

Social Customer-Oriented Technologies in the Tourism Industry: An Empirical Analysis

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Abstract - This article examines the peculiarities of application regarding the social customer-oriented technologies in the modern Ukrainian society which are exemplified by the tourist enterprises.

The specifics of the study are based on the definition of values measuring the customer orientation of the enterprise. The basic elements are defined on the analysis of the application and the methods comprising social customer orientation by tourist enterprises: values and behavioral practices of employee, business processes, and strategic business orientation.

The results of empirical research provide an assessment of the compliance respecting the ideas of managers and customers within tourist enterprises regarding the most important social customer-oriented technologies.

Keywords - management, enterprise, consumer behavior, customer orientation, customer orientation index, hospitality industry.

1. Introduction

Today, due to the processes of globalization, increased competition and heightened consumer requirements for the services provided, as well as other competitive obstacles, the tourist enterprises are forced to seek the new ways to gain and maintain the competitive advantages.

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In the developed markets experiencing a maturity phase such changes in the external environment bring the enterprises to expand the innovative forms of activity planning and they become more customer-oriented. In the settings of saturation of demand for consumer goods and services, the level of customer servicing, which is the most copy protected, as compared to other competitive advantages, becomes the determining factor of differentiation.

Customer orientation has an impact not only on production and consumption, but also on the associated common practices, which are not purely economic, for example consumption practices.

Therefore, it makes sense to consider a customer-oriented approach within the sociology framework, for example, as a social technology.

The scientific novelty of the research lies in the development of the customer orientation concept in the performance of Ukrainian tourist enterprises.

The investigation is concerned with the body of theoretical knowledge about social technologies and customer-oriented approach, as well as the practical application of customer-oriented technologies in the performance of Ukrainian tourist enterprises.

The theoretical framework of the study includes a set of ideas that refer to social technologies and customer-oriented approach; *practical part* refers to the social customer-oriented technologies in the managers' interpretation of tourist enterprises and consumers of tourist service.

The purpose of the article is to formulate the theoretical concepts for social customer-oriented technologies, and to conduct an empirical analysis with regard to application of social technologies by Ukrainian tourist enterprises.

Research objective is to elaborate recommendations for the innovative application of the social customer-oriented technologies for tourist enterprises.

2. Literature Review

The social technologies in general and consumer behavior in particular have been studied and continue to be studied within the framework of sociological studies, while the customer-oriented approach is mainly studied within marketing and management.

A review of approaches to the study of social technologies and concepts of consumption may be useful for better understanding the essence of the customer-oriented approach and formulation of its sociological definition.

The concept of social technology, in which a person acts as an object of social engineering, was originally proposed by Robert Owen in 1813. He made an analogy between machines and people, who can be customized through the use of appropriate knowledge. He criticized the capitalist system and came to the conclusion about the necessity for deep transformations [11]. These transformations were meant to form a new system of social and economic relations and reconcile the interests in society. In *"The Poverty of Historicism"* in 1957 Karl Popper defined social technologies as a means for creation and transformation social institutions for a definite purpose [12].

The practical implementation of the customer-oriented approach is inextricably bound up with the situation of interaction between the company representative and customers. The study of social customer-oriented technologies must take into account the type of society and the degree of its development [15].

The existence of social customer-oriented technologies is conditional upon the transition of society to the post-industrial stage, which is why the measurement of corporate performance results occurs in terms of customer satisfaction, and mass production is gradually moving on to a flexible, individualized approach [9].

Currently, applying the customer-oriented approach is reasonable and necessary [4]. Today one can hardly conceive a successful business without the attention to customer needs, building and evolution of the customer relationship, as well as development of technologies for the relationship management.

Some authors [7],[10] consider the customer orientation as a concept equivalent to market orientation, namely, as the "organization-wide generation of market intelligence pertaining to current and future customer needs and affecting factors, dissemination of the intelligence across departments, organization-wide participation of employees in the customer need satisfaction". Scientists [14] include the following components into market orientation: customer orientation, competitor orientation, cross-boundary collaboration.

Thus, the customer-oriented approach is one of three components of market orientation and refers to "sufficient understanding of one's target buyers to be able to create superior value for them continuously".

Authors [1] describe the customer orientation as an independent concept, namely "approach to sales, where the customer's needs and interests are of paramount importance".

The customer-oriented approach is a set of beliefs that put customer's interests first, not exclusively the interests of the owners of an enterprise, managers and employees, for the development a profitable enterprise over the longer term [16].

In a more advanced interpretation, customer orientation is defined by an independent concept, since the "market" covers all possible customers of an enterprise, but customer orientation and competitor orientation may be completely opposite [2], [8]. This happens if the company focuses on the strong points of the competitors and tries to "overtake" them, while ignoring the customer dissatisfaction.

Author [3] interprets the concepts of market orientation more broadly and includes five main components, i.e. market participants: consumers, distributors, competitors, important persons and the macro-marketing environment.

The customer orientation is thought of as an independent concept among the five components of market orientation. The customer-oriented approach is a "survey of the customer needs, creating values and development of skills to anticipate new consumer challenges" [9].

Besides, there are a large number of definitions for customer orientation, given by domestic authors. Thus, authors [13] believe that customer-oriented approach is a strategic approach for the development of an organization, which enables improving competitiveness and yield enhancement, implicating the mobilization of all resources to identify, engage, attract and retain the most profitable ones due to improved customer experience and consumer satisfaction.

