

Customer-to-customer interaction in service eco-systems – measuring its contribution to customer value and the customers' willingness-to-pay for in case of a sport event provision

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Abstract keywords

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Aim of abstract/paper - research question

A lot of services offered, so-called collective services, are used by a group simultaneously, e.g., public transport, a theatre play etc. In these cases (and a lot of others, of course,) customers usually interact with each other – and therefore they can one another disturb and/or enhance the service quality perceived (e.g. Grove & Fisk, 1997).

The purpose of this paper is to open up customer-to-customer-interaction (CCI) for a specific collective service: sport event provision. We focused on the "bright" side of CCI and, therefore, on answering the following two research questions:

1. How much is the contribution to customer value that stems from CCI?
2. What is a customer willing-to-pay for CCI?

Theoretical background

Following Service-Dominant Logic the users of a collective service form a service eco-system – understood as a specific arrangement of resources that interact to co-create value (Lusch, Vargo & Tanniru, 2010). Resources can also be people, e.g. friends, family members or strangers – or, as in our case, visitors of a sport event: They interact and produce jointly the atmosphere at the location. Firms are well-advised to try to manage such service eco-systems.

According to Feehan (2006), in case of a sport event, the customer value due to CCI is the result of what he calls the "crowding-in effect": Crowding-in effects "assume that consumer utility depends upon how full the stadium is (that is,

capacity utilization) in that a capacity crowd improves the atmosphere at the game and adds to the sense of occasion" (p. 95).

Methodology, research design and data analysis

As object for investigation we chose matches of a club of the first German football league, a collective service that on average 50,000 customers consume simultaneously. We interviewed football fans in the region of the club we cooperated with (n=781). The survey form, ten pages in length, included demographic information, questions about the respondent's sport consumption and the task to evaluate nine offerings (four attributes with each three levels including a measure for expected degree of capacity utilization). To determine the (relative) contribution of CCI to customer value and to estimate the willingness-to-pay we analysed the data by applying a conjoint analysis (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham, 2006; Jedidi & Zhang, 2002).

Results, discussion and implications/conclusions

Companies offering service eco-systems might be able to commercialize CCI: 21% of customer value is according to our findings due to CCI. The club's customers are up to pay – on average – additional 10 Euro for the best level of CCI, i.e. for a match that is expected to be a sold out.

The paper offers a conceptual as well as methodological basis for the measurement of co-created value in all forms of spectator sport.

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