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Enhancing Customer Experience: An In-depth Exploration of Interaction Channels in the Jewelry Industry

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Abstract

High customer satisfaction is important and is seen by many firms as a critical component of their success. To improve, nevertheless, is hampered by the fact that few measure and monitor it in an organized manner. The goal of this article is to create an client touch-point management application specifically for B2B mass customisation businesses that are small to medium-sized. They can gauge, track, and improve client happiness thanks to this tool. 48 customer touchpoints were found and classified into human, goods, services, communication, geographical, and electronic interactions using a case study methodology. Employees and current customers participated in a three-step identification process that

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identified touchpoints, assessed their overall significance, and determined how particular touchpoints affected customer satisfaction. The results indicate that customers and staff generally agree on which touchpoints are most important, and that not all interactions are viewed as meaningful. Customer satisfaction was found to be most significantly influenced by human connection touchpoints.

Keywords: Customer touchpoints. Customer satisfaction. Mass customization. Printing industry.

1 Introduction

Customer touchpoints are critical exchanges that occur between companies and clients at various points in the client journey. These exchanges have a big impact on the clientele's experience and how they view the brand. These interactions, either direct or indirect, produce crucial moments that have the power to improve or worsen the customer's relationship with the company. Through methodical mapping of important touchpoints, businesses may spot and seize chances to improve and enhance the customer experience. (see Figure 1). These touchpoints are usually recorded in an client journey map, which is arranged chronologically to represent the series of interactions a normal customer has with the company. The customer experience is clearly represented visually through this mapping process, which gives marketing, sales, and customer support teams insightful information. Businesses may effectively manage and resolve customer expectations and friction by pinpointing the precise touchpoints where these issues arise.
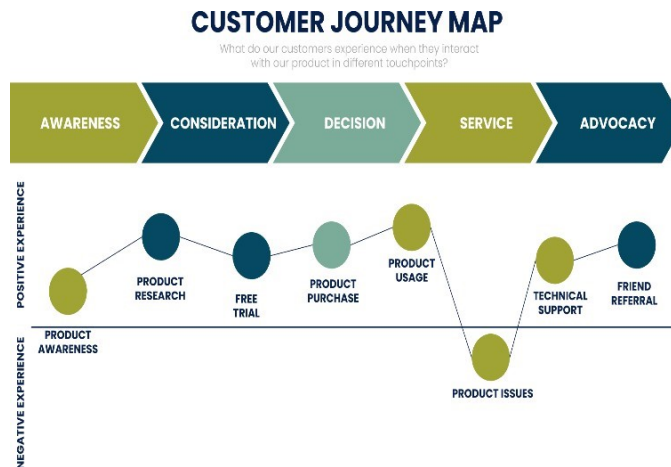

Figure 1. Customer Journey Map

1.1 Touchpoints Before a Purchase

- Social Media and Advertising
  Although social media can be useful in every area of this list, its main purpose is customer acquisition. It's a reasonably priced way to connect with a sizable section of your intended audience. It can be used to promote items, cultivate clientele, and enhance the general perception of your company. Have you ever noticed advertisements on a webpage's side or top? These are the points of contact that point prospective clients back to your website. This works well for some businesses, like Best Buy, to increase website visitors.

- Digital Marketing Content:
  Digital marketing content encompasses whatever your business posts online to further promote its brand, aside from advertisements. These could be advertisements, infographics, or interesting blog entries like the one you're currently reading.

- Events for the Company:
  If you work in sales or marketing, it's possible that you staffed a booth at a conference this year to promote your business. These occasions are excellent for presenting your brand to clients who may not be familiar with it yet.

- Peer Referrals:
  It is well known that consumers trust their friends more than advertisements. In fact, 83% of consumers say they trust recommendations from friends and family the most. Word-of-mouth marketing is therefore crucial for businesses trying to build credibility.

