



Experience Map and Empathy Mapping: A tool to getting inside a customer head

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1 Summary of key ideas

In this article we will present the basic features of Experience Map and Empathy Mapping and their possible practical applications, in order to provide a guide to use them as tools to get inside the customer's head.

2 Introduction

The concept of quality as the satisfaction of customer expectations is developing and has become a key element for companies. This concept shares with the previous ideas of Deming and Juran the principle that what is important in quality is customer orientation.

However, satisfy customer expectations has a high subjective component. Consumers are considered to have different needs and expectations. Each consumer perceives each product as a set of attributes with different capacities to offer him the desired benefits and satisfy his needs. The quality of a product would then be positively related to its degree of approximation to the consumer's ideal attribute preferences. Quality is what the customer says and it is based on his perception (Grönroos, 1990). This concept has consolidated the idea that quality exists only in the mind of the customer, whose perception is the critical element (Collet, Lansier and Olivier, 1989). In the words of Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1993), *"only consumers judge quality; all other judgments are essentially irrelevant"*.

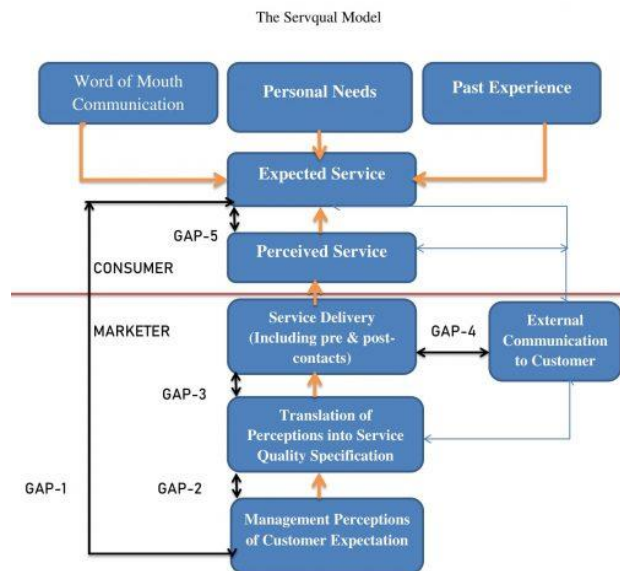
Customer satisfaction depends not only on the quality of services or products but also on customer expectations. Customers are satisfied when services meet or exceed their expectations.

Customer satisfaction is made up of three elements:

- ✓ Perceived Performance: refers to the performance that the customer believes he/she obtained after acquiring a product or service. In other words, it is the "result" that the customer "perceives" he/she obtained from the product or service he/she purchased.
- ✓ Expectations: Expectations are the "hopes" that customers have for achieving something. Customer expectations are produced by the effect of one or more of these four situations.
- ✓ The Levels of Satisfaction: after the purchase or acquisition of a product or service, customers experience one of three levels of satisfaction:
 - Dissatisfaction: occurs when the perceived performance of the product falls short of customer expectations.
 - Satisfaction: occurs when the perceived performance of the product matches the customer's expectations.

- Complacency: occurs when the perceived performance exceeds the customer's expectations.

Figure1. Customer Satisfaction Vs. Customer Experience



Source: <https://avaremy.wordpress.com>

Consequently, the customer is the key element in the concept of quality and in quality management. This first phase in whatever excellence model consists of identifying customer needs and expectations. The urge to know the customer is highlighted in the statement "*the world needs empathy*". The purpose of this learning object is to ensure that students acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to correctly use different tools to empathize with their customers to offer them innovative solutions. To this end, first the specific objectives that the students are expected to achieve are presented; then the definition and characteristics of Empathy Map and Experience Map are discussed, and some practical examples are solved to help in its understanding. Finally, in the Closing, the basic learning concepts regarding both maps and its practical applications are highlighted.

3 Objectives

In this document, the following learning objectives will be addressed:

- Remember, understand and apply the basic concepts related to quality.
- Remember, understand and apply the basic concepts related to empathy and customer journey mapping.

