

# The quest for customer delight in times of digitalization: measurement, antecedents, and effects

## INTRODUCTION

Digitalization becomes increasingly important in almost every domain of our lives. This development is an ongoing trend for at least two decades (Coreynen et al., 2017). In that time, major changes of many business models could be observed. Today, companies like Google, Netflix, Amazon, or Tesla belong to the most valuable firms. They have in common that they create value for their customers through digital business models. As a consequence, entire industries are undergoing severe transition processes, potentially letting formerly dominant companies behind. This development can be interpreted as being one form of creative destruction as postulated by Schumpeter and Capitalism (1942). Thus, large established companies have to adjust their business models to the new market situation or they will disappear sooner or later.

One of these competitive reactions in times of omnipresent digitalization, is the quest for customer delight. Only recently, many companies have defined customer delight as one of their major strategic goals (Guchait et al., 2014). Accordingly, there is a paradigm shift from customer satisfaction towards delight (Finn, 2012). However, this implicitly leads to numerous assumptions concerning customer delight. One of these assumptions is that delighted customers lead to beneficial effects for the focal organization. Another assumption – may it be implicit or not – is that customer satisfaction and customer delight are two distinct constructs (Finn, 2005, Finn, 2012, Meyer et al., 2017). Further, given the shift from satisfaction towards delight, it could be assumed that delight leads to even more favorable results under certain surrounding circumstances, such as increasingly digitalized business models. In this context, the study by Oliver et al. (1997) is often considered as being the point of departure for research on customer delight. However, even after more than 20 years of research on customer delight, in a recently published literature review by Barnes and Krallman (2019), it is argued that a clear understanding of the topic is still lacking. In particular from a practitioners perspective it remains somewhat unclear how to manage customer delight. Those companies that declare customer delight as their strategic goal might not always be fully aware of how to create delight, how to measure it and how to value its outcomes (Le Bon and Hughes, 2009). Consequently, this paper aims at clarifying the *antecedents*, the expected *effects*, and the *measurement methods* of customer delight.

In order to answer the central questions of this study, an explorative and qualitative research approach has been chosen. In more detail, a world café has been conducted at a large European automotive Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) that has just recently shifted its strategic goal from customer satisfaction towards customer delight. 16 experts participated in various discussion rounds and subsequently rated the ideas developed.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The concept of customer satisfaction is broadly discussed within marketing literature for more than five decades (see e.g. Churchill and Surprenant, 1982, Cardozo, 1965). Ever since, it has been one of the core topics of marketing research and practice. Customer satisfaction “(...) is defined as the result of a cognitive and affective evaluation, where some comparison standard is compared to the actually perceived performance” (Homburg and Giering, 2001, Churchill and Surprenant, 1982). The underlying rationale is that satisfied customers ultimately lead to benefits such as increased profitability for the selling organization (Flint et al., 2011, Lussier and Hartmann, 2017). However, as proposed by Luo and Homburg (2007), the set of expected outcomes of customer satisfaction can be clustered into different categories such as customer-

related, overall performance-related, employee-related, and efficiency-related. These categories further can be divided into sub-categories, e.g. customer loyalty, repurchase intentions, or the willingness to pay.

In general, customer satisfaction is a well-researched concept, including definitions, measurement, scales, antecedents, and outcomes. Hence, customer satisfaction remained one of the most popular concepts in marketing until the 1990s. Then, scholars started to elaborate on the concept of customer delight, which initially was argued as being an extreme form of satisfaction (Barnes and Krallman, 2019, Zeithaml et al., 1993). The more mature research became, the more dominant became the viewpoint that delight is a distinct construct. In this context, the study by Oliver et al. (1997) is often seen as point of departure for today's understanding of customer delight. In their seminal paper, the authors link previous research on customer satisfaction with emotion theories (Oliver, 1980, Oliver et al., 1997). Accordingly, delight is composed of the positive emotions joy and surprise (Barnes and Krallman, 2019, Herman, 2005, Oliver et al., 1997, Plutchik, 1980). Today most researchers agree that delight is a “(...) *profoundly positive emotional state generally resulting from having one's expectations exceeded to a surprising degree*” (Barnes and Krallman, 2019).

