16) figure out factors which should be improved for an easier company selection. A question (no 17) is acquisition question. The question tries to find out what things should be improved in the buying process online. Last questions of the questionnaire are re-evaluation questions (no 18-22). Questions ask respondents reasons for coming back as a customer. The question (no 20) tries to find out the negative aspects of the company’s operation. Lastly, the final question (no 22) is Net Promoter Score question, which finds out the satisfaction level of the company and its service and how likely respondents are to recommend the company to other people. Response to this question is measured on a scale very unlikely 1 to 10 very likely.
7.2 Research implementation

The questionnaire was made in Microsoft Word pdf-form in English and 90 copies were printed out for the respondents. The questionnaire was tested with three people to receive feedback about the grammar, the structure of the questionnaire, the form and the length of the questions before giving it to the commissioner. The company’s managing director went through the questionnaire and he checked the spelling and grammar and approved the questionnaire to be conducted.

After the approval, in total of 90 copies of the questionnaire were printed out. The questionnaire was conducted during the trip to Switzerland where the researcher was in with a group of 90 customers. The target group included 23 different nationalities, new customers and existing customers which was an ideal group for the researcher. The researcher handed out the questionnaire to the customers at the beginning of the trip and the customers had one day to fill out the questionnaire and give it back to the researcher. The researcher’s target for sample size was to receive at least 70 responds. Unlikely, all customers did not fill out the questionnaire but the target for sample size was reached as 75 customers filled out the questionnaire.

7.2.1 Sampling methods

Selecting the group of people who might answer to the questions of the questionnaire is a part of the research process. Sampling is a method which is classified as either probability or non-probability. In probability samples, a sample has been selected from a population by using a random selection method. Each member of the population has the same probability being selected. In non-probability sampling, individuals which are selected from the population have higher possibility being selected than others (Ghauri, P. & Grønhaug, K. 2005, 145-148).

The researcher chose probability method for this study. She used random sampling, which means that each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected.
7.2.2 Validity and reliability of research methods

Validity and reliability are important concepts in research methodology in terms of evaluate the study and its results. The term reliability measures the stability or consistency of study results. In other words, the study results are reliable if the results are repeatable. Meaning that researcher tests the study results to be repeatable. The study results should remain the same even if the study is conducted under different conditions, meaning that samples or timing can be different. The research is reliable if a strong correlation is seen between the results of a replicated research. (McLeod, S., 2013). Moreover, the researcher must provide explanation about the way the conclusions are derived in order to prove the study is reliable.

Whereas, the term validity represents how well the intended elements are measured. Meaning that, the research is valid if the findings truly represent the studied issue. In addition, the study process should be explained thoroughly and theoretical framework should be a basis for analysis of the study results.

The research can be reliable but not valid or other way around, the research can be valid but not reliable. The elements of the good research include its high level of reliability and validity.

However, the conducted study meets the requirement of the reliability, because the study results are repeatable and the study results remain the same among the respondents. Moreover, the study results represents the studied issue by providing information for the research questions. Furthermore, the researcher aimed to achieve the validity of the research by explaining the study process in detail and she uses the theoretical framework as a basis for analyzing the study results.
8 RESULTS

All in all, 90 questionnaires were conducted but 75 respondents filled out the questionnaire. The questionnaire was conducted during the one-day trip to Switzerland where the respondents took part in, thus, the time to fill out the questionnaire was limited. Moreover, the results represent only the respondents who took part in this trip to Switzerland. However, despite the time limit, the researcher was satisfied with the response rate, which was 83%. The questionnaire included 1 multiple-choice question, 1 scaled question and 20 open-end questions. Open-end questions gained more answers than expected. The respondents were willing to write about their own views, feelings and motivations. Respondents answered comprehensively for improvements towards the company and its operation. The questionnaire is attached at the end of the thesis (see Appendices 1).

8.1 Demographical questions

Questions from 1 to 3 were about demographical questions, such as nationality, age and gender. The response rate for these questions were 100%.

