



FACTORS OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT ON INDIA RAILWAYS' FACEBOOK AND TWITTER SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

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Abstract

Purpose - This research provides and verifies a thorough strategy for explaining the many aspects that contribute to customer engagement on the Indian Railways' social media channels of Facebook and Twitter. *Research Methodology* - A total of 601 participants from the Eastern Railways, the Northeast Frontier Railways, and the South Eastern Railways were surveyed to help reach the goal. Principal Component Analysis was used to determine the factors of customer engagement. *Findings* - Five prominent factors were identified and named accordingly. However, research showed that consumers believe the company is just concerned with providing a service to the public and not with enhancing that service in any way. It was also determined that they needed to make an attempt to attract the younger generation and clients by highlighting the improvements they had made to their services based on ideas supplied by the customers. It promotes a feeling of community within the organisation and helps to strengthen the two-way process of customer engagement. *Research limitations* - As the study was conducted during the pandemic time, the study is limited to the three zones of Indian Railways and further studies could incorporate more zones into the study. *Originality* - Prior studies have been conducted in other fields and sectors, but the novelty of the study lies in the framing of factors for studies related to customer engagement on social media platforms of government services

Keywords: Customer Engagement, Government Services, Indian Railways, social media platforms.

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India is now in a period of transition. With the new government in place and the transfer of leadership, change is a powerful force in the country. As a result, the public has an increasing feeling of expectation from the government and government institutions. Citizens demand quick service delivery with a high degree of execution, and the government is responsible for achieving this. Citizens desire to communicate with government agencies in the same manner that they interact with their mobile phone service providers, insurance companies, and e-commerce platforms. They want to be able to access the information they seek at any

moment, handle several issues on their own, or know somebody will be available to answer their questions, whether by live chat or phone. Citizens want to know them, to grasp what they're trying to achieve and where they're going. They need to be able to raise concerns or offer ideas, whether to a contact centre representative or through social media, and they want a rapid response and a plan of action. Customer engagement enhancements, such as providing a comprehensive online presence so customers can quickly seek solutions or incorporating backend systems so officials have all the data they need on a single screen to most efficiently and successfully



serve customers, have been implemented to not only enhance the customer service experience but also to keep their government loyal. In government services, active individuals can enhance the general health of communities and cities, raise awareness, and perhaps provide a better standard of living for everybody. Those are wonderful aims that are well worth the expense. And, if governments and public sector enterprises continue to invest in the proper customer engagement infrastructure and products, they may soon equal private-sector quality of service. Hence, the study of customer engagement in this respect is highly important.

This research aims to give preliminary findings from an exploratory analysis of Indian Railways' social media marketing efforts on Facebook and Twitter as part of digital marketing. The primary goal is to analyse how the notion of "Customer Engagement" has developed over time and to assess the extent to which customers' minds and actions are tied to the delivery of public services. This project is an effort to analyse Indian Railways' use of Facebook and Twitter for customer relations purposes. Therefore, there is a place for this topic within the larger research methodology.

1. Literature Review

Definitions of Customer Engagement and studies of its valence and dimensions (e.g., Vivek et al., 2012; Hollebeek, 2011a; van Doorn et al., 2010; Mollen & Wilson, 2010) have made significant contributions to the literature regarding the concept. However, the current literature does not adequately address

two concerns. To begin, while studies have been conducted on the mental processes that motivate Customer Engagement (Harmeling et al., 2017; Pansari & Kumar, 2017), the topic's value to businesses as a strategic resource has not been investigated. Most notably in the context of public service.

When it comes to serving the public, government agencies are tasked with doing it in a way that is both effective and efficient (Farquhar & Robson, 2017). The goal of public sector marketing is to "identify prospective clients with a chance of responding to what is supplied by organisations, comprehend communication, and cite environmental elements that have the power to impact the performance of public sector enterprises." Scheme and service delivery on time is crucial, which can only be done by respecting the customers' time, location, and financial resources. It employs a locally focused strategy to reduce locals' complaints, shifting their perspectives, and increasing productivity (Peattie & Newcombe, 2016).

