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CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN INTERNATIONAL FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS

Starbucks[TM] Coffee Company has more than 25,000 retail stores in 75 countries and is the premier roaster and retailer of specialty coffee in the world. Starbucks' mission is "to inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time" and its slogan has been to bring their customers exceptional experiences. McDonald's[TM], in turn, is one of the world's largest fast-food restaurant chains, serving approximately 69 million customers daily in over 120 countries across approximately 36,900 outlets. McDonald's doesn't mention any real mission in their company profile, but the strong slogan "I am loving it" describes well the company's mission as well as the customer experience they hope to give their customers. The new trend in large international companies is that it is no longer customer satisfaction that is important, but customer experience, which along with products or services carries a lot of weight in customers' final decision making. The purpose of this research was to examine the formation of and to measure customers' conscious experience of products and services in the business to consumer environment with two student groups in Poznan, Poland. The research was carried out in a Starbucks coffee shop as well as in a McDonald's fast food restaurant in Poznan, Poland with a fuzzy logic based customer experience application. The research clearly shows the possibilities to monitor, develop and improve the degree of conscious as well as unconscious areas of customer experience. Furthermore, the test results were used to verify and validate the usability and structure of the ontology and the used application. The application operated well, and the test groups were satisfied with both the operation of the application as well as the collective results, which are presented in this article. Finally, some possible future actions related to the customers' conscious and unconscious experiences are suggested.

Keywords: customer experience, fuzzy logic, leadership, management, ontology

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1. INTRODUCTION

Starbucks Coffee Company has more than 25,000 stores in 75 countries and is the premier roaster and retailer of specialty coffee in the world (Starbucks Corporation, 2017a). Starbucks' mission "to inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time" is that they strive to bring their customers exceptional "situational" experiences (Starbucks Corporation, 2017b). McDonald's, in turn, is one of the world's largest fast-food restaurant chains, serving approximately 69 million customers daily in over 119 countries across approximately 36,900 outlets (McDonalds Corporation, 2017).

McDonald's doesn't mention any real mission in their company profile, but the strong slogan "I am loving it" describes well the company's mission and the customer experience they hope to give their customers. The new trend in large international companies is to serve their customers in a special way and have a strong company brand. It is no longer customer satisfaction or loyalty that is important, but the customer's overall experience, along with the services and/or products, which carry a lot of weight in customers' final decision making and commitment.

The purpose of this research was to examine the formation of and to measure customers' conscious and unconscious experience in the business to consumer (B to C) environment and situation. The importance of studying the subject, in a new way, is highlighted by the fact that companies are currently trying to measure customer satisfaction or loyalty at an increasing rate but by using unsuitable tools to capture conscious as well as unconscious experiences. The conventional understanding of marketing and its methods, which stresses rational customer behavior, does not fit to measuring customers' conscious experience "on stage" (Baars, 1997; Vanharanta, 2003; Seikola, 2013), i.e. they experience products and services just with the senses. Customers' conscious as well as unconscious experiences should be measured as a degree based on the meanings that customers get in the shops and restaurants where they make their decisions.

These were the reasons to build a holistic and comprehensive ontology of customer experience (Vanharanta, Kantola, Seikola, 2015). The ontology considers customer experience from the perspectives of the customer's consciousness as well as a feeling of "situationality" in the company's service and product environment. The research instrument used is based on Pearl, an ontology-based management and leadership application (Seikola, 2013). The Pearl application is based on the holistic Concept of Man metaphor and the Circles of Mind metaphor (Vanharanta, 2003) described in the following chapter 3.1.

The Pearl application is constructed using Evolute Approach (cf. Kantola et al., 2011; Kantola, Karwowski, Vanharanta, 2010; Kantola, 2008). The literature review for the ontology building revealed the breadth and complexity of the concept of customer experience. A clear distinction has to be made between customers' conscious and unconscious experience and customer satisfaction. In addition, the

role of customers' conscious and unconscious experience as a more significant antecedent of customer loyalty needs to be understood.

A customer's total experience, "on stage" must be seen as a holistic cross-section of the customer's consciousness, unconsciousness and the company's product and service environment and situation. This is why creating a generic tool for measuring customer experience has been a challenge. Nevertheless, the first tests of Pearl revealed that measuring the degree of conscious and unconscious customer experience develops the overall understanding of the holistic customer experience (Seikola, 2013). The degree of customer experience is monitored indirectly, whereas traditional measurements of service quality focus entirely on the service interaction itself and ignore all the other elements of the experience between the customer and the company.

This second research using the application was made with the permission of management of the Starbucks coffee shop as well as McDonald's fast food restaurant in Poznan, Poland. The research clearly shows the possibilities to monitor, develop as well as improve the degree of customers' conscious and unconscious areas of experience. The application was tested with two student groups with a total of 61 test subjects.

Furthermore, the test results and feedback gathered from the test groups were used to verify and validate the usability and structure of the ontology and the used application. The application operated well and the test groups were satisfied with both the operation of the application as well as the collective test results, which are presented in this article. Finally, some possible future actions related to the customer experience are suggested.

