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Abstract

While the concept *customer journeys* is widely taken up to support service design and management, practical frameworks for routine monitoring of customer experience in the context of customer journeys are lacking. This paper proposes a framework for applying the widely used transactional Net Promoter Score (NPS) as a means for gathering insight into customers' experiences of a customer journey. We present lessons learnt from three case trials of the framework elements within a telecom service provider, involving the analysis of more than 1700 quantitative and qualitative customer responses from transactional NPS surveys.

Keywords: transactional Net Promoter Score (NPS), customer journey, customer experience monitoring, service management

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Leading service companies strive to improve the experience of their key customer journeys (Edelman & Singer, 2015), as strengthened performance on customer journeys has been found to correspond to increases in customer satisfaction and company growth (Rawson, Duncan, & Jones, 2013). For this purpose, companies need to gather insight into customers' evolving experience of these journeys, so as to enable the careful shaping, orchestration, and maintenance of the elements of the journey (Halvorsrud, Kvale, & Følstad, 2016). In particular, companies need to build capacity for the routine monitoring and assessment of customer experience in the context of customer journeys.

However, such routine monitoring and assessment of customer experience is challenging. This challenge is in part due to the subjective character of customer experience (Palmer, 2010) and its wide range of drivers (Verhoef et al., 2009). Furthermore, the context of customer journeys entails the evolving of customer experience throughout the service delivery process (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The literature is surprisingly silent on how to address this challenge. Whereas previous research has reported on the in-depth customer journey mapping which typically precedes larger service design projects (Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2010), researchers have offered little support for the routine monitoring and assessment of customer experiences for a service provider's key customer journeys. This gap in the literature is critical, as the lack of such support leaves service designers and managers without continuous updates on the customer experience for implemented service processes.

One means to assess customers' experience, widely taken up by the service industry in recent years, is the Net Promoter Score (NPS) (Reichheld, 2003). NPS is set out as a measure of likelihood to recommend. That is, it concerns customers' behavioural intentions rather than

experience (Keiningham, Cooil, Andreassen, & Aksoy, 2007). Nevertheless, NPS has been extensively taken up as a means to gather insight into customer experience (Temkin, 2014). In particular, the combination of quantitative and qualitative feedback, provided through what is often referred to as *transactional* NPS (Qwen & Brooks, 2009), may be useful for gaining insight into customer experience. Here, customers provide feedback on their likelihood to recommend the service provider after a specific service interaction, and their reasons for recommending or not (Reichheld, 2003). These reasons, provided by customers in their own words, constitute a rich source of insight into the customer experience associated with specific touchpoints along the customer journey, or for the customer journey at large.

In this paper, we provide a framework for service designers and managers to leverage transactional NPS for monitoring and assessment of customer experience in the context of customer journeys. We detail the characteristics of transactional NPS that make it suitable for the purpose, in particular its characteristic as a *quant-qual* instrument (combining quantitative and qualitative data collection) as well as its *under-determined* character (where the customer may interpret the question with regard to what is seen as particularly important to the customer in the specific service context). Furthermore, we suggest two types of approaches to data collection and analysis: *assessment-based* approaches, which take as a point of departure the customers' assessment of a service process, and *deviation-based* approaches, which take a starting point in deviations from the service process as planned by the service provider.

The study contributes to two bodies of knowledge: the literature on customer journeys and the literature on NPS. To our knowledge, the study is unique in that it bridges these two bodies of knowledge, thereby providing a basis for researchers and practitioners that seek to benefit from merging these widespread industrial practices.

Background

Analysing the Customer Journey

The perspective of customer journeys concerns the service process as seen from the viewpoint of the customer. Here, customers are followed through a service process with the aim of gathering insight into their experience of this process. The customer journey is seen as consisting of a series of steps or stages (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016), or as a sequence of touchpoints (Halvorsrud et al., 2016) in which the customer interacts with the service provider towards reaching a particular service goal. The customer journey is typically represented in the form of a customer journey map, that is, a structured presentation of the elements of the customer journey and their relations established based on customer research or company internal expertise (Halvorsrud et al., 2016).

