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myServiceFellow: gaining genuine customer insights

Marc Stickdorn, Jakob Schneider

MCI Tourism, Weiberburggasse 8, A-6020 Innsbruck, Austria

marc.stickdorn@mci.edu

www.mci.edu

The competitiveness of any service product ultimately depends on customer satisfaction, which is determined by the consumer's assessment of expectations towards a certain product and the actual experiences with the product delivery process. In tourism destinations, products are service products generally consisting of multiple service touchpoints which customers perceive prior to their vacation, during their stay and after their holidays. The matching or even exceeding of customers' expectations along their customer journey is crucial for generating customer satisfaction and needs to be constantly designed and measured.

A customer experiences a service process consisting of certain touchpoints, just as the journey of a traveller follows a track with certain milestones (cp. Stickdorn 2009, Lane 2007). A customer journey includes not only direct touchpoints between customers and a respective service provider, but also indirect ones, such as review websites. In fact, mostly these indirect touchpoints constitute the starting point of a customer journey in tourism by attracting the attention of tourists to a certain destination (e.g. tourism review websites, tourist guide books, travelogues or mouth-to-mouth). The very same touchpoints which are used in the pre-service period to gain information about certain products can be used in the post-service period to publicly disseminate information and opinions of specific products, which thus in return influence other customers in their pre-service period. The customer journey as a bottom-up approach illustrates the service process from a customer perspective, rather than a top-down service process conceptualisation. Hence, customers define which touchpoints are notable and which ones they ignore or overlook. To gain customer insights of this user-centred approach, there are various service design tools available, such as shadowing, mapping, interviews, user journals, or observation techniques (cp. Mager 2009, Partício et. al. 2008, Merholz et al. 2008, Strnad 2008, Miettinen 2007, Best 2006).

Beyond the customer journey it is also important to reveal the touchpoint sequence from the perspective of service providers to allow a holistic analysis and thus reveal the associated backstage processes (cp. Teboul 2006). Only when the underlying processes are uncovered, the real complexity of service processes becomes apparent and hence permits an effective improvement, redesign or innovation. However, considering the complexity and dimension of destinations as tourism products, the variety of diverse customer groups and the extensive

method of the assessed customer journey, currently available tools of gaining customer insights permit only fragmentary analyses.

The workshop discusses the results of a research project of the Management Center Innsbruck – MCI Tourism, financed by the Tyrolean science fund (Tiroler Wissenschaftsfonds) and the hardware kindly supported by mobilkom Austria. The outcome of this project is a prototype for a software for mobile phones to capture customer journeys and permits to aggregate and analyse these journeys, according to the concept of the assessed customer journey. The project aims to enable service designers - and in later project stage even customers autonomously - to capture customer journeys digitally with ordinary mobile phones. Ever more mobile phones support features like taking pictures or videos, voice recording or even locating geographic positions with GPS. Since the approach of the assessed customer journey consequently follows a bottom-up approach, it is reasonable to delegate the identification and assessment of touchpoints to the customers, using mobile phones as devices to gain structured and genuine customer insights (cp. Stickdorn 2009). The workshop will present this tool to workshop participants and discuss usability and future application of the prototype. Furthermore, requirements for a business model of myServiceFellow will be up to discussion.

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