Over the course of time, numerous studies have researched the differences between the constructs delight and satisfaction (see e.g. Barnes et al., 2011, Herman, 2005, Finn, 2005, Finn, 2012, Souca, 2014). The vast amount of these studies agrees that the key difference between both constructs is that for achieving satisfaction customer's expectations have to be met, whereas delight additionally requires positive emotions beyond customer expectations. In order to demonstrate that delight and satisfaction are indeed distinct constructs, scholars have researched whether their effects differ. Hence, there are research settings, in which satisfaction and delight constructs were tested simultaneously (see e.g. Ali et al., 2018, Collier et al., 2018, Finn, 2005, Finn, 2012, Ma et al., 2017). Although the reported results differ across the research settings, in many cases both constructs were statistically significant. Finn (2005), for instance, finds that satisfaction has a stronger positive impact on repurchase intentions than delight in the context of a retail website. Opposed to these findings, Ma et al. (2017) find that delighted customers have a higher likelihood to visit a theme park again, as compared to satisfied customers. However, for loyalty, most studies come to the conclusion that satisfaction leads to higher customer loyalty than delight (Kim et al., 2015, Loureiro, 2010, Ahrholdt et al., 2017). The ambivalent understanding of the clear delineation of delight and satisfaction might require to take into account also the wider context of the respective research settings. In this vein, Chitturi et al. (2008) as well as Barnes and Krallman (2019) highlight the importance of distinguishing between utilitarian and hedonic products. Hedonic products, i.e. products “(...) *with the seeking of pleasure and emotions as the major motivation for their consumption*” (Palazon and Delgado-Ballester, 2013), might be considerably different from utilitarian (i.e. useful and functional) products. Also different measurement methods are likely to limit the comparability across studies. Even though the scale developed by Finn (2005) received much attention and is widely adopted, several authors have customized it (Barnes and Krallman, 2019, Torres and Ronzoni, 2018).

Another topic that is intensively debated in the literature are the antecedents of customer delight. While it is implicitly agreed upon that customer delight can lead to beneficial outcomes, it remains unclear how customer delight can be created. Some authors focused their research on joy and surprise as antecedents for customer delight, others apply more sophisticated ideas (e.g. Dey et al., 2017). In a recent literature review on customer delight, antecedents of customer delight were identified that belong to three main groups: employee factors, customer factors, and contextual factors (Barnes and Krallman, 2019). Still, there is no dominant view on the concrete drivers of customer delight.

## RESEARCH GAP

Over the last decades, the scientific interest in customer delight has grown remarkably. In contrast, the concept of customer satisfaction has been challenged. Even though customer satisfaction has demonstrated its robustness over decades, it can be observed that academia and companies increasingly focus on customer delight (Barnes and Krallman, 2019, Luo and Homburg, 2007, Torres and Kline, 2006). Many large firms declare customer delight as one of their major strategic goals (Guchait et al., 2014). It seems that corporations are one step ahead of scholars that still were not able to create a clear image of customer delight. Given the omnipresent reliance on customer delight as panacea to improve corporate performance, it seems to be reasonable that researchers are getting more interested in this topic.

The literature review by Barnes and Krallman (2019) revealed that there are areas that still deserve scientific attention. Main gaps have been identified in the measurement of customer delight, its antecedents, and its outcomes (Barnes et al., 2010, Herman, 2005, Kumar et al., 2001, Kwong and Yau, 2002, Ma et al., 2013). Accordingly, for managers of companies that declare customer delight as their main strategic goal, there is no widely accepted framework that can be relied on. Put in another way, from a practitioner's perspective it remains somewhat challenging to operationalize strategic goals – such as delighted customers – without having relevant guidance (Herman, 2005). Usually, it is expected that strategic goals and achievements are reviewed periodically. However, if there is no clear understanding what is actually meant by customer delight and how it can be measured, it becomes impossible to objectively assess the effectiveness of managers and strategies. Similarly, decision makers also need to know how they can create delight and what will be the expected benefits (Barnes and Krallman, 2019, Torres and Kline, 2006). Especially in times of digitalization, customer journeys are changing dramatically. Often, along the process of service provision, there are only few contact points with human interaction between the customer and the selling organization (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). On the one hand, this development seems to be conducive to a company's efficiency, on the other hand, instant customer feedback becomes rare.

