

Understanding and engaging in the customer experience

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Executive summary

Customer engagement is the art of organisations to reach the customers heart by them action, way of thinking and the way of supporting them. As long as exist customers as long will be organisations to be engage in this amazing art.

Introduction

The outcome of this work is to analyse how internal and external factors such as COVID-19 affect or influence organisations quality systems and control for customers and how the organisations can manage the new situation and achieve business objectives by developing and maintaining good customer relationships. Furthermore, will see and adapt marketing theories such as SWOT analysis, PESTEL analysis, segmentation and Porter's five forces and critically will be analyse the factors mentioned above and will identify those systems that assist to institution quality procedures and inflict a critical understanding of the dimension to which the writer think those factors are efficient to encounter customer requirements and nourish good customer relationship during COVID-19. The writer has chosen FirstPort property services limited as organisation due that is the writer workplace. The organisation nature of business is management of real estate on a fee or contract basis and is a private limited company. The organisation registered office address is Queensway house 11 Queensway, New Milton, Hampshire, BH255NR. FirstPort vision is to be the UK's leading residential property service business apostrophising the challenges of managing complex shared residential developments in high quality professional services manner. FirstPort property services limited market portfolio is small to medium sized development in all the UK. The organisation is working hard on achieving the gain of professional trained and motivated employees to fulfil customer satisfaction by outstanding services. The four pillars service standards of the organisation are strong health and safety, great customer communications, healthy estate finances and high site standards. FirstPort has rules of procedure to specify, to coach and to inspect service on each facility by using these four pillars. In this work will see how these pillars help to achieve the business objectives and how they are generating and perpetuating a great customer association (Companies house, 2020).

1.0 Internal and external factors

As it was mentioned above this part of the work will analyse the internal and external factors such as COVID-19 what can affect FirstPort quality systems and control for customers. To identify these impacts over the organisation first will apply SWOT analysis to see if besides the negative factors can find some opportunities to consolidate the organisation. The second tool what will helps to assess the market regarding COVID-19 impacts is PEST analysis. It will help to see if the chosen organisation is still profitable and due that FirstPort is a huge organisation any macro movement could have huge impact. The last tool what will be applied is Porter's 5 forces what will help to determine the grade of contest in a specific business sector. In this segment will see that the threat what can come is not only from competitors. To perceive the market circumstances on market admission and to generate the execution project accordingly PESTEL analysis will be a helpful tool for organisations (Perera, 2017, p. 5).

1.1 Internal and external factors SWOT

Swot analysis is one of the tools that can use to determine both internal and external factors such as strength, weakness, opportunity and threats. The strength of FirstPort it comes from the past 30 years' experience what helped the organisation to rise among the first. During this time, the organisation has achieved many awards and accreditations. These experiences allowed the organisation to grow to the biggest estate management company in UK with more than 232.000 units (flats) in over 3900 developments with more than 3200 employees. FirstPort is well established to gain persist increase with a strong order book, pipeline, repeatedly increasing industry system, enhance brand admission and outstandingly ameliorate brand reputation. Is in a powerful position to successfully encounter progressing customer expectations and needs, distinguish itself beyond market participants, and enhance any future adjusting expectations for leading representative. However, due to 2019-year acquisitions the organisation profit decreased with 51% in comparison with 2018 while the revenue was higher with 3 percent. At the same time, these acquisitions are opportunity for the future of the organisation. Due that the organisation has more than 3000 developments the risk of infringement of health and safety standards such as injuries, damage of milieu is huge. SWOT segments are mostly based on individual perspectives of leaders or designer verdicts of which applying the conventional SWOT analysis is sub structured on qualitative interpretation (Phadermrod, et al, 2019, p. 194). Another risk or threat it could be through contract retention by losing customers due that the organisation has a huge dependency on VIP customers. In many divisions and in the entire institution an operation strategy of ideas can be originated to ameliorate achievement from the date gained (Sanne, 2019, p. 28). Another threat for FirstPort it was the current COVID-19 pandemic especial the governmental

decisions to this unprecedented situation and by legislation regarding health and safety, social distancing and environmental requirements.