The first question asked to fill out the respondents’ nationality. The research reached high level of different nationalities. Among the respondents 23 different nationalities were identified from all around the world. The major nationality were Indians (47%). The next most respondents as a nationality was Georgians (7%) then, Vietnamese and Filipino (5%) and Mexican and South-African (4%). This shows, that almost half of the respondents were Indians and the difference among other nationalities were evenly distributed. Furthermore, this question showed that majority of the respondents are from outside the Europe and the minority of the respondents are from Europe.
Figure 4 The results of question 1

The question number two was age question. The question was divided into three age groups. First group was between 18-23 years old (15%). Second group was between 24-29 years old (72%). Third group was between 30-35 years old (13%). Obviously, customers between 24-29 years old travels most with pm2am.

The third question was gender question, which included multiple-options such as male, female or "other". Other is referred to a person who categorizes themselves as neither man or woman. More than half of the respondents were females (53%). Thus, less than half of the respondents were males (47%). This shows that, customers are distributed evenly between the genders and there is no big difference in customers between females and males.
8.2 Motive development

Questions from 4 to 6 concerned about the motives which have awakened respondents interest towards the company. Response rate for these questions was 98%.

Motive development started with a question how respondents have heard about pm2am? The majority of the respondents (61%) heard about pm2am through word of mouth. Whereas, (39%) have heard about pm2am through social media. These answers revealed, how large influence word of mouth and social media can have on the recognizability of the company. Especially, when the customers are multinational from all over the world, the word of mouth has been spreading fast around the world. In addition, this question also shows that the respondents have heard only positive feedback by word of mouth and has seen pm2am in a positive light in social media because after hearing about pm2am they wanted to gather more information about the company and they have moved to the next stage in the customer journey map.

![Pie Chart showing 61% Word of mouth and 39% Social media](image)

Figure 5 The results of question 4

Question 5 asked about the motivations which made the decision to travel with travel agency like pm2am. Half the respondents (50%) answered that the price was the main reason, which made the decision to travel with pm2am. As most of the trips takes place on weekends and they are only one-day trips, it means that customers do not need to take free days from University or work when they are traveling. This
shows that (21%) decided to choose traveling with pm2am due to this reason. (16%) Answered that pm2am offer attractive destinations and it is the reason behind to choose the company as a travel agency. Good organizing skills of the company was valued by some of the respondents (13%).

Question 6 was about whenever the respondents are traveling, do they choose pm2am as a travel agency and if so, why or why not. Researcher did not get answers from all the respondents, however, still the response for this question was relatively high (98%). This question reached positive results as the majority of the respondents said they choose pm2am whenever they are traveling because the trips are well organized, the price is affordable and specially if they travel alone a travel agency like pm2am is best option to choose for traveling (74%). Some of the respondents were unsure, because this was their first time when they travelled with pm2am (17%). On the other hand, rest of the respondents said they would not choose pm2am whenever they are traveling, because time schedule is always too tight to have a relaxed holiday (9%).

8.3 Information gathering

Questions from 7 to 10 concerned about available information pm2am communicates and shares online.

The question 7 showed that the respondents were very satisfied with the way pm2am communicates its commercials to the customers as they said commercials are positive and information is clear and simple to understand (90%). Whereas, little group of respondents was unsure about the commercials, since they haven’t heard about them before (6%). The minority of the respondents (4%) did not like the way pm2am communicates its commercials to the customers, since they would like to see the trip information earlier than three days before the trip takes place. Furthermore, according to the minority of the respondents the commercials should be more informative.
Figure 6 The results of question 7

Question 8 regarded how customers usually search for new trips. The question was open-end question, but there was also listed several examples from where customers can choose the best option such as pm2am website, Facebook, Blogs, ask your friends. Response rate for this question was 91%. The question clarified that the majority of the respondents prefer Facebook for searching new trips (44%), secondly, the respondents prefer to use pm2am’s website (25%) thirdly, the respondents ask from friends (21%) and minority of the respondents prefer to search new trips on Google (10%). Based on the results, the importance of the social media e.g. Facebook continues to increase in terms of awaken customers’ needs and wants.