2. RESEARCH CONCEPT AND CONTEXT

2.1. What is Customer Experience?

Companies have been testing and measuring the satisfaction of their customers for a long time and at an increasing rate. However, it has to be noted that customer satisfaction is not the same as customer loyalty, i.e. whether the customer will buy again. A satisfied customer does not equal a loyal customer (Griffin, 1995; Maklan, Klaus, 2011). Customer satisfaction can also be seen as the culmination of a large group of different experiences the customer faces during direct or indirect interactions with the company at several touch points, and it measures the gap between expectations and experiences (Meyer, Schwager, 2007). This is the main reason why companies should start paying more attention to the experiences they are providing instead of measuring customer satisfaction. Customer experience is a better explanation and antecedent of customer loyalty (Klaus, Maklan, 2013).

Customer experience concerns everything about a company's actions and offering. Whenever customers buy a product or service, they always have an experience, which may be good, bad, or indifferent (Berry, Carbone, Haeckel, 2002). This approach can be expanded even further to consider that the customers have an experience every time they are in any kind of contact with the company. The key from the company's point of view is to learn to manage the experiences customers are given. Therefore, customer experience management (CEM) and leadership (CLM) are important research areas from the company's point of view. When the company understands the experiences it can provide to its customers, it can also manage relationships concerning customers' needs and priorities better. A closer look at the customer's holistic nature also improves the understanding from the leadership point of view.

It is therefore important to understand that consumers/customers do not always make their decisions on a rational basis. They are in a certain situation every time they make their final decisions. Emotions and consumer intuition also have considerable influence when making the decision to buy. According to Shaw, Dibeehi and Walden (2010), over 50 percent of customer experience is linked to emotions. This is why a holistic approach towards the subject should be taken. Customer experience is about the conscious and unconscious sides of human mind processes, expressed as rational and emotional decisions and actions towards the company's offering. Many different definitions and dimensions of the concept of customer experience can be found in the literature (Gentile, Spiller, Noci, 2007) (Figure 1).
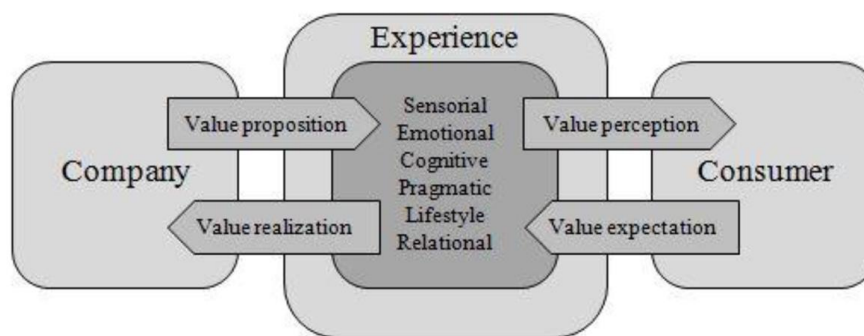

Fig. 1. General framework of experience components in the co-creation of value (Gentile et al., 2007, p. 400 adapted by Seikola, 2013)

Three common features can be identified from the definitions and dimensions in Figure 1. First, all definitions stress, one way or another, the subjectivity of experience. All customer experiences are strictly personal and unique. Second, customer

experience is something that includes the consumer's rational thinking and emotions. There are many different ways to describe this, but what is important to understand is that customer experience is largely a question of emotions and the customer's subconscious mind. The third common feature is that customer experience is a very holistic concept. There are a lot of different touch points between customers and companies, and every one of these touch points acts as an arena for experiences. Value proposition by the company, value perception by the consumer, value expectations and value realization form the overall loop of processes in the general framework of experience components in the co-creation of value (Gentile et al., 2007). All these common features presented above, are referred to in our Circles of Mind metaphor, which is used in the application development and presented in more detail in chapter 3.1.

2.2. Customer Experience and Brand Experience

Schmitt (1999) identifies differences in branding when comparing traditional and experiential marketing. A brand from the point of view of traditional marketing is seen as a static identifier including names, logos, and slogans. In experiential marketing brand is an experience provider. It still includes names, logos, and slogans but also appeals to all five senses and the mind of the consumer. Brands are sensory, affective, and creative relations and should be seen as something the consumers care about. Brands always exist only in the minds of the customers (Pine, Gilmore, 1998). We refer here also in our scientific and theoretical approach in chapter 3.

Brand experience can be considered as a factor in customer experience because all consumers see the company through their personal brand experiences. However, there seems to be a two-way impact between these two notions. As earlier brand experiences affect later customer experiences, the experiences the consumer has in direct contacts with the company also have an impact on brand experience. In other words, customer experiences affect brand experiences. Thus, a bad customer experience can impair the consumer's brand experience and an earlier bad brand experience can have an impact on the consumer's later customer experience. This bi-directional interaction has been considered by Verhoef et al. (2009).

