An investigative study of customers' experience in customized customer contact services in Oporto hotels

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Abstract

Several hospitality industry operations face the concerns of coordinating and organizing a customized customer contact service point for their customers, especially with the connection with the customer preference and details. Hence, customers experience some series of intermittent communications when they come across various contact points within the hospitality industry. Thus, the purpose of this study was to concentrate on ascertaining the impact of customized customer contact services on customer's experience in the Oporto hospitality industry in Portugal. The study investigated two hundred participants, who are guests of hospitality industries in Oporto. The study adopted a descriptive analysis method to find the overall result of the study. The study further adopted T-test and ANOVA to carry out the analysis for this research. Findings from this work shows that guests of the hospitality industry highly acknowledged the importance of a customized contact service point and its positive impact on their lives. The study further showed that there is a significant difference between income of guests and how it impacts on their experience towards a customized contact point. Other findings showed that both age and gender of the customer does not necessarily impact on their experience towards a customized customer service contact point; thus the study shows no significant differences.

Keywords: Hotels, Oporto, tourism contact center, services, Portugal.

Introduction

Many firms face the issue of coordinating and management of information, most especially when it comes to dealing with issues that relate with customer details. This has most often lead to several customers experiencing some series of intermittent communications when they come across various contact points of the firm. To be specific, numerous firms largely implement contact services points as a means to interact with customers, such like, mails, e-mails, phone, website, face to face, live chat, social Media, etc., and this several points influence the way and manner in which firms and customers communicate with one another. The growing adoption of these several contact service points, enhance chances for firms to implement customer responsiveness. That is, a firm can adopt these customer contact points to interact their knowledge of, and the enablement to personal customer desires and needs. This can be a form of creating a customized customer contact service.

The major aim of customized customer contact service could be data gathered, maintained and retrieved via database marketing. Basically, the database of a firm has been observed to be the necessity for a successful firm (Read, 2011; Watjatrakul, 2018). Also, carrying out marketing database has improved from a constricted instrument adopted for a specialist direct marketing campaigns to a broadly adopted tool which has firm's broad influence to manage customer relationships. Generally, marketing with database continues to create value to a firm, enhance customer response and improve accountability. Although research has been carried out on either

database marketing or customer service, there has been smaller investigation linking customer contact service and database marketing (Zikmund *et al.,* 2013). To be precise, investigation has been carried out on similar fields such as customer relationship and technology (Stein & Ramaseshan, 2016); customer relationship management; using data in organizations (Robert-Lombard *et al,* 2012), service operation improvement (Cunha, 2019). Nonetheless, investigation is needed to properly comprehend these challenges of information management in the customized customer service framework.

Accessibility to data is a key to the success of any firm (Richards & Jones 2016). This research concentrates at the accessibility of data as a process to ensure customized customer contact service. Additionally, this availability of data and possibility for responsiveness to what the customer wants could lead to higher levels of customer satisfaction (Read, 2011). Nonetheless, in other for a company to provide value to customers', they need both internal management of data inside the company and quick real time sharing of that particular information. The structures and systems of a conventional firm do not always permit for this management and sharing of information. Investigation into customer desires and satisfaction shows heightened expectations of customer contact service via numerous contact points (Rajnish, Jayesh, Bagdare, 2017).

Most past studies had determined the gains of retaining a client to a firm and hence, stated that the longer a client sticks to a firm, the more satisfied than acquiring a new client (Rajnish, Jayesh, Bagdare, 2017). Hence, numerous firms all over the world are organizing the technologies to coordinate clients' services as a valuable asset to accomplish greater competitive edge. Rajnish, Jayesh, Bagdare (2017) in his work, "the adoption of information technology in customer service" found that information communication technology serves as an assistive tool in accomplishing client service advantage in various ways, such as effective and efficient operational responsibilities in the firm, automation of clerical duties, as well as generating of information and strategic transformation. Another finding from Christine's work is that technology helps to nurture client's service as an asset that is very valuable in separating inventories into more than one forms, such as transaction, distribution, relationship and strategic. Christine's work finally found that there is direct positive relational link between the optimization of technology in harnessing clients' services and the level of information management. The study finally concludes to display the adoption process of this technology and states that firms that have greater competitive advantage in business are utilizing technology in client services.

The variety of contact points in a firm shows that links with marketing database is complex. In an integrated firm, the marketing database is the hub which the wheel of continuous dissemination of data rotates and an important part that complements to the total customer contact management. This research study aims to find out how customized customer contact services impacts on customers' experience in hospitality industry.

Significance of the study

The variety of contact points in a firm shows that links with marketing database is complex. In an integrated firm, the marketing database is the hub which the wheel of continuous sharing of data rotates and an important part that complements to the total customer contact management. This research study will be significant to service industries by helping them understand how customized customer contact services can impact on customer's experience in hospitality industry; also, through the understanding of the perceptions of customers towards the customized contact points, hospitality industries will therefore fashion out best ways to appropriately contact, interact and serve their customers (Zikmund *et al.,* 2013).

Problem of the study

Many firms lack coordination and management capabilities in harnessing the information of customers, even with the rise of several customer service contact points and their huge adoption by firms. This mismanagement and non-coordination are as a result of the lack of understanding of the customers' experience and perception towards customized customer contact service point with hospitality industries. Also, there is a need to understand the impact of customized customer contact service points on customers' experience, choice and personality. In the absence of these understanding, customers thus experience sequence of intermittent communications when they come across the different contact points created by hospitality industries. This occurs because these industries lack the required knowledge of customer experience and perception towards customized customer contact service point, as well as the impact of these customized customer contact service points on customer's experience. Thus, there is a need for a customized customer contact service platform, this will enhance an appropriate interaction between firms and customers, with an end goal of tailoring the services of the firms to the personal customer desires and needs.