1.2 Internal and external factors PEST

Pest analysis is another great tool to determine specific macro-environmental factors or external risks. This tool is flexible for organisations and it is helpful in many scenarios such as risk, market and strategic assessment. Taking in consideration the COVID-19 pandemic many organisations did assess these factors and risks. All the organisations in UK have faced and face with the political factor during the pandemic. At the FirstPort has been carefully reviewed the impact of the pandemic and been taken action to drive these unprecedented events and support that appropriate customer service needs are managed proper. Another political aspect is the Brexit what could affect many organisations, but the past and current situation with the COVID-19 which has forced the entire world economy to its knees. These two factors lead the organisation to take steps for mitigation such as flexible national based business model, consistent review of contest and so on. Hearing the news, the UK economy suffer the largest fall for 300 years and to reach the pre pandemic level will have to wait till end of 2022. With such prospects do not be surprised that many organisations look forward to achieving the goals. Many organisations who was not able to face with the pandemic challenge filed for bankruptcy or those ones who can survive they redeemed his employees. One of the FirstPort economic factor or risk in these circumstances are financial management and through this mistake to nourish adequate financial inspection everywhere the business such as maintenance of debt alliance, credence risk, deception risk and so on. However, another factor is risks and changes in market dynamic and FirstPort has the risk to fail to efficient response to progression in the wider economy and as well monetary dynamic together with Brexit and COVID-19. Taking in consideration that the whole economy been shocked not just about the pandemic but about the reaction of governments to mitigate the spread of the virus the weakest countries economy now depends on those ones who somehow been survived and of course the monetary politic of the banks. The institutions to turn into efficient in resolution method vis-à-vis the opportunities and threats connected to the institutional environment it is requisite to originate circumstances (Leite et al. 2017, p. 323). As the humankind faces such as imponderable economical crash there is another aspect or dimension what is more imponderable than the economical which is the peoples or social factors. During this pandemic more generations been changed in behaviour, way of thinking, buying and consumer attitude and so on. The humankind has opened the way for microorganism to jump into recent host body by alterate the ecosystem, through destroying natural environments, changing the atmosphere and climate, changing the animal's habits, bacillus hosts and morbific blend (Benton, 2020, p. 577).

1.3 Internal and external factors Porter's five forces

Porter's five forces helps to gain insight and evaluate the structure of an organisation industry structure and the institution corporate strategy by five forces or segments what modelling each worldwide market and industry. These five forces or segments are 1. Industry competition, 2. Potential of new entrants in industry, 3. Power of suppliers, 4. customers power, 5. Threat of substitute product. The writer will use these forces to analyse FirstPort limited strategic place in the industry. The core function of the organisation is the management and maintenance of communal housing residential. The organisation is part of the Knight Square Holdings Limited group of companies. In 2019 Equistone Partners earned the major part shareholding in the KSHL group. The newly born group is implied below new investors as Drive Topco Group. In 2019 it was another important step in FirstPort history it was the prosperous procurement and incorporation of Barrat Residential Asset Management Limited, gaining a huge property management experience and many huge and composite sites in the capital and around. With outstandingly ameliorated brand reputation, growing admission of brand, permanently improving industry network FirstPort is fit situated to reach proceed increment. All these together with prior acquisitions the organisation got many experiences with a core team to assist prosperous acquirement in the future. Taking in consideration that FirstPort is the first biggest organisation out of ten in residential management and maintenance in UK, and the fourth highest ranked as profit. There are many elements what must deliberate such as in crease of the industry, development and technology and the linkage with other branch (Mahat, 2019, p. 1083). Due that FirstPort is the number one in the market together with the past and future acquisitions it has a strong position in this segment. This is mean that is in strong competition with other organisations such as NEPI (North East Property Investment), Prime Property Management, Central Housing Group, City Relay and so on. However, there is a guarantee and safety to be part of a holding limited company. The potential of new entrance into industry right now in these circumstances of pandemic and about the Brexit it would be a wrong step. Due that the economy is unstable enough to be able to drive an organisation to bankruptcy the right choice would be to wait till the market will be stable again. However, the organisation has economic risks and uncertainties such as failure to respond effectively to developments in the broader economy competition and other market of fiscal dynamics such as Brexit and COVID-19. The power of suppliers is another aspect what can affect the organisation both positively and negatively. Taking in consideration that FirstPort asses his suppliers in advance and after that in a regular basis to be sure that their procedures toward meet the organisation expectation. Therefore, those companies must have the same interest and the worth what FirstPort represent and to come across to the organisation standard such as health & safety, insurance and monetary history (FirstPort, 2020). The requirement about supply of goods must be satisfied the quality include in Sales of Good Act 1979, if is manufactured good must be perfect and fit in design, must satisfy with all adaptable statutory and regulatory requisites such as labelling, packaging, storage and so on. The supplier must be in possession of licences, permissions and authorisations. The goods must pack in the way will arrive to the