The concept of customer experience can also be divided into either product or service experience. However, as customer experience should be seen as a holistic view of the consumer's total experience, the experiences with the product or service itself cannot and should not be separated from the total customer experience. Fig. 2 presents the different experience components and the relations between them.
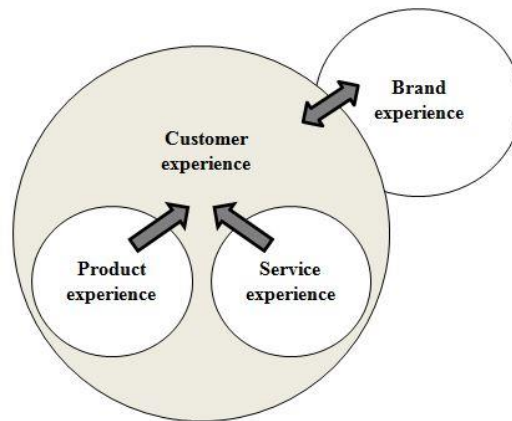
Fig. 2. Experience components of total customer experience (Seikola, 2013)

The concepts of brand experience and customer experience are seen as parallel items having a two-way impact on each other and being partly nested. However, customer experience is seen as the most important part of the total experience because of its wider definition. Product and service experience are seen as sub-items in both customer and brand experience.

2.3. Benefits and Challenges of Measuring Customer Experience

The benefits of measuring customer experience compared to traditional customer satisfaction measurement can be compressed into three points. First, customer experiences are antecedents of customer satisfaction, and thus, measuring customer experience will create more insightful information for managers. Second, customer experience is a more holistic concept than satisfaction. Customers usually have experiences with the company even before they have direct contact with it. Customer satisfaction measurement focuses on direct service contacts with the company and so provides managers with more narrow information. Third, customer experience has been found to be a stronger antecedent of customer loyalty because it takes account of customers' emotional side. Satisfied customers are not the same as loyal customers. Knowing about the experiential side of customer contacts can predict customer loyalty more accurately.

In spite of its useful and holistic view of customer behavior, there are a few problems, i.e. challenges, related to measuring customer experience. Palmer (2010) mentions three challenges in customer experience measurement. The first problem/challenge concerns the complexity of context-specific variables. As customer experiences are very subjective and situation-specific, a fully inclusive and absolute measuring scale is hard to achieve. The second problem/challenge relates to

the non-linear nature of customer experience, which makes measuring it harder. The third problem/challenge is caused by the two previously mentioned problems. Because of the context specificity and non-linearity, it may be hard to find the "ideal" level of experience. However, according to Palmer (2010), the above-mentioned problems can be reduced by using sophisticated measuring instruments, which do not follow the traditional questionnaire approach. Therefore, in our research, we use a sophisticated fuzzy logic based measuring instrument, which gives us the ability to measure customer experience indirectly through the meanings in the statements we present to the test subjects. In the following chapter we explain the research framework and the new tested methodology as well as the methods used to monitor the degree of customer experience.

3. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

3.1. Scientific and Theoretical Approach

The Holistic Concept of Man (HCM) by Rauhala is a human metaphor where body, mind and situation are an inseparable whole in different situations (Rauhala, 1986; Rauhala, 1995). Baars's theatre metaphor, in turn, is based on the workspace of the mind by Baars (1997) where the self as an agent and observer behaves as if on the theatre stage. Close to the stage is the unconscious part of the brain (the audience) having four main areas: motivational systems, automatic systems, interpreting systems and memory systems. The spotlight controller, context and theatre director are also present. The combination of the HCM metaphor and the theatre metaphor led to a new, particular and practical metaphor known as Circles of Mind by Vanharanta (Vanharanta, 2003). The Circles of Mind metaphor (CM metaphor) was also designed as a physical entity so the metaphor could be used for design purposes. This has led to the idea of a brain-based system that contains the physical body following the Cartesian mind-body relationship, i.e. as a thinking thing and an extended thing (Maslin, 2001). One version of the Circles of Mind metaphor is presented in Figure 2. The Circles of Mind metaphor opens up the mind's most important unconscious systems: memory systems, interpreting systems, motivational systems and automatic systems. These systems, their content and functionality must be supported and reinforced by services, when a human decides (cf. director him/herself) to focus attention (cf. spotlight controller) in a certain context (cf. context). Individuals who use services should feel holistic support and reinforcement in all four unconscious system areas of the brain. The "conscious experience on stage" comes from the outer and inner senses as well as from the ideas experienced: the players, the audience.

This is the way we use the CM-metaphor to better understand customer experience as well as to design brain-based models and applications for management and leadership purposes.
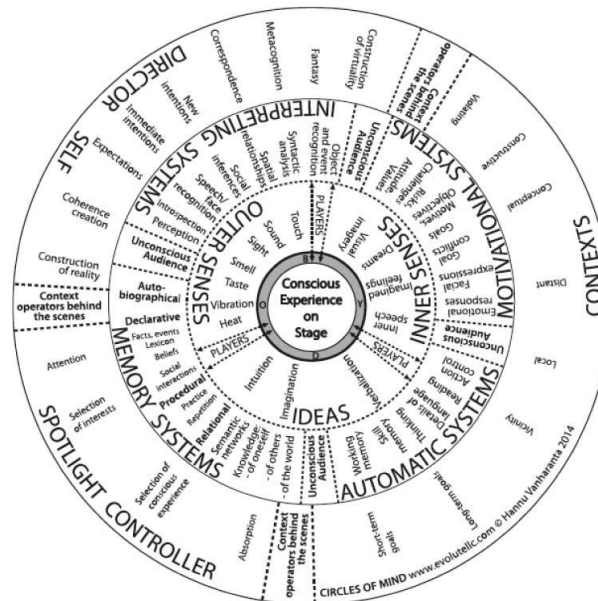

