

Understanding and Engaging in the Customer Experience

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Introduction

A company needs to understand needs and demands of customers to enhance customer experience. Positive customer experience shows positive attitude towards a company and its products. It is essential to state that a company needs to have the ability to communicate and contact with customers through various steps such as decision making, survey for change process and so on. It helps to improve customer engagement. A company who succeeds in establishing customer engagement and experience tend to have high opportunity of creating positive image for itself. Customer value, service quality and service gap are the three major factors a company need to consider. Herein lays the importance of the presented assignment. It would discuss, elucidate, apply and address the three factors with the help of relevant organization examples.

Part 1 Customer value

5 Dimensions of customer value

Customer value chiefly involves the value or a perception that a customer has for a product of the company. It helps to determine a product/service's ability to fulfil customer needs and demands as per expectation. As stated by Bilgihan *et al.*, (2016), a company, need to satisfy and exceed customer expectations. Effort is necessary to ensure consistency of customer value. The five dimensions of the customer value are conformance to requirements, quality and range of products, price and brand of products, additional services, relationships and experiences of the customers.

Conformance to requirement

Conformance to requirements highlights a company's ability to understand customer needs, preferences, demands and offer products accordingly. For instance, as Sainsbury provides grocery, it needs to take into account varied customer demands. The UK customers prefer to

have fresh produce to make food at home. Considering the fact, it needs to be stated that the company needs to offer different types of fresh produce such as vegetables, spices to ensure quality food products. In contemporary times, most people prefer to purchase online. Digital shopping has gained prominence. Sainsbury has acknowledged the changing trend of purchase intention and behaviour. It has introduced online purchase with the help of its official website. Both online and offline purchase options are presented by the company. As its consequence, the company has started to experience growing sales. It is necessary to mention that the mobile app facility has increased sales by 7.2%.

As stated by Terblanche, (2018), 15% online orders are placed through the app. On the other aspect, the convenience sales increased by 8.2%. It is relevant to state that large number of customers are attracted to Sainsbury as the company has focused on improving and developing customer value. As mentioned by De Keyser *et al.*, (2015), a company need to consider conformance to requirements. Taking the factor into consideration, it is reasonable to state that Sainsbury has made significant changes to attract customers. It has succeeded in understanding customer purchase behaviour, trends. It has developed insight regarding factors that influence customer purchase behaviour and pattern. The company of Sainsbury shows that it is necessary to assess customer requirements and conform to it accordingly. The retail has stressed on cross channel shopping to attract customers. In order to enhance customer market and enhance its competitive advantage, the process of acquisition is considered. For instance, Sainsbury has acquired Argos, the chief objective is to employ digital platforms and services of Argos within Sainsbury. Customers believe in using digital devices such as mobile, social platforms, Sainsbury has made effort to utilise Smart Shop (Dou *et al.*, 2016). The feature would allow buyers to scan, conduct in-store shopping through mobile phone. The company is ranked as one of the leading companies.

Product selection

Standard quality of products and bringing wide range of variation among the products/services makes the customers experience good and favourable. It helps to ensure company success. Sainsbury leads the group of groceries and departmental store in the global

market, its main business being the United Kingdom. The company has wide variety of products. As its consequence, it enables customers to manage supplies following prediction for demands. For example, Sainsbury gives importance to cross-shopping channels that help to analyse customer behaviour. Taking into account the information, the company conducts product selection to offer desirable products to customers (Robson *et al.*, 2016). A company with large customer base with diversity need to have varied products. It is essential to state that a company need to consider divergent factors such a demand, needs and expectations. It helps a company to stand apart from its competitors and make a separate place for itself in the market.