The motivation for the study at hand, thus, is driven by the call for further research from recent marketing literature as well as the need to provide a clearer picture of customer delight for practitioners.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a qualitative research approach. In order to achieve relevant and rigorous results, data have been collected during a world café session at a large European automotive OEM. As customer delight is a research topic that recently gained increased attention, an explorative research setting has been chosen, in order to be open enough for unexpected answers from the expert panel (Corbin and Strauss, 2014, Farhana, 2014, Goldberg and Schiele, 2018). This procedure is in line with numerous publications in management literature.

The discussants were experts that belonged to four different domains such as marketing, research and development, sales, and academia. In total, 16 persons participated in the world café session. The basic idea of this method is to interview experts from different fields at the same time in order to facilitate the mutual exchange of distinctive perspectives, potentially leading to more robust results (Fouché and Light, 2010, Schiele et al., 2011). For the research at hand, there were discussions taking place at four tables. At each table a specific question was discussed under the supervision of a dedicated moderator. In detail, the following questions have been part of the expert discussions in order to get a clearer picture of the current understanding of customer delight.

- 1) *How can customer delight be measured?*
- 2) *What are potential antecedents of customer delight for physical products?*

- 3) *What are specific antecedents of customer delight in the context of digital services?*
- 4) *What are the expected effects of customer delight?*

Over the course of the day, each participant was asked to join every discussion table. The discussions took place in parallel in four consecutive rounds. The moderators made notes on a flipchart, that were visible for every participant. By doing so, it was ensured that the discussants had the opportunity to intervene if they felt misunderstood.

Except for the first round, the moderators summarized the results of the previous round, making sure the ideas did not have to be developed from the scratch. Instead, new ideas could emerge in every round. After the last round was finished, all 16 participants were invited to a plenary session, during which the four moderators presented the ideas that emerged on the tables under their supervision. Subsequently, each participant obtained twenty stickers (five for each discussion round). The experts were then asked to assign their stickers to those ideas that appeared most relevant to them.

Accordingly, after each participant had made his judgement, the data collection was finished. As a next step, the data have been clustered and ranked to identify the ideas that received most attention from the expert panel. For each discussion topic, 80 points in total were assigned by the participants. For a descriptive data analysis, the five most relevant ideas for each discussion topic were identified. In the tables 1-4 these ideas are presented together with the respective ratings.

## FINDINGS

The results of this study mainly cover the areas of *measurement*, *antecedents*, and *effects* of customer delight. From the expert discussions, various ideas emerged. The five most relevant ideas per topic are presented in the tables 1-4.

*Measurement (see Table 1):* 21% of the discussants agree with the idea to analyze the feedback provided by the customer (e.g. complaints or product reviews). Another 19% recommend to focus on complex big data analyses, i.e. cross-sectional analyses of all customer related data available to the focal company (e.g. social milieu, frequency and type of interactions, etc.). 16% of the experts suggest to focus on the customer behavior in general, which includes any observable action from the decision making process until the end of usage of a product. Also the idea to focus predominantly on the customer's buying behavior received 13% of the total votes. Finally, an assessment of word of mouth recommendations (e.g. net promoter score) obtained 5% of relative agreement.

<b>Idea</b>	<b>relative agreement</b>	<b>total votes</b>
1. Analysis of customer feedback	21%	17
2. Big data analysis	19%	15
3. Analysis of customer behavior	16%	13
4. Analysis of buying behavior	13%	10
5. Recommendations (word of mouth)	5%	4
<b>total (out of n=80)</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>59</b>

Table 1: Top 5 rated ideas on how to measure customer delight

*Antecedents (for physical products, see Table 2):* Most participants (18%) identified functionality as the most relevant antecedent for customer delight in the context of physical products. 13% of the attendees rated the perceived comfort of the product as an antecedent for delighted customers. Personalization/customization of a product was seen as prerequisite of

delight by 11% of the experts. 9% voted for the product’s design and 6% for its sustainability as antecedents for delighted customers.

<b>Idea</b>	<b>relative agreement</b>	<b>total votes</b>
1. Functionality	18%	14
2. Comfort	13%	10
3. Personalization	11%	9
4. Design	9%	7
5. Sustainability	6%	5
<b>total (out of n=80)</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>45</b>

Table 2: Top 5 rated ideas of antecedents of customer delight for physical products

*Antecedents (for digital services, see Table 3):* The ability of a digital service to positively surprise the customer (29% of agreement) and its performance (29% of agreement) received the highest expert ratings. Moreover, innovativeness was identified by 17% of the discussants as being an antecedent for delight in the context of digital services. The set of identified antecedents is completed with reliability of the service (16% of agreement) and usability (9% of agreement).