Fig. 2. Circles of Mind metaphor (Vanharanta, 2003)

Figure 2 shows the sub-systems that the four main systems of the mind include. These sub-systems give a direct indication of what service/product designers should be capable of doing. In the future, service design and production will be a broad, multidisciplinary and demanding research and application area, where people representing different kinds of engineering, human, social and other disciplines must work together. Traditional engineering with a technical focus will not be sufficient. Strong expertise in human factors will be crucial in designing, developing and maintaining services. The concept of customer experience has evoked debate in recent years and has been mentioned as forming a new paradigm of marketing (Maklan, Klaus 2011; Schmitt, 1999; Shaw, Ivens, 2002). In the last few years an increasing number of publications have emerged on the subject. At the same time, companies are trying to attract their customers through different kinds of experiences resulting from various triggered stimulations in the consumers' senses and mind. This brings an immediate need for marketers to measure the experiences that customers have subjectively too. However, the measuring tools and the complete traditional sense of marketing should also evolve to a new level. This means that marketers should question the focus on plain functional-centered thinking and rational decision making with narrow product categories and traditional analytical models (Schmitt, 1999). Also, the traditional division of goods and ser-

vices is becoming blurred as physical goods are becoming "servicified" and consumers are more eager to participate in co-creating value together with companies (Grönroos, 2000; Gummesson, 1995; Vanharanta, Kantola, Seikola, 2015).

Our research focuses on the human side and the holistic nature of mind processes. The idea is strongly supported and linked also to the fact that humans are connected through situationality.

3.2. Evolute Research Approach

The Evolute research approach uses online fuzzy logic (Zadeh, 1965; Zadeh, 1973) based applications (Kantola et al., 2011; Kantola, Karwowski, Vanharanta, 2010; Kantola, Vanharanta, Karwowski, 2006). The system itself contains domain ontology-based applications that the target groups can use with natural language. Evolute computes and visualizes the perceived current reality and the future vision of objects, for example services. The Evolute system can be therefore used to design and develop services and service applications. Figure 3 presents the overall Co-Evolute Theory and Methodology.
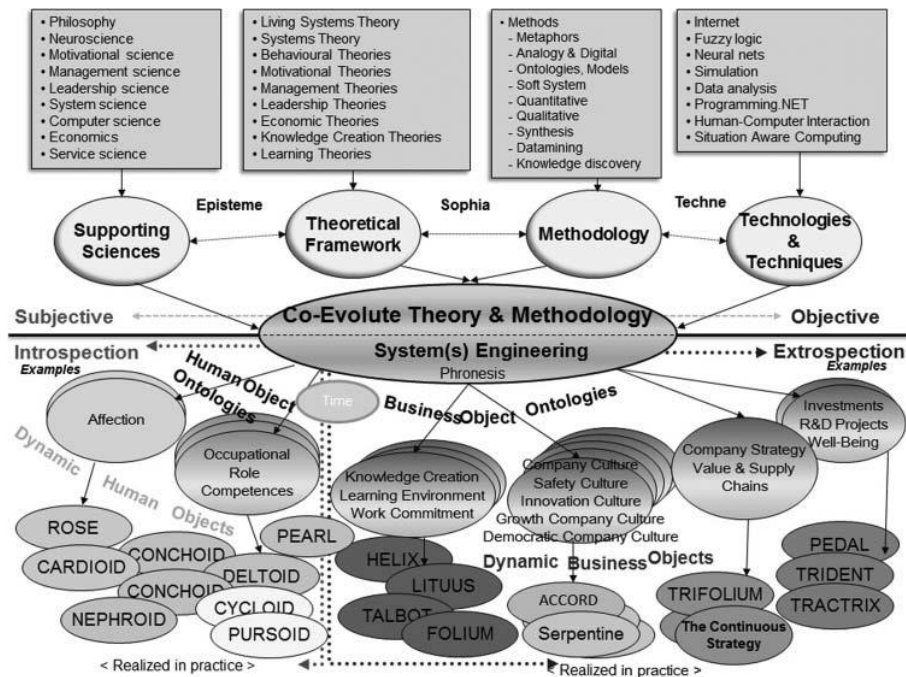

Fig. 3. Co-Evolute Theory and Methodology Architecture
(Kantola, Karwowski, Vanharanta, 2010)

The upper part of the framework shows the scientific side and the lower part shows the practical side with named tools. Many of these existing tools can be applied to develop and manage those organizational resources that are used for service design and development in areas such as customer experience, organizational learning, knowledge creation, different responsive environments and competence.

In the Evolute approach (Co-Evolute Theory and Methodology), mind system imitation and emulation follow the same processes. The first process is to create object ontologies in an ontology repository (Pearl application ontology in this case) from where the Evolute system converts the ontologies into ontology-based online tools. The second process involves groups of people (test subjects) using these tools for different purposes. With the help of their human mind processes, the current and future states of the concepts of the object can be explored and visualized. The Co-Evolute Theory and Methodology complies with the following philosophical knowledge concepts: Episteme (teachable knowledge), Sophia (reasoning concerning universal truths), Techne (skills) and Phronesis (practical wisdom that combines the capability of rational thinking and actions which can deliver the desired effects). This is the way scientific background, theoretical knowledge, multifaceted methodologies, as well as modern technology give us the ability to monitor, perceive, understand and develop complex management and leadership concepts like customer experience in this research.

