Best practices in Post-sale Customer Surveys in Online-strong Direct to Consumer Companies

Case Company X

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Description

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis was to find out the best practices of post-sale surveys in direct-to-consumer companies and suggest improvements to the post sale surveys at company X. The thesis was done for a client. The main focus was to provide suggestions of improvement for company X through finding out the best practices and comparison of methods. The theoretical part focuses on the post-sale part of the customer cycle and customer satisfaction. The post-sale survey questions used at company X were used as the data for this study. The analysis was done using the hypothesis coding method in two cycles. The analysis was performed in two cycles. The results of the analysis are presented together with the improvement suggestions in the conclusions part of the thesis, combining both the empirical and the theoretical parts. The results showed that there should be changes made in the length of the current post-sale survey. Either it could be divided into two surveys, or the questions should be shortened to avoid survey fatigue. The Net Promoter Score could be either divided into two or used a single time, but nevertheless should be used as a separate survey instead of being included in the multiple-choice survey.

Keywords/tags (subjects)

Customer experience, customer satisfaction, post-sale survey, net promoter score, customer effort score, direct to consumer marketing.

Miscellaneous (Confidential information)

There is no confidentiality marking. Only the name of Company X is hidden throughout the thesis.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis concentrates on customer experience and specifically the post-sale part of the customer cycle. The thesis aims to find the best practices to do post-sales surveys in Direct-to-Consumer companies, analyse the way company X does post-sale surveys and suggest improvements to their model. The theoretical part covers topics such as direct to consumer marketing, DTC trends, customer cycle, customer loyalty as well as customer experience and customer satisfaction which are undoubtedly in the core of any business model and central in especially post-sale surveys. The theoretical part of course also includes sections on the different ways to do post-sale surveys and what are their pros and cons. The analysis part analyses the surveys used at company X, their relevance in terms of uniqueness compared to the other questions used in the survey, their wording, length, and timing when they are sent to the customer.

The analysis findings and final post-sale survey improvement suggestions for company X are presented in the last chapter of the thesis.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The post-sale survey at company X has a low response rate. How can the response rate be raised? The survey is sent to all customers after two weeks of buying a product from company X, but many don’t answer the questions. Additionally, some stop answering towards the last questions of the survey. This falsifies the data and impedes company X from drawing valid conclusions from the data.

1.2 Background, Motivation and Need

The thesis was done for a client as a case study. Company X is a globally operating company in the sports equipment web sales field. The company asked me to solve their problem of a low response rate in their post-sale survey by finding out the best practices in the DTC field when it comes to the post-sale part of the customer cycle and based on the research findings suggest improvements to their post-sale surveys.

The purpose of the study is to find the best practices on the DTC field when it comes to post-sale surveys and make improvement suggestions for company X.

1.3 Research Questions

How to improve the post-sale survey of company X? What are the ways a company with a DTC marketing strategy should do post-sale surveys? What are the best practices on the field?

1.4 Limitations of the Study

One limitation is the fact that the topic is fairly new, so the available literature on the topic is very limited. Due to this fact I have used mostly online sources as well as online scientific articles and studies published by for example the Harvard Business Review as references for this thesis. Most of the sources are international. There is a possibility that I could have gotten more detailed information by interviewing companies with a DTC marketing strategy. However, the thesis concentrates on best practices on a global scale on the DTC field. Finding a good take of a couple global scale DTC companies and get them to do an interview is challenging. Therefore, I decided that I would get the best and less biased results by looking for information and scientific studies online. All the articles used as references in this thesis have been carefully selected with source criticism.

1.5 Structure of the Study

The study was done using qualitative methods. The thesis begins with a theoretical part explaining theories about DTC marketing, customer cycle, customer experience and post-sale surveys. The thesis consists of five chapters: Introduction, Methodology, Theoretical Framework, Empirical Study and Conclusion. You can find information about company X in the methodology chapter and the analysis part.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

The research data consists of the surveys that company X uses for their post-sale surveys. A am using their question battery for analysis and find out how it can be improved to make the response rate higher.

2.2 Methodological Approach and Methods Applied

The research approach that I have chosen for this thesis is the qualitative approach. (Carol, 2016) A qualitative analysis is suitable for analysing a few sources in a detailed fashion in comparison to the quantitative method, which is more suitable for analysing question batteries. in this thesis, the analysis is directed to the questions of the post-sale survey, as with a qualitative analysis method it is possible to consider each question in detail.

