BIZ104 Customer Experience Management

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# Introduction to Personal Experience

I have always enjoyed travelling across Australia, and as a curious tourist, I often visit several tourist spots through various tour operators and travel agencies in the country. When travelling with these tour operators and agencies, I have experienced both positive and negative customer services and products which have impacted my customer journey experience with that company. One such positive experience that I encountered was with the popular tour operator Autopia Tours. When travelling with them, I had pre-booked a vacation package, which seemed to be a bit expensive.

For this reason, I was quite hesitant in the beginning but chose to travel with them nonetheless. However, to my surprise, the package not only included staying in the hotel for the vacation period but also included 4 meals every day. A touchpoint in a customer journey experience is the point during which the customer comes in contact with the tour operator before, during and after purchasing the tour package (Lemon &Verhoef, 2016). The two major touchpoints related to my positive experience with Autopia Tours included booking and travel. While booking the package, I was hesitant as the package price seemed a bit steeper than usual package prices. During the booking touchpoint, as I was not expecting any food services from the company, my expectations were really low.

Contrary to this positive experience, I had also encountered some negative experience when travelling with another tour operator in Australia known as Intrepid Travels. Once, when booking a package, I read on their online website that the company would refund any money if the person cancelled his tour. I had booked a package for 7 days in the Australian outback and started travelling with the tour operator. However, due to some emergency at my workplace, I had to cut short my vacation and return from the holiday. Keeping in mind that the package is expensive and the company would be refunding money for any cancelled tours, I informed my tour manager on the second day that I would be leaving during the fourth day and won’t be travelling for the planned 7 days. When asking for a refund for the remaining 3 days, I was informed that refunds were only available if the entire tour is cancelled 2 days before the tour begins and no partial refund was not in the policy of the company. When I argued that the company should have mentioned that on their website, the tour manager was reluctant to admit it as their fault. The two major touchpoints in the customer experience are shopping and post-travel (Wilson et al. 2016). In the shopping touchpoint, I checked the price for the package and the company’s refund policy. There was no mention of any non-refund when cancelling part of the package. The post-travel touchpoint included my complaint to the company chief about my dissatisfaction during the journey.

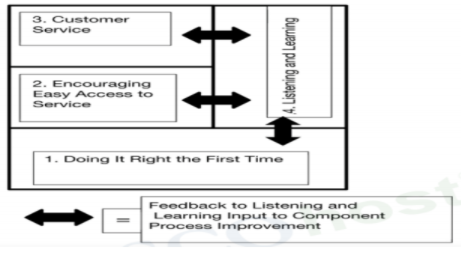
# Thoughts and Actions During Customer Journey

As I am a frequent traveller, I am well aware of the cost of staying in hotels and the price for the food which customers generally pay themselves. When combined together, the package cost was quite low than usual, and I was really happy with their services at such a low price. This is surely one of the most positive experiences I had while travelling with a tour operator.However, when travelling, I understood the reason the price was justified as Autopia Tours offered 4 complimentary meals every day. During the booking touchpoint, as I was not expecting any food services from the company, my expectations were really low. However, as soon as I came to know of the free buffet service on the first day, I was glad about the service the company had provided in exchange of the package price and it was a value for money service.

As the package price was too expensive, I requested to refund only a small part of the remaining 3 days as consideration for my emergency situation. However, the tour manager was too arrogant about his decision and refused to pay anything. I was shocked with such poor customer service, and as the entire package price was paid in advance, I had no other way to retrieve it. However, after I returned, I filed a complaint to the company head through their communication channels and also requested a refund from their customer relationship manager on the phone by explaining to him about the situation. However, despite repeated efforts, I was denied any partial refund, and the company was not willing to admit that it was their responsibility to mention a no partial refund policy on their website which clearly indicated their poor customer service management.

# CEM Concept in Customer Journey Discussion

Customer Experience Management (CEM) is the collective process that business organizations often use to monitor and manage their interaction with the customer throughout the customer lifecycle (Wilson et al. 2016). There are four major components of customer experience strategy implemented by the company.



**Figure 1: CEM components**

Source: (Homburg, Jozić & Kuehnl, 2017)

The positive experience can be linked to the first component, which states doing it right the first time (Ren et al. 2016). As a tourism agency, a company must know how to attract and retain customers, and Autopia Tours did it perfectly by offering free meals which would make the tourists travel with them again in the future. The negative experience can be linked with the fourth component of CEM, which is listening and learning (Homburg, Jozić&Kuehnl, 2017). As I was unable to get a refund for shortening my tour, the company head should have listened to my complaint and learn from their mistake. They could have rectified it by adding a non-refund policy during future tours if the customer shortened their journey. However, as it was ignored, they might face a similar situation in the future, and this would truly affect their CEM, and they might lose their loyal customer base.

# Proto-Persona Profiles

As a customer, my pain-points, needs and goals have been established in the proto-persona profiles attached in the **Appendix**. Referring to the Proto persona Diagram for negative experience, the major 2 pain points are related to***Process pain point*** and ***Support pain point***. I am unhappy with the refund policy, and this is directly related to the process pain point in which the internal process of refund policy does not satisfy me. The particular support pain point is directly related to complaint after travel. I am unhappy with their customer service with respect to the customer feedback process. These pain points are directly related to my needs and goals.

# Comparison of the Two Customer Experiences

When comparing the positive and negative experience that I encountered as a customer, it can be established what can make a good customer experience. In my negative experience, the company Intrepid Travel had no mention of partial refund in their policy, which is considered misinforming the customer. Moreover, even after complaining, they were unwilling to admit and learn from their mistake, which showed they were not focused on customer-centric services. However, in a positive experience, the company Autopia Tours exceeded customer expectation by offering free meals. As it was not mentioned in the website, the customers who received the free meals were taken by surprise by their excellent service.

# Conclusion

This is an excellent strategy to exceed customer expectation which is the key factor in good customer experience. Intrepid Travels, on the other hand, promised refund for cancellation, and when unable to pay for shortened tour failed to fulfil even their promised services. This proves their lack of commitment towards the business and poor customer experience and service.