

COMPANIES STRATEGY FOR CUSTOMERS SATISFACTION

IVAN Elena-Bianca, ARON Georgiana-Elena, GUȚOIU Andreea-Cătălina

Faculty: Industrial Engineering and Robotics, Specialization: Quality Engineering and Management,

Year of study: 3, e-mail: ivanelenabianca@yahoo.com

Scientific supervisor: Prof. dr. eng. Irina SEVERIN

SUMMARY: One of the biggest challenges facing organisations is customer satisfaction. To own success, companies must consistently focus their efforts and priorities on understanding and meeting the needs and expectations of all their customers. At the same time, they must identify the right methods and tools to measure customer satisfaction and ensure customer loyalty. The case study consists of evaluating the customer satisfaction strategies of three companies, Altex, CCC and H&M, using the triangulation method. Triangulation will be carried out using three tools: a checklist based on a structured interview with an employee of each company, an analysis of each company's website and a survey in which 100 customers expressed their opinion about these organisations. Finally, conclusions will be drawn according to the chosen hypotheses (companies are interested in customer satisfaction; companies have defined their key values; they define their stakeholders and target them with their approaches; they align their approaches with regional, European policies).

KEYWORDS: customer orientation, customer satisfaction, companies' strategy.

1. Introduction

In this scientific paper, a case study was carried out, looking at customer satisfaction strategy from the perspective of three well-known companies.

Companies, in general, aim to create a customer-oriented environment, constantly focusing their efforts towards knowing and meeting the expectations of all their customers, to provide trust to them and other stakeholders, to promote their services or products. Through all this, companies make themselves stand out in the market, targeting their field of activity.

2. Status

The success of a business is determined by the effectiveness of the strategy it follows. Customer orientation is a business strategy that involves prioritising customer needs and desires. Satisfaction develops the approach, a customer's condition is achieved by comparing the quality of a product/service with their expectations. Satisfaction is also the difference between appearance and essence which is measured by the quality level offered by the products and services tested.

To increase customer satisfaction and loyalty, and to remain competitive in the market, they adopt this approach. Companies are also constantly identifying and gathering customer data and information to meet their priority objectives.

A customer-focused organisation can predict future customer behaviours and, as a result, better meet their needs and desires. By knowing what creates value for the customer, collecting and analysing relevant customer data and information, constantly and dynamically adopting methodologies that meet customer requirements, businesses can develop long-lasting customer relationships that can benefit all stakeholders.

In general, the information received by the client comes from advertisements, advertising, own experience, the experience of acquaintances, information gathered from the company. Thus, the firm needs to review the methods it uses to promote its image in the market and gain customer recognition.

Based on the four hypotheses, we will analyse how the three companies, ALTEX, CCC and H&M, adopt the customer orientation strategy, by the triangulation of three tools: checklist, site analysis and questionnaire.

The premises consist of developing four statements about how organisations aim towards customer satisfaction. These are:

- The first hypothesis relates to companies which are interested in customer satisfaction.
- The second hypothesis refers to companies that have defined their key values.
- The third hypothesis focuses on the companies define their stakeholders and target them through their approaches.
- The fourth hypothesis is based on companies align their approaches to regional, European policies (e.g., environmental policy).

Altex is a company that sells home appliances, IT equipment and components [1]. Altex started its activity in 1992, in Piatra Neamț, in Neamț County. Dan Ostahie, one of the most famous entrepreneurs in Romania, borrowed \$ 10,000 from the bank, with which he started importing second-hand TVs from Switzerland. The TVs brought from Switzerland were repaired and then sold through consignments that sold, among other things, clothes, and household products. Later, in 1993, Dan Ostahie opened the first home appliance store in the Altex network. Altex continued to grow its network of stores, opening more than 50 outlets in all major cities in the country. [2]

CCC is a footwear and accessories retail chain [3]. The company was founded by Dariusz Milek, a graduate of a mining school, who in 1991, after the fall of communism, sold goods in an open-air market in Lubin. In 1996, he opened a chain of cheap shoe stores called Golden Feet. In 1999, as the retail sector began to grow in Poland and malls began to emerge, Milek founded the CCC chain of stores, which is now present in almost every mall in the country. Until 2000, the Pole also had a shoe factory, and in 2004 he listed the company on the Warsaw Stock Exchange. In 2009, the company owned 585 stores in Poland and 29 in the Czech Republic, and Dariusz Milek was one of the richest people in Poland. The company has been present in Romania since the summer of 2012, when it opened the first shoe store in Feeria Galleries in the Băneasa shopping area. In 2014, the network reached a number of 19 stores, of which 5 in Bucharest and 3 in Iasi. [4]

H&M is a clothing company that originated in Sweden [5]. The company was founded by Erling Persson in 1947, when he opened his first store in Västerås, Sweden. The store, called Hennes (Swedish for "hers"), and sold exclusively women's clothing. Later, another store was opened in Norway in 1964. In 1968, Persson acquired the Stockholm-based hunting clothing retailer Mauritz Widforss, which led to the inclusion of a men's clothing collection in the product range and a name change to Hennes & Mauritz. The company was listed on the Stockholm Stock Exchange in 1974. Shortly afterwards, in 1976, the first store outside Scandinavia was opened in London. H&M continued to expand in Europe and began retailing online in 1998, with the hm.com domain registered in 1997, according to Whois data. [6]

They sell their products both in the national retail network and online.

