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Changing Tomorrow in Customer Experience

LAHTI UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED
SCIENCES
Degree Programme in
International Business Management
Master's Thesis
Autumn 2013
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Master's Degree Programme in International Business Management

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Master's Thesis in Business Administration, 79 pages, 28 appendices

Autumn 2013

ABSTRACT

This Master's thesis explores the customer experience approach and considers the need of development in customer experience management in the case company. The key issues are how customer experience management, CEM, causes attention and whether it can be improved. Customer experience is important to take into account if the company wants to improve their customer satisfaction and this way to offer an added value to its important customers. Today's business life has its own challenges and especially what comes to customer relations. Companies can no longer compete only with price or with products, they need to develop services and experiences that truly matter to their customers and that competitor cannot replicate too easily. Products don't necessarily differ much from each other but the competitive advantage can really be in a customer experience. The better a customer's experience is taken into consideration and done strategies on how it's managed, the better value it will give both for the company and the customers. This thesis' case company operates nationally, and as a part of the global organization, producing health care –related products and services.

This thesis investigates how the case company's employees in different levels of organization think about customer experience and customer experience management. This study's research method is quantitative. The research was conducted with a semi-structured questionnaire and study group received an internet link to Wepropol. The results were analyzed by content and by using theory-based content analysis.

The majority of the respondents thought that the definition of CEM is not as familiar as CRM. Still they were able to define a customer experience and excellent customer experience very well and also saw that they are able to plan customer meetings and experiences that they offer in advance. The case company was seen as differentiated from its competitors in a positive way and the benefits from that and also from customer satisfaction were recognized.

Key words: Customer Experience Management, customer experience, Customer Relationship, management, expectations, emotions, benefit, value, profitability.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CEM	Customer Experience Management
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
F2F	Face to Face, meeting in person between a customer and a company's representative
ROI	Return of Investment
HR	Human Resources

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Business life today has its own challenges. It is important to be aware of how to improve profitability and to achieve sales targets. These thoughts are behind every management group's strategy planning. Quality and pricing are competing while marketing access people are planning different kinds of functional strategies how to differentiate company actions from competitors. There are a lot of challenges to keep the customers satisfied and maintain the key customer relationships. Since the late 1990's, companies have done investments on different kinds of customer relations management, CRM, programmes. It usually means for sales people that they have a database in use, tracking the history, listing customers and helping planning their customer visits. Too often these systems do not really support sales departments every day work rather than it's for statistics for technical support functions.

This study's case company operates customer orientedly and its employees are professionals in customer relations. Even though the case company receives almost without exceptions only excellent feedback from its customers there is always room for improvement. It is interesting to investigate how this study group thinks about customer relations and especially customer experience and do they have ideas how to be even better in their work with customers. Today's business life requires motivation, dedication and desire to develop yourself in many different levels of skills. This introduction is a brief summary through this study background, objectives and scope. In addition, this part describes the knowledge base, research strategy and the structure of the thesis.

Customer relations management, CRM, is a very familiar approach in Finnish business life. In addition to CRM, there is globally a more widely known concept Customer Experience Management, CEM. The key word is Experience. Companies usually offer different kinds of service to their customers and also the

feedback is often asked after meetings. But good question is that does the given feedback really make a difference and how often the companies really change their way of performance and their customer service, probable not that many. Use of CEM can give answers to every company in case they really want to be the number one customer oriented co-operator. It is really important to start thinking what the customer is really experiencing, feeling and thinking. That may do the difference in this competitive field of business.

1.2 Research questions, objectives and scope

The research question of this study is

How customer experience is seen and taken into consideration in customer relation.

In the process of addressing this question, this study has four descriptive sub-questions:

- What is the level of knowledge of Customer Experience Management in the case company
- How is Customer Experience seen in the case company among the employees in general
- What benefits a case company and its representative can get from a good customer experience and relations
- How to develop the Customer Experience in the case company

The primary objective of this study is to investigate how the case company's employees in different level of organisation think about Customer Experience Management, and secondarily how customer experience is seen in their work with a customer. The target is to improve the knowledge of customer experience in the case company and how that knowledge can be used when planning customer meetings, actions and relationship management. In this research Customer relations means generally the co-operation and interaction between a customer and a company's employee.

In this thesis the employees of the the case company were the respondents of the research questionnaire. Because of the primary objective of this study the researcher choose this group as a study group to be able to answer the research questions from inside perspective of the company. Unfortunately there was no capacity to include customer perspective to this research so the scope is bordered by employees of the the case company only.

1.3 Knowledge base of the research

This research knowledge base concentrates on CEM and how customer experience affects to business in general and in the case company. It is also compared to CRM and how it differs from CEM.

The concept of Customer Experience came more relevantly to the fore in the late 1990s with B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore book *Experience Economy* (1999) (Gentile et al. 2007). In Finland the definition of CEM has become more familiar in 2010s by Löytänä and Kortesoja when they wrote a book about *Customer Experience Management in Finnish*. (Löytänä & Kortesoja 2011, 11) Mainly resources of this thesis research are foreign.

1.4 Research approach

This thesis research is a quantitative survey, using a questionnaire that has been designed for this research and conducted via Wepropol. The research questionnaire had both semi-structured quantitative and open-ended questions. Answers were analyzed for content and a theory-based content analysis was used for open-ended questions.

In quantitative research the aim is to generalize the research results. A small number of respondents are chosen from target group and generalized conclusions are drawn from the results. Economic perspective is one reason why there is no potential to include whole target group into the research and with a representative sample gives enough accurate results. It also has to take into consideration that in quantitative research it is rare to fully succeed in selection of the sample. (Kananen 2011, 22) The most important thing in quantitative research methods study is the planning of questionnaire. It requires the researcher to know the objective of the research questions and to which the researcher is looking for the answer. For the research questions and objectives the researcher can define the background variables that may influence the research subjects. (Heikkilä 2004, 47)

A survey is important way to collect data and to view data from different kind of society's phenomenon, actions of humans, opinions and values and this kind of target of interests are both multi-dimensional and complex. (Alkula et al. 1997, 118-122, Vehkalahti 2008, 11-13) A survey describes a population; it counts and describes 'what is out there' (Sapsford 2007, 3). Surveys via web have all the advantages of self-administered surveys and email surveys (Andres 2012, 51). According to Andres (2012, 51) web surveys has many positive advantages. Web surveys are technologically sophisticated and different kind of streamings can be used embedded within the survey, or within the instrument, as author describes it. In addition to this it's beneficial also to use web surveys because of the costs of data collection and human errors. In web interview's the respondent's age, gender or race does not define the interaction as strongly as in personal face to face –

interview. The researcher also gets the interview results more prepared and avoid fault literature. (Kuula 2011, 174 and Tiittula et al. 2005, 5)

Salmons (2012, 17) presents that in case of using web and interview that occurs online, it is important that researcher has to design and learn new ways how to build trust and to motivate respondents to share thoughts and comments and reveal individual views or experiences. Savolainen (1999,13) has claimed that web interview can limit interactivity and that way the power of expressions can be lower because there is no gestures, expressions or tone of voice. Survey questions ideally should be geared to embrace all levels of understanding so that they have the same meaning for everyone (Payne 1951, 115).

In quantitative survey research the information is collected with questions that can be structured or open. Also in this thesis research questionnaire, it was important to use also open-ended questions because answers to open-ended questions indicate respondent' levels of knowledge about the topic (Foddy 1994, 129). Different kind of things can affect to the functionality of the research questions. For example is the respondent's understanding a question right or are they having both knowledge about the subject and also willingness to give the information that they have about it. Also clarity of questions is important. Questions should be easily understood, using everyday language without unusual terms and respondents should be able to provide appropriate answers. The strength of the open-ended questions is that there are virtually no false positives; respondents either give the right answer or they do not (Fowler 1995, 69).

Characteristic for good data collector and researcher is that all these features are taking into consideration in the research plan. (Kananen 2011, 30; Pahkinen 2012, 222) According to Fowler (1995, 151) the main problem when designing questions is defining of the objectives. A clear statement or what is to be measured is one key to the solution of many question design problems. Fowler (1995, 151) has defined the three key standards for subjective questions.

- 1) the terms of a question be clear, so everyone is answering the same question

- 2) the response task is appropriate to the question and is relatively easy for most people to perform; and
- 3) the response alternatives are designed so that respondents who differ in fact in their answers will be distributed across the response alternatives

(Fowler 1995, 151).

Jyrinki (1977, 41) defines the decisions that researcher has to do when planning and creating a questionnaire. Decisions are related to questions, what is the content, wording or technical format and how the questions are located in questionnaire. Questionnaire can be used to measure both experienced value and the value of different dimensions of the importance of customer (Kuusela & Rintamäki 2002, 147).

According to Vilkkä (2005, 81) it is important when planning the research and questionnaire that the research object is able to be measured and tested. It can also be what ever phenomena or subject that only can be changed to measured shape. This means that theoretical level leads to empirical level.

The research approach in this study is descriptive, answering the questions about the phenomena of the subject, which are the emerging and the most visible behaviours, beliefs and processes in Customer Experience Management in the case company. (Vilkkä 2005, 134) According to Uusitalo (1995, 62) the descriptive study is to describe the nature, frequency, historical development or other characteristics of the phenomenon, event or situation. Descriptive studies are giving answers to practical problems and for questions what or how.

1.5 Structure of the research report

This thesis research has two main parts, theoretical framework and empirical research part. The theoretical framework of thesis was conducted by studying source materials. The empirical part contains methodological background for survey and questionnaire, and also analyzed data from answers. Results of the questionnaires were analyzed for content and compared to theoretical framework of Customer Experience Management.

In total, this thesis research has five main chapters under two main parts. The first chapter describes the background, objectives, research questions and scope. The knowledge base is also viewed briefly, as well as research methods. In second chapter is about how to define this researchs topic and theoretical background. Research context and methods are introduced in third chapter. It includes also data collection and analyzing. Results are presented in fourth chapter, as well as this thesis research reliability and validity.

Conclusions of this thesis research are presented in fifth chapter, as a summary of how the objectives of the thesis were completed successfully. This chapter also discusses of the future development in the case company as well as possible options for further research.

2 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Customer Experience is more or less a feeling. Experience leaves a memory trace that can last a long time and may have a huge effect on customer relations, bigger than a sales or customer service person could even think about. This chapter will open the definition behind this concept based on literature from theoretical perspective. This chapter will also open thoughts why emotions and feelings are important factors in customer relations and meetings.

2.1 Meaning of a Customer Experience

Customer experience is the sum of those meetings, visions and feelings that customer forms from company's operations (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 11).

A customer experience is an interaction between an organization and a customer. It is a blend of an organization's physical performance, the senses stimulated and emotions evoked, each intuitively measured against customer experience expectations across all moments of contact (Shaw & Ivens 2002, 6).

Customer Experience is profitable (Arussy 2010, 5).

Customer experience is the qualitative aspect of any interaction that an individual has with a business, its products or services, at any point in time (Watkinson 2013, 15).

A definition varies according to a definer. Interaction is the key feature almost in every definition. Arussy (2010, 5) has approached a definition also from the

profitability point of view and how to use innovations and commit individuals to deploying customer experience. Meeting a customer is always a moment of humane occasion, a moment of truth that indicates the success of a meeting. (Valvio 2010, 86) Every company has important question to resolve and that is the ratio between the costs for the company and the joy and benefit to the customer. A “one-size fits all” approach is no longer adequate and businesses must find ways to tailor their products, services and experiences to individual customers (Anderson et al. 2003) Customer experience is the sum of interpretations that people are doing. It is not a rational decision but an experience being affected strongly by motions and sub-conscious interpretation. Customer experience is also an overall experience of activities of the company (Kortesuo 2012, 51). This is a reason why it is not easy to influence on what kind of experience customer is going to have. Companies may still have possibility to affect on what kind of experiences they are creating and offering. (Löytänä & Kortesuo 2011, 11)

A competitive advantage can only be defined in terms of customer value (Christensen 2010, 20). Today’s competitiveness requires that company differentiates itself on competition field. Many companies are investing to marketing, customer service, training of personnel, efficiency of production lines and distribution. A value of a Customer Experience Management is often almost totally forgotten or it is rarely on agenda in management meetings. Using a customer experience for competitive advantage means not only a well-thought-out strategy, leadership support, the breaking down of organizational silos, and skilled management, but also an often-overlooked element: the smart use of both foundational and disruptive technologies (Soudagar et al. 2012, 12). Organizations that adopt this customer-perceived approach to competitive advantage can make better assessments of where to expend their efforts and resources to outmaneuver their rivals and improve profitability (Christensen 2010, 20). According to Soudagar (2012, 12) if company wants to scale its excellency in customer experience delivering it consistently, sustain it indefinitely or provide it profitably it needs right technological infrastructure and strategy.

According to Leppänen (2007, 131- 143) it is very important to think about the quality of service that company is providing. Customer expectations and earlier experiences influences to the quality of service (Leppänen 2010, 135). Quite often

a customer decides whether to use certain company's products or services according to what is their experience and what they have heard about it from other customers. Often there are a countless number of things that a company itself can really even partly to influence. According to Leppänen (2010, 135) the operational quality consist of company related functions, such as a service minded behaviour and an attitude among employees, an atmosphere of the company, and a physical quality consists of more like technical solutions. If the customer's experience of the company falls short of what they have been led to expect, their disappointment will probably show as frustration or a withdrawal of trust in the company (Payne 2008, 199).

It is a challenge to know what kind of a feeling of experience customer really had after your meeting. As a company representative it is always important to plan customer visit in advance. In addition to all that pre-planning about selling skills, question techniques and other things, it would be very important to think what kind of experience you want to give to your customer. After all, it's not just about delivering a great customer experience, it's about doing so in a sustainable and ultimately profitable way (Soudagar et al. 2012, 12).

Because emotions are driving the experiences of customers, Shaw et al. (2010, 35) has also defined the structure of customer experience according to their research. There are a stimulus, a response and an effect. A stimulus is seen as a customer experience, a response is the subconscious and the emotional, but also a rational impact of experiencing these stimuli. And an effect is the valued outcome that business seeks through engaging with a customer and it could be about increasing levels of spend, tenure or attitude, for instance customer satisfaction, recommendation or trust (Shaw et al. 2010, 35). As a conclusion from their research there is an emotional and a sub-conscious experience that drives and destroys value. According to their results it is also possible to identify what element of persons's physical experience these emotion effects relate to and that it is possible to identify the "experience gap", the difference between what you do today and what people actually want and that this is quite critical (Shaw et al. 2010, 35).

2.2 Meaning of the emotions and expectations in the customer experience

An experience is an immediate, relatively isolated event with a complex of emotions that leave an impression and represent a certain value for the individual within the context of a specific situation (Boswijk et al. 2012, 61).

Emotions are passing feelings (Shaw 2007, 26).

Emotions are a way of processing information (Boswijk et al. 2012, 59).

The power of emotion is what binds us together and builds trust. (Coughter 2012, 116).

Empathy is a two-step process of understanding another person's feelings and then sharing them (Broughton 2012, 72).

Watkinson (2013, 201) has written about the ten principles behind a great customer experience to help to think how to offer an experience to a customer from company's perspective. He also lists the most common emotions (table 1, 2), both negative and positive, that may occur during the customer experience.

Table 1. Negative emotions and principles at work (Watkinson 2013, 195).

NEGATIVE EMOTIONS	PRINCIPLES AT WORK
Anger	Occurs when the pursuit of an objective is obstructed. May also be caused by inaccurate expectations, and a loss of control
Annoyance	Less intense than anger, annoyance occurs when the pursuit of an objective is hampered or when a task requires excessive effort
Anxiety	Strongly related to stress
Apprehension	This uncertainty relates back to stress factors, especially competence, and an over-abundance of choice
Boredom	Occurs when there is a lack of progress or stimulation. Can be traced back to time on task, which is a function of effort
Disappointment	The feeling is a component of stress
Distraction	Distraction is a component of stress
Doubt	This relates to uncertain expectations and also stress factors, especially feedback
Embarrassment	A violation of social pleasure. Also relates to competence
Frustration	Typically occurs when progress towards an objective is hampered, often as a result of errors
Neglect	Feeling neglected is a violation of social pleasure
Regret	A strong failure to meet expectations
Surprise	Occurs when expectations are not met

Table 2. Positive emotions and principles at work (Watkinson 2013, 196).

POSITIVE EMOTIONS	PRINCIPLES AT WORK
Acceptance	Occurs when expectations are accurately set
Calmness	Felt in the absence of stress
Delight	Strongly related to pleasure and exceeding expectations
Excitement	A high arousal state, most often in anticipation – relates strongly to expectation
Interest	We are interested in those things that help us achieve our objectives and are sources of pleasure
Pride	Relates strongly to both social pleasure (status) and feeling in control
Relaxation	Felt in the absence of stress
Satisfaction	Occurs when a result of achieving our objectives
Surprise (positive)	Positive surprise occurs when expectations are exceeded
Trust	A function of consistently meeting expectations

These principles at work, both negative and positive, should be taken into consideration when planning how the employees receive information and knowledge about customer experience, and to understand how they can recognize the emotions that occurs in these situations. It is important that these listed emotions are recognized and also the reasons behind these emotions. If employee can turn this as strength whilst meeting a customer the experience they are delivering is also much stronger. Löytänä & Kortesuo (2011, 48) says that to analyze a good customer experience is to measure the positivity of memory trace. To be able to deliver positive memory traces to customer must employees have ability to recognize their own, both positive and negative, emotions at work.