Customer orientation is a company's strategy focused on the analysis and satisfaction of consumer needs and formation the most comfortable customer relationship for the purpose of continuous professional interaction [6].

Customer orientation is the ability of an enterprise to create an additional customer flow and additional income due to good understanding and satisfaction of customer need [5].

Based on the theoretical analysis regarding the literature, it may be said that the customer orientation is a management tool in the customer relationships aimed to gain a sustained profit over the long term, which is based on the key factors: staff competence,

target audience and application of innovative technologies in the course of enterprise performance.

3. Data and Methodology

Without a clear understanding of the social nature of customer orientation and its peculiar characteristics, it is impossible to apply the customer-oriented approach correctly and for the good of society.

The method of online survey is used to conduct an empirical research, resulting in simplification of a procedure for completing a questionnaire by respondents.

There are plans to use a questionnaire-based survey in the Internet to interview the target audience, i.e. consumers of tourist services and managers of tourist enterprises. In this manner, one can achieve the values of customer orientation in the enterprise which are realized by managers and customers, as well as their ideas of just and confirm what kind of social customer-oriented technologies would be applied in the enterprises. The data obtained by employing the method combinations will allow the analysis to be conducted regarding the application of social customer-oriented technologies by tourist enterprises and compare them with the customer preferences.

3.1. Empirical Research Programme

3.1.1. Challenge

The customer-oriented approach is defined as a special type of social interaction that develops between people as a result of the transition from industrial to post-industrial type of society. This concept emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. At this particular time enterprises began to measure their performance by degree of customer satisfaction and by switching to the flat organization.

The emergence of social customer-oriented technologies is due to the fact that in the presence of a large number of goods and services equal in characteristics on the market, the consumer will most likely prefer the enterprise that is mostly oriented towards understanding and satisfaction of its personal needs.

It would seem that in these circumstances there are all the prerequisites for the harmonious development of society, economic advancement and improvement of social stability and mutual confidence of entrepreneurs and consumers.

If enterprises produce products and render services in accordance with the identified needs of individuals striving to anticipate them, the manipulative techniques, deception and putting pressure on

consumers with the objective of effecting sales lose their meaning.

Moreover, the most complete satisfaction respecting the distinctive needs of the members of society lays the groundwork for effective development of society. Thus, one can hardly conceive a development of modern society without social customer-oriented technologies.

However, in practice, Ukrainian tourist enterprises often have no idea of the customer orientation and its manifestations. Therefore there is no customer orientation support system, although there is a confidence in its necessity.

3.1.2. Research Objectives

1. To identify the existing differences in the ideas of Chief Executive Officers, managers and customers concerning social customer-oriented technologies applied by tourist enterprises.
2. To characterize the peculiarities of application of social customer-oriented technologies by tourist enterprises.
3. To develop recommendations for an innovative approach for the application of social customer-oriented technologies by tourist enterprises.

3.2. Object and Subject

Object of research – Managers of the network of travel agencies “Sonata” which are engaged in implementation of tourism services and the customers.

Subject of research – Social customer-oriented technologies which are realized by managers of the network of travel agencies “Sonata”.

3.3. System Analysis of the Object of Study

The staff of the network of travel agencies “Sonata” is divided into managers and officers.

The managers take part in the implementation of internal social customer-oriented technologies and interact with management and officers.

Besides, the managers make decisions, execute instructions are coming from the management, including instructions on organization as the economic component within the procedure for implementation of tours and tourist services, and carry out customer communications.

The managers communicate these instructions to the officers and monitor compliance.

The officers interact directly with the customers and implement external social customer-oriented technologies.

Managers, officers and consumers of tourist services have their own ideas about customer orientation.

Social customer-oriented technologies for each of this three links are represented by a combination of factors concerning the specific manifestations of customer orientation, such as benefits, communication style, etc.

Both managers, officers and consumers of tourism services evaluate the customer orientation of the Company based on the compliance of this enterprise with their perception of customer orientation.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Development of the Model of Social Customer-Oriented Technologies.

Based on the analysis of reference sources for practical implementation of customer-oriented approach, we have compiled a Model for classification of social customer-oriented technologies (Fig. 1).

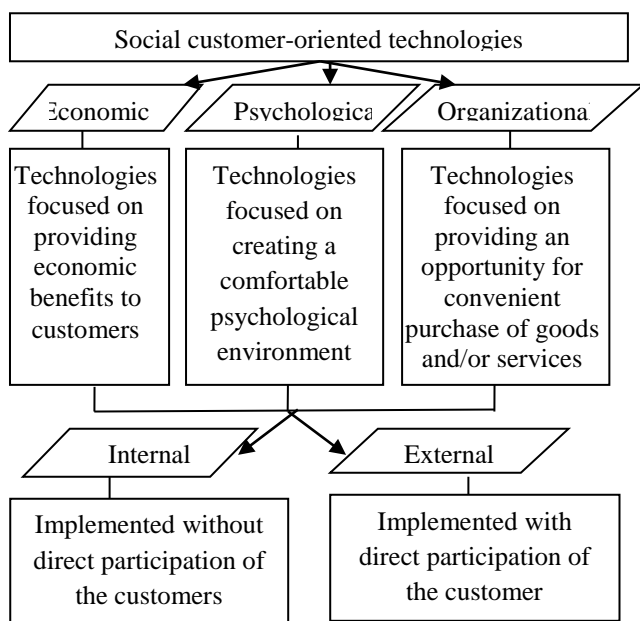


Figure 1. Model for classification of social customer-oriented technologies*

*Source: prepared by authors.