Research into consumer relationships and customer engagement in the social media sphere has been conducted across a wide range of sectors, including mobile internet services (Giovanis, 2016), retail (Verhoef et al., 2009; Teixeira et al., 2012), telecommunications (Izogo, 2017), the cultural sector (Ponsignon et al., 2017), and financial services (Ponsignon et al., 2017). However, there appears to be a dearth of research into the interaction between public railway services and their patrons. Due to a lack of alternatives, consumers have few



options regarding routed services. There is a pressing need to comprehend the connection between public sector services and the people who use them in light of recent developments including rising service demand, frequent labour disputes, and worries about service improvements and interruptions.

2. Objectives of the Study

The present study explores the factors affecting customer engagement on the social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter of Indian Railways.

3. Methodology

This study is an endeavor to study customer engagement on social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter of Indian Railways and the factors affecting the same. The present study is comprised of three zones namely, Eastern Railways, Northeast Frontier Railways and South Eastern Railways. A sample size of 600 comprising 170 to 210 from each zone was planned. The selection of respondents was based on their minimum exposure and awareness of various social media platforms and of Indian Railways Facebook and Twitter page. Due to the reluctance of respondents and lesser passenger traffic in the northeast states, a total of 838 responses were recorded. Of which 788 responses were up to the required criteria of awareness and exposure and the rest were weeded out, and 601 respondents had completed the questionnaire. Thus, the final sample was 183 respondents from the Eastern Railways, 201 respondents from Northeast Frontier Railways and 217 from Southeastern Railways. As this study is exploratory in nature, we used a non-probability convenient

sampling method to pick our respondents (Tull & Hawkins, 1996, p. 544). There was an attempt, however, to ensure that the sample was representative by including responders from a range of demographics. The sampling unit considered here is the individuals having minimum exposure and awareness of social media platforms, belonging to these three zones and having purchased a railway ticket for any destination.

To gather information, a pre-tested, structured, and non-disguised questionnaire was distributed to respondents who filled it out in person. These three zones encompass the states of West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh. In order to study the same, respondents from major junctions of the three zones. For each zone, the major junctions and stations were identified based on the frequent train routes in long-distance passenger train routes and local passenger train routes. Of the identified 73 junctions and stations, 27 major junctions and stations were selected based on passenger traffic. The questionnaire was personally administered to the passengers waiting for their trains on the platforms.

4. Tools and Techniques

We compiled a list of thirty-nine assertions based on our discussions with industry specialists and literature reviews and asked respondents to rate each one. These comments highlighted the interaction between Indian Railways and its customers on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. A five-point Likert scale was used, with 5 indicating



"strongly agree" and 1 indicating "strongly disagree" for each statement. The averages for the three Railway zones were calculated. Additionally, F-ratios were determined (Table 2). Factor analysis was used on the total sample when it was determined that there were no statistically significant variations in the

responses provided by respondents from the various Railway Zones. Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the scale's internal consistency dependability. The list of hypotheses for the research is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Statements for Indian Railways' study of customer engagement on Facebook and Twitter.

S1	I feel a personal connection to the organisation.
S2	I can identify with the organisations' goals.
S3	I keenly notice information related to the organisation.
S4	I feel the organisation serves every customers need.
S5	I feel emotionally connected to the organisation.
S6	The organisation provides platform for customer interaction.
S7	I post suggestions in the organisation's Facebook and Twitter for service improvement.
S8	I feel the organisation respond to customers observations of the organisation by incorporating observation into service improvement.
S9	When someone criticises this organisation on social media platforms, it feels like a personal insult.
S10	I believe the organisation reflects the customers' wants and needs.
S11	I am passionate about the organisations' social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter.
S12	I like to learn more about this organisations' online community.
S13	I pay a lot of attention to anything about the organisation.
S14	I feel the organisation have a unique place in the mind of the customers.
S15	I often visit the organisation's social media pages of Facebook and Twitter and give feedback about their services.
S16	I recommend the organisation's services to friends & other groups of people on Facebook and Twitter.
S17	I feel the organisations' successes are the customers' successes.
S18	I feel the organisation has a strong understanding for customer's requirement.
S19	I feel proud to recommend the services of the organisation.
S20	The organisation explicitly appreciate/reward views of customers regarding the services of the organisation on Facebook and Twitter.
S21	I am heavily into the organisation on social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter.
S22	I think that the organisation has a genuine concern for its customers.
S23	I feel convinced by the organisations' endorsement on Facebook and Twitter.



