

Applied Leadership and Management in the Workplace

Module Assignment Submission

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Statement of Confirmation of Authenticity

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Introduction

The purpose of this assignment is to explore the many elements of the customer experience, emphasising the significance of strategic engagement at all stages of the customer lifecycle.

It will investigate consumer value and what this entails for both organisations and consumers. It examines models of customer value and how to apply them to find out how value is perceived by customers. It will analyse consumer loyalty and satisfaction and how they influence organisations whilst exploring the implications client retention can have on organisations.

Via an in-depth analysis of existing research and case studies, we will identify best practices for improving CX management and analyse the consequences for corporate performance. Ultimately, this study aims to provide actionable insights to organisations seeking to build meaningful and long-lasting relationships with their customers.

The writer will relate the customer process to their current employment as a communications and development officer for an elected representative.

Customer Value

“A customer perceived preference for and evaluation of those products attributes, attribute performances, and consequences arising from use that facilitate (or block) achieving the customer’s goals and purposes in use situations.” (Woodruff, 1997).

According to Shanker (2012), Woodruff’s definition consists in two elements: perceived value and desired value. Whilst desired value is the customer’s perception, or the value created by the product, perceived value is more a feeling of value the customer receives from a service or the product. However Butz & Goodstein (1997) suggest that when a purchase is made or a service is acquired, customer value is an emotional link between the client and an organisation.

CV = Customer Value B = Perceived Benefits C = Perceived Costs

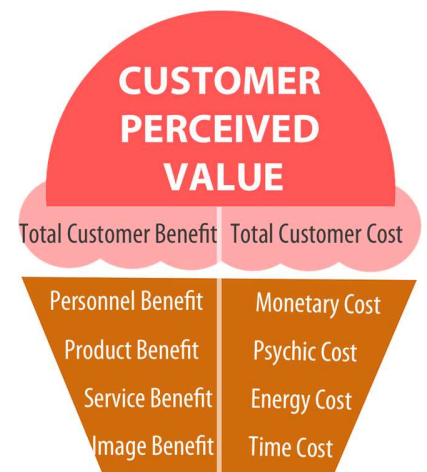
Customer value is indeed a variable concept that can differ significantly from one individual to another. The basic formula for customer value ($CV = B - C$) provides a foundation for understanding this variability. Customer value is variable: value for one *may not be the same* as for another (Graf & Maas, 2008; Chen, Z & Dubinsky, 2003).

Customer value is what the customer believes to be the worth of a good or service. Usually defined as the discrepancy between the cost that a consumer pays to obtain and use a product or service and the perceived benefits. The concept covers both physical and psychological aspects as well as functional use, emotional gratification and social standing. According to studies, long-term success for companies, customer loyalty, and purchasing decisions all depend mostly on customer value (Mascarenhas et al., 2006).

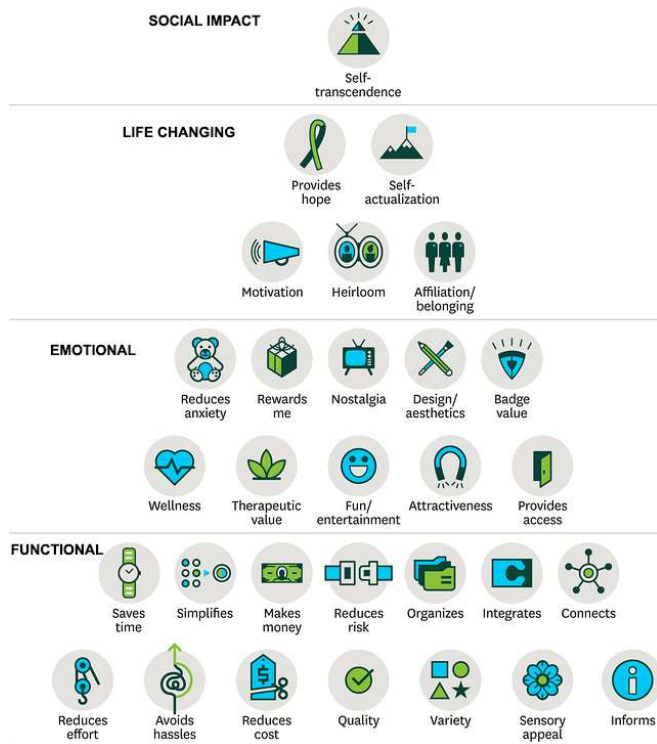
Studies have indicated that businesses who regularly provide exceptional customer value can fetch premium rates and increase market share (Anderson, 1994). Customer value is multidimensional, hence it can vary significantly depending on the person and the situation. For companies, this is a complicated yet vital element to know and control (Salem Khalifa, 2004; Gallarza et al., 2011).