Investigating customer experience in the context of customer journeys is challenging. The relevant journeys may involve a large number of touchpoints and be characterized by co-creative relations between customers and providers (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010). The customer experience may change significantly and unexpectedly throughout the customer journey (Rawson et al., 2013; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016), and relevant aspects of the customer experience may concern both the service process and its outcome. Often, there is a gap between how the service process is planned or expected by the service provider and how the service process is actually experienced by the customers (Halvorsrud et al., 2016).

A number of approaches have been proposed to analyse customer experience in the context of customer journeys (Følstad & Kvale, 2018). Those most frequently reported involve the use of qualitative methods such as field-studies, observation, and interviews for in-depth investigations (Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2010). These methods indeed provide rich insight, and are typically applied as part of larger service design

or innovation projects. However, they arguably are too resource demanding for routine monitoring of customer experience in established service processes.

Also, quantitative approaches have been proposed to investigate customer's behaviour or experience throughout the customer journey. Among these is the analysis of log data to investigate customers' behavioural patterns during online customer journeys (Anderl, Becker, von Wangenheim, & Schumann, 2016; Lee, 2010). However, such log analysis does not provide direct insight into the subjective customer experience, and may leave out interactions experienced by the customer but not captured in the available log data. Others have proposed using self-reported metrics, as an alternative quantitative approach. For instance, Rawson et al. (2013) applied a self-report satisfaction metric across the customer journey. Self-report metrics of customer experience are indeed valuable, as they potentially provide reliable and general high-level knowledge about how customer experience varies throughout a customer journey. However, they may not enable needed insight into the underlying drivers of customer experience, as these are likely to be contextually dependent (Palmer, 2010).

In Table 1, we summarize the current approaches for investigating customer experience in the context of customer journeys.

Table 1

Current Approaches for Studying Customer Experience in Customer Journeys

Approach	Limitations	Example references
Qualitative: In-depth field-studies, observation, diaries, and/or interviews.	Time and resource demands prohibitive for routine application.	Trischler & Zehrer, 2012 Halvorsrud et.al., 2016
Quantitative: Analyses of online behaviour based on server log data.	Cover only customer interactions from log data. Only behaviour, not experience.	Anderl et al., 2016 Lee, 2010
Quantitative: Self-report experience metrics	Limited insight into the drivers of customer experience.	Rawson et al., 2013 Wozniak et al., 2017

While both the in-depth qualitative approaches and the high-level quantitative approaches are duly represented in the literature, it is noteworthy that approaches to leverage gathering of qualitative experience feedback from larger respondent groups are absent. It is in this context that we see the potential of transactional NPS to fill the gap as a means to monitor customer experience throughout the customer journey. To our knowledge, no previous work has described how transactional NPS may be applied for this purpose.

Transactional NPS as a Source of Insight into Customer Experience

NPS has been established as a much-used approach for gathering customer feedback across service industries (Temkin, 2014). NPS is applied for two distinct purposes: on the one hand to monitor customers' overall perceptions of the brand and their relation with the company ("top-down NPS"), and on the other hand to monitor customers' assessments of particular transactions with the company ("transactional or bottom-up NPS") (Reichheld & Markey, 2011).

Transactional NPS is used to monitor and improve specific offerings or service functions within a company. Data for transactional NPS is often gathered immediately following a service interaction; for example, after interacting with a call centre, completing a purchase in store, or visiting a company's customer website. Here, customers report on their inclination to recommend the company based on the specific interaction, through a single-item *likelihood-to-recommend* (LTR) question. The LTR question may be phrased in different ways, but typically follows this pattern: "How likely is it that you would recommend us (or this product/service/brand) to a friend or colleague?" (Reichheld & Markey, 2011). Hence, the LTR question may be open to interpretation by the customers, as it only to a limited degree suggests which factors they should consider as basis for their recommendations of the product, service, or brand to others.

To apply NPS for intra-organizational learning, Reichheld (2003) advise supplementing the LTR question with a free-text *reason-for-score* question. Here, customers report in their

own words the main reason for their assessment. While the LTR question may be open to interpretation in terms of the underlying drivers of recommender behaviour, the reason-for-score question provides insight into these same drivers. Thus, the customers' reports on reasons-for-score provide insights into both what customers like in the service transaction and problems or sources of discomfort that they may have experienced, and is hence a veritable source of customer experience feedback. On this basis, it is understandable that Temkin (2014) considers transactional NPS a prominent customer experience metrics.