As stated by Fischer *et al.*, (2016), the Sainsbury has experienced considerable growth in recent times as it has improved its product selection approach. It is relevant to state that the company has made an effort to work on improving product quality. Known for quality and fresh food products, the company attempts to address food qualities of branches that have experienced negative customer feedback. The company has attempted to strive to concentrate on giving quality food products. The range of prepared vegetable is acquired positive customer review. The company has launched allergen free food products to ensure healthy food. However, it needs to be stated that the company needs to make an effort to maintain its market position. As reasoned by Goodman, (2019), a company needs to keep track of substitute products. For instance, competitor companies such as Lidl offer food products and groceries within a reasonable price range. Sainsbury need to make sure that its products offer quality, quantity, variety with different price ranges for customers.

Price and brand

As stated by Zhang *et al.*, (2017), price and brand are two major factors determining customer value. Price is crucial for customers as it impacts purchase behaviour and intentions. () points out that for most customers, price play a major role in deciding purchase intention. A customer tends to look for alternative options to acquire substitute products that would suggest reasonable price range. Affordability, price range, socio-economic status, unemployment, are some of the factors that are considered during purchase. Taking the factor into consideration, a company need to set price range in a way that would be reasonable, appropriate. Melero *et al.*, (2016) highlight that customers understand that quality products have certain price standard. Hence, companies such as Sainsbury need to balance customer

benefit and company price range. On the other aspect, the brand factor plays a vital role for a company. As stated by He *et al.*, (2016), a company with strong brand helps to enhance company identity. It helps to increase company sales as customers are encouraged to purchase products from a particular company. For instance, Sainsbury has good brand name, it is regarded as one of the leading retailers in the UK. The strong brand image helps the company acquire customer confidence and reliance. Compared to other less known retails, Sainsbury has earned a place in the market. It is necessary to state that a company needs to ensure and maintain quality service to retain its brand name.

Value added service

Value added service are regarded as additional benefits which a customer receives along with purchase of product/service. As stated by Kondoh *et al.*, (2016), the services help to establish good customer relations. For instance, quality customer service, free support and so on are value added services. The additional services are rendered by a company to attract and appeal to its loyal and potential customers. It helps a company to retain customers and attract new customers at the same time. In the global sphere, a company needs to improve and modify the services as per necessity. For instance, Sainsbury possess good value-added services. It attempts to offer quality service to customers through customer care, occasional discounts and offers, good behaviour and so on (Lanier Jr and Hampton, (2016).

The company also comes up with a range of additional services for target and permanent customers. For instance, Sainsbury conducts various short time and limited period offers in order to appeal to or attract a certain range of customers. Beside throughout the year, the company offer certain lucrative discounts and amazing discounts. It enables a company earns enormous profits and the customers also get pleased ad impressed by virtue of these schemes and processes of the company. Different value-added services enable Sainsbury to have improve its market positions (Lee *et al.*, 2016). It is necessary to mention that Lidl often falls behind Sainsbury in terms of understanding and engaging in the process of customer

experience due to not so effective and strategic implementation and manipulation of the five dimensions of the consumer value.

Relationship and experience

The company has implemented and adopted various strategies and techniques and tactics. It helps to deal with the wide range of customers and in the betterment of the process of customer experience. The company's skilled and groomed employees and the speciality teams regularly interact and communicate with the customers and accept their feedbacks. It helps to come up with more user friendly and innovative products and services that are customized keeping the customer's needs and demands in mind. The interactions are made both over the social media and digital media platforms and also via offline processes like seminars agendas, in other words they maintain a strong bond with the customers which is extremely necessary to thrive and sustain in the business scenario (Sachdeva and Goel, 2015).

The company in order to enhance supplement customer experience considers new and innovative business steps. For instance, Sainsbury has conducted experimentation with the products and services. It has led to leading to the widening of the range of products and pay necessary attention to see that the desired quality is maintained even after the company earns huge profit rates. Even the raw materials that are welcomed by the company to assemble the products go through strict processes of evaluation so that their quality is preserved, and low-quality raw materials are adopted by the company in order to make profits.