<b>Idea</b>	<b>relative agreement</b>	<b>total votes</b>
1. Surprise	29%	22
2. Performance	29%	22
3. Reliability	17%	13
4. Innovativeness	16%	12
5. Usability	9%	7
<b>total (out of n=80)</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>76</b>

Table 3: Top 5 rated ideas of antecedents of customer delight for digital services

*Effects (see Table 4):* An increased willingness to pay received the highest rating from the panel (16%). Also greater customer loyalty is an expected effect of delighted customers (14%). Repurchase intent (13%) and an increased turnover (9%) were further identified as potential consequences of delight. Finally, 9% of the participants agreed with the idea that delighted customers contribute to the focal company’s brand image.

<b>Idea</b>	<b>relative agreement</b>	<b>total votes</b>
1. Willingness to pay	16%	13
2. Loyalty	14%	11
3. Repurchase intent	13%	10
4. Increased turnover	9%	7
5. Improved brand image	9%	7
<b>total (out of n=80)</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>48</b>

Table 4: Top 5 rated ideas of expected effects of customer delight

## **DISCUSSION**

In the last years, a paradigm shift from customer satisfaction towards customer delight could be observed (Barnes et al., 2010, Finn, 2005, Torres and Kline, 2006). In literature as well in

corporate strategies and mission statements, customer delight receives increased interest (Barnes and Krallman, 2019, Guchait et al., 2014, Torres and Ronzoni, 2018). Accordingly, the aim of this explorative study is to clarify the *antecedents*, the *effects*, and the *measurement* methods of customer delight.

In recent publications, it is highlighted that delight and satisfaction are distinct constructs (Barnes et al., 2010, Barnes and Krallman, 2019, Ma et al., 2017). Whereas satisfaction is an essential construct in industrial marketing literature for more than five decades, customer delight is a rather new research theme. As a growing number of companies aims at delighted customers, instead of just satisfied ones, additional research was needed. Consequently, scholars investigated whether delight is actually a distinct construct or only an extreme form of satisfaction (Oliver et al., 1997, Zeithaml et al., 1993). Despite a broad range of partially contradicting results of these studies, most scholars agree that both constructs are indeed distinctive (Barnes and Krallman, 2019). However, as stated earlier in this paper, the paradigm shift from satisfaction towards delight is associated by various (implicit) assumptions. Besides the assumption that delight and satisfaction are distinct constructs, it is also implicitly assumed that delight and satisfaction have different effects for the focal organization (Finn, 2005). The growing interest in delight might also be triggered by the trend towards digitalization that is challenging established business models (Coreynen et al., 2017, Torres and Ronzoni, 2018).

Hence the authors were specifically interested in revealing the understanding of customer delight not only from an academic perspective but also from a managerial one. To do so, an expert panel has been invited to participate in a world café session in customer delight (Fouché and Light, 2010, Schiele et al., 2011). The experts belonged to four different domains: academia, marketing, research, and development. In four consecutive discussion rounds, the participants were asked to develop ideas on measurement methods, antecedents and expected effects of customer delight. The set of ideas that emerged, was then rated during a subsequent panel session by the experts. In the previous section, the top five ideas for each category have been presented.

In particular concerning the measurement of customer delight, considerable deviations from the prevalent measurement methods are uncovered. For the measurement, the discussants suggested to distinguish between direct and indirect measurement approaches. Direct measurement of customer delight is associated with various forms of customer surveys (see e.g. Finn, 2005, Oliver et al., 1997, Kim, 2011). This is in line with current research settings in many marketing studies. In contrast, indirect measurement methods comprise observations of customer behavior (Dodd Ian Clarke Christopher and Kirkup Malcolm, 1998). Even though direct and indirect measurement methods were part of the discussions, only indirect approaches received the highest ratings from the expert panel. This is somewhat surprising as the participants of the world café session did apparently not support the idea of using surveys in order to measure customer delight. Despite the fact that the possibility to conduct surveys was discussed, there were only very few experts that argued in favor of this measurement method. This is a clear mismatch between marketing literature and current industry practices. One expert stated: *“It does not really make sense to ask a customer whether he is delighted to not. When it comes to delight, actions are more meaningful than words”*. Accordingly, it is argued that for the measurement of delight, it is reasonable to assume that practitioners are prospectively relying on observations and different kinds of analyses of customer behavior. In this context, the expert panel pointed into the direction of data driven analytics, such as recommendation rates, analyses of customer feedback, big data analyses, and analyses of the buying behavior.