S24	The organisation formulates ideas through discussion and collaboration about the organisation with the customers on Facebook and Twitter.
S25	When someone praises this organisation on social media platforms, it feels like a personal compliment.
S26	I enjoy spending time on the organisations' social media pages of Facebook and Twitter.
S27	I feel the organization shares the goals of its customers.
S28	I believe the organisations' services benefit the customers' in the long run.
S29	I have a sense of belongingness towards the organisation.

Mean scores were derived to determine the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with each statement according to their Railway Zone. Each comment received a point value from 5 (Strongly Agree), 4 (Agree), 3 (Neither Agree Nor Disagree), 2 (Disagree), and 1 (Strongly Disagree).

In statistics, mean scores are calculated by adding together all of the individual respondents' ratings. This allows us to evaluate and examine the contentment of the chosen twenty-nine assertions independently, providing us with a more complete picture of the whole. The median degree of satisfaction on this scale is 3, which may be considered as average. Variables with means greater than 4 indicate a widespread consensus among respondents; those with means between 2 and 3 indicate substantial disagreement; those with

means between 1 and 2 indicate disagreement among respondents, and those with means below 1 indicate widespread opposition.

The following null hypothesis has been tested in order to see if there are any significant variations in the level of customer engagement on the Indian Railways' Facebook and Twitter pages among respondents from different Railway Zones.

H₀: Customer engagement on Indian Railways' Facebook and Twitter pages does not vary significantly between responders from different Railway Zones.

F-ratios have been computed for the results of each statement in order to make comparisons between the mean scores obtained by each Railway Zone. Table 2 shows the mean values and F-ratios for the assertions.

Table 2: Perspectives on Indian Railways' Customer Engagement via Facebook and Twitter (Overall and Railway Zone-wise Mean Scores and F-Ratio)

	Overall Mean Value (M)	Eastern Railways (M1)	Northeast Frontier Railways (M2)	South Eastern Railways (M3)	F-Ratio



I feel a personal connection to the organisation	3.35	3.34	3.34	3.37	0.052
I can identify with the organisations' goals	3.45	3.46	3.44	3.46	0.04
I keenly notice information related to the organisation	2.83	2.85	2.79	2.86	0.249
I feel the organisation serves every customers need.	3.92	3.89	3.99	3.89	1.282
I feel emotionally connected to the organisation	3.12	3.11	3.06	3.18	0.645
The organisation provides platform for customer interaction.	3.61	3.58	3.61	3.64	0.173
I post suggestions in the organisation's Facebook and Twitter for service improvement	3.48	3.5	3.46	3.47	0.079
I feel the organisation respond to customers observations of the organisation by incorporating observation into service improvement	3.56	3.57	3.5	3.62	0.956
When someone criticises this organisation on social media platforms, it feels like a personal insult	3.34	3.37	3.34	3.32	0.166
I believe the organisation reflects the customers' wants and needs	3.41	3.42	3.4	3.41	0.015
I am passionate about the organisations' social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter	3.13	3.1	3.09	3.21	1.141
I like to learn more about this organisations' online community	3.83	3.83	3.82	3.84	0.047
I pay a lot of attention to anything about the organisation	3.87	3.92	3.87	3.81	0.901
I feel the organisation have a unique place in the mind of the customers	3.42	3.39	3.36	3.5	0.963



