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Customer experience and brand loyalty in relationship marketing strategies: analysis and methodological aspects

Abstract. The relevance of the topic is due to the fact that in the period of instability, businesses seek to maintain customer loyalty by improving their experience and creating an emotional relationship with the brand. The purpose of the study was to identify the main elements of customer experience that most affect consumer loyalty, as well as to analyse strategies for improving it in the context of relationship marketing. Research methods include the analysis of theoretical sources, a quantitative marketing survey to collect data on customer expectations and a practical analysis of customer experience management strategies used in leading companies. The article considers key elements of relationship marketing, theoretical dimension of customer experience, digital tools for its improvement, as well as investigates the impact of customer experience on consumer loyalty. The main indicators and tools for measuring customer experience, in particular through digital platforms, are identified. Customer priorities and their impact on loyalty are analysed, which makes it possible to propose directions for improving the strategies of customer experience management. The main results of the study show that the personalisation of service, the speed of response of companies to customer requests, as well as the use of modern digital solutions to improve the interaction experience are the most important aspects for the formation of loyalty. The use of digital technologies allows for not only saving customers, but also expanding their life cycle. The practical value of the study is that its results can provide companies with important insights on key aspects of service that affect customer loyalty. Marketing research data can be the basis for improving the customer experience management strategy, increasing the effectiveness of customer interaction and promoting long-term relationships

Keywords: methodology; personalisation; digital customer experience; omnichannelness; branding; interaction with consumers

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Introduction

In today's hyper-connected world, the business environment is changing at an unprecedented pace, causing significant challenges for companies to provide high-quality customer experience (CX) across all stages of the value chain. The rapid growth of consumer expectations is forcing companies to transform their approaches to interaction, turning simple transactions into a comprehensive process that encompasses the entire customer journey - from first contact to after-sales service. CX is becoming a critical success factor in a competitive market, where every aspect of the interaction between a brand and a consumer influences the formation of loyalty and trust.

Globally, research in the field of customer experience demonstrates its significant role in relationship marketing strategies. This approach focuses on long-term and mutually beneficial relationships, where consumer loyalty is a central element. The integration of modern technologies, the personalisation of interactions, and the overcoming of organisational barriers allow companies to create coherent and continuous experience on various channels, which helps to strengthen emotional connection with the consumer. The relevance of the study lies in the fact that, against the background of increasing competition, companies are forced not only to improve their product, but also to ensure maximum customer orientation, maintaining a high level of empathy and cooperation.

An analysis of the latest research on the development of customer experience and marketing strategies demonstrates that this topic is of considerable interest among scientists, marketers and business practitioners. The rapid pace of digitalisation, global crises (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) and the impact of the war in Ukraine are significantly changing the business environment, requiring new approaches to customer interaction. In such conditions, the scientific community is actively researching the impact of digital technologies, artificial intelligence and new strategies on the formation of customer experience and building long-term relationships with consumers.

D. Venciute *et al.* (2023) study the impact of employee advocacy in social media on brand attitudes. In their study, the authors emphasise that employee satisfaction and advocacy can significantly shape a positive brand image through parasocial relationships, which, in turn, helps to strengthen trust in the company. M.-H. Huang and R.T. Rust (2024) study the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in building emotional customer relationships, especially in the context of using generative AI technologies (GenAI). They argue that such technologies can provide responsive service, improve emotional interactions and, as a result, increase customer value and loyalty.

In turn, M. Eratalay and A. Kaasa (2024) analyse the impact of cultural factors on consumer trust indices in 37 countries. They show that in crisis conditions, the level of trust decreases in cultures with a high level of individualism and secularism, while collectivistic cultures demonstrate more resilient behavior, which emphasises the need to consider cultural context when developing marketing strategies. H. Obruch *et al.* (2021) focus on the implementation of digital technologies in the process of managing customer experience, emphasising the formation of a unique service and ensuring continuous customer communication. They prove that a customer-centric approach, personalisation of services and adaptation of the business model are the main factors for successful implementation of a relationship marketing strategy.

M. Konoplyannykova (2024) focuses on the impact of personalisation strategies in e-commerce on customer loyalty, pointing out that personalised recommendations and adaptive design can significantly increase customer brand loyalty. These studies emphasise the importance of personalisation as one of the central elements of modern marketing. Scientists O. Bakulich and A. Bokyi (2022) in their article consider in detail the omnichannel marketing technology, which is gaining popularity in the conditions of digital economy. The main emphasis is on the integration of

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various communication channels to create a unified and seamless customer experience. The authors emphasise the importance of ensuring that consumers can interact with the brand through any channel or device, while remaining within the framework of a unified, holistic communication strategy. The omnichannel approach makes it possible to more effectively retain customers and increase their lifecycle through convenient and personalised communication.

A study by F. Li and G. Xu (2022) shows significant benefits of applying artificial intelligence (AI) in the field of customer relationship management. They evaluate customer experience (CX) for five AI-based products, such as recommendation systems, virtual agents, email marketing, voice recognition, and visual systems. It is found that customers are aware of the use of such technologies on company platforms, and these AI tools increase the effectiveness of interaction, providing a pleasant experience. As a result, customers remain loyal and continue to use such services. A study by V. Misiukevych *et al.* (2023) also focuses on customer experience management, but with a particular emphasis on the role of logistics management in retail companies. They have developed a structural and logical diagram of the CX strategic management process, where they separately highlight such modern trends as product personalisation, the use of chatbots for customer support, and multichannel communications. Particular attention is paid to the use of digital tools to improve the quality of service and build long-term relationships with consumers.

Thus, modern research shows that successful customer experience management requires a comprehensive approach that combines digitalisation, emotional connection with customers and adaptability to changes in the business environment. The purpose of the study was to analyse the impact of customer experience on the level of consumer loyalty in relationship marketing strategies and to identify key factors of customer interaction that contribute to the formation of long-term relationships with brands.

Materials and methods

The research uses a comprehensive approach combining quantitative and theoretical methods. To study theoretical aspects of the topic, an analysis of scientific sources, including publications on customer experience management and customer loyalty factors, is conducted. Empirical data are collected using a quantitative marketing survey aimed at studying customer expectations and their attitudes towards interaction with brands. The marketing research is conducted by surveying 479 respondents aged 17 to 63, which is carried out via the Google Forms platform. The survey covers key aspects that allow for a deeper understanding of the factors influencing customer loyalty, as well as their expectations regarding interaction with brands in modern digital environment. Participants are asked to answer questions aimed at assessing the quality of customer experience, satisfaction level and factors influencing their brand loyalty.