I decided to analyse the questions and surveys that are used at company X with hypothesis coding as the first cycle coding method. I hypothesis coding applies pre-determined codes into the quantitative data to assess a researcher-generated hypotheses. The codes have been developed from the prediction of what will be found in the data before the actual analysis. The first cycle coding generates an array of individual codes that are associated with their respective data chunks. The theoretical background was obtained mostly from online sources, like websites and online articles. The language of the references is mostly English.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The data used for this study consists of the different questions sent to the customer post-sale at company X. The data that I have available for my thesis is the questions of customer surveys that are sent to all customers that purchased a product from company X in the United States. The data is analysed at the end of chapter 4. Company X is introduced at the end of this chapter, methodology. As the data analysis method, I chose the hypothesis analysis that codes the data into sections defined by the researcher by intuition. In the first cycle the data is coded into four different groups based on the theoretical part of the thesis. The second cycle of the analysis divides the questions in terms of length and how complex they are, each on a scale from 1 (short/simple) to 5 (long/complex). The reasoning for this is the fact that to avoid survey fatigue and long answer times.

2.4 Ethical Consideration

In the beginning of the thesis process I considered writing the theoretical and empirical parts in an alternating manner, but after some consideration I decided to have the theoretical and empirical parts separate. The initial thought was to have each introductory chapter of company X following the chapters in the theoretical part to avoid repetition, as there will be a fair amount of theory covered, but I decided against it and covered the introduction in chapter 2 in the methodology part and the necessary analysis-related parts in chapter 4 in the analysis part.

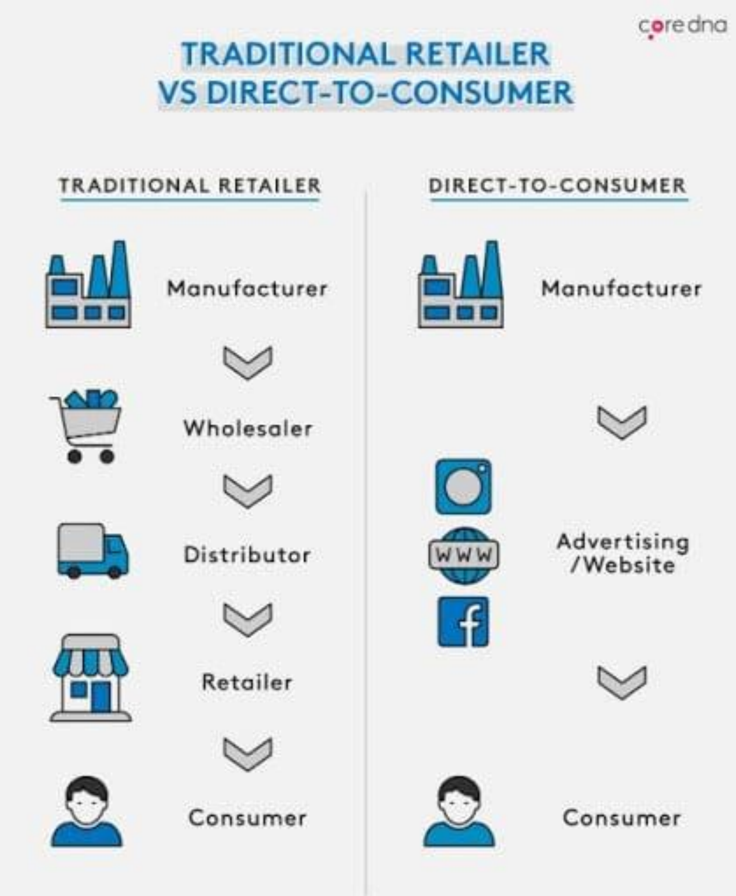
2.5 Case Company X

This thesis was done as a case study for company X that operates in a global scale in the sports equipment online sales field. Company X is an online strong DTC company. What is meant by an online strong DTC company is a company, that has put special emphasis to developing the online sales channels and is utilizing the direct-to-consumer marketing technique. The products that company X sells are large, and therefore the products are not purchased very frequently by a single customer. They are more often purchased once or if a repurchase happens, it happens after years. This fact poses a challenge to remarketing and post-sales as opposed to new customer acquisition.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction to Direct-to-consumer Marketing

