MAPPING THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY THROUGH EXPERIENCES: A FINNISH CASE COMPANY STUDY

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ABSTRACT

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Customer journey mapping has rapidly grown as an interesting and innovative way of understanding consumers and their patterns of behavior. Although the concept is essentially based on the traditional research of customer buying behavior, the modern way of mapping out the diverse journey through different stages and touchpoints was first introduced at the start of the twenty-first century. During the years the method has spread to become a broadly used tool of service design and offers primarily a clear way of visualizing company's intangible services. As the importance of customer experiences has increased, the journey mapping has also expanded to be centered upon not just actions and thoughts but also feelings that arise during the journey.

The objective of this research is to investigate and gain an understanding of journey mapping through customer experiences and examine the process behind its creation. Alongside a framework created based on the existing literature of the theme, the research is executed in the context of a Finnish case company and utilizes qualitative methods to untangle customer experiences and ultimately build a coherent journey map based on customers' own narrations. Observation is also utilized as a method to better understand the touchpoints and stages, and as an endorsement for the customers' comments. The customer research of the study pursued to offer a comprehensive portrayal of the case company's customers and was ultimately executed as six individual interviews. The interviewees represented different age groups, parts of the country, and amount of work history (in general and with the case company).

The results of this research indicate that the method of journey mapping based on customer experiences is an effective way of gaining understanding and revealing previously unknown information on customer behavior. The chosen qualitative methods and framework created proved to be successful in the identification of touchpoints and creation of the journey map. Based on the results it can be stated that when done correctly, customer experience journey map is a useful tool for improving the overall customer experience and supplying valuable data for marketing and product development.

Keywords
Customer journey, Journey mapping, Customer experience, Service design

Location
Jyväskylä University School of Business and Economics

FIGURES

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1 INTRODUCTION

The radical changes in the field of marketing have for decades pushed researchers and companies into creating new and innovative ways of understanding customer behavior and thus gaining multifaceted information to utilize in business strategies. Customer research in the context of marketing has for long focused heavily on the physical actions of customers and to why people buy what they buy. Recently, the interest has shifted into a deeper stage of buying in order to understand the complex process behind consumption behavior alongside motives and experiences related to it. Overall, since the world and personal needs and desires of individuals have changed, the traditional methods must be re-evaluated in order to gain market success. (Blythe 2013, p. 6-7)

Customers today are valuing not only the traditional aspects of buying, such as price and functionality but also intangible aspects that are related to the overall consuming experience. The experiences may be formed by any contact the customer has with the company, whether it is direct contact through products and services or indirect contact through third-party influences and may vary among different customer personas which are defined via different personal attributes. Some authors have claimed customer experiences to be the main way to obtain a competitive advantage in today's markets. (Meyer & Schwager, 2007; Pine II & Gilmore, 1998; Shawn & Ivens, 2005.) A method of combining the research of both customer experiences and buying journey serves as the theme of this study. Customer experience journey mapping involves interaction between the consumer and the service provider through various touchpoints in different channels and environments. Overall, customer experiences have evolved towards being more social in nature and are affected by not only the company's actions but also third-party influences. (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016.)

Even though customer experiences are a popular topic among marketers, research including managerial implementations or practical ways of utilizing customer experience journey mapping is still quite scarce (Gentile et al. 2007). Although methods for building and including journey maps into business operations are found across the internet, the scientific literature is somewhat in need for extended research of the topic.

1.1 Defining the key terms

The key concepts in this study circulate around customer experience and journey mapping. The concept of customer experience has had different definitions through time. Pine II and Gilmore (1998) conceptualized the thought of experience being separate from concrete goods and services, but this has been critiqued afterward for not considering the aspect that every encounter with the service provider, whether direct or indirect, tangible or intangible, leads to an experience that contributes to the customers' perceptions. Today, customer experience is often referred to as a sum of every contact a consumer might have with a service provider. (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Meyer & Schwager, 2007.)

This chapter goes briefly through the commonly used terms in order to refine their interpretation in the context of this thesis. Definitions presented are gathered from the existing literature. The concepts and their meanings are addressed more thoroughly in the upcoming chapters.

TERM	DEFINITION
Customer experience	Internal and subjective response a customer has to any contact with a certain company. Includes every aspect of a brand and it's offering, whether direct or indirect
Customer journey	The process that includes customers' evolution within a specific journey (for example from pre-purchase to purchase and post-purchase stages) through a variety of touchpoints
Journey map	A diagram that illustrates the stages, touchpoints etc. customers go through while interacting with a company
Touchpoint	A point of interaction or contact between the customer and the company itself or a representation of it
Customer persona	Semi-fictionalized characterization of a customer based on customer attributes and information of how they use company's products or services. The information is collected with market research and based on real data
Moment of truth	Touchpoints in the customer journey that matter the most to customers; make-or-break moments the customers have with the brand

TABLE 1 Key terms of the thesis

1.2 Background to the theme

In order to provide a better understanding as to what the history of customer behavior research is, this chapter focuses on the background of the topic. The general transition to the customer-centric thinking is introduced as well as the traditional buying process model which still acts as a baseline for the modern concept of customer experience journey.

1.2.1 Shift into the customer-centric thinking

During the course of new marketing methods being applied, there has been a notable shift from the traditional ways to new and improved practices. Customer relationship management (CRM) has for long focused on the measurable, hard data-based information that simply apprehends what a company knows about a certain customer. This information includes facts such as customers' purchase history as well as knowledge of service requests, inquiries and product returns. Diversely, customer experience management (CEM) concentrates on the thoughts of the customers; how they feel about the company and how they perceive the experience of being their customer. CEM catches the instantaneous response the customer has when having an encounter involving the company. (Meyer & Schwager, 2007).

Besides the managing methods focusing on customer relationships and experiences, a concept of customer value management (CVM) has recently emerged. In an article by Verhoef and Lemon (2013) the effects of CVM as a part of improving business performance are highlighted. Value management offers extensive customer knowledge and focuses strongly on return of investment (ROI) in marketing decisions. This way the marketing of the company becomes more accountable, which results in a decreased amount of fruitless marketing investments. The marketing budget can be allocated more effectively over customers and different marketing tools. A term closely related to customer value management is customer lifetime value (CLV) which takes into consideration each customer's contribution margin, next purchase probability, and predicted marketing costs of an individual customer-level.

	What	**When**	**How is it Monitored**	**Who Uses the Information**	**Relevance to Future Performance**
Customer Value Management (CVM)	Explains how to create and maintain customer value	Constantly through various customer channels	Customer research, existing database, sales data, financial performance metrics	All business leaders, to determine and create customer value	Profitable: Reallocates resources among customer value segments to improve business performance

Customer Experience Management (CEM)	Explains how customers perceive the company	At the spots of customer interaction – touch points	Researches, questionnaires, observations, studying the voice of the customer	All business leaders, to generate better experiences with products and services	Leading: Establishes how to fulfill the gaps between expectations and experience
Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	Explains what the company recognizes about the customer	After a record of customer interaction occurs	Tracking of sales data, general surveys	Customer-interface groups (sales, marketing, customer service), to be efficient and sellable	Underdeveloped: Encourages cross-selling by combining products vainly

TABLE 2 Comparing different customer management methods (Meyer & Schwager, 2007; Verhoef & Lemon, 2013)

The table above includes the definitions of these customer management methods as well as notes about their individual features. It combines observations from both Meyer and Schwager's (2007) as well as Verhoef and Lemon's (2013) articles.

1.2.2 Customer buying process

In the more traditional models of customer buying behavior process the actions are usually divided into specific categories. In an article written by Lasalle and Britton (2003) an engagement model of five different stages is presented. The first stage focuses on the discovery of the product or service in order to fulfill a specific need or desire. Next becomes evaluation, during which the consumer narrows the discovered options down to a preferred choice by analyzing all the possibilities, comparing them, and using different decision-making regulations. After that, the consumer acquires the chosen product or service by consuming time and money. The fourth stage after the acquisition focuses on integration and in this phase, the consumer merges the purchase to be a part of their life by actually using the product or service in everyday tasks. The last stage is about extending the relationship between buyer and seller and strengthening the consumers bond with the brand. Various touchpoints between different stakeholders exist in all of these stages and are each included in creating and modifying the customer experience journey. (LaSalle & Britton, 2003).

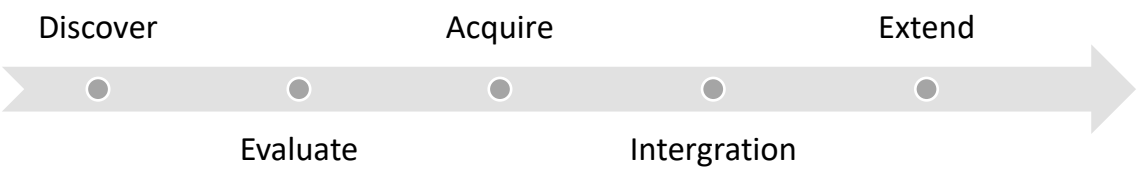

FIGURE 1 Consumer buying process (LaSalle & Britton, 2003)

1.3 Introducing the research

This research seeks to investigate the concept of customer experience journey mapping and shed a light on how to utilize it in improving overall experiences of customers, as well as bringing new discoveries to contribute to marketing and product development. The creation of a journey map is investigated through previous research which eventually benefits the building of conceptual framework. The framework is subsequently used in the process of analyzing the study results, and it acts as a guideline for forming the actual customer experience journey map.

1.3.1 Justification of the research

As stated above, even though customer experience and especially buying behavior are not new as a concept, they have greatly evolved to have new meanings over time. The previous methods of investigating customers are no longer directly valid in today's competitive markets as the consumers seek to find something more than the mere act of filling their primal needs. Many researchers have therefore made a distinct division between the two perspectives: traditional information processing and the more modern experiential perspective (Frow & Payne, 2007). The reasoning behind a purchase may be rational but more than ever before emotional factors play a great part in deciding between service providers. The motives behind a purchase may also vary vastly depending on the relationship between the buyer and the seller. In business-to-business context the decisions are often based on a more rational reason whereas business-to-consumer relationship may profit more from creating emotionally-moving experiences. (Frow & Payne, 2007.) This vast field of evolved customer behavior was found to be challenging but also fascinating which is why it acts as a base for this thesis.

Customer journey mapping is a relatively new and interesting concept that visualizes the main touchpoints and stages customers must go through when doing business with a certain company or a brand. Because journey mapping is such a versatile method that can be modified to serve different types of companies, branches of business, and buyer personas, it was seen as a valid manner of investigating the customers of the case company. The experience journey map seeks to offer the company fresh insights that may have been veiled and thus not utilized in business operations.

Research of customer journey and experiences are widely spoken of but still appear to be a theme that partially lacks data of utilizing the results in real business-life situations. This concerns especially the field of scientific literature where the information is often limited to explaining the customer experiences or journeys as a concept and offering ambiguous tools as to how they might be applied in business strategies. To contribute to the gap of knowledge between conceptual level and the more strategic level of utilizing the information to improve one's operations, this study seeks to investigate how the journey map is

concretely build based on real customer data, and how the research and analysis on customer experiences can contribute to operations such as marketing and product development in practice.

1.3.2 Case company

The case company is an SME specialized in the field of security and fire safety. It is a part of a larger enterprise which offers a large variety of different electrical products and services. The product range of the case company varies from all-around safety equipment to complementary computer software but in the context of this research, the emphasis is on the products related to fire safety. This range includes items such as fire detection panels, alarms, and software that together form a fire safety system for a building. The case company offers consumer products but operates primarily in a business-to-business setting where the customer base includes various safety-related companies around the country.

The initiative to begin investigating the customers' experiences and creating the journey map came from the company's goal to gain understanding about customer behavior and thus improve these experiences and the overall journey. The company has recently released a new system and the interest was therefore particularly in receiving new insight to utilize in its marketing and a possible need for product development. Since this thesis focuses on very particular products from the case company's product range, the two main items are from here on referred to as the old system and the new system referring to the previously released model which is highly used and widespread among customers and the recently released model which is still very fresh and used by only the early adopters. These are presented and compared more profoundly in chapter 3 alongside the distinct buying process of the customers of the company.

1.3.3 Research objectives and questions

The objective of this research is to investigate customer experiences and journey mapping in light of previous literature and to create a framework to be used in a case company context. Furthermore, this study seeks to create a customer experience journey map based on customer data and discover ways to utilize it in practice in future business operations.

The research questions were formed based on a literature review and an introductory research on customer experiences. They are ultimately determined to serve a common purpose in the research of customer experience journey mapping, but also to be suitable for the needs of the case company. Therefore, the first main research question is:

> **1. What are the elements of customer experience journey and how is the journey map created?**

To expand the knowledge on the first research question it is supported by an additional question:

1a. How do the individual customer journeys differ among buyer personas?

The two following questions are emphasized on the improvement of business operations and pursue to offer functional methods for utilizing the customer journey and experience mapping in a practical setting.

2. How can customer experience mapping be used in creating better customer experiences?

3. How can customer experience research benefit marketing and product development?

In the context of the case company, the first two questions focus on the customer experiences in general concerning mainly the old system whereas the third question is examined particularly with the new system in mind. This is due to the fact that the case company has renovated their product range and therefore wishes to focus mainly on marketing and product development of the new product releases instead of the already established range.

1.3.4 Research methods and data

This research is executed by using qualitative methods in order to gather the requisite customer data. The methods include individual in-depth interviews that were executed as semi-structured with a body of basic questions and topics, alongside with observation. The six interviewees were selected from the case company's customer base and are all experienced workers with comprehensive knowledge and history with the company and fire safety equipment. Therefore, they were presumed to be skilled enough to evaluate their experiences and share insights and opinions that had years of work background to back them up. All respondents were interviewed once either face-to-face or via telephone during March and April of 2018.

Additionally, the method of observation was used to provide the researcher with a deeper understanding of the overall processes the customers go through and assist in creating the journey map to be logical and coherent in general. Due to strict safety regulations, a real-life observation on site alongside the customers was not possible so the observation was arranged as a simulation of a commissioning process of fire safety systems. It included both the old system and the new system and thus gave the researcher a chance to compare their differences first hand. This proved to be useful later when interviewing the customers about these differences.

The process of making the thesis started at the end of February 2018 with a meeting with the case company and an exploration of the previous literature of

the theme. The research data was all in all gathered, transcribed, processed and analyzed in the spring of 2018 and finalized at the beginning of June, extending the entire thesis project into four months.

1.4 Structure of the research

This research consists of six main chapters including an introduction, theoretical background, a deeper overview of the case company, research design and methods, findings and finally conclusions and discussion. Lastly, the references are presented.

Theoretical background (chapter 2) seeks to provide a comprehensive outlook of the theme. It begins with a review on customer experience literature from traditional to modern views and continues to explain the concept of journey mapping in light of current research. The idea behind customer personas is also introduced. Finally, this chapter presents a theoretical framework created based on the literature review. The framework is later utilized in the creation of the journey map.

This study is executed in the context of a case company, which is further explained in the third chapter. Here the company, their products, and customers alongside their work processes are presented in order to give the reader a frame to assist in understanding the data and results of the research in a more comprehensive manner.

Research design and methods (chapter 4) give a closer look at the execution of the study and research data and discuss the motives behind using particular techniques. The results of the research are presented in chapter 5. The findings begin with a brief overview of customer background and are then divided according to the research questions, which acts as a ground for the final conclusions. In the fifth chapter the method is also reviewed alongside its validity and reliability.

Finally, conclusions (chapter 6) are presented and research question are answered based on the theoretical background and results gathered from the qualitative research. Discussion includes managerial implications and deliberation on limitations. In the end, possibilities for future research are discussed.

2 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND JOURNEY MAPPING

Customer experience as a marketing concept was first introduced on in the mid-1980s. Before this, the main literature at the time focused on the customer as a rational decision maker, which made the idea of experiential approach new and original; consumers were already thinkers and doers, but now they were also feelers. The idea of customer experience became even more relevant in the following decade when Pine and Gilmore (1998) presented the progression of economic value. The core idea is that during the purchase process, experiences can be viewed as an economic offering and serve as the next point after commodities, goods, and services. At the beginning of the 2000s customer experience received great awareness and several contributions were focusing their attention on the subject and experience as a new form of creating value for both customers and companies. (Gentile et al. 2007.)

Despite acknowledging the importance of customer experiences, the literature in the early 2000s focused mainly on managerial publications and practitioner-oriented journals. The focal point was therefore on the managerial actions and outcomes, rather than on the actual methods determining the sources and consequences of the customer experience. (Verhoef et. al. 2009.) When evaluating the service experience from a research perspective, the relationship between a customer and company forms from a series of encounters. Recent research of the customer experience often conceptualizes these encounters as touchpoints which together form a unified service process called customer experience journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Since the journey consists of more than just the just the core service, it is important to focus on the experience as a whole. Authors such as Voorhees et al. (2017) recognize this in their recent analysis of service experience literature. They note that while the prior work concerning the topic is indisputably foundational, it often lacks in providing a vision of service research outside the core service encounters. Thus, they suggest looking beyond the obvious and examining the all-compassing service experience including the pre-core, core, and post-core service encounters.

2.1 Mapping the customer journey through experiences

In today's modern and customer-driver environment it is critical for companies to understand the experiences of consumers and the journey their customer have to go through. More than ever before, customers are interacting with the firms via several diverse touchpoints which include communication in various channels and media. All in all, compared to the early consumer behavior models, customer experiences are becoming more social which requires companies to purposefully take action in integrating numerous business functions in

pursuance of delivering and creating consistent and positive customer experiences.

Tseng et al. (1999) present an idea of improving service operations by the customers' service experience, which is presented in the figure below. The improvement can be executed by discovering the customer experiences and following the customer experience mapping. Information gathered by methods such as examining customer behavior, their interaction and contacts, and what their current experience journey regarding the service operations is, can be used as an insight to improve the service quality. This insight may be utilized in uncovering where exactly the service experience should be improved so that the customers' perception of value can be enhanced.

