

Managing Emotions

Measuring the EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF TOUCH POINTS within the scope of customer journeys by means of the validated PICTURE GALLERY VAL|LERY

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Companies want to create positive experiences for customers, because emotional bonds facilitate the establishment of sustainable business relationships. Customer Experience (CX) Management means to understand every step of the customer's experience during his or her interaction with the company. Laura Ostländer and Dr. Michael Koch from Produkt + Markt report on how this kind of understanding may be acquired with the help of their validated picture gallery VAL|LERY.

The first step is to understand what the individual customers do and say; i.e. what steps they go through, what actions and statements they take or make, and at which touch points the interaction takes place. This provides a first, neutral impression of the relationship. It is then a matter of determining which clues the customers perceive. These may be features of the product or services at the touch points, sensory signals such as odours or noises as well as people's behaviour. However, a crucial factor for the impact of touch points is the customer's feelings. Hence it would be desirable to assess the customer's emotional state at each touch point.

Managing emotions is essential for successful CX management. In order to capture the emotional impact of touch points in detail, it is usually necessary to have experienced market researchers conduct in-depth interviews, which generally require a great amount of time and money. As a result, one is usually only able to conduct a rather limited number of qualitative interviews.

As an alternative, one may also measure the physiological values of the respondents in order to draw conclusions about the emotional effects – i.e. EEG, EMG, ECG, heart rate, skin conductance, or body temperature. In order to ensure that the readings be traced back to specific touch points, one must combine various methods, such as combining EEG and skin conductance measurements with eye tracking. For example, if one only considered the skin conductance value, it would not be clear whether an observed excitation has a positive or negative effect, or which stimulus in particular has actually triggered said excitation. The scope of application is currently still limited due to the fact that various physiological measurements need to be combined with each other. Therefore, the following question remains: To what extent is it possible to capture the emotional depth of touch points even within quantitative studies with large samples? If one focuses on the effects of a touch point in its entirety, images actually present a good approach to measuring emotions.

Avoiding pain points and learning from pleasure points

Produkt + Markt uses the validated picture gallery VAL|LERY to classify respondents according to their emotional experience of a touch point, in order to be able to assess the effect of every single touch point along a customer journey. This allows one to identify pain points that keep consumers from buying a product, using a service (anymore) or

recommending the provider. At the same time, one is also able to identify pleasure points, which essentially lead to high levels of customer satisfaction. The goal is to avoid the pain points and to learn from the pleasure points in order to design the entire customer journey accordingly.

Using images to measure the impact of touch points

Images present a means to implicitly measure emotions, motifs and affective attitudes towards advertising, brands, or touch points. Above all, the respondents' intuitive approach to those images can be seen as a major advantage. This is particularly beneficial when it comes to sensations that are difficult to verbalise or only perceived subconsciously. However, the following question remains: What do we actually measure with those images, particularly since they may be interpreted differently depending on the context. However, if the respective ambiguity of each image is known, one may compensate this fuzziness when measuring the image properties.

Our model assumes that an image cannot be attributed to only one property dimension, but that each image can be attributed to every dimension with a certain probability. Hence, a picture of a bicycle helmet does not only signify the dimension Safety, but also to a lesser extent the dimensions Order, Quality, Environment and Frugality in addition to a multitude of other dimensions without that much impact. It is absolutely essential to accurately translate the visual dimensions into verbal dimensions so that they can be used for the quantitative analysis of an object. For this purpose, the values of the dimensions are now calculated for each respondent and each touch point based on the probabilities of attribution from VAL|LERY and the selection probabilities of the images. Thanks to the probability model one is now able to derive a metric value for each dimension and each respondent from the respondent's actual nominal image selection. This reveals how each individual respondent experienced the respective touch point in terms of verbal dimensions.

The respondents may be segmented according to these dimensions. For example, one can now identify groups of people who felt rather secure around a certain touch point. At the same time, there will also be others who associated freedom or happiness with that touch point instead. Once the segments are known, it is even possible to assign the individual respondents to existing segments based on their respective dimension profile derived from their image selection. Consequently, the respondents are assigned to the segment that best fit their individual personal profile.

