

AN EMPIRICAL CLASSIFICATION OF ANTECEDENTS OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE OF TELECOM INDUSTRY: A PATH WAY FOR BETTER EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS.

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Abstract:

Aim / Purpose: The purpose of the study is to ascertain the critical antecedents of customer experience with reference to the telecom sector of Chhattisgarh through an empirical analysis and understand how it can lead to further better employable skills.

Methodology: To accomplish the above mentioned objective an intense literature review was carried out to identify the antecedents responsible for building customer experience followed by a survey from customers of telecom sector of Chhattisgarh. Using Questionnaire survey the data was collected from the 240 customers of telecom sector and empirical analysis using descriptive statistics conducted. The outcome of the study was analyzed using graphical representation and descriptive statistical analysis.

Findings: Results of literature review reported 10 antecedents which were responsible for building the customer experience. All the ten identified antecedents were found to have a strong impact in building the experience of the telecom customers.

Implications: The findings of the study will help the managers of the telecom sector to develop a better understanding of the key antecedents of Customer Experience. The decision makers can also keep the findings of this research in mind while making policies. Through identified antecedents the manager can develop the skills for enhancing customer experience among the youth, thus providing them better employability opportunities.

Key words: Customer experience, antecedents, telecom sector.

Introduction:

The service industry in India is at boom. The service industry also contributes significantly to the economy of India. To perform better and to withstand the competition the service industry are focusing more towards customers. The needs and demands of the customers are thought over and the organizations are planning their all business strategies which ultimately have focus on the customer. To face the competition offered by competitors the service industries are leaving no stone unturned that could lead their customer lose their focus from the organization.

In this era of competition the customer has availed the top position. Many researches in the past have supported the notion of customer focus. It has become important for the organizations to know the complete journey of the customer and understand their priorities. This journey built the experience of the customer which ultimately leads to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of customer. The success of the products offered by the organization now depends on the experience of the customer (Gentile *et al.*, 2007).

Today's era is moving with high pace. Everybody who so ever is a part of system is trying to move fast in his own field. The movement gets momentum through wide range of network and connection. In this context, telecommunication is playing an indispensable role to make network and connection among people worldwide. With the passage of time telecom industry is continuously doing expansion and growth in the sectors of economy. Telecommunication industry is contributing a lot to the growth of Indian economy. Both public and private sector companies are involved as a service provider. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), Airtel, Idea, Vodafone, Reliance etc. are the major players in India as telecom service provider. Beside so many competitors in the market and begin one of the largest sector there is a need to focus on few points such as, is the sector really working on building the experience of the customer in positive notion and what factors are building this experience? Does understanding of these factors will lead to further better opportunities of employment?

To find the solution to these questions researchers from time to time have suggested different antecedents but these differ from industry to industry. This research is specifically conducted to understand the antecedents that are responsible for building a positive customer experience in telecom industry of Chhattisgarh.

The main aim of the paper is

- To study the antecedents of customer experience for telecom industry.

The paper is organized as, first part consist of review of the content available from the literature. The antecedents important for building customer experience are identified from the literature review. The section covers the research question and hypothesis, and then research methodology is covered and lastly the paper is concluded with results and findings.

Literature Review:

Customer experience is considered as a way to achieve competitive advantage and a way of sustaining in the changing business environment due to its nature of focusing on the needs of the customer (Tsaur *et al.*, 2007). Around four decades back the customer's needs and intentions were focused through the introduction of new concept called as consumer behavior. The concept gained lot of importance from the scholars and academicians and treated consumer as a rational decision maker (Gentile *et al.*, 2007). The consumer was considered to focus on the tangible attributes of the product due to rational decision making. Soon this concept had an added dimension of experience, which was also considered by the scholar and the organisation for understanding the journey of the experience and considering both tangible and intangible attributes considered by the customers.

The concept of customer experience has been defined as:

Carbone and Haeckel, (1994) has defined Customer experience as “*takeaway impressions that customers have when they encounter products, services, and businesses.*”

Walter *et al.*, (2010) has mentioned it as “*A customer experience is defined as the customer’s direct and indirect experience of the service process, the organization, the facilities and how the customer interacts with the service firm’s representatives and other customers. These in turn create the customer’s cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses and leave the customer with memories about the experience*”.