While reviewing marketing literature on antecedents of customer delight, some scholars argued that the antecedents could to some extent depend on the nature of the product (Barnes and Krallman, 2019). For instance, it is stated that it could be distinguished between hedonic and

utilitarian products (Chitturi et al., 2008, Palazon and Delgado-Ballester, 2013, Burns and Evans, 2000). Given the ongoing trend towards digitalization and the growing importance of the service industry, the study at hand separately discussed the antecedents of customer delight for physical products as well as for digital services. In general, it was anticipated that exceeding the customer's expectations in connection with emotions like joy and surprise can create customer delight (Ludwig et al., 2017, Oliver et al., 1997, Plutchik, 1980, Zeithaml et al., 1993). For physical products, the expert panel identified functionality as the main prerequisite for being delighted. This is in line with previous research, as the judgement of functionality is associated with a-priori expectations of the customer (Schneider and Bowen, 1999). Besides functionality, the discussants highlighted comfort, personalization, design, and sustainability as main drivers of customer delight for physical products. All these ideas are directly related to the product characteristics. Surprisingly, emotions were not among the top five delight triggers. Rather, the results indicate that for physical products, the product characteristics and the associated expectations can be seen as main antecedents for delight. In contrast, for digital services, the participants identified surprise, performance, innovativeness, reliability, and usability as key drivers of delighted customers. Whereas performance, reliability, and usability are rather associated with expectations on product (or service) characteristics, surprise and innovativeness are somewhat detached from explicit expectations. In particular, surprise – which received the highest ratings – is in line with prior research on customer delight. Apparently for digital services, an emotional involvement seems to be more relevant than for physical products.

Regarding the expected effects of delighted customers, literature suggests that it could be distinguished between different groups of affected stakeholders. Accordingly, scholars recommend to take into consideration the effects of customer delight on the focal company, the company's employees, and the customer (e.g. Barnes and Krallman, 2019, Luo and Homburg, 2007). The expert panel rated the customer's willingness to pay, loyalty, repurchase intentions, increased turnover, and improved brand image as most meaningful outcomes of customer delight. Hence, employee related outcomes were entirely neglected by the world café participants. Only one discussant mentioned that also the company's employees might benefit from delighted customers but this idea did not receive votes from the other experts. However, the company-related and customer-related expected effects are broadly in line with those effects that are presented in marketing literature (Luo and Homburg, 2007). In this context, the results of previous research can be confirmed. Further, the results of the world café session support the idea that customer delight is positively related to the financial performance of the focal organization (see e.g. Herman, 2005, Schneider and Bowen, 1999, Torres and Ronzoni, 2018). In general, the expert panel supported the idea that delighted customers – especially because of their increased willingness to pay, loyalty and repurchase intentions – are for the company more valuable than customers that are just satisfied. One expert from the development area said: *“Radical product innovations are costly and risky but the market forces us to offer them. Delighted and loyal customers help us with their increased willingness to pay to master these challenges, particularly in the context of digital transformation”*. This statement points into the direction that companies in changing markets rather focus on delighted customers in order to be able to deal with risks that are associated with uncertain market conditions.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE**

From a scientific perspective, the study's results further support the notion that satisfaction and delight are indeed distinct constructs (Finn, 2005, Finn, 2012, Meyer et al., 2017). Accordingly, results of previous publications are supported. This is particularly true for the expected outcomes of customer delight. Moreover, the study at hand uncovers potential new research areas that deserve more attention. As many study's in industrial marketing literature rely on

customer surveys (Finn, 2005, Kim, 2011, Oliver et al., 1997), the results of this study suggest that for customer delight, customer observations might harvest more relevant results. Following the idea that delight is closely related to emotions, it might be questionable whether these emotions can be appropriately reflected in surveys that might be conducted with a considerable time lack to the situation under investigation. Additionally, the findings highlight that in future research settings the nature of the products should be taken into consideration. While previous publications predominantly distinguish between hedonic and utilitarian products (Chitturi et al., 2008, Palazon and Delgado-Ballester, 2013), the authors recommend to differentiate between physical products and digital services. Especially for digital services, the interviewees highlighted that not only the functionality and quality of the product but also its ability to trigger emotions is a critical antecedent of customer delight.

