

DEVELOPING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE THROUGH CUSTOMER JOURNEY TOUCHPOINTS

Case Company: Polar Metalli Oy

Branch: Subcontracting

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Opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli tutkia, mitkä tekijät vaikuttavat tapausyrityksen asiakkaiden kokemaan asiakaskokemukseen ja millä keinoin tapausyritys voi erottautua kilpailijoistaan. Lisäksi opinnäytetyö sisältää suunnitelman asiakaskokemuksen kokonaisvaltaisesta kehittämisestä ja toimenpiteistä, joiden avulla saavutetaan kilpailuetua yhä kovemmassa kilpailutilanteessa. Tapausyrityksen merkittävin tulonlähde on sopimusvalmistus, minkä vuoksi tutkimus on kohdennettu vain tähän osa-alueeseen. Tapausyritys Polar Metalli Oy on Keminmaalla toimiva pieni metallialan perheyrittäjä, ja yrityksen päätuotekategoriat ovat sopimusvalmistus, Polar Grillit ja Polar savupellit.

Opinnäytetyön tutkimusmenetelmänä oli yksittäinen tapaustutkimus. Tutkimuksen aikana kerättiin sekä laadullista että määrällistä tietoa, joka analysoitiin ja validoitiin menetelmä- ja teoriatriangulaation avulla. Teoreettinen viitekehys perustui kirjallisuuteen sisältäen eri lähteistä koottuja asiakaskokemukseen liittyviä artikkeleita. Lisäksi teoreettiseen viitekehykseen on koottu tietoa työntekijäkokemuksesta ja organisaatiokulttuurista, koska ne kytkeytyvät tiiviisti asiakaskokemukseen. Tutkimukseen sisällytettiin myös alihankinta-asiakkaille lähetetty kyselytutkimus, sekä yrityksen johdon haastattelut sekä tutkimukselle merkityksellisten yrityksen arkisto- ja tietokantatietojen analysointi.

Asiakaskokemus ja sen kehittäminen on noussut yhä tärkeämpään rooliin myös Suomessa ja yritysten on yhä tärkeämpää solmia asiakassuhteita huomioiden myös tunteisiin liittyvät tekijät. Osallistaminen, yhdessä tekeminen ja arvon luominen yhdessä tulevat nousemaan yhä tärkeämpään asemaan ja yrityksen vilpittömyyden tavoite olla tukemassa asiakasta kokonaisvaltaisesti asiakasmatkan jokaisessa vaiheessa edistävät yrityksen kestävästä liiketoimintaa. Tutkimuksen avulla muodostettiin viitekehys, jonka avulla tapausyritys voi erottautua kilpailijoistaan, vaikkakin tutkimuskyselyn alhaisen vastausprosentin vuoksi ei ollut mahdollista tehdä kattavaa kosketuspisteanalyysia.

Avainsanat asiakaskokemus, kosketuspiste, asiakaspolku,
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Author	Lea Åman	Year	2022
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The objective of the thesis was to examine the factors that affect the case company's customers' customer experience and recognise means for differentiating from the competitors. In addition, the thesis incorporates a development plan for improving overall customer experience and measures that enable the case company to achieve competitive advantage over competitors in an increasingly turbulent business environment. The case company's most important source of income is subcontracting and therefore the research is targeted only on this particular area. The case company is Polar Metalli Oy that is a small family-owned company operating in Keminmaa, Finland. The main product categories are subcontracting, Polar Grilli products and Polar damper flues.

The research method for this thesis was a single case study. Both qualitative and quantitative information was collected, and data was analysed and validated with method, - and theory triangulation. The theoretical framework of the research was based on the literature and article reviews from different sources related to the concept of the customer experience. Further, because the employee experience and organisational culture relate closely to the customer experience these are also parts of the theoretical framework. The research also included a questionnaire that was sent to the subcontracting customers of the case company. In addition, the case company managers were interviewed, and relevant data was collected and analysed from the case company archives and databases.

Developing customer experience is today a trend also in Finland and closer connections with customers also on emotional level is more important than ever before. Collaboration, involvement and co-creation of value together with the customers will be an important ingredient of sustainable business development in addition to corporation's genuine purpose of doing good and supporting customers during the whole customer journey in the future. With this single case study, the researcher was able to develop framework for differentiating from the competitors' despite of the low response rate on the customer touchpoint survey.

Keywords customer experience, touchpoint, customer journey, organisational culture, employee experience

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Lifelong learning is a concept that originates from the 1920s but became more popular in the 1970s. Ever since, the concept has been associated with personal and organisational development in thousands different ways. Today, organisational learning and exponential learning are leveraged through collective knowledge within teams that reinforce cross-functional intelligence for value creation. The studies at Lapland University of Applied Sciences opened a totally new world for me. In addition to new knowledge, I learned and reinvented and strengthened not only my professional skills but myself as well with the support of the professors and fellow students of the IBM20 group. Especially I would like to thank Kaisa Lammi for the valuable insights and all the support during this thesis project and Teresa Chen who encouraged and helped me to improve the language of the thesis.

My employer and the commissioner of the thesis, Polar Metall Oy, that I have worked for over a decade has given me an opportunity to grow along with the company and I am proud to be part of the team we have there today. I would like to thank my colleagues and the work community, especially Markus Saukko who supported and mentored me during the research.

I want to express my deepest gratitude also to my husband, who supported me all the way through this project and my children to whom I am a living example of lifelong learning. The world is yours.

ABBREVIATIONS

CX	Customer Experience
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning
BMC	Business Model Canvas
EE	Employee Experience
QMS	Quality Management System
CEM	Customer Experience Management
CER	Corporate Environmental Responsibility
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
ExpO	An Experimental Organisation
VoC	Voice of the Customer
B2B	Business to Business
B2C	Business to Customer
CJD	Customer Journey Development
NPS	Net Promoter Score

1 INTRODUCTION

In extremely competitive and turbulent markets, focusing only on producing high quality products with low prices and short lead times does not necessarily guarantee long term success for companies. However, as the mentioned aspects are still essential, long-term success depends on establishing deeper relationships and continuous interactions with customers.

Emotional bonds, memorable experiences and co-creation of value are influencing not only the sustainable and prosperous business development but also enables companies to distinguish future behaviours of the customers (Rais, Musa & Muda 2016, 300). The fundamental shift from product-centric mindset of an organisation, that manufacturing companies traditionally are perceived, to customer-centric mindset requires companywide pursuit and connecting organisational silos for cross-functional collaboration for improving customer experience (CX). When the core values and expectations of customers are properly acknowledged it becomes easier to address resources efficiently on the aspects that matter the most. Further, it is important to distinguish the relation between the organisational culture, strategy, vision and mission, leadership, and employee experience to the customer experience. All these factors ultimately influence on the holistic experience customers get while interacting with the company or the brand.

Kari Korhonen (2019) summarises the relation between brand, customer-, and employee experience in his book *Asiakaskokemus ja Henkilöstökokemus, uusi aika, uudenlainen johtaminen* as following: "Brand promises, customer experience delivers, and employee experience secures". In addition, he explained the strategic choices the company should evaluate concerning the customer experience in relation to the branch of industry. Traditionally branches are qualified as high-touch and low-touch branches where high-touch branches include hospitality and service industries and low-touch branches include energy and manufacturing industries where dependency between employee experience and customer experience is not as high compared with high-touch branches. However, regardless of the branch of industry the company can make strategic decision on developing customer experience that differentiates it from

competitors. As an example, the company can improve and deepen interactions and communication with customers. (Korkiakoski 2019, 18,19.)

1.1 Polar Metalli Oy

The commissioner of the thesis is Polar Metalli Oy, that is a small family-owned company operating in the metal industry. The company was established in 1984 when the founder, Tapio Saukko, invented revolutionary damper flue for masonry chimneys. (Saukko, T. 2022.)

Tapio Saukko invented a modernised damper flue, as shown in the image 1, that is made from stainless steel and patented mechanism brought several advantages for end users and masons as well (Saukko, T. 2022).



Image 1. Polar Metalli damper flue (Polar Metalli Oy 2022)

In the beginning, Tapio Saukko produced damper flues in his home garage with his family members and in 1990 the production was moved to production facilities located in Kemi. The company acquired industrial customers that produced ceramic and pumice system chimneys and with steadily growing turnover the company started to invest in automation and the company soon become the leading manufacturer of damper flues in Finland. By means of increased automation and steady market position the company started to expand its

production, and in 1995 first Polar Grilli was introduced. On a small scale the company practiced subcontracting for industrial customers and custom-made products for consumers during that time as well. Since 2001 the company has operated in Keminmaa, where the company found suitable production facilities for the growing company. In 2009 the company launched its' own web shop, Polarshop.fi first for domestic customers in Finland followed by the EU (in English) and DE (in German) shops for European customers. (Saukko, T. & Saukko, M. 2022.)

In 2009 Polar Grilli products became the most important product group because of the internationalisation of Polar Grilli products and regression of the building industry started in 2008-2009 that weakened the demand for damper flues. The demand has been decreasing ever since until 2021 as shown in the Figure 1. (Polar Metalli Oy 2022.)

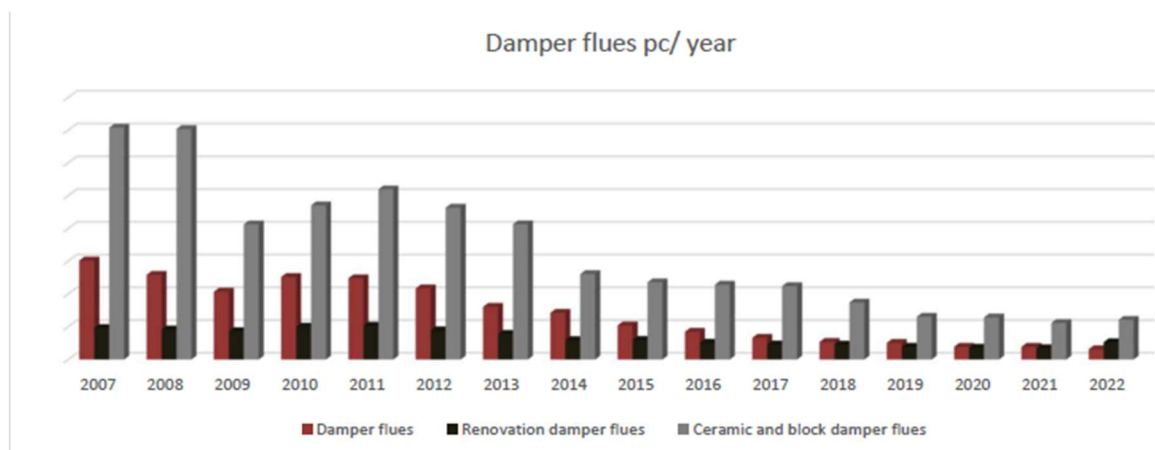


Figure 1. Damper flue demand between 2017-2022 (Polar Metalli Oy 2022)

During the last quarter of 2022, the energy crisis caused by the Russian illegal invasion of Ukraine has increased the demand of the damper flues. Especially the demand for renovation damper flues has almost doubled compared to the previous year. The trend is expected to continue in 2023 because of energy saving campaigns and uncertainty in the energy markets. However, from the strategical point of view, it was a wise decision to increase automation and invest in machinery aimed at higher value-added production in different fields because the results of relying on one product segment would have been disastrous for the

case company. In 2007 the damper flue sales accounted for about 40% from the total turnover. (Polar Metalli 2022.)

At the time of this study, the company employs about 40 people and the turnover at the end of the fiscal year 2021 was 4,3 M€. In 2022 the turnover will exceed to 5 M€, thus the company will reach a remarkable milestone. In 2021 exports accounted for about 27 % of the total turnover consisting mainly of exports of Polar Grilli products for Kota and cabin producers. In the 2021 the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, The Netherlands and France were the main exporting countries. (Polar Metalli 2022.)

In the end of 2021 Tapio and Tuula Saukko transitioned the company officially to the next generation and the company is now under the management of Markus, Matti and Hannele Saukko all of whom have spent a great part of their adult lives in the company. In practice, Tapio and Tuula had stepped aside well before the official transition and were not involved with daily operations anymore in years, except as members of the board. Markus Saukko operates as a CEO, Matti Saukko is a sales manager and Hannele Saukko is responsible for supervision of work in powder painting unit. (Saukko, M. 2022.)

During the accounting year 2018-2019 the company acquired a new board member outside the company that brought significant changes to practices on the managerial level. The new and experienced board member gave valuable insights for improving procedures companywide followed by the formulation of the management group in the summer 2019. (Polar Metalli Oy. 2019, Annual Report.) Both the board and the management group convene once a month that have improved communication and established grounding for constant improvement and development.