The research sample is formed to cover a wide age group of respondents to ensure the representativeness of the results in the context of different demographic segments. The collected data is analysed using statistical methods to determine key trends and relationships between factors influencing customer loyalty. To conduct the survey, a list of key aspects is compiled, allowing for a deeper understanding of the factors influencing customer loyalty and their expectations regarding interaction with brands. The main directions of the study cover three key blocks:

1. Most desired personalised customer interactions. The survey includes questions about customers' preferences in the field of personalised communications. In particular, it is proposed to assess the importance of interactions, such as special offers and promotions, personalised recommendations, SMS campaigns, targeted advertising, email newsletters with an individualised approach, as well as individual packaging (thank you cards, product samples, etc.) and reminders about unfinished purchases.

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2. Top services that customers expect from companies. In this section, the survey focuses on expected services, such as the ability to track orders, purchase of products through social networks, contactless payments, partial payment options (BNPL - buy now, pay later), loyalty programmes, eco-friendly packaging and tools for comparing products.

3. Factors that can cause customers to switch to another brand. It is important to investigate what factors can force customers to switch brands. These factors include higher product quality, better promotional offers, higher level of service, better availability of products, convenience in making a purchase, wider range of products and compliance with ethical values of customers.

The research is conducted in compliance with all necessary ethical standards, including the requirements of the American Sociological Association (ASA) Code of Ethics (1997), the ICC/ESOMAR International Code on Market, Opinion and Social Research and Data Analysis (2016) and the European Commission Guidelines on Ethics and Data Protection (2021).

All survey participants are informed about the purpose of the study, its voluntary nature, and the anonymity of their answers. Respondents are provided with detailed information on how their data would be used, and are assured that there are no risks associated with their participation. Before the start of the survey, each respondent gives his/her consent to participate in the research and to publish the summarised results.

The study does not require separate ethical approval from the Ethics Committee, as it complies with the requirements of local legislation, which does not imply such approval for sociological surveys conducted on terms of voluntariness, anonymity, and lack of interference in private lives of respondents. The confidentiality of the collected data is strictly maintained, making it impossible to identify individual participants or their answers.

Methodological principles of the study of the impact of customer experience on brand loyalty

For a comprehensive study of the relationship between customer experience and loyalty, it is necessary to use methodological tools that ensure scientific accuracy and relevance of the results obtained. Research on the impact of customer experience on the formation of brand loyalty requires a comprehensive theoretical analysis of key concepts, the development and adaptation of measurement tools, as well as a critical understanding of modern methodologies used in the field of relationship marketing. Schematically, methodological principles of research on the impact of customer experience on brand loyalty are presented in Figure 1.

At the initial stage of research, it is advisable to conduct a thorough analysis of basic concepts, including relationship marketing, customer experience and brand loyalty. Particular attention should be paid to the study of the relationship between customer experience and loyalty, taking into account such key aspects as emotional attachment, level of satisfaction from interaction and formed trust in the brand.

The study of key indicators and tools that will allow measuring customer experience is the next stage of the research. Careful selection and systematisation of metrics that can guarantee objectivity and accuracy in assessing the quality of customer experience are important tasks of this stage. Special attention should be paid to the analysis of modern digital technologies and tools aimed at optimising and increasing the efficiency of customer experience management, given their impact on key aspects of interaction between the brand and the consumer.

Methods of data collection in the study of customer experience and its impact on brand loyalty involve the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative methods include surveys and questionnaires. They make it possible to obtain numerical indicators of the level of customer satisfaction and loyalty. Qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews, focus groups and content analysis of feedback, make it possible to explore in more detail the emotional aspect of consumers' interaction with a brand and to understand hidden motives of their behaviour.
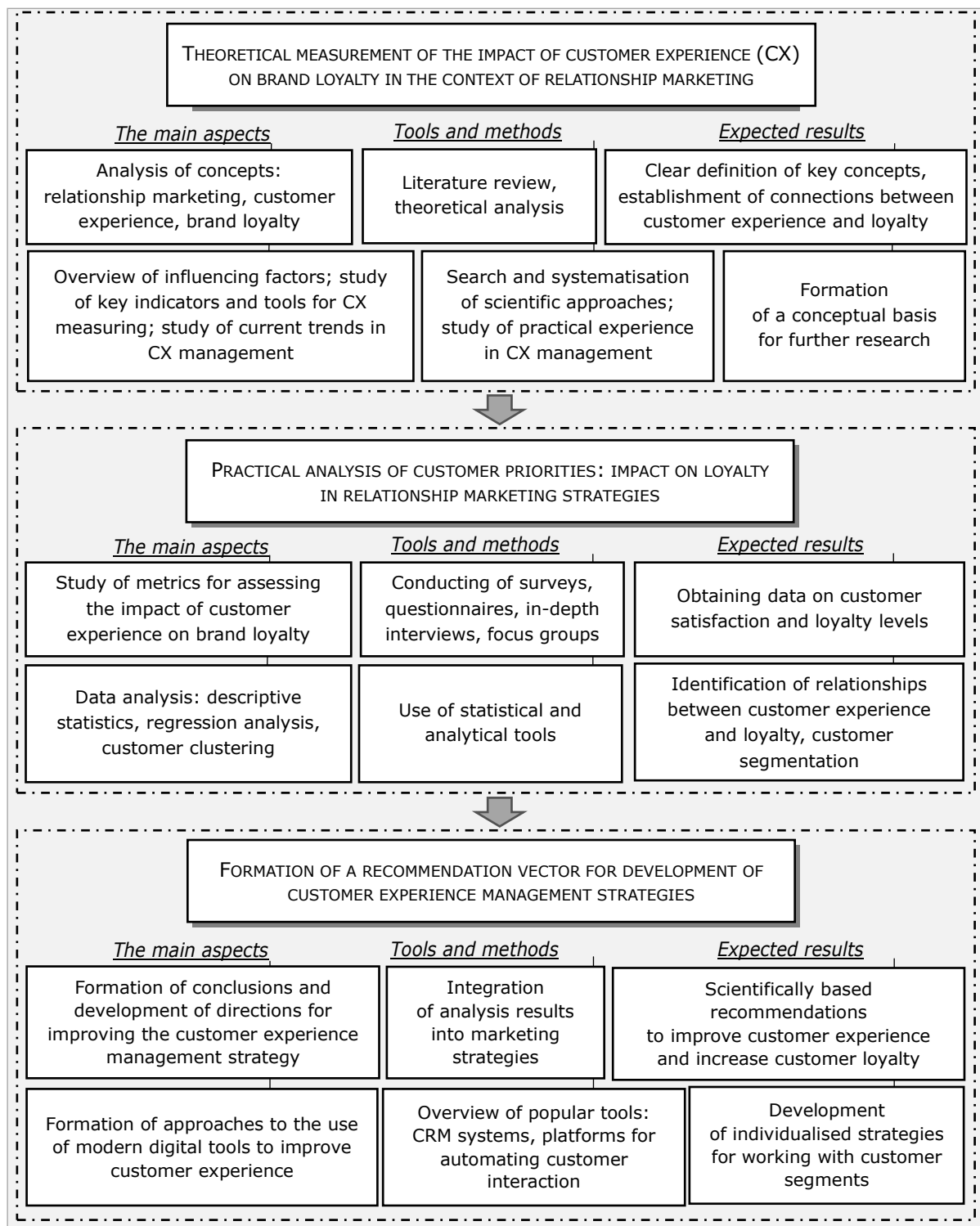
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Figure 1. Conceptual diagram of te methodology for studying the impact of customer experience on brand loyalty

