



DATA DRIVEN

In an age of instant gratification, telcos definitely will need to push harder and integrate data analytics effectively into their CEM to ensure they don't lose out

The importance of customer experience has increased manifold for telecom operators, especially due to the heightened customer expectations induced in the market by the Googles, Facebooks and the like. In the data era, customer experience management (CEM) is a very crucial aspect and helps to ensure that the customers are happy, their grievances are addressed, customer churn is reduced and there's an enhancement in sales, revenues and brand image.

When it comes to customer experience, it's often said that telecom operators have a long way to go. "It is true that operators have been viewed as the providers of traditional services and the adopters of an outdated approach to customer experience, but most are now re-inventing themselves through digitisation to improve experience," says Hani Zein, principal with Strategy&, formerly Booz & Company and part of the PwC network. "Operators have also started to realise that although excellence in

technology and infrastructure is a must, but it is no more a key differentiator that attracts and retains customers."

Alan Gow, CEO, Virgin Mobile MEA says: "People expect to connect with brands in the way they choose, and they expect a quick and seamless resolution. Their experience is now measured against the best, such as Netflix, Amazon, Deliveroo, Uber, and Spotify."

"Telcos now need to build compelling digital propositions that sit at the heart of their product offering and that are designed specifically to meet these changing customer needs. We can learn from these agile digital business models by starting with the customer, identifying a real customer need, quickly building a product with a great experience, scaling a significant user base and then monetising the proposition," adds Gow.

"There is always more to be done, but we should recognise the strides telcos are making in this area, through transformative investments in automation of business processes to take people,

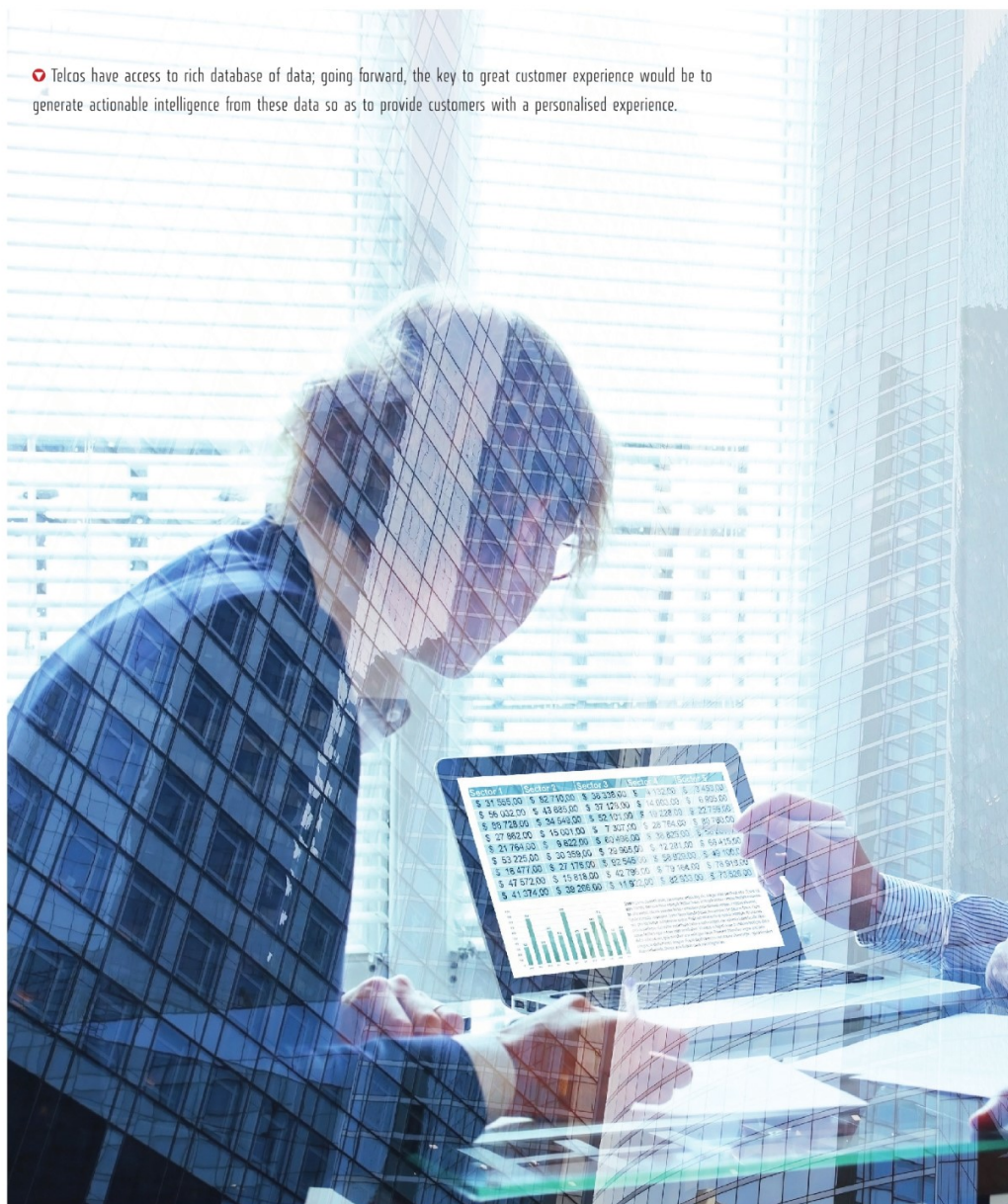
time, and mistakes out of the mix, and the empowerment of customers through the delivery of highly functional self-care apps,” says Amit Sanjal, VP & executive head- consumer value solutions Mahindra Comviva. “Telcos probably can’t fix all legacy systems, but should focus on those that are key to the future – digital channels.”