The company gives importance to the communication and interaction process with the customers. There is no space for delay in the communication process of the company which contributes to a better customer experience (Verleye, 2015). The marketing managers and the customer care executives of the company are always active and available to the instant service of the customers. Effort is made to ensure active use of all the platforms of social

media and the digital media the company's staff and employees are present to answer customer queries. On the other aspect companies such as Sainsbury need to come up with a solution for the customers who are facing an issue regarding the products or services of the company in discussion. Employees take into account feedback whether positive or negative on a serious note without having negative attitude towards customers (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

A company which fails to maintain consistency with performance tend to hamper customer relationship. It produces a dissatisfaction among the customers leading to unsatisfactory customer experience. As stated by Low, (2016), it would affect the relationship between company and customers. It is important to understand that a company needs to conduct research on customer experience and engagement. It would be helpful to assess customers enrich the product service, development that would pave the pathway for the company's growth (Rosenbaum *et al.*, 2017).

Though the five dimensions of the customer value are equally important but according to chronological order based on effectiveness and importance of the factors on how they serve to satisfy the process of customer experience, the quality and range of the products tops the list and thereafter comes pricing of the products, then conformance to requirements and communication and additional services thereafter (McColl-Kennedy *et al.*, 2015).

Sainsbury is one of the leading operating in the market of UK and enjoys a wide range of customers from all over the globe. It caters to varied customers who have diverse cultures and diverse demands and expectations. For satisfying and meeting customer expectations, has implemented a wide range of strategies. It would enable the company to cater to the needs of each and every customer. It is relevant to state that customers are valuable stakeholders who contributes to the growth and development of the company individually (Goodman, 2019). The company pays a strong heed to the packaging and an outer appearance of the products. It offers a range of services to its customers so that a positive impact is instilled in the minds of the customers.

It is important to highlight that Sainsbury ranks high in terms of utilising five dimensions of customer value. The company can be considered as a good example to understand the value and effectiveness of customer value (Melero *et al.*, 2016).

Conclusion

Conclusively speaking, taking steps to improve and focus on improving customer value enables a company to attract customers. It helps a company to address factors that would influence customer behaviour, attention. Companies such as Sainsbury needs to understand that price, brand, offering quality and relevant products motivate customers to make purchase decision. In other words, a company needs to consider factors that are beneficial and useful for customers. Sainsbury stands before Lidl due to its more planned and strategically implemented techniques. Sainsbury has succeeded in changing its services, product selection. It has proved to be helpful to attract customers and enhance customer experience and engagement.

Part 2A Service quality

5 Dimensions of service quality

Service quality deals with the comparison of what a customer expects from the services or the products of the company and in reality, whether the company succeeds to meet that or not. It elucidates the way a company reacts to customer expectations through the products and services. The five dimensions of service quality are tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

Reliability

Reliability factor is one of the driving forces that contribute to the advancement and flourishing of a company. It basically involves the degree by which the customers can rely on the company or its products. For instance, Sainsbury assures customers concerning its products. It ensures that food products that are offered to customers are fresh, quality. The aspect of packaging further gives a sense of reliance to customers. It is important to understand that the grocery and food retail takes measures such as communication through customer care, resolving issues and queries regarding food products and so on. The company

possess several suppliers who are reliable and offer quality food products. Its visible aspects and infrastructural attributes are also quite attractive and appealing. The company has a high reliability factor among its consumers. Along with good brand value and goodwill, the company ensures quality customer service both offline and online (De Keyser *et al.*, 2015). Company staffs and employees are helpful, social media platforms offer assistance to customers round the clock. A core company goal is to offer quality food within reasonable price range. It stresses on fair suppliers and environment welfare. The company ensures that measures are taken to meet its goals while offering goods to customers.

Assurance

It is important to understand that a company needs to give assurance of its products. Employees are responsible to inspire confidence and trust. For instance, Sainsbury ensures that its employees and staff offer quality service. Training and education are provided to employees. It helps employees to have guidance and instruction regarding ways to deal with customers. Sainsbury employees have the skills and knowledge to resolve problems, customer issues, critical situations (Lanier and Hampton, 2016). For example, customer care staff are active round the clock to help customers who purchase company products online.