As a driver of performance improvement, the case company started to pursue Quality Management System (QMS) Certificate ISO 9001:2015 in 2020 and on 17.3.2022 the Certificate was granted by DNV Business Assurance Finland Oy Ab. The decision to adapt QMS was a strategic choice to ensure that processes and documentation are uniform within the whole company and for building solid

groundings for sustainable development and growth. Further, because the company had set yearly growth targets it was important to secure the organisation's ability to deliver. In addition, because of the high turnover of workers the number of claims had increased substantially there was an urgent need to react and define processes thoroughly. (Saukko, M. 2022.)

The business model canvas (BMC) is used for designing, testing, building and managing business models. Business model canvas is a strategic tool to create alignment and to improve collaboration within the whole organisation for continuous improvement and for reinventing new opportunities. The BMC provides information about value creation for the organisation, but it is the value proposition canvas that helps in detecting value creation factors for the customers. (Osterwalder, Pigneur, Bernarda, Smith & Papadakos 2014, xv, 257, 272, 276.) The case company's BMC is presented in the figure 2.

BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS, POLAR METALLI OY

Key Partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - material suppliers - shipping companies - software and machinery suppliers - advertisement and marketing agency Sointi Oy and Inhouse Group Oy - governmental and local institutions/associations: ELY-Keskus, Business Finland, Keminmaan Yrittäjät - financiers 	Key Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sub-contracting for different industries - producing grills and accessories for kota and cabin manufacturers and also individual consumers both domestically and internationally - manufacturing of damper flues for chimney flue- and fireplace producers and constructors and renovators - production of MyPizza baking steel and other own products - renting premises for other businesses 	Value Propositions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - offer fast, skilful, and reliable services for industrial customers and operate as preferred partner not only by producing according to orders but developing and improving products and production methods together with customers - offer unique and memorable grilling experiences and versatile possibilities to enjoy Polar Grilli experience - operate as an attractive and reliable employer for talents from different fields and influence on the attractiveness and vitality of the region 	Customer Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - acquiring new customers via targeted marketing (contact directly potential new industrial customers, Facebook campaigns, google ads, and videos) - value each and every customer and operate resiliently and innovatively for customer retention and satisfaction - meeting customers and potential new customers in fairs and in other events 	Customer Segments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - different industries that seek for sub-contractor that can offer individualized service (from manufacturing small parts to full service: designing→ manufacturing→ warehousing→ delivering) fast, reliably, resiliently, and safely - kota and cabin producers - chimney flue producers - fireplace manufacturers and masons - people that love to cook with fire and get together with family and friends
Cost Structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - material and software costs - personnel costs - loans - fixed costs (insurances, gas, electricity etc.) - maintenance and repair costs (machinery and buildings) - marketing costs (Sointi Oy: digital marketing, Inhouse Group, fairs, and events, third party video producers) 		Revenue Streams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sub-contracting - selling Polar Grilli products - selling damper flues - web shop sales (FI, EU and DE) - income from renting premises 		
Key Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - skilful personnel - innovative and encouraging management (constant learning and focus on improvement and growth) - automated production lines and wide range machinery - modern software - own land and premises 		Channels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in-house sales force, company, and brand web sites, communicating actively in social media (Facebook and Instagram) - own web shops (FI, EU, DE) - other web shops: grillikauppa.com (FI and SWE), netrauta.fi - kota and cabin producers and their channels - chimney flue producers and their channels - recommendators (word of mouth) 		

Figure 2. Polar Metalli Oy BMC (Polar Metalli 2022)

The value proposition of the case company for subcontracting customers state: “offer fast, skilful, and reliable services for industrial customers and operate as preferred partner not only by producing according to orders but developing and improving products and production methods together with the customers”. Osterwalder et al. summarises that value proposition explains the benefits the customers can expect while using the organisation’s products or services (Osterwalder et al. 2014, 7).

The value proposition canvas is integrated into the organisation’s BMC. It serves as a strategic management tool for testing, designing, building, and managing services and products of the organisation in question. With designing the value proposition canvas, it is possible to clarify what customers want and understand value creation patterns in a simplified and visualised form. In addition, value proposition canvas allows testing new business ideas and evaluate risk factors associated with the new business strategies and ideas. For keeping the value proposition relevant for the customers, the design should be continuous process leading to evolvement. (Osterwalder et al. 2014, viii, ix, xiii 277.)

1.2 Motivation and Background

Continuous improvement, improving products, services, processes, customer experience etc. requires efforts not only from the management but from the employees at all levels of an organisation as well. The organisational culture should be supportive for innovation, knowledge sharing and exploration of improved ways for customer value creation acknowledging also changes in the business environment. Organisation goals should be clearly defined and be effortlessly accessible to all members of an organisation. Knowledge should be shared between organisational silos and employee involvement should be ensured for transformational change. (Dewar, Doucette & Epstein 2019.)

The researcher’s initial aim was to develop customer experience management (CEM) strategy for the case company but when the researcher started to work with the topic and align it with the company strategy, the initial plan needed to be changed. The researcher discovered that the company actually had not defined

the organisation strategy and it was therefore impossible to align CEM strategy with it. For this reason, the researcher decided to concentrate on developing customer experience and targeting the research to subcontracting customer segment for keeping the research in controllable frames. In addition, because subcontracting is the most important source of income for the company, and the researcher found it interesting to validate whether the customer experience is the key driver in industrial context over more traditional aspects like productivity, price and short lead times.

During the MBA studies, the researcher found the CEM course the most fascinating but at the same time the most challenging. The researcher tried to reflect theories and practises constantly to the researcher's daily work but was not able to develop common thread within the industrial context. The researcher was moderately disturbed with the matter and decided to dig deeper into the topic. With this research, the researcher was able to get valuable data from the case company's customers and from the literature for developing customer experiences based on knowledge that will later be utilised in formulation of the customer experience management strategy for the case company.

Despite the case company's long history, operating for almost 38 years, no prior customer satisfaction surveys or interviews had been conducted. However, important insights have been shared and discussed in personal meetings and correspondences with industrial customers for decision making purposes. Because subcontracting has become the most important source of income for the company and development is estimated to continue (Saukko, M. 2022), it is important to discover what are the factors customers value for making strategic choices for improving the customer experience and differentiating from competitors. Therefore, the focus of the research is on business-to-business (B2B) segment and other segments are omitted for future researches.

1.3 Research Questions and Objectives of the Research

The objective of the research is to distinguish and examine factors that the case company's industrial customers find most important in relation to customer

experience. Aim was to discover means for differentiating from competitors for sustainable competitive advantage. For fulfilling the objectives of the research, the researcher determined following research questions for the study.

Research question 1: How will the development of customer experience influence on the competitiveness of the case company? This question will explain the theoretical framework for the customer experience and present strategical advantages development that can bring for organisations.

Research question 2: What are the most important factors to be taken into consideration for developing customer experience for the case company? This question will examine and explain the most important factors industrial customer value and what are the most important development points indicated by the survey.

Research question 3: How should the results of the research be implemented and managed in the case company? This question will present framework for differential competitive advantage and how the aspects of customer experience should be taken into daily operations and managed for securing best possible results for the case company.

1.4 Limitations of the Research

The research is aiming to find out means for improving customer experience in interorganisational, (B2B) context for the case company and therefore business to customer (B2C) will be excluded from the research. However, the theoretical framework for customer experience is mainly based on business to customer (B2C) context that notwithstanding developed theoretical foundation for the research.

The purpose was to make a touchpoint analysis via customer survey and analyse gains and pains customers perceive while experiencing different interactions and touchpoints during the customer journey. However, because of the low response rate it was not possible to make any definite conclusions for development. However, the survey gave some valuable insights that in combined with the

theoretical framework will be utilised in development plan presented in the sub-chapter 4.2.

In addition, for the future it would be beneficial to consider segmenting industrial customers more precisely into smaller customer segments based on the industry they operate. Segments could be as an example divided into high-end customer products and industrial volume products for conducting accurate analysis based on the field of industry.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The first chapter of the thesis introduced the case company and motivation and the background for the research. In addition, the research questions and objectives of the research were explained with analysis of the limitations of the research. The chapter 2 covers theoretical framework of the customer experience explaining the theories and advantages the customer experience framework can provide to organisations generally.

The following, chapter 3 introduces the methodology of the research followed by the empirical part in the chapter 4. The chapter 4 includes analysis of the results of the customer experience survey and development proposal based on pertinent theories and the survey. Conclusions and suggestions for the future research are presented in the chapter 5.

2 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Michael E. Porter is perceived as the most influential sophist on competitiveness and management in modern business. Adam Smith with his book in 1776, *The Wealth of Nations*, can be stated of being an ancestor of economics and developed groundings for economic thinking and future theories as well. (Cho & Moon 2013, xix, xxi.)

These theories along with several adaptations introduced during the last decades have developed the groundings for differentiation strategies and customer experience that are applied in the 21st century. Further, at the time of this study it is more important than ever before to consider corporate social and environmental responsibility and sustainability not only from the strategic but also competitive point of view.

2.1 Definition of the Concept of the Customer Experience

Customer experience incorporates the customers' cognitive, social, emotional, sensorial, and psychological perceptions to every contact point with the company or the brand (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016, 70). Customer experience is the impression the customer has developed about the company during different interactions including emotions and image. These different interactions can be described as touchpoints that form customer journey and usually includes both digital and physical aspects. It is important to remember that customer experience starts from the very moment there arises a need for the certain product or service. This early stage is influenced by any knowledge or information the customer has received earlier on the company, product or service and are not necessarily related to the customer's own experience nor can be controlled by the company. (Korkiakoski 2019, 19.) Customer experience can be either objective that relates directly on the physical usage that provide functional benefits or subjective that are strongly related to individual emotions and feelings during the customer journey (Wen, Wong, Kim & Badu-Beiden 2021, 3).

The company cannot completely alone determine what kind of experiences customers get; they can only choose what kind of experiences they will try to create. The reason for this is that holistic customer experience involves unconscious interpretations involving feelings and emotions. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011,7.)

Korkiakoski (2019, 42, 43) presented 7 different dimensions for developing customer experiences from the organisation capability perspective that are presented in figure 3.

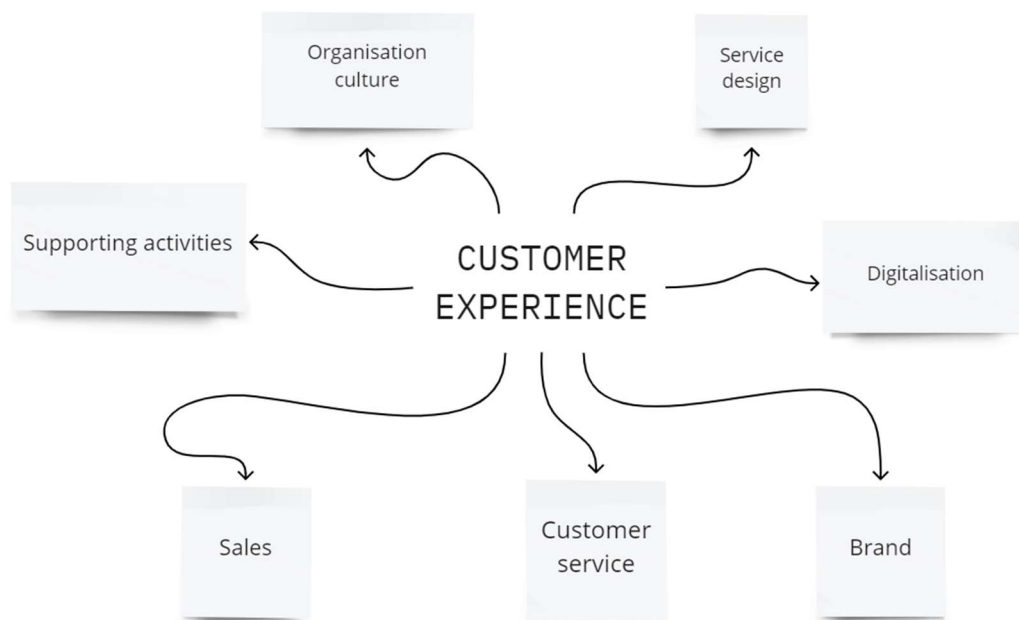


Figure 3. Organisation capability aspects, adapted from Korkiakoski (2019, 42,43)

These abovementioned dimensions construct the environment where customers interact with organisations and depending on the organisations capability to integrate processes e.g., utilising different digital solutions determines how the customer perceives different aspects; whether they are integrated in the seamless entity or siloed, where different dimensions operate as independent ones.

However, from the customer point of view, Korkiakoski (2019, 46-48) presented Gartner Pyramid where the three lower layers are the most common and

organisations rarely reach upper levels that really differentiate the organisation from the competitors as described in the figure 4.