Economic. Technologies are focused on providing economic benefits to customers. This includes Loyalty program (discount cards, bonus system, special conditions for long-term customers); gifts; promotional offers with discounts; publicly available list of shortcomings, whereby the customer receives a bonus, when finding deficiencies.

Psychological. Technologies focused on creating a comfortable psychological environment in the course of interaction with the company representatives. This group of social technologies is the most numerous. This includes meeting and escorting the customers; smile when meeting and talking; fair propositions,

clarifying questions concerning needs and preferences of the customer, etc.

Organizational. Technologies are focused on providing an opportunity for convenient purchase of goods and/or services, positive experience of attendance. This includes creation of comfortable conditions for a potential customer (air temperature, light, furniture); convenient business hours; available location. Besides, within the framework of the abovementioned typology, it seems important to develop an additional focus regarding the social customer-oriented technologies. The reason for this is that customer orientation involves not only the application of social customer-oriented technologies, but also the application of plant specific social technologies.

Scientific articles and practical recommendations that are meant for Chief Executive Officers and managers pay considerable attention to these “internal” technologies.

Internal. These technologies are implemented with the actual participation of employees without direct participation of the customers. This includes “customer data sheet” (gathering information about customer preferences and offering promotional offers); development of the principles and rules of work that will help solve the customer’s tasks; formation of behavior models capable of supporting the customer expectations through the use of financial and non-financial motivation; description and elaboration of business processes (for example, order acceptance) and monitoring techniques; selection of customer-oriented employees at the stage of employment; nominating colleagues for the title of “Employee of the Month” for going the extra mile to help their customers; writing the word.

“Customer” with a capital letter in all documents of the enterprise; appointment of the secretary by the vice-president at face value; enabling employees to write stories about crotchety customers and rewarding the best every month; providing employees with books about good manners; conducting a survey among employees about the most anti-customer-oriented thing in the enterprise.

External. These technologies are implemented with the direct participation of customers. Conducting marketing research; application of Net Promoter Score; loyalty program (discount cards, bonus system, special conditions for long-term customers); gifts; promotional offers with discounts; publicly available list of shortcomings, whereby the customer receives a bonus, when finding deficiencies; meeting and escorting the customers; smile when meeting and talking; fair propositions, clarifying questions concerning needs and preferences of the customer, instead of the question “How can I help you?”; creation of comfortable conditions for a customer (air

temperature, light, furniture); convenient business hours; available location. Taking into consideration with respect to limited access to the field of activity and for benefit of research, a decision was placed into the focus on the external social customer-oriented technologies, excluding internal technologies. In order to obtain the most complete results, a different toolkit has been compiled for managers and customers.

The questionnaire for managers consists of 3 parts: the first part was compiled on the basis of a combined scale for assessment of customer orientation of the agency; the second part includes statements identical in meaning to those proposed in the questionnaire for customers. At the end of questionnaire there is a question about social customer-oriented technologies that should be applied, but not used by agencies at the moment.

The questionnaire for customers includes a screening question, a question for general assessment of customer orientation, statements, and an open ended question for opinion collection concerning improvement of service quality. These statements were selected on the basis of a preliminary snap poll of ten respondents regarding the essence of customer orientation. The list of statements is formed in such a way that each type of social customer-oriented technology has a corresponding number of statements representing such technologies. The wordings of statements are adapted from the answers of managers and customers of the network of travel agencies "Sonata".

The questionnaires based on the online survey platform Google Form were distributed through the social networks such as *Facebook* and *Instagram*, as well as in instant messengers *Viber*, *Facebook*, *Messenger*, *WhatsApp* and *Telegram*.

4.1.1. Model Questionnaires for Research

*Table 1. Questionnaire for managers**

Part 1		
Assess the compliance with these statements on a scale from 1 to 3 (where 1 – completely disagree, 2 – rather disagree than agree, and 3 – fully agree)		
№	Question	Compliance rate
1.	Our business is primarily focused on the customer service.	
2.	The interests of our customers are more important than the interests of the agency.	
3.	The agency constantly measures the level of customer orientation.	
4.	We understand customer needs full well.	
5.	We practice brainstorming to understand how customers use our services.	
6.	We strive to manage customer needs to the greatest possible extent.	
7.	We are constantly exploring new potential customer needs they never imagined existed.	
8.	We are looking for development of opportunities in the areas, where customers find it difficult to express their needs.	