According to the research by Almquist, Senior and Bloch (2006), customer value can be categorised into four main types:

- Functional value
- Emotional value
- Life-changing value
- Social impact value



These categories form a hierarchy whereby social influence is at the top and functional value at the bottom. Here is a brief overview of the categories -



Functional value: This is the most basic level, addressing practical needs. It includes elements like saving time, reducing cost, simplifying tasks, and reducing risk.

Emotional value: This category focuses on creating positive feelings for customers. It includes elements such as reducing anxiety, providing entertainment, wellness, and attractiveness.

Life-changing value: This level has a more profound impact on the customer's life. It includes elements like providing hope, self-actualization, motivation, and a sense of belonging.

Social impact value: At the top of the hierarchy, this category relates to how a product or service allows customers to have a positive impact on society. The key element here is self-transcendence.

Almquist et al. (2006), identified 30 distinguishing "elements of value" that can influence consumer engagement and preference within these four categories. This framework offers a more complex comprehension of the values that consumers truly hold, expanding beyond conventional economic and functional factors and incorporating societal, psychological, and emotional factors.

Generating client value is a complex task that requires an in-depth understanding of customer requirements and preferences (Moeller et al., 2003). There are many key factors to consider when creating and enhancing customer value such as:

Understanding your customers - To create value, you must first understand what drives value for your customers. This involves conducting thorough customer research, including surveys and direct conversations. Organisations must analyse customer purchasing and behaviour patterns and identify unmet needs in your target market (Kumar & Reinartz, 2016, Aaker & Moorman, 2023).

Develop a strong value proposition - Presenting the reasons consumers should choose your good or service above others depends on value proposition. Organisations can enhance this by recognising their unique strengths and differentiators. Calculate their value using actual data and continue to evolve based on feedback from customers. (Osterwalder et al., 2019, Barnes et al., 2009)

Segment your audience – Value is perceived differently by different customer categories. By segmenting your audience, you can personalise your messaging and products to appeal to particular consumer groups, adapt your value proposition in accordance with demographics and geography factors. This data can be used to design marketing strategies that are more tailored to each consumer (Hassan, 2012).

According to Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1990), discrepancies can occur when customers' perceptions of the service standards provided by an organization do not match their expectations of the service received. To effectively meet customer needs, it is crucial to focus on the following five dimensions:

1. **Tangibles:** The physical evidence of the service, including facilities and equipment.
2. **Reliability:** The ability to deliver promised services dependably and accurately.
3. **Responsiveness:** The willingness to assist customers and provide prompt service.
4. **Assurance:** The knowledge and courtesy of employees, along with their ability to instil confidence.
5. **Empathy:** The provision of caring, individualized attention to customers.

This model resonates strongly within the writers organisation, it is vital to consistently deliver reliable and empathetic services within their current workplace. It is essential to respond efficiently and professionally when dealing with constituents queries and ensure responses are obtained in a timely manner.