- Remember, understand and apply the bases empathy map.
- Remember, understand and apply the bases of customer map
- Remember, understand and apply the basic concepts related to customers go through and improve the quality of your customer experience.

4 Development

4.1 Introduction

Customer and Empathy maps are visualization tools that allow you to articulate what you know about specific types of users. They are often considered a part of the design thinking methodology, and they empower you to create a shared understanding of user needs and help decision-makers with key judgment calls.

4.2 Empathy Map

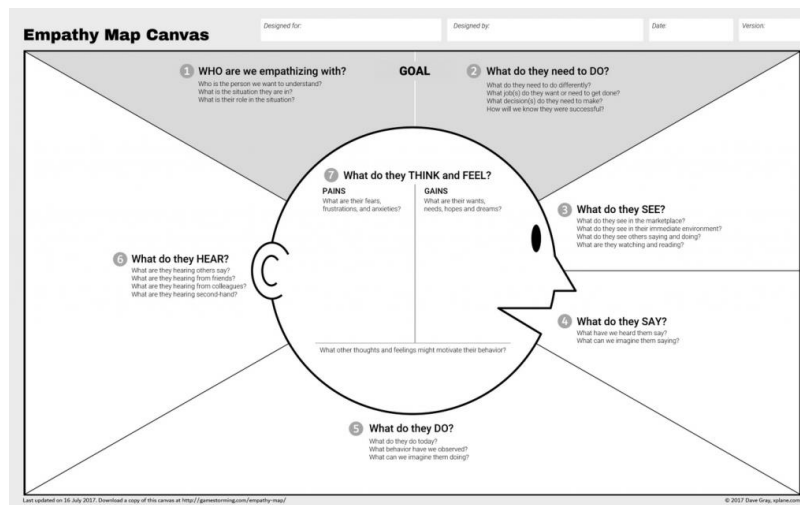
An empathy map is a simple, easy-to-digest visual chart that captures knowledge about a user's behaviors and attitudes. It is a useful tool to help teams better understand their users. Empathy mapping is a simple workshop activity that can be done with stakeholders, marketing and sales, product development, or creative teams to build empathy for end users. Empathy maps are models that help groups focus on the people for whom they are designing or developing experiences.

Empathy maps are most useful at the beginning of the design process after user research but before requirements and concepting. The empathy map can help synthesize research observations and reveal deeper insights about a user's needs.

4.2.1 How to create an empathy map

To create an empathy map the only materials needed are large sheets of paper or a whiteboard, colored sticky notes, and markers. There are many free templates available online, such as the shown in Figure 2, which was developed by Gray (2017). As can be seen in Figure 2, a large sheet of paper is divided into sections with the user at the center. Around the user, the sheet is divided into seven sections or quadrants. Each section is labeled with a category that explores the user's external, observable world, and internal mindset: what the user is doing, seeing, hearing, thinking, and feeling. Explain to the team what their parts mean and ask them to describe the different experiences from the user's point of view.

Figure 2. Empathy Map



Source: Gray, D. Updated Empathy Map Canvas. Medium, 15/Julio/2017

Each team member will have some time (e.g. 10 minutes) to write information that can come from existing data or from what each team member thinks or considers on post-it notes. Afterward, all the information will be shared and the most relevant will be collected on the map.

Step 1: Establish Focus and Goals

Who is the person for the map?

This is the user who you want to understand and empathize with. Summarize his or her situation and role. If you have multiple personas, each one will need its own map.

What is the desired outcome?

This is what you hope the user will do. What does success look like? For example, what does he/she need to do differently or decide?

Step 2: Capture the Outside World

There is no set order for completing each section, but there has been found more productive to start with the observable activities in the user's world. Participants often generate these more easily than the more introspective steps. Start by examining the user's experience and imagine what it is like to be her. Complete the sections of the map to capture what she sees, says, does, and hears.

What does he/she SEE?