The objectives of this study will thus: Identify the impact of customized customer contact service point on customers experience and identify the perception of customer towards customized customer contact service according to their gender, age, and income and hotel preference.

This study will further answer the following research question: How does customized customer contact service point impact on customer experience? And what is the customer's perception on customized customer contact service based on their gender, age, and income and hotel preference?

The possible challenges that will be faced in this research is a situation of language barrier, as the researchers' Portugal language skill is not competent enough; nevertheless, efforts will be made to concentrate on sample participants with high competence in English language just like the researcher.

Finance is also another challenge faced by the researcher as the cost of covering all the sampled participants and collecting, storing and producing data is quite huge, thus, the researcher worked around the confines of his means during the research. Another possible challenge that the researcher might face will be time, as such an intensive investigation will require more time and the duration allocated for this research could be challenging.

State of the Art

This section of this thesis will further review relevant related literatures to set the background of this study. Findings and recommendations pertinent to this literature will be reviewed and knowledge and ideas on the subject matter will be established.

Customer Relationship through Customized Contact Point

Managing customer relationship is an ideology that has existed around management area which sorts to build long lasting relationship with clients of an organization. Ensuring and managing client's loyalty can be seen as a technical pattern that is connected with building enabling shareholder value through the advancement of appropriate coordination with major client segments and clients (Leigh & Tanner 2014; Rahimi & Kozak, 2017). Managing client's loyalty according to Payne & Frow (2013) is a series of actions of business enhanced by the combination

of both the technologies and process linked by techniques and built to ensure company performance in client management field. Thus, to manage a successful customer relationship, a firm should aim at deciding the needs and wants of their clients, and further integrating these needs and wants with the company's strategy, culture, personnel and process (McLauchlin, 2010).

Akroush *et al.,* (2011) posited major similar components of managing the framework of customer's relations with their firm. The components of which are: appropriate customer's focus, organizations of CRM, management of knowledge and technology focused CRM (Rajnish, Jayesh, Bagdare, 2017; Cunha, 2019). Nonetheless, past studies had shown that the management of a clients' loyalty increases efficiency of finance in marketing process and pricing (Matthew *et al.,* 2000); increases the differentiation of product, dedication of client, loyalty and customer satisfaction *(*Akroush *et al.,* 2011); ensures long-term profit (Leigh & Tanner 2014); ensures the management of knowledge (Lin & Wu, 2011) enables acquisition, development, retention and decision of clients (Tanner *et al.,* 2005) and leads to improved successful performance of a firm (Leigh & Tanner 2014).

Maintaining client is highly important for a firm to remain competitive. This has currently become more vital compared to acquiring new client. Based on an investigative study by Lemon & Verhoef (2016) retaining a customer has been evaluated by four scopes, which is, the total satisfaction of a firm; word of mouth that is very positive, repetitive purchase motives; and loyalty to an organization. In a current study by Leigh & Tanner (2014) it has be established that there is a significant link between quality dedication, trust and maintaining and satisfying a client and a future adoption of a good. An early study has proven that, dedication and trust directly lead to cooperative attitude which are appropriate to the success of a marketing relationship and vital in the developing and managing and a long-term link with clients (Robert-Lombard and Du Plessis, 2012).

Maintaining clients' loyalty is a technique aimed at maintaining ensuring a long-term retention of clients. Retaining a client is the direct opposite of client defection. A huge rate of retention is automatically equal to a low rate of defection. Nonetheless, retaining clients is not a novel concept amongst most firms, but the current market of today needs a new method to build and maintain clients' loyalty. A proper customer retention method does not only maintain the clients' loyalty but also encourages the sales of more inventories to that client as the need calls for it. Four proactive structures as postulated by financial service firm are at the centre of an effective program (Akroush *et al.,* 2011; Rahimi & Kozak 2017). These are: targeting and tailoring (which helps to know the attitudes and priorities of your clients); improving the client's experience (ensure the inventories are in line with client needs); ensure retention (include client retention in the firms' client service policies and engage the staff of the firm (build in the staff of the organization the sense of client relationship ownership). A practical research in Dubai showed that 46% of clients that switched providers believe that their old firm did not try any attempt to stop them from changing to a new firm. Research has also showed that 56% of research respondents in Dubai believe that their firms never properly give rewards for loyalty (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Most past studies had determined the gains of retaining a client to a firm and hence, stated that the longer a client sticks to a firm, the more satisfied than acquiring a new client (Frawley, 2014). Hence, numerous firms all over the world are organizing the technologies to coordinate clients' services as a valuable asset to accomplish greater competitive edge. Lemon & Verhoef (2016). in his work, "the adoption of information technology in customer service" found that information communication technology serves as an assistive tool in accomplishing client service advantage in various ways, such as effective and efficient operational responsibilities in the firm, automation

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Cunha (2019) in her work, "strategic implementation and IT: gaining competitive advantage from the hotel reservation process", posits that strategic achievement and implementation of operations have been built on the trending period of the technology era. This pointed out as far back as 2001 on the usefulness of reservation management and it's potential. The author stated that operators in the hotel needed to comprehend how technology modifies the entire service system in the service business and also further pointed out technology as an alternative in acquiring competitive advantage.

Matthew *et al,* (2000) examines the various types of loyalty programmes that are available in the England hotel sector. The study proposed that for a firm to minimize their cost in stimulating continuous business, loyalty programmes should be part of the business policy and surrounding in which they function. There are various kinds of loyalty programmes, and this is according to the way and manner they gather, evaluate and utilizes the customer data. The study further developed a conceptual framework trying to relate the management of information together with customization of such customers' information. The proposition in this study aligns with the debate that there is no one particular technique for the improvement of a successful loyalty programme in a hotel sector. Propositions were raised regarding a loyalty programme that is effective and it can be measured, the characteristic of a market, the intensity of an information and customization level and how it can impact on the loyalty programme in a positive way.