According to Renet *et al.*, (2016), “*Customer experience is a subjective perception that is felt from within and relies deeply on consumption context. It is caused due to interaction with human or physical elements*”

From time to time researchers have reported the antecedents which lead to the customer experience. To understand and identify the antecedents of customer experience 32 paper where reviewed which have reported been from time to time. The research papers referred are Johnson and Mathews (1997), Tseng *et al.* (1999), Rowley (1999), Novak *et al.* (2000), Flanagan *et al.* (2005), Arnold *et al.* (2005), Knutson *et al.* (2007), Takataloet *et al.* (2008) Roos and Edvardsson, (2008), Bridges and Florsheim (2008), Knutson *et al.* (2009), Hollyoake (2009), Verhoefet *et al.* (2009), Jain and Bagdare (2009), Ferguson *et al.* (2010), Walter *et al.* (2010), Slattenet *et al.* (2010), Garget *et al.* (2011), Su (2011), Rose *et al.* (2011), Rose *et al.* (2012), Fatma, (2014), Fawcett *et al.* (2014), Lee (2013). Only those antecedents who had frequency as 10 or above were considered for the study. The details of the antecedents and frequencies are as mentioned in Table - 1.

Table – 1: Antecedents of Customer experience with Frequency of occurrence.

S. No.	Antecedent	Abbreviation	Frequency of occurrence
1	Convenience	C	27
2	Physical Environment	PE	26
3	Employees	E	26
4	Service Quality	SQ	21
5	Service Process	SP	21
6	Trust	T	12
7	Influence of other customers	IOC	11
8	Incentives	I	11
9	Marketing Mix	MM	10
10	Affordability	A	10

Research question and Hypothesis formation:

The purpose of the study as stated is to identify the antecedents of customer experience and their priority based on the response received from the customers of telecom industry. Based on the purpose the 10 antecedents have been identified through literature review. The research question thus framed is as mentioned below:

RQ 1: What are the antecedents of customer experience and which antecedent is responsible building a positive customer experience.

The hypothesis developed for the same is

H1: The 10 antecedents' i.e. C, PE, E, SQ, SP, T, IOC, I, MM, A are responsible for building a customer experience among the customers of telecom industry.

Research Methodology:

Research methodology is the step by step procedure to how the research has to be conducted and is a very important process (Sadikoglu and Olcay, 2014) and (Malluret *al.*, 2012). To achieve the aim of the study a structured survey instrument was adopted. The survey Questionnaire was completed through Electronic mail which is the most commonly used method for data collection Ciptonoet *al.*, (2011); Baird *et al.*, (2011). The Questionnaire was developed in line with the similar studies (Valmohammadi, 2011), (Deroset *al.*, 2009), (Arumugamet *al.*, 2008) and contains two parts; the first part contains the demographic information of the respondent such as designation, Gender, Experience, Department and General information on the organization. The other section of the questionnaire consists of the Practices of TQM. The respondents were asked to specify the importance of all 17 practices in a 5 point Likert scale where 5 being the highest and 1 being lower.

The data was collected from the customers of telecom industry of Chhattisgarh. The questionnaire was sent to 400 customers. The 240 responses were completely filled and were considered for the study. The reply pace was 24% which is between the range of 85-300 cases as stated by Kureshiet *al.* (2010); Spector (1992); Hair *et al.* (1998).

Result and analysis:

The responses received were analyzed in two parts. The first part gave the information about the demographic profile of the respondent and the second part consists of descriptive analysis in which the response count, mean and graphical presentation of the same has was done. The descriptive statistics was calculated using SPSS.20 software.

Profile of respondent:

The profile of the respondent is given in Table -2.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	144	60
Female	96	40
Total	n= 240	100
Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	130	54.17
Unmarried	110	45.83
Total	n=240	100
Age (in years)	Frequency	Percentage
Under 20	62	25.83
21-35	30	12.5
36-50	58	24.17
51-65	70	29.17
Above 65	12	5
Total	n=240	100
Education	Frequency	Percentage
High school and below	56	23.33
Bachelor's Degree	68	28.33
Master's Degree	78	32.5
Professional Degree	38	15.84
Total	n=240	100
Income Level	Frequency	Percentage
Below 10,000	58	24.17
10,000 to 30,000	34	14.17
31,000 to 50,000	70	29.17
More than 50,000	64	26.66
None	6	2.5
Total	n=240	100

Descriptive statistics for Classification of antecedents of Customer Experience:

Based on the responses received the descriptive analysis was done through response count, mean score and standard deviation score as presented in Table -3. Based on the same the researcher has tried to understand

which antecedent has greater impact in building the experience of the customer. Based on the mean score, graphical representation of the antecedents is also done as shown in Figure -1.