Direct to consumer marketing is a way of marketing directly to the customer base instead of through retailers. Any brand that sells their products straight to customers without the products going through a distribution channel or a retailer is a DTC brand. (mediaradar, 2019) During the coronavirus crisis the shift towards DTC has been significant. The direct-to-consumer model is starting to become favored by not only companies but also clients. (Brightpearl, n.d.) From the company's point of view the DTC model means that the company owns its own distribution channels and is thus able to reach its customers directly at any point of the customer journey instead of being limited to communication only through retailers. Brands have recently started to expect quicker communication and the ability to reach the customers directly. Marketing and sales have also shifted more from being transactional towards being experiential. (Mediaradar, 2019) Creating experiential marketing and creating the amazing customer service requires the possibility of quick connection. Below you fill find an infographic demonstrating the differences between the traditional retailing style and the DTC style.



(Dennis, 2020)

A 2017 survey (Sterling, 2017) shows the DTC trend that has been developing for a while now. According to the survey that was done by Aston Commerce using data from 1000 American adults, 55 percent of the participants wanted to buy directly from brands instead of through retailers. (Sterling, 2017) The trend has been only growing since the survey and buying through suppliers instead of retailers has become a standard practice in most people's life.

3.1.1 The Biggest DTC Trends

The shift to DTC isn't expected to slow down anytime soon, and there are a couple trends that have been visible for a while in the DTC industry. The first one is that the online and offline brands are blending. This means that brands that have usually been viewed as online-only, will now have an offline presence as well and vice versa. A second trend is that traditional retailers are moving into DTC with the help of big data. Data is an increasingly important part of navigating the business among competition and acquiring data is a lot easier when customers buy directly from you. DTC brands are also categorizing, meaning that they are wanting to expand into a greater category instead of a single product, and to sell a feeling instead of just a product, for example the company Bombas, selling socks, launching t-shirts and broadening their category, wanting to be perceived as a comfort company instead of one just selling socks. (Song, 2019) The fourth trend is that DTC brands are embracing amazon as a partner instead of a competitor. After all, it is impossible to compete with Amazon, so why not adopt the useful and quick sales channel as your own. The final trend is that DTC agencies are launching their own brands and creating a new revenue model as a result. (Song, 2019)

3.1.2 Customer Cycle

The graph below summarizes the customer cycle. (Taylor, n.d.)

From sparking interest in new customers and becoming known at the awareness-level, to the acquisition level where the customer researches products and decides upon purchase. From conversion to retention and through an amazing customer experience to the advocacy level and to the second cycle of the customer cycle. That is the optimal customer cycle, which is rare of course. Some customers might only reach the conversion part. Some will reach the advocacy part, get more people to purchase from your business and continue to the second round of the customer cycle. Without a good post-sale plan and a good understanding of how the customer path resonates with the customer, you are less likely to succeed in getting as many people as possible to turn into loyal customers and continue in the customer cycle. Creating a great customer experience creates more happy customers that are likely to reach the advocacy level and tell others about their company and even continue to the second cycle. This is free marketing, and the best kind at that. Needless to say, it is very profitable to put effort into creating an amazing customer experience for your customers. With the help of the data collected with the post-sale survey, it is easier to pinpoint places of improvement and develop the customer path at your business. It is crucial to stay on track about how customers are viewing business with your company. This highlights the importance of collecting information from the customers after they have made a purchase. Re-advertising is an increasingly important part of the customer cycle as it is very cost efficient to get customers to return instead of acquiring entirely new customers. (Taylor, n.d.)