The increasing value of the service industry in all the world economy has brought about a significant portion of attention in such industry. Practically, numerous service industries have tried to and adopted different improvement programs to enable their works, performance and operations in other to attain a competitive business edge. Many researchers identify that service operation that are connected with clients, here the clients as subjects, functions in the service operation scale motivated by the aim of availing their added values (Cunha, 2019); this study further proposes an improvement of service operation program through objective mapping of the service experience of client through the eye of the customer journey.

Frawley, (2014) also in their research study on the impact of customer management system in increasing the retention of customer; projects more ideas on management of customer relationship and also stating that there is a need to improve customer service quality in a firm.

Matthew *et al,* (2000) work on the four faces of customization portrays on the limitations on poor implementation of customer customization strategies. This source created an eye opener on the wastage that could occur if managers or companies wrongly implement a bad strategy towards customizing customer-company relation.

Coelho and Henseler (2012) work on creating customer loyalty through service customization; developed a model of customer relationship outcomes on service customization and the efficacy of service customization. It further gave more insight relatively to the size and nature of customization.

So many scholars and researchers have suggested that client's customizations will soon displace the practices of conventional market segmentation (Franke *et al.,* 2016); the major lead on this development are due to the growth of the technological industry in production and communication sector on one side and the growing differing client's choice on the other side. The customization includes gathering information of a clients' choice and needs and distributing a personalized inventory that particularly suit those needs. Franke *et al.,* (2016) argues that this aligns to a more suited choice match and therefore to a huge worth for the client. Nonetheless, most significant downfalls in mass customization, such as the ones observed in recent times puts a question mark on this argument. Do clients really identify their needs in a very precise manner? These questions and arguments have raised doubting cases that subtly contest the value of customization as a technique for marketing. Franke *et al.,* (2016) further found that customized inventories leads to a significantly huge gain for the client in terms of their intention to purchase, willingness to pay and behavior towards the goods than standard goods. The gains are huge if clients have a proper insight to their own choices, a proper ability to communicate their needs to the producers and greater product inclusion. Their findings suggest that customization of clients' need holds the possibility to be a strong technique for marketing if the conditions are met.

Another case suggests that firms that aim to serve different client needs through creating personalized goods should try to accommodate their customization structure in a pattern that openly solve the clients' inability to provide accurate need information (Franke *et al.,* 2016); this can be attained through deviating from client-active means of needs transmission in which the client must state their need in an active manner, rather depending on options such as smart links or recommender structure, that need low skill and stress from the client than a stressful self-design processes. The study further suggested an alternative which is to create a toolkit for client design which are openly made to assist the client comprehend and communicate their needs in a more appropriate manner.

Watjatrakul (2018) posits that customization of service ensures the users to customize services for their particular needs, and service industries can also adopt the customize output to provide higher services for their clients. Lower concern has been given to the issues that cause clients to customize services in a different way and this customize output had affected their intention to adopt such services. This work proposes a novel paradigm to evaluate the impact of gathering information and clients' experience on the customization of service i.e. the configuration of services and custom outputs, and the impact of the customization of services on client's intention to use a product or service.

Akroush *et al.,* (2011) in their work focuses on the success of mass customization to increase multi retailing as an encompassing technique that guides online initiatives especially in the area of customer value. Optimizing the technique will create an assimilation of the various aspects and enhancement of e-customer services. There study found that the total success of the larger Web market is not justified by company's vast relationship, but by the improvement of valuable standards which permit to greater customized bundling of products and services.

Customer Experience and Customized Contact Service Point

To understand customer experience and their journey it is important for organization to begin to combine various functionality of businesses, this is because, customers nowadays communicate with organizations via various contact points in numerous channels and platforms, also the experience of customers are now more social in nature (Cunha, 2019).

Frawley (2014) customers' experience is seen to be an encompassing and interactive process, supported via empathy and reasoning clues, controlled by the customer and the attributes of the context, which results into peculiar and pleasure or distaste memories. The study further opined that there is a need to consider and manage customer experience as an entire technical process for providing customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, competitive merit and customer differentiation. Akroush *et al.,* (2011) described customer experience as any response that tends to be internal and subjective which customer possess as a result of a direct contact of indirect contact with an organization; they further stated that an experience takes place due to a contact or being in connection with a thing or an event, which create empathy, thoughts, attitudinal, reasoning and relational values. Frawley, (2014) also explained customers experience to be a connection between a firm and a customer, this could be a mixture of a firms' actual performance, the mind activated, and a feeling of empathy evoked, all of these are intuitively evaluated against the expectation of the customer which cuts across all connections contact.

Frawley and Frawley (2014) stated that the gateway to attracting customer and creating a durable firm is by producing a encouraging customer experience that support current engagement that emanates from "like" from face book to the decision of acquisition. Cunha (2019) in their work found that no matter the alteration that have arisen in the past decade with respect to customer's experience and expectation in hospitality industries, there study found out that the value of money and major products still act a vital role in the total satisfaction of customer with budget hotels.

Frawley (2014) their study discovered several elements that surrounds customer experience service points. Their study found such elements to include technological, interactive, process, customer-employee communication, customer-customer communication, product interaction, etc., findings from this work further showed that numerous contact channel consist of various combination of those elements.