The checklist was based on a structured interview with an employee of each company. In this interview, the employee was approached by a customer and put in a specific situation, thus analysing the satisfaction of the solution.

In Altex, the interview consisted of a request for information. The customer wanted to know the specifications of a particular product and the best option for purchase. The employee's response was disappointing as he did not know how to answer, not having technical knowledge. Thus, he showed a lack of experience and interest in dealing with the request.

The CCC store employee's interview consisted of a presentation of a real problem. The customer wanted to return a product purchased on the same day but did not have the receipt. Without this, according to the return policy of this company, the product cannot be returned. Despite this, the employee sought to resolve the problem by calling his superior who eventually carried out the return process. The staff showed interest in resolving the problem despite the difficulties encountered.

H&M supports and promotes sustainability, so the interview was based on questions about sustainability. The client wanted to know how sustainability is achieved, an approach that appears in different campaigns. The employee in question, lacking sufficient knowledge, was not able to give further information about this and suggested looking for details online. After further exchanges, the customer left

dissatisfied with the answers received. In contrast to the previous case, the employee showed indifference towards the company's customer.

At the end of this checklist, each firm profiled itself through the lens of its customers and thus it can be said that the only firm that met customer expectations was CCC.

The second tool to perform triangulation is represented by site analysis and is the place where useful information (such as: texts, images, sounds, programs) can be accessed, usually on the Internet. At the same time, it is the interface between the company's location itself and the virtual company, accessed from anywhere, at any time. Part of their analysis will be approached in terms of highlighting their particularities, presented in Table 1:

Table 1. Company particularities.

	ALTEX	CCC	H&M
Simple and attractive web design	✓	✓	✓
Possibility to log in on your own	✓	✓	✓
Promotional offers	✓	✓	✓
Promoting procurement security	✓	✓	✓
The existence on the site of a telephone number for complaints	✓	✓	-
Possibility to sort articles according to certain criteria	✓	✓	✓
Possibility to choose a price range for items	-	✓	-
Online technical support	✓	✓	✓
Possibility to choose the display language of the site	-	✓	✓
Possibility to choose the currencies in which the prices are displayed depending on the language and the chosen country	-	✓	✓
The site can be accessed from any device	✓	✓	✓

Within the three companies, websites are accessible, usable by anyone, regardless of the device they are accessed from. Its content is structured, organised, and understandable to everyone. As for the overall quality, privacy, return and complaint handling policies, these are presented and described differently for each company.

Taking them individually, on the ALTEX website, only several objectives and approaches are structured [7]. At the same time, the CCC company, encompasses a few different concepts and expands on several areas. [8]. The latter company, however, promotes a wider range of approaches, such as that with reference to animal welfare policy [9]. Among the policies and objectives of the companies found on the website, the most important ones will be presented in the table below, called Table 2.

Table 2. Company policies and objectives [7]; [8];[9].

ALTEX	CCC	H&M
Vision	Vision	Employee Code of Ethics
Mission	Mission	Consumer protection
Culture	Values	Global Complaint Policy
Return policy	Ethics	Privacy Policy
Buy-back policy	Correction	Global non-discrimination and non-harassment policy
Complaints handling policy	Security	Sustainability
Privacy policy	Respect for the environment	Tax policy
Warranty certificate	Return policy	Investor relations
Environmental protection	Complaints handling policy	Animal welfare policy
	Privacy policy	Global Diversity, Inclusion and Equality Policy
	Warranty certificate	Return policy
		Complaints handling policy
		Privacy Policy

From the analysis of the sites, it is clear that their profile is different and that each has a distinct approach due to the field in which they operate. Thus, H&M's website describes its policies and objectives in a transparent and detailed way, while ALTEX and CCC share broadly similar ideas.

The third instrument of the triangulation, the questionnaire [10], was carried out on a sample of 100 people whose answers contributed to the complete definition of the scientific research work. The questionnaire was divided into two structures, the client's perspective on the strategy of his satisfaction and the company's orientation towards current values. Figure 1 will present the most relevant answers regarding the quality and capability of staff performance and the sustainability of companies, more precisely the representative elements of sustainability known to those surveyed.