Customer experience is managed consciously and those touch points that create memory traces should be analyzed efficiently to succeed.

Shaw et al. (2010, 34-37) has introduced their Emotional Signature® -the mind journey compass as a methodology, or as they describe it, the key measurement tool, to give a direction to the customer experience. They have researched customer experience and as one result they discovered that the emotions both drive and destroy the value.

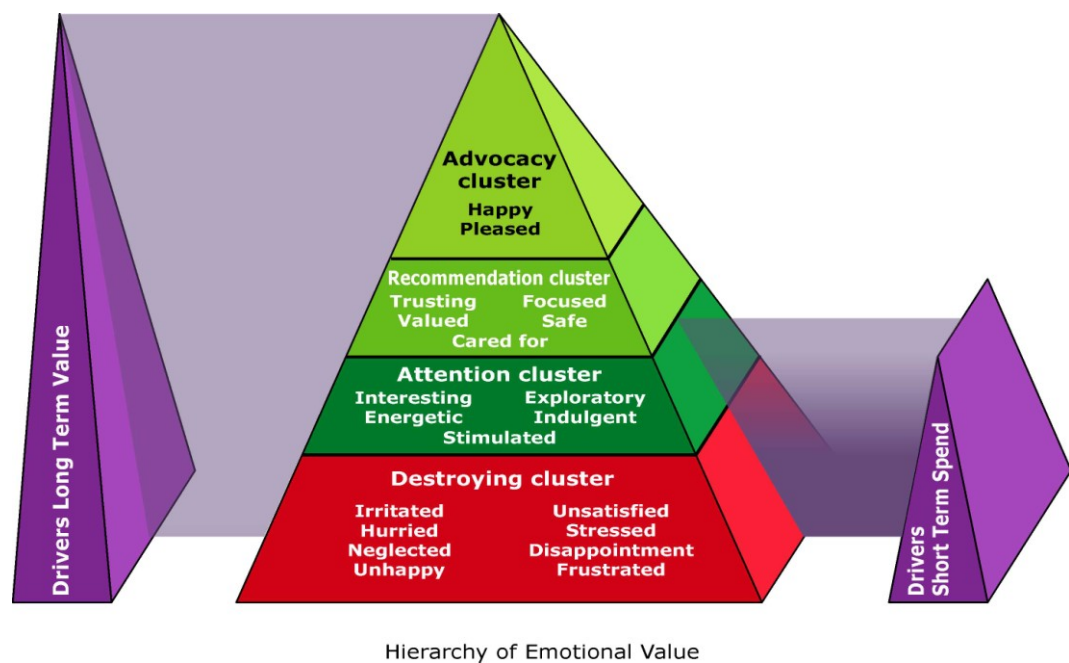


Figure 1. The hierarchy of an emotional value. (Shaw et al. 2010, 34)

Figure 1 demonstrates that identified emotions in Shaw et al. (2010, 34) research are broken into four clusters: negative emotions that destroy value; attention emotions such as interested which make something feel appealing; recommendation emotions, which are all about the touchy-feely side of the

experience; and the advocacy emotions, which together are close to the concept of total satisfaction (Shaw et al. 2010, 34).

Expectations, experiences and corporate image, which includes both operational and physical quality, are the base for reference to the quality of service, as seen in figure 2. Great customer experiences are created by consistently exceeding customer's physical and emotional expectations (Shaw & Ivens 2002, 27). The more realistic customer expectations are, the higher the possibility that they will be met in reality, and good customer-perceived service quality is more likely (Ojasalo 1999, 84).

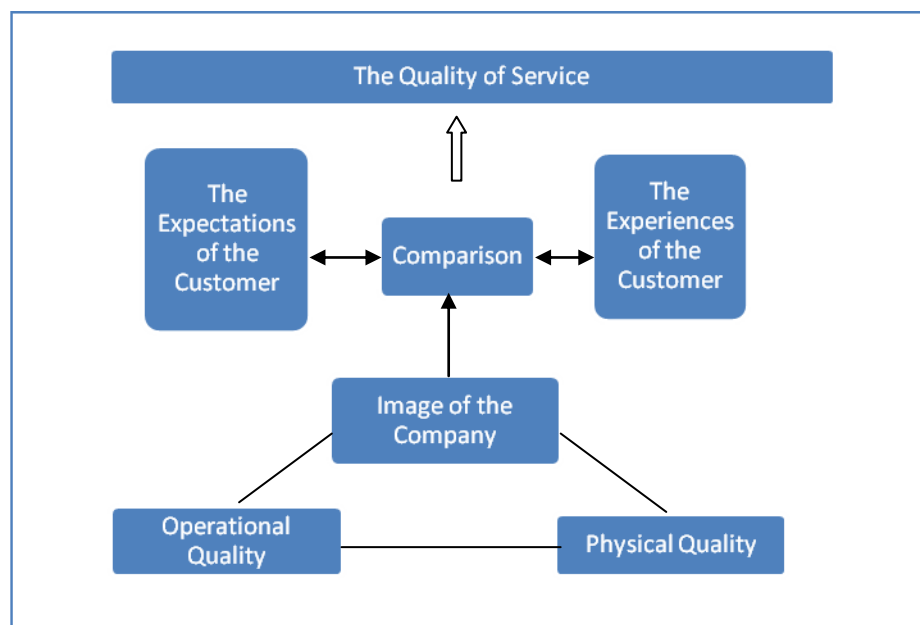


Figure 2. The quality of service (adapted from Lahtinen, Isoviita 2004, 45)

Also figure 3 shows that when experiences with quality exceed the customer's expectations, it leads to satisfaction. This helps companies to maintain good customer relations and also establish new relations. To exceed customer expectations a company has to create a positive awareness (Timm 2008, 118).

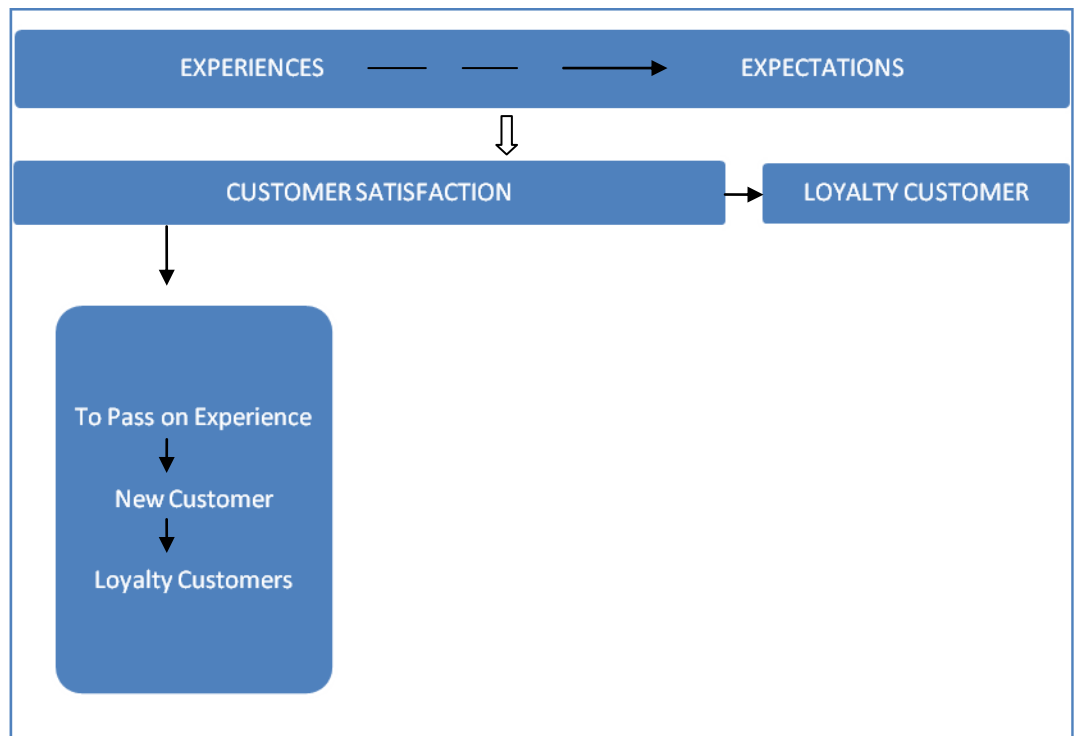


Figure 3. Customer satisfaction (Adapted from Leppänen 2007, 137)

It is critical to establish expectations. According to Shaw & Ivens (2002, 24-27) every customer has expectations and every company should not overlook a customer experience. To deliver a great customer experience often needs exceeding customer expectations and Shaw & Ivens (2002, 28) says that it is important to remember that it doesn't always mean extra costs to the company. It can be a little thing, like warm greeting or a smile that doesn't cost any money. Figure 4 presents an example how to illustrate the customer experience stages.

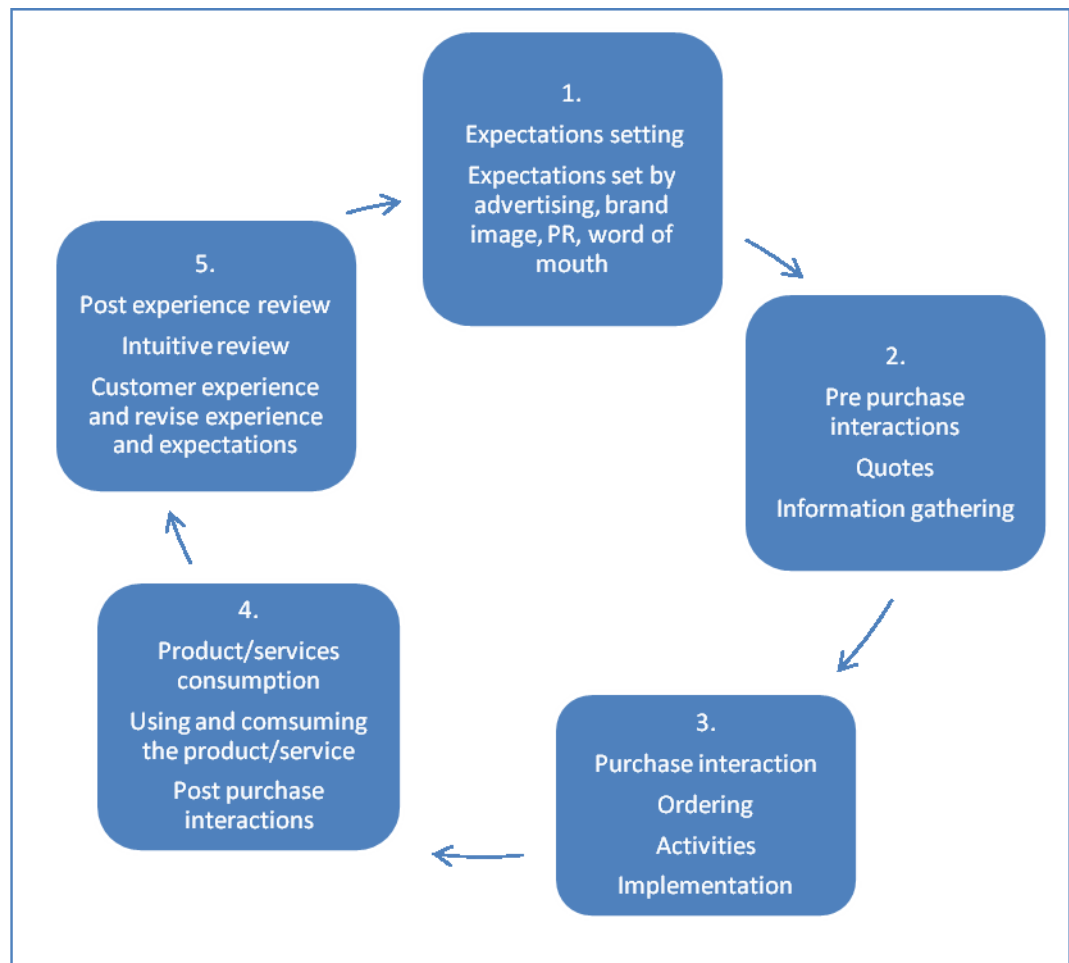


Figure 4. Stages of customer experience (Shaw & Ivens 2002, 24).

Also Löytänä & Korteso (2011, 71) recommends that it is the quality that should be provided to the customer, not only to sell a product. This finally leads to sales but also strengthens the customers loyalty and commitment to the relationship with the co-operative company. Lehtinen (2009, 86-98) has thought about the life cycle of customer relationship and how customers value the benefits they're achieving from a company they operate with. It is important that the expectations and experiences of received value are worth of amount of customer's investment. In figure 5 Lehtinen (2009, 97) uses the word 'strength' to describe the potential of continuous customer profit and if the customer is valuable for the company it is essential to provide first-class quality to keep these customers. Experienced value

for the customer is the emotional bond between a customer and a company (Kuusela & Rintamäki 2002, 17).

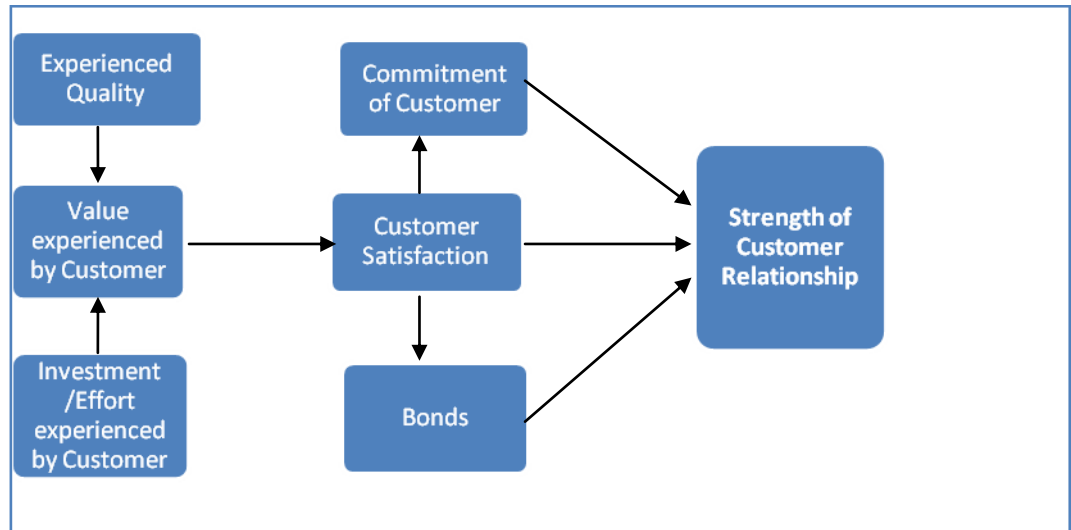


Figure 5. Value of customer experiences and the strength of the customer relations (Adapted from Lehtinen 2009, 95).

According to references used in this chapter, the value, quality and expectations seems to be important factors when creating experiences to customers and also when companies try to understand how to offer great customer experiences. What this all really needs from a company is a good CEM strategy and also awareness of the importance of experienced emotions and feelings that customer might have. Arussy (2010, 252-253) has mapped a holistic view of the customer experience that can help to map the complete customer journey. These three standpoints are helping any company to achieve a comprehensive approach to a customer experience and can also be seen as a guidance in process planning and for CEM strategies.

- Assessment. Evaluating the quality and priority of experience.
 - Physical Attributes – Importance vs. Satisfaction
 - Emotional Attributes – Knowledge, willingness, engagement

- Alignment. Evaluating how the experience fits your customers' lives.
 - Brand Promise – Value and promise fulfilment
 - Lifestyle Fit – My values vs. the company's values
 - Action. Evaluating the results of your experience.
 - Loyalty – Personal - Repeat and expand business, longevity
 - Loyalty – Network - Willingness to recommend
- (Arussy 2010, 253).

All these three standpoints require that all employees of the company measure and understand the depth of their emotional relationship with a customer. The cycle of emotional assessment should be regular, not one-time projects, to guide further actions and to measure the success of employee's efforts. Evaluating the experience, what kind of meaning it has and what the results can motivate positive actions and all these factors can be seen as touch points in developing the holistic view of customers' perception in the entire company. (Arussy 2010, 252-257) The company's reliability is based on activities and the story behind them and the synergies between these two operations (Aapola 2012, 27).