A study has proven that firms have not finally organized their clients' data and maximize clients' relationship for onward loyalty (Frawley, 2014). To implement a technique in line with the management of a client, firms need to be poised to invest into newer technology to help them: comprehend the clients' attitude; group clients in other to determine the similarities between the groups which can be targeted in a joint manner; allocate values to the clients that are segmented, predict the experience of customer and implement strategies that achieves the preservation and satisfaction of customers; and determine and optimize continuous sale of both new and existing product to existing customer in other to improved sales. Many firms are designed for novel client acquisition. Nonetheless, current study argued that retaining client plays a huge part in the profitability of the firm (Cunha, 2019). A database marketing research institute found that everyone dollar paid for retaining a customer invariably improves profits more than every five dollar that will be spent in getting newer client.

Customers' view on customized contact service point based on gender, age, income and hotel preference

Gagnon and Roh (2016), as their work examined the connection between clients' view of customization and customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry; their study found that customers in USA hotel had good experience regarding customization and their general experience as a customer.

Ganesan *et al* (2015) findings regarding income showed that there is no significant difference in the opinion of customers in relation to their income per month.

Akroush *et al.,* (2011) found in their work aimed at finding the correlation difference of gender and customization, they found that male and female customers showed positive but different attitudes towards the various contact service points provided to them by the hospitality industry; Wolf and Zhang (ibid) further suggested that owners or managers of hospitality industries should adopt various list and design techniques to lure customers. Thus, this implies that customized customer contact point impact on the customer experience towards a hospitality industry.

Meyer and Schwager (2014) in their study found that, customer experience is impacted through varieties of hospitalities and firms touch points; this experience could also be altered overtime, within the customer's life.

Methodology

Methods applied towards accomplishing this thesis study, such as research design, data collection tool, analysis and techniques for the data sampling would be covered in this section of the study.

According to Cunha (2019) they described research design as a blueprint that is made at the beginning stage of an investigation and should be used as a guide to complete the investigation. In designing a research, several frameworks can be considered, such as, explorative research, descriptive research and some others. Explorative research is helpful for getting familiar with perceptions and subjects, adopting secondary data tools such as, reviewing of literatures (Cunha, 2019). Descriptive research is used when analyzing the attributes of a specific group, predicts and make estimations on individuals that acts in a particular way within a group. It is also utilized when analyzing the relationship that exists between two variables.

Selecting a research design should be based on the objectives and aims of the research investigation (Cunha, 2019). Regarding this study, the major aim concentrates on investigating how the impact of customized customer contact services on customer's experience in Oporto hospitality industry as well finding customers opinion on customized contact points based on their gender, age and income. The aim and objectives of this study will be met through adopting descriptive research design. Additionally, the body of literature have been made through the use of explorative research design for establishing the background for assessment of the capacity of the entire investigation. Both research designs have been chosen due to time frame and available source of finance, thus they suit to cover the goals of this current investigation.

Research could adopt both qualitative and / or quantitative. Gathering and investigating data, which includes the examination and calculation of occurrences and displaying factual evaluations of progression of numerical data are all the functions of quantitative research method (Cunha, 2019).

Considering the research objective of this investigation which focuses on evaluating phenomenon, relationship and variance between variables, thus, it was pertinent to adopt quantitative research. Cunha, 2019 stated that the collection of data in quantitative research involves several forms such as survey, experiment and tracking. But the questionnaire is the most widely and popular adopted tool used to collect data in quantitative research in both business, marketing and social science researches. This thesis study also adopted the questionnaire instrument to elicit response from the sampled participants

A simple random sampling technique was selected for this study. This study focused on customers of hospitality industries in Oporto, Portugal, as they contributed to the population of this research. Since all the customers have equal chances to be selected, a simple random sampling method was adopted for this study.

Questionnaire Design

In formulation of the questionnaire used for this study, it was important that careful design and avoidance of errors should be observed in other to evade numerous issues in the following processes of the research investigation (Cunha, 2019) as the steps described in their work:

Step 1: Identify the data to be sought. Cunha (2019) stated that categorizing the type of data to be sorted out is needed, and also the hypothesis of an investigation is the basic factor that determines the type of data that will be needed, and which relationship will be tested. This research study examines the impact of customized customer contact services on customer's experience in Oporto hospitality industry as well finding customers opinion on customized contact points based on their gender, age and income.

Step 2: Determining the kind of questionnaire and administering approach. Kumar et al (2010) categorized questionnaire into several forms, structured non-disguised questionnaire, structured disguised questionnaire, non-structured non-disguised questionnaire and non-structured disguised questionnaire. In this study, a structured non-disguised questionnaire form was adopted. According to Cunha (2019), a structured non-disguised questionnaire form is type whose listed questions are in a well pre-arranged manner where the main purpose of the investigation is known to the respondents. The authors enlisted various forms of collecting information such as via email, post office, self-administering etc., strategies for collecting data also contributes a huge role in the rate of response from the respondents. After, deliberate thoughts and evaluations on the various gathering techniques, a self-administered form of collecting primary data was used.

Step 3: Content of the separate items. When constructing the individual item question of the questionnaire, the researcher took cognizance of Cunha (2019), who stated that item questions should guarantee that the necessary answer for the research questions will be received and should never contain more or less than necessary details require. This is to avoid confusion to the respondents.

Step 4: Determine the scale of response. Apart from the demographic part, Likert scale was applied to all the major section of the questionnaire. The authors stated how easy Likert scales are used and run, and how unequally subjects are disagreed and agreed upon; it also displays the conviction rate and level to which the subject matter is channeled towards the issues under investigation. Five-point Likert scale was used for this study. Ranging from 1-5 i.e. strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly disagree, to examine the degree of responsiveness and comparability of response.