Also from a managerial perspective, the study at hand provides several relevant implications. Given the fact that in today's times customer delight is a strategic goal of many companies, it should be debated how to measure delight (Guchait et al., 2014, Torres and Ronzoni, 2018). Only if the levels of customer delight can be assessed correctly, a realistic judgement can be made on whether the strategic goals of the company are achieved or not (Ulaga and Chacour, 2001, Vorhies and Morgan, 2003). The input from the expert panel indicates that various forms of observations and diverse data analyses might lead to more accurate results than just relying on surveys. In this context, one participant said: *"You can only manage what you measure"*. When companies decide to declare customer delight as a strategic goal, they should also deliberately decide on suitable management practices that take into consideration the antecedents of customer delight. Another relevant finding for practitioners relates to the missing overlap between antecedents for physical products and digital services. As a consequence managers should pay attention to the question whether it is necessary to adopt different strategies to delight customers in physical in contrast to digital contexts. Managers should not just focus on customer delight because it is currently in fashion but because it matches the nature of their products and the respective market situation (Schneider and Bowen, 1999). Especially when companies are undergoing severe transformation processes, they might notably benefit from having delighted customers with above average levels of loyalty and willingness to pay (Winkelhake et al., 2018).

### **LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The study at hand was conducted with respect to broadly accepted scientific and ethical standards. Nevertheless, it has to be acknowledged that the research setting is subject to some limitations. The first limitation is that the data collection was made at only one large automotive OEM in Germany. This procedure might somewhat limit the generalizability of the results. However, the expert panel consisted not only of employees of the case company but also of external participants, such as highly renowned marketing scholars. Moreover, the automotive industry is a very popular research environment as it is of major interest for the world economy (Horn et al., 2014, Schiele et al., 2011, Townsend and Calantone, 2014). Further, the automotive industry is facing manifold changes such as the transformation from traditional carmakers towards digitalized providers of mobility (Winkelhake et al., 2018).

Another limitation is the relatively small number of participants. Still, this is an explorative research setting aiming at deeper insights on the topic of customer delight. The world café method is well suited for research themes that did not yet reach high maturity levels. The advantage of this approach is that the participants are not forced to select between predefined answers (as done in surveys) but they are free to provide completely individual ideas (Corbin and Strauss, 2014, Fouché and Light, 2010, Schiele et al., 2011). Those ideas can then be further explained and discussed with other experts. Due to the panel discussion and the

subsequent rating of the developed ideas, only the most relevant arguments receive the highest attention.

Future research settings could be used to replicate the findings of this study. Potential research topics in the domain of customer delight could be advanced measurement methods. The use of secondary data, for instance, might represent a promising opportunity to test hypotheses in large samples. Furthermore, additional research on the relevant product characteristics is needed. The results of this study point into the direction that not only a distinction between hedonic and utilitarian products is useful. There might be more dimensions potentially influencing the appropriateness of customer delight as strategic goal.

## CONCLUSION

Customer delight received increased scientific and managerial interest in recent years. In particular, large organizations rely on customer delight as strategic goal. However, research on customer delight still needs further attention. Managers that are striving for delighted customers are asking for suitable methods to measure and to create customer delight. Whereas in the past many studies have relied on customer surveys, new measurement approaches could be used. Especially in times of digitalization diverse potential data sources are available. Concerning the question of how to create delight, the findings suggest that for traditional physical products other criteria might be relevant than for digital services. Among the most relevant drivers of customer delight for physical products are functionality, comfort, and personalization. In contrast, for digital services, the expert panel identified surprise, performance, and innovativeness as key prerequisites. Accordingly, for traditional products, the product characteristics seem to be of high importance, whereas for digital services also emotional components are relevant. The expected outcomes of delighted customers are mainly related to an improved financial performance of the focal company due to increased willingness to pay, loyalty, repurchase intentions, and brand image.

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