Question 9 revealed that the majority of respondents were very satisfied with the information available on online platforms (80%). Whereas some respondents would be satisfied, if pm2am will add more information on online platforms such as accurate time schedule of the trip, route of the trip, more pictures of the destinations and provide more information of the destinations (12%). Rest of the respondents were not satisfied at all because there was an important information missing on online platforms such as arrival of time and preferred pick-up locations of the customers. Moreover, according to the rest of the respondents pm2am should publish earlier upcoming trips online to plan trips accordingly (8%).
Question 10 showed that most of the respondents think that pm2am informs customers well enough before the start of the trip (69%). Whereas the rest of the respondents think pm2am does not inform the customers enough for several reasons: departure information should be sent earlier than three days before the trip takes place, departure information should include photo of the street (not map as there is already a map) but a real photo of the departure place/street, picture of the bus or detailed information of the bus e.g. the name of the bus, the color of the bus (31%). Furthermore, the departure information should also include more detailed information of the pick-up point such as what is located next to pick-up point or which platform bus leaves. Departure information should also include a photo of the team leader and she/he should wear pm2am’s flag on his/her hand for an easier recognition before the check-in. These respondents preferred to receive the departure information rather via sms than via email. In addition, these respondents added that the travelling experience can be troublesome due to lack of information.

8.4 Proposition evaluation

Questions from 11 to 13 concerned about company’s evaluation criterion. Respondents evaluate the company based on the preferred criterion before they move to the selection whether to buy the service from the company.

Question 11 response rate was 91%. The question showed that three main reasons stood out for selecting the criteria to the company evaluation. Major respondents said online reviews to be the most important criteria for company evaluation (45%). Secondly, price was the most important criteria (40%). Lastly, minority of respondents said that based on the website outlook and content they make the company evaluation (15%). This question shows that, customers talk to one another and hold peer’s service reviews in a high esteem.
Question 12 asked about the easiness of creating an account and managing booking on the website. This question revealed that most of the respondents think pm2am’s website to be easy to use for creating an account and managing the booking (87%). More precisely, they described the website to be user-friendly which is simple to use and provides helpful information to its user. Some respondents answered “I don’t know” whether the website is easy to use, since they haven’t used the website before (7%). These respondents told they friend has made the booking for them. Whereas, rest of the respondents did not agree with the easiness of using the website for creating an account and managing the booking (6%). The respondents told the website is difficult to use and they have faced some problems with managing the booking. On the other hand, according to these respondents the customer support helps always if they face problems with the website.

Question 13 reached low response rate (65%). The question asked about respondents’ opinions how to improve the experience as a customer on pm2am’s website. Almost half of the respondents agreed that they would not make any improvements for the website (49%). First improvement some respondents would consider is to make feedback session available on the website for travellers to share their own experiences on the pm2am’s website (10%). Secondly, they would want to be seen more destinations available on the website (8%). Thirdly, they would like to be seen more pictures and videos of the destinations could be added in order to make a
better overview of the destination on the website (6%). The respondents added that this would speed up the buying decision.

8.5 Proposition selection

Questions from 14 to 16 concerned about the criterion for choosing a travel agency, pm2am’s supply and improvements for an easier travelling experience with pm2am.

Question 14 asked about the criterion respondents make their travel agency selection. Almost half of the respondents told that based on the price they choose the travel agency (45%). Secondly, based on the reviews of other travellers they make the decision (24%). Thirdly, the main criteria were the location of the operation of the company (13%).

Question 15 asked about respondents’ opinions about the destinations pm2am offers. Majority of the respondents think pm2am offers attractive destinations (75%). Some respondents would like to visit Prague (7%), Spain (7%) and visit more often Scandinavian countries with pm2am (6%). However, few respondents think that pm2am offers too many similar trips too often and they should add more destinations on their trip portfolio (5%). According to these few respondents, the variation of the destinations would attract the customers to buy the service more often.
Question 16 relieved factors which should be taken into consideration when improving travelling experience with pm2am. Many factors concerned the beginning of the trip and the travelling experience in the bus. Many respondents said Wi-Fi-connection should be available in the bus (36%). Next, charging point should be on each seat in the bus (20%). Some respondents said the bus is not comfortable because the space for the legs is too small. They wish to have more space in the bus in order to travel comfortably (11%). However, there was also respondents who said that there is nothing to be improved for an easier traveling experience (8%). Rest of the respondents wish to receive proper information of the bus before the start of the trip (6%). Furthermore, teamer should interact more with customers in order to have better travelling experience. More precisely, teamer could provide more information of the destinations and ask more about customers’ feelings during the trip (4%), add more time in each destination (minimum should be 3-4 hours) (3%), keep short breaks in the evening while picking up other customers (3%).
8.6 Acquisition/ purchase

Question 17 concerned about the buying process online and how it could be improved. The question reached lowest response rate. Thus, the response rate was relatively low for this question (64%). Consequently, the researcher did not receive desired results. However, the question showed that majority of the respondents were satisfied with the current buying process online and it does not need any improvements to be made (83%). Some respondents have faced problems during the buying process and they wish the problems occurred on the website could be solved and removed (10%). Even though, there are variety of payment options available on the website, some respondents wish that pm2am could still add more payment options on the website (5%). Lastly, few respondents have paid attention in to architecture of the website and they wish it could be modified more simply to understand and use (2%).