Tangibles

The tangible factor stresses on services/products that are physically present. It refers to services that the customers can experience in real life. As stated by Sachdeva and Goel, (2015), it refers to the outer appearance of the products or services. The tangibility factor depends on how the products are equipped externally and infrastructural attributes and the visible aspects that the company or business organization portrays. For instance, quality service delivery, mobile applications, advanced marketing and transaction equipment are relevant examples. Sainsbury has mobile apps, social media platforms, e-commerce facilities that encourage customers to shop online.

Empathy

Empathy involves the individual care and attention a company offers to customers. It enables companies to acquire customer loyalty, helpful to enhance sustainability and business in the long run. It is relevant to state that a company needs to care for customer needs and requirements. It is relevant to state that Sainsbury makes effort to act in an empathetic

manner while serving customers. The company takes into account the factor of diversity to offer varied products to different types of customers. As stated by Sahu *et al.*, (2016), companies need to understand the varied needs, preferences, demands of customers.

Responsive

The responsiveness factor depicts the flexibility of a certain company or organization. It epitomizes the willingness of the company to respond to the customers in relation to queries or doubts or complaints. For instance, Sainsbury takes initiatives to solve customer problems. Lidl being another prominent and significant chain of supermarket operating in the same market of UK also abide by all the five dimensions of service quality. It helps to earn customer satisfaction and gain an increasing flock of customers every year. But in some fields, it lags behind its competitor, Sainsbury due to lack of well-equipped and strategically drafted tricks. It leads to a decrement in the amount of customer satisfaction and not so effective customer experience (McColl-Kennedy *et al.*, 2015). Though the company's visible aspects and outward appearance and infrastructure are up to the mark to attain a proper and good customer experience it is unable to provide the customers the necessary and the required amount of reliability and trust and confidence depending on which customers will make their minds to purchase the company's products and take a taste of their services (Terblanche, 2018).

The staffs and the employees of the company are not so polite towards the customers and often render out harsh and rude behaviours which makes the current as well as the probable consumers demotivated and dissatisfied and they develop an inclination towards other companies like Sainsbury who are quite supportive and responsive in this regard as they take the customers as their primary asset for the growth and progress of the company in the international market as well as the domestic market of the United Kingdom. As a result, the customers can't convince themselves to the right amount when they give a thought about purchasing from Lidl. Also, communicating and interacting processes of the company's marketing team and customer care services team lacks effectiveness. It often delays occurs which make the customers to search for another company. Lack of communication leads to poor customers relation. Comparatively speaking, Sainsbury has good responsiveness towards its customers than Lidl.

Ranking of companies

Although the five major dimensions of service quality are equally important in regard to the customers and are independent of each other. A chronology exists, based on its rankings, reliability comes first and then tangibility, assurance, empathy, and responsiveness in that order of importance (Bilgihan *et al.*, 2016). Based on these five dimensions and the chronology of these dimensions, the customers make a comparison between the expected service and perceived service of the company and since, Sainsbury and Lidl operate in the same market with more or less the same range and type of products. The factors are important for both the companies.

The five dimensions regarding the quality of the services that are rendered by the two companies towards the potential and prospective customers are tremendously effective and significant in order to engage more customers and to provide them with a better experience.

SUMMARY Table

The rankings of the five dimensions of service quality from the perspective of the two companies, Sainsbury and Lidl, are hugely significant and both the companies abide by the chronology of the dimensions of the service quality in order to achieve market success and for the betterment of customer experience while Sainsbury leads in this field and Lidl is after it.

Conclusion

The five dimensions of the quality of service that are provided to the customer base including tangibility, reliability, assurance, empathy and responsiveness are tackled by the two companies in different manners and different degrees which yield different results.