In spite of its widespread uptake, only a few studies on transactional NPS have been reported in the academic literature (e.g. Feehan, Ilangakoon, & Mesure, 2009; Whitlark & Rhoads, 2011). To our knowledge, no studies have provided in-depth reports on the gathering and analysis of qualitative data through the reason-for-score question, though some papers on organizational improvement through the use of NPS report in general terms on the benefit of such qualitative data (Markey, Reichheld, & Dullweber, 2009; Reichheld, 2006).

Research Objective and Requirements for the Framework

The research objective of this work is to propose a framework for applying transactional NPS to monitor and assess on regular basis the customer experiences in the context of the customer journey. To meet this research objective, the transactional NPS and the framework within which it is applied should satisfy the following requirements (R1-R4):

- **R1:** Support comparing service performance to benchmarks and business goals;

- **R2:** Provide insight into key customer experiences and experiential drivers;

- **R3:** Provide actionable insight into customer problems or pain-points as well as opportunities for service improvement; and

- **R4:** Be sufficiently general so as to be applicable across customer journeys.

These four requirements will be referred to below, both when presenting the framework and in the discussion of the framework based on the case experiences.

Framework

The Basis: The Customer Journey Map and the Transactional NPS

To monitor customer experiences for a particular customer journey, the starting point is a customer journey map representing the elements of the customer journey and their relations (see e.g. Halvorsrud et al., 2016; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2010). Through such mapping, the service journey has been delimited through well-defined start- and end-points, and key touchpoints have been identified.

To this customer journey map, specific points can be assigned for assessment through transactional NPS. We specifically consider transactional NPS applied as an *end-point measure*, when the customer has reached the goal of the journey, as a *start-point measure*, when the customer is about to begin the journey, or as a *touchpoint measure,* when the customer interacts with the company in between the journey's beginning or end.

The transactional NPS holds the characteristic of what we refer to as a *quant-qual* instrument. That is, it includes a quantitative component that serves as a metric for benchmarking within and across customer journeys, and a qualitative component that serves to explain the score provided through the metric, thereby providing insight into the underlying customer experience.

With its single-item LTR component, the transactional NPS match well the requirement to support benchmarking and comparisons between competitors, among company units, and across time (R1). Furthermore, this single-item component is sufficiently general so as to be applicable throughout and across journeys (R4). With its qualitative reason-for-score component, the transactional NPS support the gathering of qualitative data where customers report on their experiences in their own words (R2).

The phrasing of the LTR question does not strongly guide the customer towards which aspects of the service experience that should be considered, something we assume to

strengthen its versatility as a quant-qual measurement instrument. Rather, the LTR question arguably has what we refer to as an *under-determined* character; that is, the range of possible drivers that could motivate customer recommendations is broad and the respondents have much freedom in deciding what should motivate their answers.

Two Approaches for Applying Transactional NPS in the Context of Customer Journeys

When applying transactional NPS for the investigation and monitoring of customer experience, it must provide insight into the key drivers and aspects of the customer journey experience (R2). At the same time, following Dixon et al. (2010), threats to customer experience reside not only in service providers' failure to facilitate great service experiences, but also their failure to have the customer journey proceed as planned or expected (R3). To cover these two needs, we propose two approaches for applying transactional NPS as a quant-qual instrument: An *assessment-based* approach, addressing the gathering of customer experience data related to key drivers and aspects of the customer experience, and a *deviation-based* approach, concerning the gathering of customer experience data specifically related to problems or pain-points during the customer journey.

The assessment-based approach. The aim of the assessment-based approach is to gather insight into key experiences and experiential drivers pertaining to the customer journey as it is designed, planned, or expected by the service provider. In its simplest form, the assessment-based approach may be instantiated as an *end-point measure*, providing insight into key experiences and experiential drivers as they are remembered by the customer at the end of the customer journey (i.e. when the customer's goal for the journey is achieved).

Though simple to administer, the end-point measure does not give insight into how the customer experience evolved across the customer journey. To provide such insight, the assessment-based approach may be extended with a start-point measure, for a *start-end*

analysis. The start-end analysis will be relatively easy to implement, as the start-point and end-point of the customer journey typically occur at points known to the service provider.

