

CUSTOMER-SUPPORT SERVICE FROM A RELATIONSHIP PERSPECTIVE: BEST PRACTICE FOR TELECOM

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Abstract

Customer-support service in companies has existed for a long time. Today, customer support in companies is differently outlined in comparison to the situation one decade ago; still phone calls or messages over Internet are most common. Customers may phone the companies and ask questions, they can complain and they can ask for support regarding technical devices. However, most research on the topic show customers being dissatisfied with the service they receive under the label of customer-support. One frequently mentioned reason is long queues for customers when they search for help and support on different issues, which again may be caused by the fact that companies in their attempts to renovate the function mostly seem to have focused on cost reducing, which has resulted in unsuccessful solutions seen from the customers' perspective. The purpose of the study is to find out the best-practice for customer-support service in the telecom industry; from the customers' perspective when the relationship strength is considered.

The study maintains a relationship perspective on the best practice for customer-support in telecom. Customers are asked to recall their customer-support experiences from different services and to include the consequences of the customer-support contact and handling. In order to apply the content analysis, innovative principles by Downe-Wamboldt (1992) and Granheim and Lundman (2004) are followed. When customers' experiences are related to actual behavior in customer relationships the results reveal five important areas for the innovation focus: (1) Identification of customers in connection to customer support, (2) Availability of Internet customer support, (3) Proactiveness, (4) Inter-activeness for full understanding and (5) Queues.

Keywords: Customer-support service, customer relationships, active and passive customers

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