Step 5: Determine the item question wordings: The researcher adhered to the authors who suggested that the questions should be brief in other to avoid confusing the minds of the respondents. Cunha (2019) states that question should not be above 20 words. He also states that words should be simple to grasp in other to ensure clarity and evade misconceptions.

Step 6: Determine item questions sequence. This study adopted a funnel strategy, which is a very decent manner to construct a huge arrangement of questions. This is arranging the questions

from a broad item questions on the subject and gradually trimming down to a specific direct question on similar subject (Faed & Forbes, 2010).

Step 7: Layout and re-examination of the steps. The layout of the questionnaire in terms of dimensions of the text, items layout, and visual quality was all considered in the designing of the questionnaire. This is important if the questionnaire is seen to be vital enough to permit participants the opportunity to respond. The questionnaire also contains an introductory section that explains the aim of the researcher in other to win the trust of the respondent. This also was ensured by the provision of confidentiality disclaimer so as to whim support form relevant authorities aa well as the respondents.

Cunha (2019) states that investigators should ensure that minor errors are witnessed in the initial questionnaire draft, therefore, to evade all misunderstanding, these steps above should be revisited and maintained after the questionnaire formulation.

Step 8: Pre-test and piloting: Pre-test was executed in other to validate the questionnaire. The authors narrated the importance of pretesting the questionnaire before it is used to collect data from the audience; vital data are gathered, wordings are properly arranged and understood. The questionnaire was shared to two-free person before the main distribution and they stated that they cannot understand how to make final-final corrections, and few copies of questionnaire were further pretested with target audience closely linked to major study audience. This approach continued until respondents didn't have any improvement to further make.

Adopting Cunha (2019) steps, the questionnaire was created on a two-page questionnaire that is shared into 2 sections. First section, which is the demographic section covers the preferences related to the subject matter and characteristics of the respondents, such. The second section of the questionnaire contains questions that are necessary to capture sampled participants responses related to their perceptions and awareness of the subject matter related to this thesis research. In this pilot study, the questionnaire was prepared in English, and 200 copies were shared to customers of hospitality industries in Oporto

Faed & Forbes (2010). described sampling as the small percentage of the total amount of population of concern which the researcher is interested in, for the aim of determining the overall conclusion of the population. The researcher studied and adopted Churchill and Akroush *et al.,* (2011) five steps for selecting a sample.

Step 1: Determining the target population. Marianna (2015) explained a target population as a collection of a particular people that will be the beneficiary of the research investigation. Knowing how important the population of this study is, this work recognizes customers of hospitality industries in Oporto as the population of the study.

Step 2: Sample frame. The list of elements drawn from an actual sample is known to be a sample frame (Cunha, M. 2019). This study adopted a random sampling strategy.

Step 3: Sample Method: A survey mainly applied in broad activity areas, such as supermarkets, busy streets, lobby of buildings or even school areas and public spaces is known as mall intercept (Park & Kim, 2013; Tanner *et al.*, 2015) this study therefore, provided questionnaires for respondents in hotel areas, where many of the customers agreed to fill it out in the reception, cafeteria, porter section or lobby.

Step 4: Sample size. What sample size should be covered? is usually the concern of many researchers. Park & Kim (2013), Tanner *et al.*, (2015) however stated that no conclusive answer has been reached regarding this, however, the size could be well defined by the exact precision and level of confidence desired; the higher the required accuracy, the higher the size of the sample needed. This study thus shared questionnaire to 200 respondents as the sample of this study.

Step 5: Collection of data from sample. As it is known that investigation was conducted on customers of hospitality industry in Oporto. Data were collected from customer found within and outside hotel industries in Oporto, and also, 2 months was approximately used to collect data for this thesis, February and March 2018, from 9am to 2pm in Oporto, Portugal time.

The issues related to ethics in a research work cannot be overlooked, as they relate to the regulations and standardization involved in an investigation, as well as the trustworthiness of a research piece. This work considered several ethics related to research as explained by Park & Kim (2013) which are; anonymous and confidentiality of the data collected, provision of clarity on the aim of the research to the sample respondents and the participation of respondents was not done on a compulsion base, the collected data was not kept beyond the required period, data was compiled, collated and imputed without alterations and manipulations into the database and the collected data was only used for the purpose for which it was gathered.

Empirical Analysis

The aim of this chapter is to examine the collected data through the questionnaire instruments. The data were further collated and stored into the SPSS database. This section analyzed the demographic features of participants on the study, descriptive analysis of the responses of the participants in accordance to the Likert scale measurement. Additionally, T-test statistics will be conducted for variables with only two groups such as gender etc. Additionally, ANOVA analysis will be conducted on the other variables with more than two groups such like, age, income of customer etc. Finally, variables with significant difference will be analyzed to determine variations and relationships amongst and within groups.

The demographics of our sample have been analyzed with respect to their various characteristics. Their findings displayed thus, 55.5% (111) are male participants and 44.5% (89) are female participants in the study. Based on the age of the participants, 12.5% (25) are between the ages of 20-26 years, 40.0% (80) and 47.5% (95) all are between the ages of 27-33 and 34 and above respectively. Based on the monthly income of the participants, participants who earn between 500-1500 euro are 33.0% (66) while 53.0% (106) and 14.0% (28) earn between 1501-4000 euro and 4001 euro and above respectively.

The most popular approach to evaluate the reliability and consistency with regards to the scale of a questionnaire is the use of a Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Cunha (2019) states that Cronbach's alpha coefficient examines how well the items in a questionnaire set are linked to one another. To also measure the internal stability and connectiveness in an instrument, we also adopt the Cronbach alpha.