For longer journeys, it may be valuable to extend the assessment-based analysis with customer feedback on one or more of the touchpoints between the extremities of the of the customer journey. These touchpoint measures will provide additional insight into key customer experiences and experiential drivers—both the role a particular touchpoint may have in shaping the experience of the subsequent touchpoints and the whole customer journey and the role the journey may have in shaping the experience of the particular touchpoint.

The deviation-based approach. The customer journey as planned or expected by the service provider is often disrupted by problems or mishaps on the side of the customer. However, in spite of being potentially detrimental to the customer experience, such problems or pain-points may go unnoticed by the service provider and ultimately lead to customer deflection (Meyer & Schwager, 2007).

To monitor and assess problems or pain-points faced by a customer during the customer journey, the transactional NPS may be applied in a deviation-based approach. Here, the customer is specifically asked for experiences of problems or mishaps, or for problem-indicating behaviour such as several calls to customer service, during the journey.

The deviation-based approach is intended as a complement to the assessment-based approach. From the perspective of the service provider, insights on deviations in the customer journey complement insights from general customer assessments. From the customer's perspective, requests for retrospective feedback on deviations during the service process may be an acceptable addition to requests for feedback on the service process at large.

Case Experiences

This section presents three case studies in which the proposed framework has been applied. The cases were conducted in the context of a particular service provider; one of the operations of a major international telecom company.

The first case demonstrates the under-determined character of the quantitative LTR question, and the benefit of such under-determination. Case 2 shows the assessment-based approach, and Case 3 exemplifies the deviation-based approach.

Case 1: NPS as an Under-determined Question

Case 1 demonstrates how the under-determined character of the LTR question supports customer insight on a wide range of experiential drivers. In particular, the case shows how the question elicits customer responses not only addressing the object of assessment (referred to as *target*), but also other aspects of the service process or the company (referred to as *spillover*).

Background. Prior to this study, the case company had implemented transactional NPS across all operations. The company used transactional NPS to gather customers' assessment of particular touchpoints, such as Customer Service and stores. For example, after having called Customer Service, customers were asked to respond to the following question: "On the basis of your experience concerning your recent call to Customer Service, how likely are you to recommend [the company] to your family, friends, and colleagues?" on a scale from 0 (not at all likely) to 10 (extremely likely). Customers responding to the LTR question were also asked to respond in free text on the reason-for-score question: "What was the primary reason for your score?".

The company regarded transactional NPS as providing useful input for service improvement. However, the company had also noted that many of the customers tended to report other reasons for their LTR score than those pertaining to the touchpoint of interest. On

this background, this study analysed 1100 reason-for-score reports provided after the customers' calls to Customer Service.

Method. The customer reports were selected through stratified sampling where 100 reports for each of the 11 possible LTR scores (0 through 10) were randomly chosen from the total set of >200000 such reports for a given 13-month period (October 2013 – October 2014). The reports were analysed in a thematic analysis (Ezzy, 2013), conducted by the first author and subsequently checked by the second, to identify and code the types of reason-for-score, and in a content analysis (Ezzy, 2013) to determine the *object* (target or spillover) of the response. In the latter analysis, a response was coded as *target* if it concerned the particular Customer Service interaction and *spillover* if it concerned backstage customer service processes, general products and services, or brand perception. Example target reasons-for-score included service agent attitude, service agent knowledge, whether help or solution was provided, and waiting time and ease of access. Example spillover reasons-for-score included brand perceptions, product experiences, and experiences with the service process at large. Responses addressing aspects of the particular Customer Service interaction as well as other aspects of the service process or provider were coded as both target and spillover.

Findings. The analysis gave several interesting findings. First, a substantial proportion of the reason-for-score reports were coded as spillover; 23% were coded spillover only, 15% were coded both target and spillover. Second, the spillover reports typically were associated with lower LTR scores. For the lowest-scoring customers (LTR scores 0 to 6; *detractors* in NPS jargon), 31% were coded spillover only and 15% were coded both target and spillover. This finding contrasts the highest scoring customers (LTR 9 or 10; *promoters* in NPS jargon) for whom just 9% of the reports were coded as spillover only and 18% were coded as both target and spillover. The middle scoring customers (LTR 7 or 8; *passives* in NPS jargon) had

somewhat more spillover comments than the highest scorers did, but fewer than the lowest scorers (10% coded as spillover only and 28% coded as both target and spillover).