Figure 1. Questionnaire answers

The degree of satisfaction of ALTEX's customers made it possible to assess the subject of the research based on the answers given by the respondents. Thus, the hypothesis that companies are interested in customer satisfaction was verified. It appears that 75% of the respondents are satisfied with

the customer orientation of the staff. Based on another assumption, 78% consider that the way and time complaints were handled was satisfactory. 86% of customers rated the correlation between the website and the physical store as excellent. In contrast, only 60% of them consider that ALTEX aligns its approaches with regional, European policies.

The second company surveyed, CCC, had the subject of the survey rated in the same way. Thus, the hypothesis that companies are interested in customer satisfaction was verified. Surprisingly, all respondents were satisfied with the customer orientation of their staff, with a share of 100%. In comparison to ALTEX, only 76% consider that the way and time complaints were handled was satisfactory. 92% of customers rated the link between the website and the physical shop as excellent. In contrast, only 71% of them consider that CCC aligns its approaches with regional, European policies.

The last company, H&M, had the subject of the survey rated according to the answers given by respondents. Thus, the hypothesis that companies are interested in customer satisfaction was verified. It turns out that 95% of those surveyed are satisfied with the customer orientation of their staff. Based on another assumption, 69% consider that the way and time complaints were handled was satisfactory. 96% of customers rated the link between the website and the physical store as excellent. In contrast, only 65% of them consider that H&M aligns its approaches with regional, European policies.

After completing and analysing the results of the questionnaire, it appears that the results may also have been influenced by the reputation or track record that each company has, which is why CCC is more highly regarded than the other two.

Triangulation is a method of analysis based on combining three tools to define a concept.

The triangulation for which the research was created was distinguished by the practical methods implemented: checklist, site analysis and opinion survey. Thus, their study shows that the reality through the companies' prism does not always correspond to the customer's reality or expectations.

In the picture below, called Figure 2., the triangulation is schematically represented.

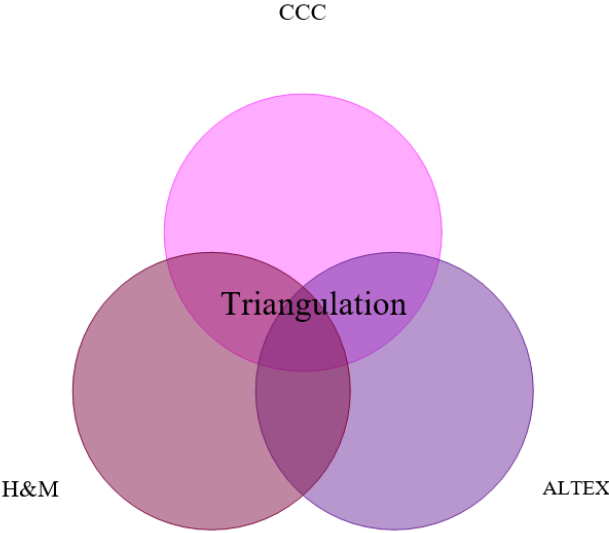


Figure 2. Triangulation representation of companies

3. Conclusions

In order to increase customer satisfaction and retain important customers, but also to remain competitive in the market, companies adopt different approaches, but they all boil down to one - customer orientation, as opposed to the traditional one - customer search. Businesses are also constantly identifying and gathering data and information about customers, thus achieving new company-wide performance.

Following the triangulation analysis based on the three companies, the following conclusions were drawn:

- the research is done by collecting data from three sources (through triangulation) ;
- no single data collection channel is used ;
- own observation validates the information gathered from the questionnaire which revealed some practices from different hypotheses ;
- institutional procedures and policies should be linked to ensure customer loyalty ;
- triangulation shows that among the three studied companies the best strategy to satisfy the customer is held by CCC.

4. Bibliography

- [1]. ***, www.altex.ro , accessed on 02.05.2022
- [2]. ***, <https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Altex> , accessed on 02.05.2022
- [3]. ***, www.ccc.eu , accessed on 02.05.2022
- [4]. ***, [https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/CCC_\(companie\)](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/CCC_(companie)) , accessed on 02.05.2022
- [5]. ***, https://www2.hm.com/ro_ro/index.html, accessed on 02.05.2022
- [6]. ***, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H%26M> , accessed on 02.05.2022
- [7]. ***, <https://altex.ro/cariere/>, accessed on 02.05.2022
- [8]. ***, <https://corporate.ccc.eu/en/supply-chain>, accessed on 02.05.2022
- [9]. ***, <https://hmgroupp.com/sustainability/standards-and-policies/>, accessed on 02.05.2022
- [10]. ***, <https://www.surveio.com/survey/d/J7L4H1M1O5O7O5K9P> , accessed on 10.05.2022.