2.3 The productive interest of CEM to the company

The customer relationship life cycle is based on the belief that the ability of the provider to satisfy needs and fulfil promises determines the chances of retaining the customer (Gummesson 2008, 258). Customer insight increases competitiveness and primarily on the strategic effectiveness. The case industry and a customer should be well known to be able to create effective strategy and segmentation. (Ala-Mutka & Talvela 2004, 35) Because it's not just about the product that shapes customers' attitude and behavior about the company, companies have to seek and adopt new business approaches to develop their co-operation and communication with customers. It is also essential to seek

improvements how to increase company's profitability. Feedback from the customer is usually based on the totality of their experiences with a brand, including support and other interactions they have. Customers are basing their purchasing decisions on a different kind of factors, including recommendations, previous experiences and current needs. Still majority of companies are still measuring their performance based on out-dated product-centered indicators like units sold by region or per quarter. Possibly that old model does not serve today's business requirements for the future. Companies should focus on customer metrics, such as willingness to recommend and likelihood to purchase, as drivers for business growth.

Benefit of CEM to the company is real return of investment and probably it's not easiest data to be measured, but it is likely to be resolved. According to Soudagar et al. (2012, 24) not just for high level of customer satisfaction but also for customer loyalty and advocacy are the aspects that companies are reaching. Various studies have demonstrated that passionate, emotionally bonded customers are also highly profitable (Soudagar et al. 2012, 24).

According to Blount (2013, 30) humans do recognize the people who go the extra mile for them. This means that if a company wants to receive revenue for effort being made for customer, it should make the experience of spending money or doing business with someone more pleasurable, for both parties. Expectations should be forget and to focus on how good it feels instead. In a long run this will be profitable also for the company.

Smith & Wheeler (2002, 87) has made a model to analyze the return of investment of Customer Experience Management. As illustrated in figure 2 a company can have three main high level features that can be invested by a company when seeking improvement to their results. These three levels features in this figure are a company's people, processes and products together with services. If there can be improvement in customer experiences by strengthening the company's services it probably leads to customers willingness to stay as a company's customer longer and it also adds satisfaction. This easily leads to positive feedback and increases positive recommendations from customers. If all these three level features are organized successfully with focusing on customer experience it would lead to

better business results, increasing profitability and sales. (Smith & Wheeler 2002, 87)

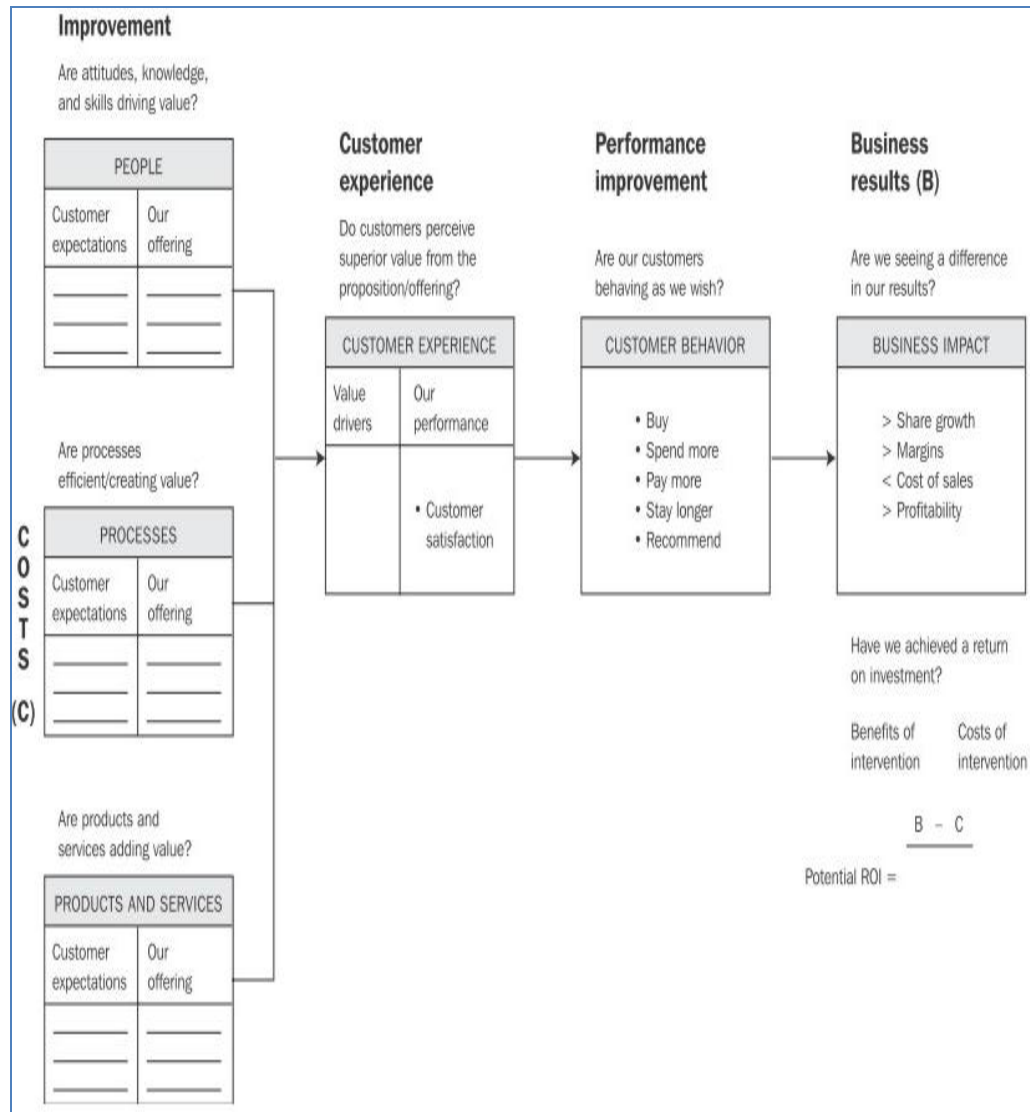


Figure 6. The return of investment in Customer Experience Management (Smith & Wheeler 2002, 87).

According to various references there are found various suggestions how to measure and to analyze economics of Customer Experience, ROI and revenue

opportunities. Arussy (2010, 51) has given one example how to calculate the customer experience revenue opportunity by using 5 P's (table 3).

Table 3. Formula for customer experience revenue (Arussy 2010, 51).

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{Preference} + \text{Promotion} + \text{Permanence} + \text{Portion} + \text{Premium Price} \\ &= \text{Revenue Opportunity} \end{aligned}$$

Using the language of revenue and expenses, any successful customer experience strategy must demonstrate the financial benefits that it will deliver because of customer experience transformation (Arussy 2010, 61). Only by looking at a customer experience strategy through the lens of the economics of customer experience will organizations be able to place the topic of a customer experience strategy at the top of the corporate agenda, with the highest sense of urgency (Arussy 2010, 61).

2.4 Differences between CEM and CRM

Customer Relationship Management is an enterprise approach to understanding and influencing customer behavior through meaningful communication in order to improve customer acquisition, customer retention, customer loyalty, and customer profitability (Swift 2001, 12).

CEM concentrates to the experiencing and how customer feels about the interaction with a company, its representatives and its products. CRM concentrates more or less to collect data about customers according to their needs with company, its products or services. The approach is often very statistical. In today's business life the CRM is seen as a system that includes all customer-facing interactions, including billing, fulfillment and other back-office processes with high customer impact and as a system that offers an opportunity to manage company's relationships with customer. (Cook 2011, 28) CRM strategies should seek to synchronize all these functions so that they operate as one and not as distinct elements (Soudagar et al. 2012, 24).

Really few companies have had a competitive advantage by developing customer relationship management. This is because most of the development has been based on the processes thinking. Description of customer process has too often been made without listening to customers or by including them into the process. This way there cannot be a deeper understanding of customer's needs, choices, motives or actions. A customer cannot be forced to a process and a customer rarely works like a process describes. (Mattinen 2006, 40-41) When CRM processes were described there was no description of feelings, motivation and stakeholders. Therefore, new and creative was not genuinely realized and that is the reason why CRM thinking was missing (Mattinen 2006, 41).

All the respondents of this thesis research are in contact with customers in different kinds of situation. Customer Relationship Management tools are in

efficient use and company's CRM system has been changed quite recently to meet the needs of customer relationships better. However, this system doesn't respond to the overall need of customer experience management. To manage experiences is on everyone's own responsibility how to handle it. Customer Experience Management, CEM, is seen as an important follower for more familiarly known CRM. Shaw & Ivens (2002, 76) has said that CRM should mean customer managed relations rather customer relationship management. Reason behind this is that it is not the company who determines which customers they have a relationship with and how, it is the customer who makes that decision.

Companies have understood the importance of the customer relation management and that they need to deepen the knowledge and information that they have in their databases. The profitability of the successful business is correlating straight with the value that a company is providing to their customer. It is not only a product or service that a company is selling, but also a value and a benefit. This is the reason why it's important to have effectual CRM system in use but also to put effort on how to create experiences to customers. Customer Experience Management is the science and art of creating, innovating, monitoring and managing that overall framework (Arussy 2010, 28). According Arussy (2010, 28) creativity and analytical attitude is needed in order to maximize the value provided to customers. CEM oversees all interactions with customers across all touch points (Arussy 2010, 28).

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Context and Methods

This study's case company is very customer oriented co-operator in its own field of business. Employees are all very motivated and customer-oriented. To research the concept of Customer Relations and especially Customer Experience in its context is interesting and how these concepts are really seen inside the case company and among the case company's employees. There are ways to approach, to meet and to get to know the customer, but how to do it regarding to customer experience. There isn't always awareness of how to react or how to proceed in a certain circumstances. In other words the theory behind the actions is not always thought or recognized.

It is very interesting to research how the Customer Experience is seen in the case company and how case company employees sees the benefits behind the power of experience that they are offering to their important customers. The research question of this thesis, how customer experience is seen and taken into consideration in customer relation, is substantially guiding the structure of this research. To improve company's relationship management it is important to know if experience itself is something that may affect on establishing and maintaining the good relations with customers. Does an employee recognize his or hers strengths and possibilities and is the customer experience something that has been taken into account when planning customer meetings and activities. Four descriptive sub-questions are looking for answers to deepen the context of customer experience and it's meaning to the case company's employees.

The case company is part of the global corporation, producing health care –related products and services. As agreed with the case company there will be no names mentioned in this thesis research. If there are mentions about the name of the case company will this data be unpublished in any public releases.

Appendices of this thesis research will not be published in internet because of data protection of the case company.

3.2 Data Collection

This research was conducted via internet using Wepropol. The case company's employees were used as a study group. Questionnaires were sent to 22 employees in the case company by sending an email link. The link for Wepropol questionnaire was open 5.-18.8.2013. Study group was limited to the case company's employees and in this research there is no customer point of view. The reason for this limitation was that researcher wanted to concentrate to objectives and to get answers to research questions from the case company's perspective.

According to Davies (2007, 54) the sample of respondents for quantitative research should be in the range of 60-120. If you are testing a hypothesis, you will need to gather a sample that is big enough to enable you to observe anticipated differences and do a power calculation to guide you in your decision about sample size (Davies 2007, 54). A size of the sample in this thesis research is appropriate to researcher objectives. There is research question with sub-questions in this thesis research and no hypothesis will be presented. From 22 of the case company's employees 19 participated into this survey. It can be concluded that the response rate was very good. Answers were given and handled anonymously.

3.3 Data analyzing

This study's research method is quantitative. The research conducted with semi-structured questionnaires and study group received an internet link to Wepropol. The results were analyzed by its content and by using theory-based content analysis.

Quantitative methods of social research involve, on the one hand, counting and measuring those human behaviours which are plausibly quantifiable, and on the other hand, applying these data as evidence in the interpretation and analysis of the issues addressed by the various social sciences (Payne 2011, 10). According to Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2009, 91) the content of the analysis may be a theory-oriented when the data analysis is based on the classification of the previous frame of reference, which can be theoretical or conceptual driven. The first phase of content analysis is an analysis of frame format. The content analysis can be continued after the classification of quantifying the data. In this study the researcher framed open-ended answers from questionnaires according to incidence of the most often used words and made the classification according to these words. The statistical analysis consisted of mean values of respondents. Because the size of the respondents group was very small there was no broader statistical analysis performed.

The frame format of design of reduction, grouping and abstracting of the open-ended question (table 4, 5) material was done to help researcher to analyze the content of the results and to help to achieve the main concept and to answer the research questions. First there was a reduction of the open-ended questions answers and examples. To find the plain terms from answers it required reading through the open-ended question answers several times. Certain words and themes emerged and plain terms were chosen from the most used terms in answers. After defining the plain terms the researcher formed concepts for subordinate and upper levels. Main concept was CEM to which to reflect the concepts. Expectations and emotional status was formed from plain terms and that way also the upper concept got the determined abstracts. This grouping and abstracting is seen in open-ended

question answers in research results and also in examples taken from the respondent's answers. Plain terms reflect also to theoretical part of the thesis.

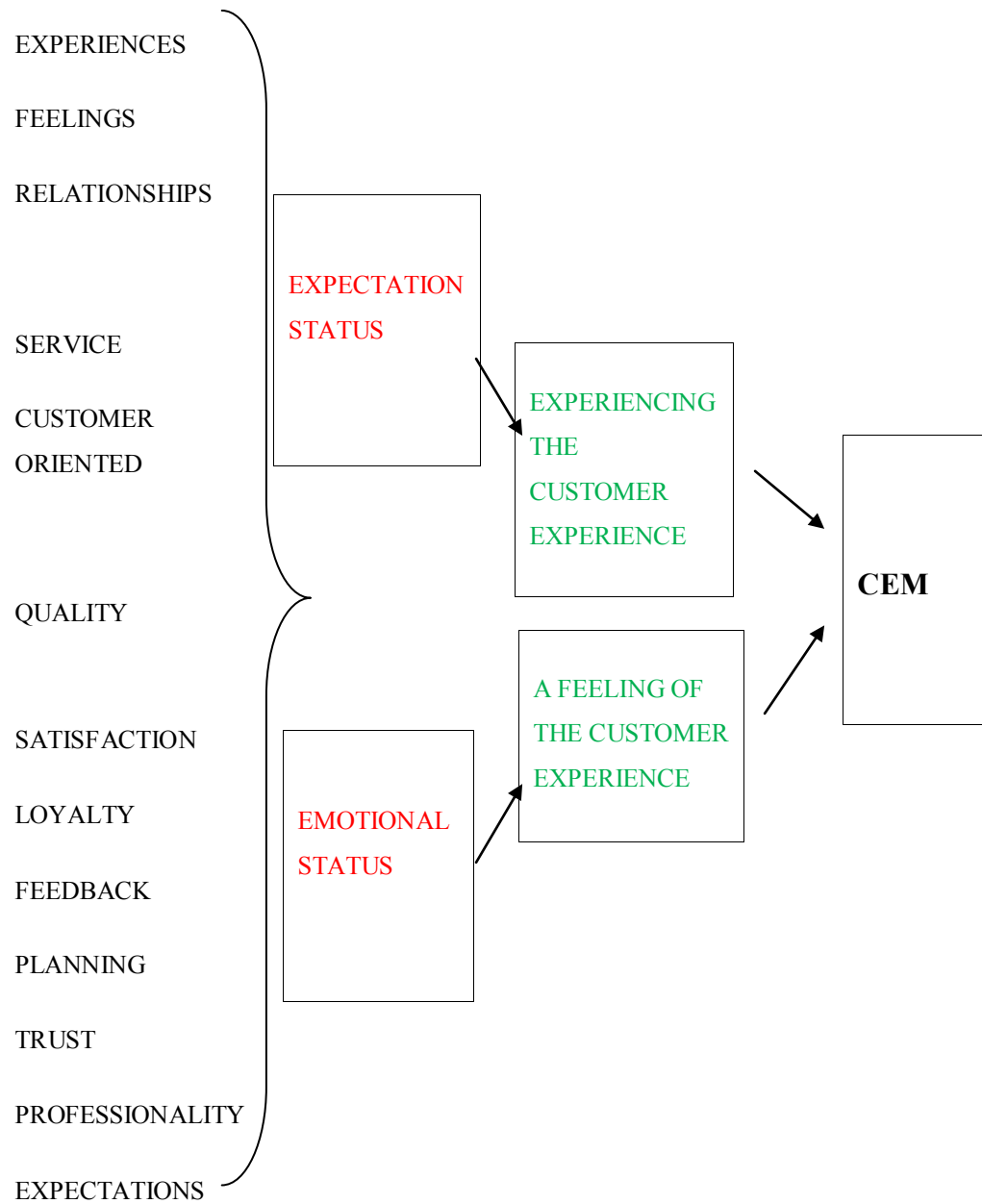
Table 4. Reduction of the open-ended questions material

<u>Reduction of the material</u>	<u>Plain terms</u>
<i>"Customer experience is the interaction between customer..."</i>	EXPERIENCES
<i>"Customers feeling of contact..."</i>	FEELINGS
<i>"...He/she gets excellent service..."</i>	SERVICE
<i>"...have increased our customers' loyalty substantially."</i>	LOYALTY
<i>"Better quality of customer activities, more added value ..."</i>	VALUE
<i>"...customer is satisfied, I'm satisfied!"</i>	SATISFACTION
<i>"...we have in many cases deeper relationship with them."</i>	RELATIONSHIPS
<i>"You have planned your customer visit in advance..."</i>	PLANNING
<i>"The feedback we have received from the customers strengthen the strategy..."</i>	CUSTOMER ORIENTED FEEDBACK
<i>"Highly professional..."</i>	PROFESSIONALITY
<i>"Valuable and trustworthy."</i>	QUALITY EXPECTATIONS

Table 5. Grouping and abstracting the open-ended questions material

Grouping and abstracting the open-ended research questions material

Plain terms Subordinate concept Upper concept **Main Concept**



4 RESEARCH RESULTS

Research results are introduced in this chapter. There were 28 questions in Weppol questionnaire and answers have been splitted into six subchapters according to the topic of questions. Question's of questionnaire (1-28) has listed in appendices. All figures from questionnaire has presented in results. From open-ended questions there are few examples presented per question and all the answers can be found in appendices.