![Figure 9 The results of question 17](image)
8.7 Re-evaluation

Re-evaluation questions were the last part of the questionnaire. Questions from 18 to 22 concerned about the evaluation of the travel experience, things, which would make come back as a customer, a main negative issue regarding pm2am and its operation, improvements, which pm2am should consider in order to make it better travel agency for customers and lastly, how likely respondents are to recommend pm2am and its service to other people.

Question 18 asked about the evaluation of the travel experience on social media. In the question 18 the results were evenly distributed. The results showed that, almost half of the respondents rate their travel experience on social media (47%). Whereas, some respondents never rate their experience (38%). Lastly, rest of the respondents sometimes rate the experience on social media (15%).

Question 19 concerned respondents’ opinions about what would make them come back as a customer. This question’s response rate was low (67%). The researcher expected to receive different answers for this question such as what pm2am could additionally provide to customers in order them to come back as a customer. Instead of that, the question showed that firstly, low prices of the trips got the most votes (27%) Meaning that, low prices matter most to customers. Next, both friendly, helpful teamer and attractive destinations was important aspects for customers (23%). Thirdly, the overall experience has an influence on coming back as a customer (12%). Lastly, the quality of the bus (9%) and how the trip is organized (6%).
Question 20 wanted to find out a main negative issue regarding pm2am and its operation. Buses that do not have charging points in each seat was the main negative issue regarding pm2am and its operation for one quarter of the respondents (25%). Secondly, some respondents told that the main negative issue is that buses are uncomfortable because there is no much space for legs (17%). Thirdly, traveling without Wi-Fi connection in the bus was the main negative issue (15%). Fourthly, if buses are late and there is long waiting time it will have a negative influence on the operation (13%). Whereas, some respondents agreed that there is nothing negative in pm2am and its operation (10%).

Question 21 asked about the improvements pm2am should consider, to make it a better travel agency for customers. The question received variety of responds how the level of service could be easily improved by small modifications. Most of the respondents said that by adding charging points in the bus would significantly change their experience more positive in pm2am (31%). Next, traveling in the bus where is Wi-Fi connection would increase their satisfaction level (27%). Some respondents were not happy with the quality of the bus because there is too little space for legs, so they suggested to invest only buses which have more space for
the legs (8%). Even though, pm2am provides information of the destinations during the trip by giving a brochure of the destination, some respondents thought it is not enough. On top of that, they would like to hear or receive more historical information of the destinations in advance by email or during the way to the destinations by teamer. Furthermore, some respondents said they wish that pm2am could add more destinations on their trip portfolio, which differs other competitors (6%). Lastly, the question received different kinds of separate suggestions such as pm2am could give exact time schedule of the one-day trip to customers (2%), teamer should arrange some activities during the bus journey (2%), pm2am should sell coffee, water or light snacks in the bus (2%) and add more features to premium seats e.g. charging points or water (2%).

Question 22 was the last question in the questionnaire. The question was Net Promoter Score question, which means that the question wants to find out how likely respondents are to recommend pm2am and its service to other people on the scale of 1 to 10. The researcher got responses only on a scale of 4 to 10. However, the question showed that respondents are (7.7) likely to recommend pm2am and its service to other people.

![Figure 11 The results of question 22](image)
9 ANALYSIS

Conducted questionnaire provided comprehensive information about the company and its operation. Based on the results, the researcher is able to suggest on how the overall experience of the customer could be improved. The following chapter analyses more deeply the results of the questionnaire. The chapter has been divided into customer experience, customer service, customer satisfaction and customer commitment as they all are part of the customer journey map and the theoretical framework of the research. Last part of the chapter the customer journey map of pm2am Student Trips is built.

9.1 Customer experience

The first part of the analysis starts with the customer experience, meaning that the researcher divided the study results in each category. The study results which are related under the customer experience are analysed in this chapter.