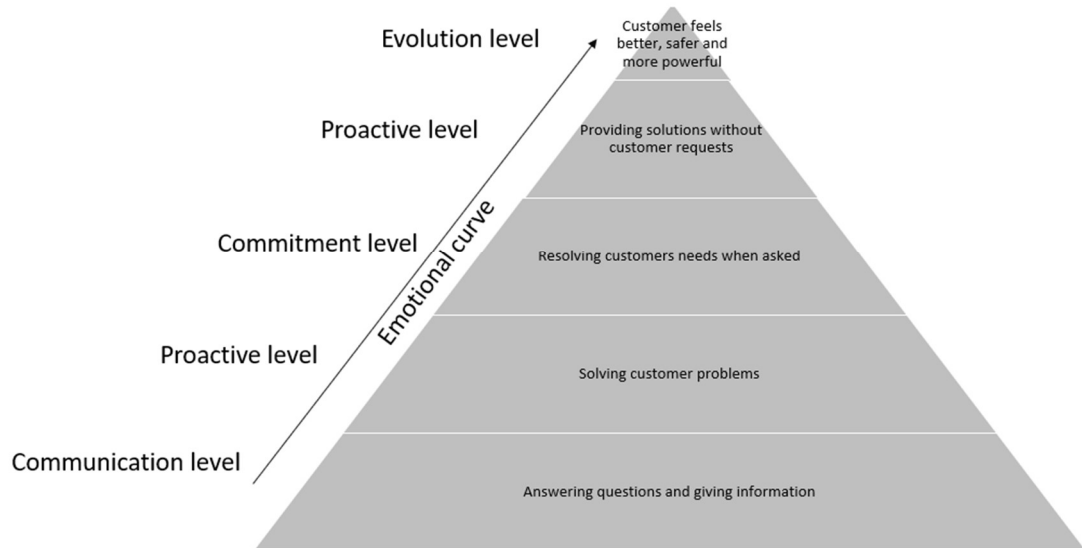


Figure 4. Gartner Pyramid, adapted from Gartner via Korkiakoski (2019, 46–48)

Companies tend to focus on improving processes, communication and reacting on customers activities that pursue customer commitment and loyalty while at the end of the pyramid customers problems are being resolved before customers even realise them, or personalised and individualised services make them feel valued. For predicting customers' needs the company can utilise technological solutions but usually this is not enough. Connecting with customers and creating emotional bonds require also human interactions. (Korkiakoski 2019, 47-48.)

Emotional curve in the figure 4. presents the increase of emotional involvement and the purpose is to indicate how emotional aspects or empathy increase while moving towards evolution level of the customer experience. Korkiakoski (2019) argues that a good experience consists of three components that are effectiveness, easiness, and emotional feeling as described in the figure 5. The first two can be quite easily detected and resolved with development of processes and technological solutions, but emotional feeling is the most difficult because it is dominated with the personal perceptions of the customer and conditions during specific time. The key question is how to deliver feeling that the customer is cared for, listened to and understood. (Korkiakoski 2019, 49-51.)



Figure 5. Components of the good experience. Adapted from Korkiakoski (2019, 54)

Technological solutions and organisation's processes need to meet customers' requirements, but it is the complete journey that determines the customer experience. When the organisation has made strategic decision about the customer segment(s) it wants to serve, processes and people need to deliver, customer experience strategy should be developed, and results should be measured and validated for not only meeting or exceeding customer expectations but also for reacting according to customers' needs and wants. (Korkiakoski 2019,58, 62, 64, 95.)

Bolton, Gustafsson, Mccoll-Kenndy, Sirianni and Tse (2014) believe that it is the small details that makes a difference on customer's holistic experience. Small details facilitate development of excellent experiences "the little things that make a big difference". Bolton et al. (2014) categorise the little things into three different categories. The first is human touch where the whole experience is designed holistically around the customer considering all separate elements; technology, third parties and the brand promise into seamless and integrated entity where customer does not even realise elements as separate ones. The second is emotional engagement, where satisfying experiences are not enough for creating emotional bonds but memorable and customised are. The third combines two above mentioned. It is the human touch with emotional engagement. It involves co-creation of value, open platforms; redesigning services together that can lead to remarkable results. (Bolton et al. 2014, 261-266.)

Further, when the company already produces high quality products and services similar to competitors' offerings, customers would not necessary even remark small improvements and therefore it is necessary to discover other means for differentiating from others. Hence, it should be studied what are the service points that could be leveraged for increasing brand loyalty and commitment of customers. (Bolton et al. 2014, 254.)

2.2 Experience Economy

In 1999 Pine & Gilmore (2013) presented the concept of experience economy in the book *The Experience Economy* and ever since the concept has been evolved from a single phrase or mantra to what it is today; transformation where experiences are customised for both individuals and businesses. Businesses are managed by people and therefore offerings should be personal, customised, and authentic for differentiation. (Pine & Gilmore 2013, 21, 33, 41.)

In 2011 Pine and Gilmore published the book *The Experience Economy, Updated Edition* where they argue that still too many companies and managers rely on old-fashioned way of thinking where concentration is on productivity aspects instead of customer experience, where positive feelings and emotional bonds create groundings for relationship (Pine & Gilmore 2011, X). The researcher of this study can concur with the statement even it was published over ten years ago, because remarks from the researcher's daily work indicate that this is usually reality especially in interorganisational, B2B, context. Organisations tend to make developments only from the productivity and cost perspective or for increasing the turnover and brand value, and customers are not necessarily at the centre of development.

In 2011 the concept customer experience was not yet as familiar for businesses in Finland as it was in the United States or in the Europe (Löytänä & Korteso. 2011, 6). According to the opinion of the researcher of this study, the situation has started to change and especially hospitality and service industry are widely using the concept. In industrial context the concept is not yet as widely used, and

this creates remarkable opportunity for companies that are at the forefront of developing customer experiences and gives an edge over competitors. Korhonen & Gerdt (2016, luku 1) support this viewpoint presented by the researcher of this study, only 20 % from the companies that operate in industrial production and services have integrated customer experience in the organisation strategy.

Experience is according to Pine and Gilmore (2011) a new source of value. While services can provide intangible benefits that are carried out on customer's behalf, experiences offer memorable, sometimes even theatrical events that reinforce engagement and feeling of personality. (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 3.) Everyday routine can be transformed into an experience in several ways, Pine and Gilmore presented some examples like certain music and pictures in certain parking hall floors for customers to remember where to find the parked car (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 5). This example from everyday life can be transformed to any other activity, a standard service is transformed to an experience with the touch of personality and when it awakes emotions it will become memorable.

2.3 Touchpoints

Touchpoints are separate transactions that a customer face during experiencing the product or service with the company or the brand. These transactions form customer journey, from the very beginning until the end sometimes affected by multiple channels and direct or indirect touchpoints, that determines holistic experience for customers that should always be studied from the customers' perspective. (Pantouvakis & Gerou 2022, 3, 4.)

Touchpoints can be identified as brand-owned, partner-owned, customer-owned, or independent ones. Interactions with customers can take place in each three stages of the customer journey, that are presented more detailed in the following chapter, and the relevance may also differ between the stages of the customer journey depending on the customer's personal journey or on the nature of the service or product. (Siebert, Gopaldas, Lindridge & Simões 2020, 76.)

Brand-owned touchpoints are controlled and designed by the organisation including advertising, organisation webpages, product features including pricing, packaging, inhouse customer service and sales and loyalty programs. Partner-owned touchpoints are controlled and designed by the organisation with its' partners. Partners can operate as distributors, marketing agencies or as communication channel partners. Customer-owned touchpoints are actions of a customer that neither the organisation nor the partners can control. Customer-owned touchpoints include as an example consideration during the prepurchase stage and consumption and usage in the postpurchase stage. In addition to consideration and consumption, customer-owned touchpoint includes aspects related to co-creation of value together with the organisation. This may appear in forms of usage-, and assembly videos shared by the customers in different channels. Independent touchpoints are controlled by other customers, influencers, or information sources apart from the organisation that influence decision making during the whole customer journey. (Siebert et al. 2020, 77, 78.)

In the past, only source of information for customers was brand-owned, completely controlled by the organisation in question. The world is quite different now, and customers should be listened in real time during the whole customer journey for allocating resources between different touchpoints efficiently. (Baxendale, Macdonald & Wilson 2015, 235, 251.) The company should renew customer experience constantly by monitoring, designing, prioritising and by adapting touchpoints within the customer journey because customer preferences change over time. Further, touchpoints should be consistent, relevant, and connected with one and another. (Homburg, Jozić & Kuehnl 2017, 386, 397.)

By optimising customer journey, it is possible to discover touchpoints gaps; unmet customer needs, futile and ineffective touchpoints along with incompatible touchpoints by categorising them as satisfying, dissatisfying and neutral (Pantouvakis & Gerou 2022, 8,10,12). For being able to categorise touchpoints, it is first required to determine the touchpoints from the customer's point of view and find out how customers experience each of them e.g., by utilising different surveys or questionnaires.

2.4 Customer Journey

Customer journey is developed from incidents that take place not only during experiencing the product or service but also preceding and subsequent experiences matter (Pantouvakis & Gerou 2022,3). Interactions can be either direct or indirect where indirect are harder the company to manage and control (Meyer & Schwager. 2007, 2).

Maechler, Neher & Park (2016) present six critical actions for managing customer journeys. These are identifying customer journey from the customer's perspective, understanding how the customers move and navigate during the journey, predicting the customers' expectations and needs during each interaction point, understanding the gains and pains the customers face during the journey, prioritising the most important opportunities and gaps for improvement and fixing root causes for improving end- to -end customer journey experience. (Maechler et. al. 2016.)

Further, Maechler et. al (2016) argue that organisations that excel in customer journey delivery are usually the market winners with higher revenue growth and recognisable competitive advantage over organisations that focus merely on touchpoints. Designing exceptional customer journey enhances customers' willingness to spend more, willingness to recommend the organisation's products or services to others and willingness to build long term relationships. (Maechler et. al. 2016.)

Optimising customer journey requires mapping all touchpoints. As already introduced earlier, interactions occur before-, during and after purchase that can be described as following.

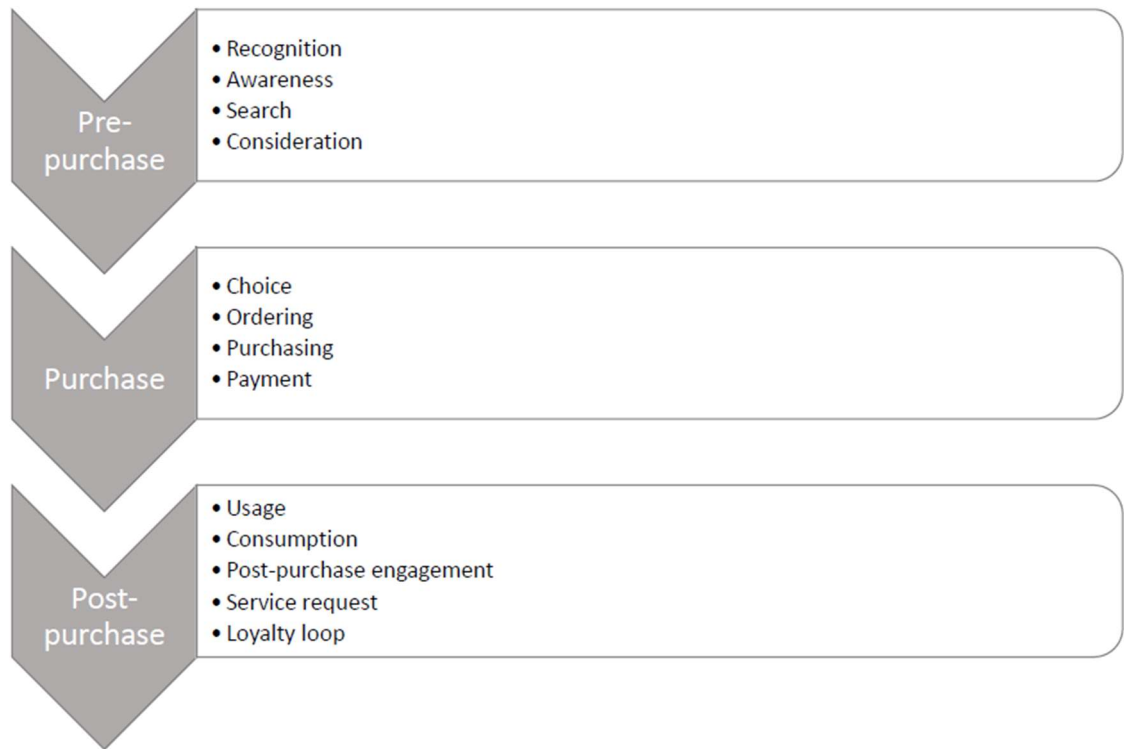


Figure 6. Purchase phases in the customer journey, adapted from Lemon & Verhoef (2016, 76)

Lemon and Verhoef (2016) introduce 3 main purchase phases in the customer journey that are presented in the figure 6 that logically lead from acknowledging the need for certain product or service to the final phase where the customer has experienced the whole journey and determine the level of relationship for the future.