Source: developed by the authors

The analysis of the obtained data is carried out using modern statistical and analytical tools that provide in-depth processing of the collected information. At the first stage, descriptive statistics are used, which make it possible to summarise the results of surveys, identify key trends and form an overall picture of the level of customer satisfaction and loyalty. This approach provides a basis for further inductive analysis aimed at identifying relationships

between the variables under study and building substantiated conclusions. Regression analysis is a key tool for quantitatively assessing the strength and direction of the impact of customer experience on loyalty indicators, allowing for identifying dependencies between individual components of interaction and the level of consumer loyalty. Cluster analysis, in turn, provides effective segmentation of the customer base based on the level of their loyalty and the nature of interaction with the brand. This approach contributes to the formation of differentiated, individualised customer relationship management strategies focused on meeting the needs of each consumer segment.

The development of conclusions regarding the impact of individual components of customer experience on customer loyalty is a feature of the interpretation of the results. This process includes testing of hypotheses using statistical tests, which ensures the objectivity and reliability of the results obtained. A comprehensive approach to data analysis makes it possible to formulate scientifically based recommendations for improving marketing strategies aimed at increasing customer loyalty.

Therefore, methodological principles of studying the impact of customer experience on brand loyalty involve a comprehensive approach that includes in-depth theoretical analysis, the application of modern digital technologies and the use of empirical methods to obtain reliable data. This makes it possible to develop effective strategies for customer interaction, increase their loyalty and ensure the competitiveness of the brand in the market.

The work focuses on the theoretical dimension of the problem, which includes the analysis of basic concepts and relationships in the context of customer experience, as well as on the empirical aspect, which is implemented through conducting of a survey, interpretation of the obtained results and development of practical recommendations for improving customer experience management strategies. The presented work forms the basis for further scientific research aimed at deepening the analysis of the studied issue and expanding methodological approaches to the study of the impact of customer experience on brand loyalty.

Results and discussion

Relationship marketing is aimed at maintaining long-term mutually beneficial relationships between a brand and a customer based on the formation of a close emotional connection. This approach differs from classical marketing, which focuses on increasing sales, in its emphasis on the consumer as the central figure of the marketing strategy. Key aspects such as trust, loyalty, individualisation and feedback are the main elements of relationship marketing (Ledro *et al.*, 2022). Trust and loyalty are the foundation upon which any successful strategy of customer interaction is built. Customers should feel that the brand cares about their needs and strives to create an emotional connection that goes beyond purely commercial relationships. At the same time, loyal customers who have high trust in the brand are much more likely to return to it, which contributes to long-term relationships (Peppers & Rogers, 2004).

Individualisation is the next important element. It consists in a personalised approach to each customer. In modern conditions of technological and big data development, companies have the ability not only to collect information about customer preferences and behaviour, but also to use this data to create unique offers and services for each individual consumer. This approach makes the customer an important part of the interaction process, which significantly increases the level of his/her satisfaction. Feedback is also critically important in relationship marketing. Regular communication with customers allows companies to obtain important information to improve the quality of products and services. This enables companies to better understand the expectations and needs of their customers, making the interaction process more effective. Due to feedback, companies can adapt their offers and strategies to current market realities, thereby increasing the level of satisfaction and strengthening customer loyalty, as well as improving the corporate image and accumulating

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reputational capital, which becomes an additional competitive advantage in the long term (Richard & Zhang, 2012).

Customer experience is the foundation of relationship marketing, as it includes all touchpoints between a customer and a brand, whether it is a contact through an online platform, a physical store, or after-sales service. Customer experience covers all stages of interaction - from the first acquaintance with the brand to the moment of completion of the deal and support. The emotional component of customer experience is its important characteristic: successful brands are able to create positive emotions in their customers, which, in turn, contributes to increasing loyalty and forming sustainable relationships. Customer experience is a set of impressions and emotions that a consumer receives at all stages of interaction with a company. This can include product quality, level of service, ease of use of services, as well as emotional feelings from communicating with the brand (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Relationship marketing involves an emphasis on long-term interaction and building an emotional connection with the consumer, which requires an individual approach and ensuring a positive customer experience at each stage of the "customer journey".

Consumer loyalty in this context is seen as a long-term attachment to a brand, manifested in repeated purchases, positive reviews and recommendations. Positive experience is the basis for the formation of such relationships. Customer experience is a decisive factor in the formation of brand loyalty. A study by Moretta Tartaglione *et al.* (2019) shows that consumers who have a positive experience of interacting with a company are more likely to re-choose its products or services, as well as recommend them to others.

The main aspects of the impact of customer experience on loyalty should include:

1. Emotional connection with the brand. Customers who receive positive emotions from interacting with the brand are more likely to become loyal. Relationship marketing seeks to provide personalised interaction that meets the needs and expectations of consumers.

2. Satisfaction of customer needs. If a company satisfies the needs of its customers, it creates a positive experience, which leads to an increase in the level of loyalty. This includes both tangible aspects (product quality) and intangible ones (emotional component of service).