Part 2B Dimensions of service gap

The Gap Model of Service is a structure which helps in analyzing the satisfaction level of a customer. It is also known as the Customer Service Gap Model. Hence, in order to understand the level of satisfaction, the organization must work towards fulfilling their needs. This model enforces on five gaps prevalent in services (Dou, *et al.*, 2016). They are:

1. The Knowledge Gap

The Knowledge Gap discusses the gap occurring between the expectation level of the customer in the service and the provision provided by the company of that service. The major fault is of the management. The management does not take any kind of initiative in knowing the preferences and needs of the customer (Fischer *et al.*,2016). Factors behind this include:

- Absence of management and minimal interaction with the customers
- Absence of communication found between the employees and the management
- Inadequate market research
- Inadequate focus on relationships
- Failing to hear the complaints of customers

2. The Policy Gap

The Policy Gap discusses about the gap which takes place between management's understanding of the preferences catering to customer and the conversion of that understanding into the policies of the service delivery and quality. A number of factors responsible for this gap are:

- Management unable to meet a quality service of customers.
- Service labels are found to be in a state of extremely poor condition.
- Unable to update regular service level standards.

3. The Delivery Gap

The Delivery Gap is a kind of contrast which is found between the policies of service delivery and real delivery of the service.

A number of factors responsible for this gap are:

- Shortage found in the policies of human resources
- Failing to match the supply to its demand.
- Employees having lack of knowledge about the product
- Lack of cooperation found among the team members to deliver the product.

4. The Communication Gap

The Communication Gap is the gap which is found between what is promised to the customers about a product or service by means of advertisements and what they get in return.

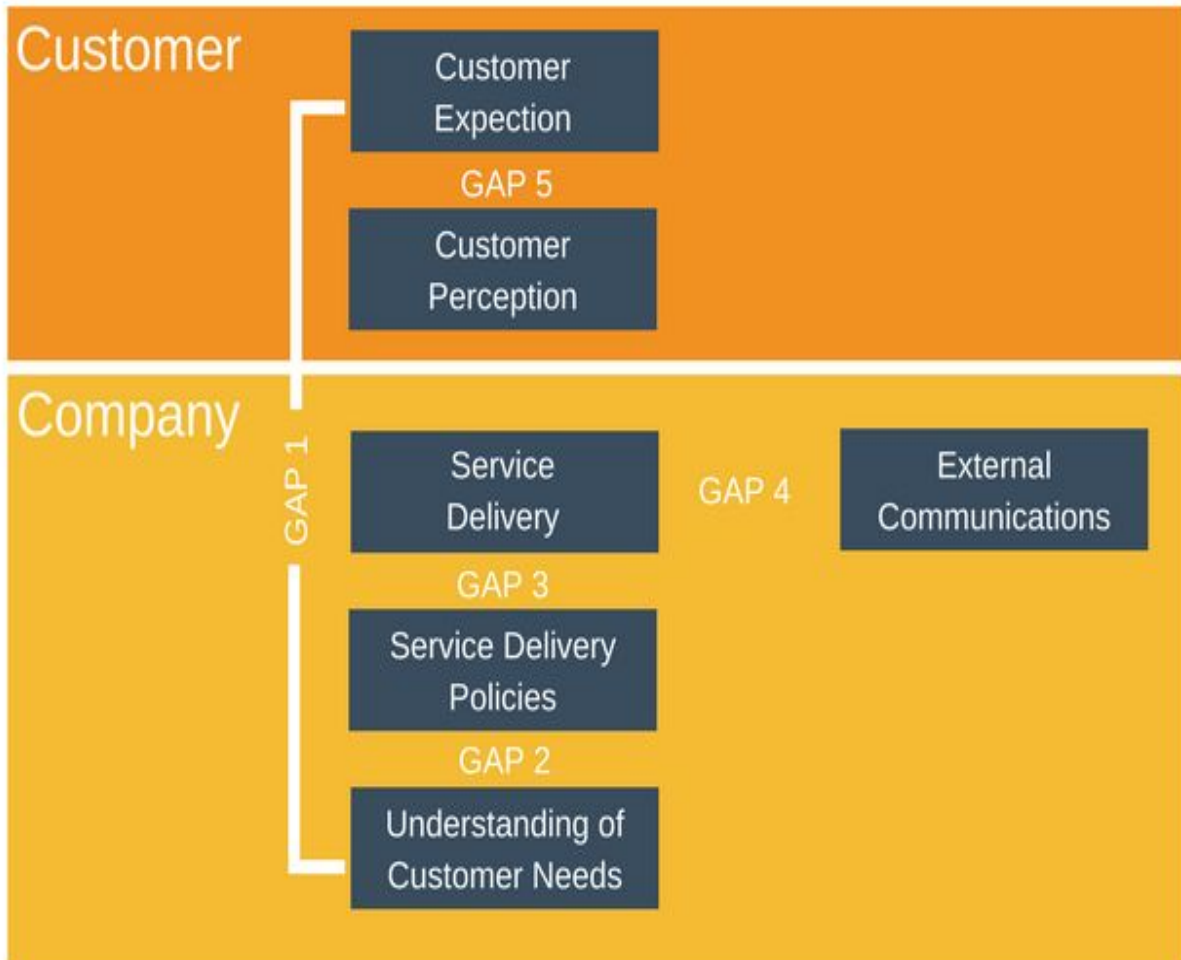
This particularly happens when the customers do not get the service, which they expect from a particular kind of product. There are a number of factors which are responsible for Communication Gap. They are:

- Overpromising and under-deliver. This leads to frustrated customers.
- Inadequate communication taking place between the advertising teams and the operational management.
- However it has been found that Communication Gaps often increases the level of dissatisfaction among the customers.
- It is more because the companies fail to keep their promises to the customers.

5. The Customer Gap

The Customer Gap is a kind of gap which is found between the expectations of the customer and the realization of the customers. This gap mainly arises due to the fact that the customers do not understand the service or misunderstand the quality of a service provided to them. Specifically, most of the organizations in their worst situations lose the majority of their customers.

Gap Model of Service Quality



1. The Knowledge Gap

As per the reports of Sainsbury, the families belonging to Britain has been wasting twice the level of their food. People waste over four million tons of edible food are rejected in a year in the UK. However, many of the families think that they waste a small amount of food. In accordance to the Sustainability Head of Sainsbury, Food wastage is one the biggest problem faced in the society. Wastage of food is one of the major problems, thereby creating a knowledge gap among the consumers. Sainsbury is striving to invest £ 10 million to manage the problem of food disposal. The workforce of Lidl increased by 8% in the year of 2018.

2. The Policy Gap

The Gender Pay Gap is the dissimilarity found in the average income between all men and women in a company. According to the report of Sainsbury, in the year of 2017 the mean gender pay was around 14.6%. However in the year of 2018, the mean gender pay gap reflected to be 12.1%. Sainsbury prefers to assign men and not women in the senior role positions. Men are given better pay roles, whereas women are paid on an hourly basis. 63% of women are found to be working on the basis of part time. Talking about the gender pay policy of Lidl, female employees receive a higher percentage of anniversary payment compared to males (Lee, *et al.*,2016).

3. The Delivery Gap

Sainsbury is looking to enlarge its food sector specially the takeaways. It aims to maintain the quality and service of a product or service. However the company has failed in creating a good market which would help to differentiate from other supermarkets relating to price, quality, service provided to the customers. Lidl scores high in satisfying the needs of the customers.

4. The Communication Gap

Communication plays an important role in building an organization. However, in case of Sainsbury an effective means of communication was found to be missing somewhere. In order to sustain the brand level, the key to success is the communication. Lidl effectively communicates with the customers thereby delivering cost effective products, ensuring great quality. Lidl attempts to launch a TV Campaign concerning Ester with having all kinds of decorations in it.

5. The Customer Gap

Companies such as Sainsbury is quite failing to meet the needs of the customer. The consumer demands keep on changing from time to time. Hence, it is becoming difficult for the organization to drastically change the consumer market. Thereby, it is becoming slow enough in altering the changes demanded by the consumers. Satisfying the needs of customer are utmost important. It has developed its market by giving more preference to the customers. For instance: Customers would not find any sort of problem in parking their cars as they are clearly marked, thereby making it convenient for the customers (Sahu, *et al.*,2016).