2.4.1 Prepurchase Stage

The first purchase stage covers the whole environment starting from the recognition of the need, awareness, search, consideration, and brand related interactions that occur before the actual purchase (Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 76). Because the customer experience is affected by all previous information on the company and its services it is essential to take care of the image and secure that all communication both internal and external are aligned with the brand promise and corporate strategy. Any contradictions will decrease the company's reliability in the eyes of the potential customers. Today in highly digitalised world customer reviews are published fast and information is visible for all individuals in

innumerable channels and therefore companies should not ignore the importance of aligning communication with the brand promise or preferably with the company strategy.

Webb (2017) argue that the most efficient way to deliver good prepurchase, or pre-touch experience for potential customers is to offer valuable resources for free before the actual buying decision. By making the customers want to do business with the organisation, they will voluntarily come and choose it instead of other service providers. (Webb 2017, 147.)

Another important aspect on consideration phase relates to sustainability factors. The main drivers for corporate environmental responsibility, CER, are for example government legislation that determines the minimum requirements for avoiding sanctions, enhancement of a brand and reputation, pressure or expectation from shareholders and customers or from different organisations or society, or a person within the organisation who strives for sustainability (Dummett 2006, 377). Environmental issues are constantly being under study and reported worldwide and inevitably will have an impact on the lives of all of us. When organisations operate acknowledging environmental issues and can communicate and promote it within the industry and communities, they are partly influencing on the general awareness and shaping the attitudes of individuals and other organisations as well.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) involves organisation's impacts on society and its' citizens including working conditions, equality, human rights, environment, education, training, and innovation. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) may not be familiar with the concept of CSR but instead, with the close co-operation with local communities, business partners and employees, enterprises are already almost subconsciously following the CSR principles. However, European Union promotes SMEs to formulate written manuals for the CSR. (European Commission 2022.)

Further, European Commission has established a framework for sustainable investment and amending regulation in 2020. The aim of the sustainable finance

strategy is to lead capital flows to investments that support sustainability including environmental- and social factors (EUR-Lex, 2020, L/198/13, L198/14). The regulation will influence on the price of funding and as an example, the bank considers corporations' environmental and social responsibility when adjudicating price for the funding or the investment (Työ- ja Elinkeinoministeriö, 2022, 15).

Corporate social- and environmental responsibility is especially acknowledged in interorganisational (B2B) context and is important component on branding that enhance credibility and trust within the industrial environment (Saarijärvi & Puustinen. 2020, 53). Because of the high importance in B2B context, corporate responsibility issues were highlighted as an important part of the prepurchase stage because it relates directly to the brand and image of an organisation.

By operating in environmentally and socially responsible manner, it will have positive effect on brand image that is directly connected with the feeling and impression that others will develop from the company. Therefore, responsibility is an important component of customer experience because if these aspects are completely neglected and the reputation is damaged it is hard to win customers, recruit employees, and develop loyal relationships.

2.4.2 Purchase Stage

Prepurchase stage is followed by the decision and purchase. Lemon & Verhoef (2016) explain that the purchase stage covers all interactions between customers and corporate brand and environment during the actual purchase. Further, the role of the purchase confidence factors, decision satisfaction factors and reducing overload purchase options should be considered for securing that the purchase is completed, and the shopping experience is excellent. (Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 76.)

Purchase stage covers choice, ordering, purchasing and payment that were described in the figure 6. All related processes need to work seamlessly, and customer should feel secure in every stage of the purchasing experience.

Easiness, convenience, and consistency are required for delivering good experience at this stage.

2.4.3 Postpurchase Stage

The product or service itself plays critical role in customer experience in the postpurchase stage. Usage, consumption, engagement, need for service construct basis for the future behaviour of the customer. Postpurchase stage involves triggers that engage the customer for continuous relationship leading to loyalty loop within the customer decision journey. In addition, it involves also nonpurchase behaviours related to commitment with the company or the brand including word of mouth or other means for spreading the information about the services or products. (Lemon & Verhoef 2016, 76.)

Webb (2017) argues that customers are not keen to do business with companies that contact them merely aiming to sell more. Companies should differentiate with providing value for the customers without asking for returns. As an example, value could be provided with a gentle reminder about coming event or season in addition to free information that is relevant for the customer. (Webb 2017, 204, 205, 209, 210.)

2.5 Customer Experience in B2B

Interorganisational, B2B, customer experience is more complex than B2C because customer journeys relate to the nature of the relationships. Relationships vary in nature, they can relate to customer projects, industrial process development, expertise services, comprehensive solutions, or repetitive purchases and all of them lead into different kind of customer journey. In repetitive purchases the convenience and easiness throughout the customer journey is emphasised as an important element. In addition, another important element relates to the organisation's ability to deliver services in each touchpoint cost-efficiently for increasing customer's profitability. The level of customer relationships in B2B context can be leveraged through operating proactively; foreseeing customer's needs, operating responsively, show commitment and

expressing the desire to evolve together with the customer. (Saarijärvi & Puustinen 2020, 53.)

Loyalty loops are usually described as never-ending cycles that can however be disrupted by incidents that weaken customer loyalty e.g., poor customer service or better alternative. However, instead of creating predictable smooth customer journeys for customers in loyalty loops it could be worthwhile to consider designing unpredictable sticky customer journeys in involvement spiral. (Siebert et al. 2020, 47, 50.)

Siebert et al. (2020) stresses that the predictable and smooth customer journeys will meet customer expectations but there also lies the risk of losing their interest. The customers will stay excited and want more, when customer journeys are designed to offer unpredictable experiences. The smooth journey model facilitates loyalty loops offering support for customers' decision making aiming to ease customers' lives. Conversely, the sticky journey model facilitates involvement spirals with multiple offerings to bring excitement on customers' lives. (Siebert et al. 2020, 47,50.)

However, in interorganisational B2B context good experience does not have to provide excitement as in B2C context, and experience should instead be easy and painless and assertive for decision makers in question. Costs and benefits should be in balance and capacity should be aligned according to customers' needs. The efforts of the general sales and marketing departments are not dominantly determining the contact points in B2B context, because the counterparts usually communicate directly with each other's. (Meyer & Schwager. 2007, 3.) However, as above-mentioned cost, benefit and capacity related factors are important, in addition communication, collaboration and deeper connections including trust between parties should be leveraged throughout the customer journey for maximising customer loyalty and engagement.

In B2B context, trust and plausibility can be strengthened with the development of the brand through thought leadership. The organisation's brand could be systematically developed towards industry reckonable pioneer e.g., related to

digitalisation or sustainability factors. (Saarijärvi & Puustinen 2020, 53.) Thought leaders, in B2B context, are future orientated and inspire others with innovative thinking and provide guidance and new knowledge within the industry (Neuhaus, Millemann & Nijssen 2022, 108).

In addition, the development and improvement of the brand experience is one important factor in B2B context for increasing customers' loyalty. The reason is that usually the expenses are high, money and extra effort associated with the process, when changing the supplier and simultaneously brand involvement is low. (Kuehnl, Jozic & Homburg, 2019, 566, 558.) Because subcontracting is still mainly about producing items according to the customers' requests and drawings it relates more closely on goods than services. Therefore, instead of customer journey design (CJD), that is more important on services, brand experience should be developed through brand experience development (Kuehnl et al. 2019, 558).

2.6 Voice of the Customer

Organisations have started to move towards customer centricity and are trying to operate as customer driven by initiating different developments, usually incremental ones, that lead organisations closer to customers. However, a fundamental shift is required to become truly a learning organisation where customers lie at the heart of all operations. An organisation's personnel, throughout a company, usually think what customers want and need that is the major barrier for development and growth. The organisations that have comprehensively studied customers' needs and wants, have prioritised and aligned information with customers' views will be able to foresee customers' needs and get closer to customers. Voice of the customers (VoC) are used for getting closer to customers and for understanding customer problems, motivations, needs and wants comprehensively. (Coppenhaver 2018, 22,24.)

VoC can be collected via different surveys, interviews, observations but following social media channels and the Internet should also be noted. It is important to

know what the customers are saying about the organisation and its' products and services.

2.7 Customer Experience Management

Customer experience management is according to Homburg et al. (2017) a companywide management approach that consists of three categories: a company's culture, strategic governance, and capabilities the company possesses. The main purpose of the CEM is to achieve, sustain and enhance long-term customer loyalty across the whole organisation noticing different routines and patterns within. (Homburg et al. 2017, 384, 386.)

By managing customer experience, the company will maximise the value the customer receives and offer relevant experiences (Löytänä & Korteso. 2011, 7). The key word is relevant. For determining what is relevant and meaningful for the customer, it is required that the company knows the customer and understands the soul of the customer. Webb (2017) presented this idea in his book *What Customers Crave* simply stating "what customers hate and love". (Webb, 2017,10.)

Managing customer experience is always a strategic decision and it is not onetime project but requires constant development and innovation. In addition, it is important to determine how to measure and validate result and because the customer experience concerns the whole organisation it should be integrated with the organisation strategy. Customer experience management provides tools for discovering competitive edge because customer feedback is collected and analysed continually and there is a real connection between the organisation and the customer. Taking customers for granted, neglecting customers' wants and wishes will eventually be detrimental for development and can eventually lead into bad customer experience. (Löytänä & Korteso, 2011, 89.)

The customer experience management could be managed with using the framework presented in figure 7.



Figure 7. Customer Experience Management stairs, adapted from Lior Arussy (2010) via Löytänä & Korteso (2011, 89)

Lior Arussy (2010) via Löytänä & Korteso (2011, 89) introduced customer experience management stairs as presented in the figure 7., that lead from determining an organisation's own goal for differential customer experience to development of experiences in every touchpoint, organising, implementing, measuring and constantly redetermining previously set goals.

Customer experience management provides several advantages for a company that are for example:

1. Increase of customer loyalty and customer life cycle
2. Increase of customer satisfaction
3. Decrease of customer drain and claims or negative feedbacks
4. Increase the number of referees and strengthen the willingness to advocate
5. Increase the brand value and employee engagement
6. Increase cross – and upselling possibilities

7. Minimises costs for acquiring new customers
8. Increase development proposals from the customers

When customer value is maximised, it will bring returns for a company. (Löytänä & Korteso. 2011, 7.) Returns can be both tangible and intangible as the benefits for the customers as well. Whether the return is increase in sales or increase in customer loyalty both are important for the company and intangible returns should never be neglected as they are more important than ever before.

3 METHODOLOGY

The methodology chapter presents the methodology of the research. The research method and techniques are presented in the first sub-chapter followed by explanation of data collection and analysis in the second sub-chapter. Further, the second sub-chapter explains the motivation for the selected research method.

3.1 Single Case Study

The thesis incorporates research and development work and both qualitative and quantitative research techniques were applied. Yin (2009) describes a single case study as empirical research that examines present situation that relates to a real-life profoundly, particularly when there exist not clear boundaries between the situation and context (Yin 2009, 18,46).

The case study research combines data from different sources for comprehensive understanding of the entirety under study. In addition, the distinct feature of the case study relates to the questions how and why. When these questions lie at the heart of the research questions and there exists logical order connecting empirical data at first to the research questions and leading towards conclusions the definition of the case study is met. (Yazan 2015, 142, 148.)

Because the focus in this research was to study specific topic, real-life phenomenon from the case company's viewpoint, the customer experience and how it could be used for differential competitive advantage for the case company, the research method in this research is the single case study.

3.2 Data Collection, Analysis and Validation

The case company aimed at improving customer experience and for keeping the research in controllable frames, it was decided to concentrate on subcontracting customer segment that is the most important source of income for the case company. For finding out the topics and patterns that influence on customer experience the researcher first developed theoretical framework by familiarising

with the concepts and theories from the literature and journal articles both from digital and traditional sources. Theoretical framework formulated the basis or the scope for the empirical research that include interviews, questionnaire, observations, and data analysis from the case company's archival and data bases.

The researcher used multiple sources, personal experience within the case company, and validated results with method, - and theory triangulation, comparing the data between different sources and with findings of the research. Method triangulation relate to collection of data with multiple methods; interviews, field notes and observations and theory triangulation relate to using different theories for analysis and interpretation of the data (Carter, N., Bryant-Lukosius, D., DiCenso, A., Blythe, J. & Neville, A.J. 2014, 545). In addition, the quality of each information source was validated, and chain of evidence established. Yin (2009) stresses the importance of maintaining the chain of evidence for the convenience of the reader of the research and for validity and quality of the case study (Yin 2009, 122, 123). Because the researcher is working for the commissioner of the thesis, the scope of the research was developed according to the current situation and observed development points within the case company. The customer experience survey, touchpoint analysis, was implemented with Microsoft 365 Forms and was transmitted through Active Campaign. In addition, during the research the researcher had several informal discussions with the CEO and the Chairman of the Board of the case company. These all provided valuable insights from the past and also indications for the future development.