What is he/she encountering in his/her daily experiences? These could be people, their activities, or things. What are the people around her doing? What is she watching, reading, and exposed to in her environment or the marketplace that could influence her?

What does he/she DO and SAY?

What are his/her behaviors and how does he/she conduct herself? What is his/her attitude and what does she say? This may change depending on where he/she is, who he/she is with, or is nearby. Attitude can be actions towards others or how he/she conveys something and if behavior changed. For example, he/she used to constantly post on Facebook until he/she told everyone that it was evil. Now he/she secretly uses it and stalks but does not post.

What does he/she HEAR?

What is the user hearing and how is it influencing him/her? Consider personal connections with family, friends, and coworkers along with what is being said in the media by bloggers, social media influencers, and experts in fields. Focus on things that impact her thinking—not superfluous information streams. Influencers should focus on the people, things, or places that influence how the user acts.

Step 3: Explore Inside the Mind

After completing the outside elements, the focus moves inside the mind to explore the thoughts and feelings that are internal to the user and not observable. These might be inferred, guessed, or captured in direct quotes during research. This is the central point of the exercise, as teams imagine what it is like to be in someone else's head.

What does he/she THINK and FEEL?

What matters to the user that he/she is thinking about it? Consider positive and negative sides of thoughts. What makes his/her feel good or bad? What does he/she worry about or what keeps his/her up at night? His/Her mind is exploring paths and possibilities as he/she considers doing or trying something. How does he/she feel? Frightened? Excited? Anxious?

Next, explore the specifics of his/her pains and gains. What does success and failure look like? Capture frustrations and challenges, the obstacles that stand in his/her way. What goals and dreams does he/she have? Gains are what he/she aspires to achieve or have.

4.2.2 Tips to create an effective empathy map

- ✓ ***Do not get hung up on what goes where.***
- ✓ ***Only explore what matters about the user's perceptions related to the project goal.***
- ✓ ***Adapt the map for your situation and needs.***

4.2.3 Examples of the Kaizen methodology

Examples of application based on the empathy map could be the establishment of:

- Help professionals understand what aspects of their user they know and where they would need to gather more user data.
- Meetings of customer and working groups.

- Remove bias from our designs and align the team on a single, shared understanding of the user
- Uncover user needs that the user themselves may not even be aware of
- Understand what drives users' behaviors
- Guide us towards meaningful innovation

4.3 Experience Maps

Given the nature of each person, experiences in each service are unique and unrepeatable, and it has been studied that they can change over time depending on the customer's personal state (Lu et al., 2018). However, no matter how much a person pays two or more times for a service they will never live exactly the same experience they had the first time, which does not mean that it cannot be repeated and be positive. Several authors emphasize that user experiences cannot be designed, but the service can be designed with their positive experience in mind (Patrício et al., 2011). Hence the challenge for organizations to design situations that help customers or users in the co-creation of the desired experiences (Forlizzi & Ford, 2000). Hence the importance of working with an experience map.

An experience map visually represents a person's complete experience (from the beginning to the end of a journey). The map is used to understand what the thoughts, emotions and behavior of a generic user in front of an overall experience are. This tool describes the stages and steps that a user takes to achieve a goal (which may be an existing service to redesign it, or a new one, which from a prospective vision, it is analyzed to then co-design it), in addition to expressing what they think and feel along this journey.

The customer journey map focuses on the analysis or design of how a specific user profile relates to a specific service or product, in order to solve a specific challenge.

It is usually used during the analysis phase. It is a good tool to lay the foundations on which the customer journey will be built, since it offers an analysis of the global scenario during which an experience will be developed. An experience map focuses on a general high-level understanding of human behavior in order to achieve a particular goal. The main characteristic of an experience map is that it is independent of products and services. The experience map helps to understand the current experience regardless of the product es yet.