3. Individualisation of experience. Due to modern technologies and customer data, companies can offer personalised solutions and offers. This approach makes interaction with the brand more individual, which contributes to the formation of long-term relationships.

Improvement of customer experience is one of key tasks for any company, as it directly affects financial results of the business. Strategies to improve customer experience encompass several important elements, including communication personalisation, omnichannel presence, transparency and honesty in communications, and investing in employee training (Sytnik, 2021).

Personalisation of communications is one of the most effective strategies for improving customer experience. Through the use of customer data, companies can tailor their offerings, address consumers by name, and provide personalised recommendations that enhance the feeling of uniqueness for each customer. It is important to consider the differences in consumer behaviour between generations, as their expectations for personalisation can vary significantly, requiring different approaches (Persson, 2019). This provides a stronger emotional connection with the brand and increases the likelihood of long-term cooperation. Personalisation also contributes to customer satisfaction, as it makes them feel that the company understands their needs and interests, which, in turn, increases their level of trust.

Omnichannel presence ensures the continuity of interaction between the customer and the brand through various communication channels - both online and offline. In modern world, customers strive for convenience and the ability to communicate with the company on any platform, from mobile applications to physical points of sale. It is important that service remains at the same high level regardless of the chosen interaction channel. A thorough study by O.

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Kolomytseva *et al.* (2022) on the issue of strategic vectors for the development of marketing communications of the company in the era of digital economy confirms the importance of omnichannel communications, emphasising that "modern trends and digital means of their implementation dictate new opportunities for the company and its customers (consumers), which can be realised precisely through omnichannel communications: convenience for consumers due to the availability of various options for interacting with them; ability to interact at any time (24/7); reduction of the risk of losing a customer; hyperpersonalisation, deep segmentation, increased audience reach". This creates a comprehensive experience for the customer, allowing for maintaining the context of the interaction, which reduces the risk of misunderstandings or discomfort for the consumer.

Transparency and honesty in communications are also important aspects of customer experience improvement strategy. Consumers value openness, and therefore companies should provide clear and understandable information about their products, services, and terms of cooperation. This helps to avoid misunderstandings and increases the level of trust between the customer and the brand. Honest communication promotes loyalty and creates a sense of confidence that the company is acting in the interests of its customers. An equally important strategy is to invest in staff training. Customer experience largely depends on the quality of service, so the training of employees who interact with customers is critical (Sitorus & Yustisia, 2018). This includes the development of communication skills, emotional intelligence, and the ability to understand and solve customer needs. Highly qualified staff creates positive impressions for customers and helps to build long-term relationships. In the context of creating a positive customer experience, the importance of employee experience (EX) cannot be ignored. The relationship between the level of employee satisfaction and the quality of customer service is key to successful business development. Employee experience directly affects their motivation and engagement, which, in turn, affects their productivity and the quality of their customer interaction (Romanchukevich, 2018).

According to a 2019 Glassdoor study, every one-star improvement in a company's employee rating results in a 1.3-point increase in customer satisfaction (Chamberlain & Zhao, 2019). This study highlights the importance of considering employee experience as part of a successful marketing strategy. When employees are satisfied with their work, they are more engaged in the customer service process, offer better services and solutions, which creates a positive impression among consumers. Such interactions lead to the fact that customers leave positive reviews more often, increase the level of brand loyalty, recommend it to others and generally strengthen the company's market position. This approach to experience management is based on humanity, emphasising the need to harmoniously combine employee and customer experiences. Companies that invest in the development of their employees create favorable conditions for their work, which, in turn, allows providing an exceptional level of service to customers.

In modern marketing, customer experience is a key factor in creating long-term relationships with a brand. According to the Zendesk Customer Experience Trends Report 2023, 81% of business leaders believe that customer experience and support are becoming increasingly important, emphasising their role as a key competitive advantage in the market, 77% of business leaders note a positive return on investment (ROI) in customer experience improvement initiatives (McDermott, 2023). According to research data from the Kantar Connect international company, up to 75% of brand formation occurs through experience touchpoints, which emphasises the importance of consistently high level of service. Providing a positive customer experience is no longer an option and is becoming a mandatory element of strategic management (Kantar Ukraine …, n.d.). Kantar identifies six main factors that determine the success of customer experience. First of all, it is efficiency, which consists in providing services in accordance with the promises and needs of the customer. Simplicity,

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which ensures ease and pleasant interaction with the brand, is the second important factor. Affinity, where the customer feels an emotional connection with the brand, is the third element, which promotes trust and loyalty.

Brand authenticity, which is based on consistency, fairness and transparency of the company's actions, also plays an important role. At the same time, brands should strive to be unique, exceeding customer expectations through innovation and individual approach. Inspiration, which arouses enthusiasm in customers and leaves unforgettable impressions of interaction with the brand, is the last key factor (Kantar Ukraine …, n.d.). The effectiveness of these factors is confirmed by Kantar's experience of cooperation with the Renault automobile company. Using the Kantar CemTric platform, Renault has managed to develop a global "Voice of the Customer" programme focused on collecting and analysing data on the needs of the audience in 54 countries. This programme allows not only to increase the return on investment, but also to create such a business culture in which customers are at the centre. Due to real-time feedback and analytical functions of artificial intelligence, Renault is able to quickly solve problems and improve customer experience. Since the launch of this programme in 2019, more than 40,000 Renault employees use the data collected on a daily basis to improve customer interaction, resulting in reduced customer churn, higher levels of satisfaction, and higher return on investment (Kantar helped…, n.d.).

Customer experience analytics (CX Analytics) is becoming an increasingly popular tool for companies, as it allows them to identify key factors that affect customer experience and to assess the effectiveness of various business activities. It helps to analyse the maturity of the brand in the field of customer experience based on data on operational processes, customer ratings, and metrics. This analysis makes it possible to understand how advanced the customer service system is and what type of maturity it can be attributed to (Sytnik, 2021). In addition, CX Analytics makes it possible to demonstrate the real value of initiatives related to improving customer experience through optimisation of indicators of return on investment (ROI). By measuring the impact of individual elements of customer experience on the entire customer journey, companies can assess important parametres for a certain category of products or services, which helps to improve business results. This includes studying the impact of brand, communications and direct investments on customer satisfaction and overall financial indicators (Collect and Report…, 2018).

