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Customer service quality in real estate agencies in the context of new technologies: An analysis of challenges and expectations

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Abstract: The quality of customer service in real estate agencies is increasingly shaped by digital technologies, including online platforms, virtual tours, and e-signatures. Although transactions are still traditionally finalized, client decisions are largely made online, which makes digital touch-points crucial for building trust and satisfaction. This study applies the Customer Journey Mapping (CJM) method to analyze service quality in real estate agencies, based on interviews with 19 clients and 3 employees in Poland. A model CJM was developed, covering five stages of the customer journey. At each stage, key touchpoints, emotions, needs, pain points, and potential improvements were identified. Results highlight three critical “moments of truth” where client emotions strongly influence satisfaction. The findings confirm the usefulness of CJM in evaluating service quality and designing practical improvements. Its application in the real estate sector provides both academic value and actionable recommendations for agencies seeking to increase customer satisfaction and competitive advantage.

Keywords: real estate, service quality, Customer Journey Mapping

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Introduction

The quality of customer service in real estate agencies increasingly depends on the use of new technologies. The dynamic development of the market and growing customer expectations make intuitive online platforms, quick access to information,

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and professional digital communication essential (Baryshnikova et al., 2021; Kraus-Kowalczyk, 2025; Tomski, 2022). In large cities, it is particularly important to provide accurate information about secondary-market apartments, whereas in smaller towns, clear and transparent listings of single-family homes are essential (Buzalska, 2024; Kuraś, 2025; Tomski, 2021).

The challenge lies in the fact that, although the finalization of transactions still takes place traditionally, customer decisions are largely made online. Websites and e-services thus become the first point of contact, shaping buyers' trust and satisfaction. Today, expectations of real estate agencies include not only competent advisors but also efficient digital tools that support the process of buying and selling properties (Cieśła, 2024; Cieśła & Ulewicz, 2024; Ślusarczyk & Wiśniewska, 2024).

Real estate agencies must understand customer experiences and their perception of service quality, as these factors determine satisfaction with property purchases and the potential to attract new clients. For this purpose, a service quality measurement model is needed, one that also captures its intangible aspects. To ensure effective research, agencies should clearly define objectives, the information required, available time, and data sources which facilitates the selection of an appropriate research method (Ghotbabadi et al., 2015).

Assessing the quality of real estate agency services is particularly challenging because their core is not the material product itself. A client can view an apartment or a house, but these properties belong to someone else, the agency merely facilitates the entire process. Consequently, the service provided is intangible and difficult to measure or evaluate directly. This makes it essential to understand the specific characteristics of services that distinguish them from tangible products and allow for a proper assessment of service quality (Čierna & Sujová, 2022; Sitek, 2016).

There are many methods for assessing service quality. The most popular include the Servqual method and its variants: Important Performance Analysis, Critical Incident Technique, Kano, and Mystery Shopper (Ingaldi & Klimecka-Tatar, 2024). These methods often rely on interviews or surveys due to the need for participation from clients using the services. It is the clients who must define their expectations regarding the service and evaluate its execution (Parasuraman et al., 1991). However, it should be noted that these methods require a large number of respondents to ensure the reliability of the results.

An interesting and highly useful method, often overlooked, is Customer Journey Mapping (CJM). It is a tool for visualizing the entire customer journey, encompassing all touchpoints with a service organization (Labajan & Koomsap, 2019). In real estate agencies, these touchpoints may include pre-purchase activities (e.g., browsing listings, email contact), during the service (e.g., meeting with an agent, property presentation, negotiations), and post-purchase support (e.g., assistance with formalities, post-sale follow-up). Understanding these stages enables agencies to better manage client relationships and design service innovations that enhance the experience of both buyers and sellers (Craig, 2011; Lingqvist et al., 2015).

A key challenge in CJM is the effective use of the map's vertical axis, which not only represents customer emotions but also integrates the actions of marketing, staff, operations, and technology. For real estate agencies, this means linking every

touchpoint – from initial contact to transaction completion, with appropriate organizational initiatives. This approach makes CJM a practical tool for both designing services and improving them based on client interviews (Bitner et al., 2008).

The aim of this article is to analyze the quality of customer service in real estate agencies in Poland using the Customer Journey Mapping (CJM) method. The paper demonstrates how new technologies (e.g., virtual tours, electronic signatures, video meetings) influence the customer experience and which pain points and critical moments (moments of truth) can be identified in the process of purchasing real estate.

The key results of the study include the identification of critical moments that determine customer satisfaction, the recognition of the most frequent pain points in customer service within real estate agencies, the demonstration of the role of digital technologies as tools for improving service quality, and, ultimately, the development of a framework of recommendations to enhance the customer journey using CJM.

The primary scientific contribution of the article lies in the application of CJM as a research method in the field of service quality management in the real estate sector. As noted, CJM is a relatively simple yet highly effective tool, but one that is rarely employed in this area of research. The practical contribution of the study consists of providing actionable recommendations for real estate agencies, aimed at improving customer satisfaction and strengthening competitive advantage.