Table 1. Reliability test

N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
20	.721

The result of the scale examination of the instrument adopted in the study appears to be larger than 0.7 mark-up standard for research study (Cunha, 2019).

Descriptive study for the scales

This part of this research analysis investigates on the rate of response of the participants with respect to the Likert scale measurement of the instrument. This section measures participants' opinions on the impact of customized customer contact services on customer's experience in hospitality industry and their perception towards customized customer contact point based on their gender, age and salary income.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of participants response on each item scale

	Items	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	Std. Div.
Q1	Hotel industry try to engage with the customers more personally	4.3150	.77380
Q2	Hotel industries try to tailor their services and products to my need as their customer.	4.4350	.74737
Q3	Hotel industries adapts the type of service to meet customer unique needs.	4.3300	.81512
Q4	Hotel industries offer services and product that satisfy customer's specific needs.	4.3650	.80312
Q5	Hotel industries send customized information to customer during their web navigation periods.	4.4350	.73380
Q6	It is easier for the customers to decide what product or services to purchase from hotel industries because of their customized banner messages.	4.3850	.70659
Q7	As a customer I know my target categories because of the customized banners.	4.3000	.78298
Q8	Hotel industries provide tailored and personalized offers to their customers.	4.3750	.75313
Q9	Hotel industries offer products and services that satisfy the specific needs of customer.	4.3300	.70966
Q10	Hotel companies fulfills the expectation of their customers.	4.3350	.73858
Q11	Hotel industries customize the services for the customers.	4.3900	.66340
Q12	Hotel industries vary the actual service offerings on several dimensions depending on the needs of the customer.	4.3050	.75153
Q13	Hotel industries treat each customer with a unique approach.	4.2450	.79254
Q14	Hotel industries usually adapt the type of service to meet the unique needs of each customer.	4.2450	.80512
Q15	Hotel industries adopt a wide variety of strategies in attempting to satisfy the customer.	4.2900	.74746
Q16	Hotel industries easily suggest wide variety of services to meet each customer's needs.	4.5050	.60148
Q17	Hotel industries maintain database that contain a comprehensive data of their customers.	4.3000	.71593
Q18	Hotel industries easily reach their customers through a customized contact point.	4.0900	.73799

Q19	It is easy for hotel industries to identify different customer types, because they know all their customers.	4.0150	.73994
Q20	Hotel industries have broad knowledge of their customers.	4.0802	.82890

Average mean = 4.08176

Table 3 above displayed the descriptive statistics with respect to the impact of customized customer contact point on customer's experience, as well as describing customer's perception towards customized customer contact service point. The average mean scores of the respondents shows a score of 4.081, this appears to be above the Likert scale score of 4.00, this statistically means that participants majorly agreed on the positive impacts of the hotel industry's customized customer contact service points for customers. More so, participants further showed positive perception towards customized contact points of hotel industries, this can be seen on how they mostly agreed on the questionnaire items that described the level of customized contact service points provided by hotel industries to customer.

The various individual items showed a mean score above 4.00 and this displays that the participants believed that the hotel industry adapts and tailor the kind of services needed to meet customers' unique wants. The participant also agreed that the hotel industry offer services ad products such as customized banners that assist and update customers on target categories. Q16, Q2, Q5, Q6, Q4, Q11, Q3, Q1, Q10, Q9, Q8, Q12, Q17 and Q15 all showed a means score 4.5050, 4.4350, 4.4350, 4.3850, 4.3650, 4.3900, 4.3300, 4.3150, 4.3350, 4.3300, 4.3750, 4.3050, 4.3000 and 4.2900 respectively; these question items approximately displayed a mean score to prove that participants strongly agreed and also agreed that hotel industries easily suggests wide range of services in order to meet the needs of their customers. Also, participants strongly believe that hotel industries provide their customers with customized information during their web navigation periods; additionally, participants believe that hotel industries fulfill customer's expectation, creates customers with customized service experience, ensuring a more tailored and personalized offer to the customers. The table 3 above further showed that participants agreed that hotel industries maintains database that harness the comprehensive data of customers, also they agreed that hotel industries adopts variety of strategies to meet customer needs and also believed that hotel industries engages customers on a more personal level.

Analysis of the customers' perception towards customized customer contact service points based on some variables.

This section of the research study describes participants opinion on customize contact service points based on their demographic variables of this study, which are gender, age and monthly salary of the participants of this study.

Analysis of customers' perception towards customized contact service points based on gender characteristics

For analyzing the mean score of two different set in a group variable such as male and female group, independent sample T-test was adopted. This analysis will portray if significant differences occur on the mean score of both set in the group variable.

