

GUEST JOURNEY EXPERIENCE MAPPING

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ABSTRACT

This short paper reveals the current practice of Guest Journey Experience Mapping, illustrated on one specific case. Guest Journey Experience Mapping has the purpose to provide customer insight about how guests experience certain services, and it is part of the modern marketing topic Service Design Thinking. The case was conducted by Hotelschool The Hague's City Hospitality and City Marketing Chair Team within the framework of a research-project called "Service Design in Tourism" and in co-operation with two of the destination marketing organisations of The Hague: Bureau Binnenstad and Stichting Marketing Haagse Binnenstad . Various other Service Design Thinking tools such as Personas or the innovative MyServiceFellow application are applied within the practice. The practice's process and implications further reveal benefits for the service owner, and additional stakeholders.

Key Words: Customer Insights, Guest Journey Experience Map, Marketing, Service Design, Service Management, Stakeholders

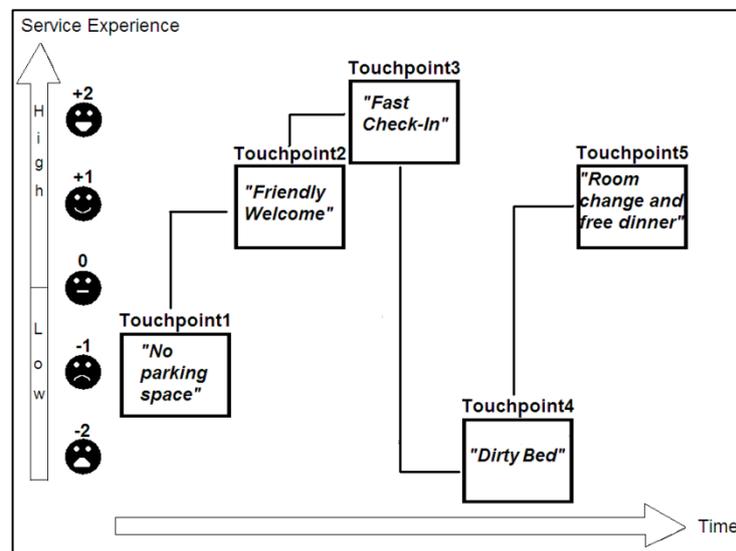
BODY

Introduction

Aim of the short paper is to contribute to the further development and integration of the hospitality city experience literature, city consumer behaviour research and city marketing decision-making and implementation practice. This short paper speaks about Guest Journey Experience Mapping as a current practice, which can be defined as creating a map that visualizes a guest's perception based on positive and negative experiences in regards to the service over a certain amount of time (Lane 2007, Schneider and Stickdorn 2011). Figure 1 shows an example of a Guest Journey Experience Map adapted from Lane, M. (2007). It visualizes how a guest might perceive a Hotel Check-In process. The horizontal axis presents the various experience-encounters, that can be tangible or intangible moments and which all together compose the guest journey in a sequencing way; the vertical axis presents how the guest experiences these touchpoints, either negative/low or positive/high.

Figure 1

Title: Example of a Guest Journey Experience Map at a Hotel Check-In



Source: own development adapted from Lane, M. (2007)

To illustrate the Guest Journey Experience Mapping practice more comprehensively, this paper presents a case which includes the practical application within a city. This specific case, called “Journey through The Hague”, was conducted by the Chair of City Hospitality and City Marketing commissioned by two destination marketing organisations within the municipality of The Hague in The Netherlands. The case was furthermore within the context of a EU-funded research-project called “Service Design in Tourism”.

Introduction to the case: objectives

The proposed case “Journey through The Hague” was conducted as a cooperation between Bureau Binnenstad, Stichting Marketing Haagse Binnenstad and the Chair of City Hospitality and City Marketing. Bureau Binnenstad and Stichting Marketing Haagse Binnenstad are public private partners that act as destination marketing organisations for the municipality of The Hague. The researchers of the Chair have been conducting research at Hotelschool The Hague aiming to contribute to the progress of the hospitality city experience and consumer behaviour research. Main research issues include city hospitality as a distinctive part of city marketing, the key drivers of successful city hospitality, visitor experience, branding issues and Service Design.