1. Methodology

The study was conducted based on direct interviews with 19 clients of real estate agencies in Poland (buyers) and 3 employees of such agencies. The interviews were carried out between January 2025 and April 2025. Clients were asked the following questions:

1. What were your first steps in searching for a property?
2. Which points of contact with the agency were most important to you?
3. What made it most difficult for you to decide on a purchase or rental?
4. How do you assess communication with the agency (response time, clarity of information)?
5. What could improve your experience as a client?

It should be emphasized that the real estate sector is highly specific. Individual agencies usually do not serve a large number of clients, which explains the relatively small sample size.

After conducting client interviews, the study was carried out in the following stages:

1. Defining the persona (representative client): Based on client interviews, typical personas were identified. For the case under study, the persona represents a young couple, approximately 30 years old, purchasing their first apartment, with a budget of around 400,000 PLN. They prioritize clear communication, transparent costs, and proximity to kindergartens or schools.
2. Mapping the customer journey stages: The stages from initial contact to post-sale support were delineated. Based on discussions with real estate agency staff,

the following stages were proposed: Property search, Agency contact, Property viewing, Negotiation and contract, and Finalization with post-sale service.

3. Identifying touchpoints: Key points of interaction between the client and the service were determined. Insights from both clients and agency employees were used to highlight the most critical touchpoints.
4. Assessing client emotions and needs at each stage: Client emotions and specific needs were identified for each stage of the journey. A 1-5 scale was employed to evaluate the intensity of emotions and the importance of needs.
5. Identifying pain points and moments of truth: Problems and pivotal moments impacting client satisfaction were pinpointed, providing insight into areas requiring attention.
6. Proposing improvements: For each identified pain point, specific solutions were recommended to enhance the overall customer experience.

2. Results and discussion

The following customer journey map model was developed after conducting interviews with clients and employees of real estate agencies (Table 1).

Figure 1 presents a visualization of client emotions for the examined customer journey map (CJM) in a real estate agency. The chart illustrates the fluctuations in clients' emotional levels across the successive stages of the process.

Based on interviews conducted with clients and real estate agency employees, a customer journey map model (CJM) was developed, encompassing five main stages: property search, agency contact, property viewing, negotiation and contract, and finalization with post-sale service. At each stage, key touchpoints, client emotions and needs, as well as the most frequently reported problems (pain points) and potential improvements were identified.

The results indicated that the property search stage is primarily associated with curiosity and uncertainty. Clients highlighted issues such as the lack of up-to-date listings and unclear information regarding price and location, which leads to frustration even at this initial stage. Suggested improvements, such as integrating listings from multiple sources or providing cost calculators, could help mitigate these challenges.

During the agency contact stage, emotions of hope predominated, alongside concerns related to complex purchase procedures. Clients expected prompt and professional responses, while the most frequently reported problems included delays in communication and insufficient staff preparedness. Potential solutions include the implementation of chatbots, FAQ sections on agency websites, and customer service training for employees.

During the property viewing stage, clients experience a mixture of excitement and stress, alongside frequent feelings of disappointment. Clients expect accurate information and transparency, while common issues include hidden costs and pressure to make quick decisions. Consequently, offering transparent listings and providing detailed information about the technical condition of the property are essential for improving service quality.

Table 1. Model Customer Journey Map (CJM) (*own research*)

Journey stages	Touchpoints	Client emotions	Needs	Pain points	Improvements	Moments of truth
Property search	Website, online listing portals, friends and family, banners on balconies or fences, advertisements and leaflets available in various locations	Curiosity, uncertainty, desire to find a property quickly	Clear information, easy comparison of listings, up-to-date offers, full price disclosure, convenient property location	Outdated listings, unclear pricing, lack of properties in the desired area	Listing integration, cost calculator, categorization of listings by area	No
Contact with agency	Phone, email, chat, in-office visit	Hope, doubts, fear of a complex purchase process and formalities	Prompt response, professionalism, detailed answers to questions, clarification of doubts regarding the purchase process	Delayed responses, unprofessional client handling, insufficient staff preparation	Chatbot, online FAQ, customer service training	No
Property viewing	In-person meeting, virtual tour	Excitement, stress, disappointment	Accurate information, transparency, opportunity for a thorough property inspection	Hidden costs, pressure to purchase, lack of answers regarding property condition or equipment	Transparent property presentation, detailed information about the property	Yes
Negotiation and contract	Phone, email, chat, in-office visits, meetings, electronic documents	Stress, uncertainty, fear of errors or seller withdrawal	Clear terms, security, efficient handling of negotiation and contract signing, convenient location for signing	Complex documents, long travel distance to the contract signing location	E-signature, simplified contract templates, wide choice of locations for signing	Yes
Finalization with post-sale service	Key handover, meter readings, service support	Joy, satisfaction	Efficient procedures, accessibility, accurate completion of acceptance documents	Lack of post-sale support, errors in acceptance documents	Defective reporting app, follow-up emails, multi-step verification of acceptance documents	Yes

The negotiation and contract-signing stage generates the highest levels of stress and uncertainty. Clients are concerned about errors in documents and the possibility of the seller withdrawing at the last moment. The most frequently reported problems include complex procedures and the need to travel to distant locations to sign documents. Potential improvements suggested by clients include electronic signature options, simplified contract templates, and greater flexibility in choosing the location for finalizing the transaction.