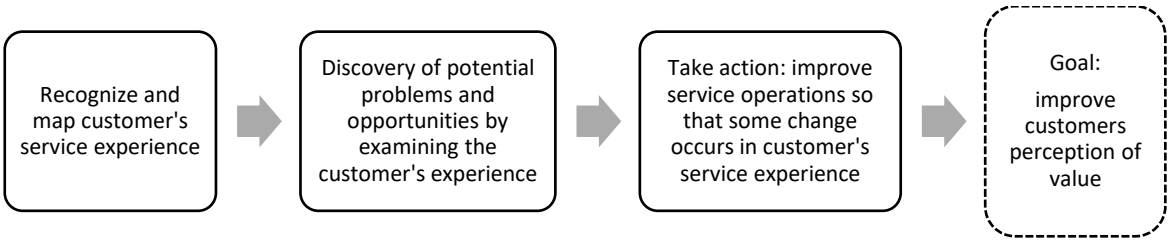

FIGURE 2 Improving the service experience of customers (Tseng et al., 1999)

2.1.1 Definition and creation

Some of the first authors to mention the concept of customer experience were Pine and Gilmore (1998). They discovered that while the services were becoming more commoditized, the forefront companies started to utilize experiences in the competition for customers. The idea of customer experience journey and journey mapping can be seen as drawing the base from theoretical methods such as SIT (sequential incident technique) and service mapping. SIT was first introduced by Stauss and Weinlich in 1997 and later published in their 1997 article. In the article, the sequential incident method was used to measure the capacity of service by sorting the phases of the customer relationship into the order of priority in the eyes of the consumer.

Norton and Pine II (2013) define customer journey as a sequence of events that can either be designed or not. During this journey, the customers go through learning about, purchasing, and interacting with the company or the brand. The journey may include a specific commodity, good, service, or experience, that is in the center of the purchase process. The customer journey reflects a specially designed sequence of events, which are produced by the company in order to create value for the customers as well as profitability for the company and standing out from the competitors.

Customer journey maps are used to illustrate individuals' experiences as a customer of a certain company. The maps normally include making choices related to the buying process, such as deciding to buy a product or a service, or the decision to continue being a loyal customer. Customer journey maps typically

contain various phases of interaction, touchpoints, different facets of the customer experiences (such as actions, feelings, goals and pain points), activities, and some sort of analysis of the customer data collected. The term of experience maps can also be discussed separately, as it focuses more on the experiences individuals have within a given domain (such as while travelling with a certain travel service provider). (Kalbach, 2016 p. 6–8.)

2.1.2 Experiences

The term of experience is not always easy to define as the concept might differ depending on the situation. Kalbach (2016, p. 20) mentions some common features which can be used as guidance to understand the term.

1) Experiences are holistic
   They encompass the whole occurrence including actions, feelings, and thoughts
2) Experiences are personal
   They are not an objective view of a certain product or service but instead the subjective perception an individual has
3) Experiences are situational
   They differ in every situation and are highly circumstance-driven

Meyer and Schwager (2007) define customer experience as an internal or subjective response that the customer has with any contact, direct or indirect, with the company or brand. Generally, direct contact refers to purchase, usage, or service, usually instituted by the customer. Indirect contact, on the other hand, covers mostly spontaneous interaction with some form the company's products, services or brands, which may also include for example word-of-mouth messages, recommendations, criticism, news, advertisement, or reviews.

Gentile et al. (2007) conducted a research on customer experiences and based on the literature concerning the subject, they defined customer experience as follows:

> *"The Customer Experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction. This experience is strictly personal and implies the customer's involvement at different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial, physical and spiritual). Its evaluation depends on the comparison between a customer's expectations and the stimuli coming from the interaction with the company and its offering in correspondence of the different moments of contact or touch-points."*

2.1.3 Stages of the journey

Lemon & Verhoef (2016) suggest that the experiences of the customer can be defined as a journey that includes the various touchpoints of the purchase process in a certain time frame. The customer journey begins from the stage of *pre-purchase*, which incorporates all encounters the customer has experienced

with the certain brand, product category, and business environment before the actual purchase stage This usually includes phases such as independent research and evaluation of options. The *purchase* stage, on the other hand, encompasses every interaction between the customer and the brand throughout the purchase process itself. Acts such as choosing, ordering, and paying are typical features of this stage. The final stage, *post-purchase*, includes all interaction taking place after the actual trade. These interactions involve behavior such as usage, utilization, initialization, and other post-purchase functions such as instance service requests and evaluation. At this stage, the service or product purchased becomes a crucial touchpoint. Essentially, the post-purchase stage could stretch to cover the entire period from the act of purchase to the end of the customer's life since it includes all of the brand and/or product related elements that occur after the purchase stage.

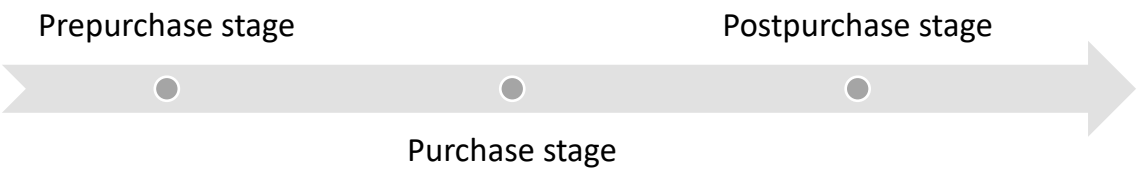

FIGURE 3 The three stages of the purchase process (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016)

Alongside the traditional purchase process model, Edelman (2010) presents an updated version based on the results of later research. Instead of systematically narrowing the possible choices during the pre-purchase stage, consumers add and subtract companies and brands within a group of considered options. After the purchase is done consumers generally move into a relationship with the company which can be described as an open-ended loop of loyalty. Consumers today take therefore a much more repetitive journey that is also less reductive in nature. The stages of the updated journey are consideration, evaluation, buying, enjoying, advocating, and bonding. At the beginning the consumer enters the first stage, consideration, by forming a top-of-mind set of options for purchase. These brands and products in mind are usually a result of being exposed to advertisements, displays, recommendations, or other stimulation. The evaluation stage is for comparing the options, often with the help of other consumers, reviews, the brand itself, or its competitors. Within this phase, it is also common to discard some of the original options and replace them with new ones as the knowledge of the brands expands. From evaluation, the consumers shift into the stage of purchase. The final stage combines the acts of enjoying, advocating, and bonding. Here a deeper relation with the product is formed which may result in advocating it to other consumers via word-of-mouth. If the purchase and the entire process are viewed as pleasant and successful by the customer, the bond becomes stronger and the consumer may enter into the loyalty loop. This is demonstrated in the figure below (see figure 4). This cuts down the stages of considering and evaluating the product selection and

establishes a durable relationship between the customer and the company. However, if the purchase process is seen as unsuccessful and the customer is left feeling disappointed, the bond may break and result in consumers detaching themselves from the company altogether.

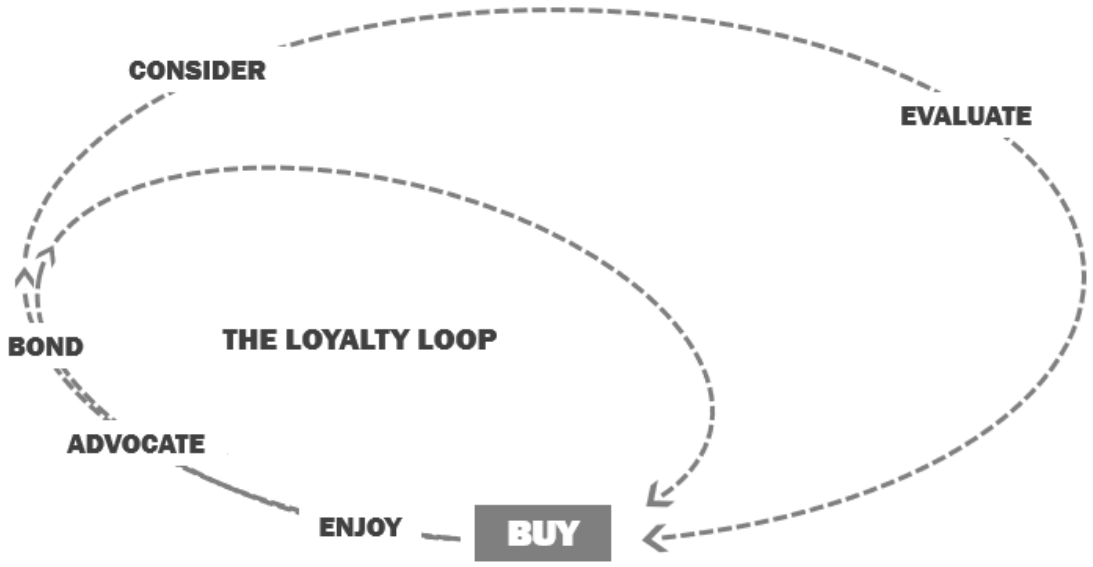

FIGURE 4 Consumer decision journey stages (adapted from Edelman, 2010)

2.1.4 Touchpoints

A touchpoint can be defined as an occurrence of direct contact between the customer and the actual product or service or with the representation of it inflicted by the company or a third party. The importance and meaningfulness of a certain touchpoint vary throughout the course of the customer's life. Additionally, not all touchpoints are equally valuable. For example, when offering a service, the touchpoints including service interactions are more relevant. Customer touchpoints can be identified either from the perspective of the customer or from the viewpoint of the company (Meyer & Schwager 2007; Roto et al. 2016). The customers' interaction with the touchpoints is what ultimately makes up the service experience, and the quality of service can be defined by determining how smoothly the touchpoints work together for an individual customer (Polaine, Lovlie & Reason, 2013). The figure below is an illustration describing different types of touchpoints and their connection to each other.

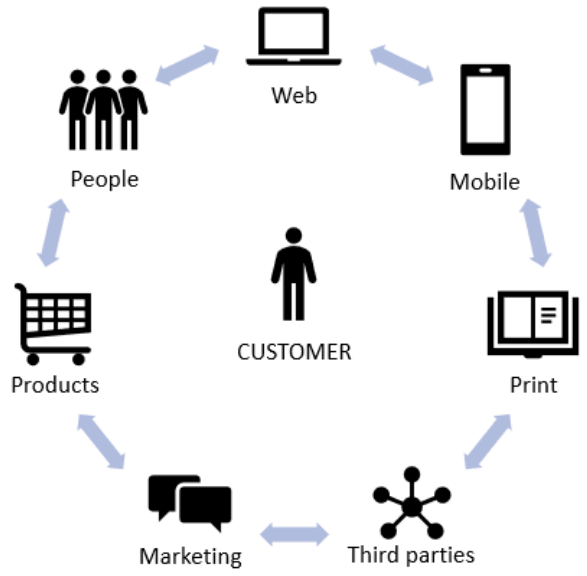

FIGURE 5 Different types of touchpoints during the customer journey

In a research by Stein and Ramaseshan (2016) the authors conducted a study to identify diverse elements of the customer experience touchpoints. After analyzing the data, they determined seven distinct themes associated with the touchpoints. *Atmospheric elements* include the physical environment that the customer observes while interacting with the brand. *Technological elements* disclose any customer-retailer interaction that includes any form of technology. *Communicative elements* cover one-way communication from the seller to the customer whether they are promotional or informative. *Process elements* describe the steps or actions a customer must take to achieve a specific outcome with the brand. *Employee–customer interaction elements* include both direct and indirect interactions the customer has with the employees of the company. To the contrary, *customer–customer interaction elements* focus on direct or indirect brand-related interactions the customers of the company have with each other. *Product interaction elements* concentrate on the actual product or service purchased and the interactions the customer has with it.

Additionally, Lemon & Verhoef (2016) present distinct types of touchpoints that can be distributed into four categories. These include brand-owned, partner-owned, customer-owned, and social touchpoints that can also be described as external or independent. The categories are not tied to a specific part of the customer journey but can occur at each and every stage. *Brand-owned touchpoints* are interactions between the customer and company, that are constructed and operated by the company itself or under their control. These encompass all media owned by the brand (for example website, advertisements, customer loyalty programs) as well as other elements of the marketing mix controlled by the brand (for example aspects of the product, service, packaging, price). *Partner-owned touchpoints* are simultaneously generated and managed by the company and one or multiple of its business associates. These associates can be for example distributions partners, marketing agencies, and joined customer loyalty program

partners. Since brand-owned and partner-owned touchpoints share some of the same elements the line between these might occasionally be blurry. *Customer-owned touchpoints* include the actions of the customer which are not under the influence or control of the company, its partners, or other stakeholders. During the pre-purchase and purchase stages, these touchpoints could include for example the act of defining the customers' own needs or the choice of payment method. Nevertheless, the customer-owned touchpoints are the most prevailing and critical during the post-purchase stage when the consumer indeed has the opportunity to use and assess the product. *Social or external touchpoints* acknowledge the relevancy of others affecting the customer experience. Through the whole customer journey, buyers are encircled by different external touchpoints (such as friends, family members, other customers, autonomous information sources) which might have an effect on the process.

Kalbach (2016, p. 27-28) describes touchpoint as a value exchange between two parties. These acts of exchange can include a wide range of activities and are historically divided into three essential types of touchpoints: static, interactive, and human. *Static* touchpoints do not enable the users to interact with them. They may include the company's communicative tools such as advertisement or newsletter. *Interactive* touchpoints allow the users to take part and be an active member of the value exchange. These include tools such as websites and apps. *Human* touchpoints involve interaction between humans, for example face-to-face contact or phone conversations.

While studying the research of customer journey and touchpoints, a *moment of truth* is a commonly arising term. Kalbach (2016, p. 31) describes it as being a special type of touchpoint, that is especially critical interaction charged with emotion. They usually occur when the user has invested a great deal of resources in hopes of achieving a certain outcome. Moment of truth may be positive or negative by nature and can either make or break the customer relationship. How the individual perceives the company they are a customer of is ultimately the sum of the moments of truth.

2.1.5 Customer experience design and management

The management of the customer experience can be described as a strategy in which the company steers the customers' experiences to create value for both the company itself as well as its customers. In contrast to customer relationship management, customer experience management does not focus on the customer's history but rather on the prevailing experiences and situation of the customer. (Verhoef et. al. 2009.)

While designing a customer journey model for the company, Norton and Pine II (2013) emphasize the importance of basing the model on the actual behavior of the consumers. The goal of the company should be to coordinate their business strategy and experiences that bring the most value to the customers. Companies should take into consideration the current trends and shifts in the economy and prioritize what the customers actually want. In several industries, products and services are even becoming secondary and to avoid

commoditization, companies are aiming to create experiences and memorable situations that are engaging to the customers in a more personal way.

Berry et. al. (2002) suggest that first and foremost the management of the company should recognize what kind of signals they are passing on to their customers. They call these signals clues, which can be divided into two categories. The first category includes the actual performance of the products and services. These clues are closely related to the functionality of the goods and are therefore construed predominantly by the logical sectors of mind. On the contrary, the second category is connected with the emotions and senses and comprises all of the aspects beyond logical thinking. Along with the perceptions it gives to the user, it is also contiguously related to the environment in which the goods are being used. So not only should companies and their managers focus on the product and service functionality, but also pay equally close attention into the emotional and feeling-based segments of the customer experiences. Applying this method into the business making intensifies the bond between the company and the customer and also makes it more challenging for competitors to impede the relationship.

Schmitt (2003) states that customer experience management is a method of managing that aims to drive growth, increase revenue, and encourage changes in the organization in order to guarantee that customers meet their expectations. He also presents a framework which in five steps gives guidance to delivering expected results for the customers. The five steps are: (1) analyzing the experiential world of the customer, (2) building the experiential platform, (3) designing the brand experience, (4) structuring the customer interface, and (5) engaging in continuous innovation.

A term closely related to customer experience today is service design. The concept of service design places the customers in the center and supports the creation of a customer journey alongside various service points. Roto et. al. (2016) state that the goals of user experience are, however, often effectiveness- and usability-driven instead of focusing on other aspects such as emotional and experiential factors. Especially when companies digitalize their services it is even more likely that they lose most of the emotional aspects. Therefore, a strong attention should be aimed in delivering a harmonious customer experience journey that reaches across all channels and touchpoints.

2.1.6 Measuring the customer experience

As the management strategies for customers have shifted from relationship-centric thinking to managing value and experiences, the methods for measuring customer perception have also evolved. During the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, a popular movement of estimating customer satisfaction was measuring service quality (SERVQUAL), a method which focused on understanding the gap between customers' expectations and assessment of the actual service encounter. As a result for defining the gap, the goal is to take action and improve the service in order to ultimately surprise the customers pleasantly with their upcoming service encounters. (Parasuraman et al. 1988). While SERVQUAL still remains as

a popular measurement for customer satisfaction, it has gained some critique over the years for not being fitting into today's business world. The problems include the lack of applicability in heavily digital and online-based environments as well as the methods emphasis on the process rather than the outcome. (Ladhari, 2009).

As a response to measuring merely service quality, Maklan and Klaus (2011) developed a method to measure customer experiences; key concepts such as value creation, emotional assessment, and a timeline reaching from pre-service to post-service pursue to look beyond traditional views on product and service delivery and expand the understanding of consumer insight to overall customer experience. The method (see Figure 6 below) consists of four main attributes that individually affect the way in which the interactions with the company are experienced. The attributes, peace-of-mind, outcome focus, moments-of-truth, and product experience are evaluated through customer research and statements made about the experience with the company by customers.

1. *Peace-of-mind* – determined primarily by the statements that include evaluating the emotional aspect of service. The peace of mind is deepened when the customer can rely on the service provider's expertise and have confidence within their partnership.
2. *Outcome focus* – focuses on reducing the transaction costs of customers. Once the relationship between the company and customer is established, the customers may become reluctant to seek out new providers or acknowledge competitors' offers since the habit of associating with the original service provider is seen as the most effortless choice.
3. *Moments-of-truth* – this attribute is centered upon the defining moments of the customer interaction. Unpredictable complications may be overlooked if the company is able to recover and nevertheless deliver a satisfying service experience.
4. *Product experience* – characterized by the customers' perception of having choices when it comes to products. The choices may reach out to competitors' product ranges or be limited to the same provider; the main point is that the customer has the perception of having an ability to compare offers and choose products.