9.	When developing new products and services, we introduce solutions aimed at satisfaction of potential needs of our customers.	
10.	We develop new tourist products and services, even when there is a risk that existing services and/or products will become obsolete.	
11.	We extrapolate the main market trends to get a foretaste of future needs of our customers.	
12.	We have a comprehensive idea how customers evaluate our service.	
13.	We measure satisfaction of our customers on a regular basis.	
14.	Data on customer satisfaction are regularly distributed at all levels of the agency.	
15.	We are planning to increase customer satisfaction.	
Part 2		
In the following list of customer-oriented technologies indicate by check mark all items implemented by your agency at the moment		
№	Question	Compliance rate
16.	The agency implements a loyalty program (for example, discount cards, bonus system and special conditions for long-term customers).	
17.	Sometimes the agency gives gifts to the customers (for example, for the purchase of a service or as part of promotional offer).	
18.	Our agency conducts promotions for customers.	
19.	Our employees smile, when meeting customers and when talking to customers.	
20.	Our employees communicate with customers in a courteous manner.	
21.	Our employees wish the customer a good day and invite to come back again.	
22.	Our employees are ready to respond to appeal of the customer.	
23.	Our employees offer apologies, if they failed to satisfy the customer's request.	
24.	Our employees communicate with a customer equally friendly, regardless of whether he/she effects a purchase or not.	
25.	Our employees ask clarifying questions about the needs and preferences of a customer in the process of communication.	
26.	Our employees strive to satisfy even unstandard request of the customer, when choosing a tourist product.	
27.	Our employees recommend a tourist service that meets customer needs to the greatest possible extent.	
28.	Our employees are honest, when communicating with a customer, even if this may lead to a refusal of purchase.	
29.	We created comfortable conditions for a customer in the company premises (air temperature, sufficient illumination, sufficient amount of furniture, Wi-Fi).	
30.	We provide business hours convenient for our customers.	
31.	The agency has available location.	
Part 3		
What do you think are there customer-oriented technologies in the agency that should be applied, but not used at the moment? Specify, if this is the case.		

**Source: prepared by authors for research purposes.*

Table 2. Questionnaire for customers*

Part 1		
Question	Answer	
Have you ever purchased the tourist services in the network of travel agencies “Sonata”?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Part 2		
Question	Degree of compliance	
How would you assess the customer orientation of the agency on a scale from 1 to 3 (where 1 – low customer orientation, 2 – average customer orientation, 3 – maximum customer orientation)		
Part 3		
Which of the following items would you personally really appreciate, when attending the agency? Please assess the importance of each item personally for you on a scale from 1 to 3 (where 1 is completely unimportant, 2 is of average importance, 3 is of the utmost importance).		
№	Question	Compliance rate
1.	There are discount cards that give the right to a discount.	
2.	There are promotional offers for regular customers.	
3.	There is a bonus scheme of discounts.	
4.	Agency gives gifts (for example, for the purchase of a service or as part of promotional offer).	
5.	Agency conducts promotions for its customers.	
6.	Agency makes personalized offers and grants discounts (for example, timed to a birthday).	
7.	Agency provides free additional services (for example, promotional tours).	
9.	Employees are ready to respond to your appeal.	
10.	Employees offer apologies, if they failed to satisfy your request.	
11.	Employees communicate with you equally friendly, regardless of whether you effect a purchase or not.	
12.	Employees ask clarifying questions about your needs and preferences in the process of communication.	
13.	Employees strive to satisfy even unstandard request.	
14.	Employees recommend a tourist service and/or product that meets your needs to the greatest possible extent	
15.	Our employees are honest, when communicating with a customer, even if this may lead to a refusal of purchase.	
16.	Agency created comfortable conditions for a customer in its premises (air temperature, sufficient illumination, sufficient amount of furniture, Wi-Fi).	
17.	Agency provides business hours convenient for the customers.	
18.	Agency has available location	
Part 4		
What do you think the agency can improve in the customer service?		

*Source: prepared by authors for research purposes.

Analysis of the sociological research results is presented in two parts. The first part includes the general characteristics of the application of social customer-oriented technologies by Ukrainian tourist enterprises; the second part constitutes the test of research hypotheses.

Table 3. Social profile of the respondent*

№	Question	Answer
1.	Is there discount cards that give the right to a discount?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2.	Age	<input type="text"/>
3.	Sex	<input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F
4.	Education level: – incomplete secondary education – general secondary education – secondary technical education – higher education	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Which of the following estimates most accurately describes your financial situation? – below average – average – I consider myself a fairly wealthy person	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

* Source: prepared by authors for research purposes.

The study engaged managers and customers of the network of travel agencies “Sonata” in Ukraine. Among the managers, the questionnaire was filled out by 5 respondents – employees of the network of travel agencies “Sonata”.

In total, 129 respondents were interviewed and were separated using a screening question:

- 74.4% of them are regular customers of agencies;
- 25.6% have never made purchases some of the tourist services.

Answers of respondents to the question “Have you ever purchased the tourist services in the network of travel agencies “Sonata” in Ukraine?” were distributed as follows (Fig. 2).

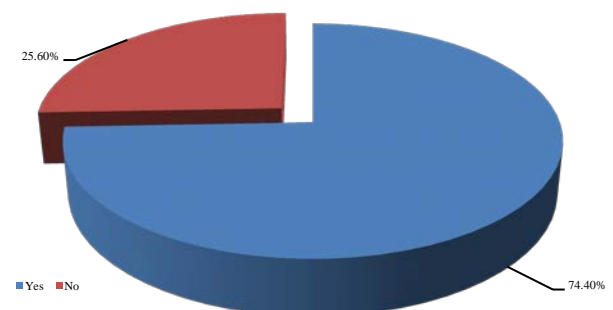


Figure 2. Distribution of respondents based on the response to the screening question*

*Source: prepared by authors based on the results of the research conducted.

4.2. Evaluation of Customer Orientation of the Network of Travel Agencies “Sonata” by its Managers

In the first part of the questionnaire, it was suggested that the managers should evaluate their compliance rate with 15 statements borrowed from the methodology for assessing the market orientation of the agency on the basis of a combined scale. Only those statements that are directly related to customer communications and identification of needs were borrowed from the methodology.