We have to understand here that human introspection is important as well as to see the external objects in a certain situation, where humans exist. The Pearl application, used in this research, is placed in Figure 3 between the human object ontologies and the business object ontologies according to the nature of the research (Kantola, Karwowski, Vanharanta, 2010). The Pearl was used to monitor customer's experiences in the context of two international chains of fast food restaurants where the test subjects enjoy coffee and muffins.

3.3. The Research Instrument

The complex and holistic nature of customer experience can be explained by using the metaphor of a theater stage. The whole concept of customer experience can be seen as a theater where the customer's and company's processes meet (Figure 4). This theater consists of two partly nested stages, where the outer stage acts as the service environment provided by the company and the inner stage as the customer's mind. The experience happens in both stages at the same time, and the two acts together form the complete customer experience. Thus, to understand the holistic concept of customer experience, the subject should be viewed from both perspectives: the customer's consciousness (inner stage) and the company's service environment (outer stage). A similar idea has been introduced earlier by Pine and Gilmore (Pine, Gilmore, 1998), who stated that because of the interaction between the company's staged events and the individual's state of mind, no two people can have

exactly the same experience. The basic principles of the Pearl application content by Seikola (2013) are presented in Figure 4.
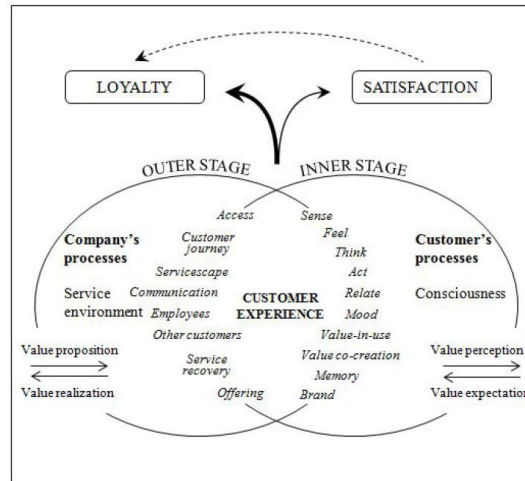

Fig. 4. The main components of the Pearl application (Seikola, 2013)

Pearl, the application designed for measuring the customer's conscious experience, is built on the web-based Evolute platform (Evolute, LLC, 2016; Vanharanta, Kantola, 2012; Vanharanta et al., 2012; Vanharanta, Kantola, Karwowski, 2005). When respondents use the application, they are asked to estimate the current states and the desired future states of propositions representing different elements of the customer experience. At the time of this research study, Pearl included 76 propositions /statements. After answering every statement, the application recorded and represented the results on a fuzzy scale. In Table 1 the main categories and features are presented as a construct.

Table 1. The Structure of the Pearl Application

Main Categories	Categories	Features
Conscious customer experience	Inner stage	Sensing experiences
		Feeling experiences
		Thinking experiences
		Acting experiences
		Relating experiences
		Mood
		Memory
		Brand
	Customer value	Value-in-use

Table 1 cont.

	Outer stage	Value co-creation
		Servicescape
		Communication
		Employees
		Other customers
		Service recovery
		Offering
	Touchpoints	Access
		Customer journey

In Table 2 the categories as well as the features are explained in more detail. Then it is also easier to analyze the test results.

Table 2. Descriptions of the concepts in the Pearl Application Ontology (Seikola, 2013)

Conscious customer experience	The holistic view of customer experience
Inner stage	Customer experience from the point of view of customer's own consciousness.
Outer stage	Customer experience from the point of view company's service environment.
Sensing experiences	Customer experience from the point of view of customer's senses.
Feeling experiences	Customer experience from the point of view of making the customer feel.
Thinking experiences	Customer experience from the point of view of making the customer think.
Acting experiences	Customer experience from the point of view of making the customer act.
Relating experiences	Customer experience from the point of view of making the customer relate to others.
Mood	Customer's perception of the effect of the mood of customers, employees and other customers on customer experience.
Customer value	Customer's perception of his/her received value.
Value-in-use	Customer's perception of how much value he/she gets from the consumption of company's offering.
Value co-creation	Customer's perception of how much he/she can affect the creation of value.
Memory	Company's ability to affect customer's memory and create positive, memorable experiences.
Brand	Customer's perception of the effect of company's brand on customer experience.
Touchpoints	Customer's perception of ease of access and uniformity of contact points between the company and customers.
Access	Customer's perception of ease of access to different touch points.
Customer journey	Customer's perception of his/her journey between different touch points during the service.
Servicescape	Customer's perception of the physical service setting of the company.

Table 2 cont.

Communication	Customer's perception of company communication, its consistency and how a company keeps its promises.
Employees	Customer's perception of employees of the company.
Other customers	Customer's perception of the effect of other customers on his/her experience.
Service recovery	Customer's perception of company's ability to handle problematic situations.
Offering	Customer's perception of company's offering regarding prices and assortment.