I often visit the organisation's social media pages of Facebook and Twitter and give feedback about their services	3.58	3.54	3.58	3.61	0.252
I recommend the organisation's services to friends and other groups of people on Facebook and Twitter	3.48	3.52	3.44	3.47	0.346
I feel the organisations' successes are the customers' successes	3.39	3.42	3.35	3.41	0.35
I feel the organisation has a strong understanding for customer's requirement	3.86	3.87	3.9	3.82	0.444
I feel proud to recommend the services of the organisation	3.38	3.36	3.39	3.4	0.084
The organisation explicitly appreciate/reward views of customers regarding the services of the organisation on Facebook and Twitter	3.65	3.61	3.64	3.7	0.439
I am heavily into the organisation on social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter	3.00	2.98	2.96	3.07	0.787
I think that the organisation has a genuine concern for its customers	3.94	3.99	3.93	3.9	0.891
I feel convinced by the organisations' endorsement on Facebook and Twitter	3.10	3.11	3.04	3.16	0.572
The organisation formulates ideas through discussion and collaboration about the organisation with the customers on Facebook and Twitter	3.55	3.57	3.49	3.59	0.703
When someone praises this organisation on social media platforms, it feels like a personal compliment	3.35	3.38	3.32	3.36	0.212



I enjoy spending time on the organisations' social media pages of Facebook and Twitter	3.08	3.17	3.02	3.06	1.229
I feel the organization shares the goals of its customers	3.42	3.35	3.41	3.49	0.819
I believe the organisations' services benefit the customers' in the long run	3.25	3.27	3.23	3.26	0.084
I have a sense of belongingness towards the organisation	3.10	3.08	3.04	3.18	0.908

As can be seen in the table above, the highest average score is 3.94 on statement S22 (I think that the organisation has a genuine concern for its customers) to as low as S3 (I keenly notice information related to the organization). Most respondents agree, as indicated by a high score for statement S22, that Indian Railways pays attention to its consumers, and that its customers pay attention to the information Indian Railways puts out on its social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Twitter. The high average scores of 3.92 on the statement S4 (I feel the organisation serves every customers need) further supported this, along with scores of 3.87 on the statement S13 (I pay a lot of attention to anything about the organization), 3.83 on the statement S12 (I like to learn more about this organisations' online community) and, 3.86 on the statement S18 (I feel the organisation has a strong understanding for customer's requirement). Thus, indicates that the attention of the organization and the customers toward each other is essential for building a customer engagement process.

Most of the mean scores from the table show value closer to 3, implying that the respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statements. Thus, respondents are neutral to the statements S16 (I recommend the organisation's services to friends and other groups of people on Facebook and Twitter), S7 (I post suggestions in the organisation's Facebook and Twitter for service improvement), S2 (I can identify with the organisations' goals), S27 (I feel the organization shares the goals of its customers), S14 (I feel the organisation have a unique place in the mind of the customers), S10 (I believe the organisation reflects the customers' wants and needs), S17 (I feel the organisations' successes are the customers' successes), S19 (I feel proud to recommend the services of the organization), S25 (When someone praises this organisation on social media platforms, it feels like a personal compliment), S1 (I feel a personal connection to the organization), S9 (When someone criticises this organisation on social media platforms, it feels like a personal insult), S28 (I believe the organisations' services benefit the customers' in the long run), S11 (I am



passionate about the organisations' social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter), S5 (I feel emotionally connected to the organization), S23 (I feel convinced by the organisations' endorsement on Facebook and Twitter), S29 (I have a sense of belongingness towards the organization), S26 (I enjoy spending time on the organisations' social media pages of Facebook and Twitter), S21 (I am heavily into the organisation on social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter) and, S3 (I keenly notice information related to the organization). When looked closely it can be interpreted that the respondents do not consider enthusiasm to interact and absorb the communication way between Indian Railways and the customers as a way of customer engagement on social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter of Indian Railways.

For 26 out of 29 assertions, the variations in the mean scores of respondents from the three Railway zones were judged to be statistically insignificant. By a large margin, respondents from all three of the evaluated Railway Zones agree with the following claims: S4 (I feel the organisation serves every customers need), S13 (I pay a lot of attention to anything about the organization), S18 (I feel the organisation has a strong understanding for customer's requirement) and, S22 (I think that the organisation has a genuine concern for its customers). The differences between the respondent's viewpoints from the three different Railway Zones are statistically significant regarding these statements at a 5 per cent level of significance.