All managers assessed the compliance and every of 15 statements by at least 3 points (“Yes or No”). Three respondents expressed a relative disagreement in respect of one of them (“more likely no than yes”). It followed an overall assessment of the customer orientation of the agency network by its managers, which is relatively high. It cannot be ruled out that the choice of answers was affected by the unwillingness of respondents to evaluate the agency in a negative way within the framework of study conducted not by the agency itself. It should be noted that the assessment of the same statement in 80% of cases differed by 1-2 points, and the remaining 20% of statements were assessed by each manager equally. Consequently, evaluation of the customer orientation of all agencies by the managers has been nearly the same.

Items 13 and 14 of the questionnaire received the lowest rating. All 5 managers answered “yes and no” on the statement 13 and 3 of 5 noted that they rather disagreed with the statement about data dissemination at all levels of the agency. This item received the lowest rating.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the regular measurement of customer satisfaction and dissemination of relevant information is not a priority for the agency with regard to implementation of customer orientation.

At the same time, all five managers fully agreed that their agency strives to manage customer needs to the greatest possible extent, and 4 of 5 among them consider that their agency’s business is primarily aimed at the most convenient customer service. All 5 managers also “rather agree than not” that they understand customer needs fully well. It is remarkable that only 3 of 5 respondents answered “Yes or No” to the statement about complete understanding of the assessment of agency products and services by the customers.

Therefore, it can be stated e that managers are disposed to assess the agency’s orientation towards customer satisfaction higher than it is in practice. However, it is interesting to note that 4 of 5 respondents are “rather agree than not” that the agency regularly practices brainstorming to

understand how customers use the tourist products and services offered. This means that employees still work for understanding the benefits provided by the products offered.

Besides, based on the research findings we have not identified a single manager, who absolutely agree with the statement that interests of customers are more important than interests of the owners of the agency, and also that the agency develops new products, even when there is a risk that existing products will become obsolete.

It should be noted, however, that there is some controversy in the overall assessment of these statements and more highly assessed statements concerning customer orientation and satisfaction of potential needs. Perhaps, this controversy is partly realized by managers, since 4 of 5 respondents noted the existence of customer-oriented technologies that should be applied in the agency, but not used at the moment. However, none of them cited specific examples of such social technologies, which makes it impossible to analyze the opinions of managers in the ways to increase the level of customer orientation based on the results of the research conducted.

4.3. Evaluation of Customer Orientation of the Network of Travel Agencies “Sonata” by Customers.

An open-ended question “What do you think the agency can improve in the customer service?” was included in Part 4 of the structured questionnaire-based survey for customers. It should be noted that 52 of 96 respondents, who purchased products in the company, answered this question, the others were undecided.

After deleting answers with dashes and other non-informative answers we conducted analysis of proposals for improvement the quality of service.

The analysis revealed that each proposal can be attributed to one or several groups of external social customer-oriented technologies: economic, psychological or organizational (Fig. 3).

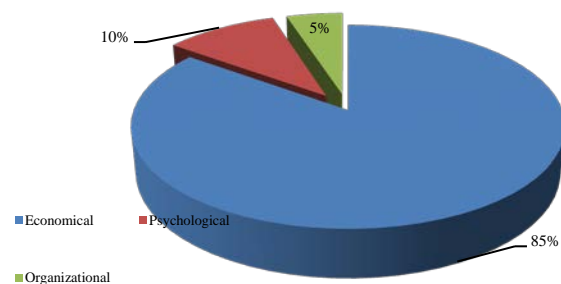


Figure 3. Correlation of groups of external social customer-oriented technologies, %,*

*Source: prepared by authors based on the results of the research conducted.

The largest share of wishes (85%) belongs to the organizational social customer-oriented technologies.

Based on the qualitative data obtained, the wishes related to this group of technologies can be divided into the following categories:

- arrangement of the place of a child’s temporary stay (while the parents will choose the service);
- elimination of inconvenience from a wait in queue in order to communicate with a manager to choose a tour;
- increase in the number of employees; improvement of indoor environment (pleasant color in the interior, lighting);
- expansion of variety of tourism services; arrangement of documentation maintenance (arrangement of insurance, voucher, booking process) (Fig.4).

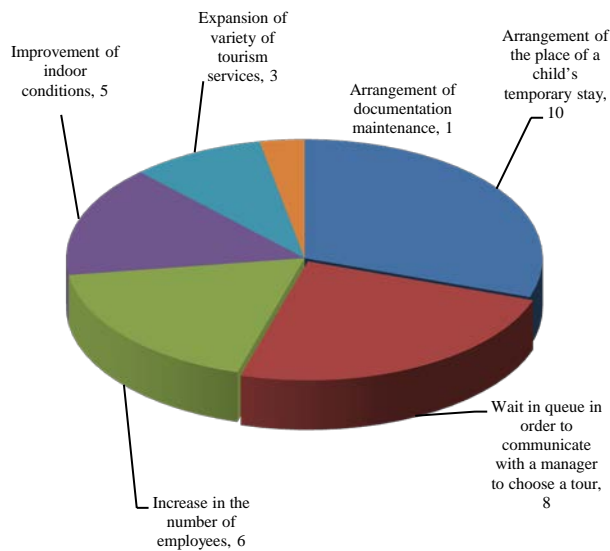


Figure 4. Correlation of the respondent responses in respect of organizational social customer-oriented technologies applied in the network of travel agencies “Sonata”, *

*Source: prepared by authors based on the results of the research conducted.