4 THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AT THE CASE COMPANY

As already presented in the sub-chapter 1.2. continuous improvement and improving customer experience requires efforts not only from the management but also from employees at all levels of an organisation. An organisation's goals and ambitions should be delivered understandably, and organisational silos should be broken down for increasing trust and communication between different departments. Organisational silos are needed for securing operational efficiency but sometimes silos cause mentality where skills and information is not shared that eventually inhibit cooperation and collaboration between departments that is noxious to customer experience, innovation, performance and eventually for the organisation itself (de Waal, Weaver, Day & van der Heijden 2019, 2).

According to the observations of the researcher of this study and the discussions with the production manager of the case company organisational silos are affecting negatively on communication, collaboration and trust and there is a need for improvement. However, because the management has already distinguished the problem and the case company is resilient to make changes quickly the problem is being tackled together with the managers, team leaders and employees and the situation has started to heal and improve. (Moisio 2022.)

Organisational culture is an important part of the customer experience as explained in the sub-chapter 2.7. because it reflects the values, the leadership styles, the procedures, the routines and even the language that makes the organisation special (Cameron & Quinn 2011, 22). Further, organisational culture and values are today more important also for employees than earlier and because eventually employees determine the level of service and the experiences they give to the customers, their role should be recognised in relation with the customer experience. Similarly, while customer experiences reflect customers' views on the organisation, employee experience reflects employees' views about the organisation both including emotions and feelings. Especially when organisations compete for talented and committed workforce, employee experience should not be neglected. (Korkiakoski 2019, 19, 21,23.)

Traditionally, organisations have had the power and control assuming that employees' need to work for them but today the power has shifted, and organisations are transforming into places where employees truly want to work. (Morgan & Goldsmith 2017, xxii.) The same phenomenon concerns also the power shift between customers and organisations, today the customers have the power and because of the numberless information channels organisations cannot hide from reviews of the disappointed customers (Webb. 2017, 13).

For creating employee experiences, the company must know its' employees. Managers and team leaders must have skills and capability to build connections on human and individual level noticing individual differences and designing experiences together with the employees. The organisation where people want to work, instead of needing to work, is an Experiential Organisation (ExpO). When employees are at the centre on the organisation, they are cared for, listened to and their fears, ambitions and passions are known, the transition to ExpO is possible. Employee experience is affected by three different environments that are technological-, physical and cultural environments with different related attributes. (Morgan & Goldsmith 2017, 9,10,12, 264.)

To summarise, organisational culture relates directly to the customer-, and employee experience, it is all about how we treat and communicate with each other' that eventually reflects on our customers and working environment as well. What kind of organisation we want to work for and what kind of organisation we want to create, we all have the possibility to make a choice.

4.1 Touchpoint analysis of the case company

The customer experience survey that was included into this research included 65 questions on different touchpoints covering the whole journey subcontracting customers experience during prepurchase, purchase and postpurchase stages. The questions are presented in Appendix 1. In addition, the questionnaire included Net Promoter Score (NPS) for finding out customers' willingness to recommend products or services to others. The purpose for finding out the NPS

in this research related to the overall experience and comparing it with the industrial standard.

For determining the touchpoints for this research, the researcher utilised her own experience as an industrial purchaser but also the long experience of the production manager of the case company, who have over 10-year experience in offer calculation and engineering and design. Touchpoints of the customer survey were determined from the customer point of view, stepping away from the corporate dependent standpoints for developing realistic and truthful journey industrial customers take while experiencing the case company's products and services.

The inquiry form (Appendix 1) was formulated in Microsoft 365 Forms and sent via Active Campaign to 450 subcontracting customers of the case company. However, because of the remarkably low response rate, it is not possible to make any definite analysis based on the results because only 23,7% of the respondents opened the e-mail that was sent via Active Campaign and of which only 7,38%, totalling 10 individuals, answered to the questionnaire. However, some valuable insights were discovered and for the future it will be studied if Microsoft 365 Forms and Active Campaign are the right tools for conducting surveys and if surveys should be assigned to be conducted by a third party.

However, for the researcher this survey gave valuable insights for the future researches. It is not enough that subcontracting customers are viewed as a one single customer segment, but it is recommended to divide the segment into smaller subsegments based on the nature or the field of the industry. High-end customer products and complex customer projects should be studied apart from industrial volume products for more accurate analyses.

The following sub-chapter, development plan for the case company is mainly based on the findings on the literature but also findings revealed by the survey. Despite of the low respondent rate, the researcher was able to find out important factors to be considered for development.

The main reason for the survey was to find out how the case company's customers experience different interactions, finding out the truth based on the knowledge not assumptions or believes the case company's personnel might have. As an example, the researcher has always thought that customers must find it difficult to arrive to the factory because there is no marked parking spaces for quests and sometimes there is also forklift truck moving around. However, according to the survey no one experienced this as a problem at all. All the respondents stated that it was not only easy, but also safe to arrive in the premises. This indicates the most important reason for listening to the customer voice, making the right decisions for improvement, and using resources efficiently.

The researcher and the CEO of the case company, Markus Saukko, had discussion soon after the analysis of the results of the customer survey. Of course, for the researcher the low respondent rate was a disappointment but there exists another aspect that should not be ignored. Because the questions of the survey covered the touchpoints within the whole customer journey, our customers, at least those who opened the e-mail can relate the questions to their own business activities. In this perspective, the questionnaire can bring added value for our customers by inspiring and giving new ideas to them for improvement.

4.2 Development Plan for the Case Company

The research, including theoretical framework from the literature and the customer experience survey, revealed several points that the case company could develop for improving the customer experience. These are presented in more detailed in the following sub- chapters followed by the conclusion chapter.

4.2.1 Strategy Development

Customer experience should be incorporated with the case company's strategy, vision and the mission and the message should be delivered throughout the

company to secure consistency within the whole company as summarised in the chapter 1.2 (Dewar et al. 2019). In the beginning of this research, the CEO Markus Saukko formulated a strategy for the company that is presented in figure 8.



Figure 8. Polar Metalli Oy strategy, adapted from Markus Saukko presentation (3.2.2022)

All these components listed in the strategy are important and are leading the case company's development to the desired direction. However, it could be worthwhile to consider making strategy slightly simpler, not too focused on individual stages of development and include novel aspects, doing good for the people and the community. Further, the case company could involve employees for strategy development for increasing engagement and involvement.

Strategies and mission statements are explaining the reason for the existence of organisations. Usually, the statement includes implications related to market leadership, shareholders' values, exceptional customer experiences etc but what if the focus is shifted from the trees to a forest, to the bigger picture. What are we here for, what good we are doing for the people and the community? (Morgan & Goldsmith 2017, 51.) In addition, as mentioned in the customer experience sub-chapter, genuine purpose of doing something good is a requirement for excellent

customer experience, doing good for the world and people, not aiming only on maximising financial gains and selling more.

The strategy could be renewed for example considering factors presented in figure 9. Brainstorming together, involving personnel throughout the company could develop groundings for a new and strong strategy that is recognised companywide.



Figure 9. Polar Metalli Oy strategy development, adapted from Markus Saukko presentation (3.2.2022)

Renewing the case company's strategy, taking people, including employees and customers, and sustainable business development in the heart of it would reflect the fundamental change within the organisation that is a requirement not only from the customers' perspective but also from the employees' perspective as discussed earlier in this research.

Pine and Gilmore emphasised in their book *The Experience Economy*, Updated Edition (2011) that the company's strategy and competitiveness should be grounded on company's own singularity and should not be determined by obsessively monitoring competitors and their activities (Pine & Gilmore 2011, 294). This means that development should be inherently connected to company's

own vision for the future that can be shaped and attained by constantly seeking new ways for generating value.

In addition, the case company should communicate and promote both environmental and social responsibility more actively because this will have positive influence on the image and branding. Further, the case company should provide customers free advices or other industry related information or news via Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn because these were the most important channels according to the survey. With relevant and free information, the case company can increase the commitment and loyalty of the customers and simultaneously enhance the brand image. As introduced earlier in chapter 2, small details matter. For example, easy interactions, consistency between different communication channels, variety of communication channels and responding fast on the changes of customer needs are critical for delighting customers. Employees should be trained and empowered for empathising personalised and individualised services. (Bolton et al. 2014, 255, 258.) This is something the case company could also consider in the future.

Subcontracting generally relates to producing items according to customers' drawings and to repetitive purchases. However today, the case company has acquired several new partners that are interested more on services; planning and designing projects collaboratively and arranging production accordingly (Saukko, M. 2022). Kuehnl et al. (2019) argued, that developing the brand experience is more important in product related context while developing the customer journey design is more important in service-related context (Kuehnl et al. 2019, 558). Therefore, the case company should take these both aspects into consideration for increasing the customer loyalty within all customer segments.

4.2.2 Thought Leadership

The case company has invested remarkably in automation and robotics and the company has inhouse competence and know-how that differentiate the company from competitors especially in the northern business region. In addition, modern design tools and skilful designers with the right attitude are also resources that

gives an edge over competitors. The case organisation could differentiate with combining all these above-mentioned factors in the thought leadership, being a trailblazer for the future development in robotics and automation. These aspects should be emphasised in both internal and external communication channels because it will strengthen not only the case organisation's internal self-confidence but will strengthen the brand image and reliability in the eyes of the present and potential new customers and partners.

4.2.3 Improvement targets based on the results of the survey

As mentioned earlier, comprehensive analysis is not possible because of the low response rate of the survey. However, the researcher was able to find out few development targets presented by some of the key customers of the case company.

An interesting finding was that respondents find LinkedIn as an important source of information as Facebook. Instagram and TikTok are also preferred channels over Twitter but not as important as LinkedIn and Facebook. In addition, a majority of the respondents emphasised the importance of participating in different fairs and because the case company is already active in fair participation this is recommended also in the future. The case company is active in Facebook and Instagram, but because customers also find LinkedIn an important channel for communication it is recommended to use the channel more actively. In addition, the relevance of the TikTok should be studied more for deciding whether it could be used as one of the communication channels.

A majority of the respondents were of the opinion that it would be better to inform about important issues personally instead of via newsletters. Therefore, it is recommended that the salesperson in charge would personally contact the customer and share information in the future. However, general information can be shared via newsletters as earlier. Response times, answering calls, messages and e-mails were generally pleasing the customers and 40% were hoping the chat service to be included on the case company home pages. In the future, this

could be one important development that could improve customer experience remarkably within all customer segments, also in B2C context.

The customers found the factory easily and did not experience any inconvenience when arriving and finding the right person. The customers that had visited the factory were really satisfied with the first impression, they were warmly welcomed, and the friendliness of the whole staff was noted.

All the customers found offer calculation and related procedure seamless and smooth. The offers are generally placed within the agreed time limit. The majority of the respondents were pleased with the content of the offers and 25% of the respondents had to ask for corrections. Only for 37,5% of the customers were suggested improvements and changes by the case company's representatives due to the cost and productivity reasons. However, this can relate directly to the nature of the product in question, whether it is industrial volume product purchased repetitively or individually designed and manufactured product. Therefore, before any changes in procedures this should be studied in more detailed. 87,5% of the respondents wanted to develop processes and products together with the case company's personnel that indicates that the case company's strategic choice to move towards full service or complete service is the right one. When there is a need to develop processes and products together with the customers, the need must be fulfilled by securing that the case company's personnel's professional skills meet the requirements. Therefore, it is suggested to carefully analyse what kinds of skills are required and arrange training courses companywide.

The customers were hoping for resiliency for possible changes related to delivery time and content of the orders. When the customers recognise a need for receiving products faster, the case company should meet new requirements. Further, when there arises a sudden need to change the content of the order the case company should be able to respond. These factors should be taken under more detailed study because of the importance and relevance to the customers.

The customers should be informed about possible production delays and mistakes as early as possible and after dispatching the order the customers should be informed with the related waybill, CMR, number. Because the case company uses enterprise resource planning system (ERP) automated delivery note should be feasible and will be studied further with the ERP supplier. In addition, it is recommended to formulate precise internal instruction related to delays for securing consistent procedure within the case company.

Quality of the products have met or exceeded customer expectations and 90 % of the deliveries have been on time. The case company is following delivery reliability on a weekly basis and any deviation will lead to further investigation. Documentation, delivery notes and invoices, generally meet customer requirements and the case company's forwarder services are perceived as professional and friendly.