1.2 Touchpoints During a Purchase

- Conversations With Company Representatives:
  Face-to-face interactions are the most direct way to communicate with clients. The customer's choice to purchase is directly impacted by these swaps that take place in your stores.

- Product Catalogs:
  Catalogs, whether printed or digital, are a great method to display the products you provide. Including eye-catching product photos with informative descriptions gives buyers all the information they require prior to making a purchase.

- E-Commerce:
  E-commerce is the most effective approach for many businesses to draw clients and close deals. Due to the global accessibility of websites, a small firm located in one place can service customers from all over the world.

- Product Reviews:

  These days, product reviews serve as more than just a pre-purchase guide. Customers can read reviews while in your store using smart devices.

- Point of Sale:

  This is the last interaction a customer has before making a purchase. This is where your sales professional explains to the customer why they ought to select your product. This is a critical point in the client journey for a lot of firms.

1.3 Touchpoints After a Purchase

- Thank You Letters:

  Writing a thank-you note for a purchase is a wonderful approach to build consumer ties. This might be an email thanking them for their business or, if that isn't feasible, a handwritten note. It's a great approach to express your gratitude and foster a connection of mutual respect with the client.

- Product Feedback Surveys:

  After a customer makes a purchase, you may evaluate their satisfaction with your product or service by sending them product feedback surveys. If the business receives unfavorable comments, it can get in touch to learn more about the problem. The product development team receives this feedback and can utilize it to enhance the upcoming product version.

- Upselling/Cross-selling Emails:

  After making their first purchase, customers still have needs. In fact, some clients can find they have new wants after utilizing the product. This gives you the chance to cross- or upsell more expensive or more products from your store.

- Billing Actions:

  Frequently overlooked throughout the client experience is billing. It is usually disregarded because it happens after the sale and has no direct bearing on the customer's choice to buy. Still, it's crucial because if managed improperly, a bad billing experience can result in instant client attrition.

- Subscription Renewals:

  Renewals are crucial for subscription-based businesses to keep their income streams alive. Ensuring that clients renew their subscriptions is crucial in order to maintain steady growth. It's critical to reduce friction in the renewal process. After all, when a current customer's contract expires, they should be able to renew with ease.

2 Objectives

- To understand customer behavior before a purchase.
- To analyze customer behavior during a purchase.
- To explore post-purchase behavior of customers.

3 Literature Review

Through a variety of touchpoints, each business interacts with its clients in a different way (Dhebar, 2013). Despite being widely applied in practice for a considerable amount of time, the notion of "touchpoints" is relatively new in academic research (Morgan, Bitner, & Ostrom, 2008). Touchpoints refer to discrete instances of communication that occur between a company and its clientele, encompassing behavioral, emotional, social, sensory, and cognitive elements. Certain academics contend that concepts such as "contact point" or "moment of truth" could be interchangeable with touchpoints. Every consumer interaction has the potential to result in a favorable or unfavorable experience. Positive or poor customer-company interactions can influence the overall experience, regardless of the size of the interaction. For example, even if every other aspect was flawless, an unanticipatedly long wait, one rude staff, or a slow web can make a consumer unhappy. From a corporate perspective, customer experience encompasses "every aspect of a company's offering, including advertising, packaging, features of the product, ease of use, and dependability, in addition to customer care." Customers' internal and subjective reactions to any direct or indirect connection with a business are reflected in it (Duncan, Jones, & Rawson, 2013).

A client may, for instance, contact a business via its website, subsequently send an email, get a callback, visit a production site to meet with a consultant, and finally ask a question on the business's Facebook page. Stronger client relationships and a competitive edge are achieved by businesses that are adept at enhancing interactions across all of these touchpoints during the customer journey. The demand chain management concept states that better cooperation results in more efficient demand networks and higher customer satisfaction. This is because understanding consumer demands and circumstances drives better collaboration (Burgess, Sunmola, & Wertheim-Heck, 2023; Foster, 2008).Recent research, the perceived significance of touchpoints varies depending on the type of product. This implies that it's important to assess client interactions in a variety of settings and product categories. To effectively manage touchpoints and increase customer satisfaction, large-scale customization (the MC companies—those that provide enough product diversity and modification to satisfy almost every customer's preferences without sacrificing cost, delivery, or quality—must provide their customers with the tools they need to handle the variety of options available. (Bernard et al., 2012).