Table 3. T-test analysis on gender group statistics

Q	Items	Gender	Mean	*P value*
1		Male	4.3423	.679

	Hotel industry try to engage with the customers more personally	Female	4.2809	
2	Hotel industries try to tailor their services and products to my need as their customer.	Male	4.4144	.362
		Female	4.4607	
3	Hotel industries adapts the type of service to meet customer unique needs.	Male	4.3243	.992
		Female	4.3371	
4	Hotel industries offer services and product that satisfy customer's specific needs.	Male	4.3514	.104
		Female	4.3820	
5	Hotel industries send customized information to customer during their web navigation periods.	Male	4.4234	.341
		Female	4.4494	
6	It is easier for the customers to decide what product or services to purchase from hotel industries because of their customized banner messages.	Male	4.3784	.759
		Female	4.3933	
7	As a customer I know my target categories because of the customized banners.	Male	4.3243	.736
		Female	4.2697	
8	Hotel industries provide tailored and personalized offers to their customers.	Male	4.3694	.391
		Female	4.3820	
9	Hotel industries offer products and services that satisfy the specific needs of customer.	Male	4.3153	.567
		Female	4.3483	
10	Hotel companies fulfills the expectation of their customers.	Male	4.3243	.549
		Female	4.3483	
11	Hotel industries customize the services for the customers.	Male	4.4054	.089
		Female	4.3708	
12	Hotel industries vary the actual service offerings on several dimensions depending on the needs of the customer.	Male	4.3604	.399
		Female	4.2360	
13	Hotel industries treat each customer with a unique approach.	Male	4.2793	.579
		Female	4.2022	
14	Hotel industries usually adapt the type of service to meet the unique needs of each customer.	Male	4.2342	.247
		Female	4.2584	
15	Hotel industries adopt a wide variety of strategies in attempting to satisfy the customer.	Male	4.2342	.788
		Female	4.3596	
16	Hotel industries easily suggest wide variety of services to meet each customer's needs.	Male	4.5676	.087
		Female	4.4270	
17	Hotel industries maintain database that contain a comprehensive data of their customers.	Male	4.2523	.782
		Female	4.3596	
18	Hotel industries easily reach their customers through a customized contact point.	Male	4.1081	.656
		Female	4.0674	
19	It is easy for hotel industries to identify different customer types, because they know all their customers.	Male	4.0360	.996
		Female	3.9888	
20	Hotel industries have broad knowledge of their customers.	Male	4.0472	.407
		Female	4.1235	

Significance diff. 0.05

From table 4 above, it showed that participants responses based on their gender classifications (sig. 2 tailed), proves no significance difference according to the P value score of both male and female. The P score values of participants on all the items regarding customers perception toward customized customer contact service points appears to be (P > 0.05). This statistically means that male and female participants hold similar views on their perception towards the impact of customized customer contact service points of the hotel industry. Thus, there is a relationship regarding gender responses on the opinion of customized contact service point impact on customers of the hotel industry.

Analysis of customer's perception towards customized contact service points based on monthly salary characteristics

For analyzing the mean score of three different set in a group variable such as 500-1500 euro, 1501-4000 euro and 4001 euro and above group, ANOVA analysis was adopted. This analysis will portray if significant differences occur on the mean score amongst the set in the group variable. This analysis showed how the monthly earnings of the participants affected their opinions towards customized contact service points provided by hotel industries. Thus, from the table 5, result showed that monthly salary classification (sig. 2 tailed), proved that significant differences in opinions occurred between participants; Q2 and Q11. The P score values for these items are < 0.05 standard significant score set for this study, displaying 0.018 and 0.019 respectively. This therefore, statistically means that the salary earning level of participants impacted on their perception towards customized contact service points of hotel industries, thus, they hold no relationship in opinion based on their monthly earning levels such as 500-1500 euro, 1501-4000 euro and 4001 euro and above. Their differences in opinions ensued on agreeing whether the hotel industries tailors their service and products to their need as a customer, and whether the hotel industries customize their services for the customers.

Table 5 further displayed a mean score for Q2, 500-1500 euro = $\overline{x}$ 4.2424, 1501-4000 euro =4.4906 and 4001 euro and above = 4.6786 accordingly. This statistically $\overline{x}$ showed that participants that earn $\overline{x}$ above 4000 euro majorly agreed that hotel industries try to tailor their services and $\overline{x}$ products to their needs as a customer, also, participants who earned between 1501-4000 euro slightly agreed more than the participants that earn lesser; agreeing that hotel industries make efforts to tailor their services and products to their needs as their customer.

Also, table result showed that mean score for Q11, 500-1500 euro $\overline{x}$ = 4.5606, 1501-4000 $\overline{x}$ euro = 4.3396 and 4001 euro and above = 4.1786 accordingly. This statistically means participants that earn $\overline{x}$ between 500-1500 euro majorly agreed that hotel industries customize their $\overline{x}$ services for their customers. Also, participants who earn between 1501-4000 mostly agreed more than the participants that earn above them on hotel industries customizing their services for their customers.

Analysis of customers' perception towards customized contact service points based on age characteristics

For analyzing the mean score of three different set in a group variable such as 20-26 years, 27-33 years and 34 years and above group, ANOVA analysis was adopted. This analysis will portray if significant differences occur on the mean score amongst the set in the group variable.

Table 4. ANOVA analysis on age group statistics

Q	Item	Age	Mean	P value
1	Hotel industry try to engage with the customers more personally	20-26 years	4.2000	.650
		27-33 years	4.3625	
		34 years above	4.3053	
2	Hotel industries try to tailor their services and products to my need as their customer.	20-26 years	4.3600	.751
		27-33 years	4.4125	
		34 years above	4.4737	
3	A hotel industry adapts the type of service to meet customer unique needs.	20-26 years	4.4400	.772
		27-33 years	4.3125	
		34 years above	4.3158	