4.1 General profile of respondents

There were three questions in questionnaire to get data from respondent's background. The majority of respondents (figure 7) have worked in the case company 0-3 years. Respondents (figure 8) worked both on the field and at the office based (including home office). The majority of respondents (figure 9) met customer's F2F every day.

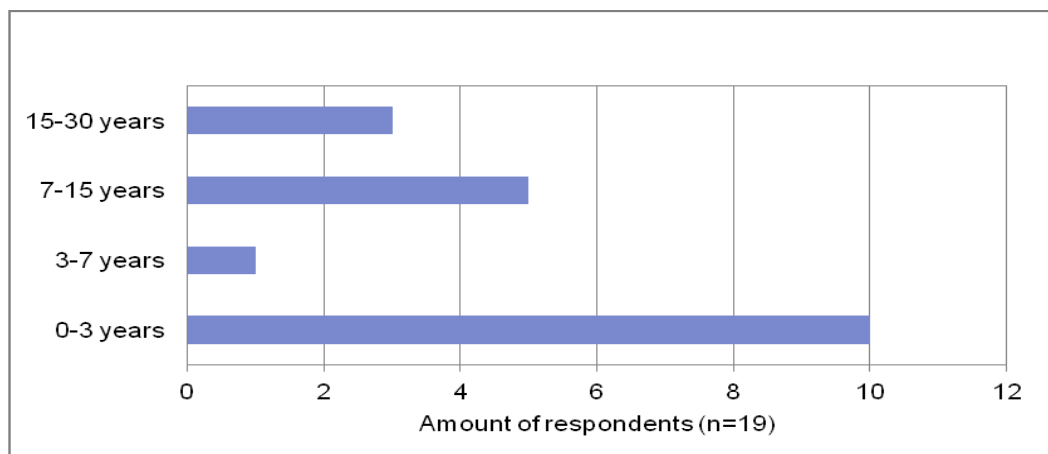


Figure 7. Working years in the case company.

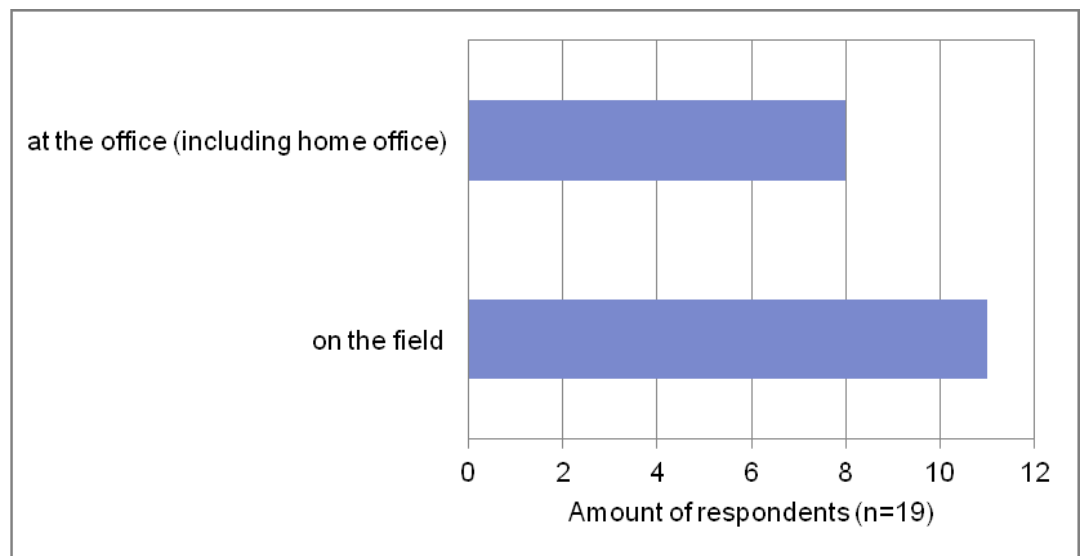


Figure 8. Place of work.

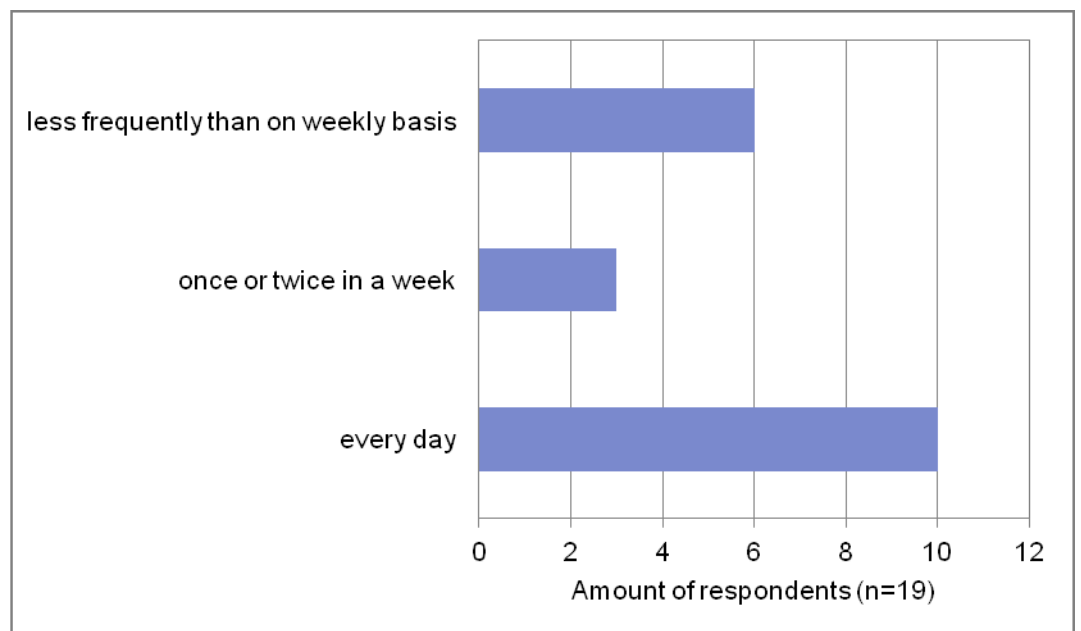


Figure 9. Frequency of customer contacts.

4.2 Customer Experience Management as a definition

The questionnaire started with a question (figure 5) about familiarity of the definitions of CEM and CRM. The majority of respondents recognized Customer Relationship Management, CRM, as more familiar definition.

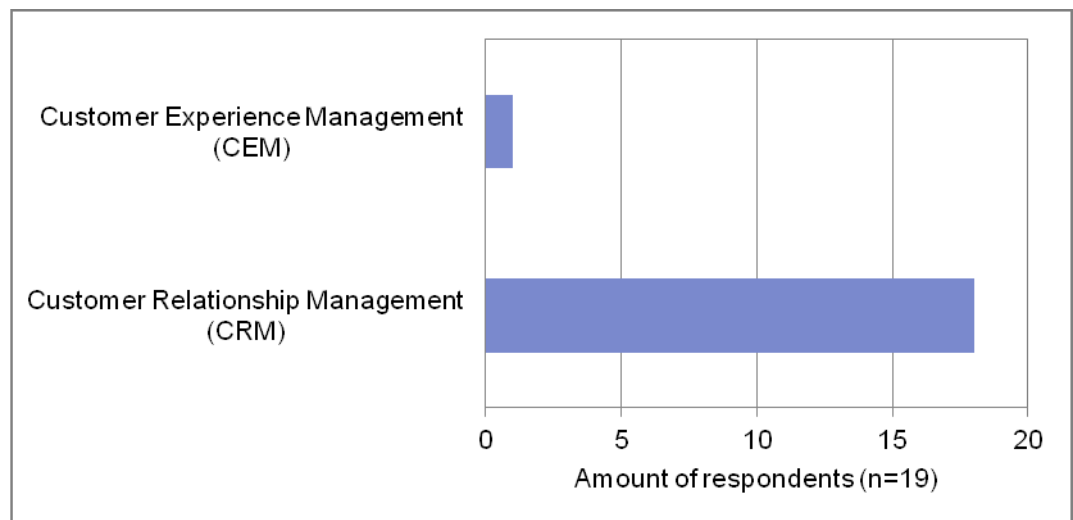


Figure 10. Familiarity of a definition.

To the open-ended question How would you define a customer experience the majority of respondents answered that it is more than a product or service, and that it is more a feeling that customer gets of the case company.

“It's an overall picture of the company as a service supplier from the first call or contact to the step of aftercare.”

“? Customer experience is not only the "product" or the "price" the customer is buying, it is the whole process, feeling.”

“It is the feeling that customer gets of our company. Either he / she trusts our company or not. A good experience means that a customer wants to do cooperations with our company.”

“Customer experience is the interaction between customer and any company representative. This does not necessarily need to be physical but also a phone call or a mail goes in this category.”

Bringing CEM definition to a deeper context the open-ended question was How would you define an excellent Customer Experience. As seen in following examples of answers, the respondents answered by using words feelings and to feel, a value, benefits and professionalism in their answers.

“When you have something to offer to the customer so that they feel that they had some real value for they work.”

“You have planned your customer visit in advance and take all possibilities in consideration, what might be useful in our meeting. Then in your customer meeting you can serve even better than expected your customer, for example, deliver more relevant information or "better mood" to your customer.”

“Excellent customer experience gives the customer a feeling that he/she has spent his/her time wisely and benefitted from the experience both professionally and as a person. E.g. our study visits both internationally and nationally have increased our customers' loyalty substantially.”

“when you have enough information from your customer you can feel when your meet he/her which rope is the best one right now is it long or short version, scientific or more practical or just one thing etc”

“They can allways contact our company, because they know it is so easy to co-operate with us in professional way.”

4.3 Customer Relations

All respondents answered to the question about who is responsible for customer relations in your company (figure 11) that everyone is responsible.

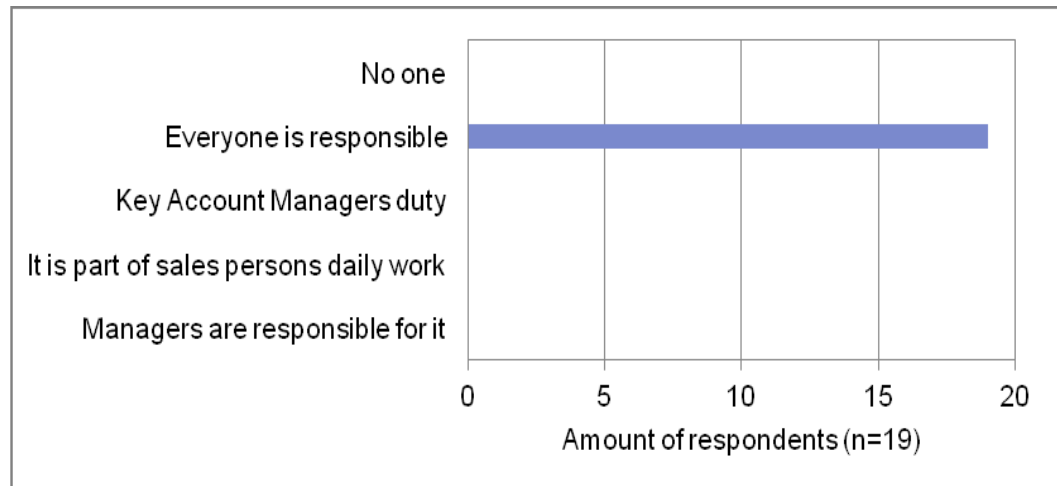


Figure 11. Responsibility of customer relations.

All the respondents answered that they think the case company differs in a positive way from its competitors in customer relations (figure 12).

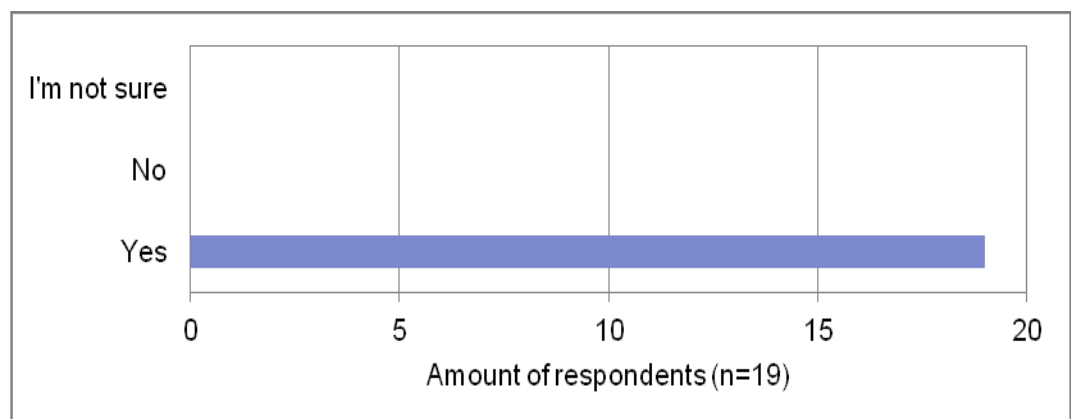


Figure 12. Differentiation from competitors.

Respondents were asked how they think their company differs from competitors in customer relations, in case they answered “Yes” or “No” to previous question (figure 12). They were asked to give at least one example. They were also asked to explain why, if they answered “I’m not sure”. All the respondents answered “Yes” and there were then only positive answers.

“The feedback we have received from the customers strengthen the strategy we focus to the customer oriented service.”

“We always try to find the best possible service for our customer.”

“We arrange educational meetings with lectures that our customers ask for and are interested in. Our speakers are of high standard and practical arrangements are made carefully.”

“I believe our company gives out a feeling that people enjoy working in it. It reflects to the way we interact. Example: we try to maintain good quality in order to maintain a good picture, i.e. take care of all the inquiries our customers might have.”

4.4 Planning and creating a Customer Experience

When planning every day activities (figure 13) all the respondents felt that they can take the customer experience into consideration.

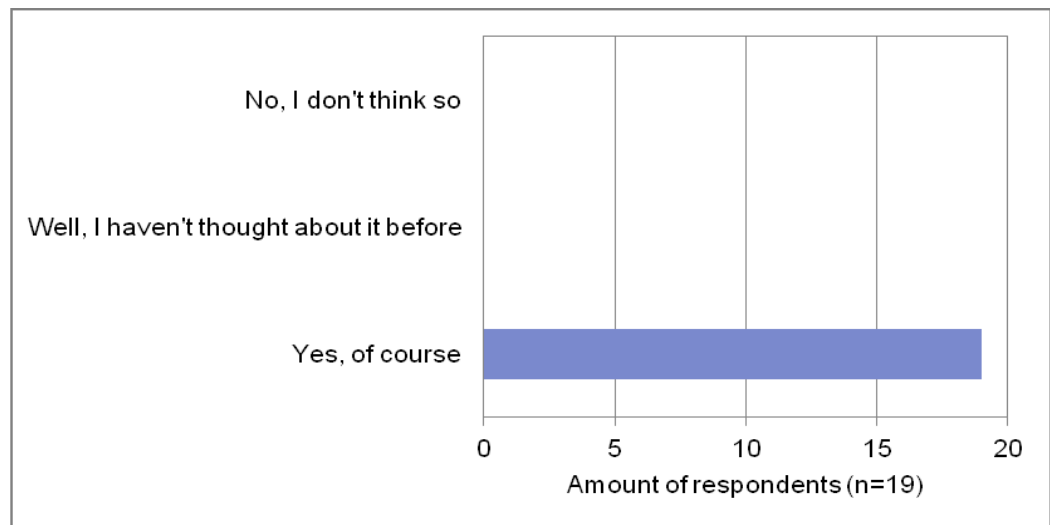


Figure 13. Everyday planning.

All the respondents also answered (figure 14) that they do plan in advance what kind of experience their customer is going to have.