The surprising finding was that the majority of the customers do not want the salesperson to contact them after products have been dispatched. 55,5 % of the respondents didn't consider important to be asked how things have worked out, and they prefer to contact themselves if there arises a need. However, it should be remembered that this could relate to the nature of the products or service because in this survey subcontracting customer segment was studied as one entity and it was not divided into smaller subsegment that is recommended for the future surveys. 40% of the respondents were in the opinion that it would be nice to hear from the salesperson also after the delivery and secure that the level of service has met expectations.

Even if the case company is targeting to deliver products and services according to customer requests inevitably mistakes can occur both in production and during transportation. In case of claims, personnel of the case company are showing empathy and are apologising for inconvenience caused to the customer. The claims are being resolved without delays and replacement products are sent fast. The only alarming finding was that only to 16,6 % of the respondents were delivered the deviation report that is a mandatory procedure required by the QMS.

Customer claims and complaints are always harmful for the customer and also for the supplier. However, there is another aspect that should be remembered. Studies show, that when the company deals the claim in a good and professional manner the customer will not only stay as a customer but will be 15 times more committed to the company than customers who have not experienced deviations. The disappointment can therefore be transformed into pleasure where the person or the company in question might start even advocating the organisation that processed the claim fast, empathetically and providing added value as compensation. Exceeding customer expectations is the key element in transforming pain into pleasure where even small things matter. (Löytänä & Korteso, 2011, 117, 119.)

The last part of the survey measured the overall service experience, net promoter score (NPS) and most important criterion for selecting suppliers. The NPS of the case company is 80 that is excellent compared with the other publicly available scores (IRO Research & Consulting, 2022).

According to the customer survey, the most important criterion for selecting the subcontracting partner is quality as presented in the figure 10. The second important is price and third the resilience to make changes. Corporate responsibility is 7th important factor, that was a surprise for the researcher because according to the literature and findings during the research it should play more important role when selecting partners, especially in B2B context. However, this could also indicate that it will be more the trend for the future and is not yet completely broken through.

What are the most important criteria for selecting subcontracting partner?

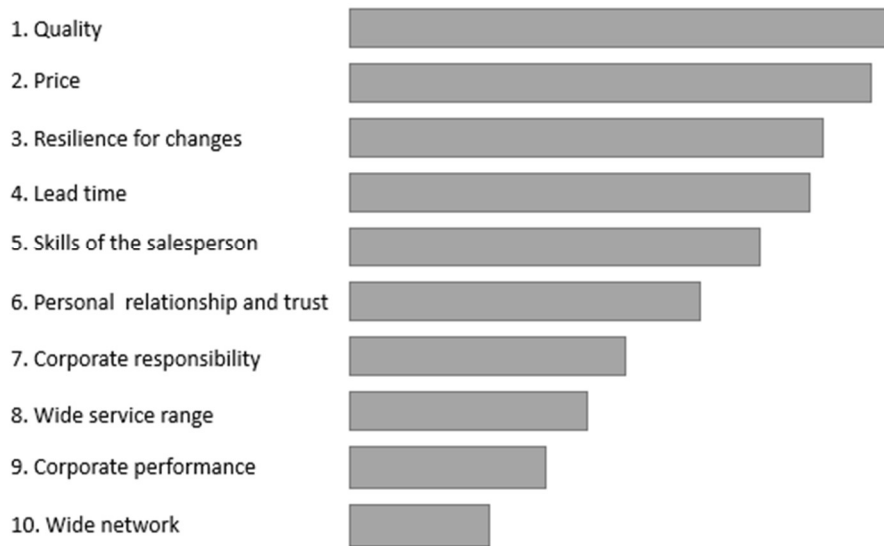


Figure 10. Criteria for selecting subcontracting partner (Polar Metalli Oy 2022)

The case company should find means for being able to meet customers' requirement for resiliency. This was the third important factor in partnership evaluation, as indicated in the figure 10. and is therefore one of the key factors the case company should dig deep into. In addition, because the survey revealed the need for more close collaboration service design workshops or personal meetings could be arranged regularly.

4.2.4 Communicating and Managing Customer Experience

Storytelling is an effective mean for delivering message not only for customers but for employees as well. For employees, instead of grinding training sessions with numberless theories, stories deliver message more effectively and simultaneously reward employees for exemplary behaviour. These stories indicate the desirable operational culture or the change where the organisation is aiming. (Korkiakoski 2019, 155.)

The case company could utilise storytelling both in external and internal communication. When the case company's employees succeed in fulfilling demanding project or perform remarkably in some other context, this should be communicated not only within the company but with the customers also. As an

example, in 2022 due to summer holidays one of the customer projects in the case company was not being looked after by the substitute due to communication break but fortunately this was noted and because of the right attitude of the personnel the project was fulfilled on time. Naturally, it required extra working hours from the employees and managers as well, but eventually the project was successfully completed. This kind of stories are important because as mentioned earlier they lead organisational culture within the company to the right, desired direction and customers that are considering between few potential suppliers could perceive the story as an encouragement to start collaboration. Some may argue that it is not wise to reveal that due to the holidays there was a communication break but, in the researcher's opinion, it delivers a message that the organisation is resilient, people can make mistakes, but because of the right attitude things can and will be resolved.

As explained earlier by Löytänä & Korteso (2011, 89), an organisation should formulate a clear plan for managing customer experience. The first step was determining the goals leading to development of customer experience strategy, organising, implementing, measuring, and redetermining the goals at the final stage as presented in the figure 7. in the sub-chapter 2.7. The management of customer experience is a continuous process because the results of today might be totally different tomorrow. Listening to the customers and reacting proactively on their needs and wants is the key factor regardless of the field of industry or customer type.

5 CONCLUSIONS

In the acknowledgement chapter, the researcher presented shortly the concept of lifelong learning in relation with the personal and organisational development. The reason for this was originally based on the researcher's personal and individual development during the MBA studies at Lapland University of Applied Sciences. However, during the research it became evident that when the organisation wants to excel in customer experience development, it is required that the organisation actually is a learning organisation. Different departments of an organisation should work seamlessly together as well as the whole entity around the organisation for maximising value creation for all actors within the business environment or in the ecosystem.

The case company's personnel have had internal discussions about the importance of emotional aspects during interactions with the customers. Integrity, ability to solve problems on behalf of the customers and that empathy skills are more important than ever before. The organisation's existence is dependent on the customers and with creation of emotional bonds it is possible to lead the customer experience into a new level. Interorganisational, B2B business takes place between people, and it is a living and breathing individual who makes decisions based on the contractual issues but also subconscious matters, feelings matter.

The purpose of the research was to discover how the development of the customer experience will influence on the competitiveness of the case company. The findings from the literature and from the customer experience theories revealed several advantages including increasing customer loyalty and commitment, increase of new innovations and enhancing the brand image. It is not enough to develop and improve individual processes and functions of the customer journey, but it is the whole journey that determines the level of relationships in the future.

In addition, the purpose was to study how the case company's customers experience the different touchpoints during the customer journey and to discover development targets for improvement. Unfortunately, due to the remarkably low

response rate the extensive analysis was not conducted but however some development points were discovered. Theoretical framework revealed the need of renewing the organisation strategy, enhancing the brand image, need to develop more personal and individual services and findings from the survey emphasised the need for resiliency and ability to adapt to changes. However, because the subcontracting customers were studied as one entity for the future it is recommended to divide this customer group into smaller subsegments for more accurate and informative results.

Lastly, the final objective of the research was to study how the results of the research could be implemented and managed in the case company. The company should first determine the goals for differential customer experience, determine the customer experience strategy for meeting the set goals in every touchpoint, empower the employees to deliver, put the customer experience strategy in practice, measure and validate results and finally start all over by redetermining goals. It is a never-ending cycle, constant evaluation of the status quo and trying to foresee changes in customer preferences proactively.

The case company should integrate customer experience into the organisation strategy and analyse and respond to customer needs and wants continuously. The customer experience should be part of the organisations' DNA. Operating proactively and the ability to foresee changes in customer preferences gives competitive advantage over competitors as explained earlier. Organisational culture should be supportive for learning and innovation, how we treat each other' will eventually reflect on the customer experience also.

With implementation of the development proposals presented in this research the case company can remarkably improve the holistic customer journey and the customer experience of its' customers. Further, the research gives the company tools for managing customer experience in addition to holistic understanding on the topic. Because customer experience relates closely to employee experience the relation with these two aspects would be interesting topic for the future research. Even though the case company operates in low-touch branch industry, the importance of employee commitment and involvement cannot be underrated.

Only employees who feel valued and are proud of being part of an organisation can deliver memorable experiences.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1.	Asiakaskokemus kartoitus
Appendix 2.	Customer experience survey

APPENDIX 1

**Arvoisa asiakkaamme**

Haluamme kehittää ja parantaa palveluitamme asiakaslähtöisesti ja tästä syystä toteutamme asiakastytyväisyystutkimuksen. Kyselyyn vastaamiseen kuluu n. 15 minuuttia, ja olisimme todella kiitollisia, jos sinulla olisi mahdollisuus vastata kyselyymme alla olevan linkin kautta 21.11.2022 mennessä.

Mikäli ilmoitat meille yhteystietosi lomakkeen viimeisellä sivulla, sinulla on mahdollisuus voittaa jouluihin tuotepaketti. Vastauksia ei tulla yhdistämään antamaasi sähköpostiosoitteeseen.

Kiitos etukäteen arvokkaasta palautteestasi!

Kysely avautuu tästä

Asiakaskokemus kartoitus

Arvoisa asiakkaamme,

Haluamme parantaa palveluamme kehittämällä asiakaskokemusta. Toivomme, että vastaisit kyselyyn jonka avulla kartoitamme kehittämiskohteet asiakkaidemme näkökulmasta. Vastaukset käsitellään ehdottoman luottamuksellisesti eikä vastauksia tulla yhdistämään vastaajan tietoihin.

Kaikkien vastanneiden kesken arvotaan jouluihin yllätyspaketti ja mikäli haluat osallistua arvontaan niin jätäthän sähköpostiosoitteesi lomakkeen viimeisellä sivulla.

* Pakollinen

Yhteistyötä edeltävä vaihe

1

Oliko sinulla ennakkomielikuvaa yrityksestämme ennen yhteistyön aloitusta?

*

- Ei mitään ennakkomielikuvaa
- Kyllä, negatiivinen mielikuva
- Kyllä, neutraali mielikuva
- Kyllä, positiivinen mielikuva

2

Kuinka helposti löysit yrityksemme Google hakujen kautta? *

- Ei kokemusta
- Löytäminen oli haastavaa
- Yritys löytyi helposti

3

Kuinka tärkeänä pidät yrityksen Facebook sivuja palvelukanavana? *

- En osaa sanoa
- En lainkaan tärkeänä
- Jonkin verran tärkeänä
- Erittäin tärkeänä

4

Kuinka tärkeänä pidät yrityksen Instagram sivuja palvelukanavana? *

- En osaa sanoa
- En lainkaan tärkeänä
- Jonkin verran tärkeänä
- Erittäin tärkeänä

5

Kuinka tärkeänä pidät yrityksen Twitter sivuja palvelukanavana? *

- En osaa sanoa
- En lainkaan tärkeänä
- Jonkin verran tärkeänä
- Erittäin tärkeänä

6

Kuinka tärkeänä pidät yrityksen LinkedIn sivuja palvelukanavana? *

- En osaa sanoa
- En lainkaan tärkeänä
- Jonkin verran tärkeänä
- Erittäin tärkeänä

7

Kuinka tärkeänä pidät yleisesti yrityksen TikTok sivuja palvelukanavana? *

- En osaa sanoa
- En lainkaan tärkeänä
- Jonkin verran tärkeänä
- Erittäin tärkeänä

8

Kuinka tärkeänä koet messuosallistumiset yhteistyökanavana kanssamme? *

- En osaa sanoa
- En lainkaan tärkeänä
- Jonkin verran tärkeänä
- Erittäin tärkeänä

9

Kuinka tärkeänä koet puhelinkontaktointin yhteistyön kartoittamisvaiheessa (puhelinmyynti)? *

- En osaa sanoa
- En lainkaan tärkeänä
- Jonkin verran tärkeänä
- Erittäin tärkeänä

10

Kuinka onnistuimme puhelinkontaktoinnissa, palvelun laatu ja ystävällisyys? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Palvelun laatu ei ollut parasta mahdollista
- Palvelun laatu oli keskitasoa
- Palvelun laatu oli hyvää
- Palvelun laatu oli erinomaista

11

Kuinka tärkeänä koet tiedottamisen uutiskirjeiden välityksellä *

- En osaa sanoa
- En lainkaan tärkeänä
- Jonkin verran tärkeänä
- Todella tärkeänä