This finding has critical implications for service design and management. For managers of Customer Support, it is important to recognize the substantial proportion of low LTR scores that originates from issues depending on other departments in the company. Reporting such issues in a standardised manner to the respective responsible managers will enable them to take actions on the insights. For designers and managers aiming to improve customer experience, it is important to recognize the combined effect of multiple touchpoints in forming the customer experience.

Case 1 clearly demonstrates that the LTR question has an under-determined character. For the lowest-scoring customers in particular, the frequency of spillover was substantial. Furthermore, Case 1 illustrates the benefit of such under-determination, provided the question is an integrated part of a quant-qual instrument; the LTR question supports a high-level quantitative assessment of customer experience while the free-text reason-for-score question supports the development of a case-specific model or understanding of the key drivers of customer experience with implications not only for the touchpoint in question but for the wider customer journey.

Case 2: Experiences with the Assessment-based Approach

Case 2 shows the application of the assessment-based approach where NPS is used in a start-end analysis to investigate customer experience in the context of a customer journey.

Background. Case 2 concerns the customer journey of service recovery (Spreng et al., 1995). The complexity of telecom services implies frequent needs for service recovery. Hence, this customer journey, which we refer to as a *service recovery journey,* is key to the case company. As an illustration of its importance, the Customer Service in the case company at the time of the study handled around 300 million calls yearly across all operations. The

service recovery journey typically starts when the customer experiences a problem in the service delivery and ends when the customer acknowledges the problem as fixed. The journey can involve touchpoints such as a call to Customer Service for problem registration, messages from the service provider on the status of the service recovery progress, a visit by repair personnel (optional), and a message from the service provider when the problem is fixed.

Method. To understand how the customer experience was formed during the service recovery journey, this study conducted a start-end analysis based on transactional NPS responses. The start-point measure was the transactional NPS responses immediately after the customers' initial call to Customer Service for problem registration. Here, the LTR and the reason-for-score questions were formulated as in Case 1. The end-point measure was a NPS data collection following the entire service recovery process. Here, the LTR question was phrased: "On the basis of your experience concerning the recent fault handling process, how likely are you to recommend [the company] to your family, friends, and colleagues?". As in Case 1, the LTR answers alternatives ranged from 0 (not at all likely) to 10 (extremely likely) and respondents were followed up with the reason-for-score question.

Responses were gathered across a six-month period (September 2014 – February 2015). In total, 2341 customers responded to the LTR question at the journey start-point and end-point. Of these, 319 provided free-text reason-for-score reports on both occasions. The quantitative data were made subject to a descriptive analysis. The free text reports were analysed in a thematic analysis (Ezzy, 2013), conducted by the two authors collaboratively, to identify and code the types of reason-for-score. To analyse change across the customer journey, the customer reports at the start-point and end-point were analysed and coded as one unit. The coded reports were then grouped according to the corresponding start- and end-point scores for the LTR question. The resulting groups were *All High* (LTR score ≥ 7 for both start- and end-point), *All Low* (LTR score ≤ 6 for both start- and end-point), *Falling* (LTR score ≥ 7

for start-point, LTR score ≤6 for end-point), and *Rising* (LTR score ≤6 for start-point, LTR score ≥7 for end-point). The cut-off at score 6 corresponds to the NPS category *detractors* (Reichheld, 2003).

    Findings: The customers' reason-for-score reports provided insight into a wide range of key experiences, some reflecting experiential breaks or changes across the service recovery process, others reflecting stability or predictability. In the group *All High* (64% of the responses) the customers reported on positive experiences throughout the journey, typically due to a pleasant meeting with Customer Service personnel at the start of the process and satisfaction with the process outcome, the status reports during the service recovery process, and the process duration. In *All Low* (16% of the responses) nearly all reported process problems, such as service recovery taking too long and having to make multiple inquiries. A substantial proportion reported on problems that had lasted for longer than just this service recovery process, and some reported that they still experienced the problem even after service recovery. In *Falling* (13% of the responses) respondents tended to report a pleasant and reassuring process start with unforeseen problems during service recovery. In *Rising* (7% of the respondents) customers typically reported start-up problems concerning the fault reporting or problems that had lasted longer than just this service recovery process.