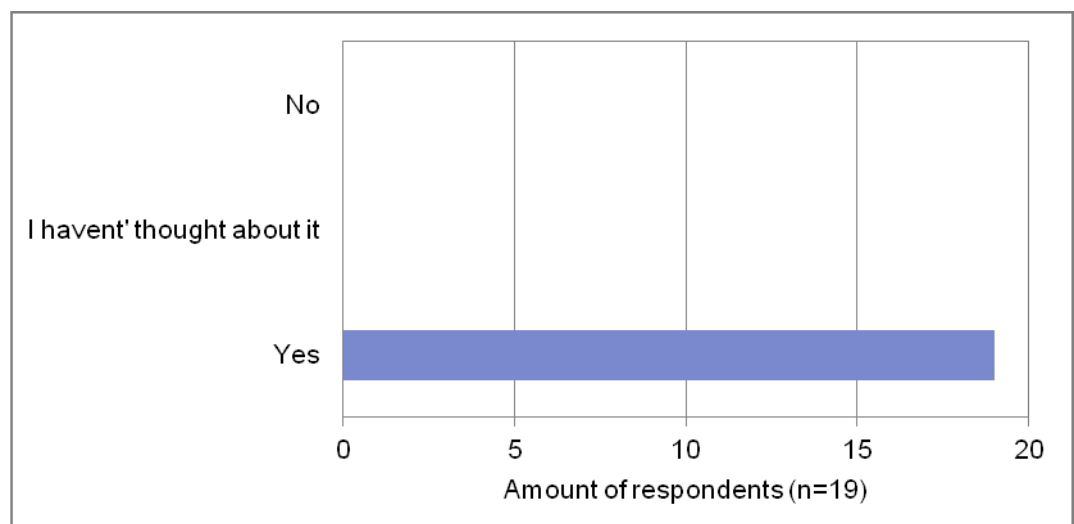


Figure 14. Advantage planning.

According to respondents opinion to the question of which departments are responsible for creating an experience to the customer, all the respondents agreed (figure 15) that marketing and sales are responsible for creating an experience to the customer. It was seen that all departments are more or less the option for answers.

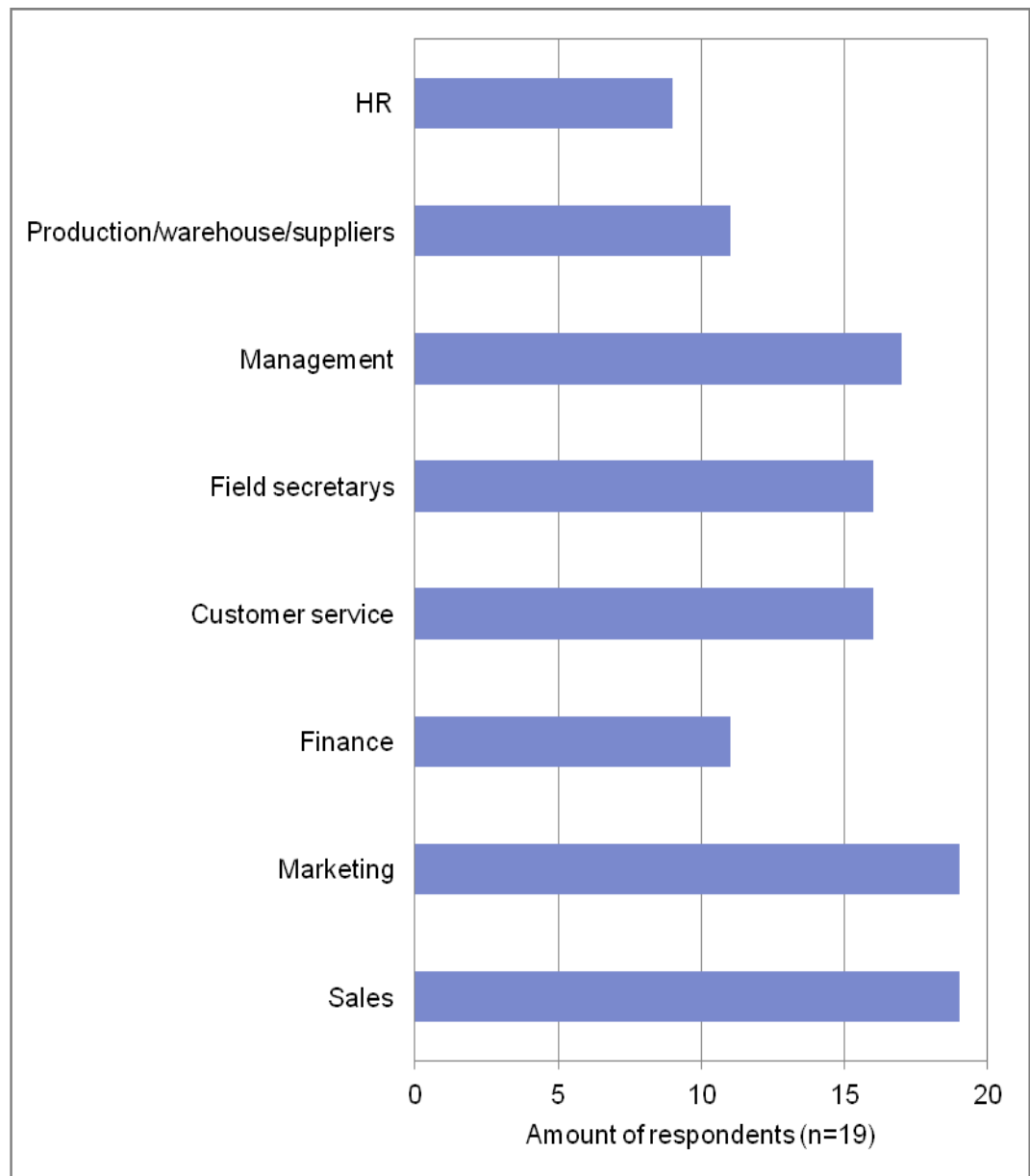


Figure 15. Responsibility of creation customer experience.

To the question about who in the case company is responsible for Customer Experience Management according to respondents (figure 16) the majority answered that everyone is responsible. It was possible to choose more than one option.

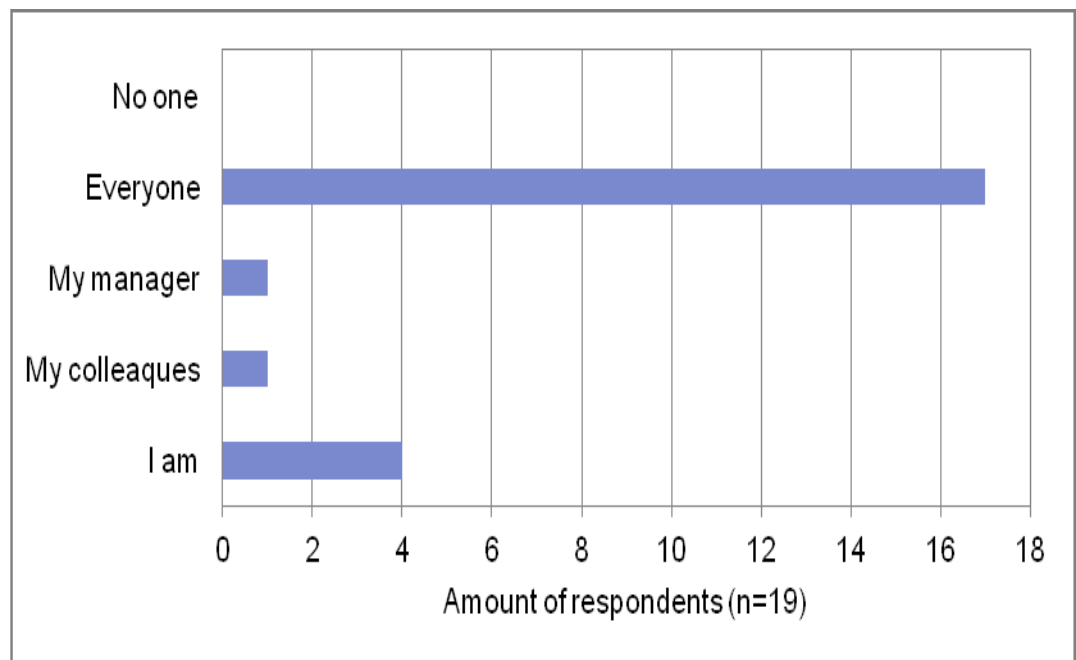


Figure 16. Responsibility of CEM.

The majority of respondents answered that their company has a strategy for Customer Experience Management (figure 17). To be noticed quite many of respondents answered that they don't know if their company has a strategy for Customer Experience Management.

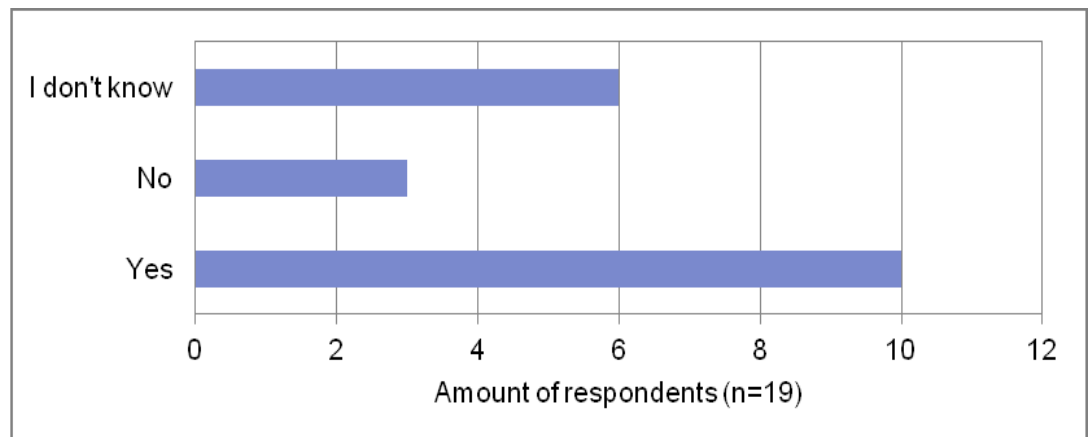


Figure 17. CEM strategy in the case company

As a follow up –question there was a question (figure 18) to find out if there is a need for a strategy how to manage customer experience in the case company in case respondent answered No or I don't know to question above. The majority of respondents answered that there is a need for a strategy.

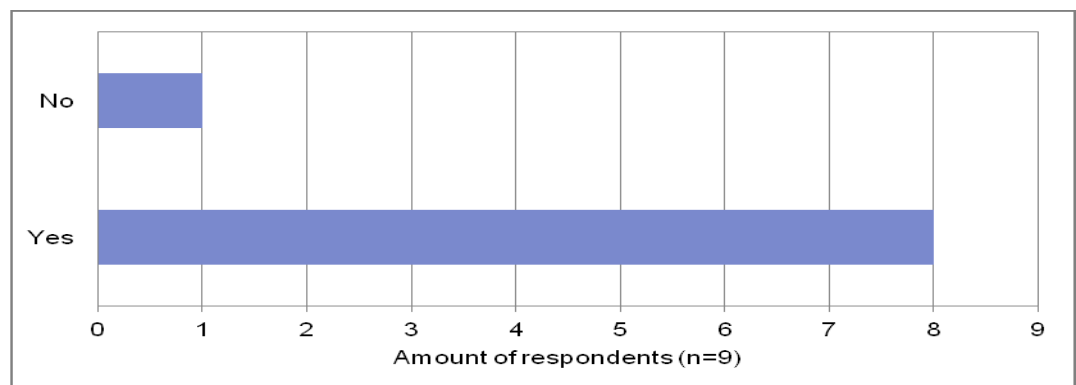


Figure 18. The need for a CEM strategy

To the question what things may influence on customers experience in general (figure 19) the respondents had wide range on answers. There was no limitation of how many options respondents were able to choose. All the respondents thought that their selling skills and customers feelings and mood may influence on

customer experience. Almost all the respondents also thought that the quality of the company's products, as well as time and place, influences.

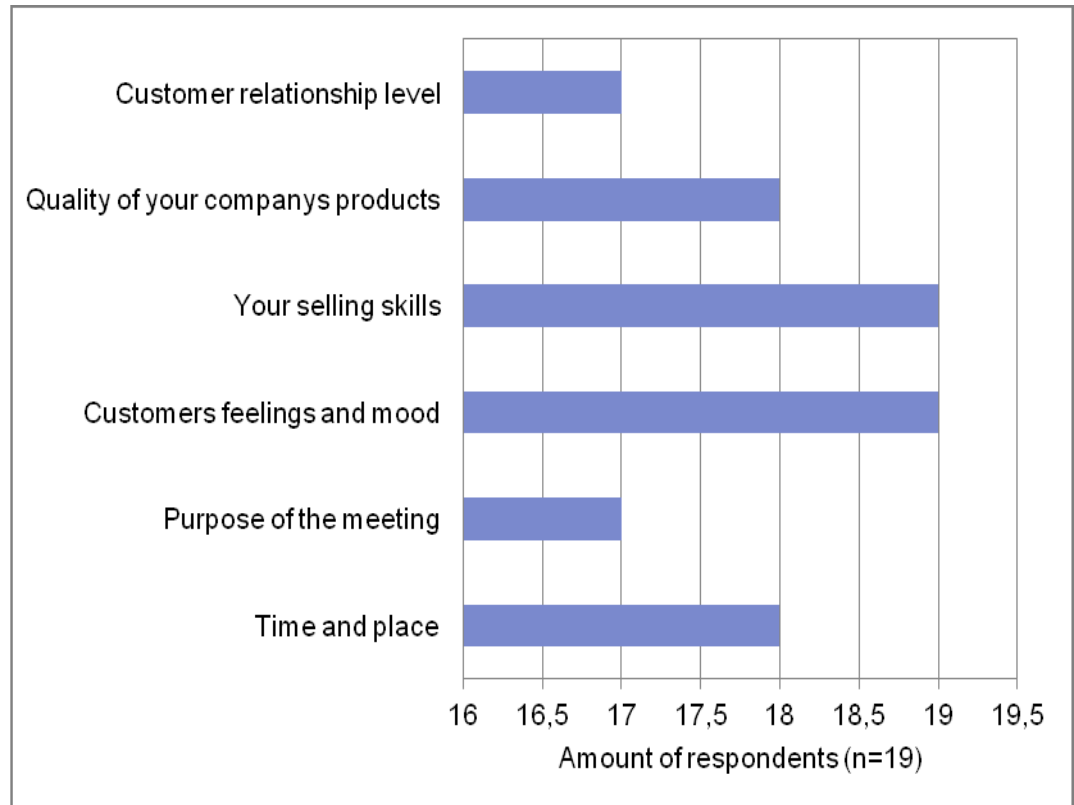


Figure 19. General influencers to customer experience.

In addition to the figure 19 there was an open-ended follow-up question where respondents had a possibility to add things they felt were missing from options offered in previous question (see appendix 22). Respondents wanted to add for example their own attitude, moods, preparation, previous experiences with the company and/or representatives or product.

“My own attitude and preparation”

“Previous experiences with the company/rep”

“Customers experience with us.”

The majority of respondents would like to have training about customer experience management (figure 20).

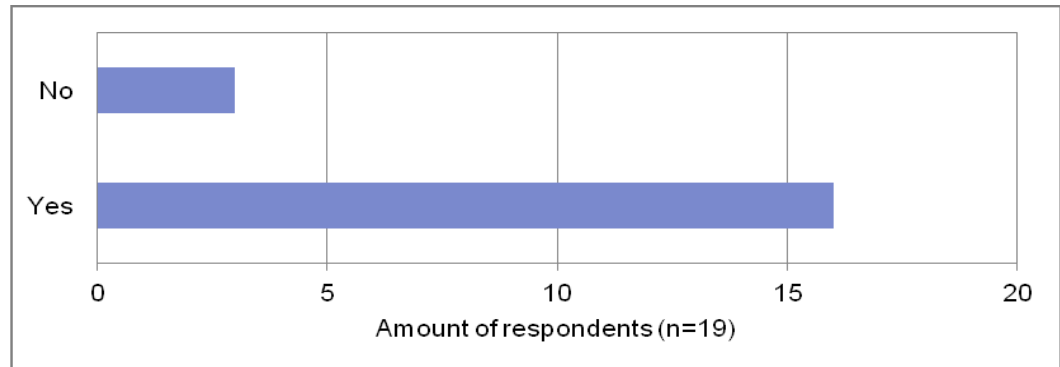


Figure 20. The need for training.

4.5 The definitions of CEM and CRM

Customer Relationship Management, CRM, is more familiar to respondents according the first question of questionnaire (appendix 1). To deepen what this definition means to respondents they had an open-ended question to answer.

“It means continuity, consistency, persistance, proper documentations, personal communication both face-to-face and written. It also includes constant evaluation of existing relations and creating, maintaining and developing either current or new relations.”

“It does not work optimally in our company, because crm software is having big limits. It should have more information, more planning, all positions should utilize it better. We should be able to measure customers value with it, but unfortunately it is more an activity register.”

The majority of respondents thought that CRM system, particularly mentioned in questioning software programme Veeva, doesn't take into account the real content of customer visit (figure 21).