When analyzing the data given in Figure 4, it should be noted that 10 respondents indicated the need for arrangement of the place of a child’s temporary stay; 8 respondents experience inconvenience from a wait in queue in order to communicate with a manager to choose a tour; 6 respondents expressed a wish to increase the number of employees; 5 respondents recommended indoor improvement environment (pleasant color in the interior, lighting); 3 respondents mentioned wishes for the expansion of variety of tourism services (variety of tours, etc.); and 1 respondent also expressed a wish for the arrangement of

documentation maintenance (arrangement of insurance, voucher, booking process).

In addition to the largest group of organizational social customer-oriented technologies, customers expressed wishes concerning psychological social technologies. Four answers contained proposals for improving customer communications (friendliness, amiability of personnel and honesty), and 5 answers carried proposals for improving the staff competence (knowledge of the range of services, understanding of materials, care).

Two respondents expressed wishes for the opportunity to get which can come from employee’s advices, recommendations, information about alternative tourist services and tours (Fig. 5).

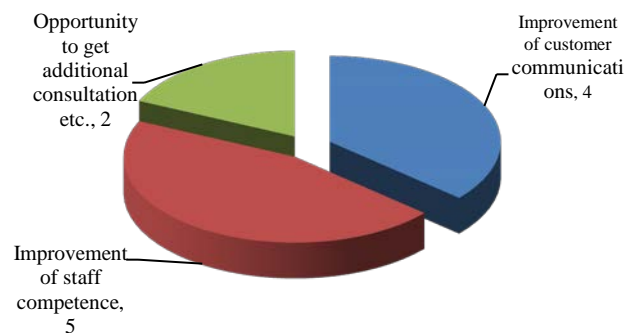


Figure 5. Correlation of the respondent responses in respect of psychological social customer-oriented technologies applied in the network of travel agencies “Sonata”, *

* Source: prepared by authors based on the results of the research conducted.

Proposals related to the economic social customer-oriented technologies turned out to be the smallest in number. One respondent noted an unsatisfactory quality-to-price ratio, 2 respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the use of discount cards, and 2 respondents expressed dissatisfaction with granted discounts and promotional offers (Fig. 6).

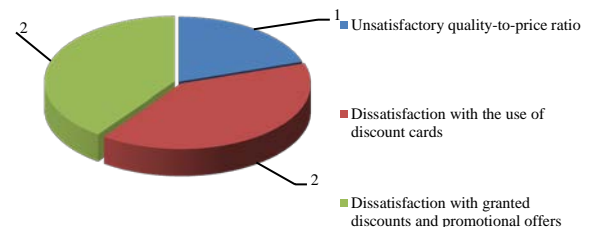


Figure 6. Correlation of the respondent responses in respect of economic social customer-oriented technologies applied in the network of travel agencies “Sonata”, *

*Source: prepared by authors based on the results of the research conducted.

The data analysis of the open ended question confirms the priority of organizational social customer-oriented technologies for the customers of

the network of travel agencies “Sonata” identified in the course of analysis of assessable three types of technologies. In both parts of the study respondents put special emphasis on the organizational social customer-oriented technologies, whereas psychological and economic social technologies were not assessed so highly. This result can be explained by two main factors. First, the psychological type of social customer-oriented technologies is currently widely used in the Ukrainian tourism market. A growing number of tourist enterprises realize the importance of friendly customer communications and create a psychologically pleasant atmosphere.

Today, comparing the time of shortage within tourist services, customers perceive the application of such technologies as a standard of life, and therefore their importance is assessed slightly lower than “Technical” aspects of customer orientation, which are difficult to compensate with a friendliness.

The relatively low assessment of the importance of economic social customer-oriented technologies can be explained by the fact that the network of travel agencies “Sonata” offers various tourism services, and their pricing policy is little different from competitors. Thus, customers deliberately prefer to purchase tours, at the prices similar to competitors’ prices.

4.4. Test of research hypotheses

4.4.1. Hypothesis 1.

Evaluation of implemented customer-oriented technologies by managers and customers of the network of travel agencies “Sonata” is different.

It was suggested that the customers should assess the customer orientation of agencies on a scale from 1 to 3. Thus, 43 (44.8%) respondents assessed a customer orientation by 2 points, and 36 (37.5%) - by 1 point. Only 17 (17.7%) respondents chose the highest score (Fig. 7).

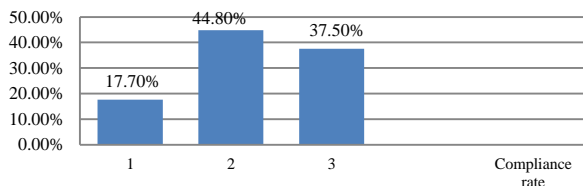


Figure 7. Assessment of customer orientation of the network of travel agencies “Sonata”,*

*Source: prepared by authors based on the results of the research conducted.

At the same time, according to the data from the first part of the questionnaire for managers, the statements reflecting the indices of customer orientation of travel agencies were assessed relatively high.

All managers expressed unanimous consent with several of them, for example, that the company strives to manage customer needs to the greatest possible extent. Based on the data comparison, it is impossible to identify a significant discrepancy in the overall assessment of the company’s customer orientation by its managers and customers.

According to the data from the next part of the questionnaire, the average score was calculated for each social customer-oriented technology based on an assessment of significance by customers. This average score for each item was compared with the responses of managers, who has indicated by check mark the technologies used in the company in the identical list.