Valued customers offer many advantages to an organisation, including enhanced reputation, increased credibility and improved customer loyalty (Hu, Kandampully & Juwaheer, 2009). When an organisation recognises what is significant to its customers, it can foster long-term customer relationships that contribute to lifetime value (Berndt & Brink, 2004). Khadka and Maharjan (2017) highlight that neglecting to cultivate and sustain valued customers can severely impact an organisation's profitability. This decline may stem from deficiencies in product quality, service delivery, or overall customer experience. The alignment of customer expectations with the value perceived from products and services is crucial for maintaining loyalty and satisfaction. Organisations that prioritize understanding their customers' needs and preferences are better positioned to deliver exceptional value, thus securing a competitive advantage in the marketplace.



Customer Experience (CX)

Customer experience (CX) and customer engagement are separate yet interrelated ideas that are essential in defining a customer's connection with a brand. Understanding how they differ is essential for organisations seeking to improve customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Customer Experience defines the comprehensive perception a consumer holds of a brand, derived from all encounters during their journey. This includes every point of contact, from first awareness to post-purchase assistance. Customer experience includes the quality of products or services, customer support and the emotional reactions generated during these interactions (Mark, et al., 2024). Businesses need to understand the customer experience in order to build value and stay ahead of their competitors.

Pollack (2014) suggests that the customer experience is not solely determined by individual interactions, but rather by the cumulative effect of numerous interactions across a variety of channels and over time. This comprehensive viewpoint recognises that consumers now engage with companies through a variety of interactions, many of which are outside the company's direct control, such as digital platforms and peer influences. Therefore, in order to effectively manage and improve the customer experience, businesses must implement an integrated strategy that incorporates multiple departments, including IT, service operations and marketing. It is crucial for businesses to take into account all aspects of their offering to determine the overall customer experience, as customer perceptions are formed through both direct and indirect contact with a company (Peppers & Rogers, 2016; Schmitt, 2010).

Customer perception and engagement with our organisation are significantly influenced by quality management systems, which greatly affect customer experience. By implementing rigorous quality standards, such as Customer Relationship Management, and continuously striving for enhancement, organisations can improve the quality of the client experience across all domains. The use of this method provides enhanced satisfaction and loyalty levels. The quality of services significantly influences the overall experience of customers.

Customer Relationship Management is a management strategy that uses behaviours, technology and strategies to track and analyse contacts with customers at all stages of their lifecycle. The main objective is to improve connections with customers, keep customers longer, and push sales growth. CRM systems collect information about customers from websites, social media, and direct contacts with the business. This information helps the business understand how customers behave and their preferences. Kulpa (2017) states that automating tasks like customer service and training can make the customer experience significantly improved if the CRM is set up effectively. This automation not only makes things run more efficiently but it also helps organisations to effectively meet customer demands which, in turn, develops loyalty and earns them a greater profit. CRM comes in many forms such as, operational, analytical and collaborative. Each one serves a different purpose and helps an organisation manage its ties with its customers as a whole. Businesses can make their customer service more personalised and responsive by using such resources. This helps them compete in their own markets. There are many reasons a business should incorporate a CRM system, however the importance of maintaining the system will ensure they keep up with technology and customer trends. It has been widely reported (Ledro, et al., 2023; Chatterjee, et al., 2021; Potla, 2023), that a rising number of Executives are currently or seek to integrate some form of AI into their CRM systems. This trend is expected to continue.

According to Wailgum and Fruhlinger (2018), CRM solutions streamline sales processes by providing a centralised hub for customer data, allowing sales teams to log interactions, manage leads and automate regular tasks. This automation not only saves significant time for sales professionals, but it also ensures that follow-ups are prompt and personalised improving the likelihood of closing a deal.

Within the writers workplace customer experience is the at the forefront of all decisions made. There are many strategies in place to promote such engagement. Regular drop-in surgeries are held and residents are prompted to attend via a targeted leaflet drop. It has been shown that actively marketing different engagement options including newsletters and social media, as well as informing locals about upcoming meetings, volunteer opportunities, and local initiatives, increases their engagement in neighbourhood affairs. As an office it is recognised that any form of engagement, whether in a negative or positive context, is a form of engagement. The relationship can be improved but the initial engagement is celebrated.