Answers of the question 6 included statements which showed the reasons if respondents choose pm2am as a travel agency whenever they are traveling. Although the majority of the respondents choose pm2am as a travel agency whenever they are traveling because they have had previous positive experiences with pm2am. Trips are well organized and the price is affordable for customers. However, some respondents would not choose pm2am as a travel agency whenever they are traveling as time schedule of the trip is always too tight to have a relaxed holiday. There is few if any breaks during the way to the destinations. Although, the trips have tight time schedule, the trips would require more flexibility on time schedule. Meaning that there would not be that hurry when picking up other customers and driving to the destinations. There could be at least one short break in the evening between the departure cities for the customers who have been picked up firstly and have been sitting on the bus longest. Moreover, perhaps some trips could include less destinations. In other words, rather than having three different places to explore in one day there could be two places to go in one day in order to save some time and split the time between the destinations. This could add flexibility and remove the rush in destinations which would have positive influence on customers’ feelings and lead more
positive customer experience. On the other hand, this might require extra bus driver during the trip, since there is a limited time for bus drivers to drive a bus and the driving time is calculated accordingly in each trip, meaning that if there is changes in the trip schedule, the driving time must be calculated again to meet the law requirement.

Spending time on company’s website and using the website for searching information of the company, its service and making the decision whether to buy the service reflect on the overall experience how the customer finds the company’s website. Although almost half of the respondents assessed the website to be attractive and informative, the development is required according to the respondents who would consider several improvements on the website. Especially, feedback session should be made available on the website, where travellers could share their own experiences about the destinations, tell pros and cons in each destination, give suggestions which places are worth to visit or which things should take into consideration when travelling to these places. As shown earlier in the results, online reviews are the main reason why customers would make the company selection and have an effect on the buying decision, the feedback session could make the buying decision easier based on the online reviews on the website. Feedback session could be made limited so that, it includes only feedback of the destinations itself but not about the quality of the service as some customers could make bad feedback of the service on purpose. With small improvements, destinations could be made earlier available to see on the website than before in order to know better which trips are upcoming in the near future, this would have positive impact on the functional element of the customer experience and lead even to customer engagement. Moreover, this would save some time of the customer supports as customers tend to ask future trips on a daily basis via phone, email and social media. More pictures and videos could be added on the website to make a better overview of the destination on the website.

Question 17 concerned about the buying process online and how it could be improved. The respondents assessed the buying process online and most of the respondents would not change anything in the buying process online. Whereas, some
customers were not happy with the buying process online. According to some respondents, buying process can be problematic. Once in a while, the website goes down when doing the buying process and some problems occurs on the website that hinder to proceed. These problems should be simply solved and removed so that the website works without problems. Additionally, some respondents wish that there would be even more payment options available on the website as current payment options are not suitable to make the payment by themselves.

9.2 Service quality

Question 9 included quality dimensions about the availability of information on online platforms. The webpage and online platforms such as Facebook and Instagram are part of facilitating services which have large impact on customers’ buying decision. Majority of the respondents were very satisfied with the information available on online platforms. Accordingly, some respondents were not satisfied with the available information, thus, it requires development. Based on the results, pm2am could add more accurate time schedule of the trip (arrival of time in each destinations, departure time in the evening, arrival of time in each home cities) there could be notification that “the time is dependent on the weather, border controls and traffic jams but according to our plan we will be following this time schedule.” Moreover, pm2am could add more informative or historical information about each destinations on online platforms. These small modifications would save customer supporters’ time in the office as customers could find the information by their own. Furthermore, according to the dimensions of service quality, this would increase company’s level of politeness and customer’s feeling they are appreciated and well-informed.

Statements regarding the amount of information pm2am gives its customers before the start of the trip included different improvements. The question 10 showed that most of the respondents think that pm2am informs customers well enough before the start of the trip. Whereas, some respondents think pm2am do not informs the customers enough. Thus, departure information should be sent earlier than three days before the trip takes place if possible. It would help
customers to plan better the trip. In addition, the departure information should include a photo of the street, thus, the departure point could be more easily recognized. Furthermore, the departure information should include detailed information about the bus, there could be the name of the bus, the color of the bus and perhaps the plate number of the bus and it should indicate which platform the bus will be coming. As there are many different buses going on trips, it would be time-consuming to add every time the details of the buses on departure information. The details of each buses should be automatically set on pm2am’s online system. When adding pick-up locations on the departure information, the information of the bus could be selected so the online system could automatically add the details of the bus on the departure information in order customers to receive them.