The perceived quality of customer experience has an impact on the customers' thoughts and attitude towards the company and thus results in a certain way of behavior. The research by Maklan and Klaus (2011) conclude that the quality of experience has a considerable effect on customer satisfaction, word-of-mouth intentions, and loyalty. With improving the attributes affecting the customer experience, these variables improve reciprocally and result in an overall better and more productive business partnership. It is also mentioned that out of all four attributes, peace-of-mind has the strongest correlation with the outcome variables and should therefore be considered highly relevant as it is

perhaps the closest link to direct interactions and the experiences resulted from them with the service provider company.

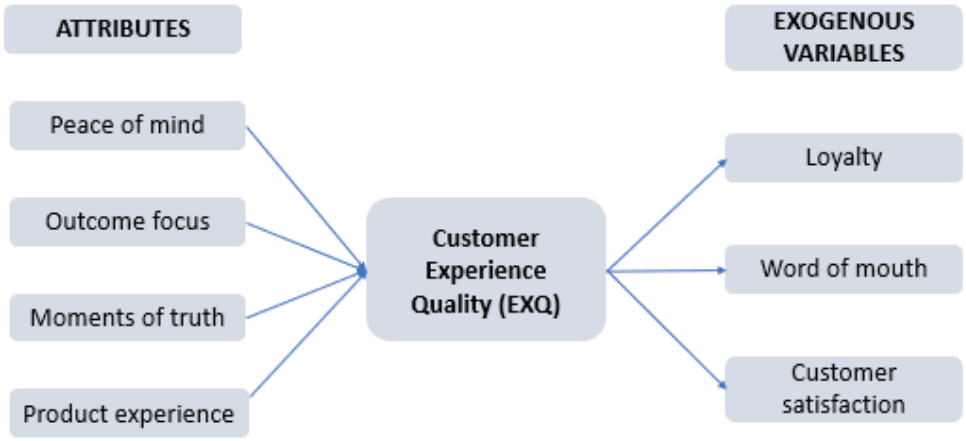

FIGURE 6 A scale to measure customer experience quality (after Maklan & Klaus, 2011)

2.2 Personas supporting the customer journey

Pruit and Addlin (2006, p. 11; 51) define personas as "fictitious, specific, concrete representations of target users". The personas are created to provide a face for the user with the main objective to serve as a target for the service and product design. They communicate information about the user to product development in order to create a selection fitted for the main customer groups. Personas can be utilized in planning, designing, evaluating, and releasing the products as well as acting as guidance for marketing, advertising, and sales strategies. Besides individual consumers, the creation of stakeholder personas can also be applied to determine various organizational personas that are utilized in sales and marketing like individual personas. Since this thesis concentrates more on the individual personas, this chapter will focus mainly on these.

Personas are used to characterize and assemble groups of different individuals that share the same traits and goals. The division is also possible to execute by identifying the information gathered from customer data and recognizing various user roles, segments, or demographic factors, and defining the personas based on these groups (see table 3 below). The individual customers of the company can be studied by using various research methods, need analysis, and identification, which together provide raw data for the creation of personas. (Pruitt and Addlin, 2006, p. 49-50).

Personas			
Individuals			Organizations
Geographic	Demographic	Psychographic	+ Additional
• Area • Language • Nature of retail • Etc.	• Age • Gender • Income • Occupation • Etc.	• Goals • Motivations • Values • Purchase behavior • Etc.	• Sector • Revenue • Years in operation • Etc.

TABLE 3 Possible methods for creating stakeholder personas (after Ortbal et al., 2016)

In their study of the constructed stakeholder personas, Ortbal et al. (2016) present a methodology for creating these personas. The first step is to determine the identity of the stakeholders for certain ventures. This can be done by using either real data gathered from reliable sources or, in some cases, by using management's own judgement to predict who the main customers are most likely going to be. Secondly, after identifying each stakeholder, their geographic, demographic, and psychographic data should be determined. With the information gathered from this data. the company should be able to arrange the stakeholder into different categories and furthermore into specific stakeholder groups. The final step is to build the visual presentations of these constructed stakeholder personas which are beneficial for capturing and quickly communicating the findings.

When building a customer journey map, it should be considered that different customer personas may go through very diverse individual journeys and thus require separate journey maps. For example, if a journey map made for a modern customer looking to expand their business is applied to business operations with an old customer looking to downsize, the outcome might be all but successful. Therefore, a company should determine whether their customer base is heterogeneous and in need for segmentation and targeted journey maps. (Parise et al. 2016).

2.3 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study and research is based on the previously discussed theoretical background. It offers an understanding for building a customer experience journey map based on the research data and provides a view on how to utilize the journey map in business operations. The framework utilizes the existing literature presented previously in this chapter and the

elements of experience mapping guide created by Valentine (2013). The guide explains the method of creating a customer experience map by using so-called build blocks which can be defined as classified and distinct parts of the results of customer research. These blocks are ultimately combined to form a unified path that represents the journey of the company's customers.

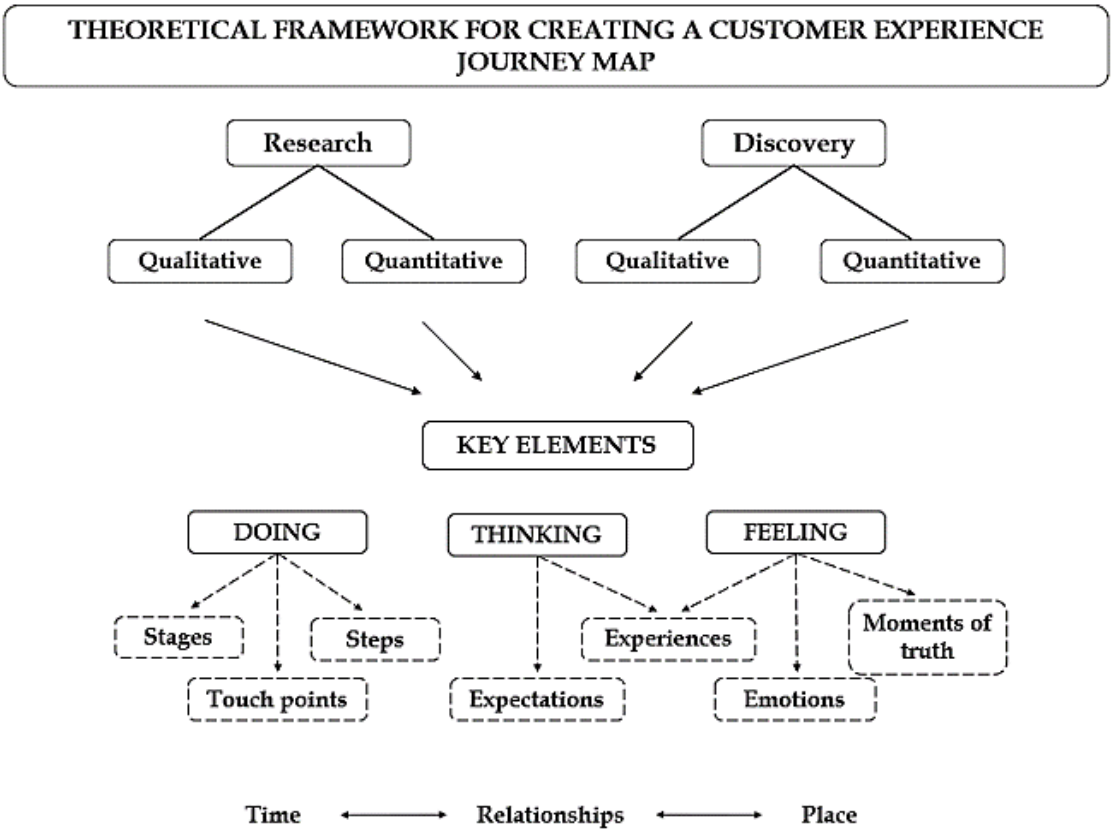

FIGURE 7 Framework for the research

The framework begins with two separate study methods conducted in order to receive results: research and discovery. Both research work and discovery work can be divided into quantitative and qualitative research.

With quantitative discoveries from the existing customer information, for example web analytics, customer satisfaction data, and other data available it is possible to recognize the issues of the customer journey and see how the customers generally think and feel about certain touchpoints based on said data. In addition to the discoveries, it is sometimes useful to conduct quantitative research with a survey concerning the prevailing situation and targeted to the current customers. It can assist by giving answers to basic questions and help to validate the information gathered from the qualitative research. It gives an answer to what the customers are doing today and what are the present-day touchpoints and stages of the customer journey.

Qualitative discoveries assist and guide in the making of qualitative research. With interviewing and observing the customers via qualitative research, it is possible to gain deeper insight on what the current customer process and journey consist of and what the customers are thinking throughout.

The ultimate results, which are related to the basic acts of **doing** (how customers behave during the journey), **thinking** (what is customers' frame of thought for the journey), and **feeling** (what are customers' emotions and motivations during the journey) are what eventually compose the customer experience journey. By analyzing what the customers do, the researcher is able to define the different stages of the journey and the individual steps and touchpoints within these stages. With the information of what the customers are thinking, the expectations and experiences regarding the journey can be added. Feelings are a key factor in experiences, as well as in other emotions (such as needs) and moments of truth, which can either make or break the customer's relationship with the company.

It should also be noted that while doing a research on people, context should always be taken into account. Time, place and relationships are all factors which affect the way people think in particular situations.

3 CASE COMPANY

3.1 About the company

The case company in this research is a Finnish company whose main field of business is in security and fire safety. Origins of the company lie in a grand international enterprise that operates in the retail of electronic goods around the globe. The case company's headquarters is located in the metropolitan area of Helsinki, but the customers are spread around the whole country. In this thesis, the emphasis is on the company's B2B-operations with various customer companies.

The case company is an established operator in its own branch and has a solid customer base with many long-term relationships and loyal clients. The company is particularly known for their high-quality products which vary from single products to entire safety systems and software alongside the relevant services.

3.1.1 Overall buying process of customers

The customer buying process in the case company is roughly divided into three stages: initial stage, purchase stage, and usage stage. The goal is to create loyal customers relationships so that the buying process is ultimately ongoing.

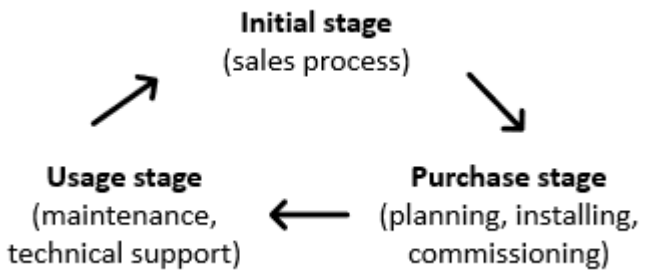

FIGURE 8 Overall customer buying process in the case company

At the initial stage, the persons in sales processes become the main characters of interest. They are the ones in charge at the beginning of the original purchase process and determine whether to take the first step into developing or continuing a customer relationship with the company. The purchasing process itself highlights the participation of planners, installers, and other individuals in commissioning, who are the key actors in setting up the equipment and act as a link between the case company and the end user. After finalizing the purchase, the customer moves into the stage of integration as the product or service is included in business operations. Individuals such as maintenance personnel,

technical support personnel, security managers, and security authorities become key factors in the usage stage with their pragmatic approach. Since they are the ones operating the equipment and experience the positive and negative aspects of it first hand, it is them who become the most familiar with the actual performance and usefulness of the goods purchased. If the individuals at the usage stage are satisfied with the product, it is likely that the buying process will develop into an extended relationship between the buyer and seller companies and strengthen the customer's bond with the brand.

3.1.2 Buying process of the research subjects

In this research the focus is especially on the second stage of the overall customer buying process and is thus limited on case company's customers who operate in forwarding the fire safety systems from the case company onwards to their own customers through retail and executing the planning, installing, and configuration of the equipment and software before handing the site forward to the buyer. Therefore, their status is to work as a link between the case company and the actual users. In this research we concentrate on their customer journey starting from selling the fire safety system to their own customer, going through the necessary steps to set up the equipment and software with the assistance of the case company, and finally proceeding to residual steps such as evaluating the project with their customer and performing possible maintenance work afterwards. This process is from here on referred to as **commissioning**, which encompasses all of the actions listed above.

3.1.3 Basis for the research

As stated, the case company has always pursued to compete with high-quality products and competent service. The prices are often on the higher side of the scale when compared to competitors but so far, the strategy has been successful as the customers have been content to the quality-price ratio. In the future, the company's objective is to invest in the quality of customer experiences more than ever before and to not take part in the price competition but instead be the market leader in delivering successful customer experiences.

With this research, the aim to is offer the case company insight on their customers and through their journeys and experiences produce new views on their business strategies. The emphasis is particularly on improving overall customer experiences, marketing, and product development, and thus make the investment on customer experiences recompensing.

3.2 Fire safety systems

3.2.1 Fire safety in buildings

According to the national building code of Finland (Fire Safety, 2017) released by the Ministry of the Environment, all building projects must be engineered in a manner that ensures the design and construct of the building are done in a way that is fire-safe. The risk of a fire breaking out must be minimized at all times and in the event of a fire those inside the building must be alarmed and able to escape in order to be rescued.

The modern fire detection systems in buildings consist of an FACP (fire alarm control panel) that can be described as the brain of the system. These detection devices run the whole set-up including the various fire detectors which are available in a wide range from smoke detectors and heat detectors to multi-capability detectors that combine different functions. Modern detectors can be supplied with addresses that let the panel know where in the building they are located. In case of smoke, heat, or other factors that trigger a detector they alert the FACP about the problem and the panel decides which actions to take. It can also consider the findings from other areas' detectors and thereby reduce the potential of false alarms. The panels communicate for example by activating audible or visible notifications which alert those inside the building to take action. The alerts can be designed so that they may activate only on certain floors which reduces the need to evacuate the whole building. (Keyworth 2009.)

3.2.2 Fire safety systems of the case company

The fire detection systems offered by the case company include a variety of different fire detection panels, wide range of fire detectors and components, and software systems. Alongside the older version of the system, the case company has recently released a new version of it. Compared to the older series the most notable improvement in the new system is that when paired together with the new complementary software, it utilizes a cloud service and allows the possibility to monitor and manage companies' fire systems online with a device such as PC, smartphone, or tablet.

The new software is a cloud computing model -based online application utilizing particularly the model of SaaS (Software as a Service). This means that the consumers are able to use the provider's application operating on a cloud infrastructure. The applications provided are accessible from different devices used by the consumer through a client interface, such as a web browser or a specific program. The client does not, however, have control over the overall network, servers, or capabilities. (Mell & Grance, 2011.) Accordingly, the new software pursues to combine traditional fire detection devices to modern technology and cloud services. The browser-based application is able to receive data from the fire detection system and thus allows the user to remotely monitor and manage the equipment and settings via smartphone or other mobile devices

at all times. This is claimed to save time in operations and also reduce risks by giving better predictability. Because of the cloud service the user is not required to install any software.

4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Since the goal of the study was to gather information and reveal new aspects of customer experiences it was important to choose a method that would offer a deep enough understanding of the subject and allow the customers to express their opinions versatilely. Based on the existing literature of customer experience research, it was also clear that the most effective way to gather customer data concerning their inner thoughts and feeling is interviews (see for example Palmer, 2010; Lemke et al. 2011). Therefore, a qualitative approach to the theme was chosen. The methods used were interviews and observation, which both proved to generate valuable information and eventually support each other in order to form a coherent portrayal of customer experiences within the case company.

4.1 Research design

The research for this study was designed to answer the research questions with a versatile and comprehensive manner. The methods of observation and interviews were selected as the primary study methods based on a theoretical review of existing literature. As the goal was to gain new insight on customer experiences and gather useful material for marketing and product development, it was important to uncover which features the customers might find problematic and should be taken into consideration in future business operations. As pointed out in the previous chapter, the emphasis of the study is particularly in customers executing the installation and commissioning of the equipment and software, so the journey map was designed to concern particularly these individuals.

To be able to determine the touchpoints of the customer experience journey, the questions needed to be designed in a way that would reveal not only what the customers are concretely doing but also what their thoughts and experiences are considering the process and what feelings arise throughout. As earlier discussed, a customer experience journey map includes not only the phases and actions but also attributes such as touchpoints, experiences, feelings, moments of truth, and/or expectations. The figure below (figure 9) created by Adaptive Path showcases an example of an experience map made for the transportation company Rail Europe. It includes the stages of the journey, channels connecting the customers to the company, customers' actions, thoughts and feelings, and an evaluation of the overall experience based on enjoyability, relevance, and helpfulness of the company in question. The journey is presented in a clear manner that encompasses the different features and lets the viewer get an outlook of the situation in one glance.

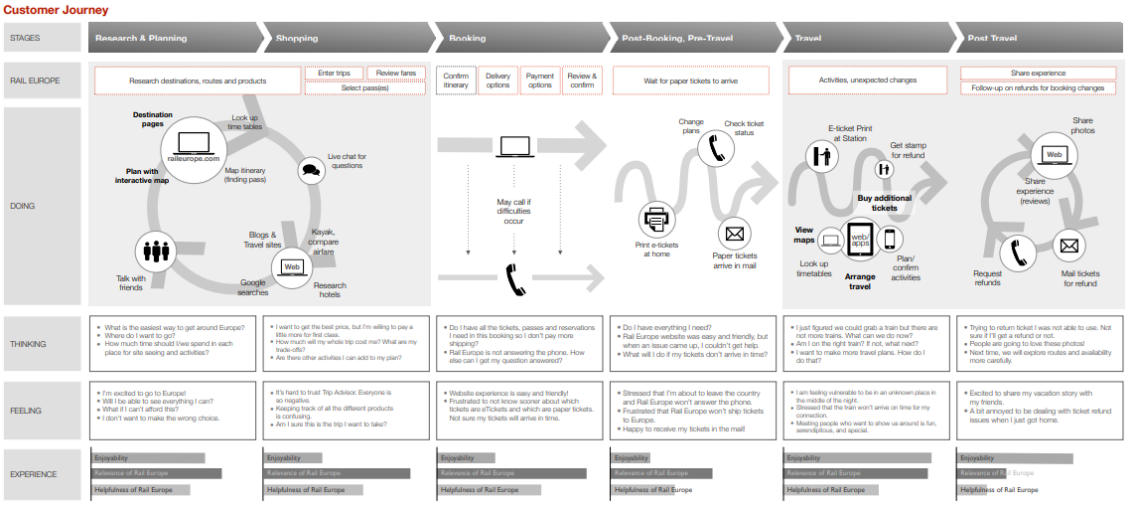

FIGURE 9 An example of a customer experience journey map (by Adaptive Path, 2011)

It can be concluded that customer experience mapping requires a deep insight which can only be gathered from genuine customer experiences. If a company does not consult the customers and include them in the customer experience journey mapping, the result may be distorted and not correspond to the actual situations. This might turn out to be unbeneficial if the faulted journey map is utilized in business operations.