Customer Engagement (CE)

Customer engagement emphasises the active engagement and involvement that customers have with a brand. This includes engagements via marketing efforts, social media and customer service avenues. Engagement involves creating significant relationships that promote continuous interaction and allegiance.

The concept of engagement varies depending on the setting. In the business environment, engagement is known as a contract. The management field refers to this as an organisational activity involving internal stakeholders. In marketing, customer engagement refers to a customer's interaction with an organisation (Kumar et al. 2010; Brodie et al. 2011; Vivek et al. 2012).

Kumar et al.'s (2010) definition of CE differs from Vivek et al.'s (2012), who focus on consumer participation, and that of Brodie et al. (2011), who view customer engagement as a psychological state within a specific context. However, all of these research indicate that CE is a complex notion. Several studies suggest that CE is influenced by marketing operations and can impact corporate performance. Various definitions highlight the distinction between understanding and implementing CE.

Defined as "the customer's behavioural manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers" (van Doorn et al., 2010), customer engagement reflects the emotional and cognitive investment a customer has in a brand. This engagement can occur on a variety of forms, including sharing content on social media, participating in brand-related activities and providing feedback or reviews. The importance of customer engagement stems from its direct correlation with customer loyalty and retention. Customers who are engaged are more likely to promote the brand through word-of-mouth, exhibit brand loyalty and make contributions to a positive brand image (Bowden, 2009).

Understanding the processes of customer interaction becomes increasingly important as organisations recognise the need of creating genuine connections with their consumers in order to develop effective marketing strategies and improve the overall customer experience. This

understanding not only influences how brands communicate with customers, but it also sheds light on the motives driving these interactions, ultimately leading to long-term business prosperity.

Organisations must recognise the fundamental requirement for them to comprehend and participate in the customer experience (CX). As more and more businesses come to the realisation that their contacts with customers go beyond simple transactions, they are driven to adopt a holistic approach to the management of these interactions. Every interaction that a customer has with an organisation, starting with the customer's initial awareness and continuing through the customer's engagement after the purchase, is reflected in the customer experience. This experience has a substantial impact on the customer's perceptions, loyalty and overall satisfaction (Kusumawat & Sri Rahayu, 2020). Pansari & Kumar (2017) suggest that when a relationship is satisfied and has emotional bonding, it then progresses to the stage of engagement.

Just as businesses analyse customer data to understand preferences, elected representatives can gain valuable insights into voter concerns and expectations from obtaining such data. This information enables the writer to personalise their campaigns to more effectively address the expectations of their constituents, thereby increasing support and satisfaction. Engaging constituents in meaningful ways, such as collecting their feedback on proposed legislation or involving them in community initiatives, promotes a sense of ownership within voters, thereby increasing the probability that they will remain supportive and engaged with the elected representative. Constituent engagement not only enhances the relationship between representatives and their voters but also enhances the general effectiveness of governance by ensuring that the voices of constituents are at the forefront of decision-making processes.

Customer Retention

The duration of time that a consumer remains engaged and purchases from an organisation throughout their lifetime is referred to as customer retention. Customer retention provides an organisation with numerous benefits, including increased customer loyalty, recommendations and increased profits. Retained customers are not only more likely to make recurrent purchases, but they also tend to spend more over time. Studies have shown that existing customers can spend up to 67% more than new ones, which significantly increases Customer Lifetime Value (CLV) (Wailgum and Fruhlinger, 2018).

For organisations to effectively measure customer retention, it is essential to have accurate data on their customers. This data enables organisations to calculate the number of existing customers within a specific timeframe and compare this figure to the number of customers at the end of that period. It is also crucial to incorporate data on new customers acquired during the same timeframe. By offsetting these figures against one another, organisations can derive a comprehensive view of customer retention. The resulting figure can then be multiplied by 100 to determine the percentage of the customer retention rate over the specified period. This approach provides valuable insights into customer loyalty and helps organisations assess the effectiveness of their retention strategies.