In terms of touch point evaluation, this means that a person is assigned to the segment that provided a similar assessment of the respective touch point. A touch point evaluation based on a selection of images requires a survey time of approximately one minute. However, the prerequisite for such classification is that a fundamental segmentation based on a rather large sample has been conducted beforehand.

Evaluating touch points of a trade fair visit

For our example, we chose five touch points that visitors of a trade fair could encounter. In an online survey, we initially asked 1,000 people to evaluate the following touch points by means of images: arrival, hotel accommodation, breakfast, a workshop or seminar they attended as well as their last professional discussion. For each touch point, respondents were to select four to six images that best describe their emotional experience. Next, we conducted a fundamental segmentation of the emotional effects of the five touch points

mentioned above. As a result, every respondent can now be assigned to a segment for each touch point based on his or her image selection. For each of the touch points, the respondents were divided into four segments.

Four segments can be distinguished for the emotional evaluation of the journey and arrival: There are Wellness and Success as the two segments that are positive for different reasons, Structured Sustainability as a touch-point-specific segment, and Pure Stress as a critical segment. Each touch point basically revealed a similar segment structure: A successful segment predominantly characterised by experiences of success, efficiency, speed, dynamics, and/or strength; a feel-good segment associated with wellness, relaxation, joy, or friendliness; and also a critical segment that is dominated by negative experiences such as stress, incomprehension, bureaucracy, or a general lack of understanding. Additionally, there is also a touch point-specific segment which showed neither an entirely positive nor exclusively negative assessment of the respective touch point. In relation to the touch point arrival, this segment was characterised by frugality and sustainability without being associated with positive characteristics such as joy, relaxation, speed or success. If the respondents feel their latest arrival was, for example, a decelerated, relaxed experience without any kind of stress, this fits into the Wellness segment. However, on the other hand, those who report trouble and mishaps fit better into the Pure Stress segment. In the profile of the wellness segment, the characteristics naturalness, beauty, environment, and care are selected by means of appropriate images aiding the emotional evaluation of the touch point. However, in this example, the segment Wellness is not assigned 100 per cent, as indicated by the person illustrated in the figure 'Touch point „arrival“'. In this case, the segments Successful and Structured Sustainability are also given a certain allocation. In our example, the majority of respondents tend towards the Wellness segment. The simultaneous proximity to the segments Structured Sustainability and Successful means that an environmentally friendly, relaxed, but also successful arrival can be generally expected.

For each of the five touch points evaluated in this case, one is able to proceed in the same manner which eventually leads to an evaluation of the entire customer journey. In our example, arrival and breakfast were perceived as pleasant, since they were associated with relaxation and wellness. The accommodation and the professional discussion were considered successful, but the workshop was evaluated rather critically. According to the respondents it lacked inspiration and sense of achievement or the presentation was rather confusing. Hence the workshops form a pain point within the customer journey, whereas the rest can be regarded as relaxed and successful. However, this pain point could be in the way of a successful evaluation of the customer journey in its entirety.

After identification, the respondents can be asked about the pain point 'workshop' in a subsequent interview in order to find out more details or to ask for suggestions for improvement. The quantitative interview can then be focussed on a central touch point. Starting with the image selection therefore has several advantages: On the one hand, one may focus on several touch points in one interview, and on the other hand, the respondent is taken to a much less rational level during the rather intense discussion of the touch points predominantly influencing his or her customer journey.

Measuring the emotional impact of touch points by means of images is a comparatively simple alternative to costly qualitative interviews, since this can be also carried out in quantitative online surveys. The validated picture gallery VAL|LERY illustrates the emotional experience. By choosing just a small number of images, one may gain a glimpse of the emotional impact of each individual touch point during the customer

journey. By segmenting the experience, emotional pain points as well as pleasure points can be identified. In the further course of the quantitative interview, specific questions may then be asked about the respective touch point of interest in order to determine any possible optimisation approaches.