Moreover, the departure information should also include a photo of the team leader and she/he should wear pm2am’s flag on his/her hand for an easier recognition before the check-in. Customers could recognize faster the right bus and right teamer, which would reduce waiting time in pick-up points and speed up check-in. These improvements would increase the service quality based on the service quality dimension of availability. Meaning that, the easiness of getting the service would be improved through the reduced waiting time before the start of the trip.

9.3 Customer Satisfaction

Analysing the offered services and factors which have an influence on overall customer experience showed and clarified the respondents’ customer satisfaction. Question 15 relieved that majority of the respondents are satisfied with pm2am offered destinations. Some respondents would like to visit especially Prague, Spain and Scandinavian countries. Thus, to keep customers satisfied, pm2am could add more destinations to its trip portfolio. However, the questionnaire was conducted in the beginning of March and by then there was not trips to Scandinavian countries. However, after a month the questionnaire was conducted pm2am added a trip to Scandinavian countries. Meaning that pm2am may offer some destinations which customers are not aware because the trip is not yet updated on the website. In addition, minority of the respondents think pm2am offer too many similar trips too often.
Even though, pm2am has big customer base and most of the customers are exchange students who spend a limited time in Europe, still the company has long-term customers who travels frequently with pm2am. In order to keep them satisfied pm2am should add more variety to the destinations. This would also attract old customers.

In question 16 the respondents assessed the factors which should be taken into consideration when improving a travelling experience with pm2am. Respondents regarded that Wi-Fi connection and charging points on each seat in the bus would add their satisfaction level of the overall experience. Customers would highly appreciate good quality of bus as they are traveling in the bus most of the time. According to the results of the respondents, teamer should be more active during the trip. Meaning that customers want teamer to interact more with the customers, to provide more information about the destinations and ask how customers are feeling during the trip. Thus, interaction between the teamer and the customers would add customers’ satisfaction level in the entire customer experience.

### 9.4 Customer commitment

Analysing the factors which would add customer commitment showed that developments should be made. Question 21 asked about the improvements pm2am should consider, to make it a better travel agency for customers. Consequently, these improvements would increase customer commitment because, these improvements would add value to the customers. As the question 16 assessed already the factors which should be taken into consideration to increase the customer satisfaction, the results of the question 21 were somehow similar. Accordingly, this confirmed that with Wi-Fi connection, charging points on each seat in the bus and good quality of the bus increases both customer satisfaction and customer commitment. Furthermore, with small improvements such as teamer could arrange some activities in the bus during the bus journey to keep customers entertained. Pm2am could sell coffee, water or light snacks in the bus as there are few stops during the way and lastly, add more features to premium seats e.g. water. As a consequence, these improvements would increase the sharing of the same
values, meaning that company appreciates and values same aspects than customers and this would lead to higher glamorizing of the company and its personnel and make the customer even more committed.

9.5 Pm2am's customer journey map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CJM</th>
<th>Motive development</th>
<th>Information gathering</th>
<th>Proposition evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer Actions</td>
<td>Customer wants to travel and explore new places in Europe</td>
<td>Customer continues talking to friends and family, gathering information</td>
<td>Customer evaluates pm2am’s website to make the decision whether to select the company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Touchpoints</td>
<td>Word of mouth (friend’s recommendations)</td>
<td>Word of mouth (friend’s recommendations) Google, pm2am’s website</td>
<td>Pm2am’s website, Facebook, Instagram Customer support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Experience</td>
<td>Interested about pm2am Curious to know more about the company</td>
<td>Quite satisfied with the level of information available</td>
<td>Impressed about the price level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Decision</td>
<td>Wants to gather more information</td>
<td>Hopes to find more information about the destinations and accurate time schedule on the website Decides to contact customer support</td>
<td>Evaluates pm2am’s website appearance and contents Evaluates offered destinations, prices, departure locations Evaluates online reviews Evaluates customer support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvements</td>
<td>Increase marketing efforts to captivate new customers by adding videos of the destinations on the website</td>
<td>More information about the destinations on the official website and online platforms More informative commercials</td>
<td>Improve the quality of the website Make feedback session available on the website Update upcoming trips earlier than usually to attract new and old customers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Customer journey map of pm2am
The research questions and research problem

After conducting the questionnaire, analyzing the results and building the customer journey map the researcher is able to provide answers to her research questions and research problem. The next chapter discusses thoroughly the customer journey map.
map from an average customer point of view. The first research question was: “How does the customer journey look like from customers’ point of view?”