“The challenge for operators is to start with the customer first and drive that mentality through their businesses,” Gow says. “This is a bigger challenge for larger businesses that have complex processes, complicated propositions and technical legacy infrastructure. It’s not impossible, but



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Hanı Zein,
principal with Strategy&



• Telcos have access to rich database of data; going forward, the key to great customer experience would be to generate actionable intelligence from these data so as to provide customers with a personalised experience.

brand experience needs to be embraced at the heart of the business.”

The Virgin Mobile UAE app based proposition provides a completely new telecoms business model, built around a digital ecosystem. “To ensure they were creating a proposition that fully met changing customer experience needs, the team worked with a group of beta testers, using their real time consumer feedback to improve the product in a live environment during a

phased launch programme. This approach has allowed them to really put the customer experience at the centre of everything that they built,” Gow explains.

Sharing a recent success story, Zein tells CommsMEA how Strategy& worked with one of the leading telcos in the Middle East to help provide a differentiated experience to enterprise customers. “We leveraged digitisation to instill a customer centric culture. Customer feedback



was solicited via intelligent and convenient means, automatically incorporated in employee scorecards and timely analysed to gauge perception and tailor experience programmes at a customer level.”

“Our approach led to a 7% improvement in customer satisfaction, 34% increase in digital adoption, and 5% reduction in complaints volume,” explains Zein.

Emir Susic, APS senior director at Avaya In-

ternational says: “An extremely successful use case of omni-channel CEM is Telekom Serbia. In this case, the service provider integrated customer information effectively with its back-end processes, enabling the business to make CEM decisions in real time.

“Telekom Serbia they increased their customer satisfaction rate by almost 16%, doubled their attainment of SLAs on mobile services with almost zero abandoned calls, and lowered



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abandoned calls for its fixed line and technical support services by over 25%.”

“With one of our clients, we used machine learning rather than marketing rules, to make the right offer to the right customer at the right time. In doing so the customer learned a lot, and adapted their approach to their marketing,” says Sanyal. “We learnt that real-time (sub second interaction) is actually more important than the perfect offer. A good offer now in the instant you are running out of data, is better than a perfect offer 15 minutes too late.”

The present times demand a pro-active omni-channel approach to customer experience. “The starting point would be a clear definition of customer journeys for different segments and prod-

ucts. The journey definitions would inform the technology applications landscape, the underlying integrations, and data models,” says Zein.

Gow says: “Our integrated platform provides a unified interaction history from all channels to all channels, so we can provide seamless care should a customer decide to switch channels. We also work hard to ensure that our customers can join the customer journey at any stage. Centralisation of the product experience through the app is helping to facilitate this in a seamless way.”

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Charbel Khneisser,
regional presales director, METNA,
Riverbed



◊ Till AI can offer a truly human equivalent customer experience, service providers can implement appended machine learning for useful insights.

complex for automation. In fact, the more complex the environment, the greater the business benefit,” says Susic.

Will AI actually play the role of a strong differentiator in action when it comes to CEM of telcos? “AI would help in leveraging historical interactions and experiences to enhance the context awareness at channels and improve the product propositions,” says Zein. According to Alan Gow of Virgin Mobile, “Whilst we believe that ultimately AI will be an enabler for customers to interact with the brand on their own terms,

we still believe there is a significant way to go in terms of a truly joined-up AI solution.”

Gow further explains that until AI offers a truly human equivalent customer experience, it will never replace existing customer channels completely. “For now, the focus for differentiation should be on minimising the customer interactions required to complete any action. By focusing your team on minimising customer interactions, you can offset the time spent fixing problems to instead focus on making your product and service better – this is where brands need



to focus in the short to medium term.”

According to Charbel Khneisser, regional pre-sales director, METNA at Riverbed, what service providers can implement at present is appended machine learning which can generate actionable intelligence that drives strategic decision making.

“Our visibility platform gives telcos complete insight into user behaviour such as which applications are being utilised and which services users consume most. This is complimented by our performance monitoring platform,” he adds. “With these platforms, we then apply machine



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learning and analytics to data all the way from layer seven through to layer one, and thus provides actionable intelligence which serves the technical requirement of support teams as well as the high-level reporting needed to make strategic business decisions.”

At the core of the next generation CEM technology is robust data collection from varied sources, data federation for extended and fast access to data, decision engines and advanced analytics, according to Zein.

“The core technologies are already available today so what telcos need to focus on is the end result which is generating actionable intelligence. It is not about simply collecting information- they already have this in place- but rather their ability to apply analytics to information and to data from all layers,” Khneisser says. “At the same time, telcos need to be wary of solutions



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that fail to correlate information, as these introduce unnecessary complexity without delivering valuable insight.”

“We need LAMBA architecture, Batch (Big Data Analytics capability) and Real-time solutions,” Sanyal says, “There is a lack of data science people, with analytics capability. And finally, we need to bring technology and people on a common platform to drive the next generation of CEM technology for telcos.”

Creating market advantage through customer experience management requires collective efforts from across the organisation. “A key success factor for delivering effective customer experience management use cases is the collaboration of commercial and technology teams.” As Gow says, mobile operators need to be bold and start digitising the customer journey from end to end to drive positive results. ◻