Provide a ranking for each gap

The gap model is ranked on the basis of:

The *Customer Gap* must be met first. This could be attained by meeting the needs of the customers. Customers are the vital elements of the organization. If their needs are fulfilled, the organization could see the path of success.

Second, comes the *Delivery Gap*. The products served to the customers must be of superior quality. If the quality of a product is good, the customers would be longing to consume more of a product. The organization must not compromise on the quality and service of a product. This would help to draw more customers. Attracting more customers would help to generate more revenues out of it.

Third comes the *Communication Gap*. An organization could run successfully in the long run if it communicated efficiently with the customers. The relationship could be strengthened by researching more about the usage pattern of a particular product by a customer. The interaction should be increased between the management and the customers.

Fourth is the *Policy Gap*. The policy gap could be enhanced by strengthening the quality standards of a product. Training managers is utmost important to sustain the quality of a product. Motivating the staff is a crucial aspect. It could be done by rewarding them for achieving a goal.

Fifth would be the *Knowledge Gap*. It is the responsibility of the organization to address the problems faced by the customers. Imparting them with a correct set of knowledge would help them to understand what is right and what is wrong.

Summary table

Gaps	Comparator Analysis	Ranking
<i>Knowledge Gap</i>	- As per the reports of Sainsbury, the families belonging to Britain has been wasting twice the level of their food. - The workforce of Lidl increased by 8% in	Fifth would be the <i>Knowledge Gap</i> . Imparting them with a correct set of knowledge would help them to estimate the level of correctness.

	the year of 2018 (Kondoh, <i>et al.</i> ,2016).	
<i>Policy Gap</i>	• Sainsbury prefers to assign men and not women in the senior role positions. • Men are given better pay roles, whereas women are paid on an hourly basis. • The gender pay policy of Lidl, female employees receives a higher percentage of anniversary payment compared to males.	Fourth is the <i>Policy Gap</i> . Training managers is utmost important to sustain the quality of a product. Motivating the staff is a crucial aspect.
<i>Delivery Gap</i>	• Sainsbury has failed in creating a good market which would help to differentiate from other supermarkets relating to price, quality, service provided to the customers. • Lidl scores high in satisfying the needs of the customers.	Second, comes the <i>Delivery Gap</i> . If the quality of a product is good, the customers would be longing to consume more of a product.
<i>Communication Gap</i>	• Sainsbury have an effective means of communication was found to be missing somewhere. In order to sustain the brand level, the key to success is the communication. • Lidl attempts to launch a TV Campaign concerning Ester with having all kinds of decorations	The relationship could be strengthened by researching more about the usage pattern of a particular product by a customer. The interaction should be increased between the management and the customers.

	in it (Low, et al.,2016).	
<i>Customer Gap</i>	• Sainsbury is quite failing to meet the needs of the customer. • The workforce of Lidl increased by 8% in the year of 2018.	The <i>Customer Gap</i> must be met first. This could be attained by meeting the needs of the customers.

Conclusion

The Gap Model of Service is a structure which helps in analyzing the satisfaction level of a customer. The five levels of gap involve the knowledge gap, the policy gap, the communication gap, the Customer gap, delivery gap. The gap portrays the means by which an organization attempts to improve the factors to maximize the rate of profit in the market. The Knowledge Gap discusses the gap occurring between the expectation level of the customer in the service and the provision provided by the company of that service. The Policy Gap discusses about the gap which takes place between management's understanding of the preferences catering to customer and the conversion of that understanding into the policies of the service delivery and quality. The Delivery Gap is a kind of contrast which is found between the policies of service delivery and real delivery of the service. The Communication Gap is the gap which is found between what is promised to the customers about a product or service by the means of advertisements and what they get in return. The Customer Gap is a kind of gap which is found between the expectations of the customer and the realization of the customers.

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