The integration of data from different sources is also one of the main advantages of CX Analytics. Using unstructured data, such as transactions, visits, traffic, surveys, reviews and ratings, companies gain a deep and comprehensive understanding of customer behaviour and needs. This allows them to build more accurate interaction strategies, providing more effective and personalised work with customers, while meeting their needs for privacy protection and data security, which increases brand trust and consumer loyalty. Based on the analysis of research from leading companies, such as Kantar, Zendesk and Gartner, a table of key indicators and tools that make it possible to effectively assess and measure customer experience has been compiled (Table 1). These companies are recognised leaders in customer interaction research, and their recommendations help businesses to obtain objective and comprehensive data to improve customer interaction.

Table 1. Key CX indicators and measurement tools

Indicator/Tool	Description	Purpose
Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT)	Measures customer satisfaction based on short surveys where customers rate their experience on a scale of 1 to 5	Assesses the level of overall customer satisfaction after a specific interaction or stage in the customer journey
Net Promoter Score (NPS)	Assesses customer loyalty by asking, "Would you recommend our company to others?" Scored on a scale of 0 to 10	Determines how likely customers are to recommend a brand to others and divides them into promoters and detractors

Indicator/Tool	Description	Purpose
Customer Effort Score (CES)	Measures customer's efforts to solve a problem or achieve a desired result by evaluating the interaction with the brand	Accesses how easy it is for customers to work with the brand, which affects the overall impression of the interaction
Churn Rate	Measures the proportion of customers who leave the brand within a given period	Shows the level of customer satisfaction and the risk of customer churn
Customer Lifetime Value (CLV)	Assesses the total value of the customer to the company throughout the entire period of cooperation	Helps to understand economic benefits of long-term customer relationships
Ticket Reopen Rate	Measures the number of times a customer resubmits a complaint due to an unsatisfactory resolution of a problem	Indicates the level of problem-solving effectiveness and the need for improvement in support processes
Time-to-Resolution	Measures the average time it takes to solve a customer's problem from the time it is accessed	Shows the effectiveness of the support team in solving customer issues
Surveys	Customer surveys to collect their feedback on their interactions with the brand	Provides a direct assessment of customer experience and their expectations
A/B Tests	Comparison of two versions of web pages, emails, or other materials to assess which version delivers a better result for customers	Determines which elements of the interaction have a greater impact on customer satisfaction
Community Forums	Platforms where customers share their experiences, make suggestions, and discuss problems	Provides insight into customer pain points and wishes through direct discussions
Communication with employees	Feedback from employees who directly interact with customers	Enables the identification of recurring customer problems and opportunities for process improvement

Source: developed by the authors based on Collect and Report… (2018); Wintermantel (2024); CX Analytics (n.d.)

Table 1 makes it possible to systematise the main indicators used to assess customer experience and helps to make decisions to improve it. It should be noted that due to technological progress, significant opportunities for the development of CX have opened up, there has been a rapid implementation of various use cases, and technologies will continue to develop, expand and bring opportunities to an entirely new level. CX has already taken a step forward, using new technologies in areas, such as predictive analytics, customer segmentation, sentiment analysis, customer journey orchestration and hyper-personalisation, generative artificial intelligence can help organisations to create personalised and localised content, augmented and virtual realities open up phenomenal opportunities for customer interaction.

It is the factor of technological progress, along with such factors as globalisation of markets and changes in consumer behaviour, that has contributed to the development of digital customer experience, DCX (Haije, 2024). Today's customers increasingly rely on digital platforms for services and support, forcing businesses to adapt, just as the expansion of global markets requires the use of digital solutions to maintain customer relationships regardless of their geographical location. DCX is an integral part of customer experience, covering all interactions that occur through digital channels, such as mobile applications, websites, social networks, email and online chats. It is not just about the usability of technologies, but about creating a seamless, personalised and interactive experience that meets the expectations and needs of customers in a digital environment (Khoa, 2022).

An important feature of DCX is that it provides a constant presence of the company on digital platforms, allowing customers to interact at any time and from any place. It often works in tandem with physical touchpoints, creating a multichannel (omnichannel) service strategy that makes the customer experience holistic and consistent. In today's world, where most interactions take place through digital channels, DCX plays a key role in establishing long-term customer relationships. Today's consumers expect a high level of personalisation and speed in service. DCX allows

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companies to meet these expectations through the integration of tools, such as artificial intelligence, chatbots, personalised recommendations and predictive analytics.

Digital experience (User Experience, UX), which focuses on optimising the user's interaction with individual products and interfaces, is a significant element of DCX. UX encompasses all aspects of the user's interaction with a product - from first impressions to long-term use, including usability, emotional satisfaction, and efficiency of working with the interface. The concept of UX has emerged at the intersection of various disciplines, such as cognitive psychology, ergonomics, and computer science. Donald Norman, who has first introduced the term "User Experience," emphasises that UX concerns all aspects of the user's interaction with a company, its services, and products, not just the appearance or functionality of the interface (Norman, Nielsen, 1998).

At the beginning of its development, UX was focused on the usability of interfaces, but over time, this concept has evolved into a multifaceted approach that encompasses the emotional aspect of interaction, creating positive experiences and building loyalty. By 2024, when users have access to many alternative products and services, providing high-quality UX has become not only an advantage, but a necessity. UX consists of several key elements that provide a holistic user experience (Garrett, 2011):

- usability. Usability is one of the basic aspects of UX. Users expect intuitive interfaces that do not require additional effort to master them. A complex or incomprehensible interface can lead to frustration of users and reduce their engagement;

- accessibility. An important part of UX is to provide access to the product for users with different abilities. For example, the design should take into account the needs of people with limited vision or hearing, using alternative methods of access;

- visual design also plays an important role in the perception of the product. A harmonious and aesthetically pleasing design creates positive emotions in the user and enhances the overall impression of the interaction;

- emotional impact refers to how the user feels when interacting with the product. This aspect involves creating an emotional connection between the user and the product, which can influence the decision to reuse the product or service.

With the development of digital technologies, UX has become a key element in the formation of competitive advantages of companies. In today's world, users spend most of their time in a digital environment, so successful UX allows companies to increase customer engagement, reduce user churn and ensure loyalty. A well-designed UX can have a significant economic impact on a business. For example, companies that invest in UX can see up to a 400% increase in conversion rates, as users perform desired actions on the platform faster and easier (Patov, 2024).