4.2 Research subjects

Because the goal of the study was to study experiences from the perspectives of the case company's customers, the study subjects for the interviews were chosen from the company's customer database to represent the whole group as versatilely as possible. The individuals were chosen by the case company and represented various viewpoints by coming from different parts of the country, being different ages, and having a different amount of work experience and history with the case company. A common factor, however, is that all of the interviewees can be defined as being long-time customers of the case company and experienced users of their fire safety equipment. All customers interviewed had a vast amount, ranging from 10 years to over 30 years, of experience with the older system and furthermore, few interviewees also had some knowledge of the new system as they had had the opportunity to experiment with its commissioning.

All interviews took place in March and April of 2018. Four interviews were executed as a telephone interview and two as an in-person interview at the customers' office. All interviews had a duration of about half an hour and together generated 3 hours and 20 minutes of recordings and 51 pages of written transcription material.

4.3 Data collection methods

In order to deliver a successful customer experience journey map, it was crucial to examine what the customers of the case company where actually doing, thinking, and feeling during the commissioning process. Because the gathered data needed to be from a customer perspective and reach deeper than just a survey–type questionnaire, six interviews were conducted. The qualitative research of the thesis was conducted as **semi-structured interviews**. These kinds of interviews are founded on same research principles as surveys or questionnaires as they typically follow a standardized manner of asking questions in order to end up with answers and data that can be compared across participants. Semi-structured interviews have a purpose of achieving an authentic description of the interviewees' world and ultimately explain the meaning of the phenomena described in an all-encompassing manner. Overall, the goal of an interview as a research method is oftentimes to seek answers to how the individuals interviewed experience the world and real-life situations considering the phenomena in question, rather than why they experience the things they do. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, 161).

For this particular study, the usage of interviews as a study method is particularly justifiable since the purpose is to explore a rather new aspect of customer research and investigate features of the customer journey that have not been previously mapped out by using customer interviews as a source. As Hirsjärvi et al. (2009, 205) state, the advantages of using interviews as a study method include the fact that it is an efficient way to highlight the study subject as an individual and emphasize the importance of their own thoughts and feelings. It is also a valid choice of a method when the answers gathered from the study subjects are challenging to predict and might thus reveal new point of views from a lesser studied theme.

At the beginning of each interview, the purpose of the research and objectives for the interview were briefly explained. The interviewees were asked to give a permission to record the conversation and informed that the material gathered from their answers was going to be used as a part of the research. The table below (see table 4) showcases the main themes for the interviews and the primal question topics related to them. During the interviews additional topics also arose as the conversation expanded further than the basic, predesigned questions.

Theme	Questions
Personal information	Job title, work assignments, previous work experience, experience of case company's fire detection systems
Commissioning process	Examining the user experience of commissioning process: the advancing of the process in one's own words; comparing systems; usability, fluency, duration, challenges of the process; case company's customer service; ideas for improvement

Service experience	How does the user feel during the process: successful / unsuccessful experiences; pleasant / unpleasant experiences during the commissioning process, hopes vs. reality; grade for the experience; overall satisfaction with the case company
Other themes emerging during the interview	Inquiry of user opinions during product development; feedback from the end users; other fire safety system providers; financial issues; sales demonstrations and training arranged by the case company

TABLE 4 Themes of the customer interviews

The **observation** was conducted as an organizational simulation with characteristics from non-participant, unobtrusive observation; more precisely simple observation in which the observer has no control over the course of the situation and acts as a passive bystander (Bryman & Bell 2011 p. 272; 330). The advantages of using observation as a study method include that it generates direct information, in this case about the functionality of the commissioning equipment and method (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, 213). The situation observed was a **simulation of the commissioning process** and the goal was to imitate the situation that the customers of the case company face in their everyday work tasks. The simulation was organized at the case company's office in March 2018 and included both the old and the new systems. During the simulation the observations the data was captured and documented with written notes and photographs.

Other material used in this research included private and public documents provided by the case company. The usage of materials such as these has become more common with especially qualitative research methods and they act as a tool for understanding the examinees through the documents produced by themselves (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, 217). In this study, the material ranged from official public documents, such as websites and marketing material, to private documents, such as notes, observations, and business strategies manufactured by the employees of the case company.

4.4 Data analysis

Once the data from the chosen study methods (interviews and observation) were gathered, the material was analyzed in order to produce a uniformed portrayal of the customers' experiences. To attain this, the data gathered must be prepared by going through various steps necessary to access the point of analyzing results and being able to draw conclusions from them. Primarily, the data was evaluated to determine whether the information in them was decent, usable, and free of distinct errors or deficiency. After the data was qualified as sufficient, the complementation of information was carried out by combining the materials from different sources to fill the existing gaps and thus constructing a solid

description of the customer journey. The final step in the preparations is to organize the data so that it is a logical form which allows the analyzing to begin. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, 221-223.) The organizing, which can be executed with data coding or transcribing is used to parse and abbreviate the vast amount of information into more compact segments that are relevant to the theme of the research. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009, 92-94) present three methods for organizing the data which include dividing the materials into distinct classes, themes, and types. Classifying is a simple method of separating classes from the data and counting how often a particular class appears within the data. The classification can be presented with a table, as has been done with the interview material of this thesis (see table 5). Theming is reminiscent of classifying, but it emphasizes the importance of how different themes are presented in the data and is thus not necessarily reliant on the number of individual mentions. Dividing the data into types pursues to seek common views within the themes and compress a group of said views to form a generalization.

While coding the data from the interviews the material was first transcribed into writing. Secondly, the themes which were most relevant to the study were defined and statements from the interviewees were gathered under various hypernyms, such as statements about case company's products, service, guidance, or product development. As the building of the customer experience journey map began, the touchpoints of the journey were defined from the interview material with the help of materials provided by the case company. The touchpoints were gathered into a table and with the classification method individualized and counted. Furthermore, the touchpoints were themed into neutral, positive, and negative to distinguish how the interviewees actually experienced them and to investigate which touchpoints would stand out by being particularly satisfying or in the need for improvement.

The observation was also transcribed from notes into a logical timeline that imitated the real-life process of commissioning with the case company's equipment and software. In the end, it provided the researcher with a beneficial understanding of the process as it was not originally familiar. The observation data proved to be a useful tool while compiling the customer journey as it assisted in organizing the touchpoints and gave an impression of how the commissioning process should proceed according to the directions of the case company.

5 FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to further evaluate and present the results of the research methods used in executing this study. The methods are further explained in the previous chapter. The aim is to provide an answer to the research questions and also to offer an understanding as to what the value carrying out the mapping of customer experience journey can provide in the context of the case company. The analysis is executed by using the framework created for the study (see figure 7) and based on the findings the customer experience journey map is created and customer experiences are analyzed in order to provide insight for future business operations.

First and foremost, it should also be noted that as the gathering and analyzing of the results proceeded, the answers given by the customers were found very similar in terms of touchpoints and also in many parts in terms of experiences. Thus, it was determined that in this research there were no rational grounds for creating several different journey maps, which is often necessary if the customer personas vary significantly when looking at their actions, thoughts, and feelings. To have created the personas, there should assumably have been more interviewees with separable opinions on the experiences throughout the customer journey.

The quotes presented in this chapter are all gathered from customer interviews and marked with a number of the interviewee (for example the first interviewee is marked as I1, the second as I2 and so forward). All of the statements are translated from Finnish to English and some of them are abbreviated or slightly modified for the sake of clarity.

5.1 Objectives

The objective of this study was to examine the customer experience of the commissioning stage when using the fire detection products and services provided by the case company. The focus was on the experiences of the individuals who were familiar with using the equipment and had professional insight as to how the different features performed in practice.

The practical objective of this research was to build a customer experience journey map based on the data and information collected, since the data needed to be visualized and communicated in a clear and effective manner to appear appealing and easily displayable. The journey map was assembled by analyzing the research material and determining the stages and touchpoints of the customer journey. The purpose of journey mapping was to further bring insight of customer experiences to the case company and thus provide useful knowledge to utilize in marketing and product development. To enhance the possibility of utilizing the results in marketing, the objective was also to compare the difference

between the old and the new system and to discover which features could be emphasized to persuade the customers into purchasing the updated version of the system. For product development the objective was to possibly unveil deficiencies and ideas for improvement, which could be brought to the attention of the product development department and allow the case company to refine the features of the products, hence developing it to become more functional than it is at the current state.

5.2 Customer background

The six customers interviewed for the research were located in different parts of Finland and had slightly differing work experiences and background. The titles used varied from project manager and system expert to maintenance technician. The length of the interviewees work career in this particular field varied from ten years to over thirty years with the average length being twenty years. The work assignments varied depending on the title and status of the employee; some were more focused on the physical aspects of the work, such as commissioning, maintenance, installation, and other tasks related to safety technology and systems, while others had transferred to more of an office worker with the main tasks being project designing and planning, quotations, project supervision, and overall management of operations. Two of the interviewees had also previously worked within the case company and thus had generally more knowledge and contacts. This proved to be beneficial for example in situations, where help was needed, and they instantly knew which employee of the case company to contact.

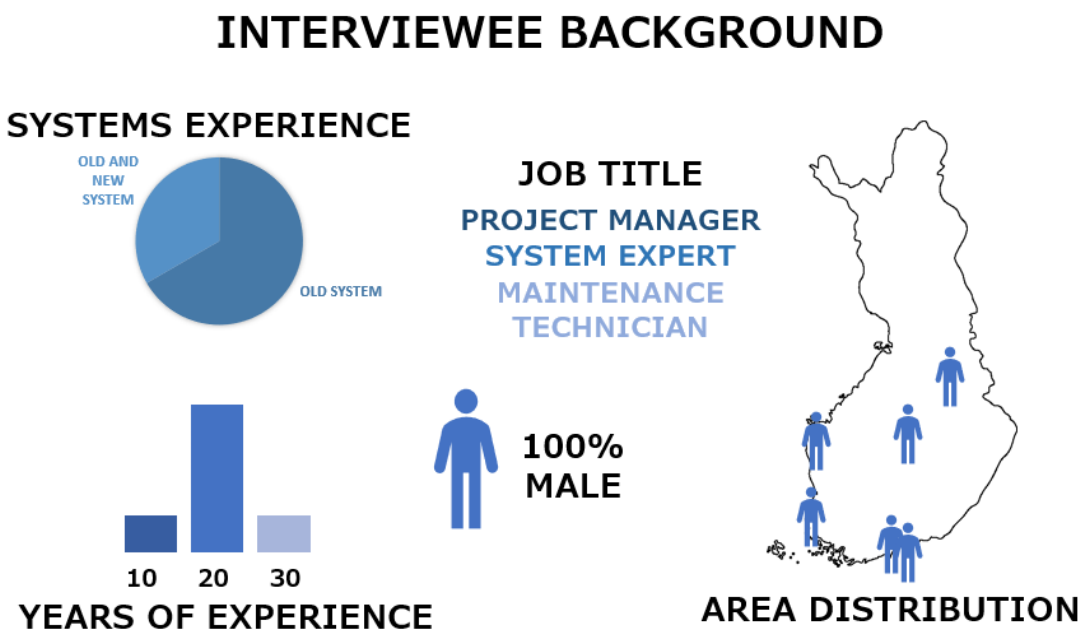

FIGURE 10 Interviewee background

Overall, the customers studied were very familiar with the case company's services, equipment, and the different fire detection systems offered. Especially the older model was well-known as it is an established product and far more common than the newer system. Two out of six customers had some experience of installing and commissioning the new system and few mentioned that they would be using it for the first time shortly in the future. During their work tasks, all customers interviewed mentioned being in touch with the case company's products on a daily basis or at least on a weekly basis. Many claimed case company's equipment to be their main product to offer to their own customers even though other brands were also included in their retail selection of fire safety products.

When asked about the course of a normal workday or if such a thing even existed, it was clear that in the business of safety systems and electric installing the work days varied considerably since the work tasks often come up with a short notice and a tight schedule.

5.3 Creating the journey map

The first research question, alongside its additional question, is focused on building the journey map. The data concerning these questions is gathered under this chapter and presented in a manner which correlates the customer journey's chronological design. This chapter has a focus on the actual experiences the respondents have undergone as a customer of the case company. It seeks to define the touchpoints, actions, and phases of the customer journey in chronological order from start to finish in light of the existing theoretical framework.

1. **What are the elements of customer experience journey and how is the journey map built?**

   1a. How do the individual customer journeys differ from each other?

As explained before, customer journey maps are often divided into three main stages: pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase. To make this model relevant to the research in question, the main stages of this journey map are as follows: **pre-commissioning, commissioning** and **post-commissioning**. The first stage includes all actions the customers must take before being able to move on to the actual commissioning. The second stage includes the act of commissioning itself and steps such as installing the equipment, doing the configuration of the software, testing, and inspecting the system in case of errors. The final stage takes place after the commissioning and contains final inspections and service and maintenance of the site.

To start creating the map and defining the touchpoints and actions, the results of the interviews and observation are presented in an order that provides

a chronological description of the process. The three main stages are examined separately and ultimately combined to create a representation of the journey as a whole. In the table below (see table 5) the different touchpoints of each stage are listed and presented by either mention from the interviewees (numbered from 1 to 6) or a note from other sources, which refer to observations done by the researcher or other materials provided by the case company. The mentions are marked with an X – symbol. Red color within the mention indicates that the interviewee discussed the touchpoint in a sense that can be interpreted as negative. For example, this may include mentioning that the touchpoint in question is particularly difficult, troublesome, frustrating, or overall in need for improvement. On the contrary, the green color within the mention indicates that the touchpoint was discussed in a positive sense. This may include the interviewee mentioning the touchpoint being particularly pleasant, effortless, satisfying, or rewarding. The markings with a white background are considered neutral indicating that the touchpoint was mentioned or discussed during the interview, but there were no particularly positive or negative experiences or feelings involved. The touchpoints gatherer from other resources than the interviews are all marked as neutral since the customers' feelings towards them are undefined.

The customers interviewed were asked to describe the commissioning process with their own words. Principally, the answers followed fairly accurately the same pattern that was compiled from the documents and information received from the case company and the observations made from the simulation by the researcher. Some however described the process quite vaguely, while others were more detailed.

> In general, it [the commissioning process] goes as follows: an electric contractor generally does the biggest installations and introduces it, and the pictures are drawn in advance or in some cases they come through the electricians. I get to the site and usually do the main wiring there and then usually make the configuration there on the field, you rarely have time to do it at the office. Then you put the program in (to the fire detection panel) and search for flaws and depends on the electrician, with some you get off easy and some have a lot of faults. When it (the flaw detection) is completed, you begin to test the system and draw up the installation certification. Then at the office, I usually transcribe the testing record and installation certification, in which are also marked all the flaws I haven't noticed or wasn't able to fix. After that enters the inspector from Inspecta, who is a third party [in the commissioning process] and whose inspection papers go forward to the end user and rescue authorities. I1

In addition to these straightforward descriptions given by the customers, the touchpoints were gathered from mentions and topics that arose during other stages of the interviews. The order in which they are presented is compiled with the help of observation, case company documents, and the fact that the answers given by the customers completed each other and mainly followed the same, logical pattern.

Touchpoints gathered from the research material by themes								
	Interviewee	1	2	3	4	5	6	Other
Pre-commissioning stage	Justifying the price for customers	X	X		X	X		
	Making the sale					X		
	Planning the project		X			X	X	
	Making transcription of execution	X				X	X	
	Making drawing of site plan	X	X			X	X	
Commissioning stage	Getting to site	X		X				X
	Examining site information		X			X		X
	Worksite introduction							X
	Notification to Emergency services							X
	Checking the site plan		X			X		X
	Checking the installation gear			X				X
	Installing the equipment			X	X	X		X
	Wiring / cabling	X	X					X
	Using subcontractor to install	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	Configuration with PC	X	X	X	X		X	X
	Making calculations with software					X		
	Booting the system				X			X
	Downloading configuration from PC to fire detection panel	X		X			X	X
	Testing	X	X		X		X	X
	Checking for errors	X	X	X	X		X	X
	Making list of the errors to the installer	X					X	X
	Fixing the errors	X	X	X	X		X	X
	Seeking assistance from a channel or tech support of case company	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	Notification to Emergency services							X
	Filling the commissioning transcript	X					X	X
	Updating site information	X					X	X
	Final check up by fire inspector	X	X		X			X
	Inspection certificate	X						X
	Fixing errors if inspection fails							X
Post-commissioning	Finishing the project	X					X	
	Reviewing project with customer					X		
	Maintenance work							
	Getting customer feedback	X						

X indicates that the touchpoint was mentioned or discussed during the interview. Customers interviewed are numbered from 1 to 6. "Other" refers to other research data outside interviews, mainly observation and documents provided by the case company.
Green indicates a positive mention by the customer.
Red indicates a negative mention by the customer.
White mentions are considered neutral.