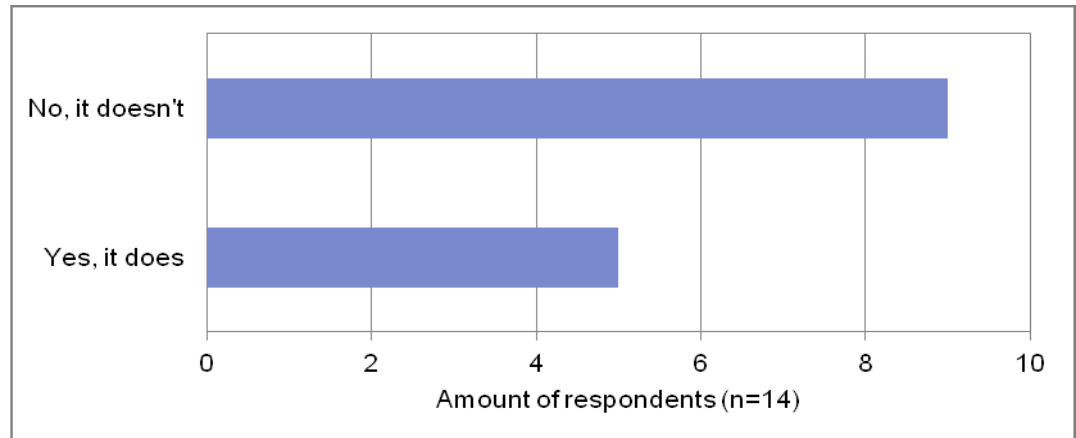


Figure 21. The feedback of CRM software system.

Respondents were asked in open-ended question that what kind of things they would like to be done better in their company's CRM. The majority of respondents claimed that software system is complicated and technically unflexible. It does not give enough space for personal/professional details about customer meetings.

"CRM programs should be always FLEXIBLE, work in way that it serves workes/customers most easiest way at daily work, all information you put in you should take out also easily, no unnecessary details included in reports."

"Even though I'm not very regular user of our CRM system I've found it poor in offering space for future planning. It is more of a mechanical tool reporting small details which of course are extremely important from another point of view. E.g. easy way to get an overview of a certain customers interest and participating in our activities would be very useful."

"Planning, absolutely."

4.6 Benefits of Customer Experience Management

The majority of respondents thought that Customer Experience Management can provide following benefits to the company: added customers satisfaction, strengthen customer's loyalty to the company, extra sales and also commitment of both customer and employee. Only few of respondents thought that diminish the costs of new customer acquisition could be seen as a benefit (figure 22).

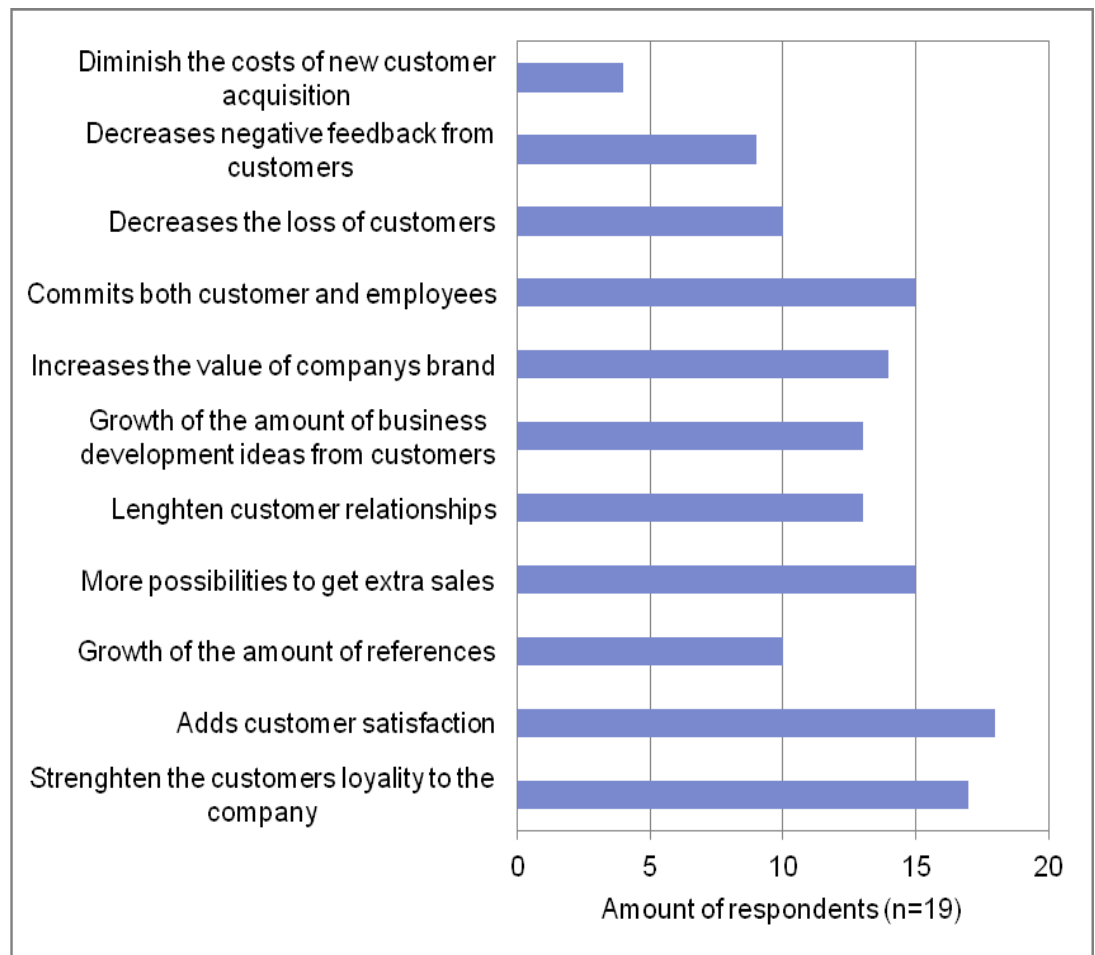


Figure 22. Benefits to the company.

The respondents were asked to give the answer how they can benefit from good customer experience. The majority of respondents were highly positive about the

benefits and how does that influences on their achievements and practices, especially in profitability level.

“Good and positive customer experience is always a benefit!”

“It makes your customers to commit to you, to your product and to you company.”

“It will be turn into trust toward our products.”

“Get boost to my work, get inspired, feeling that there is a purpose in my work.”

“Makes my work easier...”

“More sales, more opportunities to do your job better”

“extra sales, better relations”

To the question what kind of customer experience respondents would like their customer to remember, the majority of the respondents pointed out the importance of values, trust, reliability, professionalism and happiness.

“Valuable and trustworthy.”

“Caring and surprising...”

“Comfortable moment, where he/she gets valueable, interesting and reliable information. And same time feeling happy, energetic, enthusiastic.”

“Highly professional but at the same time friendly, fun and warm.”

“Easy going, interactiv and some facts and some jokes”

“Professional, trust, kindness and good service”

“Happines and this is good thing”

4.7 Receiving feedback

Feedback received from a customer is very important. Companies use different ways to collect feedback information. Individual feedback from a customer to a company representative is interesting but not necessarily that thoroughly or commonly collected. The researcher wanted to get information by using an open-ended question about how the case company's employees are generally getting feedback from their customers. The majority of respondents gave the appearance of spontaneous and straight ways of how customers give feedback as well as how respondents are receiving feedback.

"Verbally, follow up - questionnaire."

"Via other persons, sometimes directly (e-mail)."

"They say directly or e-mail me or say to my colleagues"

"Usually straight away but sometimes also later by e-mail"

"Face to face, meetings, by mail, by phone."

"Phone, email."

In research questionnaire there was also an open-ended question asking respondents own best features when they are interacting with customer and creating a customer experience. All respondents found good and positive features about their interactions with customers.

"I can listen the customer"

"Friendliness, they can trust that I take care of the things I promise to do, I am clear in my message"

“Interactivity, listening and ability to solve problems.”

“Knowing a customer, being a friendly and easy to talk with, being innovative.”

“Trustworthy, interested in solving the possible problem customer might have.”

“Long term experience, professional skills but there is still a lot of work to do or learn, long term worker, trustworthy, open.”

The respondents were asked how they think their customer should feel after meeting and to define the importance of feelings mentioned in figure 23 (next page). All the respondents thought that Trust is the most important feeling that their customer should feel after meeting. The majority of respondents thought that also Satisfaction, Acceptance and Friendliness are important feelings. Feelings like Euphoria, Amusement and Adoration was not important according to the majority of respondents. To be noticed that Happiness, Joy, Kindness and Devotion shared thoughts quite equally.

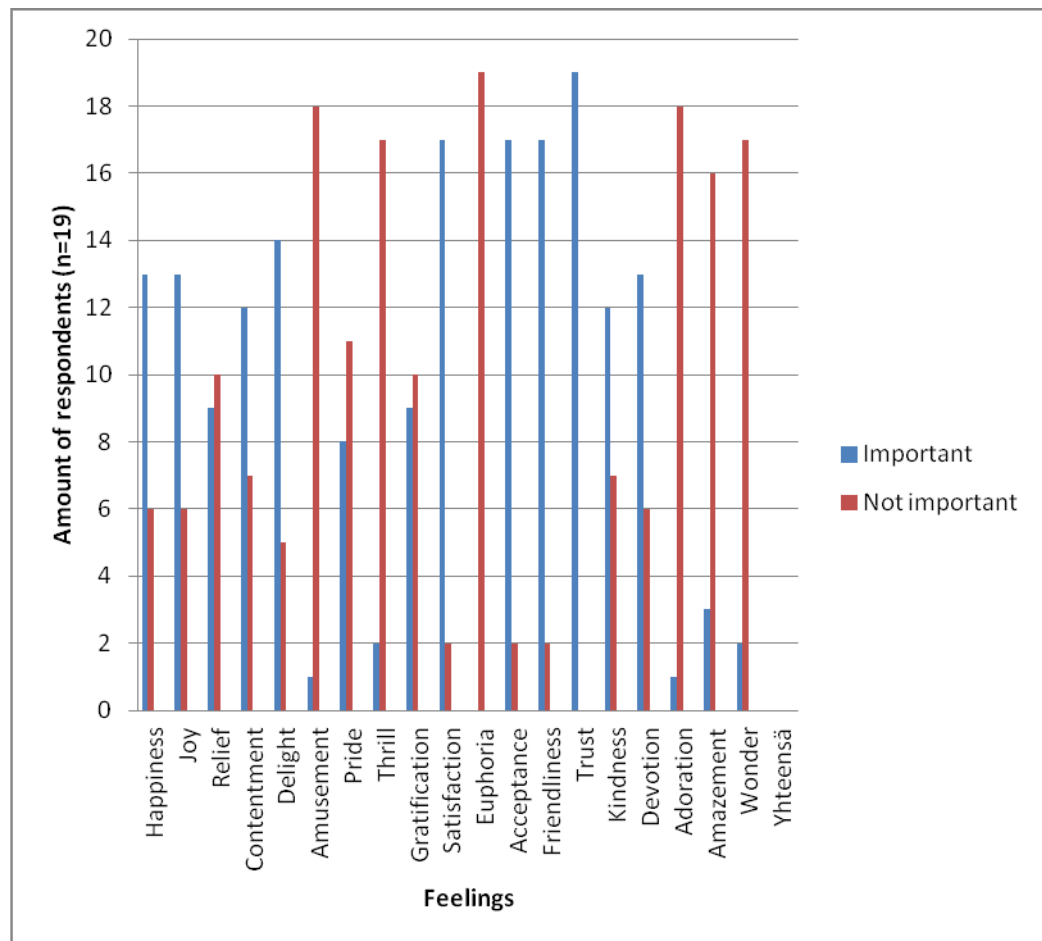


Figure 23. The importance of feelings.

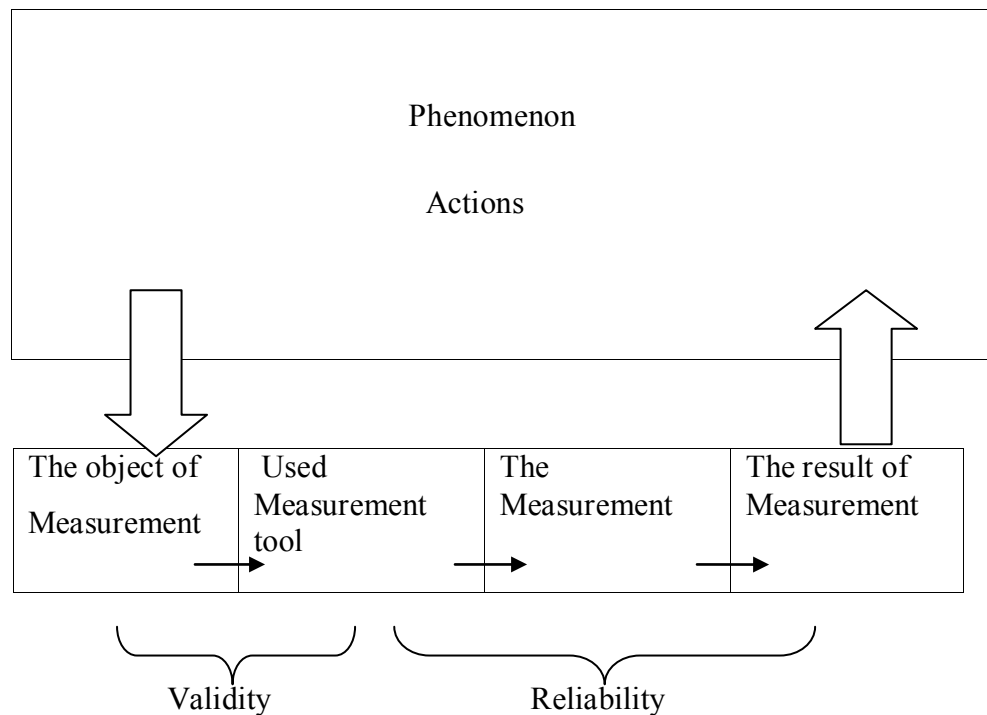
4.8 Reliability and Validity

The purpose of the study is to collect as reliable and truthful information as possible (Kananen 2011, 118). Both reliability and validity in research signifies that the research has done in terms of quality and reliably. Reliability means the stability of the research results, in other words in case of repeating the research the results should stay same. (Kananen 2011, 119) Validity tells if the right object is being measured. (Vehkalahti 2008, 41) According to Alkula et al. (1994, 121) it is clearly easier to collect reliable data if the subject is familiar and interesting to the

respondents and it's related to respondents experiences in every day life. The investigator should be aware that the inferences derived from measurement choices occur at all stages of the research process (Carrig & Hoyle 2011, 149).

In this study the reliability is easy to verify, because all the stages of the research has been documented carefully and the results are well reasoned.

Table 6. Reliability and validity. (Kananen 2011, 118)



In this study the research approach was quantitative. In quantitative studies the purpose of the research is to get the results that can be generalized. Kananen (2011, 22) says that it is ideal to ask questions from small group of respondents and to could generalize these results. Quite often there are financial limitations for big respondent groups and that is also the reason why the research plans and actions should focus on a representative number of respondents instead of big group of nonrepresentative nonrespondents. Kananen (2011, 22) also mentions that there rarely are total success in selection of respondents in quantitative

research. This is the reason why it is important to take a stand to study's validity and reliability.

According to Kananen (2011, 22) it is important that researcher brings up the reliability of the study in case if there are possibility of source of errors in research. Vilkkä (2005, 81) recommends that when planning research plan the researcher should make sure that the chosen subject is measurable and testable. This subject can be any phenomena or theoretical issue that can be operationalized or converted in measurable form. According to Vilkkä (2005, 81) it means transfer from theoretical level to empirical level. When analyzing the data/answers from questionnaires it means transfer from empirical level back to theoretical level. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2007, 216-225)

In this study the amount of respondents were relatively small. There are 23 employees in the case company of which 22 received the Wepropol questionnaire and 19 answered. The researcher decided to limit the questionnaire to the case company's employees because of the research questions, this way to be able to research the Customer Experience concept inside the company. In first research plan there was an idea to interview the case company's customers. Because researcher wanted to have specific information and data from inside the company to analyze, the group of respondents were limited to the case company's employees.

Hirsjärvi et al (2007, 190) notes that operationalization is always researcher's interpretation. Operationalization requires that researcher is familiar with the study group of the research. This enables that the theoretical concept transfers to empirical level and that the research concept is understandable to study population. The questionnaire must be measured exactly what the theoretical concepts is claimed to be measured (Vilkkä 2005, 81). Vilkkä (2005, 81) notes also that concepts that has modified from theory should be understandable for the study population. This is the reason why enough time should be used in this stage and questionnaire should be re-tested.

The Wepropol questionnaire was pre-tested by one employee from the case company. This person does feedback questionnaires and event registration

handling on a daily basis at work with this webtool and has knowledge also of how it works technically. According to this test person's feedback there was few clarifications and word corrections done in questionnaire before sending it to respondents. According to Payne (1951, 13-15) pre-testing has its own challenges. Pre-testers usually have limited time for testing but on the other hand this person can be experienced and can consider all angles and take as long as necessary in perfecting each phrase. In this thesis questionnaire pre-testing it was a benefit that test person knew the company, field of business and employees.

Wepropol link was sent to the case company's employees via email. Link to the questionnaire were open 5.-18.8.2013. One reminder was sent in the end of this period. Taking into account the amount of survey recipients the researcher was content to the response rate. There were 28 questions altogether and almost third of questions were open-ended questions (see appendices 1-28). Two respondents used Finnish to some open-questions and this was allowed by researcher to ensure the quality of answers in case of language barrier. The researcher provided the possibility to use also mother tongue if it would help to give clearer answer to question. Reason for this was that definition of CEM and Customer Experience is not very familiar to all respondents before this research. The researcher takes full responsibility of translation.

