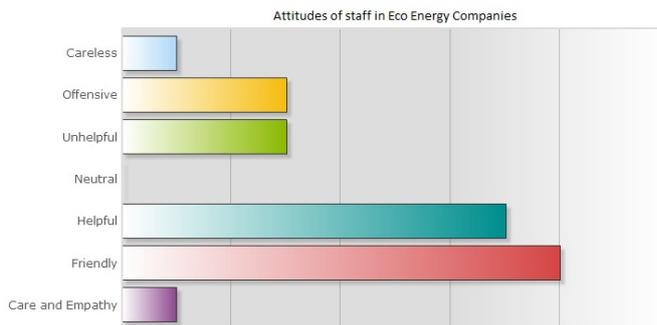
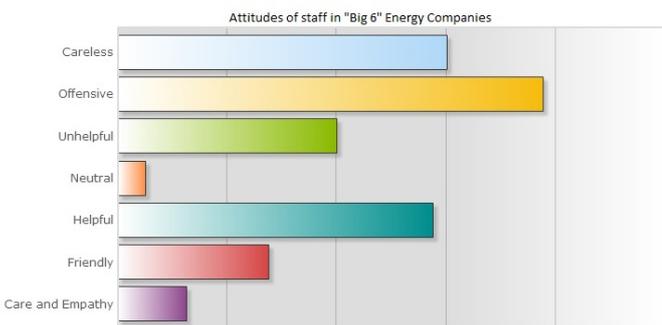
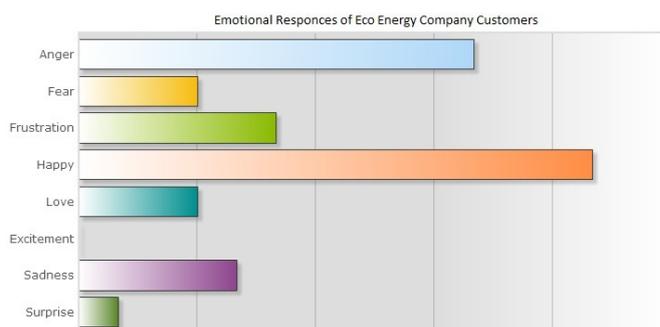
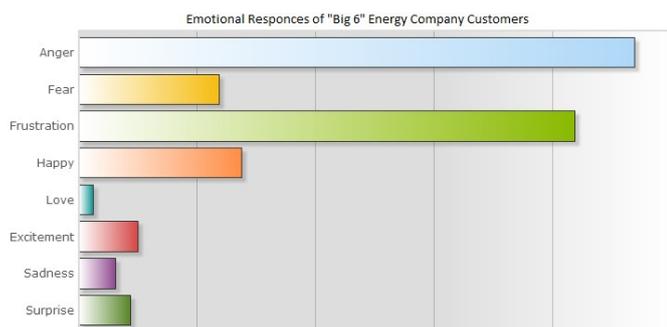


MEASURING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE OVER TIME AND HOW WE CAN USE THIS

Recently, as part of my work with Akumen, I have been looking a lot at customer experiences and how they can be used to help the companies they are written about. I have previously used Akumen's PanSentic software to read feedback and give me measures for the emotional response of customers as well as the customer's perception of the attitudes of staff. I have looked a lot at what peoples experiences of eco-energy companies are compared to the bigger conventional companies. Along with being a great example to illustrate Akumens methodology, I have recently become a customer of an eco-energy company and I want to know what I'm in for!

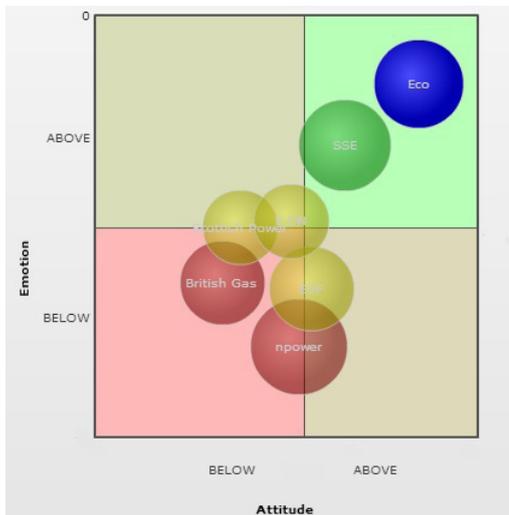
The graphs below show us the emotional responses of customers and the perceived attitudes of staff from "Big 6" Energy companies and from "Eco-Energy" companies.



For more on what these graphs tell us please see some of my other articles in our blog at www.akumen.co.uk.

From these graphs we can create a score for attitude and a score for emotion. Companies can then be plotted on a graph to show how they compare to other companies for both emotional responses and attitude.