Retention strategies that are effective can substantially increase profitability (Ford-Colin, 2022), as it is often more cost-effective to retain customers than to acquire new ones (Ahmad & Buttle,

2001). Personalised experiences, including loyalty programs that promote recurring purchases and individualised communication, are among the most effective strategies. For instance, companies can establish onboarding programs to ensure customers fully understand how to utilize products or services, which can prevent early churn. Additionally, businesses can improve customer satisfaction and loyalty by establishing a robust customer feedback loop through Voice of Customer (VoC) initiatives, which enable them to listen to and act on customer needs.

In the context of elected representatives, constituents or voters can be viewed as customers, and their retention is crucial for sustaining democratic engagement and support. Customer retention in the realm of elected representatives is based on building strong relationships with constituents to promote ongoing engagement and support. Elected officials are crucial in nurturing these relationships by actively listening to the needs and concerns of their constituents, which can significantly bolster community trust and loyalty. Currently within the workplace the writer implements effective communication strategies, such as regular updates via newsletters, social media platforms and hosting drop-in advice surgeries which allows the representative to remain connected and demonstrate transparency in their decision-making processes. Furthermore, by involving constituents in discussions about policies and initiatives that directly impact them, representatives foster a sense of ownership among community members, increasing the likelihood of continued support. Addressing issues that matter to constituents and being responsive to their feedback can enhance satisfaction levels, further solidifying their commitment to the representative. Ultimately, prioritising retention not only benefits elected officials by securing votes and support but also strengthens the democratic process by ensuring that constituents' voices are heard and valued.

Customer Relationship Manager (CRM)

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems are software solutions that are intended to assist businesses manage communications and cultivate relationships with potential and current customers (Buttle & Maklan, 2019). These systems provide a comprehensive alternative to the various spreadsheets, databases and other programs that are typically used by numerous organisations to manage client data. CRM software enables small businesses to achieve substantial automation capabilities, which ultimately leads to improved client satisfaction by improving organisation, efficiency, time management and the reduction of manual tasks ((Kumar & Reinartz, 2018).

The primary objective of a CRM is to consolidate all forms of communication, such as form submissions, telephone calls, emails and meetings, by centralising data from prospective clients and customers (Payne, 2005). It maintains and arranges documents and tasks that are linked to each client. This centralised library enables team members to access relevant information within a timely manner.

CRM's other purpose is to raise client retention, enhance customer service relationships and accelerate sales development. By integrating consumer data from many sources such as websites, conversations, emails and social media into a centralised database, CRM systems enable organisations to gain comprehensive insights into the personal information, buying behaviour and preferences of their customers.

Mithas et al. (2005) conducted a study that revealed that CRM applications have a positive association with enhanced consumer satisfaction and knowledge. Additionally, Reinartz et al. (2004) demonstrated that organisations that implement CRM processes throughout the entire customer relationship experience greater financial results. CRM implementation requires more than just technology adoption, according to Payne and Frow (2005), organisations must regard CRM as a strategic approach that generates shareholder value by establishing appropriate relationships with key customers and consumer groups. This perspective emphasises the significance of integrating CRM technology with broader business strategies and organisational ethos in order to optimise its efficacy.

Conclusion

Customer experience comprises the complete journey and emotional connection with a brand, whereas customer engagement emphasises the active participation of customers in that journey. Comprehending these distinctions enables organisations to customise their tactics efficiently for maximised customer retention and growth.

The significance of customer experience cannot be emphasised. It is essential for establishing sustainable customer relationships, obtaining competitive advantage and enhancing profitability. Businesses must adopt comprehensive customer experience management strategies that encompass understanding the client journey, personalising interactions and continuously responding to evolving expectations. In doing so, they prepare for enduring success in a progressively competitive environment.

CRM modules play a crucial role in enabling effective customer relationship management by automating workflows, improving communication, and offering valuable insights into customer interactions. By incorporating these modules into their operations, businesses can enhance efficiency, strengthen relationships with customers, and ultimately drive growth through improved service delivery and targeted marketing strategies.

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