In the following chapter 4 the data collection, test subject characteristics as well as test results are presented.

4. ANALYSIS AND TEST RESULTS

4.1. Data Collection and Test Subject Characteristics

The data used in this research was collected using the Pearl application in 2017. Altogether, 61 students were asked to partake in this research. The students were participating in two different management courses at Poznan University of Technology. In the end, 37 results were obtained giving a response rate of 60.6%.

In the Strategic Management course, the students were asked to evaluate the customer experience after visiting a Starbucks coffee shop in Poznan, Poland. The respondents were 73.7% male (14) and 26.3% female (5). The mean of the male students' age was 24.7 years old and for females 22.2 years old. The students in the Strategic Management course answered the Pearl application between 23.3.2017 and 18.5.2017.

In the Project Management course, the students were asked to evaluate the customer experience after visiting a McDonald's fast-food restaurant in Poznan, Poland. The responses from this group showed that 50% of the subjects were male (9) and 50% were female (9). For this group, the mean age of the male students was 21.0 years and for females 20.4 years old. The responses using the Pearl application were made between 30.3.2017 and 23.5.2017.

4.2. Research Results

The results of this study are presented in this section. Figures 5 and 6 show a summary of the results of both cases. The concepts are organized according to creative tension, that is the difference between the perceived future state and the

current reality (Senge, 1994). In the graphs, creative tension can be seen as the absolute length difference between the light and dark grey bars. The length of the bars shows the perceived level of the concepts, with a value between the worst (0) and the best (1) possible experiences.
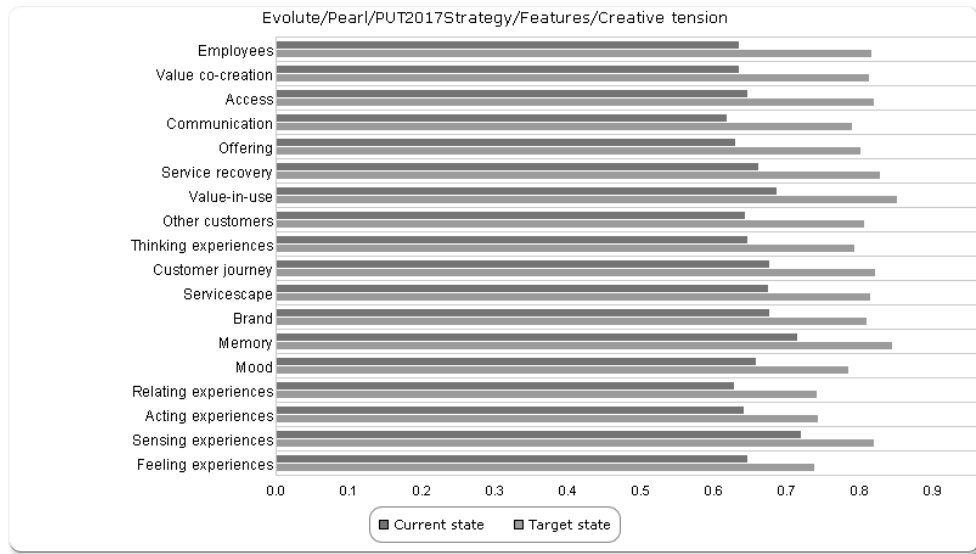

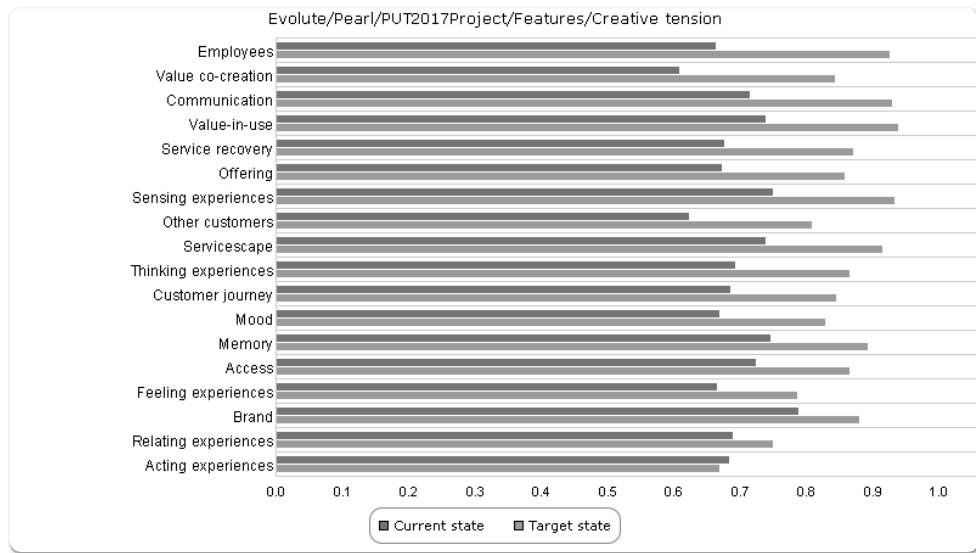Fig. 5. Summary of the results of Starbucks sorted according to creative tension

Fig. 6. Summary of the results of McDonald's cases sorted according to creative tension

Visual examination of the summary of the results shows that in both cases the creative tension is quite large, meaning that the customers see a lot of potential to improve the customer experience in general. We can also see that the current level is relatively high, meaning the restaurants already consider customer experience an important concept. The current and target values are higher in almost all concepts at McDonald's. Interestingly, in both cases the two concepts with the highest creative tension are: **Employees** and **Value co-creation**. **Communication** is in 3rd and 4th places.