The customer journey map starts from the very beginning which is initial step of the journey. In other words, it is motive development where the customer has recognized the desire to travel around Europe and wants to take part in trips which take place either in Germany, the Netherlands or in Belgium. This is the stage; the customer hears for the very first time about the company after realizing she has the motive to travel. Mostly, customers have heard about pm2am by word of mouth and social media which has given a positive picture of the company and its operation. The customer is happy and curious about the company and she wants to find out more about it by searching more information online. The customer visits company’s Facebook and Instagram and finds out the commercials very attractive so she decides to visit company’s official website for the first time and make a conclusion of the appearance of the website, the content and the offerings. In the information gathering stage the customer feels quite satisfied but still wishes to find more information about the accurate time schedule of the trip and useful information about the offered destinations. However, customers continues to move on to proposition evaluation stage, where she continues to evaluate the website, the offered destinations, the price level departure locations and online reviews. Customer is impressed about the price level and online reviews and she decides to contact the customer support for further information about the destinations. She finds out the customer support to be helpful and quick way to receive more information about the upcoming trips. After evaluating the company, the customer makes the proposition selection based on the price, reviews, offered destinations and departure locations. Because the customer journey has been positive and customer has been happy in each stage of the journey customer decides to buy the service from the company and she moves to acquisition stage. Customer decide to create an account for booking and paying the trip. Before proceeding, problems occur in the website but customer support solves the problem quickly. After solving the problem, the customer is ready to proceed to the payment. After making the payment, the customer gets the booking confirmation. She is ready to go on a trip after three days. She uses the service and goes on a trip. During the trip, the customer is quite satisfied with the service quality. She thinks, some improvements could be made. However, after the trip, she moves to re-evaluation stage which is the last stage of the customer journey. Here she
evaluates the service of the company and gives feedback of the trip for future recommendations. She will get further help by phone, social media or email after the trip if she feels she needs it.

Based on the study results, all the stages of the customer journey map look positive in the eyes of the customer. All the stages are evaluated as “happy”, “interested”, “impressed” except information gathering, acquisition and re-evaluation stages of the map are evaluated “quite satisfied” or “neutral” which tells that improvements should be made in order to attract old and new customers and retain current customers. However, the customer journey map shows the customers’ overall experience in pm2am Student Trips, which is mostly good and positive and the journey goes in a linear, meaning that there are no big problems in the company and its operation and many improvements are not required to be made.

Moreover, the research question provided the answer for the research problem, which was to find out if there is a considerable difference between the actual and desired situation when looking at pm2am customer journey map from customers’ point of view. Desired situation describes the perspective of the management, which is described to be good and desirable, whereas the actual situation describes the perspective of the customers. The study results and the built customer journey map showed that the customer journey map from customers’ point of view corresponds to the desired situation. In other words, there is no considerable difference between the actual and desired situation.

The next research question was: “How likely customers recommend Pm2am and its service?” (Net Promoter Score)
The question was scaled on a scale of 1 to 10 but the researcher got answers only on a scale of 4 to 10. Few respondents scaled 4 (3%) whereas, 5 was scaled (1%). The scale 6 got (13%), scale 7 (23%) and scale 8 got most votes (31%), scale 9 (21%) and lastly, scale 10 (8%). Based on these results, respondents are 7.7 likely to recommend pm2am and its service to other people on the scale of 1 to 10. This shows that customers are satisfied with pm2am and its service and they are willing to recommend the service for other people.
10 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are suggested based on the study results to improve overall customer experience in pm2am Student Trips. The recommendations will differentiate pm2am from its competitors and improve the competitive positioning in the market. Recommendations are divided into groups based on customer journey map.