The reliability of this study was aimed to guaranteed by systematizing the conduct of the questionnaire and through the various stages of the analysis, classification and transparent interpretation. The classification was based on the theory-based framework. After the classification of the material it was considered in plain terms how many people expressed the same thing in their open answers. After this the result was to interpret to the theory. Reproducibility of the measurement results can be considered good because this research questionnaire consist's partly semi-structured questions. Any other researcher would receive similar statistical results if using the same questionnaire to the same group of respondents. Limited due to the size of this research respondent's, there cannot be very far-reaching conclusions in this case company or in different organizations in general.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions are presented in this last part of the thesis. There is two chapters, first introduces conclusions of research results and the second part contains proposals for further development and research. The first chapter of conclusions has structured according the plain terms (table 4, 5). It starts with definition and ends to summary.

5.1 Conclusions of research results

About definitions familiarity.

Almost all the case company's employees felt that CRM as a definition is more familiar to them than CEM. The reason behind this question was to raise respondents thought that Customer Experience Management exists. CRM, as a definition, signified a company's software system for some of respondents, but the majority of respondents thought that it's related to targets and activities in customer relations. Documentation and communication were the recognized features, as well as development and interaction in customer management. There was also a question concerning the case company's software system. Half of the respondents felt that this system doesn't take into account detailed information about the daily actions, comments, follow up or details about customer well enough. This system should work better and more flexibly. According the respondents' it is complicated and it should allow easier ways to comment daily work, to see territory data and to have an overview from customer acitivities.

When thinking especially background operations, CRM is one of the most widely spread context in a customer relations in todays business world. Basicly it means an analytical and a systematical concept of collecting customer data and to build relationships with customers while aiming profitability and growth of the value of

customer relationships. Main activities in CRM are segmentation, recognition of customer's needs, customization of products and services and identifying the profitable customer. (Löytänä, Korteso 2011, 20) These attributes of CRM are more common in Finnish business world today than CEM definition. This can be seen also from answers to the question concerning familiarity of definitions (appendix 1). Payne (2008, 216-217) has listed channel options and strategies for CRM leaders (table 7). These options and strategies are the issues to review for leaders to support the CRM use most effectively.

Table 7. Checklist for CRM leaders (Payne 2008, 216-217).

1.	Our senior management have considered the future role of both existing and potential channel participants in our industry.
2.	We have a clear view on the future impact of electronic channels in our industry.
3.	Possible structural changes in our industry (disintermediation or reintermediation) have been fully considered.
4.	We fully understand the advantages and disadvantages of the major channel categories (sales force, outlets, telephony, direct, e-commerce, mobile, etc.) when developing our channels strategies.
5.	Our organization formally reviews the range of channel strategy options every year.
6.	My organization understands the channels our customers wish to use at different stages of their relationship with us. e.g. pre-sales, sales and post-sales.
7.	We know how customer channel preference varies at the segment level across different products or services sold by our company.
8.	We utilize the value and volume of goods and services passing through different channels for our company and for our competitors.
9.	Changes in our customers' channels usage and preferences and general trends in channel usage are reviewed regularly.
10.	The organization has an agreed set of metrics for measuring channel performance.

According to Payne (2008, 201) a company that wants to achieve an outstanding or perfect customer experience with their customer has many aspects for that. Perhaps the most important aspect is a deep knowledge of customer needs and the criticality of ensuring CRM operates across the business in a cross-functional manner (Payne 2008, 201). The channels mentioned in table 7 could be seen as indicators of different kinds of customer stakeholder's operating with the case company, such as private or municipal sectors as suppliers, distributors or retailers, possibly the end users are involved as well.

It was interesting to analyze results of two open-questions that handled definition of a customer experience and an excellent customer experience. Even though at the beginning of the results it showed that as a definition CRM is more familiar to the case company's employees, they do recognize the right features of CEM both in their own and company's activities. Words "*interaction*", "*emotional*", "*believe*" and "*feeling*" occurred in the most of the answers and as an one author of CEM definitions Hyken (2011, 1) has wrote experience needs amazement, a service that is consistently and predictably better than average. According to Hyken amazement is not necessarily about "Wow!" levels of service, although sometimes it may be (Hyken 2011, 1). If using words occurring in answers mentioned earlier it is a possibility to deepen CEM definition instead of CRM, although it was more familiar to respondents according the results of questionnaire (appendix 1).

Customer oriented, Service.

All the respondents thought that their company differs in a positive way from its competitors. According the respondents it is because the case company has a long history and deep relationships with the key customers, things are done more flexible by listening the customers, unique and special service is provided and also high quality educational meetings are offered. The majority of the respondents brought up these same examples. Good service was the main message in the answers. According to Frei et al. (2012, 1-3) a good service is a treasure that after many customer surveys is still seen as a tremendous differentiator in customer's experience. Also Mattinen (2006, 138) has written about the difference between two competitors. When a question about the difference is presented to the

customer it is not about the product or technical characteristics that they answer. A customer sees the difference between companies in their way to serve their customer's and how they keep in touch and communicate.

Today a competitive advantage is not just about selling products and services and building long-term and profitable relationships with customers, which are founded on mutual benefit and trust (Payne 2008, 195). Customers want a personal company (Arussy 2010, 28). Trout & Hafren (2003, 157) has said that differentiation requires specialization. The case company may do this by developing its experiences to its customers.

According to the majority of the respondents everyone is responsible both for customer relations and a customer experience management. And when respondents thought about their company and creating an experience to the customer, they all had the same opinion that sales and marketing are the main responsables for that. Management was mentioned as third, the customer service and field secretaries reached quite to the same. HR was seen the last significance. Löytänä and Korteso (2011, 26) describes the organization of company's operations and that customer should be placed in the center of company operations in all levels. All operations affect on what kind of an image customer has about the company. It is important tool to understand what is experience and how to manage it to be able to analyze the experiential world of the customer. CEM is both strategy and implementation (Schmitt 2003, 23-42).

Schmitt (2003, 39) mentions application areas that construct's the framework for CEM. It includes branding, service, positioning, innovation and segmentation and targeting. These five stages are often seen as structurally equivalent to those of a classic product-based marketing strategy. There is a key difference as well and that is a customer-based approach. Companies that are delivering a great customer experiences have thought all these aspects and approaches. All the efforts do not necessarily cost fortunes. To train and to support employees to use their skills and competences, together with positive attitude and personality, can internally change the organizational culture and atmosphere towards experiences. To deliver a customer experience through employee experience there is a need for more directive, inspirational and provocative mission statement directed at a more

granular level – the employees themselves, because they supply the foundation of the customer experience initiative (Arussy 2010, 176).

Arussy (2010, 213-217) also highlights the meaning of customer-centric business model. In any case this establishes the trust between a customer and a company, especially if there is any negative feedback to solve, but it also empowers each employee with the ability to deliver a customized experience. Customer relationships are the cornerstone of our existence, the customer drives our business and by becoming a customer-centric organization, we will be more profitable (Arussy 2010, 278). The quality of a company's service is only as high as the weakest link in their channel offer and the enterprise needs to uphold the same high standard of service and customer experience in all channels (Payne 2008, 215). According to Cook (2011, 32) to be able to improve the quality of its services the company needs to develop all aspects of its relationships with customers through the whole organization.

Payne (2008, 217) has also listed the checklist of customer experience and multi-channel integration. It is a list for CRM leaders as well and gives issues to review from experience point of view (table 8). Channels in this case can mean for example suppliers, warehouse stakeholders, as well as institutional stakeholders. The customer experience is across all moments of contact, so it's not just one part of the organization; the "customer journey" can touch many parts of an organization (Shaw 2007, 9).

Table 8. Checklist 2 for CRM leaders (adapted from Payne 2008, 217).

1.	The organization has a strategy for integrated channel management.
2.	We monitor the customer experience within channel and across channels and compare our performance with that of our competitors.
3.	The organization has identified what constitutes an outstanding (or perfect) customer experience and strives to deliver it.
4.	The customer experience consistency in 'look, touch and feel' across channels and this experience is in keeping with our brand image.
5.	The organization collects information on all relevant types of customer interactions (e.g. calls, mail, e-mail, web-based) to ensure that customer requirements and targets are met.
6.	The economics of different channels are thoroughly understood.
7.	The organization is effective in adding new channels to complement existing channels.
8.	New channels are integrated with existing channels so that an individual is recognized as the customer regardless of the channels used.
9.	Customer-affecting applications, such as order handling, work across all our channels.
10.	We consider channel integration issues for our employees and partners as well as our customers.

Experiences, Expectations.

There was dispersion in answers to the question if the case company has a strategy for Customer Experience Management. The majority of respondents answered that they have a strategy but almost half of the respondents answered no or that they don't know. For the follow up question almost all previously No or I don't know answerers felt that there is a need for a strategy for how to manage customer experience in their company. The majority of respondents also would like to have training about customer experience management.

Nowadays the experience factor plays an increasingly important role in determining the success of a company's offering (Gentile et al. 2007). According to Löytänä and Kortesuo (2011, 74-75) company's senior managements role in creating customer experiences and managing CEM is absolutely essential. Either it understands the possibilities of CEM or not, but if management doesn't engage and invest to managing customer experience management it should find another strategy for competing in customer markets. Most important task for company's management is to create a strategy for CEM and to enable it in practice. The value that company provides to their customers should be maximized by creating a meaningful experiences, this should be included also to the strategy (Löytänä & Kortesuo 2011, 76). To manage a great customer experience it needs to have a strategy and a supportive way of leading employees towards great customer experience. Hyken (2011, 168) for example challenges to think what would happen if managers consistently were treating their employees the way they want them to treat customers, or even better. Hyken (2011, 109) also brings up the question to managers' to think already in every recruitment interview that is there a question to ask that immediately tells whether an applicant matches the culture of the company, and whats more important, is capable of amazing customers in a positive way. It's all about creating positive feelings and emotions among the customers and this leads to a great customer relation. The consistent experience is what sets apart an average organization from one that is Amazing! (Hyken 2011, 1). For customers, the culture of a company manifests itself in the way commitments are honoured, the degree of responsiveness, level of employees' competence, and the attitudinal maturity the customer-contact employees bring to bear on interactions with the customers (Gureja 2013, 125).

The researcher wanted also to get information about how an added attribute 'an excellent' changes the respondents thinking about CEM. Customer Experience is much about meeting customers expectations, as Shaw & Ivens (2002, 41) has written about zones in customer expectations and about physical customer experience. According to their opinion a customer sustain more loyal and long term relationships are possible if both a physical and an emotional expectations are exceeded. Most important part of these zones they mentioned is high performance zone that is the only sustainable position. Other zones are

commodization zone, danger zone and dead zone. (Shaw & Ivens 2002, 41) A company with a price advantage can be undercut, a company with a performance advantage can be outflanked, but a company with an emotional difference can potentially demand a price premium for ever (Shaw & Ivens 2002, 41).

The needs of the customer are along customer's emotions and expectations. Shaw (2005, 64) has formed a hierarchy of needs where basic elements helps companies to define their customer experience (figure 24). The two bottom layers, primary physical needs, are quite common in all industries and because of that it's therefore difficult to obtain differentiation in these layers, but in the top two levels, in primary emotional needs, it's possible to differentiate and provide a deliberate customer experience (Shaw 2005, 63).

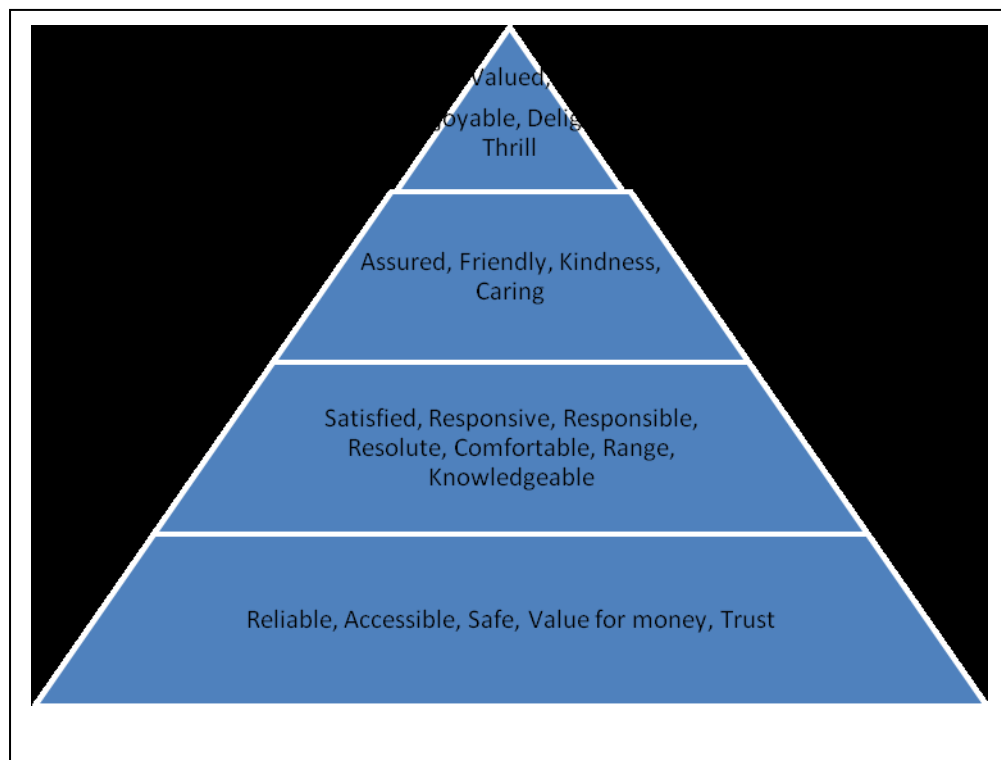


Figure 24. The Customer Experience Hierarchy of Needs™
(Shaw 2005, 64)

Excellent Customer Experience is possible to deliver but it needs commitment and even more deeper familiarization to the customers needs, individual environment and knowledge of customers overall situation. Watkinson (2013, 35-42) introduces in his book the Ten Principles behind a great customer experience (table 9) and also highlights the key benefits of using a principle based approach to both identifying problems and making improvements. Watkinsons (2013, 35-42) principles are universal, easy to understand and implement to existing ways of working and can be used in any business of any size and in any sector. When the level of great customer experience has achieved it's possible to go up to the next level, to the excellent customer experience.

Table 9. The ten principles behind the great customer experience (Watkinson 2013, 35-42).

- 1 Great customer experiences strongly reflect the customer's identity
- 2 Great customer experiences satisfy our higher objectives
- 3 Great customer experiences leave nothing to chance
- 4 Great customer experiences set and then meet expectations
- 5 Great customer experiences are effortless
- 6 Great customer experiences are stress free
- 7 Great customer experiences indulge the senses
- 8 Great customer experiences are socially engaging
- 9 Great customer experiences put the customer in control
- 10 Great customer experience consider the emotions

Planning.

Respondents were asked to think about experience and meeting a customer and do they plan in advance what kind of experience their customer is going to have. All respondents answered that they do plan experience in advance. There was another question regarding every day planning and is it possible to take a customer experience into consideration in every day planning. Great customer experiences are consistent, captivating and memorable by design (Shaw 2005, 57). This may mean that meeting and experience that will be delivered to customer is deliberately and consistently planned in advance every time. According to Ojanen (2010, 21) all meetings with customers need planning in advance and that preparing a meeting refers to analysis of previous meeting and internalizing information of it. There are challenges to do planning consistently since the meeting or customer experience is not deliberate, it is something that just happens (Shaw 2005, 57).

Satisfaction, Loyalty, Quality, Trust.

To the question about a benefit that customer experience management can provide to the respondents company a clear majority of respondents answered the option 'adds customer satisfaction'. Nearly all the respondents answered also that customer experience management strengthens the customer's loyalty to the company, offers more possibilities to get extra sales and commits both a customer and an employee. Minority of the respondents answered that diminish the costs of new customer acquisition is a less important benefit. All other options seemed to be more or less important benefits to the respondents.

Customer satisfaction is essentially the culmination of a series of customer experiences or, one could say, the net result of the good ones minus the bad ones and it occurs when the gap between customers' expectations and their subsequent experiences has been closed (Meyer & Schwager 2007). According to Kamensky (2010, 229) customer compares the values and benefits of existing options and real competitive advantages can only be perceived values and benefits. Ojanen (2013, 82) also emphasizes the importance of creating a value that a company and its representative serves to the customer during the encounter. It is essential also

for the case company to discuss what values and benefits they really offer to their customers and are these the same that customer seeks. Faced with the necessity of offering customers different channel types to meet their changing needs during the sales cycle (pre-sale, sale and post-sale), it is increasingly imperative to integrate the activities in those different channels to produce the most positive customer experience and to create the maximum value (Payne 2008, 195). Apart from values and benefits, true loyalty clearly affects profitability (Reichheld 2003).