UX has become an important component of the success of digital products and services in modern society. Formed on the basis of user needs research, successful UX strategies contribute not only to increasing customer loyalty, but also to the long-term competitiveness of companies in the market. Given the rapid development of technologies, the importance of UX will only grow, opening up new horizons for improving the quality of digital experiences. For example, the development of multimodal interfaces, where users can interact with products not only through visual interfaces, but also through voice commands or gestures, will become a new challenge for UX designers.

In the context of the study of the theoretical dimension of customer experience, as well as its components, such as Digital Customer Experience (DCX) and User Experience (UX), it is also worth considering the practical aspect. The modern digital world offers many tools that are becoming an integral part of successful customer experience management. In 2023-2024, these tools not only provide effective customer interaction, but also allow companies to increase personalisation, optimise processes and implement innovative solutions. Table 2 provides an overview of the most popular digital tools that are actively used to improve customer experience.

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Table 2. Digital CX improvement tools popular in 2023-2024

Tool	Description	Key features	Customer experience (CX) benefits
Zendesk	Customer request management system to improve service	Request management, support through different channels, analytics	Provides fast problem resolution and personalised support
Salesforce Service Cloud	A customer relationship management (CRM) platform that automates service processes	Service process automation, analytics, interaction personalisation	Improves service efficiency and allows for deeper understanding of customer needs
HubSpot CRM	CRM platform for managing contacts, marketing and sales	Customer tracking, marketing automation, personalisation	Supports an individualised approach to customer interaction at all stages
Qualtrics XM	A platform for managing customer experience through feedback collection and analysis	Real-time feedback collection, analytics, surveys	Identifies emotional reactions and customer satisfaction for rapid strategy correction
Adobe Experience Manager (AEM)	A platform for managing digital content and interaction through different channels	Content management, website and app personalisation	Supports individual customer journeys and ensures continuous interaction
Google Analytics 4 (GA4)	A tool for tracking and analysing customer interactions through platforms and channels	Real-time analytics, traffic reports, behaviour prediction	Helps to identify important touchpoints and improve customer journey
Freshdesk	Cloud platform for customer support and query management	Multichannel support, request automation, reports	Easily manages requests and improves the speed of problem resolution
Sprinklr	A platform for managing social media and customer experience through social channels	Social media management, feedback monitoring, sentiment analysis	Makes possible to respond quickly to comments on social networks and improve reputation
Genesys Cloud CX	A platform for managing contact centres and omnichannel support	Channel integration, IVR, analytics and reports	Increases the communication convenience and customer support effectiveness
Pendo	A platform for managing customer experience in mobile applications and software	Product analytics, feedback collection, personalised messages	Improves interaction with products, increases the level of retention and loyalty
Amplitude	A platform for analysing user behaviour that helps to optimise customer experience	Interaction analytics, behavioural reports, forecasts	Increases personalisation and identifies points of improvement for behaviour-based products
Twilio	A cloud platform for building communication APIs for SMS, voice, video and chat	Integration of omnichannel communications, SMS, video, chat	Supports real multichannel communication and provides personalisation
ChatGPT (OpenAI)	An artificial intelligence tool to automate communication and provide personalised responses	Chat automation, content generation, language processing	Supports instant customer communication and improves user experience
SurveyMonkey	A platform for creating and analysing customer surveys	Feedback collection and analysis, survey customisation	Facilitates feedback processing to improve customer experience

Source: developed by the authors based on Jayashankar (2023); Official website of the Zendesk (n.d.); Top 18 CX platforms… (n.d.)

The presented digital tools for improving customer experience reflect key trends of 2023-2024, in particular, the integration of artificial intelligence, automation of communications, data analysis and personalisation of interaction. Each of these tools aims to improve the efficiency of

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working with customers through various channels and technologies, provide continuity, speed and accuracy of service. This allows companies to more accurately understand customer needs, flexibly respond to their requests and build loyalty through personalised solutions. By implementing such tools, organisations can not only improve customer interaction, but also increase overall operational efficiency, optimising costs and expanding their market opportunities.

Ukrainian companies are actively implementing modern digital tools to improve customer experience, optimising interaction with users and automating service processes. For example, Rozetka, one of the largest Ukrainian online stores, uses tools such as Zendesk to support customers, Google Analytics - to analyse their behaviour, and Pendo - to track interactions in the mobile application (Vovk, n.d.; Official website of the Pendo, n.d.). This allows the company to automate support, personalise offers, and effectively analyse customer journey. Nova Poshta, a leader in the field of logistics, uses Genesys Cloud CX for omnichannel support and Salesforce (Integration salesforce…, n.d.) for customer relationship management, which provides customer journey optimisation, operational feedback analysis, and improves service quality. A-BANK has become the first bank in Ukraine to implement Genesys Cloud CX in the banking sector ("A-bank" quickly…, 2023). PrivatBank, a leader in the field of banking services, uses Google Analytics for traffic analysis (Privat24…, n.d), the Visa Cloud Connect platform (Visa moved…, n.d), FacePay24, SmartID services (10 solutions…, n.d), voice biometrics technologies (Five "technologies…", 2023), which increases marketing efficiency and provides personalised communication.

Leading global companies are also actively using digital tools to improve customer experience. For example, Amazon integrates Zendesk and Qualtrics to analyse customer behaviour in real time and automate support (Amazon's…, 2021), while Coca-Cola uses Salesforce and Google Analytics to manage customer loyalty and analyse the effectiveness of marketing campaigns. Apple, due to Zendesk and Adobe Experience Manager, provides continuous personalised interaction at all stages of using its products. In turn, Netflix uses Amplitude to analyse user behaviour and Twilio for multychannel communications, which allows it to quickly respond to customer feedback and offer personalised recommendations (Gaunce, n.d.; Kochmarska, 2019). Tata Communications is implementing its own Customer Interaction Suite tool to build scalable personalised and contextual customer interaction on a global scale (Customer Interaction…, n.d.).

In the process of working on the article, a marketing study "Analysis of customer priorities and their impact on consumer loyalty" has been conducted using a Google Forms survey. This helps to determine key factors influencing consumer behaviour, as well as to identify the most desirable services and personalised customer interactions that can increase their brand loyalty. The results of the study (Figure 2) make it possible to distinguish several key aspects regarding consumer behaviour and customer expectations.