3.2 Customer Experience

Customer experience is defined as an internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company. Direct contact is usually the actual purchase of a product usually initiated by the customer, whereas the indirect contact with a company is often unplanned encounters with the brand, representations of its products, word of mouth recommendations or criticisms, news reports, reviews and so forth. (Schwager & Meyer, 2007) Customer experience is the sum of all this. It is impossible to try to control all touchpoints the customer has with the customer as some happen on social media, between customers as conversations and so forth, but making the effort to control all the points of connection with the customer as well as you can and ensure an amazing customer experience pays off. (Hotjar, 2021) Building a loyal customer base is the goal for e-commerce companies. It is a lot more affordable to get the existing customer base to purchase products again, than it is to target completely new customers. It is crucial to make sure that the great customer experience continues also post-purchase for the customer to return. (Shaw, 2020) DTC brands have a lot of advantage when it comes to companies with no direct-to-consumer marketing. DTC companies have first party data, which means that they can track their customer's activity through all parts of the customer journey. They own their distribution channels and can control all customer touch points, which makes everything so much simpler when it comes to managing the customer experience, communicating with the customer, and dealing with complaints. It is also possible to interact directly with the customer as there are no intermediaries like retailers. (Weissman, 2019)

3.3 Post-sale Surveys

In general, the term "post-sale" includes all possible interactions with the customer after the sale, such as sending the product, billing, cancellation and changes, returns, complaints, support, service delivery, incident management, customer surveys, upselling and customer referrals. (Spacey, 2019) By creating a good impression with post-sales, customers are more likely to return to do business with the same company. There are a variety of methods that companies use to collect post sale data from the customer and change their marketing or other parts of the customer journey according to the data collected. In the following chapters I will be introducing the pros and cons of using certain ways of post-sale surveys and why they should or should not be used. I have looked into a variety of different tools that are generally used to collect data about customer experience and created a brief summary of each.

3.3.1 Post-sale Multiple-choice Survey

A multiple-choice survey is a good way of obtaining exactly the information that you want. There are an infinite number of possibilities of different questions, and it can be modified to meet the needs of any company perfectly. However, there are a couple golden rules to multiple choice surveys that should always be followed to obtain the best results with post sale surveys.

1. Keep the questions as short as possible

Taking the time to make the questions as concise as possible saves time from the customer. It is important that your survey conveys that you respect the time of your customer. (Shaw, 2020)

2. Only ask questions that serve the purpose of your survey

It is easier for the customer to fill the survey if there aren't too many different questions. When non-priority questions are removed from the survey, the information received is also more concise and serves the purpose of the survey. (Shaw, 2020)

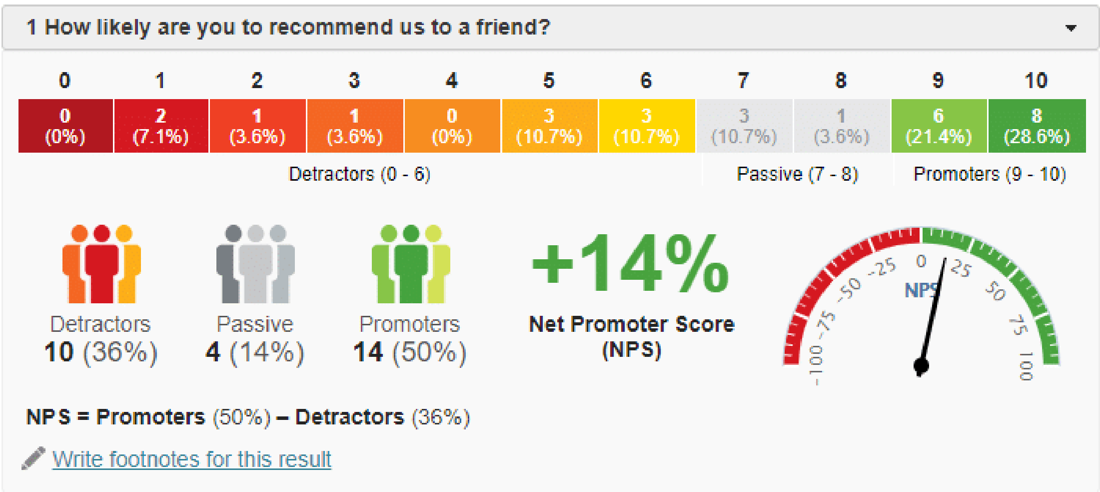
3. Keep the entire survey as short as possible