    The start-end analysis had a number of important implications for service managers and designers. Firstly, a positive service experience was characterized by high assessment scores at both the start and the end of the journey. This illustrates the benefit of conducting a start-end analysis, contrasted to only an end-point analysis, as customers in the fourth group (*Rising*) could otherwise be misinterpreted as reporting favourably on the entire journey.

    Secondly, only the *All high* pattern was associated with problem-free service recovery. All the three other patterns indicated process problems. A substantial proportion of the feedback from participants starting out with negative key experiences and low LTR score (the

groups *All Low* and *Rising*) described recurring process problems that had started long before the beginning of the service recovery journey. This finding implies the need to develop better routines for identifying customers with recurring problems and to be able to handle these more efficiently. Furthermore, the patterns of the groups *All Low* and *Falling*, where the participants ended with negative key experiences and low LTR scores, seemed for a substantial number of the customers to indicate the reoccurrence of the problem after the end of the service recovery journey. (defined as three days after the customer was informed that the problem was solved). Possibly, tracking of customers' recovery outcome perceptions may be one means towards effective identification of recurring problems.

Case 2 demonstrates the value of enriching a mere end-point analysis with a start-end analysis; in particular, the analysis of experiential change (the groups *Falling* and *Rising*) provided new, actionable insight for the case company.

Case 3: Experiences with the Deviation-based Approach

In Case 3, the assessment-based approach to customer journey measures was complemented with a deviation-based approach. That is, in addition to conducting an end-point analysis based on the NPS instrument, data on deviations from the expected customer journey were analysed. The customer journey studied in Case 3 was the process of ordering a home broadband connection from the case company. A detailed presentation of this case is previously given in a conference paper (Følstad & Kvale, 2016).

Background. Ordering a home broadband connection is a prioritized customer journey for the case company. Not only is the subsequent customer relationship dependent on this journey, but the technological and organizational complexity of this journey makes it prone to deviations. The successful completion of the journey requires the interplay of multiple technological components, some of which are controlled by the customer alone.

Method. All new customers in a seven-week period (May 1 - June 20, 2014) were invited to participate in a questionnaire on their experience with the broadband ordering journey (2939 invitations in total). The participants were asked the LTR question with reference to the entire customer journey: "On the basis of your experience concerning the ordering of broadband from [the broadband service provider], how likely are you to recommend [the broadband service provider] to your family, friends, and colleagues?". Answer alternatives ranged from 0 (not at all likely) to 10 (extremely likely). The participants were then asked to respond to a free text reason-for-score question, similar to that of Case 1 and 2. This part of the data collection constituted an assessment-based approach. To complement this with deviation-based data collection, the customers were asked to report the number of times they had called Customer Service after placing their order. All customers that reported one or more calls were asked for details on their reason for calling (free-text) and whether or not their issue(s) had been resolved (answer alternatives: *immediately*, *after a while*, and *not yet*). The questionnaire also included other questions such as channel of placing the order (phone or website) and the duration of delivery process. A total of 312 valid responses were received, of those 225 provided a free text reason-for-score.

The quantitative LTR scores were analysed for differences across the following participant groups: Did not call customer service after placing order (47%), called customer service and had issue resolved immediately (19%), called customer service and had issue resolved after a while (24%), not yet (7%), or don't know (2%). The free-text reason-for-score reports were analysed in a thematic analysis (Ezzy, 2013), conducted by the first author and subsequently checked by the second, to identify and code the types of reason-for-score, and in a content analysis to identify sentiment (positive, negative, neutral)

Findings. In the reason-for-score reports, three topics were particularly prevalent: Customer Service (31%), Delivery or installation (22%), and Broadband quality (19%).

Interestingly, average LTR scores were substantially higher for customers reporting Customer

Service as a key reason ($M = 8.2$; $SD = 2.9$), than for customers reporting Delivery or

installation ($M = 6.1$; $SD = 3.2$) or Broadband quality ($M = 6.4$; $SD = 2.9$). Consequently,

there was a significant difference in LTR scores between customers reporting Customer

Service as a key reason and customers reporting other reasons for score was statistical

significant ($t(252) = 4.6$, $p < 0.001$), the difference was of a medium to large effect size

(Cohen's $d = 0.65$) following Cohen's rules of thumb. This finding is interesting in itself,

indicating the importance of the Customer Service touchpoint in a mundane customer journey

such as ordering a broadband connection.