Figure 7 compares the creative tension in both cases. Light grey bars represent Starbucks and dark grey bars represent McDonald's. On the left side, the concepts are listed with _CT which refers to Creative Tension.
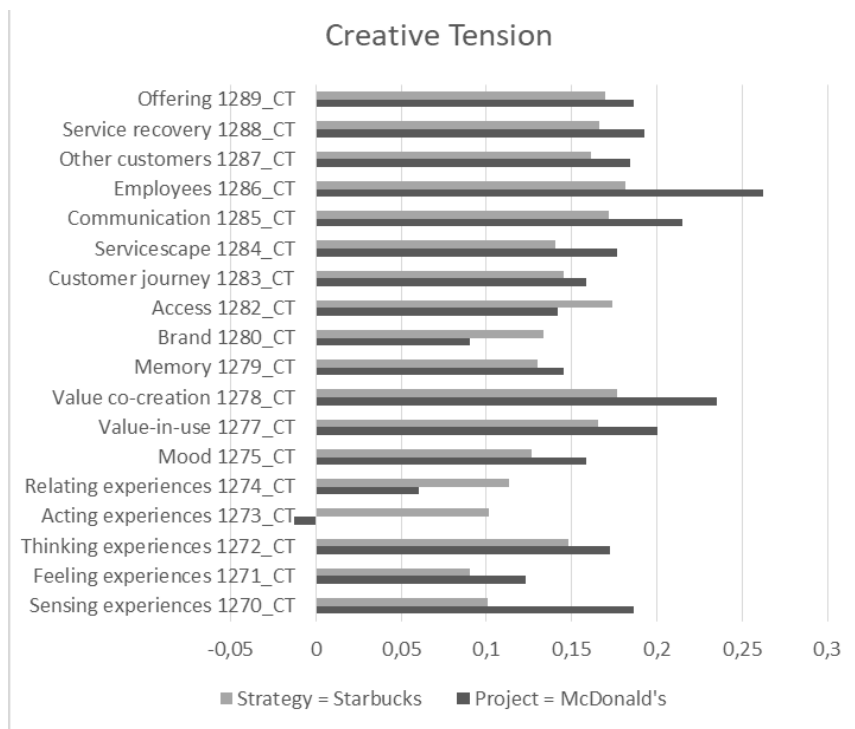

Fig. 7. Comparison of the creative tension in both cases

We can see that the creative tension is bigger in the McDonald's group than in the Starbucks group in most cases, except in Access, Brand, Relating experiences, and Acting experiences. In other words, this roughly means that the test groups perceived that there is more to improve at McDonald's than at Starbucks. Concepts in the McDonald's case that seem to have a notably large creative tension are **Employees, Communication, Value co-creation**. That means that according to the test group there is a lot to improve.

Table 3. Ranking according to the project group (McDonald's restaurant)

Class	Rank sum (Cur)	Rank sum (Tar)	Rank sum (Tar-Cur)	Rank sum (Tar/Cur)
Employees	**139**	186	205	197
Communication	173	194	197	194
Servicescape	180	185	181	181
Customer journey	156	159	175	168
Access	197	180	168	157
Brand	229	193	**141**	**135**
Memory	203	200	156	154
Value co-creation	120	144	201	209
Value-in-use	204	231	191	186
Mood	**138**	158	180	186
Relating experiences	170	125	**119**	**122**
Acting experiences	187	**109**	**97**	**112**
Thinking experiences	176	205	178	189
Feeling experiences	155	155	151	155
Sensing experiences	216	265	200	193
Other customers	**126**	**120**	173	178
Service recovery	165	153	187	183
Offering	144	**116**	178	179

Table 4. Ranking according to the project group (Starbucks restaurant)

Class	Rank sum (Cur)	Rank sum (Tar)	Rank sum (Tar-Cur)	Rank sum (Tar/Cur)
Communication	**162**	**145**	183	179
Servicescape	197	162	**156**	**155**
Customer journey	199	181	177	180
Access	165	187	194	199
Brand	196	179	**165**	170
Memory	227	213	171	165
Value co-creation	137	173	218	225
Value-in-use	219	238	211	205
Mood	176	186	185	197
Relating experiences	**146**	174	189	194
Acting experiences	173	168	169	175
Thinking experiences	174	223	174	183
Feeling experiences	178	162	**159**	158
Sensing experiences	264	242	174	172
Employees	174	160	180	**157**
Other customers	174	**155**	188	186
Service recovery	168	170	170	**153**
Offering	**120**	**131**	186	196

Tables 3 and 4 show another view of the results. The tables summarize the ranked order of concepts according to each respondent. We can see for example that Employees, Value co-creation and Sensing experiences are "popular" as highly ranked concepts according to creative tension in McDonald's case. Similarly, Value co-creation, Value-in-use and Access have the highest ranked creative tension in the case of Starbucks.