Development ideas for captivating customers in motive development stage
- Add videos of the destinations on the website

Development ideas to provide more information in information stage
- Add more information about the destinations on the website (e.g. historical information)
- Provide more informative commercials (e.g. add more information on Facebook posts, Instagram posts)

Development ideas for proposition evaluation stage
- Improve the quality of the website (occurred errors should be removed and reduced)
- Make feedback session available on the website (pm2am would first accept before publication the feedback)
- Update upcoming trips earlier on the website

Development ideas for proposition selection stage
- Increase the amount of destinations to trip portfolio (e.g. Spain, Prague)

Development ideas for acquisition stage
- Add more payment option available (e.g. American Express, Apple Pay)
Development ideas for re-evaluation stage

- Invest only buses which have charging points and/or free Wi-Fi connection
- Sell small snacks on the bus (e.g. nuts, water)
- Add some features to premium seats (e.g. free water)
- Make one-day trip more flexible (e.g. reduce one destination from the list when going to three destinations or add more time to spend in destinations to have more relaxed trip)
- Provide more information about details of the bus (e.g. name, colour) on departure information
- Add picture of the pick-up street on departure information
- Pm2am teamer would have pm2am’s flag on his/her hand before start doing check-in for an easier recognition of the bus and the teamer
11 DISCUSSION

The discussion chapter is the last part of the research. This chapter discusses last words about the conducted study relating to the questionnaire, customer journey map, study results and future recommendations related to the conducted study.

To start with, the structure of the questionnaire was built logically in terms of customer journey map stages starting from the very beginning stage to an end stage. However, the researcher found out afterwards that the questionnaire should have included additional questions relating to customer satisfaction questions. The researcher found out the priorities which matter to the customers but the researcher should have investigated also the importance of each priority, meaning that the researcher should have asked: “Which priorities matters most?” Based on the results, the researcher would have highlighted the priorities which should be considered to be improved firstly and which priorities does not matter that much to customers in order to keep them satisfied.

Moreover, the researcher found out that without knowing the company or working in the company for five months, the customer journey map would have been more difficult to formalize and build, since the customer journey map as well as blueprint requires deep knowledge of the processes of the company and its operation. Furthermore, the researcher was dissatisfied with the style of the customer journey map. Unfortunately, all the online programs to make the map were costly, so she settled for the customer journey map which was made by Microsoft Word.

However, pm2am could study further the experience of their customer by going deeper into the opinions, feelings and motivation of the customers. The study could find out, if those improvements would make them more satisfied or perhaps, are they willing to pay more about the service if those improvements are made such as investments only to better buses.

Lastly, the researcher was pleased with the good results of the study, it shows that the operation of the company is professional in every step customer goes through during the customer journey of pm2am. However, the researcher is thankful for pm2am Student Trips to made it possible to conduct the research for their company.
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APPENDICES

(APPENDIX 1)
QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Nationality

2. Age

☐ 18-23  ☐ 24-29  ☐ 30-35

3. Gender

☐ Male  ☐ Female  ☐ Other

Motive development

4. How did you hear about pm2am? (e.g. on social media, word of mouth)

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

5. What made you decide to travel with travel agency like pm2am?

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

6. Whenever you are traveling, do you choose pm2am as a travel agency? If so, why? If not, why?

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________
Information gathering

7. Do you like the way pm2am communicates its commercials to the customers? Why?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

8. How do you usually search for new trips? (e.g. pm2am website, Facebook, Blogs, ask your friends)
________________________________________________________________________

9. Is the amount of information available on online platforms enough? If not, why?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

10. Do you think pm2am informs the customer enough before the start of the trip? If not, what information would you like to receive before the trip takes place?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Proposition evaluation

11. Based on what criteria do you mainly make a company evaluation? (e.g. reviews, website, price)
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
12. Do you think it is easy to create an account and use our website for managing your booking? If not, why?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

13. How would you improve the experience as a customer on our website?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Proposition selection

14. Based on what criteria do you make your travel agency selection?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

15. Do you think, pm2am offers attractive destinations? If not, what would you like to see offered?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

16. What factors do you think should be improved for an easier travelling experience with pm2am?

________________________________________________________________________
Acquisition/purchase

17. What would you improve about the buying process online?

_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

Re-evaluation

18. Do you usually rate/evaluate your travel experience on social media?

_______________________________________________________________________

19. What would make you come back as a customer?

_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

20. Can you name a main negative issue regarding pm2am and its operation?

_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

21. What improvements would you suggest for pm2am to consider, to make it a better travel agency for you as a customer?

_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

22. How likely you are to recommend pm2am and its service to other people?

Very unlikely  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10 Very likely

Thank you for your answers! I appreciate your opinions! 😊