To maximize satisfaction, companies need to control how attribute-based and alternative-based information is presented, as well as how customer input is collected. This process generates several customer touchpoints, such as when a customer reads product information on the website, chats with an employee via social media, or speaks to technical support over the phone before submitting input through an online configurator, email, or in-person to a sales representative (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Mittal et al., 2023). Since the rise of MC in the 1990s, companies have shifted focus from manufacturing to customer interaction. A more forward-thinking definition of MC highlights the importance of this interaction, stating that MC "creates value through customer-company interaction during the design phase, combining a cost-leadership strategy with differentiation." Effective customer interaction and the quality of that interaction are essential for successfully implementing an MC strategy. In fact, MC usually requires close interaction between the supplier and the customer. Leading MC companies set up systems that facilitate these interactions, gathering the necessary information to translate individual customer needs into specific product features (K.Dwivedi et al., 2021). This results in a co-creation system that adds value for both the MC company and the customer.

Although MC is becoming more popular in consumer markets, it was initially adopted in B2B environments, where it still plays a critical role. Depending on whether high-level or low-level MC is offered, customer interaction may occur earlier (during the design or production stages) or later (in the assembly or distribution stages). B2B companies are generally more likely to offer full customization, including custom design, production, assembly, and distribution (Mehta et al., 2022; Pech & Vrchota, 2022). This leads to a higher degree of customization but also introduces greater complexity for both the supplier and the customer. To meet customer expectations, B2B companies need to manage both this complexity and the unique touchpoints involved in MC, such as communicating specific customer preferences and requirements. Research shows that the two primary drivers of customer satisfaction are the quality of the product or service and the quality of interactions. To achieve high customer satisfaction, providing top-quality MC products is essential, but not sufficient. Companies must also manage customer touchpoints in a way that aligns with customer expectations. The entire customer journey shapes overall satisfaction, as noted by (Duncan, Jones, & Rawson, 2013), but identifying the most critical touchpoints and understanding their importance in driving satisfaction is key to developing an effective touchpoint management tool.

4 Research Methodology

A three-phase strategy was used to conduct a case study in order to address the three research questions that were previously posed. Employees of the business that was the subject of the inquiry were initially charged with cataloging every client touchpoint. After then, an internal and external assessment was made on the importance of these touchpoints. Lastly, a survey focused on the most important touchpoints was done to gauge consumer satisfaction. The period of data collecting in 2017 was January–February. The case study focused on the staff members and commercial customers of a small publishing business situated in the bilingual region of South Tyrol, Northern Italy. The company makes about one million euros in revenue a year and employs nine people full-time. Business clients make up over 94% of the company's customer base and generate over 95Dealing with larger printing companies in terms of cost and distribution time, the company offers customized goods and services relating to quality, materials, shipment, management of projects, and customer support.