In other words, the perceived values for the concepts of customer experience were transformed to ranks and then summed up. Three highest (grey) and lowest values (bold) are highlighted in the tables. This kind of ranking allows the comparison of the perceived cases. When the results are examined with different viewpoints we can say that especially Employees and Value-co-creation stand out as the concepts that require deeper examination in both restaurants. The question becomes: What can be done in practice in these restaurants so that the creative tension in these concepts can be narrowed?

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The trend today in companies is to serve customers in such way that creates a great experience. In this research, making and testing the customer experience ontology revealed a wide definition and complexity of customer experience. It can be affected by even very small things such as a smile from a service employee or the background music in a service setting. But, as this research revealed, more conventional experience elements, such as the offering as a whole, i.e. value proposition and value realization, have to be on a sound footing first, so that they can meet the value expectations as well as value perception of the customer.

By taking a holistic look with the ontology-based application Pearl at customer experience, we could see through the results that the researched companies have good opportunities to develop and improve different features in their customer experience, i.e. what exists in reality in a company's processes and a customer's processes.

The purpose of this research was, therefore, to examine the formation of and to measure the customers' conscious experience of products and services in the business to consumer (B2C) environment and situation. The research was made in the Starbucks coffee shop as well as in the McDonald's fast food restaurant in Poznan, Poland. The research showed clearly the possibilities to monitor, develop and improve the degree of conscious as well as unconscious areas of the holistic customer experience.

The Pearl application was tested "on stage" according to our CM metaphor, with two student groups in Poznan, Poland. Furthermore, the test results and feedback gathered from the test groups were used to verify and validate the usability and structure of the created customer experience ontology and the Pearl applica-

tion. The application operated well and the test groups were satisfied with both the operation of the application as well as the collective results.

We can conclude that monitoring, perceiving, understanding customer experience holistically and concentrating on the customer experience features is going to give new possibilities for managers and leaders to tackle the very complex customer experience concept. By bringing the test subjects to the real-world situation, we could give them an authentic stage, from which they could analyze their customer experience individually. The approach used in this research seems to be practical for customer experience research.

Future actions regarding the research subject and Pearl include increasing the clarity of the statements used in the application and improving the user-friendliness of the test platform. Repeating the test with larger test groups and different target companies in various service industries would improve the validity of the customer experience ontology. For example, by taking into account different contextual issues, such as organizational and national cultural differences, more insightful information about the formation of customer experience could be achieved. Also, the methods and possibilities to reveal and measure more of the customer's subconscious side should be studied.

Acknowledgements

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DOŚWIADCZENIA KLIENTÓW W MIĘDZYNARODOWYCH RESTAURACJACH FAST FOOD

Streszczenie

Starbucks™ Coffee Company ma ponad 25 000 sklepów detalicznych w 75 krajach i jest wiodącym dystrybutorem kawy specjalnej na świecie. Misją Starbucks jest "inspirowanie i pielęgnowanie ludzkiego ducha - jednej osoby, jednego kubka i jednego sąsiedztwa naraz", a jego hasłem jest dostarczanie swoim klientom wyjątkowych doświadczeń. Z kolei McDonald's jest jedną z największych sieci restauracji fast food na świecie, obsługującą około 69 milionów klientów dziennie w ponad 120 krajach w około 36 900 placówkach.

McDonald's nie wspomina o żadnej prawdziwej misji w profilu swojej firmy, ale silny slogan "Kocham to" dobrze opisuje także misję firmy, a także wrażenia klienta, które zamierza dać swoim klientom. Nowym trendem w dużych międzynarodowych firmach jest silna marka i szczególny sposób obsługi klienta. Ważna jest nie tylko satysfakcja klienta, ale także wrażenia klienta, wraz z produktami lub usługami, które mają duży wpływ na ostateczną decyzję i zaangażowanie klientów. Celem badań była ocena tworzenia i pomiaru świadomego doświadczenia klientów w biznesie do środowiska konsumenckiego. Badanie zostało przeprowadzone w kawiarni Starbucks^{TM} oraz w restauracji fast food McDonald's^{TM} w Poznaniu z aplikacją obsługi klienta opartą na logice rozmytej. Badanie wyraźnie pokazuje możliwości monitorowania, rozwijania i poprawy poziomu świadomych i nieświadomych obszarów doświadczeń klientów. Aplikacja została przetestowana w dwóch grupach studenckich w Poznaniu. Ponadto wyniki testów i informacje zwrotne zebrane od grup testowych zostały wykorzystane do zweryfikowania i potwierdzenia przydatności i struktury użytej ontologii i aplikacji. Aplikacja działała dobrze, a grupy testowe były zadowolone zarówno z działania aplikacji, jak i zbiorczych wyników, które przedstawiono w tym artykule. Na koniec sugerowane są niektóre możliwe przyszłe działania dotyczące świadomych i nieświadomych doświadczeń klientów.

Słowa kluczowe: aplikacja, klient, wsparcie decyzyjne, doświadczenie, logika rozmyta, przywództwo, zarządzanie, ontologia, satysfakcja