

Chapter 16

Customer Experience Management System at a University's Student Support Services: An Organizational Ambidexterity Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The study reported in this chapter evaluates how the Customer Experience Management System (CEMS) used by a University's Student Support Services (StuSS) responds to the objectives of capturing, storing, extracting, interpreting, distributing, using and reporting customer experience information for creating organisational value. Theoretically, the study draws on the concept of organizational ambidexterity. Concerning the research design, the study was undertaken using qualitative methods of data collection and interpretivist methods of data analysis. It has been inductively discovered that the availability of customer experience information obtained through the CEMS allows StuSS to respond effectively to different student needs. Organizationally, there is clarity concerning the ownership and management of customer relationships. Individual student data is collected, coordinated and distributed across lines of business. Because of this, StuSS is able to consistently identify customers across touch points and channels. Further suggestions are advanced to improve StuSS's analytical investigation capability to derive descriptive and predictive customer information, through applying data mining models to the information that is currently collected.

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INTRODUCTION

In the context of Higher Education (HE), the quality of students' experience can be considered a key component in the total quality management process (Douglas, McClelland, & Davis, 2008; Kanji, Malek, & Tambi, 1999; Tsinidou, Gerogiannis, & Fitsilis, 2010; Zineldin, Akdag, & Vasicheva, 2011), and consequently a fertile ground for the study of customer experience management systems (CEMS).

The emergent adoption and use of information systems to improve the student-institution relationship is expected to facilitate a more student-centric focus, improve customer data and process management, increase student loyalty, and contribute to students' overall satisfaction with their institution's programs and services (Seeman, & O'Hara, 2006; Hilbert, Schönbrunn, & Schmode, 2007; Daradoumis, Rodriguez-Ardura, Faulin, Juan, Xhafa, & Martinez-Lopez, 2010).

It is not open to debate that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) strive to offer the best possible learning experience to their students. There is also a growing stream of literature embracing the student-customer model (Browne, Kaldenberg, Browne, & Brown, 1998; Munteanu, Ceobanu, Bobalca, & Anton, 2010; Wright, 2008), and indeed arguing that a customer focus in HE "provides a framework for ensuring student satisfaction by embedding quality into the learning process through quality instruction, quality assessment, and greater attention to students' needs" (Mark, 2013, p. 8). Consequently, HEIs are continuously seeking ways to improve the quality of the total learning experience by investigating approaches to quality systems (Rowley, 1996). Being aligned with this objective, the study reported in this chapter aims to evaluate the CEMS used by the Student Support Services (StuSS) at a UK-based HEI, serving a population of over 25,000 students.

The mission of StuSS is to help students with enquiries that pertain to their records (student status documentation, certifying letters, atten-

dance monitoring, exam services, summary of results and transcripts of qualification), and to point students to the most relevant academic and well-being information sources and services. Their CEMS is based on a customer experience survey that is sent to students personally visiting or contacting StuSS online. The survey collects customer experience information through basic indicators such as: (1) initial categorisation of feedback information (compliment, comment, suggestion, complaint, other); (2) specification of service requested; (3) degree of service satisfaction; (4) open elicitation of what StuSS has done well; (5) open elicitation of what StuSS can improve; and (6) open elicitation of what would the user tell a friend about StuSS. Data collected from the survey is stored at an enquiry recording system – a web-based application that provides StuSS with information about not only how many users the service that served but also who they were and which enquiries they have made.

The wider objective of the chapter is to understand how this system responds to the objectives of capturing, storing, extracting, interpreting, distributing, using and reporting customer experience information for creating organisational value, understood here as the ability to simultaneously satisfy existing customers while using competitive pressure to innovate (Schreuders, & Legesse, 2012). This duality is at the core of organisational ambidexterity, or in other words "the ability to simultaneously pursue both incremental and discontinuous innovation and change" (Tushman, & O'Reilly, 1996). In that sense, it becomes necessary to understand the ways in which CEMS is currently used as a pathway to building organisational ambidexterity at StuSS.

The remainder of the chapter develops as follows. The "Background" section provides a literature review on the concepts of "customer experience management", "organizational ambidexterity", and "information systems evaluation". An understanding of these intersecting frameworks is necessary before delving into the empirical stage

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