4.1 Architecture

In the first phase, all employees (N=40) participated in a meeting to identify customer touchpoints, including human, product, service, communication, spatial, and digital interactions. They were introduced to the concept of customer touchpoints and the process of mapping customer journeys. Independently, each employee imagined being a customer and listed all possible touchpoints encountered during a typical customer journey with the company. During the second phase, these touchpoints were compiled into a questionnaire. A cautious approach was used, meaning any touchpoint mentioned, even by just one employee, was included in the next stage. The final questionnaire contained 48 touchpoints, which were rated based on their perceived impact on customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction. To avoid bias, 16 different versions of the questionnaire were created, with a random order of the 48 items. In the final phase, an online questionnaire was designed to gauge customer satisfaction and evaluate the significance of the 10 most important touchpoints identified in phase two. Additionally, five touchpoints that were deemed less relevant or unimportant were included to further validate the findings. The number of touchpoints was limited to ensure the questionnaire remained concise, as shorter surveys typically yield higher response rates. Some touchpoints were assessed using single-item scales, while others were rated using multiple criteria related to product and service attributes, such as staff friendliness and the price-to-quality ratio (see figure 2).
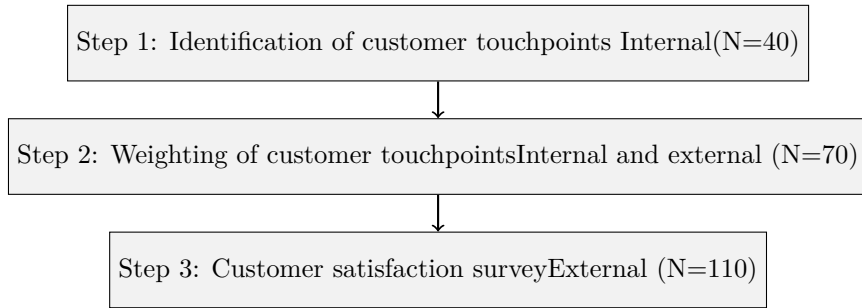
Figure 2. Steps of the experiment

5 Observations

Table 1 provides further examples of customer touchpoints. Customer touchpoints are weighted by both internal and external staff and customers, and the results are arranged by total perceived importance (N = 28). Customer touchpoint categories are indicated by the letters H, P, Se, C, Sp, and E.Consulting (03), which falls under the categories of both human connection and service, was the customer touchpoint that received the highest rating in terms of relative significance. A full 7.1% of the points were attributable to consulting. With the respondents required to select ten client touchpoints and allot a minimum of one point to each, consulting accounted for 19.0% of the total points available. Although it received the highest ranking from customers, the internal study places it fourth. With 8.6% of the total and 16.3% of all allocated points, the good itself (17) is the second most significant customer touchpoint.

Table 1. Customer Touch Points

Customer Touch Points	Internal (N=40)		External (N=70)		Combined (N=110)	
	Pts.	%	Pts.	%	Pts.	%
p:(17)	35	10.1	50	8.3	85	8.6
H,se:(11)	23	6.6	18	3.0	41	4.1
H,se:(03)	30	8.7	75	12.5	105	10.6
H:(10)	32	9.3	38	6.3	70	7.1
H:(02)	35	10.1	28	4.6	63	6.3
H:(12)	10	2.9	25	4.1	35	3.5
Se:(20)	12	3.4	32	5.3	44	4.4

Customer Touch Points	Internal (N=40)		External (N=70)		Combined (N=110)	
	Pts.	%	Pts.	%	Pts.	%
E:(34)	9	5.5	29	4.8	38	3.8
H:(07)	20	5.8	33	5.5	53	5.3
Se:(19)	10	2.9	28	4.6	38	3.8
Se:(21)	5	1.4	30	5.0	35	3.5
H:(06)	15	4.3	19	3.1	34	3.4
P:(14)	13	3.7	20	3.3	33	3.3
E:(48)	14	4.0	22	3.6	36	3.6
H:(08)	-	-	20	3.3	20	2.0
C:(30)	8	2.3	19	3.1	27	2.7
H,Sp:(01)	-	-	18	3.0	18	1.8
H:(09)	-	-	20	3.3	20	2.0
P:(15)	15	4.3	12	2.0	27	2.7
E:(35)	10	2.9	8	1.3	18	1.8
H:(04)	-	-	10	1.6	10	1.0
C:(22)	5	1.4	5	0.8	10	1.0
P:(16)	5	1.4	4	0.6	9	0.9
C:(27)	3	0.8	5	0.8	8	0.8
E:(41)	5	1.4	2	0.3	7	0.7
C:(29)	5	1.4	4	0.6	9	0.9
P:(13)	-	-	5	0.8	5	0.5
Se:(18)	-	-	8	1.3	8	0.8
E:(44)	5	1.4	-	-	5	0.5
Sp:(32)	-	-	4	0.6	4	0.4
C:(26)	-	-	2	0.3	2	0.2
C:(25)	-	-	3	0.5	3	0.3
E:(47)	4	1.1	-	-	4	0.4
C:(28)	3	0.8	-	-	3	0.3
Total	331		596		927	