Thus, one technology could be assessed by a maximum of 3 points by customers based on significance or selected by a maximum of 5 managers depending on whether it is applied in the agency. The Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient was calculated for each type of social customer-oriented technologies based on the data obtained from responses of customers and managers.

4.4.1.1. Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient for social customer-oriented technologies of psychological type.

We need to determine the ranks for attribute Y and factor X.

X	Y	rank X, dx	rank Y, dy
1	23	1	9
2	13	2	5
3	6	3	1
4	22	4	8
5	11	5	3
6	10	6	2
7	18	7	7
8	33	8	10
9	11	9	3
10	13	10	5

Since there are connected ranks (the same rank number) of the 2nd row in the matrix, their reformation should be performed. The reformation of ranks is performed in the following table.

Numbers in ordered series	Location of factors based on expert estimates	New ranks
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	3.5
4	3	3.5
5	5	5.5
6	5	5.5
7	7	7
8	8	8
9	9	9
10	10	10

Rank matrix

rank X, dx	rank Y, dy	(dx - dy) ²
1	9	64
2	5.5	12.25
3	1	4
4	8	16
5	3.5	2.25
6	2	16
7	7	0
8	10	4
9	3.5	30.25
10	5.5	20.25

Verifying the correctness of matrix compiling based on the calculation of the control sum:

$$\sum x_{ij} = \frac{(1+n)n}{2} = \frac{(1+10)10}{2} = 55$$

If the sums in the matrix columns are equal to each other and control sum, it means that the matrix is compiled correctly. Since there are several identical values among the values of statistical items *x* and *y*, i.e. connected ranks are formed, the Spearman's coefficient is calculated according to the following formula:

$$p = 1 - \frac{\sum 6d^2 + A + B}{n^3 - n}$$

in which

$$A = \frac{1}{12} \sum (A_j^3 - A_j)$$

$$B = \frac{1}{12} \sum (B_k^3 - B_k)$$

j- band numbers in numerical order for attribute *x*;
A_j- number of identical ranks in *j* band for *x*;
k- numbers of bands in numerical order for attribute *y*;
B_k- number of equal ranks in *k* band for *y*.

$$B = [(2^3-2) + (2^3-2)]/12 = 1$$

$$D = A + B = 1$$

$$p = 1 - \frac{6 \cdot 169 + 1}{10^3 - 10} = -0.0253$$

Based on the calculation, it should be noted that the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient for psychological social customer-oriented technologies is equal to 0,0253.

4.4.1.2. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient for social customer-oriented technologies of organizational type

We need to determine the ranks for attribute Y and factor X.

X	Y	rank X, dx	tank Y, dy
11	16	1	3
12	25	2	5
14	9	3	1
15	28	4	7
16	27	5	6
17	9	6	1
18	33	7	9
19	38	8	10
20	16	9	3
21	31	10	8

Since there are connected ranks (the same rank number) of the 2nd row in the matrix, their reformation should be performed.

The reformation of ranks is performed in the following table.

Numbers in ordered series	Location of factors based on expert estimates	New ranks
1	1	1.5
2	1	1.5
3	3	3.5
4	3	3.5
5	5	5
6	6	6
7	7	7
8	8	8
9	9	9
10	10	10

Rank matrix:

rank X, d _x	rank Y, d _y	(d _x - d _y) ²
1	3.5	6.25
2	5	9
3	1.5	2.25
4	7	9
5	6	1
6	1.5	20.25
7	9	4
8	10	4
9	3.5	30.25
10	8	4

Verifying the correctness of matrix compiling based on the calculation of the control sum:

$$\sum x_{ij} = \frac{(1+n)n}{2} = \frac{(1+10)10}{2} = 55$$

If the sums in the matrix columns are equal to each other and control sum, it means that the matrix is compiled correctly. Since there are several identical values among the values of statistical items *x* and *y*, i.e. connected ranks are formed, the Spearman's coefficient is calculated according to the following formula:

$$p = 1 - \frac{\sum 6d^2 + A + B}{n^3 - n}$$

in which

$$A = \frac{1}{12} \sum (A_j^3 - A_j)$$

$$B = \frac{1}{12} \sum (B_k^3 - B_k)$$

j- band numbers in numerical order for attribute *x*;
A_j- number of identical ranks in *j* band for *x*;
k- numbers of bands in numerical order for attribute *y*;
B_k- number of equal ranks in *k* band for *y*.

$$B = [(2^3-2) + (2^3-2)]/12 = 1$$

$$D = A + B = 1$$

$$p = 1 - \frac{6 \cdot 90 + 1}{10^3 - 10} = 0.454$$

Based on the calculation, it should be noted that the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient for organizational social customer-oriented technologies is equal to 0,454.

4.4.1.3. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient for social customer-oriented technologies of economic type

We need to determine the ranks for attribute Y and factor X.

X	Y	rank X, d _x	rank Y, d _y
22	42	1	9
23	16	2	2
24	28	3	5
25	44	4	10
26	28	5	5
27	14	6	1
28	41	7	8
29	33	8	7
30	18	9	3
31	27	10	4

Since there are connected ranks (the same rank number) of the 2nd row in the matrix, their reformation should be performed. The reformation of ranks is performed in the following table.

