

Mobile Service Experiences – qualitative study with a broader perspective

ABSTRACT

The increasing usage of mobile technologies for service provision has created the need to understand customer mobile service experiences and to integrate designer's and technology's perspectives for the design of successful mobile services. This paper presents the results of a qualitative study with 44 mobile service customers, providing an in-depth understanding of the experience factors that contribute to design improved mobile services. The study results indicate that traditional interface factors, such as usefulness and ease of use, continue to be important. However, the study reveals that contextual factors, such as the social environment and service atmosphere, are very important for the mobile service experience. These results reinforce the need to adopt a broader view of the experience factors for the effective design of mobile services.

Keywords

Mobile Services, Service Experience, Service Innovation

1. MOTIVATION

The increased use of mobile technologies for service provision increases the need to carefully address the customer service experience in the design of mobile applications and respective services. The service value is supported on service interfaces and through an important mobility context. [1]. Mobile services are notoriously increasing and new ideas of business require the understanding of their customers. However, mobile service experiences are still a new area requiring further research attention. This paper presents the results of qualitative study that aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the factors influencing mobile service experiences, in order to provide support to the design of more effective and innovative mobile services.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

General debate on mobility and on service delivery need to go beyond the confined and functional understanding of mobility, as well as to capture multiple dimensions of mobilization and social interaction [2]. Some authors refer the challenges in creating and innovating valuable experiences when the service provider is not present[3]. Nevertheless while improving core technologies, developers must focus on providing customers a rich and satisfying mobile-service experience. The customer experience is described by Verhoef et al. [6] as a holistic experience that involves customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses. This way the emotional factor becomes a trend in human centered service development, since one cannot truly design something without a deep understanding of the

common emotional experiences of the human nature. [4]

According to Buchenau and Suri [8], experience is very dynamic, complex and a subjective phenomenon. It depends on the perception of multiple sensory qualities of design, interpreted through filters relating to contextual factors. According to recent descriptions of what a service system might be, services should start to be thought of from a general spectrum and finish with specifications and details, with the goal to promote value co-creation[5]. The overall experience is decomposed into several service experiences; these being the outcomes of user interactions for a specific service encounter and to the operations associated to it. In this sense following several authors proposition, the above components of the service experience were taken into consideration: Social environment - The reference group with community requirements – the experience of each customer and how it can impact the others, also referred as *fellow customers* [6]; Service Interface – The physical or virtual collection of points of contact between customer and the service provider [7] Atmosphere – Design physical scents, physical environment surrounding the service interface (e. store). Usefulness – effectiveness, recognition of the service value[8]. Price – the involved charges and promotions for the service [9]. Alternative channels - In today's multi-channels environment, a service may be affected by other channels [9]; Emotional Component – A key characteristic of the service centered on the user - is an encouragement to loyalty, creating emotional connections through engaging, compelling, and consistent contexts [6]. There is some investigation on service experience and user experience [10]working fields but not on an overall approach.[10]

3. QUALITATIVE STUDY OF MOBILE SERVICE EXPERIENCE

The study of Experience factors for mobile services involved interviews and focus groups with mobile service customers. This study has been following the development of a new mobile application that supports the management of loyalty programs. Data gathering involved 27 individual and two group interviews (with 8 and 9 participants) in a total of 44 participants (15 women and 29 men). The study included users and non-users of mobile service applications and having different patterns of usage of loyalty services. Nineteen of the participants were already using the new (free) application for mobile phones running JAVA. Within these nineteen, eleven of these participants had by now experienced the service in a retailer. Following qualitative methods[11], individual in-depth and focus groups interviews were recorded and literally transcribed and analyzed with Nvivo program. Categories of experience factors were developed based on the analysis of the customer data.

4. RESULTS

The study allowed for an in-depth understanding of the mobile service experience, identifying the main experience factors. Commonly mentioned factors of the service experience for managing loyalty programs are presented in the Table 1, as well as the corresponding percentage of customers who talked about them during the interviews. The expected factors of development user-centered, such as *usefulness* and *ease of use* were obviously mentioned. In fact they still are their first stimulus. The new service customers revealed an increased *usefulness* on managing the loyalty programs with the application, not only by the references to the subject, but also by referring alternative ways to perform the same activity. These early adopters sometimes don't really understand the entire goal of the service. Nevertheless it has been by them, in many circumstances, that the idea has been spread and communicated. Some other new and relevant experience factors were diagnosed - like *Time procedural* with drivers and constraints - reinforcing the relevance for categories like service atmosphere and social environment. The feeling of *dematerialization* was referred as well. New tasks, associated to manage loyalty 'cards' activity, were identified: like *synchronization*. Although the loyalty programs management is not an highly emotional activity, this subject seems to be relevant when some earlier adopters prefer mobile systems due to factors such as feeling *enjoyment*, that might play an important role in addition to functional aspects [12]. These concerns are also revealed raising a halo effect: - I have this experience with the cashier lady who said – Fantastic! Fantastic!

Table 1. Evaluation of relevant dimensions of mobile service

| Service Experience Factors | Percentage of total respondents (44) that mentioned the factor |
|----------------------------|--|
| Social Environment | 65% |
| Privacy | 36% |
| Belonging | 52% |
| Being an Early adopter | 20% |
| Other's influence | 22% |
| Feel Info Excluded | 11% |
| Service Interface | 95% |
| Preferred treatment | 20% |
| Feel dematerialization | 30% |
| Feedback Information | 15% |
| Ease of use | 38% |
| Service Atmosphere | 70% |
| Safety | 15% |
| Feel dematerialization | 30% |
| Time Procedural | 15% |
| Service Usefulness | 70% |
| Information | 29% |
| Reward | 38% |
| Useless | 20% |
| Preferred treatment | 20% |
| Price | 18% |
| Cheap | 9% |
| Expensive | 6% |
| Cost Benefit | 18% |
| Alternative Channels | 27% |
| Memos | 7% |
| Other applications | 18% |

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Emotional Component | 50% |
| Enjoyment | 22% |
| Discontent | 6% |
| Feel Cheated | 2% |

5. CONCLUSION

The results of this study, although exploratory, show that a broader perspective of the mobile service experience is needed for the development of successful mobile services. Beyond the regular factors of *usefulness* and *ease of use* of mobile service interface, other experience factors become important in the mobile context for the design of effective mobile services and supporting technologies. According to the study, important factors promoting the mobile service experience are in the interaction with service touch points, managing their loyalty programs. The improved mobile service experience will contribute to the overall service development, considering the multiple dimensions of mobilization and social interaction. Consequently the value co-creation of the mobile service will also be enhanced.

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7. REFERENCES

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