The relative importance of the best 10 interactions with customers as perceived by

both staff and consumers is shown in Figure 3. The information reveals that although there is a general consensus between both groups, employees generally place a little more weight on these touchpoints. Human interaction is involved in four of the most important five touchpoints: meetings about the project (10), handling grievances (02), consulting (03), and outgoing calls (07). Cold messages, updates, and calls to express gratitude to clients for their business are examples of outbound phone calls. Out of 11 touchpoints, human connection accounts for 53.4% of the points, indicating that it is the most significant category. Second place goes to service interaction, which earns 29.9% of the points. Interestingly, two important touchpoints fall under human as well and service interactions: sales talks (11), and consulting (03) together accounting for 16.4% of total touchpoints. Product-related touchpoints rank third with a contribution of 13.4%, ahead of electronic engagement at 11.0%, communication at 4.3%, and physical interaction at 2.0%. Corporate tours (01), which make up 1.7% of spatial touchpoints and fall under the category of human interaction, are one example.

Internally or externally parties' examination, nine out of the fifteen digital touchpoints were awarded zero points. Moreover, of the remaining three touchpoints, which each received four or fewer points, just two—the company website (35 points) and email (34 points)—made it into the top 15. Similarly, interactions that rely on communication are viewed as relatively inconsequential by both customers and workers. In actuality, none of the top 15 touchpoints have anything to do with communication. Sponsoring (30) is the highest-ranked communication component and is placed 16th. The 10 most important customer touchpoints have been highlighted in a customer interaction management solution that has been created as a result.
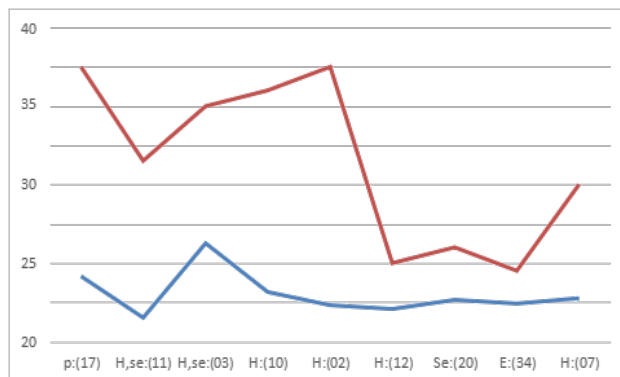

Figure 3. Relative importance of the top10 customer touchpoints in % as perceived by employees (internal) and customers (external) (N=110)
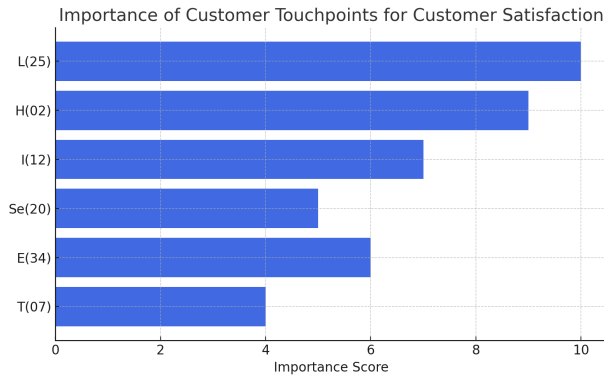
Figure 4. Importance of customer touchpoints for customer satisfaction, as attributed by survey respondents (N=110)

5.1 Importance of Most Relevant Customer Touchpoints for Satisfaction

The results of the customer satisfaction survey, conducted with 110 business customers, asked participants to assess the relative importance of 15 customer touchpoints in relation to customer satisfaction. As outlined in the methods section, the survey included the 10 most critical touchpoints identified in step 2, along with five touchpoints considered less significant. One exception was the touchpoint for word of mouth (WOM) (12), which was not evaluated based on its direct influence on customer satisfaction but rather focused on factors that lead to either positive or negative WOM. Although the survey aimed to measure both, negative WOM could not be assessed as all respondents indicated they would recommend the company.