destination in good condition and must be accompanied by delivery note with order number, date of order, type and quantity of goods and if applied storage instruction. Regarding power of customers, it has not too much affect to the FirstPort taking in consideration that the organisation has more than 3900 developments with 3900 different contracts. The price of service charge to each development is established taking in consideration many factors such as place, units (flat) number, environment and so on. Regarding future the organisation will continue this procedure to each new acquisition. Due that FirstPort is an estate management company each time when a customer purchases a flat managed by FirstPort they must accept the terms and conditions of the organisation. The customers cannot change to another substitute organisation because the FirstPort terms and conditions. The only opportunity for a substitute is an acquisition from another estate management organisation and of course accepting them own terms and conditions. Finally, it seems that the threat of the new entrants is low, and the threat of substitutes are moderate. Immediate and quick acquisition specify competitiveness by many organisations. While not the profit is not the merely significant thesis this poor point of view is brittle (Atanasiu, et al, 2020, p. 2).

2.0 Organisational quality system

FirstPort has achieved many organisational quality systems such as ISO 9000, what involve customer focus, leadership, involvement of people, process approach, factual approach to decision making, system approach, continual improvement and mutually beneficial supplier relationships. Another quality system is ISO 9001:2015 which is strict referring to managements responsibility. This quality system are about strategic planning processes of the organisation such as vision, focus on customers, mission of the organisation, values, objectives, commitment, plans, processes, responsibilities and authorities, internal communication and management review. Another quality system of FirstPort is ISO 9004:2018 which stand for enhancing a company ability to achieve sustained success. The next quality system is ISO 10001 which is stand for customer satisfaction through codes and conducts for organisation, ISO 14001 which stand for environmental management system and finally ISO 31000 which stand for risk management. Instant personal user of the system finally can influence the whole organisation by three factors such as system, information and service quality what influence the use and user complacency as mediatory constructs (Mulhem, 2020, p. 5).

2.1 Net promoter score

The net promoter score and net promoter system are different but related things. The system is about to win the customers and employees loyalty. The score stands about how to analyse it. It can be used three stages for analysing. First, strong sustained leadership commitment, the second to use NSP as a trustworthy tool, and third to create a system of improvement based on experiences learned.

2.1.1 Strong sustained leadership commitment

The leadership commitment has three points to highlight, customer support, product development and sales. The customer support at FirstPort is visible on the company site in the form of blog and is visible as well at the site of Trustpilot. At the second site it is registered 3673 reviews with an excellence of 51%, great 4%, average 1%, poor <1% and bad 42%. The aim of the FirstPort is to develop the highest level of service but these feedbacks help the organisation to continually improve this service. By product development or service development the customers are the first and during and at the end of their journey the customer remains the first by involving them in different cultural aspects of the organisation and by the FirstPort site blog the customers can express themselves regarding any issue by which the organisation can build reliable customer experience through loyalty. When sales performance is evaluating it is taking in consideration these sites and ISO 10001.

2.1.2 NPS as trustworthy tool

By using this tool at FirstPort shows that the place occupied in industry is high enough to represent the customers satisfaction not just during the COVID-19 period but beyond. It is visible as well that the changes or acquisitions from the past started to promote the organisation.

2.1.3 Creating system of improvement based on experience.

The NPS organisation implement this system by three steps, inner loop, huddle and outer loop. At FirstPort each year is starting a one-year course for beginner managers to prepare them for the organisation terms and policy, customer service quality. By these steps FirstPost assure the right staff for the future and when structural improvements are necessary these managers are ready to handle this.

2.2 Balance score card

Balance score card is a management framework strategy which include four stages: financial, customer, internal process and learning and growth. This strategy is based on four steps such as objectives or organisational aims, measures what the organisation take to fulfil these objectives, initiatives or steps what help to achieve the objectives and action items or necessary duties for team to gain initiatives. The objective of FirstPort is to be a nationwide favourite residential property management, by setting huge standards in the market, working ethically and the customer service aim to assist in communal developments and in ownership pragmatic experience. FirstPort is framed in six departments: luxury, large and complex, property services, estates, build to rent and retirement. Each of this departments distribute high standard quality service by its own management supported by inner health and safety, mobilisation, finance, acquisition, surveying, maintenance, compliance and asset performance, legal, IT, communication and business expansion. The performance delivery concentrates on the FirstPort, four pillars', health and safety, high site standards, great customer communication and healthy estate finance. The organisation financial performance is revenue £26.1m, admin expenses £28.3m, operating lost £4.4m, exceptional cost £2.2m, net asset position £31m, undertaking group owned £49.9m, decreasing undertaking amount £5.5m, share capital £9.4m to parent Night Square Limited. The core principles remain changeless and the organisation main focus is a customer centric oncoming. FirstPort group understood that must take in consideration that the business operation must be safety for employees, customers, partners and the local communities especially in these hard times of COVID-19. In this correlation is a cumulated holistic and methodical notion the achievement appraisal (Shen, et al, 2016, p. 129).