It is good to consider the fact that survey fatigue exists. To maximise the truthfulness of the answers obtained through the survey, it is good to keep the survey short. If the survey is too long, the customers might end up leaving some questions blank, or choose random answers. This affects the results of the survey and in the end of a very long survey the first answers end up being thought and truthful whereas the last answers are hurried and potentially untrue. One thing that can be done to minimize the filling time of the survey is to use multiple choice questions, that are quick to complete and don't require thought and writing from the customer. Multiple choice questions are easy to complete, but open-ended questions can give you more insight when the wording isn't already determined for the customer. The responses might also be pretty much the same for most of the customers answering the questions and may not require individual processing, but an open-ended question gives the customer an opportunity to give you information that the company hasn't thought about in the multiple-choice surveys. Of course, you will receive relatively less responses for the open-ended questions, but you might receive information that might help you improve aspects of your business. (Questback, 2016)

Survey fatigue is a problem with longer surveys. If the survey is longer, customers may start it, but start clicking whatever question just to get to the end. Therefore, it is extremely important to have the length of the survey as short as possible.

Rewarding customers for filling out surveys is another controversial topic. It has to be very carefully considered whether to reward the customer for the answer to the survey. On the other hand rewards may bring more answers to the surveys, but the answers should remain truthful. If a reward is chosen, it shouldn't be too big so that customers don't only fill out the survey for the prize. Yet it should be motivating enough.

3.3.2 Net Promoter Score



(Survio, 2019)

The Net Promoter Score, or the NPS, is the answer to a very simple question "how likely are you to recommend this company to others". It defines the loyalty level of your customers. The NPS can also be extended by verbal feedback to allow the customer to voluntarily extend their feedback and tell you what he/she would appreciate more. (Survio, 2019) NPS is a way of measuring customer satisfaction in a short and very efficient way and that has greatly contributed to it rapidly becoming one of the most used tools for measuring customer satisfaction. According to Fortune (Colvin, 2020) the NPS is used by two thirds of fortune 1000 companies. The NPS is best used as the first step. After the NPS you can send out more detailed surveys to pinpoint the issue. (Surveymonkey, n.d.)

Why should your company use NPS? It is relevant to anyone. It is inexpensive and is very user-friendly for both the company and the customer. It is easy to benchmark against competitors because it is so widely used. It measures the likelihood of repeat business and gives direction for change and improvement, as studies show that the NPS results are correlated with business growth. The promoters, passives and detractors are three categories in which the NPS score divides your customers into. (Malaguti, 2020) The NPS is a great tool that helps you segment your customers into clear groups and many people use the NPS segmentation also in other parts of the business.

What are the cons of using NPS? The NPS doesn't specify why some people could be detractors. The fact that the NPS survey gives you the group of people that are detractors, but doesn't specify why, gives you another problem to solve. Finding out the why calls for another customer survey. This is a very important thing, I feel like segmenting people through the NPS and continuing with different surveys for detractors and promoters would provide important data. The differences in the groups call for different questions. Therefore, one of the suggestions based on the research is likely to concern follow up surveys for different customer segments. The NPS score gives you the opportunity to develop your company towards the right direction. The important thing with NPS is to act on the feedback received and close the loop. It is also important to communicate to the customers about the improvements that have been made. (Malaguti, 2020)

3.3.3 Customer Effort Score

The customer effort score is a metric that measures the amount of effort that is required from the customer to interact with your company. It is essential to the customer that doing business with a company is effortless. If buying from a company requires much effort, the customer may choose to take his business elsewhere. CES is best used directly after a purchase or interaction. It is effective in helping predict future purchase decisions.

Why should your company use CES? It is a good predictor of purchase behavior as well as a good predictor of referral likelihood, as according to a study (Birkett, n.d.) 81% or customers that reported a high effort would speak negatively to others about the company.

The cons are that CES doesn't collect data on where the customers are having trouble, so finding out the specific details requires follow up. Also a downside is the fact that overall customer satisfaction cannot be measured by CES. The CES only focuses on effort, so doesn't include cost or product quality measurements. The CES is becoming increasingly popular and hence can be compared accurately with competition. CEB research (Gartner, 2019) found that Customer Effort Score is a better predictor of loyalty than the Net Promoter Score. (Chambers, 2018) But we should consider the following: are we looking for a tool that would do everything? Or are we looking for a couple tools that we can use to acquire the information we need?

