Among the Stars: A Text-Based Approach to Analyzing Online Customer Experience

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Executive Summary

Delivering a great customer experience (CX) has become a central priority for firms, particularly in digital markets. Customers increasingly interact with companies through digital touchpoints such as websites, apps, or voice-based services and publicly share their experiences in online reviews. These reviews constitute a rich and continuously available source of customer feedback. At the same time, both researchers and practitioners lack scalable and context-sensitive tools to systematically capture CX in digital environments, especially in German-speaking contexts.

Against this backdrop, the present study develops a text-based measurement to capture online CX (O-CX) from German-language online reviews. Based on a literature review, O-CX is conceptualized as a formative, multidimensional construct comprising four key dimensions: affective, cognitive, sensorial, and social customer responses. In contrast to physical contexts, the literature review shows that the behavioral dimension plays a limited role online and is therefore excluded from the O-CX conceptualization.

Methodologically, the study relies on a dictionary-based text analysis approach, which offers high transparency, interpretability, and scalability. Existing German-language dictionaries are systematically reviewed and extended to comprehensively cover the dimensions of O-CX. In particular, new word lists are developed to capture social communication and sensory experiences that are not fully represented by existing tools. The dictionary development follows established procedures and is validated through multiple steps, including expert evaluations and assessments of the approach's generalizability.

The empirical analysis draws on more than 68,000 online reviews of over 4,500 Amazon Alexa Skills. The results show that all four O-CX dimensions significantly predict customer satisfaction. Affective and sensorial dimensions are positively associated with satisfaction, whereas strongly cognitive language leads to lower satisfaction, suggesting that functional evaluations often emerge when customers perceive shortcomings. Moreover, a moderated analysis reveals that the importance of individual CX dimensions varies across contexts, such as entertainment, education, and smart home applications.

For managers, the study offers clear and actionable implications. The developed dictionary allows firms to analyze large volumes of customer feedback in real time and across multiple CX dimensions. Managers can identify which dimensions are most influential in specific digital contexts and prioritize improvement initiatives accordingly. For example, emotional responses may be particularly important in entertainment services, whereas reducing cognitive processing and improving usability may be critical in functional digital services. By focusing on the German language, the study addresses an important gap for firms operating in German-speaking markets, where validated text-based CX measurement tools have been largely absent. Overall, the study provides a practical approach to managing CX and contributes both theoretical and managerial insights for competing effectively in digital environments.