2.3 Internal audits

FirstPort approach to internal audit is to concur a risk structure reviewed together with reduce strategies and the last position of risk, nourishing and inspecting thorough policy documents through all grounds of operations, such as health and safety, acquisition, finance and governance. At the same time the group exploit the assistance of external experts to overtake risk to the shareholder. The organisation functions display to a huge rank of risk that involve impact of credit, liquidity and the risk of cash flow. FirstPort has a huge pattern of residential customers what mitigate the compression of credit risk. Dealing with corporate customers the credit supervision team start functioned to manage and reduce the risk of unpaid charges by severe procedures. FirstPort is part of Drive Topco Limited group cash directorate and estimate procedures what are administer cash flow and liquidity in the substantial group financing layout.

2.4 Servqual

Servqual is a model of five dimension of RATER, R as reliability, A as assurance, T as tangible, E as empathy and R as responsiveness. Regarding the reliability, FirstPort has placed the organisation standards high enough to perform the services professional, accurately and dependably taking in consideration the four pillars of the organisation such as strong health and safety, high site standards, great customer communications and healthy estate finance. Assurance stands for knowledge of the team and the ability to suggest confidence. Each member of staff from FirstPort is confident enough about their skill and professionalism. Tangible is about the apparel which is focused to eco-friendly machinery such as electric truck, sweeper and so on. Moreover, each staff member has a proper working clothes with FirstPort logo for identification. On each site the team members name and picture are display in each staircase lobby for easier identification. Each customer is threatened with empathy and each customer are honoured with individualized focus and consideration. The organisation has set high directives on customer service which is one of the FirstPort organisational pillars. The customers satisfaction is the FirstPort group mission. Evaluating the grade of service quality involved by customers SERVQUAL is an academical theory and tool ... (Gregory, 2019, p. 789).

3.0 Business objectives

In this chapter will be discussed the business objective of FirstPort such as profit/revenue, social impact and market leader. As it seems all these areas has been touched previous but to understand better will dig deeper into these segments. It will be visible the goals what the organisation desired to achieve and the objectives the specific steps for achieving the goal. After the audition of the financial statement of the annual report and financial statement, which involve the balance, profit and lost account, comprehensive income and changes in equity. The turnover of the organisation in 2019 was £26,106,995 which is less with 9,5% than the previous year. The administrative cost it was £28,269,529 and exceptional items £2,202,453 which is give an operating (loss)/profit of £4,364,987 which is 35% less than 2018. The interest receivable from group undertakings is £1,405,347 the interest payable and same expenses is £3,762,505 which is give the (loss)/profit before tax the sum of £6,722,145. The amount of tax on loss is £174,380 from which is coming the total comprehensive loss or expense for financial year of £6,547,765. Taking in consideration that in 2018 this amount was £23,719,081 is visible the reduction of loss with 72.4%. The fixed asset which are intangible, tangible and investment is £48,648,229 which is higher with 17.2% than the previous year. The current asset by debtors is £68,452,007 what is higher with 72.6% than previous year. The creditors amount falling due within one year is £24,791,742. The net current liabilities are £43,660,265, the total asset less current liabilities are £92,308, 494. The creditors amount falling due after more than one year is £61,257,315 which is give the net