Whilst these issues serve the Chair as a basis to develop an interdisciplinary research programme, it is also part of an EU funded research-project, called “Service Design in Tourism”. Within the framework of EU’s Competitiveness and Innovation Program, the project intends to increase the competitiveness of European tourism destinations, by exploring and implementing the contemporary marketing topic of Service Design Thinking. Inspired by this contemporary marketing approach the Chair conducted a project for the city’s two destination marketing organisations. For this project the main objective was: gain insight into how different target groups of visitors experience city hospitality. Another objective was to actively involve stakeholders (or city hospitality providers) in the process of mapping the journey, while experiencing and viewing the journey from a target group perspective. Based upon this research question the case “Journey through The Hague” was born.

Introduction to the case: methodology

To answer the research question, the Chair for City Hospitality and City Marketing applied the five key principles of Service Design Thinking as they are presented in the book *This is Service Design Thinking* by Schneider, J. and Stickdorn, M. (2011). Table 1 lists these principles as described in their book.

Table 1

Title: Key Principles of Service Design Thinking

1	User-centred	A service should be designed starting with the perspective of the specific user
2	Co-creativity	Involving stakeholders into helping design the service
3	Sequencing	Breaking down the service experience into various sequencing moments, which are also referred to as “touchpoints”
4	Evidencing	Touchpoints can be tangible or intangible moments, and evidencing means to make these moments comprehensive through the means of pictures, videos, text- or voice-notes
5	Holistic	To look at the service as a whole journey that includes pre-service, service and post-service

Source: own development adapted from Schneider, J. and Stickdorn, M. (2011)

To facilitate the application of these five principles as guideline for the “Journey through The Hague” case, the Chair made use of two tools, namely Personas and MyServiceFellow, which are also featured in the book by Schneider, J. and Stickdorn, M. (2011). The authors of the book describe Personas as fictional characters that represent a specific profile. To make the Persona near real-life and to represent the specific profile as accurate as possible they suggest to give it a real name, gender, age, origin, appearance and even hobbies, interests, dislikes and additional human characteristics. The more demographic, psychographic and behavioural characteristics the Persona receives the stronger the real-life effect will be. This tool helped applying the first and second principle of Service Design Thinking to the “Journey through The Hague” case. The second tool used was an innovative smartphone application called MyServiceFellow, which helped applying the third and fourth principle of Service Design Thinking. The application enables the user to define valuable moments, also known as “touchpoints” whilst evidencing these with text notes, photos, videos and voice memos. Touchpoints are positive or negative experience-encounters, that can be tangible or intangible moments and which all together compose the guest journey in a sequencing way. Figure 1 shows an example.

Based upon the principles of Service Design Thinking, the Chair of City Hospitality and City Marketing, Bureau Binnenstad and Stichting Marketing Haagse Binnenstad planned the case. Firstly the main city-users were identified, and Personas were created based on the different city-user profiles. Then an event was planned on December 1, 2011 where city-stakeholders were invited to take on the role of the specific Personas. They would follow a Persona-relevant mission through the city and document their city-experience with MyServiceFellow.

Application: executing the “Journey through The Hague” case

Following the five principles of Service Design Thinking, Stichting Marketing Haagse Binnenstad was asked several weeks prior to the event on December 1, 2011, to identify the city’s five main target markets for the next decade, as a starting point. Their analysis revealed that active seniors, expatriates, young families, students and shoppers would create the biggest economical spin off for The Hague, hence these were chosen as five main target market groups.