The obtained indicators demonstrate a significant customer orientation towards product quality and service level, which is confirmed by the highest indicators in these categories. In particular, higher product quality and higher service level are named as the main factors due to which customers can switch brands, which indicates increased consumer expectations from modern companies in ensuring the quality of products and services. Promotional offers, which are of great importance when making a decision to switch brands, are also quite a significant factor. Interestingly, the study shows a high percentage for the parameter of compliance with ethical values of customers. This can be explained by the influence of the current situation in Ukraine (2024), in particular the war, when many consumers prefer brands that support socially important initiatives, including the aid to the Armed Forces of Ukraine and volunteer organisations. This attitude emphasises the importance of corporate social responsibility and ethical behaviour of companies in modern conditions.
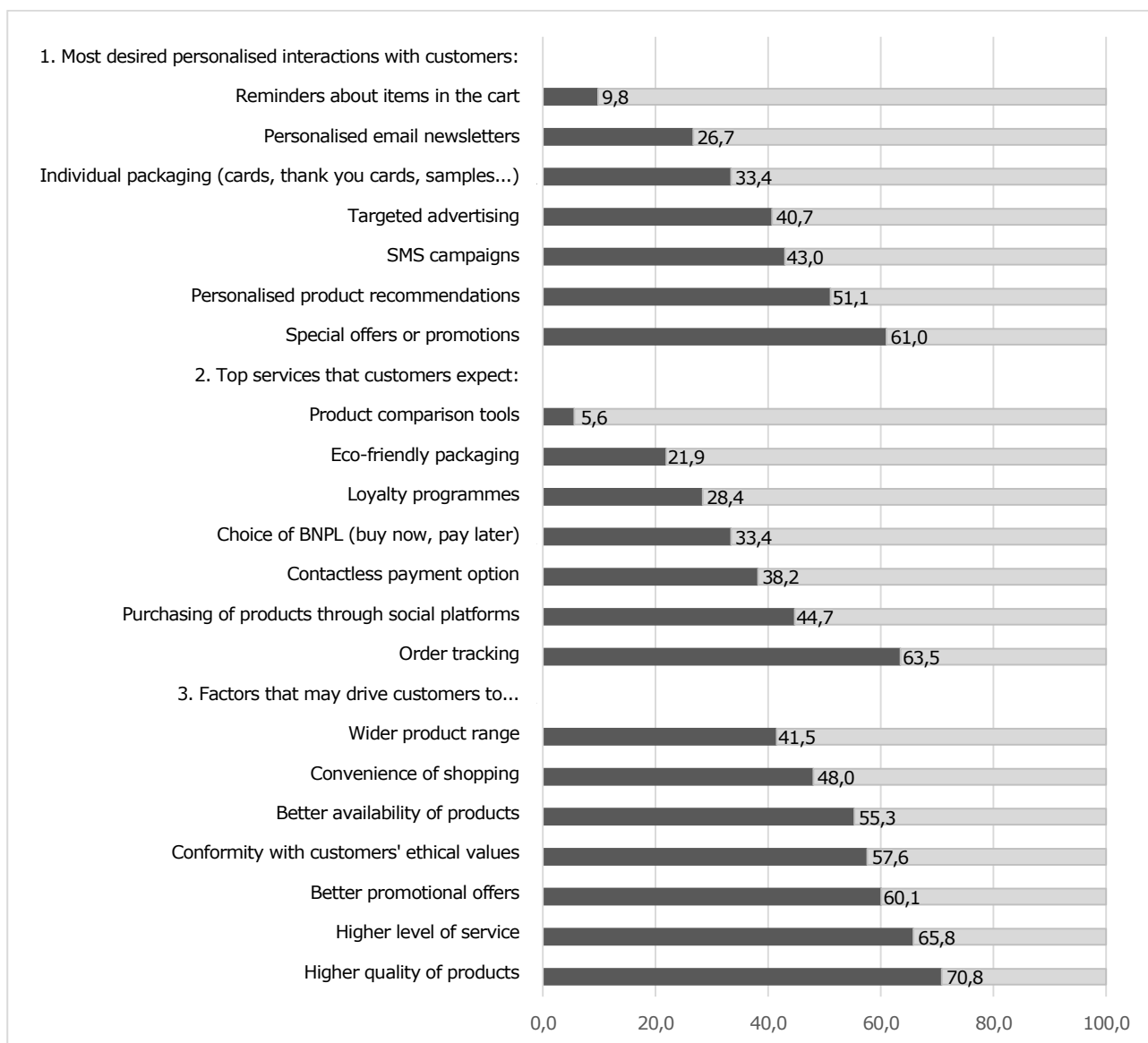
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Figure 2. Survey results

Source: compiled by the authors based on the conducted research

In addition, a significant part of respondents expresses their expectations regarding the services that companies should offer to improve customer experience. For example, consumers expect the most to be able to track orders and purchase products through social platforms, which indicates the growing role of digital technologies in the shopping process. There is also a growing demand for contactless payments and the BNPL option, which enables consumers to manage their spending more flexibly. Personalisation of customer interactions remains one of key tools in maintaining loyalty, in particular through special offers and personalised product recommendations, which are most desired among respondents. In addition, the demand for personalised email and SMS campaigns confirms that customers value attention and an individual approach from companies. Thus, the results of this study demonstrate that customers expect high quality, a personalised approach and support for ethical values from brands. These aspects play a crucial role in forming loyalty and retaining consumers in modern conditions.

Based on the analysis of theoretical aspects of customer experience and relationship marketing, as well as practical research, which includes surveys of respondents on key factors that affect consumer loyalty, it is possible to draw conclusions about the importance of a strategic

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approach to customer experience management. The obtained data demonstrate that personalisation, compliance with ethical values of customers and service quality have a significant impact on consumer loyalty, especially in the context of modern conditions, such as the war in Ukraine. Considering these results, it is advisable to provide recommendations for improving the customer experience management strategy, which will allow brands to more effectively adapt to consumer needs and increase their level of loyalty (Table 3).