TABLE 5 Touchpoints gathered from research material

Pre-commissioning stage

The conversations surrounding the stage before the commissioning were heavily focused on the pricing of the case company's products and the challenges of justifying said prices forward to the interviewees' own customers. Basically, the case company sells their products to their customer, who in turn sell them to their customers which are often construction companies that are in search of a fire detection system for a building. The common opinion was that the prices of the case company are on the higher side of the pricing scale. Customers are often emphasizing the budget and therefore looking to find the obligatory fire detection system as cheap as possible. However, few interviewees also noted that the case company has a good reputation among the construction companies as their products are seen as high quality, reliable, and overall good. Therefore, many companies are willing to pay the extra price in order to get this particular system.

Altogether four out of six interviewees mentioned the pricing and discussed the challenges of selling a service with a higher price while there are competitors in the market with comparable, but more inexpensive items and services. All of these mentions were interpreted as negative since there was a clear consensus about the struggle of justifying the price.

> Other systems preempt (the case company's system) with that (the price-quality-ratio). The competition is becoming harder. I2

> It (the case company) has never competed with price and still isn't, and nowadays the most important feature for the customer is the price. It doesn't matter which brand it is, as long as it's cheap. When their (the case company's) equipment is 30% more expensive than other brands, it's really hard to justify why the customer should choose it. I4

One problem related to selling the system and products to the customers concerned the rapid pace of the product development in the case company, which can be perceived as a positive or a negative attribute.

> The product development (in the case company) has progressed vastly in the last 20 years, but nowadays the life cycle of products is probably too fast and short. If today we have to sell a new fire detection system every 10 years, which before was sold every 30 years, the customers are not satisfied. I5

The closing of the sale is obviously a requirement for the whole process to start. Perhaps because this touchpoint is so self-evident, it came up in only one of the interviews. Within said interview, the closing of the sale was, perhaps unsurprisingly, seen as a positive step.

Once the sale is closed and the actual commissioning process is about the begin, there needs to be a plan of action. Planning the project includes the actual outlining of the commissioning, including schedule, equipment, services, and other resources. The completed plans are concretized into a written transcript of

process execution and drawing of a detailed site plan with a floor plan and layout of the equipment installed. The transcript of execution should be handed out to fire officials before the commissioning. The discussion of planning the process arose in about half of the interviews and was generally perceived as a neutral step in the process. However, some negative feelings stood out by few interviewees. Making the transcript of execution was mentioned negatively due to the inefficiency of the third-party site planners.

> Often the planner has not done the transcript of execution with the fire officials, even though it's the first thing the whole planning process should be based on. The biggest issue with these projects is that the transcript is done a week before the site is handed over to the customer even though it should be the first thing that's done. I6

Negative experiences of drawing the site plans were discussed by two customers. The reason behind the dissatisfaction was the lack of a standardized model for site plan drawings, which occasionally causes the plans to look disorganized and incoherent.

> The configuration software could produce the drawings automatically; it would make the structure more equivalent and if everybody would utilize this, it wouldn't matter what site you're going to since you would always have a familiar looking plan in front of you. I5

The figure below (see figure 11) sums up the touchpoints discussed above. Under the hypernym of pre-commissioning stage, three sub-phases are determined. The touchpoints are categorized under these phases, along with the interpreted feelings, experiences, actions, and thoughts, and completed with possibilities for improvement. The curve describing the general feeling of the customer during the phases is determined by the positive and negative experiences gathered from the interviews and highlight especially the touchpoints that the customers themselves underlined as being good or bad. This same formula for presenting the customer experience journey map is used throughout this chapter also in the stages to follow.

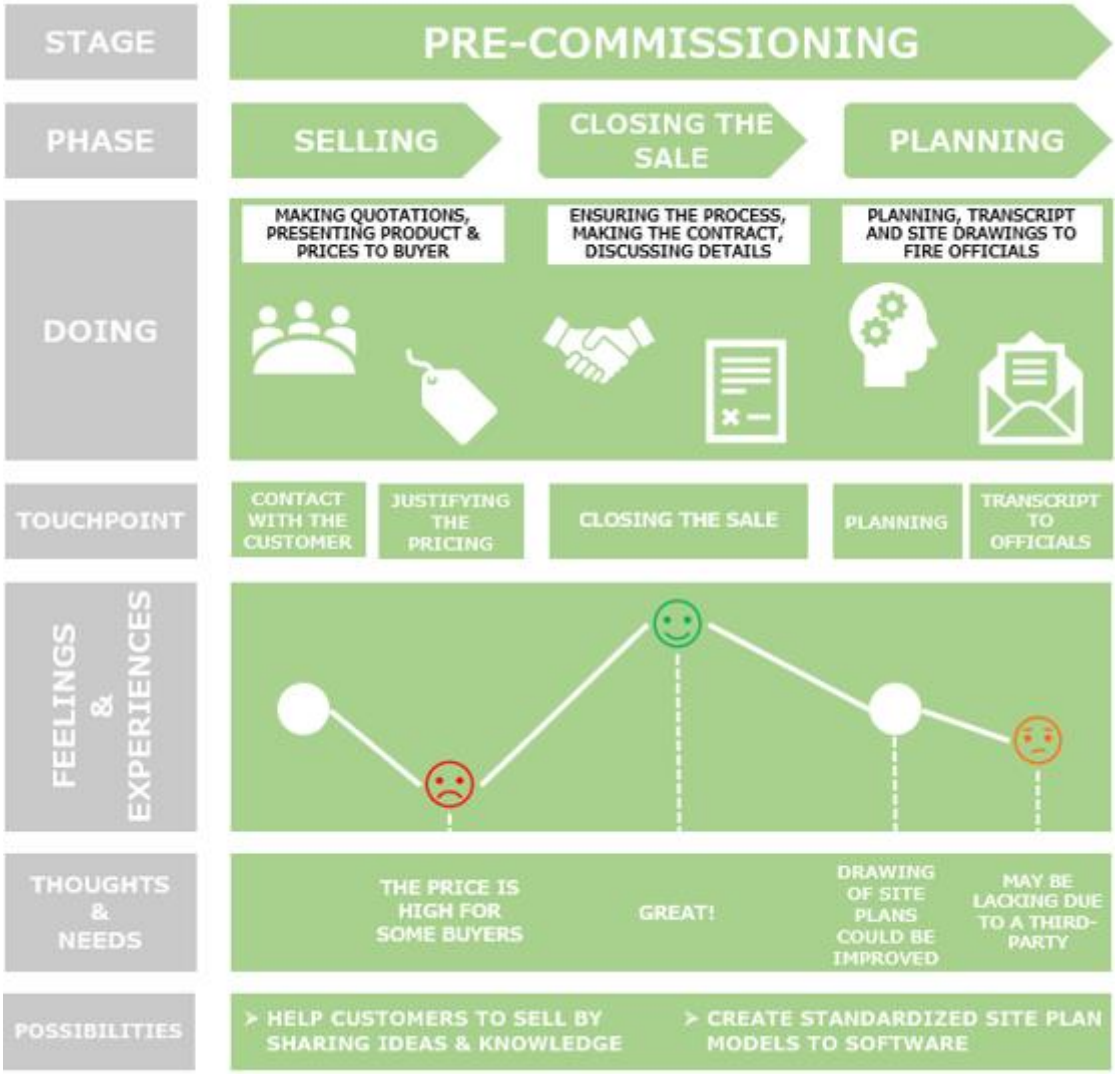

FIGURE 11 Illustration of the first stage of the journey map

When the execution of selling, closing the sale, and planning the process is done and approved, the commissioning can begin.

Commissioning stage

The first step of starting the commissioning is getting to the worksite. Once on site, the site information should be carefully examined in order to be up to date with the execution process. This should be followed by worksite introduction that familiarizes the employee with the particular site features. The steps of getting to the worksite and examining the information and introduction were mentioned by third of the interviewees and are combined to represent the phase on preparation.

When the preparations are done and installation of the equipment can begin, the first thing to do is notify the emergency services (Hätäkeskus). This is done in order to prevent false alarms that might occur when the fire detection

system is being tested. This touchpoint was not mentioned during the interviews but is supported in other research materials as a part of the official guidance during the procedure. The installation can be executed by two different ways, either using a subcontractor to do the installation or doing it oneself. When the installation is done by the customers themselves, it includes the touchpoints of examining the site plan (mentioned in two interviews), checking the installation gear (mentioned in one interview), installing the equipment (mentioned in three interviews) and doing the wiring and cabling of the equipment (mentioned in two interviews). The latter was seen as negative by one of the customers.

> The cabling space is quite small and narrow. The more you have cables coming to the system, the harder it is because there is not enough space for the cords. I2

However, from the two installation options, the interviews clearly indicated that using a subcontractor is far more common. It was mentioned by all interviewees and eventually proved to be one of the main topics of discussion during the conversations. Out of six interviews, four customer discussions implied that the installation done by a third party was often seen as a negative touchpoint. More about this topic is discussed ahead when the touchpoints of checking for errors and fixing the errors are covered.

> If it (the installation of equipment) is done by an electrician, the guys might do whatever, so it is dull when you go to do the commissioning and put the power on and there is an insane amount of errors. I1

> The biggest work during the commissioning is fixing the errors on the site if the wires are connected incorrectly. The electricians and installers just throw the wires there and don't really care. I3

> When we do it (the installing) ourselves there are no errors because we have to fix them ourselves. But if we use contract workers, even if you only have to connect plus and minus signs correctly, it is not done correctly. I4

After the installation is done, the commissioning continues with configuration. This touchpoint was discussed in all but one of the interviews. The configuration is done on a computer with the case company's software that is compatible with the equipment installed. Basically, the configuration is the point where the individual information about the site, equipment, and other specific data is fed into the software so that eventually the panel is aware of every element and thus able to control the entire fire detection system of a building. The configuration can be performed either while working on site or beforehand at the office. This touchpoint was seen as neutral by the customers. The computer software in which the configuration is executed was generally seen as functional and sufficient, although a bit outdated.

Within the configuration software, a possible but not compulsory touchpoint is making equipment-related calculations which are meant to be of assistance during the commissioning process. The calculations were mentioned

by an interviewee in a negative light, since it was expressed that this touchpoint is in a need for improvement.

> The products are already in the configuration software, so I think it's a rather useless step to type into an Excel all the same information that I have just typed into the software. The calculation program could generate the calculations directly, or at least import the information to an Excel directly. I5

Once the configuration is executed within the software it is downloaded from a computer to the fire detection panel. The system is booted beforehand. When the configuration is set within the panel, the testing of the system can begin. During this touchpoint it is ensured that the equipment installed is equivalent to the original drawing of site plans and software configuration. It is crucial that everything is working correctly or otherwise the system may not function properly in case an emergency occurs in the future. The individual executing the commissioning tests that the fire detection panel is able to locate all of the installed fire detectors in the right order and that they are working as they are supposed to. In this phase it is possible to purposely cause artificial alarms to make sure that the detectors react to them correctly. If the installation work has been done by someone else than the employee doing the configuration and errors are found at this stage, a list of them is assembled and given to the original installer. The phase of testing, which includes locating and repairing errors, was one of the main topics of conversation that arose heavily in nearly all of the interviews. Many interviewees mentioned the testing being time-consuming and even boring, as it is a mandatory step that requires a strict concentration and cannot be sped up by any means.

> (When asked about the most unpleasant step of the commissioning) Well maybe the testing, even though it's important it's a boring step since you have to go around the building and test every alarm individually. You have to stay alert to notice the mistakes but all in all… I feel it's quite useless. I1

The tone of the discussion was particularly negative if the installation work was done by a third party; according to the interviewees, this usually means that there are not only far more errors but also more often.

> Finding the installing errors is the most time-consuming part. I4

> To execute the commissioning, it requires skills and especially caution from the electric workers. They should understand that finding the errors, in the end, can take several days. It doesn't take as much time to install ten sensors correctly, versus how long it takes us to find the errors if these ten sensors are falsely connected. I6

> The most common problem is errors in the wiring. When they are connected incorrectly and there are hundreds or thousands of sensors – how do you find the right point where the problem is? I4

A touchpoint closely related to fixing errors was seeking assistance from the case company. The company has different channels through which the customers are able to search for information and services and ask for help if an insurmountable problem occurs. The channels include telephone, email, internet pages for the customers, feedback, printed instructions, and various face-to-face contact points, such as meetings, presentations, and educational events. The touchpoint of being in contact with the case company in order to get assistance was mentioned by all customers during the interview and unanimously in a negative sense. The customers expressed different concerns and experiences about the issue, the most prominent being the difficulty of reaching a competent employee to solve the customer's problem through telephone and occasionally an excessively long waiting time it takes to get an answer.

> As it is now, we are joking that it [technical support via phone] is the so-called last straw when you run out of ideas. I can't even remember the last time I called there. But since I know some guys from the product development, I usually just call straight to them when I have a problem. I1

> (When asked if the interviewee had ideas for improvement) Definitely the technical support. It is hard to solve a problem at their (the case company's) office since a lot of problems we have on site can't be verified because they can't make them recur at the office. If you have a problem you have to solve it yourself because the group (the employees in the case company's office) has changed and the old and familiar people are gone, so I don't really know whom to call anymore. I4

> The technical support, I feel like they (the case company) don't have it anymore. They don't have the experience, the best technical support would be someone who has done commissioning for a few years, so they know what we are talking about. They (the employees of the case company) can maybe read the manual of the equipment, but so can we on the spot. I4

Besides the customer service through telephone, many interviewees pointed out some issues concerning the internet site. For example, problems occurred with finding the correct product information, especially in Finnish, and the overall site was seen as illogical and cluttered by some interviewees.

> The instructions are quite bad at least on the Finnish website. The English technical support is at a separate webpage and has different contents and you can usually find the instructions there, but the Finnish site is insufficient. I1

> The website doesn't really suit the Finnish mentality. Everything you search is behind too many links and you can't always find what you are looking for, so that's a problem. I feel like they (the case company) try to put too much information in one place on the website so it becomes messy. I2

Alongside other technical support, an interviewee also thought that some particular employees of the case company were extremely hard to get in contact with when in need. Since the technical support did not offer the help needed in

certain situations, the problem-solving turned out to be unnecessarily time-consuming.

> Usually when I need help at the site I can't get it with one phone call or even during the same day. When the help is finally given, it's too late. Sometimes they (the case company) have some in-house meetings or training, so the whole staff is there, and you can't get a hold of any employee for several hours of a day. I5

When the errors have been located and fixed and the problems concerning them are solved, the commissioning may continue with the final actions. The emergency center is again informed about the termination of the process so that if an emergency occurs, the fire detection system is safely within the radar of the emergency center. The final touchpoints of the commissioning include some paperwork such as filling the commissioning transcript and updating site information. The final checkup of the site is done by an official fire inspector who ensures that the safety requirements are fulfilled and compiles an inspection certificate. If the inspection is successful, the process is completed but if additional issues are detected, they must be remedied in order to eventually pass the inspection. The whole discussion about these final actions was considered fairly neutral among the customers and neither distinctly positive or negative feelings were expressed.

To summarize the stages and touchpoints discussed above, the results are gathered as a journey map to the figure below (see figure 12). The central part of the commissioning process is further divided into five phases: preparation, installation, configuration, testing, and finalizing. The touchpoints defined from the interviews and other materials are categorized under these phases, along with the interpreted feelings, experiences, actions, and thoughts. Since several touchpoints discussed during the commissioning were brought up in a negative light, the overall curve of the customer feelings and experiences is sketched to represent the dissatisfaction and is therefore prominently low.

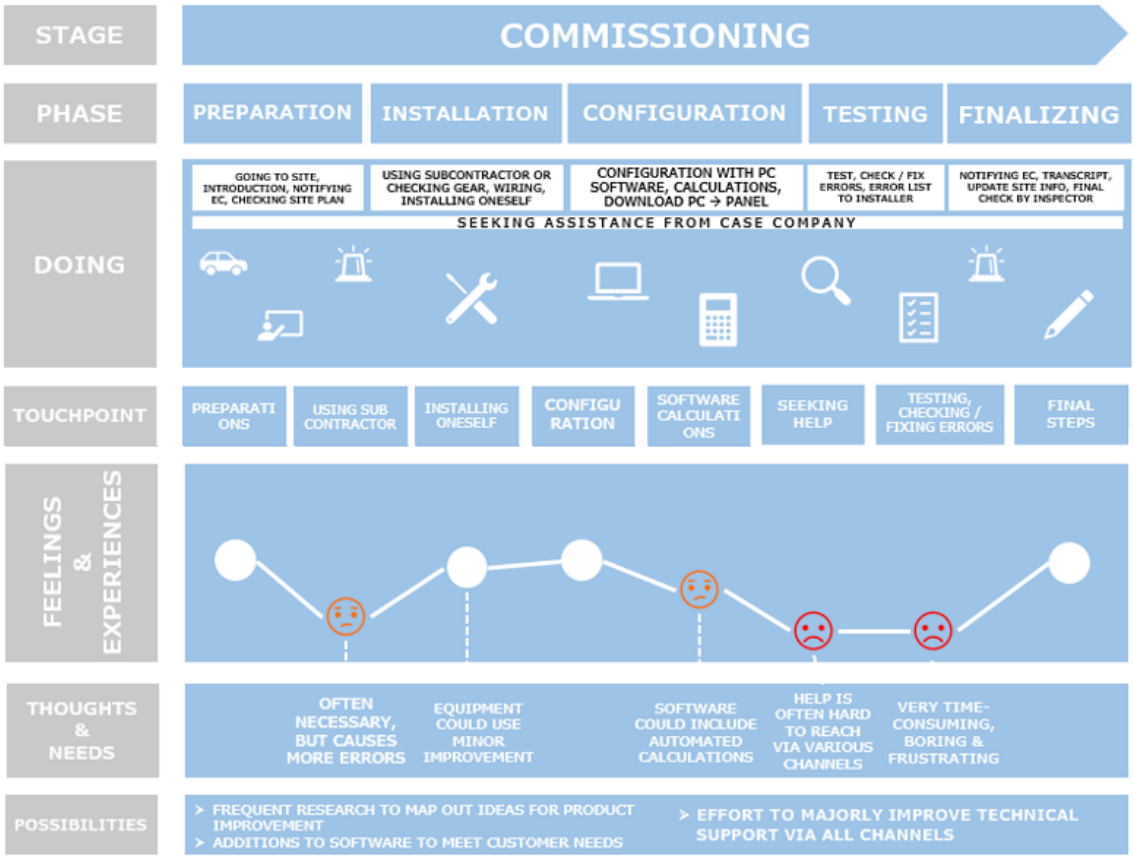

FIGURE 12 Illustration of the second stage of the journey map

Post-commissioning

Once the commissioning itself is over and successfully inspected, it is followed by post-commissioning. First and foremost, this includes finishing the project and the aftermath related to that. Completing a project was mentioned by two of the interviewees. Both mentioned it as a positive step when asked about which moments generate positive feelings during work:

> When the final inspection is done and there are no errors, so the project can be finished. I1

> Of course, it's always a good feeling when you finish a project. I6

An interviewee mentioned that the finished project is often subsequently reviewed with their customer to make sure that everything turned out to be as desired. In the time following there may also occur maintenance work concerning previous commissioning projects, which can be deemed to be a part of the post-commissioning period. Customer feedback was also mentioned as a positive touchpoint by one of the interviewees. However, it was also mentioned that good feedback is often received as continuing partnerships with the customer companies, rather than the obvious verbal of written feedback.