As illustrated in Figure 4, each of the top 10 customer touchpoints was deemed highly influential on customer satisfaction, with scores ranging from 85.6% to 91.1%, except for delivery (20). For customers using the delivery service (20a), the importance of this touchpoint was rated at 83.5%, whereas customers who picked up products from the production facility (20b) rated it at 75.3%. The additional touchpoints included in the survey—press proof (21), company website (48), Facebook page (35), packaging (16), and fax (38)—were assigned significantly lower importance, with ratings between 44.5% and 73.0%. These percentages were calculated based on the responses of 118 survey participants who rated each touchpoint's importance on a 4-point scale, assigning values of 0%, 33%, 67%, or 100%.

The customer touchpoint products (17), which was measured in terms of product quality and price– performance ratio, was found to have the highest importance for customer

satisfaction. The company's Facebook page (35) is considered to be least important. Table 2 demonstrates to WOM (12) and shows why customer would recommend the company. Survey respondents could select multiple options and/or add additional reasons. The first seven items in Table 4 were given options, while speed and flexibility were specified by four different respondents.The observations made from the point of the employees in Jewellary mart and the customers and interacted with the customers to know about the satisfaction level with respect to their touch points.

Table 2. Reasons: Satisfied customers would recommend the company through WOM

	Mentions	%
Friendliness	99	83.9
Product quality	94	79.7
Reliability	91	77.1
Trust	82	69.5
Price–performance Ratio	58	49.2
Warmth	46	39.0
Expectation exceeded	10	8.5
Speed	2	1.7
Flexibility	2	1.7
Other	4	3.4

6   Findings

i. The customer touchpoint journey is shaped by three key stages: before, during, and after the purchase.

ii. Prior to purchasing, customers gather information from sources such as social media, customer reviews, testimonials, advertisements, and engage with other buyers.

iii. During the purchase process, customers place orders online and are influenced by recommendations from sales representatives.

iv. After the purchase, the customer's expectations must be met by the organization to ensure satisfaction and encourage repeat business.

7 Conclusion

There are several strategies for enhancing customer engagement and loyalty. Firstly, organizations should focus on transforming customers into business partners through a robust customer development process, complemented by discount programs for subscriptions or after a certain number of purchases. Additionally, offering discounts in exchange for feedback or survey participation can broaden the customer base. Recognizing that potential customers often rely on product reviews, it's crucial to cultivate positive feedback, as negative reviews can undermine brand reliability. Encouraging existing customers to share positive word-of-mouth is also vital; treating them like VIPs fosters loyalty and advocacy. Moreover, prioritizing exceptional customer service is essential, as negative interactions can significantly damage brand reputation. Lastly, providing full transparency in fulfillment and shipping processes, including real-time updates, is increasingly expected by modern consumers, with various tools available for enhancing this aspect, particularly for those using platforms like Shopify.

Every company, whether making incremental improvements or implementing transformative changes, should recognize the analysis and management of customer touchpoints as a critical strategy for driving business success. Think of it as a metaphorical mirror—one that reflects your company's true customer experience. This reflection often reveals insights that differ from how you perceive your brand and can expose gaps between expectation and reality. By honestly evaluating these touchpoints, businesses can uncover opportunities for growth, improve customer satisfaction, and ultimately increase their overall value. This approach not only builds stronger customer relationships but also ensures your company evolves in alignment with customer needs and expectations, fostering long-term loyalty and competitive advantage.

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