Table 3. The main directions for improving the customer experience management strategy

No.	Direction/Step	Description
1	Creation of feedback loops	Implementation of mechanisms for collecting and analysing customer feedback to improve products and processes
2	Development of multychannel experience	Provision of continuous customer experience through various switchable channels
3	Implementation of self-resolution tools	Provision of customers with resources to solve problems on their own through FAQs, chatbots and other digital tools
4	Provision of a personalisation	Use of customer data to create customised offers and personalised service
5	Empowerment through AI and automation	Use of AI and automation to quickly solve routine queries and improve the quality of interaction
6	Provision of a proactive experience	Anticipation of customer needs and solution of possible problems even before they arise, which helps to strengthen loyalty
7	Use of data and analytics	Data analysis to identify key trends and customer pain points to improve satisfaction
8	Improvement of interaction with employees	Implementation of internal feedback channels that allow staff to share experiences and improve service
9	Creation of integrated support teams / Data system unification	Development of effective interactions between different departments to provide quick solutions to customer problems
10	Implementation of ongoing training	Organisation of ongoing training for employees to improve their customer interaction skills

Source: developed by the authors based on Wintermantel (2024); Becker & Jaakkola (2020); Jayashankar (2023)

Table 3 presents key directions for improving the customer experience management strategy, based on research findings and global best practices. Each of the proposed directions has its own rationale and is aimed at increasing the level of customer satisfaction, their loyalty, and the effectiveness of interaction with the company. Creation of feedback loops helps to quickly respond to customer needs and allows companies to optimise their products and processes in accordance with the feedback received. A multichannel experience provides continuous customer interaction with the company through different platforms, which increases convenience and the level of engagement. Self-solving of issues through digital tools, such as FAQs or chatbots, helps to reduce problem-solving time and improve service efficiency.

Directions, such as personalisation and empowerment through AI and automation, allow companies to better understand customer needs and respond to them with individual solutions, significantly strengthening customer loyalty. A proactive approach allows solving problems before they arise, which creates a positive experience and trust in the brand. The use of data and analytics helps to identify key trends and customer needs, which allows companies to provide more relevant products and services (Guerola-Navarro *et al.*, 2021). Also, an important role in ensuring quality service is played by improving the interaction with employees through internal feedback, which allows staff to improve their skills. In addition, integrated support teams and unified data systems contribute to faster resolution of customer requests, and ongoing employee training ensures their competence and readiness to work in a dynamic environment. Therefore, these directions are appropriate and effective for implementation in the customer experience management strategy, as they allow adapting to modern market requirements and customer needs, which ultimately helps to increase the level of customer loyalty and satisfaction.

Conclusions

In modern conditions, effective customer experience management is a key factor that determines the level of consumer loyalty to brands. Based on theoretical analysis and practical research, it is found that the successful implementation of a customer experience-oriented strategy has a positive impact on customer retention and increases their satisfaction. This is especially important in the context of relationship marketing, where long-term customer relationships are a priority. The results of the study also confirm that loyalty is significantly influenced by such elements as personalisation of interaction, provision of the ease of use of products and services, rapid response to customer needs, as well as the integration of various interaction channels. A special role is played by compliance with ethical values of customers, which is extremely relevant in the conditions of modern socio-economic realities, in particular the war in Ukraine, when consumers prefer brands that support socially important initiatives. Thus, the improvement of customer experience management is an important tool for building long-term relationships between the brand and the customer, which contributes to increasing loyalty, stability and trust in the company.

Limitations of the study include several important aspects that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, the respondents have been surveyed over a limited period of time, which may affect the long-term relevance of the data, as changes in market conditions or consumer behaviour can occur quickly. Second, the use of only one type of marketing research, in particular an online survey, may limit the depth of the analysis, as it does not take into account other forms of information collection, such as interviews or focus groups, which could provide a more detailed picture of customer behaviour. Also, the sample of respondents, while sufficient for general analysis, may not always be fully representative of all demographic groups or regions, which limits the possibility of generalising the conclusions. The theoretical framework of the study is based on available literature sources, but rapid changes in the field of technologies and marketing may necessitate its updating.

For future research, it is promising to solve problems related to the division of responsibility and the lack of a unified vision of customer experience management at organisational level. The study of the influence of organisational structures on the integration of efforts to improve customer experience is extremely relevant, since traditional vertical structures can create functional "silos" that hinder the unity of goals and actions. Future research should consider ways to effectively integrate various departments responsible for sales, marketing, and customer support to ensure consistency of metrics and incentives that contribute to the formation of a comprehensive and attractive customer experience. Research into the implementation of technologies for data and systems integration, which will allow combining customer information and improving cross-functional cooperation, is also promising. The study of technological solutions, in particular the use of artificial intelligence, automation, and analytics to combine data from different sources, will be an important step in developing a holistic approach to customer experience management.

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Conflict of interest

None.

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Клієнтський досвід і лояльність до бренду у стратегіях маркетингу відносин: аналіз та методологічні аспекти

Анотація. Актуальність теми обумовлена тим, що у період нестабільності бізнеси прагнуть зберегти лояльність клієнтів шляхом покращення їхнього досвіду та створення емоційного зв'язку з брендом. Метою дослідження було виявлення основних елементів клієнтського досвіду, які найбільше впливають на споживчу лояльність, а також аналіз стратегій його покращення у контексті маркетингу відносин. Методи дослідження включали аналіз теоретичних джерел, кількісне маркетингове опитування для збору даних про клієнтські очікування та практичний аналіз стратегій управління досвідом клієнтів, що застосовуються у провідних компаніях. У статті розглянуто ключові елементи маркетингу відносин, теоретичний вимір клієнтського досвіду, цифрові інструменти його покращення, а також досліджено вплив клієнтського досвіду на лояльність споживачів. Визначено основні показники та інструменти вимірювання клієнтського досвіду, зокрема через цифрові платформи. Здійснено аналіз клієнтських пріоритетів та їх впливу на лояльність, що дозволило запропонувати напрями вдосконалення стратегій управління клієнтським досвідом. Основні результати дослідження показали, що найважливішими аспектами для формування лояльності є персоналізація обслуговування, швидкість реагування компаній на запити клієнтів, а також використання сучасних цифрових рішень для покращення досвіду взаємодії. Застосування цифрових технологій дозволяє не лише зберегти клієнтів, але й розширити їхній життєвий цикл. Практична цінність дослідження полягає в тому, що його результати можуть надати компаніям важливі інсайти щодо ключових аспектів обслуговування, які впливають на лояльність клієнтів. Дані проведеного маркетингового дослідження можуть стати основою для вдосконалення стратегії управління клієнтським досвідом, підвищуючи ефективність взаємодії з клієнтами та сприяючи довгостроковим відносинам

Ключові слова: методологія; персоналізація; цифровий досвід клієнта; омніканальність; брендинг; взаємодія зі споживачем

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