> The feeling of success (during work) comes from the satisfaction and feedback of the customers. There isn't a lot of straight feedback to one way or the other, so it (the positive feedback) shows with the continuation of co-operation. I1

The post-commissioning is partitioned into three phases of finishing, reviewing, and feedback. Based on the material gathered from interviews, from all the three stages of the whole process this last one normally involves the least amount of touchpoints. It may, however, be the longest in duration, since the possible maintenance work may be set far into the future. Post-commissioning can overall be seen as a quite positive stage, and the curve describing the customer experience is varying from neutral to positive feelings with no notable negativity.

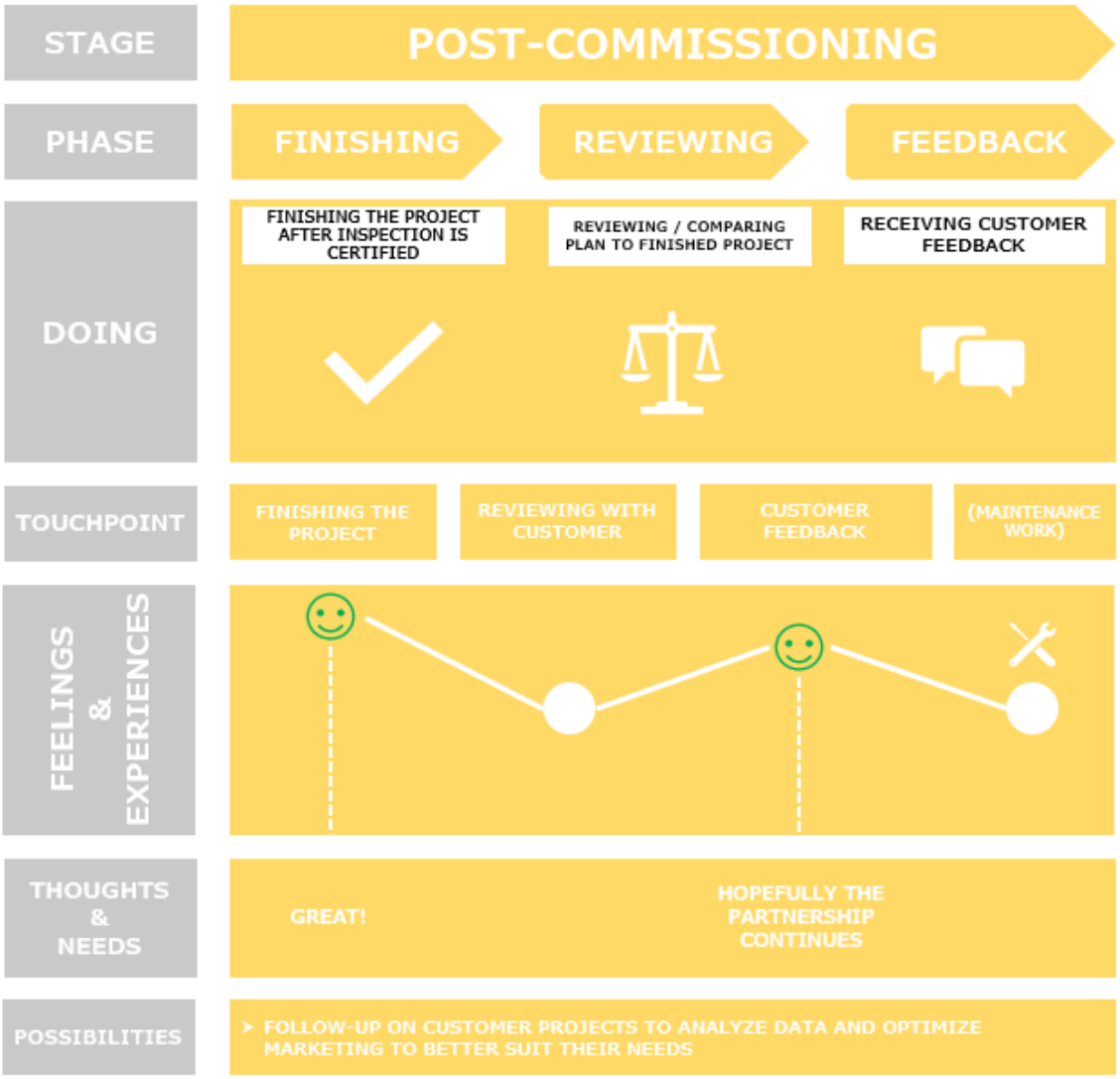

FIGURE 13 Illustration of the final stage of the journey map

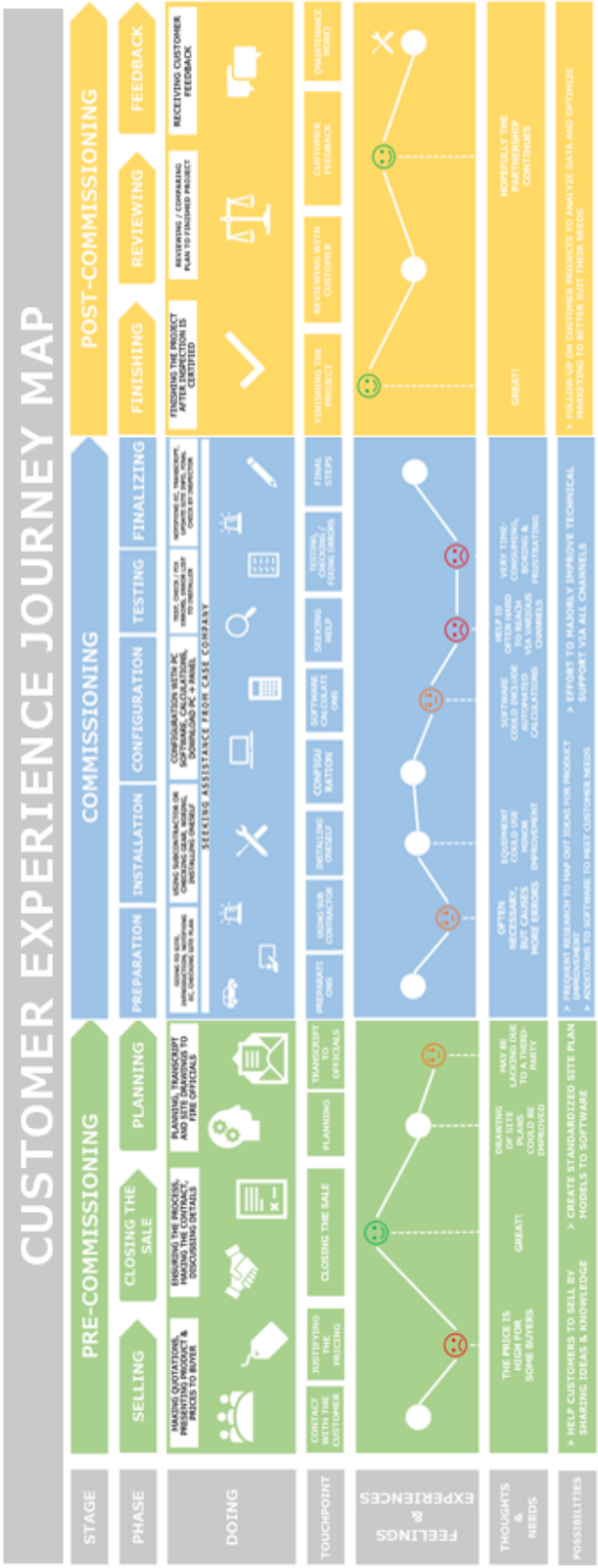

FIGURE 14 Illustration of the combined journey map

5.4 The overall customer experiences

The second research question has an emphasis on the overall customer experience. This chapter pursues to analyze the experiences as a measurable concept to better evaluate them and define if they are sufficient. The previously presented framework for measuring experience by Maklan and Klaus (2011) is used as a guideline for analyzing this research question.

2. **How can customer experience mapping be used in creating better customer experiences?**

In order to improve the customer experience, it should become a top priority throughout the company and its operations including structural changes to reflect the customer-centric thinking. Especially in the markets of today, customer dissatisfaction may have far-reaching and hazardous consequences as it is widespread due to customer empowerment. While many companies have a vast knowledge of the purchasing habits, income levels, and other categorization tools of their customers, they often have little to no insight on the emotions, thoughts, and mindsets that the customers have concerning the company's products, services, and brand. (Meyer & Schwager, 2007.)

Defining the overall experience for an individual customer may be challenging due to the fact that even though it is possible to generalize the answers and form a uniformed image of the experience, there are always personal aspects which have an effect on the individual perception of the customer journey. As discussed in the theoretical framework, variable factors such as time, place, and relationships all have a role in how diverse individuals view their personal experiences. Therefore, it should be taken into consideration that the answers the interviewees have given may have varied had the variables been different. Nevertheless, while assembling research material and getting results which ought to represent a larger group of individuals, it is reasonable to assume that the results gathered concern various customers who share the same experiences and have similar needs for improvement.

To begin exploring how the customer experience mapping can be used in creating better customer experiences, we first have to define how the overall experience is to begin with. The act of measuring the quality of customer experiences was discussed previously in the theoretical framework with mentions of the research by Maklan and Klaus (2011). Their method suggests measuring the quality by conducting customer research, and while processing the results to focus on customers' thoughts associated with *product experience*, *outcome focus*, *moments-of-truth*, and *peace-of-mind*.

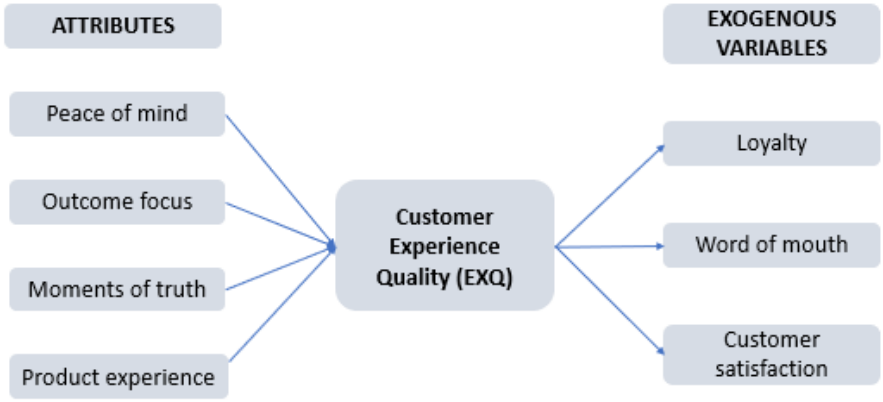

FIGURE 15 A scale to measure customer experience quality (Maklan & Klaus, 2011

Product experience refers to the customers' perception of an ability to have choices and compare different offers when it comes to acquiring products or services. The ability to choose between different products from the case company's range was not a common topic of conversation as it appeared that most of the interviewees were very satisfied with the old system they were currently using and thus did probably not feel the need to replace them with another. Although, the satisfaction the interviewees have might be the result of trial and error and ultimately finding the products best suitable for their needs as one of the customers implies.

> We use the products we trust and that have been proven to be good and avoid some other products because we know they increase our workload and make it harder than it has to be. So ultimately using them results in higher costs for us and if I can make my work easier, of course I'll use a product that allows me to do that. I5

As for comparing offers, the price point, which was discussed in the previous chapter, was a common topic during the interviews. All of the customers interviewed were aware that the case company has quite high prices compared to some competitors. The comments regarding offers and prices received mixed comments as some customers felt that the quality outweighs the pricing, while others felt that just because a product is a certain brand is not enough reason to charge significantly higher prices. Therefore, the interviewees were obviously highly aware of the case company's competitors as well as their product range and prices, so it can be stated that as for product experience, the quality of customer experience is quite high.

Outcome focus is related to the customers' tendency of for example seeking new providers in order to reduce transaction costs. However, once the relationship between the provider and customer is established, the relationship becomes a habit and the familiarity seems so effortless that the urge to react to competitors' offers reduces significantly. As discussed in the paragraph above, the case company's customers are aware of the competitors' offers but have yet

chosen to stay as the case company's customers; some even for decades. Even though some interviews included comments such as the following,

> Before It was clear that if you wanted to get off easily you installed the case company's equipment, but today the competitors have caught up so much, that sometimes it would be easier to use the competitors' equipment. I4

all of the respondents stated that the case company's items were their main goods to sell. From this, it is possible to draw a conclusion that at least as for the time being the interviewees are pleased enough with the outcome that results from doing business with the case company and therefore have no compulsive need to switch their main provider.

Moments-of-truth are associated with the prominent moments the customers experience with a company and its products and services. Whether they stand out by being positive or negative, they are the points that the customers remember and might eventually make or break the relationship. Moments-of-truth also emphasize the importance of service recovery and flexibility when encountering an unpredictable problem. The interviewees did not mention any remarkably memorable moments in which the case company would not have been able to recover from a service failure. They did mention lesser errors and points of improvement related to the case company's products and services but at least judging from the interviews, the customers had not had any moments-of-truth that would have made them question the customership and discontinue their co-operation. Some customers did, however, mention unpredictable problems which occurred during the commissioning process but added that the case company had delivered decent service in order to solve an issue or prevent a major problem.

> Lately we had problems with some installation equipment, so they (the case company) informed us immediately about it before we installed 17 000 defective parts. So even though it caused us some extra costs, it was definitely a smaller hindrance than a situation where they (the case company) had not informed us. I4

Because there was a lack of major moments-of-truths during the interviews it is challenging to evaluate customers' experiences associated with them. But on the other hand, it can be interpreted that since there were no mentions, the customers might not have had any dramatic setbacks with the case company; particularly ones that the company would not have been able to solve.

The last attribute in the method of measuring the quality of customer experience is peace-of-mind which can be defined especially with the customers' statements that are strongly associated with the emotional features of the customership and reveal how they perceive the company's level of expertise. Basically, peace-of-mind reflects the feelings of being at ease and having confidence in the customership, as well as feeling as they are valued as a customer. Strong emotions or feelings arisen due to the case company were not expressed straightforwardly during the interviews, which is perhaps somewhat dependent on the character of the customer answering and the nature of the

work; the respondents were generally focusing on the factual experiences and were less likely to express deeper emotions. It was also mentioned by almost all interviewees that the work they do is seen as merely a job and had become so routined that it does not generate deeper emotions. However overall, the answers given by the interviewees gave the impression that the case company is generally seen as a very trustworthy service provider with high-quality products and a long history of expertise.

> (When speaking about the case company's product) It has been very good equipment, from all the ones I have tried over the years it is definitely the best. I6

To summarize Maklan and Klaus's (2011) method of measuring customer experience quality it can be concluded that considering the four attributes above, the customers of the case company are generally satisfied with the quality of their experiences. None of the four attributes is significantly deviant by lacking customer satisfaction, and a strong advocate for this is also the fact that the customerships within the case company are generally very long and despite the high pricing spoken of earlier, the customers continue to sustain their partnership and stick to the case company as a provider even though there are other and more affordable options available.

As for the presented method of measuring customer experience quality suggests, there are three exogenous variables that serve as an outcome and are affected by the perceived experiences of customers: loyalty, word-of-mouth, and customer satisfaction. From the four attributes evaluated it is quite clear that the customers of the case company are highly loyal to their service provider. This can be stated based on the long-lasting partnerships and the fact all of the interviewees mentioned the case company's products as their most common and important sale items. Word-of-mouth and how frequently or in what sort of tone the customers recommend or talk about the case company to others is challenging to determine. Traditionally word-of-mouth is defined as communication between private parties and includes evaluating goods and services in an informal manner. It can be either positive, such as recommendations, or narration of positive experiences, or negative, such as denigration of products or services, complaints, or narration of negative experiences. (Anderson, 1998). Some of the interviews generated a conversation about whether the customers would recommend the case company as a service provider for others.

> It depends on the customer and the site whether I would recommend (the case company) or not. For smaller sites it would be expensive to get a separate fire detection system, it's more suited for big sites with a lot of detectors. I2

Altogether, the interviewees did not give many statements about word-of-mouth or recommendations but as the conversation turned into the case company's new system, it was expressed by a respondent that it was discussed with colleagues in a negative manner.

> It's kind of problematic with the new system and what I understand from hearing from other companies in which I have a lot of acquaintances, everyone has quite of a negative approach to it. I4

Maklan and Klaus (2011) mention in their research that out of all three variables resulting from the perception of customer experience quality, word-of-mouth has the highest correlation with customer satisfaction. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that if the customers' satisfaction in the case company is high, as it appears to be judging from the research material, the customers are also more likely to speak favorably about their experiences and give recommendations to others.