12

Kuinka tärkeänä koet tiedottamisen tärkeistä asioista henkilökohtaisesti (vaihtoehto uutiskirjeelle) *

- En osaa sanoa
- En lainkaan tärkeänä
- Jonkin verran tärkeänä
- Todella tärkeänä

Palvelukokemuksen arviointi

Digitaalinen palvelukokemus

13

Löytyivätkö yrityksemme yhteystiedot helposti (www.polarmetalli.fi)? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Löytäminen oli haastavaa
- Löytäminen oli helppoa

14

Löysitkö yrityksemme yhteyshenkilön helposti (www.polarmetalli.fi)? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Löytäminen oli haastavaa
- Löytäminen oli helppoa

15

Vastattiinko puheluusi tarpeeksi nopeasti? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei, jouduin odottelemaan/jättämään soittopyynnön
- Kyllä, tavoitin heti asiakaspalvelijan

16

Vastattiinko sähköpostiviestiin tarpeeksi nopeasti? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei, jouduin odottelemaan vastausta yli vuorokauden
- Kyllä, sain vastauksen vuorokauden kuluessa
- Kyllä, minulle vastattiin heti

17

Vastattiinko WhatsApp viestiin tarpeeksi nopeasti? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei, jouduin odottelemaan vastausta yli vuorokauden
- Kyllä, sain vastauksen vuorokauden kuluessa
- Kyllä, minulle vastattiin heti

18

Kuinka tärkeänä koet sähköisen palvelukanavan, esim. sivuston Chat palvelun? *

- En osaa sanoa
- En lainkaan tärkeänä
- Jonkin verran tärkeänä
- Erittäin tärkeänä

Palvelukokemuksen arviointi

Fyysinen kokemus

19

Löysitkö perille tehtaallemme vaivattomasti? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Löytäminen perille oli haastavaa
- Löytäminen perille oli helppoa

20

Löytyikö parkkialue ja paikka vaivattomasti? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Löytäminen oli haastavaa
- Löytäminen oli helppoa

21

Tunsitko parkkialueen turvalliseksi? *

- En osaa sanoa
- En lainkaan turvalliseksi
- Kyllä, parkkialue tuntui turvalliselta

22

Löysitkö helposti yhteyshenkilösi luo tai yrityksen neuvottelutilaan *

- En osaa sanoa
- Löytäminen oli haastavaa
- Löytäminen oli helppoa

23

Tunsitko itsesi tervetulleeksi, tervehdittiinkö sinua saapuessasi? *

- En osaa sanoa
- En lainkaan, ei tervehditty
- Jonkin verran, haalea tervehdys
- Tunsin oloni tervetulleeksi, vastaanotto oli lämmin

24

Suunnittelijan toimiston yleisilme oli siisti ja viihtyisä *

- En osaa sanoa
- Täysin eri mieltä
- Jokseenkin samaa mieltä
- Täysin samaa mieltä

25

Neuvottelutilan yleisilme oli siisti ja viihtyisä *

- En osaa sanoa
- Täysin eri mieltä
- Jokseenkin samaa sieltä
- Täysin samaa mieltä

26

Tuotantotilojen yleisilme oli siisti ja tavarat olivat järjestyksessä *

- En osaa sanoa
- Täysin eri mieltä
- Jokseenkin samaa mieltä
- Täysin samaa mieltä

27

Henkilökunta oli ystävällinen ja palvelualtis *

- En osaa sanoa
- Täysin eri mieltä
- Jokseenkin samaa mieltä
- Täysin samaa mieltä

28

Oliko tarjouslaskentaan liittyvien asioiden läpikäynti sujuvaa suunnittelijan tai asiakaspalvelijan kanssa? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei lainkaan sujuvaa
- Jokseenkin sujuvaa
- Erinomaisen sujuvaa ja asiantuntevaa

29

Kuitattiinko sinulle tarjouskysely vastaanotetuksi vuorokauden kuluessa lähetyksestä? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei, vastaanotto kuittausta ei tullut
- Kyllä, yli vuorokauden kuluttua lähetyksestä
- Kyllä, vuorokauden kuluessa
- Kyllä, saman päivän aikana

30

Saitko tarjouksen pyydetyssä määräajassa tai sovitun määräajan puitteissa? *

- En osaa sanoa
- En, tarjous saapui myöhässä
- Kyllä, tarjous saapui juuri ennen määräaika
- Kyllä, tarjous saapui hyvissä ajoin ennen määräaika

31

Vastasiko tarjouksen sisältö tarjouspyyntöä? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei, tarjoukseen piti tehdä korjauksia
- Kyllä, tarjous oli vaaditun mukainen

32

Ehdotettiin sinulle parannuksia tuotteeseen valmistusmenetelmien tai kustannussäästöjen vuoksi? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei, tästä ei keskusteltu tarjousvaiheessa
- Kyllä, vaihtoehtoisia menetelmiä ehdotettiin

33

Kuinka tärkeänä koet menetelmien ja tuotteiden kehittämisen yhdessä suunnittelijoidemme kanssa? *

- En osaa sanoa
- En lainkaan tärkeänä
- Jokseenkin tärkeänä
- Erittäin tärkeänä

34

Tilausvaiheessa, lähetettiinkö sinulle tilausvahvistus tilauksestasi? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei, minulle ei lähetetty vahvistusta lainkaan
- Kyllä, mutta vasta pyydettyäessä
- Kyllä, tilaus vahvistettiin vuorokauden kuluttua tilauksesta

35

Kuinka tärkeänä koet jouston mahdollisuuden esimerkiksi tiukentuneessa toimitusaika vaatimuksessa? *

- En osaa sanoa
- En lainkaan tärkeänä
- Jokseenkin tärkeänä
- Erittäin tärkeänä

36

Kuinka tärkeänä koet jouston mahdollisuuden esimerkiksi toimitussisällön muutoksissa? *

- En osaa sanoa
- En lainkaan tärkeänä
- Jokseenkin tärkeänä
- Erittäin tärkeänä

37

Kuinka tärkeänä koet, että sinulle ilmoitetaan tuotantoviiveistä? *

- En osaa sanoa
- En lainkaan tärkeänä
- Jokseenkin tärkeänä
- Erittäin tärkeänä

38

Kuinka tärkeänä koet, että sinulle ilmoitetaan toimituspoikkeamista ennen toimitusta? *

- En osaa sanoa
- En lainkaan tärkeänä
- Jokseenkin tärkeänä
- Erittäin tärkeänä

39

Kun tilauksellesi on järjestetty kuljetus, kuinka tärkeänä koet että saat tästä ilmoituksen? *

- En osaa sanoa
- En lainkaan tärkeänä
- Jokseenkin tärkeänä
- Erittäin tärkeänä

40

Saapuvatko toimitukset yleensä sovitun aikataulun mukaisesti? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei, toimitukset saapuvat yleensä myöhässä eikä myöhästymisestä ole ilmoitettu ennakkoon
- Ei, toimitukset saapuvat yleensä myöhässä mutta myöhästymisestä on ilmoitettu ennakkoon
- Kyllä, toimitukset saapuvat määräajan puitteissa

41

Ovatko toimitetut määrät yleensä oikeat ja vastaavat tilausta? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei, toimituksista puuttuu osia ja näistä ei ole ilmoitettu ennakkoon
- Ei, toimituksista puuttuu osia mutta tästä on ilmoitettu ennakkoon
- Kyllä, toimitetut määrät vastaavat tilattuja

42

Vastaako toimitettujen tuotteiden laatu tilausta? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei, laatu on huonompi kuin määritelty aiemmin
- Kyllä, laatu vastaa tilausvaiheessa määriteltyjä vaatimuksia
- Kyllä, laatu on parempi kuin sovittu

43

Ovatko tuotteet pakattu asianmukaisesti etteivät vahingoitu kuljetuksen aikana? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei, pakkaustavassa on paljon parannettavaa
- Kyllä, jokseenkin hyvin pakattu
- Kyllä, pakattu huolellisesti ja toimituspakkaukset ovat laadukkaat

44

Ovatko toimituksen mukana toimitettavat asiakirjat mukana ja helposti löydettävissä (esim. kuorman pakkauslista, rahtikirja tai muu vaadittava dokumentti)? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei, dokumentit puuttuvat usein lähetyksestä
- Kyllä, mutta dokumentit ovat satunnaisesti mukana
- Kyllä, dokumentit ovat aina lähetyksen mukana

45

Kuinka arvioisit huolitsijan ammattitaitoa toimituksiin liittyen (Kiitolinja Vähälä/ DB Schenker)? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei lainkaan ammattitaitoinen toimija
- Jokseenkin ammattitaitoinen toimija
- Erinomainen ammattitaito

46

Kuinka arvioisit huolitsijan palveluaittiutta ja ystävällisyyttä toimituksiin liittyen (Kiitolinja Vähälä/ DB Schenker)? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei lainkaan palveluaitis
- Jokseenkin palveluaitis
- Erinomainen palvelukokemus

Toimituksen jälkeinen vaihe

47

Ovatko tilauslaskun veloitukset yleensä oikein ja vahvistuksen mukaiset? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei, laskutuksessa tapahtuu paljon virheitä
- Ei, laskutuksessa tapahtuu satunnaisesti virheitä
- Kyllä, laskutuksessa ei tapahdu virheitä

48

Toimitetaanko laskut toivotun kanavan kautta (sähköinen laskutus/ paperilaskutus/ sähköposti)? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei, laskut toimitetaan väärässä muodossa
- Kyllä, laskut toimitetaan pyydettyssä muodossa

49

Toimitetaanko laskut oikeaan aikaan, ilman viiveitä? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei, laskut toimitetaan aivan liian myöhään
- Kyllä, laskut toimitetaan heti toimituksen jälkeen

50

Mikäli laskutuksessa on virhe, löytyvätkö oikeat yhteystiedot asian hoitamiseksi kuntoon helposti? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei, yhteyshenkilön löytäminen on vaikeaa
- Kyllä, yhteyshenkilö löytyy helposti

51

Ovatko mahdolliset hyvityslaskut yleensä sovitun mukaiset ja oikein? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei, hyvityslaskuissa on aina korjattavaa
- Ei, hyvityslaskuissa on satunnaisesti korjattavaa
- Kyllä, hyvityslaskut ovat sovitun mukaiset ja oikein

52

Toimitetaanko mahdolliset hyvityslaskut yleensä nopeasti ja ilman turhia viiveitä? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei, hyvityslaskuista joutuu aina itse kysymään
- Ei, hyvityslaskuista joutuu satunnaisesti itse kysymään
- Kyllä, hyvityslaskut toimitetaan nopeasti, ilman turhia viiveitä

53

Varmistaako vastuunmyyjä toimituksen jälkeen palvelukokonaisuuden laadun? *

- Ei, toimituksen jälkeen meistä ei kuulu mitään
- Kyllä, vastuunmyyjä varmistaa että asiat sujuneet mutkattomasti

54

Kuinka tärkeänä kokisit vastuunmyyjän yhteydenoton toimituksen jälkeen? *

- En osaa sanoa
- En lainkaan tärkeänä, olen itse yhteydessä mikäli tarve vaatii
- Jonkin verran tärkeänä
- Erittäin tärkeänä

55

Onko vastuunmyyjä yhteydessä toimituksen jälkeen ja tarjoaa palveluitamme myös jatkossa? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei ole
- Kyllä, yhteydenpito on aktiivista

56

Kuinka tärkeänä koet, että vastuunmyyjä on aktiivisesti yhteydessä muutoinkin kuin tilauksiin liittyen? *

- En osaa sanoa
- En lainkaan tärkeänä, olen itse yhteydessä kun tarve vaatii
- Jokseenkin tärkeänä
- Erittäin tärkeänä

Mahdolliset reklamaatiotilanteet

57

Mikäli toimitussisällössä on reklamoitavaa, löytyykö oikea yhteyshenkilö helposti? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei, oikean yhteyshenkilön löytäminen on vaikeaa
- Kyllä, oikean yhteyshenkilön löytäminen on helppoa

58

Saitko vastauksen reklamaatioon tarpeeksi nopeasti? *

- En osaa sanoa
- En, jouduin odottelemaan vastausta yli vuorokauden
- Kyllä, sain vastauksen vuorokauden kuluessa
- Kyllä, sain vastauksen heti

59

Toimiko reklamaation käsittelijä empaattisesti ja pahoitteli tapahtunutta? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei, reklamaatioon reagoitiin ilman empatiaa
- Kyllä, reklamaation aiheuttamaa harmia pahoiteltiin

60

Toimitettiin sinulle reklamaatiosta poikkeamaraportti? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei
- Kyllä

61

Olivatko reklamaatioon johtaneet syyt ja korjaavat toimenpiteet mielestäsi riittävät ja asianmukaiset? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei
- Kyllä

62

Toimitettiin korvaavat osat tarpeeksi nopeasti? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei
- Kyllä

63

Varmistiko vastuunmyyjä tai reklamaation hoitaja että korvaavat osat tulivat perille? *

- En osaa sanoa
- Ei
- Kyllä

Palvelukokonaisuuden arviointi

64

Vastasiko kokonaispalvelu odotuksiasi? *

- Ei, odotukset eivät täyttyneet
- Kyllä, odotukset täyttyivät
- Kyllä, odotukset ylittyivät

65

Mitkä kriteerit ovat teille tärkeimmät yhteistyökumppanin valinnassa? *

Joustavuus ja kyky tehdä muutoksia nopeasti

Henkilökohtainen suhde ja luottamus

Vastuunmyyjän asiantuntemus

Hinta

Laatu

Toimitusaika

Yrityksen vastuullisuus

Kattava palveluvalikoima

Kattava yhteistyöverkosto

Yrityksen kannattavuus ja toimintaedellytykset myös markkinoiden häiriötilanteissa

66

Miten todennäköisesti suosittelisit meitä yhteistyöverkoston muille toimijoille? *

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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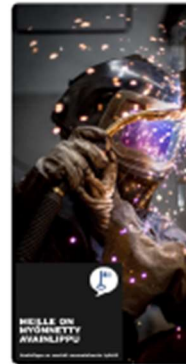
En lainkaan todennäköisesti

Erittäin todennäköisesti

67

Mikäli haluat osallistua tuotepaketin arvontaan, jätäthän tähän kenttään sähköpostiosoitteesi. Vastauksia ei tulla yhdistämään annettuihin sähköpostiosoitteisiin tutkimuksen missään vaiheessa.