3.3.4 CSAT, The customer satisfaction score

The customer satisfaction score targets the customer with variations of very basic question: “how would you rate your experience interacting with our sales/customer service/support department?” The scale typically ranges from: very unsatisfactory / unsatisfactory / neutral / satisfactory / very satisfactory. (Aircall, n.d.) The CSAT is similar to the NPS and CES in the sense that it also concentrates on one question. The CSAT score is the average of all answers.

Why would your company use the CSAT? The CSAT is very versatile since the last part of the question can be changed to anything. It is easy to understand, it uses emojis instead of numbers so it makes customers concentrate on feelings when it comes to the evaluation.

The cons include for example that the CSAT doesn’t give you insight of the customer’s overall relationship with your company. It doesn’t measure loyalty or advocacy, and is only relevant in the short term. (Doan-Dunnum, 2020) There is no way of segmenting the customers using this tool. (Birkett, n.d.) The CSAT isn’t very specific. It also requires the customers to define satisfaction, which might be understood differently by different customers. This gives room for misunderstanding. Additionally, the likelihood that the customer reflects the latest touchpoint with the company instead of reflecting the entire customer journey.

The CSAT is also a fairly commonly used and easy to compare measurement tools.

4 EMPIRICAL STUDY

4.1 Introduction

The first part of the study is the collection of the data from company X and collecting the data into a spreadsheet. The second part of the study is analysing the data and dividing it into themes. The third part of the study is presenting the research findings. I decided to analyse the questions and surveys that are used at company X by using hypothesis coding. Hypothesis coding applies pre-determined codes into the qualitative data to assess a researcher-generated hypotheses. The codes have been developed from the prediction of what will be found in the data before the actual analysis. The first cycle coding generates an array of individual codes that are associated with their respective data chunks. The second code builds on the theoretical part and divides the codes into two codes: length and conciseness. The hypotheses is that there are questions that are long and complex and that there are questions that can be combined to create a shorter survey that The second cycle coding method in this study is a part of the same hypothesis coding.

4.2 Post-sale Surveys at Company X

Company X uses three different post-sale customer survey techniques to collect information from all customers that have purchased from company X. They are the CES, the NPS and the post-sale multiple choice survey. In addition, there is a customer satisfaction survey, thumb up or thumb down, that has to do with the performance of the customer service, and thus doesn't concern post-sales.

The CES survey is sent to the customer directly after the purchase. The meaning of the CES is to evaluate the easiness of the customer path from the start until the purchase. The customer answers the following question: "how easy is it to purchase from company X?" Usually, the CES survey at company X has resulted in good feedback (4 or 5). If there is any worse feedback, a follow up is performed to correct the situation. The CES survey also involves an open-ended question to make sure pinpointing and fixing the problem is possible in case of negative feedback and a low CES score.

The NPS survey is usually used as a separate survey to find out how likely the customer is to recommend the company on to others. The NPS survey is a new concept at company X. At company X the NPS has been integrated into the post-sale multiple choice survey, which is sent to the customer two weeks post-sale. The question is located last in the survey.

The post-sale multiple choice survey is sent to the customer two weeks post-sale to receive relevant data, as by this time the customer has had time to get acquainted with the product and can provide data about the product and the entire customer journey from finding the product in the webstore to the finished product. The questionnaire includes a variety of different questions regarding customer information, customer experience, webstore operations, new products and so on. The questions are the following:

- Email
- Name
- Gender
- Age
- State

- What was your main reason for buying the product from us? You can choose multiple options.
- Considering your most recent purchase from us, Who did you buy it for?
- What other brands did you consider? You can choose multiple options.
- What features are important to you when buying our product? You can choose multiple options.
- What attracted you to purchase from us? You can choose multiple options
- How long did you search and compare products by different brands before making the purchase decision?
- When you were searching the best product for your needs, how easy was it to find us?
- Did you have any challenges throughout the shopping experience with us? You can choose multiple options.
- When shopping at our webstore, which features mattered most to you? You can choose multiple options.
- Tell us what we could have done better when comparing us to other brands?
- What additional product information or types of content would be helpful in supporting your next purchase (either on our webstore, in our newsletters or social media)?
- Help us design a future product! What three characteristics would be the most important to you in the future product?
- How likely is it that you would recommend us to a friend or colleague?