assets of £31,051,179 which is higher with 9% than the previous year. The capital and reserves on 31 December 2019 were £34,580,845 from which the revaluation reserve is £92,925 and the profit and loss account is £3,622,591 which gives the total equity of £31,051,179. The balance on 31 December 2018 was £25,229,386 the revaluation reserve of £92,925, the profit and loss reserve £2,925,174 and the total equity £28,247,485. The fix asset investments were £40,041,104, the acquisitions £5,460,260. Bank loan and overdraft payable within one year £677,635 and after one year £61,257,315 and credit facility of £81,700,000. Called up share capital £34,580,845 (Endole, 2020). Taking in consideration that these data are from 2018, 2019 the possibility as a going concern the organisation take in consideration of COVID-19 and all potential economic impacts. The management has run many scenarios to assess the consequences thinking on revenue reduction, working capital implications and decrease operation to management. There were three scenarios with three revenue streams which do not affect materially where enough liquidity and headroom been confirmed. Regarding social impact the organisation is willing to make positive change for the people and communities however, the COVID-19 impact has changed both the humans and organisations lives. FirstPort will persist to mitigate to organisation carbon footprint and has beginning the processes to achieve the company carbon trust award and ISO4001. As it was mentioned before FirstPort is one of the market leaders of industry and is determined to improve in each area of the business to succeed and to meet the future requirements and by taking in consideration well-being of the staff, customers, business partners together with the local community.

4.0 Customer relations

Good customer relations are hugely depending on couple of factors or models such as adoption model, customer engagement, customer relation management systems and so on. The adoption model can be explained like a pyramid the left bottom from one side is innovators and other side tech enthusiasts, the next stage is the early adoption or visionaries, the top of pyramid is early majority or pragmatists, the next stage on right side are late majorities and conservatives, and the bottom right side are laggards and sceptics. This model stands for an innovation of information technology and system. At FirstPort it was demand for a new digital initiative for which the organisation adopted the Digital Eagle to improve digital awareness, confidence, knowledge, training and support. There will be 10 employees from the staff assigned a Barclay digital eagle to help them is the duty. This will be a beneficial cooperation and the initiative will touch the staff to improve their digital skill, young residents by developing a coding playground in interactive workshop, creative and entrepreneurial residents providing them place and tools to help to create and grow digital ventures, retired residents to reduce the isolation in the retirement homes by increasing their digital skill, contractors and suppliers which led to work with them to get forward digital innovation in estate management by prop-tech segment. Identifying adoption attitude for customers studiers must deliberate and evident cultural characteristics (Dwivedi,

et al, 2016, p. 175). Customers are more consistent when it is about their requirements such as technology infrastructure to be connected by Wi-Fi and 5G. As expectations rise developers must be more flexible and there is demand as well for developers and estate management to implement more desegregated ages and demographic living in developments. Continual customer engagement, stakeholders, community is important for FirstPort by social events on sites available for all. Evidently customer engagement is more than social events for FirstPort means from the first encounter through the way to become customer and beyond. It is significant that the customer engagement is always in focus even before the signing the residency agreement. The engagement with the customers and stakeholders is more powerful by often advise the team on how to imply the customer journey into their perspective. Customer requirements are reshaping and flourish from each direction and for FirstPort the customer engagement is in focus to good residential property design and management. CRM is a perspective what looking to originate, develop and increase relationship with customers to maximise customers and shareholders worth together with corporate acquisitions. One of the most important aspect of CRM is technology to develop systems of catching the customers. Creating next to the customer account library and history about the customer. At FirstPort one of the significant technology initiative is to be available for customer via phone, email and call-centre agents such as customer service. Automatic delivery of message to customers about their parcels and regarding security interphone. The organisation introduced customer service helpdesk what help FirstPort in automatization the customer support process which allow to deliver a high standard quality. This application dealing with information and data about status of customer. All of these help in reduction of expenditures and manpower. FirstPort use architectural framework to deal with the best solution what are suitable in holistic viewpoint. The three elements of the application are analytical, operational and collaborative. CRM analyse the information gained on the operational site regarding business achievement and development. The operational side incorporate combination of business procedures containing customer touch point. The collaborative site involves relief of collaboration or communication such as email, fax for interplay the customers with employees. The requirements of CRM at FirstPort are business intelligence and analytical facility, integrated methods of customer interplay, web-based assistance, centralised databank for customer information and integrated workflow. An institution can comprehend easier the relevance each customer represents regarding the business and gain by separate customers into portfolios (Thakur, Workman, 2016, p. 4095). These factors play a significant role in the organisation daily live especially now when the COVID-19 with social distancing, masks and hand sanitisers slowly nobody can move.

Conclusion

These days of distress and agony both for humans and organisations, both the customers, management and team must be able to take serious actions to survive. However, during this survive everybody can make easier someone else days by

thinking in advance, by empathy, by taking in consideration others and the organisations to be flexible to reach the customers by taking care of them from the first encounter and beyond through customer engagement.

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