Kiitos arvokkaasta palautteestasi ja ajasta
jonka käytit kyselyyn vastaamiseen



Tämä ei ole Microsoftin luomaa tai suosittelemaa sisältöä. Lähettämäsi tiedot lähetetään lomakkeen omistajalle.

 Microsoft Forms

Appendix 2.

Dear Customer,

We want to improve our services by developing customer experiences. We hope that you would answer a questionnaire to identify development sites from our customers' point of view. Responses are treated strictly confidentially, and the answers will not be linked to the respondent's information.

A Christmas surprise package will be drawn among all respondents and if you wish to participate in the draw, please leave your email address on the last page of the questionnaire.

Prepurchase stage

1. Did you have a prior impression of our company before we started working together?
 - Not any
 - Yes, negative
 - Yes, neutral
 - Yes, positive
2. How easily did you find our company through Google searches?
 - No experience
 - It was difficult
 - It was easy
3. How important do you consider corporate Facebook pages as a service channel?
 - Cannot say
 - Not important at all
 - Somewhat important
 - Extremely important
4. How important do you consider corporate Instagram pages as a service channel?
 - Cannot say
 - Not important at all
 - Somewhat important
 - Extremely important
5. How important do you consider corporate Twitter pages as a service channel?
 - Cannot say
 - Not important at all
 - Somewhat important
 - Extremely important
6. How important do you consider corporate LinkedIn pages as a service channel?
 - Cannot say
 - Not important at all

- Somewhat important
 - Extremely important
7. How important do you consider corporate TikTok pages as a service channel?
- Cannot say
 - Not important at all
 - Somewhat important
 - Extremely important
8. How important do you experience fair participation as a collaborative channel with us?
- Cannot say
 - Not important at all
 - Somewhat important
 - Extremely important
9. How important do you experience telemarketing during the collaborative mapping stage?
- Cannot say
 - Not important at all
 - Somewhat important
 - Extremely important
10. How did we succeed in telemarketing, quality and friendliness of the service?
- Cannot say
 - The service was not good
 - The service was average
 - The service was excellent
11. How important do you experience information sharing through newsletters
- Cannot say
 - Not important at all
 - Somewhat important
 - Extremely important
12. How important you feel about communicating important issues personally (alternative to newsletter)
- Cannot say
 - Not important at all
 - Somewhat important
 - Extremely important

Purchase stage, digital

13. Did you find our company contact information easily (www.polarmetalli.fi)
- Cannot say
 - It was challenging
 - It was easy

14. Did you find a contact person for our company easily (www.polarmetalli.fi.)?
- Cannot say
 - It was challenging
 - It was easy
15. Was your call answered quickly enough?
- Cannot say
 - No, I had to wait or leave request to call back
 - Yes, I was answered immediately
16. Was your e-mail answered quickly enough?
- Cannot say
 - No, I had to wait over 24 hours
 - Yes, I got an answer within 24 hours
 - Yes, I got an answer immediately
17. Was your WhatsApp message answered quickly enough?
- Cannot say
 - No, I had to wait over 24 hours
 - Yes, I got an answer within 24 hours
 - Yes, I got an answer immediately
18. How important do you experience an electronic service channel, such as the site Chat service?
- Cannot say
 - Not important at all
 - Somewhat important
 - Extremely important

Purchase stage, physical

19. Did you find your way to our factory effortlessly?
- Cannot say
 - It was challenging
 - It was easy
20. Did you find the parking lot and the place effortlessly?
- Cannot say
 - It was challenging
 - It was easy
21. Did you experience the parking lot safe?
- Cannot say
 - Not at all
 - Yes, extremely safe
22. Did you find easily your way to your contact person or the company's conference room?
- Cannot say
 - It was challenging
 - It was easy
23. Did you feel welcome, were you greeted when you arrived?
- Cannot say

- No, no one greeted
 - Somewhat welcomed, half-hearted welcome
 - I felt extremely welcome
24. The general look of the designer's office was neat and cosy
- Cannot say
 - Completely disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Completely agree
25. The general look of the conference room was neat and cosy
- Cannot say
 - Completely disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Completely agree
26. The general look of the production premises was neat, and the goods were in order
- Cannot say
 - Completely disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Completely agree
27. The personnel were friendly and service-prone
- Cannot say
 - Completely disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Completely agree
28. Was the process of going through quotation related matters smooth and convenient with the designer or the sales representative?
- Cannot say
 - Not smooth and convenient at all
 - Somewhat smooth and convenient
 - Extremely smooth and convenient
29. Did you get a reply within 24 hours that your quotation is received and being under study?
- Cannot say
 - No, I did not receive any reply
 - Yes, I needed to wait over 24 hours
 - Yes, I got an answer within 24 hours
 - Yes, I got an answer during the same day
30. Did you receive an offer within the requested deadline or within the agreed time limit?
- Cannot say
 - No, I received an offer late
 - Yes, I received the offer before the requested deadline
 - Yes, I received the offer well before the requested deadline
31. Did the content of the offer match the offer request?
- Cannot say
 - No, the offer needed to be corrected

- Yes, the offer was according to request
32. Were you suggested improvements to the product due to manufacturing methods or cost savings?
- Cannot say
 - No, these aspects were not discussed
 - Yes, alternative production methods were discussed
33. How important do you experience the development of methods and products together with our designers?
- Cannot say
 - Not important at all
 - Somewhat important
 - Extremely important
34. At the ordering stage, were you sent an order confirmation of your order?
- Cannot say
 - No, I did not receive the order confirmation
 - Yes, but after request
 - Yes, the order was confirmed within 24 hours from the order
35. How important do you experience the flexibility in a tightened delivery time requirement, for example?
- Cannot say
 - Not important at all
 - Somewhat important
 - Extremely important
36. How important do you experience the flexibility in changing the content of the order, for example?
- Cannot say
 - Not important at all
 - Somewhat important
 - Extremely important
37. How important do you feel that you are notified of production delays?
- Cannot say
 - Not important at all
 - Somewhat important
 - Extremely important
38. How important do you feel that you are notified of delivery deviations before delivery?
- Cannot say
 - Not important at all
 - Somewhat important
 - Extremely important
39. When transportation is arranged for your order, how important do you feel that you get notified?
- Cannot say
 - Not important at all
 - Somewhat important
 - Extremely important

40. Do deliveries usually arrive according to the agreed schedule?
- Cannot say
 - No, deliveries usually arrive late without any prior notification
 - No, deliveries usually arrive late but I receive prior notification
 - Yes, deliveries are on usually on time
41. Are the quantities delivered generally correct and match the order?
- Cannot say
 - No, parts are missing without any prior notification
 - No, parts are missing but I received prior notification
 - Yes, delivered quantities match the order
42. Does the quality of the products meet set requirements?
- Cannot say
 - No, the quality is worse
 - Yes, the quality meet requirements
 - Yes, the quality exceeds requirements
43. Are the products properly packed for minimising transportation damages?
- Cannot say
 - No, packing should be remarkably improved
 - Yes, somewhat properly packed
 - Yes, extremely well packed with quality packaging
44. Are the documents supplied with the delivery included and easy to find (packing list, shipping note or other documents)?
- Cannot say
 - No, documents are always missing
 - Yes, documents are sometimes delivered with the consignment
 - Yes, documents are always included
45. How do you experience the forwarder's professionalism in relation to deliveries (Kiitolinja Vähälä/ DB Schenker)?
- Cannot say
 - Not professional at all
 - Somewhat professional
 - Extremely professional
46. How do you experience the forwarder's services and friendliness in relation to deliveries (Kiitolinja Vähälä/ DB Schenker)?
- Cannot say
 - Not good at all
 - Somewhat good
 - Extremely pleasing and friendly service

Postpurchase stage

47. Are the invoices generally correct and in accordance with the order confirmations?
- Cannot say
 - No, there is lot of mistakes in invoicing
 - No, there is sometimes mistakes in invoicing

- Yes, the invoices are correct
48. Are invoices delivered through the desired channel (electronic billing/ paper billing/ email)?
- Cannot say
 - No, invoices are delivered via wrong channel
 - Yes, invoices are delivered as agreed
49. Are the invoices delivered fast enough, with no delays?
- Cannot say
 - No, there is delays
 - Yes, the invoices are delivered right after deliveries
50. If there is an error in invoicing, can you find the right contact information to get it right easily?
- Cannot say
 - No, it is not easy to find right contact person
 - Yes, it is easy to find right contact person
51. Are the credit notes generally as agreed and correct?
- Cannot say
 - No, credit notes need to be corrected always
 - No, credit notes need to be corrected sometimes
 - Yes, credit notes are always right and as agreed
52. Are the credit notes usually delivered quickly and without unnecessary delays?
- Cannot say
 - No, I need to ask for the credit note always
 - No, I need to ask for the credit note sometimes
 - Yes, credit notes are delivered quickly without delays
53. After the delivery, does the sales representative ensure the quality of the complete service?
- No, after the delivery no one contacts me
 - Yes, the sales representative ensures that the complete service has met the expectations
54. How important would you consider that the sales representative contacts you after the delivery?
- Cannot say
 - Not important at all, I will contact myself if needed
 - Somewhat important
 - Extremely important
55. Is the sales representative in contact with you after the delivery and offers our services also in the future?
- Cannot say
 - No
 - Yes, the correspondence is active
56. How important do you feel that the responsible salesperson is actively in contact with you otherwise than related to orders?
- Cannot say
 - Not at all, I will contact myself when needed

- Somewhat important
 - Extremely important
57. If there is any complaint in the delivery content, can you find the right contact person easily?
- Cannot say
 - No, it was difficult to find the right contact person
 - Yes, it was easy to find the right contact person
58. Did you get a response to the reclamation fast enough?
- Cannot say
 - No, I needed to wait over 24 hours
 - Yes, I got an answer within 24 hours
 - Yes, I got an answer immediately
59. Did the complaint handler act empathically and regret what happened?
- Cannot say
 - No, the claim was handled without empathy
 - Yes, the claim was handled empathically
60. Were you provided the deviation report for the complaint?
- Cannot say
 - No
 - Yes
61. Do you think the corrective measures that led to the complaint were adequately and appropriately described in the deviation report?
- Cannot say
 - No
 - Yes
62. Were the replacement parts delivered fast enough?
- Cannot say
 - No
 - Yes
63. Did the sales representative or the person who took care of the claim make sure that the replacement parts were delivered?
- Cannot say
 - No
 - Yes

The evaluation of the complete service

64. Did the overall service meet your expectations?
- No, expectations were not met
 - Yes, expectations were met
 - Yes, expectations were exceeded
65. What criteria are most important for you when choosing a partner?
1. Ability to make changes, resiliency
 2. Personal relationships and trust
 3. The salesperson's professionalism
 4. Price
 5. Quality

6. Delivery time
 7. Corporate responsibility
 8. Service selection
 9. Service network
 10. The profitability and operation ability also in market disturbance situations
66. NPS. How likely are you to recommend us to other actors in the collaborative network?
67. If you wish to participate in the draw, please leave your email address in this field. Answers will not be linked to the provided email addresses at any point during the analysis.