When looking at how people from different Railway Zones feel about customer engagement on Indian Railways' social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, it's clear that they all share the same basic sentiment. Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis. Thus, we have used factor analysis just on the total sample, rather than breaking down the responses by income bracket.

5. Customer Engagement on Social Media Platforms of Facebook and Twitter of Indian Railways

The following procedures were carried out to determine whether or not the dataset was suitable for factor analysis: The factor analysis correlation matrix was calculated, and it showed that the data had sufficient correlations to proceed with the study.

- Correlations between anti-images were calculated. Low partial correlations suggested the presence of genuine factors in the data.
- The KMO score was 0.724, for example, demonstrating that the sample met minimum standards for sampling.
- It was found that there were a large number of significant correlations between the variables using Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1950).

The above considerations hereby established the dataset fit for factor analysis.

5.1. Extraction Approach and Number of Factors Extracted

Factors have been extracted using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) in this study. Based on the latent root criteria, we have



maintained the same fixed number of elements. Therefore, only the components having Eigenvalues or latent roots higher than one have been taken into account.

Community extraction values should be greater than 0.4 (Costello and Osborne, 2005), as these communalities show the relationship between the variable and the other variables (i.e., the squared multiple correlations between the item and all the other items). Table 3 shows that all communalities were more than 0.4, providing further evidence that all components shared at least part of their variation with one another. On the basis of

these indicators, it has been decided that factor analysis is applicable to all 29 items.

Variables' associations with their respective factors are represented by factor loadings. In a survey of 601 participants, it was determined that a factor loading of 0.30 or higher was statistically significant (Hair et al., 2010). The research used varimax rotation to orthogonally flip the order of the principal factors. Following this analysis, five key factors for defining customer engagement by Indian Railways have emerged across the three zones studied in the research. In Table 3 we see the components that were extracted, as well as their labels, loadings, and communalities.

Table 3: Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation

LABEL	FACTORS					Communalities
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	
	Identification	Enthusiasm	Attention	Absorption	Interaction	
S1	0.926					0.876
S9	0.896					0.848
S25	0.935					0.901
S2	0.701					0.638
S10	0.891					0.810
S17	0.936					0.880
S28	0.804					0.649
S21		0.846				0.736
S3		0.86				0.766
S26		0.579				0.405
S11		0.815				0.736
S4			0.834			0.706
S22			0.889			0.802
S18			0.89			0.824
S12			0.859			0.763



S13			0.912			0.888
S29				0.888		0.832
S5				0.793		0.716
S23				0.863		0.759
S19				0.785		0.630
S14				0.715		0.612
S27				0.678		0.472
S6					0.891	0.843
S7					0.928	0.894
S15					0.874	0.837
S24					0.899	0.832
S16					0.927	0.878
S20					0.892	0.829
S8					0.889	0.825
Eigen value	7.165	5.695	4.198	2.975	2.154	
Explained Variance (%)	24.706	19.637	14.475	10.258	7.429	
Cumulative Variance (%)	24.706	44.343	58.817	69.075	76.504	
Extraction Method: <i>Principal Component Analysis.</i>						
Rotation Method: <i>Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.</i>						
a. <i>Rotation converged in 6 iterations.</i>						

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5.2. Naming of factors

Appropriate names were given to each component that reflected the data that was entered into it. Following is a discussion of the five factors listed in Table 3.

Factor 1 (F1): IDENTIFICATION

The first factor includes seven variables that have been positively loaded under it. The factor includes statements S1(I feel a personal connection to the organization), S9 (When someone criticises this organisation on social media platforms, it feels like a personal insult), S25 (When someone praises this organisation on social media platforms, it feels like a

personal compliment), S2 (I can identify with the organisations' goals), S10 (I believe the organisation reflects the customers' wants and needs), S17 (I feel the organisations' successes are the customers' successes), and S28 (I believe the organisations' services benefit the customers' in the long run). These statements emphasize on the self-identity, brand personality, rapport and relevancy aspect between the organization and the customers. Moreover, these statements implies that the customers identify themselves with the organization thus, becoming the first step towards customer engagement. Hence, this factor is named "identification".