4	Hotel industries offer services and product that satisfy customer's specific needs.	20-26 years 27-33 years 34 years above	4.4000 4.3750 4.3474	.949
5	Hotel industries send customized information to customer during their web navigation periods.	20-26 years 27-33 years 34 years above	4.6400 4.4500 4.3684	.252
6	It is easier for the customers to decide what product or services to purchase from hotel industries because of their customized banner messages.	20-26 years 27-33 years 34 years above	4.2800 4.4500 4.3579	.507
7	As a customer I know my target categories because of the customized banners.	20-26 years 27-33 years 34 years above	4.2400 4.2500 4.3579	.611
8	Hotel industries provide tailored and personalized offers to their customers.	20-26 years 27-33 years 34 years above	4.4400 4.3375 4.3895	.612
9	Hotel industries offer products and services that satisfy the specific needs of customer.	20-26 years 27-33 years 34 years above	4.5200 4.3250 4.2842	.336
10	Hotel companies fulfills the expectation of their customers.	20-26 years 27-33 years 34 years above	4.5600 4.4125 4.2105	.052
11	Hotel industries customize the services for the customers.	20-26 years 27-33 years 34 years above	4.5600 4.3750 4.3579	.388
12	Hotel industries vary the actual service offerings on several dimensions depending on the needs of the customer.	20-26 years 27-33 years 34 years above	4.2400 4.3250 4.3053	.886
13	Hotel industries treat each customer with a unique approach.	20-26 years 27-33 years 34 years above	4.2000 4.3500 4.1684	.307
14	Hotel industries usually adapt the type of service to meet the unique needs of each customer.	20-26 years 27-33 years 34 years above	4.2800 4.3125 4.1789	.538
15	Hotel industries adopt a wide variety of strategies in attempting to satisfy the customer.	20-26 years 27-33 years 34 years above	4.2800 4.3000 4.2842	.988
16	Hotel industries easily suggest wide variety of services to meet each customer's needs.	20-26 years 27-33 years 34 years above	4.5200 4.4875 4.5158	.945
17	Hotel industries maintain database that contain a comprehensive data of their customers.	20-26 years 27-33 years 34 years above	4.2800 4.2500 4.3474	.664
18	Hotel industries easily reach their customers through a customized contact point.	20-26 years 27-33 years 34 years above	3.9200 4.1500 4.0842	.396
19	It is easy for hotel industries to identify different customer types, because they know all their customers.	20-26 years 27-33 years 34 years above	3.8800 4.0875 3.9895	.427
20	Hotel industries have broad knowledge of their customers.	20-26 years 27-33 years 34 years above	4.0833 4.0921 4.0690	.984

Significant point < 0.05

From the table above, it shows that participants responses based on their age classifications (sig. 2 tailed), proves no significance difference according to the P value score of ages 20-26, 27-33 and 34 and above participants. The P score values of participants on all the items regarding customers perception toward customized customer contact service points appears to be (P > 0.05). This statistically means that participants between and amongst ages 20-26, 27-33 and 34 and above all hold similar views on their perception towards the impact of customized customer contact service points of hotel industries. Thus, there is a relationship regarding age responses on the opinion of customized contact service point impact on customers of hotel businesses.

Discussion of Results

From the outcomes above it can be seen that customers believe that hotel industries provide tailored customized customer contact service point for their customers. Table 3 showed the level of positive acknowledgement shown to hotel industries by the customers chosen for this study. It showed that customers in Oporto believes that hospitality industries treat customers with unique strategies, and the hospitality industries creates customize contact service points for their customers. The study also found that hospitality industries in Oporto fulfills customers expectation and also provides customized banners for their customers, so as to enable the customer purchase products and services from the industries. This finding is very similar to Meyer and Schwager (2014) as their study found that, customer experience is impacted through varieties of hospitalities and firms touch points; this experience could also be altered overtime, within the customer's life.

Another finding from this study showed that there is no significant difference between male and female response towards the impact of customized customer contact service point. This finding contradicts Gagnon and Roh (2016), findings, their work investigated the correlation difference of gender and customization, and they found that male and female customers showed positive but different attitudes towards the various contact service points provided to them by the hospitality industry; Wolf and Zhang (ibid) further suggested that owners or managers of hospitality industries should adopt various list and design techniques to lure customers. Thus, this implies that customized customer contact point impact on the customer experience towards a hospitality industry.

Another finding from this study showed that there is significant difference between the opinion of customers that are on different salary level, as it impacts on their experience as a customer. In statement about the hospitality industry tailoring their services and products to their customers need, customers that earn quite higher believes that hospitality industries provide them with services in well-tailored manner. Also, in statement that states if hospitality industries customized their services for the customers; this study showed that customers that earned lower believes that the services they receive from the hospitality industries are customized to their advantage. Ganesan *et al* (2015) had contradictory findings regarding income, as they found that there is no significant difference in the opinion of customers in relation to their income per month.

Table 4 also shows that based on the customers various age groups there is no significant difference, as they all have similar opinion regarding the impact of customized contact service point on customer experience. This work goes in tandem with Gagnon and Roh (2016), as their work examined the connection between clients' view of customization and customer satisfaction in the us hospitality industry; their study found that customers in USA hotel had good experience regarding customization and their general experience as a customer.

The implication of this study shows to improve the understanding and insights of providers of services to customers through as customized medium. Thus, managers in the field of hospitality industry therefore should harness all available contact levels and also focus on some demographic areas, as this will improve on service contact point and the quality of services in general. Demographics assist managers in finding out the feasibility of several segment of the market and how great to penetrate into said market (Marianna, 2015).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is pertinent to conduct an investigation into customized customer contact service as it is very relevant in the sense that customer service is very significant and requires firms to inwardly ensure customer satisfaction and a positive experience, so as to create and provide quality in a competitive market setting.

Customer service is an activity and process that enables the customers to engage in a business activity with a firm. To be specific, there have been an increase in customer contact services, which is, individual interaction channels such as mail, phone, web and face-to-face which influence the way a customer may communicate with a firm. This increase of customer contact points creates chances for a firm to practice customer responsiveness. That is, a firm can adopt these customer contact points to interact their knowledge of, and the enablement to personal customer desires and needs. This can be a form of creating a customized customer contact service. Thus, as stated in the objective of this study, it can be concluded that these objectives were achieved as follows: there is a positive impact of customized customer contact service point on customer's experience. Also, based on age and gender, there was no dissimilarity in opinions among the demographic variables of customers. But dissimilarities in opinions occurred between customers who earn different salaries every month.

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