The deviation data served to supplement and complement this insight. Deviations were

investigated in terms of calls to Customer Service after placing the order. About half the

participants (53%) reported to have placed such calls. However, deviations as such were not

necessarily negative to customer experience. Customers reporting to have called Customer

Service and had their issue fixed immediately, reported substantially higher LTR scores ($M =$

8.3, $SD = 1.9$) than those having the issues resolved after a while ($M = 6.5$, $SD = 2.8$) ($t(130)$

$= 4.3$, $p < 0.001$) and those that had not had the issues resolved yet ($M = 4.5$, $SD = 3.5$)

($t(25.9) = 4.1$, $p < 0.001$). In contrast, customer reporting not to have to call customer service

had mean LTR scores of 7.7 ($SD = 2.3$). Furthermore, customers reporting to have called

Customer Service and had their issue fixed immediately were far more likely to report

customer service as a reason for score (48%) than any other group.

The findings of the combined assessment-based and deviation-based analysis provided

insights to service designers and mangers not only as to the potential importance of Customer

Service for this customer journey, but also on how Customer Service may affect the customer

experience in case of service failure. A key implication of the findings in this customer journey

is the paramount need to prioritize routines for improved first-call resolution so the customers

get their issues resolved without any further delay. This is an opportunity to create a better customer experience and thereby improve customer loyalty at the beginning of the customer relationship. Furthermore, failing to provide first-call resolution is detrimental to customer experience, and may easily outweigh other efforts to improve customer experience at later stages.

Case 3 demonstrates the usefulness of combining assessment-based and deviation-based approaches to customer journey measures. The deviation-based approach served to provide richer detail on the effect of Customer Service in the case of deviations from the expected journey. For customer journeys known to be prone to deviations, it may be wise to consider the gathering of deviation data from customers in addition to the gathering of assessment data to get a more complete picture of the customer experience during the customer journey.

Discussion

The Proposed Framework and the Current State of the Art

The proposed framework is provided in response to a gap in the current literature; that is, how to efficiently monitor customer experience in the context of customer journeys.

The proposed framework takes advantage of the widely used transactional NPS to gather customer feedback across the customer journey, through assessment-based and deviation-based approaches. Here, transactional NPS data are analysed with a customer journey perspective, in terms of target and spillover reasons-for-score. Furthermore, different sets of transactional NPS data, such as start-point and end-point measures may be combined to get new insight in how customer experience evolves across the customer journey.

The under-determined characteristic of the LTR question is shown to be key for gathering customer experience data throughout the customer journey. For this under-determined characteristic to be beneficial, however, it seems necessary to apply transactional NPS as a quant-qual instrument, rather than a plain metric. In fact, the reason-for-score

question may be seen as a means to eliciting those aspects of the customer journey that are most important to the customer.

Cases 2 and 3 show how the transactional NPS with relative ease may be implemented as a means to gather insight in customer experience throughout the customer journey. The start-end analysis in Case 2 resembles the approach of Rawson et al. (2013), in their study of changing levels of customer satisfaction across the customer journey. However, in Case 2 and 3 we show how leveraging the qualitative component of transactional NPS can strengthen the analysis as compared to analyses based on a quantitative metric only. As discussed by Palmer (2010), the multifaceted and contextually dependent character of customer experience may make it elusive to quantitative models. Through these cases, we have shown how a quant-qual instrument may help alleviate the limitations of a purely quantitative approach to the investigation of customer experience.

The Proposed Framework and the Key Requirements

The proposed framework is intended to satisfy four key requirements (R1-R4) for an NPS-based approach to the routine monitoring and assessment of customer experience in the context of customer journeys.

The comparison of service performance to benchmarks or business goals (R1) is supported using a widely applied customer experience measurement instrument for data collection in customer journey measures. Transactional NPS has broad industry uptake, and is already applied for multiple touchpoints of many organizations (Owen & Brooks, 2009). Hence, the transactional NPS already fulfils this requirement, also without the framework. The contribution of the framework is to show how multiple transactional NPS instances may be combined to cover larger parts of key customer journeys, as in Case 2; how a single transactional NPS may benefit from being interpreted as part of a customer journey, as in

Case 1; and how transactional NPS may be strengthened with means of measuring deviation from the intended service process, as in Case 3.