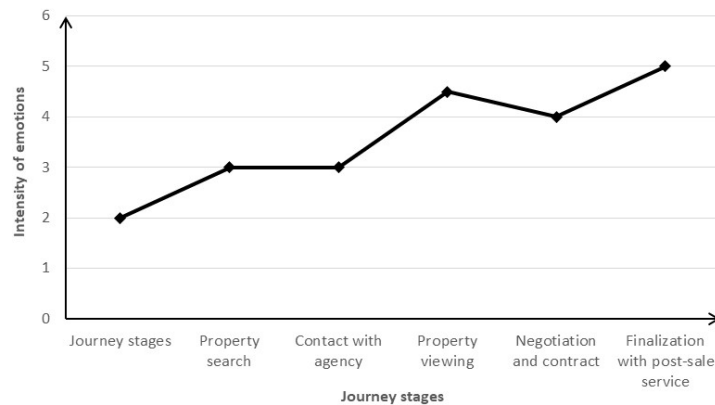


Fig. 1. Visualization of emotional levels (*own research*)

In the finalization and post-sale service stage, the predominant emotions are joy and satisfaction. However, issues such as errors in acceptance documents or lack of support after key handover were also reported. Clients emphasized the need for efficient and straightforward procedures, as well as accessible service support. Recommended best practices include the possibility of reporting defects via mobile applications and sending follow-up messages after the transaction has been completed.

In the conducted analysis, three moments of truth proved to be particularly critical: property viewing, negotiation and contract signing, and transaction finalization. These are the stages where clients' emotions reach extreme values, ranging from excitement to stress and anxiety. While the property search and initial agency contact stages help establish preliminary expectations, it is the moments of truth that ultimately determine the overall assessment of service quality. The results indicate that poor service at any of these stages can completely negate positive experiences from earlier phases of the journey. Therefore, recommended improvements such as transparent property presentation, simplified documentation, and the implementation of digital tools (e.g., e-signatures, mobile applications) should be prioritized precisely at these key stages of the process.

The most frequently identified pain points included the lack of up-to-date listings, delayed responses from the agency, hidden costs, and overly complex formal procedures. Each of these issues reduces client satisfaction and may lead to the abandonment of the agency's services.

The study also demonstrated that digital technologies can significantly reduce the number of problems and enhance service quality. Virtual property tours allow clients to familiarize themselves with a property without the need for an on-site visit, e-signatures simplify the contract process, and chatbots and mobile applications enable faster communication. Implementing these solutions can not only improve the client experience but also increase the operational efficiency of the agency.

In summary, the customer journey map enabled a detailed identification of client emotions, needs, and problems at each stage of service in real estate agencies. The results indicate that improving service quality requires primarily:

- enhancing the transparency of property listings,
- reducing response times to client inquiries,
- simplifying documentation, and
- providing effective post-sale support.

The application of Customer Journey Mapping in research on service quality in real estate agencies proved to be highly valuable. It not only facilitated a deeper understanding of client experiences but also allowed for the formulation of concrete recommendations for business practice.

Conclusions

The conducted study enabled a detailed analysis of customer service quality in real estate agencies using the Customer Journey Mapping (CJM) tool. Key stages of the service process, the most common pain points, and moments of truth that have the greatest impact on client satisfaction were identified. The results confirmed that issues such as outdated listings, delayed communication, and overly complex formal procedures significantly diminish the client experience, whereas the implementation of new technologies – such as virtual property tours, e-signatures, and chatbots – can substantially enhance service quality.

Customer Journey Mapping proved to be a valuable tool in both academic and practical contexts. In the case of real estate agencies, it not only visualized client emotions and needs at each stage of interaction but also provided concrete recommendations for improving the service process. This confirms that the method can be effectively employed in research on service quality within the real estate sector, serving as a basis for further process optimization and the development of a competitive advantage for agencies.

The study's limitations primarily stem from the small number of respondents and the specificity of the local market analyzed. The results reflect the experiences of a particular group of clients and agency employees and may vary depending on property type, geographic region, or client profile (e.g., investors, students, families). Furthermore, the analysis focused on a qualitative approach, indicating the need for future research to incorporate quantitative data to enable more comprehensive comparisons.

The next stage of the methodology should involve conducting a verification pilot of the Customer Journey Map (CJM), comprising three main steps:

1. User testing of the map – comparing the as-is variant (current process) with the to-be variant (after proposed improvements) and evaluating alignment and potential benefits.
2. Brief tests and consultations – surveys and interviews with clients and agency employees focusing on the transparency of property listings, response times, stress levels, and the quality of post-sale service.
3. Pilot implementation and monitoring – applying selected solutions in a single agency and measuring their effectiveness using indicators such as CSAT, NPS,

response time, FCR, and the number of complaints. Based on the results, a decision will be made whether to expand the changes or return to modifications of the CJM.

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