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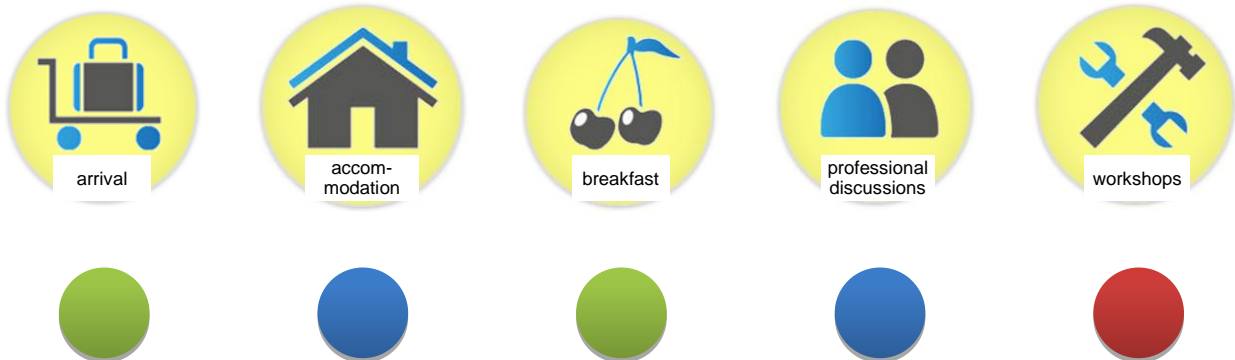
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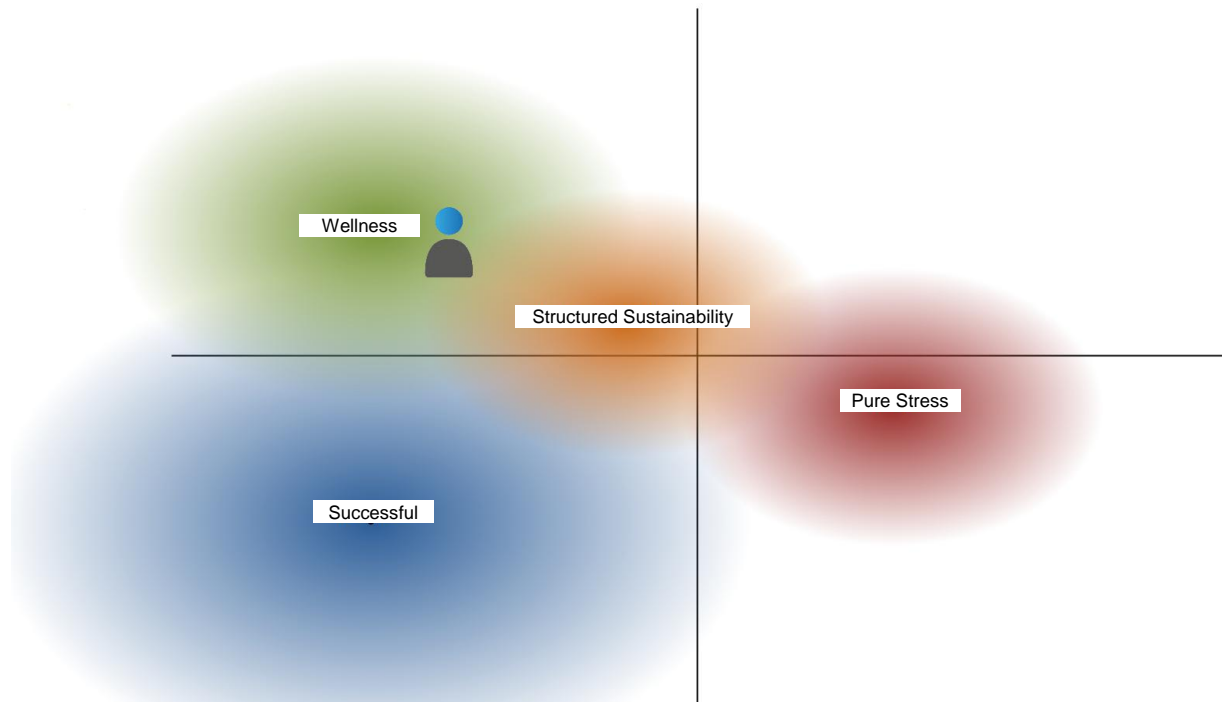
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Evaluation profile of the different touch points



Touchpoint „arrival“



Source: Produkt + Markt