The three cases also demonstrate how the framework supports the application of transactional NPS for providing customer experience data across customer journeys (R2). For this purpose, its quant-qual characteristic is key. Including the qualitative reason-for-score component when implementing transactional NPS is recommended practice (Owen & Brooks, 2009). Hence, this does not require additional data collection. However, the analysis of the qualitative data may differ from the usual approach as the customer journey perspective requires sensitivity towards how experience change across the customer journey, and how different touchpoints may contribute to this change, as is seen in the distinction between target and spillover reasons for the LTR score.

The case experiences also indicated that the proposed framework provides insight into customer problems and pain-points (R3). The importance of gathering such insight was accentuated in Case 3, where the deviation-based approach clearly showed how the customer experience was affected by deficiencies in Customer Service effectiveness and efficiency. Possibly, future analyses could here benefit from leaning on established instruments for assessing deviations from the intended service experience, such as the customer effort score (Dixon et al., 2010) which address the self-reported level of effort the customer is required to invest to attain the service goal. At the same time, Case 3 serves to illustrate how both good experiences and problems may be identified through a quant-qual approach, for systematic improvement work by the service provider.

Case 2 demonstrated the general applicability of transactional NPS as a customer journey measure (R4). Here, the use of the NPS at both extremities of the customer journey allowed for an integrated analysis showing how the customer experience changes and develops across the customer journey.

Managerial Implications

The suggested framework and presented cases hold four key managerial implications. First, the framework suggests how transactional NPS with relative ease may be applied for monitoring and assessment of customer experience in customer journeys. Being able to leverage existing customer experiences measurement instruments for this purpose is important, as leading service providers typically have invested heavily in these. To enable the adaptation, managers need to reformulate conceptions of such measurement instruments as pure quantitative metrics and rather consider these as potential sources of actionable insight.

Second, the framework may be a means to see output from the transactional NPS in a new light. As is demonstrated in Case 1, the customer feedback may reflect experiences both with the touchpoint in question (termed *target*) and with other aspects of the customer journey (termed *spillover*). It is particularly important to note that the distribution of spillover may be skewed. In Case 1, lower scores on the LTR question were more often reported as being due to spillover; in other words, low LTR scores for a particular touchpoint may well be due to other aspects of the service process. Applying the proposed framework will safeguard managers from erroneously interpreting such low scores for a particular touchpoint as only pertaining to that touchpoint. The framework may also strengthen motivation to apply touchpoint customer data as input for the improvement of the service process at large.

Third, multiple measurement points in a given customer journey enable a more precise understanding of how the customer experience evolves. This is particularly beneficial for picking up unexpected changes in experience in journeys with many possible paths to the goal. Given the increasing complexity in many service processes, with increasing flexibility in terms of channel choices and personalization, the capacity to pick up such unexpected changes will be increasingly valuable. Multiple measurement points do not necessarily entail prohibitive additional cost. As companies may already have established transactional NPS at

various touchpoints, a customer journey analysis may only require integration across existing points of measurement.

Finally, the customer experience may be critically affected by deviations and breakdowns in the process of service provision. In consequence, specifically including data collection and analysis supporting the identification of problems and annoyance encountered by the customer during the customer journey may be beneficial. Such additional data collection may not be cost-prohibitive; for example, it may be included as an extension of transactional NPS data collection as shown in Case 3. The impact of such breakdowns on the customer experience is evident across service sectors (Dixon et al., 2010) and was also demonstrated in Case 3. The proposed framework therefore includes a deviation-based approach as a complement to an assessment-based approach.

Limitations and Future Work

The presented work has limitations pointing to future research needs. In particular, the number of cases is small and the cases reflected the experiences with the framework from only one particular company in one particular service sector. Nevertheless, the cases are adequate for the purpose of demonstrating the framework and generating initial lessons learnt.

Future work, hence, is needed to apply and adapt the framework to the context of other cases and service providers. It would be beneficial to try out the elements of the framework in a wider range of sectors, and for customer journeys of varying complexity and duration. Presumably, the need to include additional touchpoint measures throughout the journey will increase as the journey duration increases.

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