4.3 Coding

4.3.1 First Cycle

According to the hypothesis coding method the different code groups are decided according to the researcher's intuitive choice. The aim of this thesis is to find the best way to do post sale surveys in DTC companies and provide means of improvement to company X. The questions in the customer surveys usually touch the same themes that are important for the business of the company. I thought to use the following themes as codes for the data:

- COMPETITION
- PRACTICAL SHOPPING EXPERIENCE
- PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT
- CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

I went through the data and concluded that the questions fall well under these categories. Therefore, changes to the codes do not need to be made, and the codes chosen are fit for the study. I am going to be excluding the first questions regarding the contact information of the customer (email, name, gender, age, state) from the analysis.

The COMPETITION (C) group had 4 questions. The PRACTICAL SHOPPING EXPERIENCE (PSE) group had 3 questions. The PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT (PD) group had 2 questions, and the CUSTOMER SATISFACTION (CS) group had 5 questions.

4.3.2 Second Cycle

It is important that the questions are as short as possible while still conveying the message to the customer to make it as easy as possible for the customer to answer your survey. As a second code for the second cycle, I wanted to analyse the way that the questions length and conciseness correlate in the questions. They should be as concise as possible while still conveying the same message.

- SHORT/LONG
- CONCISE/COMPLEX

Both the length and the conciseness of the question are described on a scale from 1 to 5, 1 describing a short/concise question and 5 describing a lengthy/complex one.

The data can be found below in the analysis-part organized by the codes.

4.4 Analysis

4.4.1 Code: Competition

COMPETITION	Lenght	Conciseness
1. What other brands did you consider? You can choose multiple options.	2	1
2. When you were searching the best product for your needs, how easy was it to find us?	3	4
3. How long did you search and compare products by different brands before making the purchase decision?	5	5
4. Tell us what we could have done better when comparing us to other brands?	3	4

The post-sale survey is a great way to acquire information about competition. The customer has already done research on competition and chosen your product over the others. I think the question 2 could potentially be joined to the first NPS that could be sent to the customer after the sale.

4.4.2 Code: Practical Shopping Experience

PRACTICAL SHOPPING EXPERIENCE	Length	Conciseness
5. When shopping at our webstore, which features mattered most to you? You can choose multiple options.	2	1
6. Did you have any challenges throughout the shopping experience with us? You can choose multiple options.	3	2
7. How effortless was your shopping experience with us? (CES)	1	1

This section is in a way different, as the CES, question 7, is presented to the customer separately from the rest of the questions. According to the research done regarding this theme, it is good to have a follow-up question or questions to the CES. Therefore my suggestion to this would be having the question 6 as a follow up question for the CES in case of a bad CES score.

4.4.3 Code: Product Development

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT	Length	Conciseness
8. What features are important to you when buying our product? You can choose multiple options.	2	1
9. Help us design a future product! What three characteristics would be the most important to you in the future product?	5	3

In this category there were only two questions, which both aid the company to develop new products. Though, it could be considered, how much information regarding this topic is needed on a regular basis? Could this category be summarized into just one question regarding old and new products?

4.4.4 Code: Customer Satisfaction

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	Length	Conciseness
10. What was your main reason for buying the product from us? You can choose multiple options.	2	2
11. Considering your most recent purchase from us, who did you buy it for?	2	2
12. What attracted you to purchase from us? You can choose multiple options.	1	1
13. What additional product information or types of content would be helpful in supporting your next purchase (either on our webstore, in our newsletters or social media)?	5	5
14. How likely is it that you would recommend us to a friend or colleague? (NPS)	1	1

In this section the NPS is included. However, the NPS is recommended to be separate from the multiple choice survey, as it is possible to segment customers with the NPS scores. I would recommend taking the opportunity of putting the segmenting to use by sending the NPS out to people first, and the post-sale survey second. The questions 10 and 12 are very very similar, and I would suggest joining them together. I would also suggest rewording the question 13 to avoid it being very lengthy.

4.5 Results of the analysis

The questions are all of value. They can be shortened and made more concise for the customer to understand them better. However, there are many of them, and the survey fatigue is a thing worth considering. Some questions should be prioritized over others, and if company X wants to use all the questions and receive answers for all of them, two surveys could be constructed instead of just one. In a survey of this size, there is a valid concern that some customers might get tired by the survey and mid-survey start clicking whatever option. This makes the particular response untrue, which falsifies whatever conclusions drawn from the survey results. I would also recommend adding a general notice of the opportunity to choose multiple options instead of adding it after every question, as it lengthens the question considerably.

