

MODULE_4 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Lesson_5_ CUSTOMER JOURNEY

CONTENT OVERVIEW

Customer journey is the complete experience that customer goes through when interacting with an organization. It covers all the possible channels, devices, and touchpoints at all stages of a customer lifecycle. Companies that focus on customer journey strategy and put the customer in the centre of their business are more profitable than their competitors. When a company manages to make a customer feel special, they will get a loyal customer who will recommend the company to friends and family. It is important that companies connect all the channels they use, to communicate with customers, to the customer journey. Otherwise, customers can easily feel that the customer experience is disconnected.

In this text we are also covering a service blueprint. Service blueprint is a visualization that shows the interconnections of different parts of service. It includes important people, touchpoints of the customer journey and any artefacts. Service blueprint helps to understand that the service process is not the same for the service provider and the customer. Both service provider and customer have many functions that are invisible to the other. Service blueprint visualises simultaneously the visible and invisible elements of the service, the roles of customers and employees, the service delivery process and how everything works together.

1. Customer journey

Where customer experience focuses more on the content and emotional experience “how the customer feels”, customer journey looks answers to the question “what the customer does” and how the service is being delivered and how a solid customer experience comes together. A way to understand and optimize the customer experience is to map the customer journey.

A customer journey map is a visual representation of the customer journey, covering every interaction customer has with the organization. These can be such as online ads, social media, customer service team, facilities, website, billing, and feedback surveys. To properly map customer journey company needs to think from the customer’s perspective, and to do so they need to speak with their customers and collect user and market information. When

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mapping a customer journey, it is important to pay attention to every stage of customer lifecycle. What happens before, during and after the purchase? When mapping the touchpoints customers and company have, it is useful to lay out all the interactions. From how customers first heard of the company, to their direct interaction with product, website and so on. To make a customer journey map as accurate as possible, it is recommendable to create customer journeys for each buyer persona, or to choose one that represents company's average customer. When customer journey and customer touchpoints are drawn out, it is possible to compare how well those are aligned with company's strategy and identify any possible gaps or new opportunities.

There are important things to note when analysing customer experiences along a customer journey map. What kind of *actions* customers have at each stage of customer journey map (when visiting a website or reading a review etc)? What *motivations* customers have, what encourages or discourages them from moving to the next stage? What *questions* customers have, and do they find answers to those questions? If not, or if they have hard time doing so, can their uncertainties lead them to give up and turn to different company? What kind of *obstacles* customers face in each of the stages? What are the possible things that might cause customers not to complete their customer journey?

Read more about customer journey map here: <https://www.superoffice.com/blog/customer-journey/> and here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/curiosity/map-customer-journey-keep-customers-happy/>

2. Service blueprint

Typically, there are five steps when creating a service blueprint. These are *physical evidence*, *customer actions*, *frontstage employee actions*, *backstage employee actions*, and *support processes*.

Physical evidence covers all the systems, digital and physical tools that are being used, and the ways consumers are interacting with the brand. *Customer actions* lists all the steps and actions customer has when they interact with the service. *Frontstage employee actions* are the touchpoints between the service provider and the customers. These are the visible actions of customer service, when interacting directly with customers. *Backstage employee actions* are actions taken by employees, that the customer does not see. These actions can have an effect on customers, but happen "backstage", these can be such as preparing food or writing a blogpost. Most of the *support processes* also happens behind the scenes. These are the ways service is being supported, for example management support.

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Service blueprints can be used in multiple scenarios. They work as the basis for planning, and as guide and support for implementation. Service blueprints are useful when trying to improve a product or service and when developing and designing new services. Service blueprints are also helpful when trying to make current process or service more understandable to those involved in the process.

Find out more about service blueprint here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-glqJ9U_Fsk

Conclusions

Customer journey map is a visual story of interactions between customer and organization. It presents the full experience of being a customer. Customer journey map can be used in small and medium sized enterprises as well as in large companies. It enables companies to optimise the process of helping new customers get started and engaged with the brand. It also helps to understand ways different buyer personas differ from one another. More importantly it simply helps companies to understand their customers better. The better company understands their customers, the more they can customize the customer experience to answer customer needs. This makes it possible for the company to meet and exceed customer expectations at every phase of the customer journey.

Service blueprints helps to visually explain how a service works, and to define a structure of a service. It helps to identify inconsistencies and find any area that needs improvement. Service blueprint is versatile tool, and it can be utilized in many different ways. To avoid service blueprint becoming too messy and confusing, service blueprint scope needs to be defined, as well as business goals. Finding answers to question “why are you creating the service blueprint”, helps to find what needs to be included in the blueprint and what can be left out.

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