The last variable in the method of measuring customer experience quality is customer satisfaction. As concluded above, it can be interpreted from the answers given by the interviewees that the customers seem overall quite satisfied with the products they are currently using even though there are some flaws and need for improvement in certain areas, such as the technical support for customers. To investigate how satisfied the customers actually are with the case company, they were asked to give a score to the overall customership and experience related to the case company and their products and services. The scores were at the end quite high, taking into account the fact that many of the respondents focused more on the negative than the positive matters during the interviews. The scores given to the company varied from seven to nine, with the average score being an eight. Some interviewees mentioned that giving just one overall score for the entire experience is quite difficult and they would probably give a different rating depending on for example the success of an individual project, the functionality of an individual product or a system, or the aspect from which the company is being examined. In other words, the score is bigger with larger projects than smaller projects, because the case company's systems have a better monetary value for customers with a more extensive fire detection system needs. It was also mentioned that the case company deserves a different score from the products than the service and interaction with customers.

> I would give it a 9, due to the fact that I have done it (the commissioning with the case company's products) so much and it's very familiar to me. I4

> I think the grade goes up to an 8 or an 8 and a half; the products are good, high-quality, protected and the product development has advanced a lot during the last 20 years. I5

> For the products I can give a 9, but on the other hand from the customer interaction and communication and such, I'll give a 7. It could be better. I6

Despite the negative aspects which arose during the interviews, the average score reached to be high and therefore proof that the customers are overall satisfied with their partnership with the company.

5.5 Improvement of marketing and product development

The third research question focuses on the more practical implementation of journey mapping and experience research. It seeks to determine how the concepts can actually be utilized in business operations and thus make the investigation on customer experience ultimately profitable. As stated before, where the previous two research question where focused on the current customer journey and experiences revolving around the older version of the case company's product, this question has an emphasis on the new product and the operations related to it.

3. **How can customer experience mapping benefit marketing and product development?**

To make the creation of a journey map beneficial, there should naturally be advantages concerning the business strategy that result from the process. In this research, the case company was particularly interested in improving their marketing and product development with the help of customer experience journey mapping. Since the company has recently gone through a significant launch of a new and renewed version of their main product (fire detection panel and software), the goal was to map out the existing customer journey and experiences concerning the older version of the product and thus gain insight and basis for comparison for the marketing of the renewed version. The research also strived to survey the customers' opinions regarding the new product launch, either from user experience or a mental image they have gotten from it and utilize these opinions in refining and optimizing the marketing and receiving valuable information concerning a possible need for further product development. Out of the six customers interviewed two had hands-on experience with the new product while others based their opinions on the information they had been given by the case company or colleagues.

When utilizing the customer experience journey mapping and implementing the information gathered from it to the company's business strategies, every department within the firm has a specific role to play. The case company was interested particularly in the improvement of marketing and product development concerning their main product category. According to an article by Meyer and Schwager (2007), the special task for marketing department is to seize the tastes and standards of each one of their target market segments and adjust the communication towards consumers accordingly. Additionally, it is marketing's responsibility to distribute the knowledge of said customer information across the company.

The main task for the product development department is to go beyond specifying features the customers need; it should also pursue to create experiences based on the information about how the customers use the company's products and services. It is crucial for the product development to

understand how and why the existing products might cause frustration to the customers and ideally to determine the aspects of customer behavior that differ from the company's expectations. This way it is possible to discover customer needs, that have yet to be found. (Meyer & Schwager, 2007.)

Customers' perception of the case company's new product

The interviews revealed that currently, the customers' opinions about the new product launch are overall rather negative. Although the case company has organized occasions in which the new product has been introduced and arranged user training, the reception appears to be unwelcoming; the users are advocating the older version of the system quite heavily and are skeptical of the new features of the renewed system. The modern technology related to the new product was in a large extent seen as impractical, complicating, or even unsafe, as some customers were concerned about their private information being on an online-based software. However, it is not a rare phenomenon that consumers might often be reluctant on changing their buying behavior and taking the time and effort of learning to utilize a new product when a positive end result and user satisfaction are not guaranteed. A familiar product that has proved itself by performing well and offering the desired result improves customer satisfaction and loyalty related to a particular product and decreases the need to explore and experiment with new product releases (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982). A research by Alexander et al. (2007) suggests that when a certain product is seen as very fresh and promoting new technologies, the consumers are actually discouraged from creating positive intentions to purchase it. This is caused by the uncertainty about the benefits of the new product; consumers are skeptical whether the cost-benefit trade-off is profitable and even though they recognize the fact that improvement might be needed, consumers might be reluctant to change their current behavior models to enjoy the benefits. In some cases, it might even be advantageous not to emphasize new features or technologies in the marketing of an innovative product since customers might find the unknown features unattractive or even intimidating. So, there may be a large discrepancy in releasing new products; in order to stay innovative and grow companies should be able to create new and improved products but simultaneously be able to assure old customers that the new innovations are familiar enough and switching to them does not take an extensive amount of effort.

Ram and Sheth (1989) discuss innovation resistance in their study alongside the functional and psychological barriers that can make the consumers reluctant to try new products. As in the context of the case company's customers, the main issue appears to be related to functional barriers such as familiar product usage patterns and existing workflows that are threatened by a new product causing a significant change into one's daily routines.

> It [the new system] is going to be very problematic when doing the configuration in a cloud. Before when you had the old system and the customer called that they would like to have changes made, you only had to take your laptop case and go to the

> site, do the change to the programming and if it was something minor, you already knew when going there that it's going to be quick and easy. But now, let's think it [the new system] is in a cloud and someone else than me has done it [the configuration]; we have to start figuring out if the client knows who has the program keys or who could give them to us so we can go and do something in the cloud, and also even though nowadays all cell phones are able to connect to the internet, the fire detection panels are located in places where accessing the internet is not a given. When you're doing the configuration and there' no internet, you aren't able to do the configuration directly and from a practical point of view, that's a big downside. I1
>
> I have not used the new system, but I have understood that you can't do the configuration of the software beforehand because it has to be registered somewhere in a cloud. As before you could just do everything in advance, go to the site and insert the software into the panel. I4
>
> I don't have experience with the new system, but I have an image that using it is not as simple as the older one. I5

Financial concerns and product value can also be seen as a functional barrier and were an issue which raised uncertainty among the customers during the interviews. While it has been stated before in the chapter that the case company's products are quite high on the pricing scale, the new product is perceived as even higher in costs and thus causes the customers to question if it truly is worth the expensive price tag.

> We can't justify the price by saying that this system has this could service and other fancy features. The contractor doesn't care about those, they just want to have the product as cheap as possible as long as it's working. I4
>
> I know where they are going with the new product and it's a nice idea, but all of the extra monthly costs are a red flag for the end users and there should be concrete benefits to justify them. I'm not very convinced, I don't know if the users actually benefit from this. At least they are not saving money for using a cloud service. I5

The final functional barrier is associated with product usage risks that can be either physical, economical, or functional. The functional risks and worries that the product might not perform properly was an issue for some of the interviews. The functionality was questioned mostly because of the need for internet connection which was not necessary in the older version of the product. Some customers of the interviewees were also concerned about the safety aspects of a cloud service as company information was going to be transferred from pc-based software into an internet-based cloud.

> With the new one you are dependent on the internet. If it doesn't work, you can't do anything. I1
>
> It (the new system as a cloud service) can be good when the building (where the commissioning is done) is completely ready, but if it's incomplete and there's no

network, it's a constant hassle. I feel that the old one is better. It has more tools and if you haven't got internet with the new system, the working stops there. I2

Some of our customers are very pedantic and they don't want anything to do with the internet. It's related to their own safety practices. I3

When the programming takes place in a browser it's always a bit trickier. All of the internet-based programs I have used never work as smoothly as the ones that you download to a pc. I4

To sum up the functional barriers introduced by Ram and Sheth (1989), there appears to be distinguishable resistance for the new system. The users have become very accustomed to the old product and perceive it as being highly trustworthy, functional, and easy to use. Therefore, the customers probably do not feel that there is any major need for change and are surprised by the fact that the new product introduced differs from the old one in such a significant way. Even though many features of the old and new product are comparable, there are large improvements that require the customers to learn and adapt to a new way of executing the commissioning process.

Utilizing customer experience research in marketing

To answer the research question of how the customer experience research can benefit marketing, this study has pursued to gather user experiences regarding an older product and possibly utilize this information gathered to make it beneficial in the marketing of a newer product. The objective was to map out what the customers perceive as being negative with the customer journey of the old product and discover and highlight the features of the new product that act as a solution for these negatives. In this case, the objective proved out to be challenging as the customers were so heavily promoting the old system and criticizing the new one even if they had no user experience of it. The improved features of the new system that were created to simplify the usage of the equipment for the end user where perceived as troublesome and it appeared that many of the negative impressions the customers had were based on preconceptions or even hearsay. For example, one of the respondents with hands-on experience on the new system gave the new product a net promoter score of 0, explaining that as the system is in its current state there is no reason to recommend it to anyone else as there are currently similar but better systems on the market. The customer gave an example of another fire detection system which also utilizes cloud services and mobile devices as an assisting factor in the commissioning process and also discussed a need for a mobile application for the new product. Since this example and its functions seem somewhat similar to the actual new features of the case company's new system and the idea of mobile applications is included, it raises a question if the new advantages and elements have actually been marketed and informed about to the customers in a sufficient manner. A respondent actually mentioned that there had been problems with the

overall communication to the customers about some aspects of the new products, especially in situations where the commissioning workers needed product information and guidance but where occasionally struggling to get it.

With using this previous conflict between a customer's perception of a product and the actual features of the product as an example, there is a distinguishable gap between some of the customer expectations and reality. This may be a result of insufficient marketing communications, as an interviewee directly pointed out. As stated before, many customers also expressed the need for a better dialog with the case company and assistance with getting necessary information concerning the products. Based on the customer experience research with the case company and the similarities within the customers' answers during the interviews, the main issues for marketing seem to be the ability to deliver the desired message in a comprehensible manner, overall communications with the customers, and lack of necessary materials that are easily available and offer information that the customers of the case company may use to gain more insight on the products and possibly educate themselves about the concerns the products might be causing (such as issues with costs, technical features, or information security).

Utilizing customer experience research in product development

The overall product development and the question if there actually is a need for development concerning the case company's products arose frequently during the interviews when discussing the new system. The answers between the interviewees were somewhat dissimilar concerning the matter of including customers and users to be a part of the development process; some interviewees felt as if they were included in the decision-making process and explained how there, in fact, had been a survey inquiring ideas and demand for a system update, whereas some interviewees felt that they were not included and had no experience of the case company mapping out the customers opinions for product development. Many respondents felt that it should have been absolutely crucial to consult the customers on a more comprehensive way so that they could have expressed their concerns and wishes about the new features. The comments about the overall product development were often circulating around the fact that the users were consulted only after the new products were released.

> There are new features and developments are made and I don't know with who, but there's really not a lot of conversation with those who actually do the commissioning in practice. We're just presented with the new products in hopes of us buying them, but at the moment there are no features that one would actually like to use. I1

> The new system should have been completely ready before bringing it to the market. They (the case company) were busy to release it, but the tools are very unfinished. I2

> There was an interview (concerning product development) and I said that the cloud service is a stupid idea and still they (the case company) went on with it. I4

> At least before the company has had a habit of releasing a product and when it has been installed and used, they ask for feedback and ideas for improvement. I don't think it's clever to test the products with customers. They should listen to us beforehand, but I personally have never been asked anything. I6

One of the promoted advantages of the new system is the fact that is should quicken the commissioning process as it removes some of the steps that are necessary when going through the process with the older system. However, when the two interviewees with hands-on experience were asked if they found the new system faster or easier, the responses did not correspond with the product promises. Neither of these two respondents felt that at least as in its current state, the new system would significantly make the work process faster or easier.

> Yes, it was [when asked if the commissioning process took a longer time with the new system] and because we were in a situation where we hadn't had the system before, we had to wait about three weeks to get the login key. I1

A respondent, however, felt that the new system is quite complicated during the commissioning process but in the end, makes the usage of the fire safety panel easier if the end customer utilizes the possibilities of remote access and the services related to that.

> The commissioning process with the new system is definitely a hassle, but after that is does get easier if the customer has the remote access to the system. But this is always a question of money and whether they want to pay for it. I2

To summarize, with the context of the case company the utilization of customer experiences in product development appears not to be the main way to operate. The customers interviewed expressed the desire to be heard more when it comes to developing new products in order to meet their needs and improve the deficiencies they have experienced with the older product range. Involving customers in the new product development is traditionally considered as a prosperous strategy, but it should also be noted that involving the whole customer base as a part of developing a new product is not guaranteed to be the most successful method. The customers often have a different level of skill, expertise, and knowledge and should thus be chosen based on their ability to contribute and appreciate the newness of the future products. It is a possibility that unsolicited suggestions from customers lead to unsuccessful direction of product development and should therefore be carefully evaluated. In order to succeed, it is crucial to understand what the customers need but also thoroughly calculate whose and what kind of participation is of utmost importance when the product development focuses on qualities such as newness, technical innovation, or user-friendliness. (Brockhoff, 2003.)

5.6 Reviewing the method

In terms of gaining the needed data to build a customer experience map and answer the research questions, the methods chosen proved to be successful. The building of a journey map based mainly on customers' own narrations and experiences requires a deep and versatile understanding that quantitative methods, such as surveys or questionnaires, alone cannot offer. Hence, interviews were arranged as the main research method. The six interviewees represented different kinds of customers in terms of title, work background, and parts of the country, but nevertheless expressed rather similar opinions in regard to the interview questions. Eventually, it was noticeable that particularly some answers from the interviewees began to be repetitive which suggests that the results gathered represent not only the six individuals but can also be presumed to represent a larger group of the case company's customers.

As explained before, the methods used for executing the research for the study were qualitative in nature and the main methods ended up being interviews and observation. The data used for building the journey map and answering the research question was principally gathered from the interviews which were recorded, transcribed, classified, and analyzed in order to form a coherent picture of the research theme. Although some interviewees were more eager to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences than others, all eventually presented valuable information and thus contributed to the formation of the study. Along with interviews, the second chosen method was observation, at the request of the case company. It was organized as a simulation of the commissioning process with the same equipment and software the customers use on site. The goal was to gain an understanding of what the commissioning process is in practice and how it should proceed in the eyes of the company. Observation proved to be a useful method to comprehend what kind of equipment the interviewees are talking about and follow their narration of the different phases of the commissioning process. When analyzing the results of the interviews the observation also offered a useful background for the journey map and assisted in arranging the touchpoints in situations where the order of the steps was not self-evident. The observation also included touchpoints which the customers did not mention but are regardless necessary for the process to succeed. Therefore, it also helped to fill the gaps between the touchpoints gathered by the customers' narrations. The simulation was two-parted and included both the old system's commissioning process as well as the new system's commissioning process.

To summarize, when creating a journey map based on customer experiences the interviews are a preeminent method. Since the goal is to truly understand thoughts and feelings, the individuals should be able to describe their opinions in an all-encompassing manner. However, if the goal was to make a journey map including solely the touchpoints and stages of the journey, a more

quantitative research or barely utilization of previous customer data might be sufficient.

5.7 Validity and reliability

When conducting a research, an important aspect is to enhance the objectivity and credibility of the study. It should be assured that the research data is accurate and inclusive, and results and claims presented based on the research data are tested for credibility. These can be measured by evaluating the validity and reliability of the research (Peräkylä 2016, 414).

Validity concerns especially the analysis made from the study results and pursues to ensure that the conclusions are supported by actual data and can reflect on the previous research of the topic. Especially in interview situations, it is important to estimate whether the respondents are being genuine and express their true opinions instead of allowing the setting to have an influence and distort their answers. (Peräkylä 2016, 413-414.) The validity of a research suffers if the researcher makes errors such as creating inaccurate assumptions, utilizing corrupted or insufficient research data, or fails to use previous research of the topic as a framework in order to be relevant for the subject. (Kirk & Miller, 1986, 20-23.) In this research, the results are based on six customer interviews which all revealed similar opinions of the interviewees. Their narrations of the customer journey supported each other and their experiences concerning the case company often resulted in similar feelings and perceptions. The data gathered from the interviews is presented in a previous chapter and classified to form a genuine description of the case company's customers, and the results and analysis are drawn directly from said data. Since the answers are somewhat repetitive, it can be concluded that the interviewees are being honest in their answers and describe the situation as it is. This is also supported by the fact that often the customers brought up certain issues spontaneously during the interviews without being asked directly about them or led into giving specific types of answers. The framework of the research is created based on the existing literature of the topic and the research questions are formed to be as adaptable as possible. However, it should be noted that this study is executed in the context of a case company which indicates that not all conclusions can necessarily be generalized to apply on a different scenario.

The concept of reliability refers to the capability to repeat the research with similar results on separate occasions and regardless of the researcher. The study objects and methods of the research should, however, remain stable in order to provide a comparable setting. A conventional way to measure the reliability is to simply replicate the study and compare if the results are similar to the first investigation. (Scott & Morrison 2005, 208-209.) Stenbacka (2001) however states that as to qualitative research, the term of reliability may even be misleading due to the fact that unlike results of a survey in quantitative research, the results of qualitative research are always somewhat affected by the unique circumstances

and the researcher's personal touch in data generation and interpretation. Therefore, when conducting a research with qualitative methods an elaborate description of the study process is a valid indication of good quality. Since the answers gathered from the interviews in this research were significantly similar despite the fact that the respondents represented various types of customers, it can be assumed that the results would have been equivalent if another researcher would have conducted the interviews with a similar, semi-structured set of questions.

6 CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

The goal of this research was to study the customer experience journey and define how to map these journeys based on customer information. The task was also to find out how the mapping could improve the overall customer experiences and benefit the marketing and product development departments within the company executing the customer experience journey mapping. The theme was discoursed in the context of a case company study, which focused on investigating the experiences of customers of a Finnish small and medium enterprise operating in the field of fire safety technology. In order to combine the theoretical framework of the subject with the chosen case company context, the theoretical aspiration has been to give an understanding of customer experience as a field of study, customer journey mapping including various stages and touchpoints, and to suggest a framework for building the journey map based on the existing literature. The empirical objective of the research has been to apply the theoretical literature and the constructed framework in practice by utilizing the information gathered from the customers of the case company.