There are two options what you can do with the multiple-choice survey: either use all of the questions as they are in two different surveys to drastically shorten the survey, or shorten and combine the questions together. I will present my findings and give a suggestion for the question shortening and combination in the conclusion part below.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Research findings

Company X uses NPS, CES and a multiple-choice survey as their post-sale surveys.
It is definitely worth it to use multiple different surveys, as no tool can be an answer to every question. The best possible combo would be using each of the tools at their best time frame to get the most out of them. I researched various other methods of collecting information from customers, but many of them would not have been viable options for use at company X, and therefore they are not presented in the thesis.

5.1.1 The Use of the NPS Survey

The NPS survey is a good fit for the company. It is easily comparable with other companies. It is also relatively better than CSAT, because of the clarity that it provides, as the CSAT is based on the definition of the word satisfaction, which can be defined very differently by different people. It would be a very valid opportunity to use the NPS first to categorize people into detractors, passives, and promoters right after the purchase. Then after the customer has received their and then send them surveys. This would create the opportunity to ask different questions from different customer segments. There have been chats going on with company X about a double NPS, where one NPS question would be asked right after the purchase, and another NPS question would be asked two weeks post-purchase when the customer has already received their order. This is a good idea, as given the different time frame the customers would answer regarding the buying process in the first NPS question, and the entire customer path in the second NPS.

5.1.2 The Use of the CES Survey

The CES survey covers the practical side more, whereas NPS covers the entire customer satisfaction. Therefore, it would be recommended to use both side by side.

One con of the CES survey is that there is no way of finding out the improvement points through the actual CES survey but finding out the improvement points requires follow up. A way of finding out improvement points would be a follow up survey for the people that have given a low CES score.

The customer effort score is also a better predictor of loyalty than the Net Promoter Score. This is why they are better used side by side.

5.1.3 The Use of the Multiple-choice survey

The multiple-choice survey is quite long. The initial problem that started the thesis process was the survey having a low response rate, which could be a result of multiple reasons such as length and thus survey fatigue, lack of motivation to fill the survey etc. The lack of motivation could be tackled with something that the customer would receive after filling out the survey, for example a raffle entry or a discount code. The length is also one possible reason for the lack of responses, which leads to a suggestion: could the survey be divided into two? If the survey was divided into two, all the questions would get answered if question shortening or deletion isn't seen as a good option. Or then on the other hand the questions could be shortened according to the suggestions in the analysis part of this thesis. Are all the questions necessary or could some of them be combined into one? Survey fatigue is a real problem when talking about a long survey like this one. When a person gets tired of reading the questions in detail, the answers might turn random, as the customer aims to just get it over with. This falsifies the responses.

The NPS and the CES are good tools when it comes to collecting information about your customers. However, they should be kept separate from the multiple-choice survey. Sending the NPS along with the CES right after the purchase makes the segmentation of the customers through the NPS score possible if so desired. These customer groups could then receive a different multiple-choice survey from company X if these three customer groups are seen different enough to present different surveys to them. The NPS and CES together with a concise multiple-choice survey joined with another NPS question sent to the customer about two weeks post sale would be a functioning post sale survey plan. A well marketed reward for the customer filling the post-sale survey is also an important part in motivating the customers to fill out the survey and getting the response rate up.

5.2 Future Research Challenges

To be able to receive a broader idea of the techniques used in post-sales in the DTC field, it could be beneficial to interview various companies in the field. However, what prevented me from interviewing companies in the field was the fact that globally operating sports equipment companies are harder to reach. Therefore, I decided to concentrate on the analysis of the surveys used at company X.

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7 APPENDIX The questions asked from company X

How is the data processed?

What parts of the customer cycle are prioritized at company X?

How often do you use open-ended questions?

What was the reasoning behind making the customer survey as it is now?

Is the questionnaire visual?

Has there been other similar surveys than NPS and CES that have been tested?

Why is the NPS a part of the multiple choice survey?

When do customers get mailed the surveys?

Do you use UX testing?

Does the customer get rewards from filling out the customer survey?

What kind of follow up are you doing with the CES?