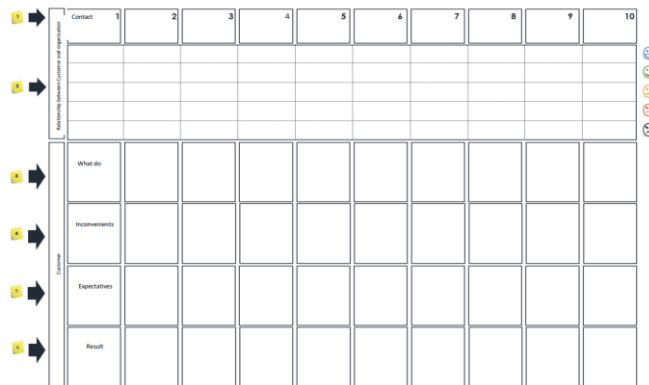
The detailed description of an experience considering what the user thinks and feels at each point allows to identify opportunities for innovation, creation and improvement of products or services.

4.3.1 How to create an Experience Map

The experience map should reflect the phases that a user normally follows to achieve an objective, considering the generic components (resources, services, people, etc.) involved during the experience.

There are many Experience Map templates, but it is generally recommended to use the template shown in Figure 3, which contains the basic elements of an Experience Map made to generate new ideas and solutions.

Figure 3. Experience Map



Source: Author's Owns

Step 1: Key moments

After breaking down the journey by stages, the key moments of the visit must appear, always the pre (prior to establishing a relationship with the service) and the post. The pre, is the stage that makes the customer or citizen to take the initiative to contact the service or vice versa. The post is related to the follow-up that can be done once the service is finished and acquired, and that helps to ensure the processes and improve the quality of the service. These key moments would be in the pre, the motivation, and in the visit (properly speaking), the contact that the user has with the organization, the information on how it is established and transmitted, and how the acquisition of the service is decided and carried out. Finally, in the post, it is observed the follow-up of how it has been formalized.

Step 2: Key actions

The second step is to determine the key actions, what happens to the user in each of the moments described above, and where it is detailed what are known as touchpoints, with complete information on what happens at each key moment.

To do this, it will be possible to use different notes or post-its to detail them with the contributions made by the team.

Step 3 : Experiences

Once the key actions have been developed, the experiences of this person must be assessed. The experiences are measured in a basic way by providing a scale of values estimating each point of contact, thinking about who intervenes as a user and what happens to them.

Step 4 to 6: People (what happens to them)

After this graphic evaluation, it is convenient to make a description of what happens at the level of this experience, to the users that there has been recognized in this experience map. To do this, it can be used graphic resources such as emoji, with the support of faces with basic expressions or it can be described by emotions in a more detailed way. In this way, the experience map reflects the reactions of a person during his/her journey for the duration of a service, showing: the key moments, the actions that take place at each moment in contact with different touchpoints, the basic assessment of his or her experience and the reaction of the person or persons at each moment (emotions, feelings, etc.).

4.3.2 Tips to create an Experience Map

The principles of good design for experience maps include these:

- ✓ **Keep it simple:** any viewer should be able to make sense out of the map at one glance.
- ✓ **Keep it self-contained:** The experience map should stand on its own.
- ✓ **Keep it sharable.**

4.3.3 Examples of the experience map

Examples of application based on the empathy map could be the establishment of:

- Can help teams align brand offerings with the buying process.
- Help teams to get a holistic view of customer interactions with the organization, their preferred products, features,..
- This view of customers helps enterprises pinpoint areas that may need improvement.

5 Closure

Empathy maps simply help us build empathy with our end users. When based on real data and when combined with other mapping methods, they can:

- ✚ Remove bias from our designs and align the team on a single, shared understanding of the user.
- ✚ Discover weaknesses in our research.
- ✚ Uncover user needs that the user themselves may not even be aware of.
- ✚ Understand what drives users' behaviors.

The Customer Journey Map or User Experience Map is a very useful method for the evaluation and improvement of the processes in which a customer or user interacts with a brand to perform any type of action. It allows a better knowledge of our customers or users and the correction and improvement of the purchasing processes as well as their experience of our brand.

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