The results presented in the previous chapter display that with the method of customer experience journey mapping, it is possible to gain valuable information about the actions, thoughts and feelings of the customers. The framework works as a guide to classify the answers given by the customers and thus build a uniformed customer journey, which reveals which touchpoints the customers are satisfied with and which are in the need of improvement. The mapping of customer experiences seeks to look beyond the traditional customer data and numerical information and define what the customers genuinely feel throughout the journey. This may prove to be particularly useful if the moments of truth during the journey can be pinpointed and taken into special consideration when designing the customer experience.

The empirical findings were gathered with primarily qualitative methods of study and in the context of a case company approach. Two methods, interviews and observation, were used to gain a diverse understanding of the subject and customers' experiences. The six customers interviewed were chosen from the case company's client register and questioned individually via phone or in person. The interviews were carried out as semi-structured with a list of themes and questions used as a baseline. The observation was carried out as a simulation of the commissioning process at the case company premises and followed closely the same steps and equipment the customers go through while working in a real-life situation.

Overall, the results support the mapping of customer experiences in any company that seeks to gain a deeper understanding of how their client base perceives the products, services, and brand in general. The customer experience journey mapping framework presented can be used within any branch of business, as it is adaptable to different industries, types of research, and business

situations. It can be used to map out the whole customer journey from start to finish or as in this thesis, a particular portion of the customer process.

6.1 Summary of research results

The results from the interviews and observation suggested that in the context of the case company, the creation of a customer experience journey map was quite straightforward, and the study methods supported each other by filling possible gaps and offering insight from different point of views; the observation focused on the commissioning process from the case company's viewpoint, while the interviews offered the perceptions of customers. The experiences could be divided into neutral, positive, or negative based on the customers' comments and feelings concerning certain touchpoints. Particularly, some touchpoints arose as being highly negative or highly positive and thus revealed valuable information about possible threats and opportunities during the journey. All of the customers interviewed presented somewhat similar opinions and views concerning the journey which ultimately lead to the saturation of certain answers. This is also supported by the fact that when defining the particularly positive or negative touchpoints, the customers' opinions were highly unanimous; the answers also revealed that many customers share the same concerns, observations, and opinions concerning the case company and its products and services. It can be stated that the customer journey is certainly not identical to every customer but in this case, the results did not indicate major differences among the interviewees. The building of the journey map was supported by the framework created for the study.

The research revealed that in terms of the overall customer experiences, the case company's customers were eventually highly satisfied. Despite the negative touchpoints discovered in making the journey map, the customers expressed their overall satisfaction with the case company and many mentioned that the company is an established service provider with high-quality and trustworthy products. This ultimately raised the combined grade given to the company to an eight with the old products receiving the highest scores and the new product and customer service receiving the lower scores.

The case company pursued to discover new insight for the marketing and product development of their new product which was recently released. It was discovered that there is noticeable innovation resistance among the customers. This is mostly due to the fact that unlike the older system, the new product is cloud-service-based and requires internet usage and is therefore perceived as creating major changes in the daily work tasks. This makes some customers perceive the new product as troublesome or unnecessary. It was remarked that oftentimes the customers did not have a lot of information about the new product, and some were also straightforward to express that the communication from the case company is lacking. Several customers mentioned that they felt the new product being unfinished and wished that the customers would be

considered more when developing new products. These discoveries put pressure on marketing and product development to dispel the negative experiences in future business operations.

6.2 Theoretical implications

The theoretical background and literature review of the research gathered together the existing concepts of customer experience and journey mapping. It was noted that through the years the importance and meaning of experience have altered, but generally the significance of researching and utilizing customer experiences in business operations was articulated in the end of the 1990s (Tseng et al. 1999; Pine II & Gilmore, 1998). The background of customer journey mapping can be seen to stem from theories such as sequential incident technique (Stauss & Weinlich, 1997), but is today described as a sequence of events the customers go through when interacting with a company directly or indirectly (Norton & Pine II, 2013).

To answer the **first research question** of what the elements of customer experience journey are and how the journey map is built, this research suggests a framework based on existing customer literature and discoveries made during the execution of this study.

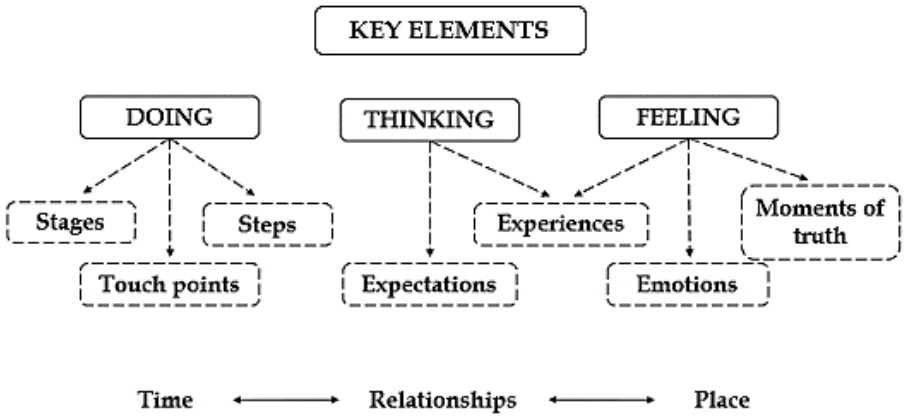

FIGURE 16 Key elements of the customer experience journey

The key elements are thus divided into doing, thinking and feeling. These elements are researched through qualitative, and possibly additional quantitative methods and ultimately allow the researcher to refine them further to gain the concrete parts of the map. By investigating what the customers are actually doing and determining the physical activities they must take part in order to proceed with the journey, it is possible to separate different stages, touchpoints, and steps. These are the traditional elements of any journey map and are possibly the most examined in the current literature (for example Norton & Pine, 2013; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Stein and Ramaseshan, 2016). The act of

"doing" requires less in-depth customer research due to its somewhat shallow nature and focuses on the behavioral patterns of the customers. It may even be investigated via existing customer data and making observations without actually needing to research the matter with customer interviews or surveys. Instead, the elements of thinking and feeling require the company to take further action and arrange a research to inquire customer experiences and opinions. As stated in the existing literature (for example Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, p. 205) the most productive way to gain insight on customer experiences is through the methods of qualitative research which were also used in the making of this case company study. Besides the obvious customer comments based on thoughts, the act of "thinking" can further be classified to expectations and experiences. It also provides an overall frame for the whole journey by answering what are the general customer opinions concerning the company and their products and services. The final key element of "feeling" requires the most in-depth customer research. Although product and service functionality is highly important in the successfulness of a customer journey, it is often the emotional factors that make the customer experiences stronger and intensify the customer-company-relationship, thus making it harder for competitors to interfere (Berry et. al. 2002). The feelings along with thoughts are what eventually together produce the experiences, which are of course bound to the different physical touchpoints. Feelings are also the cause of emotions and moments of truth, which in the existing literature are described as a special kind of touchpoint that is particularly charged with emotion in either positive or negative manner (Kalbach, 2016, p. 31).

Altogether, the created framework proved to be functional when utilizing it in the making of the case company's customer experience journey map. The results from the qualitative study methods were analyzed and classified with using the framework as a guideline, which assisted in arranging the different elements to a coherent visualization. When investigating the existing research on customer experience mapping and doing the literature review, it was observed that there was a lack of concrete methods of how the map is built. Therefore, this framework seeks to contribute to the applied research of experience mapping in offering a method to be utilized in practice.

As for the additional question to the first research question, an original objective was to investigate how the individual customer journeys differ from each other. In the context of the case company it was determined that even though the interviewees represented different customers demographically, their actions, thoughts, and feelings were eventually so similar that also their customer journey could be represented with essentially identical journey map. However as stated in the theoretical framework, the journeys may vary significantly if the customers can be clearly divided to represent distinct types of personas. In these cases, it is worthwhile to firstly create separate personas and furthermore build a specific journey map for each of them. The separating factors defining the journey maps can be drawn from for example geographical, demographical,

psychographic, or organizational features of the customer. (Pruitt and Addlin, 2006, p. 49-51; Ortbal et al. 2016).

The second research question pursued to investigate how customer experience mapping can be used in creating better customer experiences. In order to determine the level of current customer experience satisfaction, the results were analyzed with a scale created by Maklan and Klaus (2011). Based on customer thoughts and feelings applied to the scale, it was determined that despite negative aspects of the customer journey, the overall satisfaction of the research subjects proved to be high. As to how the experiences can be improved, the most negative experiences of the journey map should be carefully scrutinized, especially if they can be defined as moments of truth for certain customers. If the negative touchpoints can be adjusted to better meet the customers' needs, the experiences concerning the journey will overall improve as the drawbacks decrease. Like this study has shown, often the negative experiences are shared throughout the customer base and are therefore a general point of dissatisfaction. The more customers agree that a touchpoint is in the need for improvement, the more crucial it is for the company to act on it and seek solutions to fix the prevailing issues. These findings are in line with the previous literature on the theme; as researchers such as Norton and Pine II (2013), Schmitt (2003) and Berry et al. (2002) suggest, the companies should primarily pursue to bring value to their customers through a pleasant customer journey and carefully evaluating what the customers' expectations are in order to fulfill them. Once the customer experience journey has been defined, the company can begin to design the desirable service experience and compare if the customers' experiences are in line with the company's experience design. The figure below (17) showcases a method to utilize the mapping of customer journey in creating overall better customer experiences.

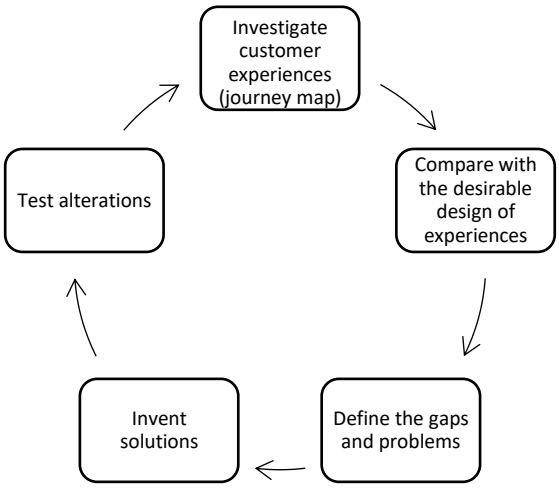

FIGURE 17 A method to utilize customer experience mapping in creating better experiences

The third research question of how customer experience research can benefit marketing and product development focused on the practical features on customer experience mapping. In the context of the case company, the analyzation concentrated especially in their newest product release which was in the need of possible ideas and insights for marketing and product development. It was discovered that the loyal customers were in some degree expressing resistance towards the new system due to the fact that using it would require changes in their daily work routines. Working with the old system was perceived as simple whereas the new system was seen as complicating the processes. These findings were however very much in line with the previous research results. Launching a new and innovative product is a difficult task for marketing since the customers cannot be certain if it functions at the same level as the familiar products (Alexander et al. 2007). From the results, the main issues about the marketing can be recognized; primarily, the customers' knowledge of the new product appears to be somewhat lacking. Several answers reveal that the purpose, usage, safety, and benefits related to the new product and cloud services are unknown to customers which makes them question the purpose of this innovation. When releasing a new product, it is therefore highly important to communicate effectively with the customers to spread information and promote the product through its advantages in a clear and tempting manner. This also helps to sever the misconceptions and rumors surrounding the release and possibly prevent negative word-of-mouth. In the case company, the customers perceive the present communication to be lacking in more than one sectors. As in line with the previous research (Meyer and Schwager 2007), it can be stated that the marketing department should seize the tastes and standards of the customers through experience mapping and adjust their marketing communications accordingly. To summarize, the main benefits for marketing in the customer experience mapping are gaining valuable insight, keeping up with the differences and changes in customers and adjusting the communications accordingly, discovering underlying deficiencies in the current marketing plan, optimizing the marketing based on customer personas and their journeys, and ultimately reducing costs and gaining profit when the negative touchpoints are improved, and the positives are highlighted.

As in marketing, also product development department must be eager to explore customer opinions and experiences and take them into account in their operations. As stated by Meyer and Schwager (2007), even though core customer needs are a key factor when developing new products, companies should also pursue to create positive experiences and thus minimize frustration, disappointments, and overall negative feelings towards the company and its products. This can be supported with the results of this study; even though all customers felt their basic needs being met (they were able to achieve the necessary outcome with the products of the case company), the journey included touchpoints that caused negative emotions. The same observations of these displeasing touchpoints were shared by many customers which indicates that they are overall a large problem among the users. Some of these are touchpoints

the company has no proper control over (touchpoints including solely the customer and a third-party), but many of them, such as lacks in the software, equipment, and customer service can be altered to better correspond with the customers' expectations. In regard to the case company's new product, the research has revealed that an important part of product development is to gather customers' opinion and suggestions widely beforehand and together with the users create innovations that match the customer demands. Even though it is seldom possible to consult the whole customer base, a group of experienced and knowledgeable customers could be included in the process of product development. The new product should also be polished enough when entering the market so that the customers can straightaway experiment with the completed version. If the products are released too early and somewhat unfinished, the customers testing them are quick to judge the whole launch based on the shortages discovered during the usage. This may also lead to negative word-of-mouth if the information of the product's faults starts spreading among the customers. Altogether, the advantages of customer experience research in product development are focused on gaining opinions and suggestions from the users and thus being able to adjust the products accordingly. The phenomenon of innovation resistance (Ram and Sheth, 1989) should, however, be taken into account to realize that even if the customers are at first skeptical about an innovation, it does not make it necessarily bad. This just means that the new product differs so greatly from the previous that it is possibly seen as arduous and intimidating.

6.3 Managerial implications

The managerial objective for this study was gain insight on customer experiences through the creation of a journey map. The additional goal was to discover how the research on customer experiences could assist marketing and product development in practice and help to improve the overall customer experience. Qualitative study methods of customer interviews and observation were utilized to gain data, which was transcribed, classified and analyzed to cultivate knowledge for the managerial objectives. The journey map was created based on the results (see figure 14) and understanding for the research questions was gathered from the received information.

The primal discovery from the journey map reveals that there are several negatively perceived touchpoints throughout the customer journey. They received confirmation from multiple customers and can therefore be viewed as a general issue. The case company should tackle these issues by evaluating their own design for the service experience and consider matters such as what are the goals in terms of customer experience and how great is the gap between the designed experience and the actual experience. If the gap is perceived as being too large, actions must be taken in order to improve the overall customer experience journey.

Practical goals to discover new ideas for marketing and product development were approached through customer comments and discovered issues in their experiences with the case company and their products. When discussing the new, innovative product of the company the customers expressed a significant resistance to introduce it into their daily work tasks. The task of marketing could be to dispel the worries and preconceptions about the new product by investing in proper marketing communications. Many customers appeared to be poorly informed about the product launch and its features, which can be believed to be a contributing factor in the negative feelings. In future marketing operations the advisory concerning new products should be designed to be easily available, clear, and informative and by own initiative distributed to customers. The marketing materials could contain different aspects of the products in a straightforward manner so that there would be no misconceptions. For example, in the case company context an encompassing guide of the new product could explain aspects such as the purpose and idea behind utilizing a cloud service, emphasizing the advantages that come with it, comparing the similarities and differences between the old and the new system, overall manual, debriefing safety issues related to online-based services, or other clarifications that would help in debunking customer doubts. These same aspects could be visibly promoted in overall marketing communications to make the innovation appear less intimidating and more intriguing. This kind of material could also assist the customers of the case company in the touchpoint of selling the products forward to their own customers; when they are fully aware of the advantages of the new system themselves, it facilitates the process of justifying the price for their own customers which was one of the main issues during the journey. If the value was clearly transmitted, the upscale pricing would seem like less of an issue.

With the product development, the customers expressed their wishes to be more included. Some mentioned that they had been inquired about the properties of the new product but felt like their suggestions were not taken into consideration. Obviously, not all customer suggestions are worth executing nor rational for the growth of a company, but since the general opinion was that the new product was not particularly requested or designed for the customers' needs, it raises a question whether the clients had any part in the development process. This contradiction could be solved by simply requesting more customer feedback regularly concerning the existing products, upcoming products, or just general thoughts and ideas. The customers would feel more included and the company would gain a deeper understanding of customer experiences and needs. The research revealed that the customers also felt the new product being somewhat unfinished and felt as they were merely testing the product instead of using it normally. It is beneficial to test new innovations thoroughly before ending up with the final product, but to improve customer experiences the so-called pioneers could be requested to officially test the products in real-life work situations and be compensated in some way (for example in the costs of the product) in exchange for user experiences and feedback.

6.4 Limitations and future research

The results and conclusions in this research should be acknowledged with some limitations. Firstly, it can be stated that since this thesis is written in a case company context, the findings and implications may not be generalizable in all situations. The results are processed in the light of case company's own customer base, culture, and way of operating and these factors are also visible in the responses to research questions and other empirical aspects of the study. Some parts of the research were designed to contribute to the company needs, which has indisputably altered the course of the research. Therefore, consideration is advised when reviewing the implications. The number of interviewees attending the research can be seen as a second limitation. Had the number been greater, the results would probably have generated even more versatile information. If the studied group would have been more heterogeneous, different customer personas could have been distinctively separated and given their own customer experience journey maps. At its current state, the research consists of merely customer perceptions which may also be interpreted as a limitation. To make the journey map deeper and more all-encompassing, it could have included comparative views of several stakeholders such as the case company, customers, and end users.

As stated before, the literature on customer experience journey mapping is still quite scarce and based on this research, in a need for an extensive amount of additional research in the future. Especially the practical methods for creating and utilizing a journey map seem to be lacking in terms of scientific research. Since the concept is relatively new, there are no major studies that would demonstrate how the utilization of customer experience journey mapping complements company's existing business operations in real life. Customer experiences and journey maps as individual concepts are studied more thoroughly but the study on the combination they generate is still in many parts in its initial phase.

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