

How emotions affect millennial customer journey

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Purpose - Value is experienced by customers in context (Helkkula et al., 2012) as a multidimensional construct consisting of cognitive, behavioural, emotional, social and sensorial responses through multiple touch points (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; McColl-Kennedy et al. 2019). Interactions at touch points are affected by emotions (Bolton et al., 2018), particularly for Millennials, due to their being confident and assertive (Bolton et al., 2013) to digital context. Studies on the role of emotions are at the infancy and there is need to address how digital technologies, as mobile applications (Muskat et al., 2013), impact on emotions and experience in customer journey. This paper addresses the role of emotions in customer journey.

Methodology - A qualitative methodology (Gummesson, 2017) is suitable to focus on customers and their emotions (Johnston & Kong, 2011). We collected data through an experimental method to track 75 Millennials' journeys performing concrete tasks and offering insights through notes and an online software mapping the journeys. Saturation led data collection until no new categories emerged (Glaser & Strauss, 2017).

Findings - Millennials' journeys consist of four moments – connect, explore, buy, use – affected by emotions and shaping the value creation process. Customers' journeys are sequences of emotions driven by choices, information, interactions, and value outcomes. These emotions are roller coasting along a journey and every emotion describes the tie between customer journey and value. Physical and virtual touchpoints and social interactions affect customers' reactions, thus they are the *locus* of emotions, hosting the value creation process.

Research limitations/implications - The moments of Millennials' journeys led to identify a phygital experience, combining emotions (Johnston & Kong, 2011) and choices in both physical and digital contexts. The journey (Følstad & Kvale, 2018) leads to co-created experience as a combination of emotions, practical benefits, and social consequences, depending on physical and digital context. Further research is called for to deepen the emotional side of the customer journey even through a cross-fertilized approach.

Practical implications - Emotions are drivers of value outcome for Millennials journeys and value-in-experience; thus, managers should pay attention in shaping value propositions to Millennials through multiple touchpoints. Involvement techniques and emotion-based goals should be sought in addressing value propositions to Millennials.

Originality/value - The intersection between digital and physical context has been proposed by scholars (e.g. Bolton et al., 2018), but empirical evidences were still missing, particularly on Millennials. Data collection took place through a new tool favouring the emerging of emotions in an unbiased way and through the combination of various sources.

Keywords - Customer experience, Customer journey, Value creation, Emotions, Millennials.

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