The second principle, co-creativity, implies stakeholders of the service in the process. To apply this principle most effectively an event was planned where stakeholders of The Hague experienced the city from one of the five main target market groups’ perspectives. Stichting Marketing Haagse Binnenstad used this opportunity to select stakeholders with whom they additionally wanted to bond with and consequently thirty key-stakeholders were invited. These key-stakeholders were invited to the “Journey through The Hague” event on December 1, 2011 and amongst them were municipality employees, local entrepreneurs and inhabitants. At the event, each stakeholder was assigned to one near-real life character, representative for one of the five target group profiles. The Personas were carefully designed days before the event by Stichting Marketing Haagse Binnenstad according to main target group characteristics. Additionally certain city-routes including minor assignments were created and presented to each main target group on the day of event. For facilitating the participants to document their Persona’s city-experience several smartphones were provided with the MyServiceFellow application.

The stakeholders received a presentation about their missions and the use of the MyServiceFellow application before they started their journey. Each of the five groups was then accompanied by one assistant, who in case of technical difficulties offered help and who motivated the Stakeholders to stick to their individual Persona roles. At the end of the missions the Persona groups’ journey ended in a restaurant. At the restaurant the stakeholders were welcomed with a reception drink before they joined for the final presentation all together. Each group presented their mission and spoke about how they had experienced the city from the perspective of their assigned Personas. The touchpoints recorded on the MyServiceFellow application were projected to a screen which was used to support the presentation but also to clarify unclear touchpoints.

Findings - outcomes

Based on the touchpoints in relation to the Personas, five distinct Guest Journey Experience Maps could be created that visualized how the five identified main target groups perceive the city. The findings revealed data that was strongly target-group related. Relative to the four other customer groups it was for instance noticeable that the active seniors group- representatives reported by far the most hygiene and safety related touchpoints. Their experience-lows were mainly characterized by having been confronted with dirty spots in the city. One negative touchpoint shows a fountain with rubbish in it. Another touchpoint shows that the city square is marked by “ugly bicycle racks”. On the other hand the touchpoints of the stakeholders who represented the young family were in contrast to the seniors dominated by action and people encounters. One of their positive touchpoint shows for example a bus with flashy lights from Pixar’s Harry Potter, where it was possible to take photos. Another positive experience shows a street musician or a small Australian flea market. All five target groups however also shared certain similarities in the touchpoints. They were all thrilled the most when they had an unexpected pleasant experience. This related mostly to very simple things, such as finding a public toilet in a very clean condition or having a friendly people encounter. The generated Guest Journey Experience Maps of the city’s five main target markets provided in-depth customer insights. They further answered the case’s main research question as to how to gain more customer insight about how guests experience certain services within a certain touristic environment by using a research tool of mobile ethnography.

Conclusion

The implications revealed various benefits to Bureau Binnenstad, Stichting Marketing Haagse Binnenstad and Hotelschool The Hague's City Hospitality and City Marketing researchers, whilst answering the main research question. The practice of Guest Journey Experience Map in combination with applying the key principles of Service Design Thinking has proven to be a very effective way of providing customer insight about how guests experience certain services within a certain touristic environment. Strengths and weaknesses of the city-experience are highlighted. Differences in perception of main target groups are made clear. Stakeholders have fun and enjoy the bonding with the service-provider and amongst each other. Viewing service delivery from a guest perspective helps the service providers to understand their customers better. Results serve as valuable information to develop future strategies. Table 2 lists the identified benefits from the perspectives of the service-provider, guest and other involved stakeholders.

Table 2
Title: Implications and Benefits of the Practice

Service-Provider	Guest	Other involved Stakeholders <i>(I.e. employees, suppliers etc.)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input for Strategic Planning • Competitive Advantage • Increase in customer loyalty • Viewing service delivery from a guest perspective 	<p>Better Experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonding with the service Provider • Networking • Contributing to a Better Service Experience • Fun and Entertainment by Co-creative / Collaborative Play

The findings of the "Journey through The Hague" case further supported Bureau Binnenstad and Stichting Marketing Haagse Binnenstad in their strategic plans and it affirmed the city's aim for creating and managing hospitality excellence. The practice of Guest Journey Experience Mapping has been rewarded with worldwide positive feedback and its usage is increasing in various industries, as it continuously proves to be a very powerful tool with various benefits.

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