Numbers in ordered series	Location of factors based on expert estimates	New ranks
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5.5
6	5	5.5
7	7	7
8	8	8
9	9	9
10	10	10

Rank matrix:

rank X, d _x	rank Y, d _y	(d _x - d _y) ²
1	9	64
2	2	0
3	5.5	6.25
4	10	36
5	5.5	0.25
6	1	25
7	8	1
8	7	1
9	3	36
10	4	36

Verifying the correctness of matrix compiling based on the calculation of the control sum:

$$\sum x_{ij} = \frac{(1+n)n}{2} = \frac{(1+10)10}{2} = 55$$

If the sums in the matrix columns are equal to each other and control sum, it means that the matrix is compiled correctly.

Since there are several identical values among the values of statistical items *x* and *y*, i.e. connected ranks are formed, the Spearman's coefficient is calculated according to the following formula:

$$p = 1 - \frac{\sum 6d^2 + A + B}{n^3 - n}$$

in which

$$A = \frac{1}{12} \sum (A_j^3 - A_j)$$

$$B = \frac{1}{12} \sum (B_k^3 - B_k)$$

j- band numbers in numerical order for attribute *x*;

A_j- number of identical ranks in *j* band for *x*;

k- numbers of bands in numerical order for attribute *y*;

B_k- number of equal ranks in *k* band for *y*.

$$B = [(2^3 - 2)]/12 = 0.5$$

$$D = A + B = 0.5$$

$$p = 1 - \frac{6 \cdot 205.5 + 0.5}{10^3 - 10} = -0.246$$

Based on the calculation, it should be noted that the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient for social economic customer-oriented technologies is equal to 0,246.

Results from the analysis of the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient for three types of social customer-oriented technologies provide evidence of the high degree of compliance between the assessment of the significance of technology types by customers and a degree of implementation in agencies by managers. The maximum degree of consistency of assessment is inherent to economic social customer-oriented technologies, and that would mean that the company realizes their importance. The smallest degree of consistency is inherent to organizational social customer-oriented technologies, which means that technologies assessed by customers as significant are underused by the company. The situation with psychological social customer-oriented technologies is not much better.

A hypothesis for discrepancies between the estimates of social customer-oriented technologies implemented by the company among its managers and customers was partially confirmed, since there is a low degree of consistency of assessment for two of three types of social customer-oriented technologies. At the same time, a completely different type of situation occurs in respect of economic social customer-oriented technologies. Besides, the overall assessment of the company's level of customer orientation by its managers is little different from the customers' assessment, which does not allow to clearly confirm a hypothesis.

4.4.2. Hypothesis 2.

Customer-oriented technologies applied by the network of travel agencies "Sonata" differ from those that customers want to see.

Despite the high degree of consistency of assessment of the group in which economic social customer-oriented technologies are made by customers and managers, the most radical differences in the assessment of each individual technology are observed in this group. In the list of economic social customer-oriented technologies, 4 of 8 technologies were not implemented in the company at all. The average assessment of the implementation of a group of economic social customer-oriented technologies among managers was the lowest of all.

Customers consider that the honesty of employees, when communicating with a customer, even if this may lead to a refusal of purchase, is the most important social customer-oriented technology. All five respondents noted that this technology is being implemented in their agencies. The second and third technologies, in order of importance, also come under psychological type: polite apologies of the staff if it is impossible to satisfy the request, as well as equal friendliness of the staff in communication, regardless of the purchasing act. Expansion of variety of tourism services was the most important technology among organizational social technologies. This item has been selected by all managers since it is being fully implemented.

Promotional offers were the most important for customers among economic technologies, and managers also unanimously chose this technology since it is being implemented by their agencies. To state clearly the most important individual social technologies are perceived and implemented by the company.

Nevertheless, the hypothesis about the discrepancy between actually-used social customer-oriented technologies and those preferred by the customers shall be considered in order to be confirmed. Acquired data attest to the fact that the company ignores a significant part of economic social customer-oriented technologies, with the greatest attention being paid to psychological ones. This may be due to attempt to compensate for the lack of economic benefits through the use of psychological techniques.

Organizational social customer-oriented technologies are also underestimated, although the difference in their assessment by managers and customers is not as high as in the case of economic technologies.

5. Conclusions

Social customer-oriented technologies shall be constantly improved. Basic, primitive level of these technologies includes such practices as a smile, greeting, farewell, ethical conduct and politeness when communicating with customers. Implementation of the principles of mutual interaction is at the individual level, and has no relevance to the company product. The next level of customer orientation is satisfaction of obvious, expressed customer needs. It does not always work through the efforts of a specific employee, as it may require additional technical capabilities and product change, as well as higher staff motivation.

It is therefore necessary to spark the interest in the entire organization and involve it in the application of social customer-oriented technologies. The highest level of customer orientation is defined as a satisfaction of not disclosed customer needs, as well as needs forecasting and satisfaction of future needs.

Based on the results of the research conducted, we have developed recommendations for the application of social customer-oriented technologies that will promote the conciliation of the interests of business and consumers, resulting in building of trust and reduction of social tension.

Thus, the Ukrainian tourist enterprises should move from manipulative application of the customer-oriented approach to the most complete consideration and satisfaction of the needs of each individual person and social groups accommodating their interests. This approach will give the opportunity to minimize negative social effects, as well as maintain the level of profits, because customers are pleased to purchase goods and services created to solve their problems and satisfy their needs.

However attempts to compensate the unawareness of real needs with psychological techniques can neither satisfy public needs, nor provide a positive image and sustained profit over the long term.

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