Table – 3 Mean Scores, Standard Deviation and Ranks of Antecedents of CE

Antecedent of CE	Response Count					Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Rank
	1	2	3	4	5			
Convenience	4	10	46	64	116	4.15	0.976	1
Physical Environment	4	14	66	96	60	3.80	0.901	5
Employees	0	12	72	90	66	3.87	1.012	4
Service Quality	2	8	66	78	86	3.99	0.905	2
Service Process	2	10	62	92	72	3.90	0.867	3
Trust	6	22	77	76	66	3.73	0.920	6
Influence of other customers	10	18	66	94	52	3.66	0.827	8
Affordability	6	16	72	98	48	3.67	0.937	7
Marketing Mix	12	24	64	86	54	3.60	0.968	9
Incentives	10	16	72	110	32	3.58	1.002	10

The median of the above mentioned values is 3.5 as the data was collected in 5 point Likert scale where 5 = very high, 3=moderate, 1 = very low. All the 10 antecedents were above the median value which indicates that they all have an impact on the overall experience of the telecom customers.

Graphical Representation of Antecedents of CE based on the Ranks:

After ranking the antecedents based on the mean value the consolidated result was presented in a graphical form as shown in Figure- 1

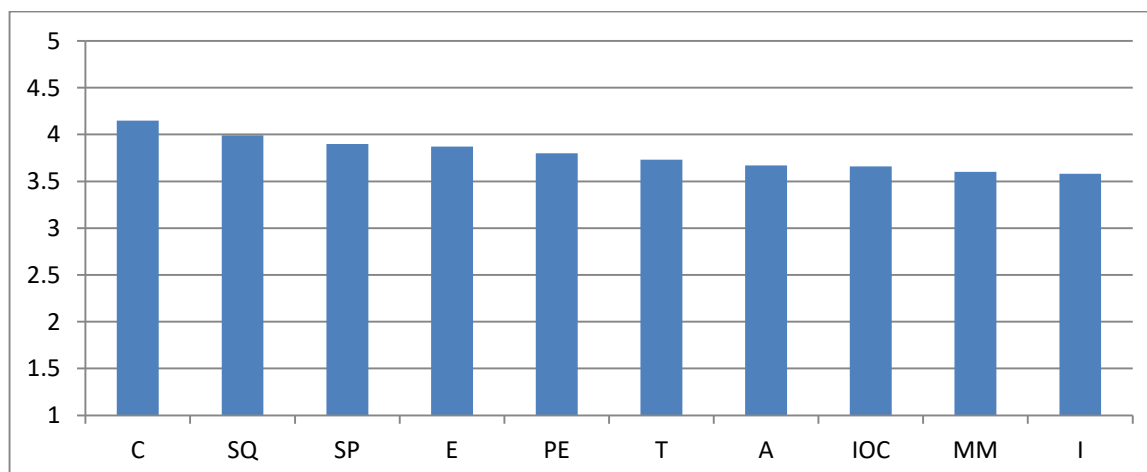


Figure – 1 Perceived level of 10 antecedents of CE

Conclusion:

The study was conducted with an aim to identify the antecedents of Customer experience and understand their importance in effecting the experience of telecom customers. The antecedents were identified through literature review. Post which questionnaire survey was conducted to understand the perceived level of these antecedents among the customers telecom industry. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics i.e., response score, mean and standard deviation.

The results of the same reveal that all the antecedents reported through the literature had a strong role in building the experience of the customers as the mean value of all the 10 antecedents was above the median value which is 3.5. The antecedents that fall in the top category as perceived by the customers in convenience (4.15), service quality (3.99) and service process (3.90). The mean value of these antecedents is above 3.9. The antecedents that fall next in the priority of the customers are employees (3.87), physical environment (3.80), trust (3.73) and affordability (3.67) and the last group will among all the 10 antecedents have received the lowest ranking are influence of other customer (3.66), Marketing Mix (3.6) and incentives (3.58).

This ranking will help the managers in understanding the things valued by the customer. As per the results the managers of telecom industry should focus more on the convenience of the customer. The customer also is looking out for excellent service quality and service process. Thus the policy makers can use this ranking and frame the new policies based on this. The study will help the youth in understanding what is desired by the customers of telecom industry, thus serving them accordingly and enhancing their employability skills in the sector. The findings of the study can also help the managers in training their employees in the field / new recruits on the priority line of customers for better performance in the job.

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