A question concerning how respondents can benefit from good customer experience supported mainly the results of previously demonstrated question about benefits to the company. Mostly the respondents mentioned extra sales. Some of the respondents also felt that they reach the targets, have enjoyable meetings with customers and that it will turn into trust towards company's products. One of the respondents answered that a good and positive customer experience is always a benefit. Also strengthening relationship and commitment with customers was described as a benefit, as well as getting inspired and that there is a purpose in respondents work.

Löytänä & Korteso (2011, 13) have defined the benefits to the company of managing customer experience (table 10). There are twelve levels of benefits that lead's from company point of view to profitability and maximising the value to a customer. This table was used as a one reference when planning a questionnaire and a question about benefits that customer experience can provide to the company (see appendices.)

Table 10. Benefits to the company from managing customer experience (Adapted from Löytänä, Kortesus 2011, 13)

Strengthen customers commitment to the company
Adds customer satisfaction
Grows the amount of referees
Gives more possibilities to across and extra sales
Makes a customer relationships longer
Strengthen customers willing to give references
Grows the amount of development of an ideas given by customers
Adds the value of the brand
Commitment of employees
Decreases customer churn
Decreases negative feedback from customers
Diminishes the costs of acquisition of (new) customers
<p>➔ Maximizes the value produced for customer</p> <p>➔ Increases the company's profits</p>

Feelings.

To the question where respondents were asked to think about customer feelings in experience was given different kind of feelings to choose. The respondents had to choose the importance of every mentioned feeling according to how they think their customer should feel after their meeting. All the respondents choosed Trust to be the important feeling and Euphoria as not important. The majority of respondents choose Amusement, Adoration and Wonder as not important feeling. Acceptance and Friendliness aroused from the majority's answers as import feeling. As a follow up question there were an open-ended question asking if there is something else that wasn't on that list of feelings and if respondents wanted to add it. Most respondents mentioned feelings and mood. Own attitude and previous experiences with the company and its representatives was mentioned also. One respondent mentioned employee's empathaty skills.

A question about what kind of customer experience respondent would like a customer to remember achieved answers from all respondents and all answers were very positive and a full of essential verbs related to CEM definition. To name a few that occurred in answers: trust, satisfaction, valuable, caring, happy, enthusiastic, positive, good service. The respondents wanted their customer to remember a very positive and memorable experience that transmitted through the contentment, happiness, fun and sometimes even amazement. As Lundberg and Töytäri (2010, 91) has said that in future the success is not coming from brands but it's coming from the people. Customer experience doesn't only mean that selling a product is shifted into selling experiences but it means that customer is surprised by positive service (Kankkunen & Österlun 2012, 90). As mentioned earlier in theory part, Löytänä & Kortesus (2011, 48) says that to analyze a good customer experience is to measure the positivity of memory trace. To be able to deliver positive memory traces to customer, employees must have ability to recognize their own, both positive and negative, emotions at work. According to Bacal (2011, 239) customers want above all else that they are appreciated as customers and human beings, and that they'll have a sense of connection of an emotional tie to people around them.

According to all the respondents customers feelings and mood as well as respondents selling skills were seen as most influencing features on customer experience in general. The majority of respondents also thought that also all other alternatives were strong influencers. In related question to this there were also asked what kind of situation can affect negatively to respondents customer experience. For this open-ended question the respondents mainly described previous experiences, bad timing, wrong place, bad mood and that if respondent wasn't prepared for that meeting. It was seen that some features mentioned may occur from outside of the respondent but almost all were features that could be affected by planning the meeting in advance. There were also features like weather which cannot be influenced. Shaw (2007, 17-41) brings out the aspect that also how the company's representative is feeling influences on customer's experience. Understanding the detailed signals that your experience is providing to your customer is vital, as their subconscious will be evaluating these and deciding if your experience is good or bad, and raising either of these to their consciousness (Shaw 2007, 29).

Feedback

The respondents were asked how they generally get a feedback from their customers. This was an open-ended question. The majority of respondents answered that they receive feedback directly, straight and verbally from their customers. Also according to respondents a customer's willingness to meet a respondent again and that customer say's that it was nice to meet are seen as a sign for a good feedback. Through constant customer feedback and the use of knowledge, the enterprise becomes indispensable (Vandermerwe 2004). It has been learned that the most important interactions are "moments of truth," those relatively few points of contact that hold the greatest potential to delight—or alienate—an organization's customers (Markey et al. 2009).

Professionality

The last part of conclusions of the results is about an open-ended question where respondents were asked to describe their best features when they are interacting with customers and creating a customer experience. All responded and it was researchers pleasure to read so positive features from the case company's employees. Is a real asset for the respondents to know how to identify the strengths and how to use those as a support when creating a good customer contact, meeting or relationship. The expectations of customers are also more likely to be recognized by respondents. The respondents also mentioned their professionalism, commitment, trustworthy, friendliness, listening skills, honesty and a smile as their best features. The strength behind good relationships between the case company's employees and their customers seems to be the openness, reliability and authenticity of the encounters. The process of acquaintance is the process of sharing your world of meaning with someone else (Duck 2011, 207).

A final summary

The interaction with a customer and to establish a good and sustainable relationship requires both commitment and motivation from both parties. As a conclusion from this thesis research the importance of good relationships with customers is crucial for a future success of the case company's life cycle. If a company wants to be successful it must take the responsibility of developing good and sustainable relationships with its customers. To differentiate from their competitors a company needs to find new profitable ways to keep their customers satisfied. Customer Experience Management, CEM, offers an excellent tool for it.

Shaw (2007, 15) has presented a recommendation cluster from customer experience point of view (figure 25). This cluster provides perspective how to have loyal customers and to build a long-term relationship with customer and that it's necessary to focus on emotions. According to Shaw (2007, 15) it also reflects the fact that recommendation is more of a reactive state.

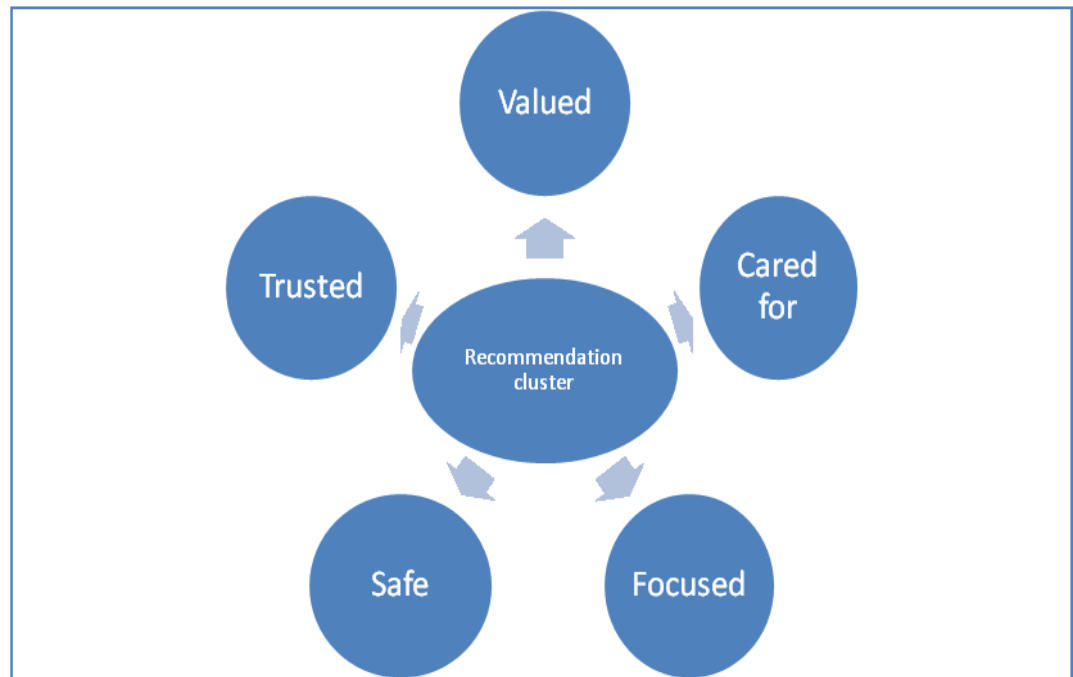


Figure 25 . Recommendation cluster (Shaw 2007, 15).

We will be able to focus on evoking the emotions that drive value and eliminate the emotions that destroy value (Shaw 2007, 32). As a conclusion for the case company the direction towards great customer experience is right. To understand how important it is to appreciate what customer really feels and how to recognize customer's needs and expectations are the guiding principles for the case company. It is possible to keep customers more satisfied and to work more customer orientedly whenever delivering customer experiences. It needs planning and a thought behind the action. Great customer experiences are differentiated by focusing on stimulating planned emotions (Shaw & Ivens 2005, 12). Regardless of our age, race, background, education, or any of a hundred other qualifiers, there is a common human experience that we all share (Coughter 2012, 74).

Arussy (2010, 20) has designed the customer experience management milestones to be followed by managers (figure 26). These milestones helps to manage but it is important also to examine ways to assure that the customer experience strategy

is supported, enabled and executed through the entire organization (Arussy 2010, 20).

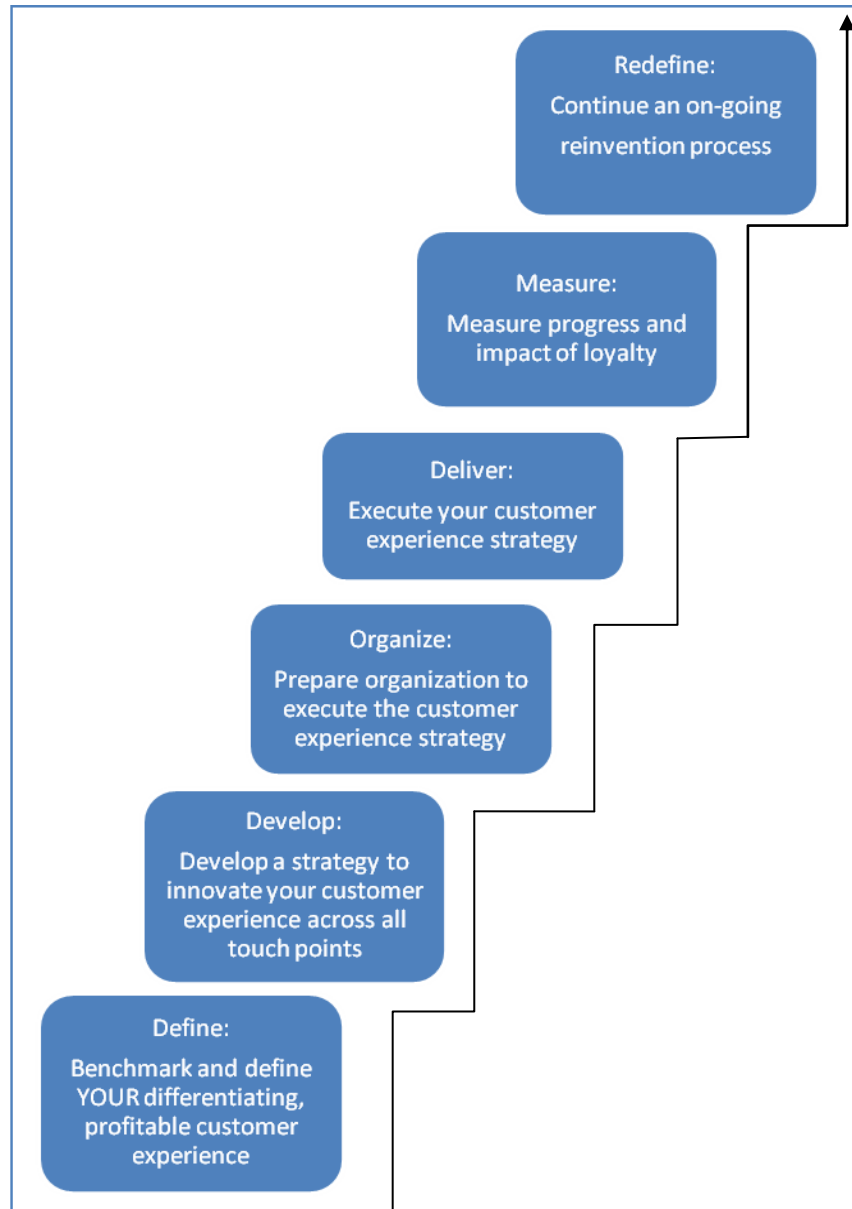


Figure 26. CEM milestones for managers (Arussy 2010, 20)

Arussy (2010, 20) mentions also some considerations that involves recruiting the right people, proper compensating, trainings and that all levels of organization has a critical role to be responsible for the customer experience. Company's management should also think how to get employees emotionally engaged. High

degree of customer satisfaction, invariably, is the result of efforts gladly put in by employees in dealing with customer related situations (Gureja 2013, 49).

The primary objective of this thesis research was to investigate how the case company's employees in different levels of organisation think about Customer Experience Management, and secondarily, how it affects to their work with customers and can it possibly be improved. The target was to improve the knowledge of customer experience in the case company and how that knowledge could be used when planning customer meetings, actions and relationship management. From researcher point of view the awareness of customer experience increased already when the respondents received the questionnaire and gave time to answering questions. The amount of open-ended questions in questionnaire was considerably high in relation to total number of questions. Researcher conclusion is that this way the respondents really had to think about the definition and meaning of customer experience than answering to structured questions. The best features of respondents that they listed in open-ended question are truly the power behind the further development. The case company employee's recognize their strengths well and appreciates the relationship with customer. These factors are the best possible base for development towards excellent customer experience.

5.2 Proposals for further development and research

For the development

The most important thing in today business world for a company is to differentiate itself from competitors. It is not the easiest thing to accomplish. It will need strategies and processes, planning and implementation, good management skills and not least the motivated and dedicated employees. Every organization in business life has the same important question to themselves, what is the joy and

benefit ratio to costs. Level of service and a concept behind that level matters and how to really make the difference and to compete. It's not just about delivering a great customer experience but it's also about how to do it profitably and sustainably. The better the experience is taken into consideration and done strategies for it the better value customer experience management will give both for the company and the customers.

As the majority of respondents of this thesis questionnaire answered, there is a need for a customer experience management strategy. Also the majority of respondents wanted to have training from customer experience management. To exceed towards a great customer experience it is important to clearly define the standards and goals of a customer experience. In the case company the direction towards an excellent customer experience management is right. It needs a lot of work, commitment and situational awareness of recognising feelings to become a company that offers a great customer experience to its customers. As this research results showed there are enthusiastically and professionally well prepared employees working in this company. They appreciate their customer's emotions and needs and are willing to fulfil customer's expectations by providing great experiences to them. These results will be handled over to the case company's national leadership team for the further development plan.

According to Soudagar (2012, 18) there are four essentials of Customer Experience, Reliability, Convenience, Responsiveness and Relevance (table 11). Four essentials is a simple example of how to fulfil the four important essentials and, from researcher point of view, also seen as a simple guideline how to offer great experiences to a customer. Trust, satisfaction, empathy and sense of individuality are guiding the collaboration between a company representative and a customer in good customer relations.

Table 11. Four Customer Experience Essentials (Soudagar 2012, 18)

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

In addition, Hopson et al. (1999, 70) gives idea of making people feel special. Four essentials mentioned earlier and also a feeling of being special can help to think how to deliver an experience. To think more deeply how to take advantage of how customers feel valued and respected, there are examples that all human beings appreciate:

- listen to us and respond to what we say
- go to some trouble to provide what we need
- give us time and quality attention
- use our name when appropriate
- are courteous, polite and welcoming
- show interest in our ideas and experiences and ask questions to find out what we think and how we feel
- make us feel comfortable and solve our problems
- provide that little bit more than we expect

(Hopson et al.1999, 70).

According to the case company's employees overall responses to the questionnaire the cornerstones of four essentials by Soudagar (2012, 18) as well as feelings listed by Hopson et al. (1999, 70) are well understood. It is easy to start to work more thoroughly towards excellence in creating a customer experience and with the support of management. According to Kim & Mauborgne (2010, 213) the more clearly the process behind the strategy exudes intelligence and emotion recognition, the more the people apply their knowledge and expertise. In addition to that people also co-operate more voluntarily to improve the company's chances of success in implementing the strategy when they are aware of the process behind it. To fully leverage experience as part of a customer-value proposition, organizations must manage the emotional component of experiences with the same rigor they bring to the management of product and service functionality (Berry et al. 2002).

For the research

For the further research there are several aspects how to continue. One aspect is to implement a qualitative research where the study group consist of this study's other party, the customers, and both research objectives and research questions could be modified to serve a customer point of view. This kind of study design could help to investigate whether this research results can correlate the expectations that customers have about experiencing. The other aspect could be to implement a research that is both quantitative and qualitative. In qualitative part there would be personal interviews with the case company employees to deepen this research results, and in quantitative part the target group would be customers by answering the internet questionnaire. Third aspect could be a quantitative survey for a larger study group of customers.

To understand more widely a definition of CEM there is a further research need for analyzing the emotional structure of collaboration and decision making. In this thesis research the research approach was throughout very positive. To research this further it would be worth knowing how negative factors may influence on both emotional and practical level.

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APPENDICES

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