Factor 2 (F2): ENTHUSIASM

Factor two explains the statements S21 (I am heavily into this organisation on social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter), S3 (I keenly notice information related to the organisation), S26 (I enjoy spending time on the organisations' social media pages of Facebook and Twitter), and S11 (I am passionate about the organisations' social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter). This factor studies the readiness of the customers to avail and to connect to the organisation through their social media pages of Facebook and Twitter. Enthusiasm for a brand/organisation is what drives customers to become part of brand/organisation communities and/or promote that brand/organisation to others. Enthusiasm and passion are often cited as crucial elements of CE's emotional component.

Factor 3 (F3): ATTENTION

Statements S4 (I feel the organisation serves every customers need.), S22 (I think that the organisation has a genuine concern for its customers), S18 (I feel the organisation has a strong understanding for customer's requirement), S12 (I like to learn more about this organisations' online community), and S13 (I pay a lot of attention to anything about the organisation) comprises the factor three. This factor describes a crucial feature of engagement that has been consistently highlighted by academics is the quality of attention. Customers' attention to a organisation leads to an increased interest in organisation-related content leading to customer engagement. Thus, the statements here describe the motivation for the customers

to pay attention to the organisation on their social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter.

Factor 4 (F4): ABSORPTION

This factor includes the statements S29 (I have a sense of belongingness towards the organisation), S5 (I feel emotionally connected to the organisation), S23 (I feel convinced by the organisations' endorsement on Facebook and Twitter), S19 (I feel proud to recommend the services of the organisation), S14 (I feel the organisation have a unique place in the mind of the customers), and S27 (I feel the organization shares the goals of its customers). This factor is termed as absorption as these statements describe a state of complete attention, pleasure, and participation in the brand that occurs when customer engagement is effectively implemented. Thus, such statements describe the attitude, belongingness and bonding of the customers with the organisations' social media pages of Facebook and Twitter.

Factor 5 (F5): INTERACTION

Statements S6 (The organisation provides platform for customer interaction.), S7 (I post suggestions in the organisation's Facebook and Twitter for service improvement), S15 (I often visit the organisation's social media pages of Facebook and Twitter and give feedback about their services), S24 (The organisation formulates ideas through discussion and collaboration about the organisation with the customers on Facebook and Twitter), S16 (I recommend the organisation's services to friends & other groups of people on Facebook and Twitter), S20 (The organisation explicitly



appreciate/reward views of customers regarding the services of the organisation on Facebook and Twitter), and S8 (I feel the organisation respond to customers observations of the organisation by incorporating observation into service improvement), are clubbed as the fifth factor, which is termed as “interaction”. These statements reflect the behavioural manifestation of a consumer's engagement with the organisation beyond conventional consumptive behaviour.

6. Conclusions and Recommendation

Some of the recommendations are based on research findings. A discussion prior reveals that customers are under the impression that Indian Railways provide their services purely out of concern for their users. This was supported by the fact that the organisation serves the needs of the customers. On the social media front, customers are more tuned into the social media presence of Indian Railways on the platforms of Facebook and Twitter. Thus, it can be concluded that the customers and the organisation are more tuned in with each, and this further supports the fact that Customer Engagement is a two-way process.

Though five factors have emerged in the process of customer engagement on social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter of Indian Railways, they cannot define the whole process and requires much further subclassification in the form of antecedents of the individual factors. Also, age and gender both play an important role in customer engagement in the public sector. With the

rapid and ready acceptance of technology these two demographic definitions play an important role in the strength, length and continued Customer Engagement. Especially in public transport, it's a trend that more and more individuals under the age variable belonging to the 28-48 years category are moving away from them and towards airlines, as they have substantially lowered their prices.

Social media pages of public sector services focus on technical knowledge dissemination rather than a problem-solving approach towards the customers. As the public sector services are focused on the citizens of a nation, it must be noted that with open data access they are under scrutiny more and are criticised by citizens who are not even their customers. Thus, it must be taken care and effort must be made by them to lure in the younger generation and customers by showcasing the changes they had made in their services based on the suggestions offered by the customers. It gives off a sense of belonging with the organisation as well as aids in furthering the two-way process of customer engagement in the long run.

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