The graph below shows the positions of all 6 of the "Big 6" as well as of a combined "Eco Energy" group.

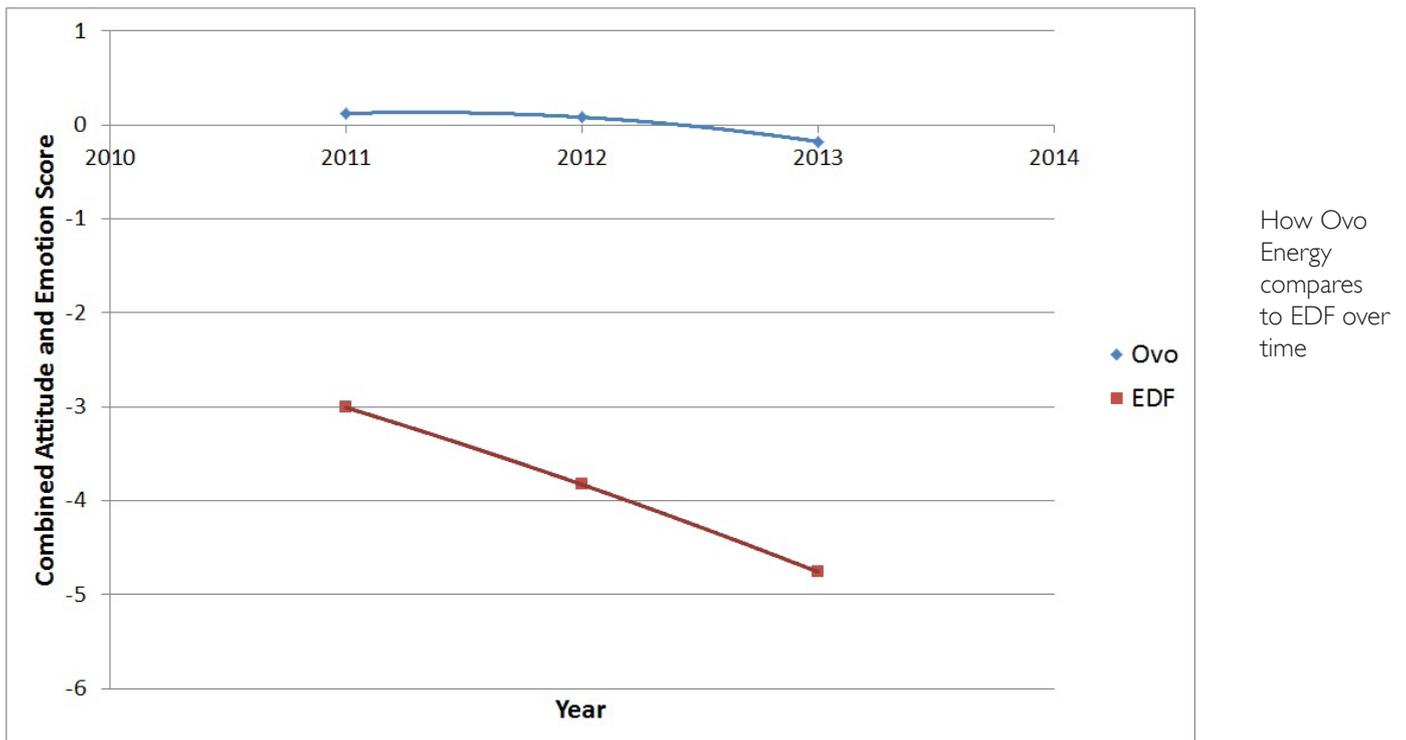


We can see from this that customers have a better experience with Eco Energy companies than they do with any of the "Big 6". This can be very helpful if you are a potential customer looking to see which company to go with.

What this graph shows us is a single point in time. Each company had 50 customer experiences analysed, so this shows us what the last 50 pieces of feedback say about a company. This is very useful to potential customers and it shows companies something that is very interesting and important to be aware of. But wouldn't it be more useful to see if companies are improving, staying the same or getting worse?

To do this we need to take customer experiences and analyse them by time period. As an example, I have chosen to look at one of the Big 6 companies, EDF, and compare how it has performed compared to one of the more eco-focused companies, Ovo Energy. I have looked back to see how these companies scored on emotional response and staff attitude combined in 2011, 2012 and how they

are currently doing for 2013. It is important to note at this point that, due to the fact that Ovo Energy only started in 2009, there was not enough feedback just from 2011 to get a good picture so I have included feedback from 2010 in the 2011 category to provide a good start level for their performance. Shown below is a graph to show how the two companies have performed compared to each other over time.



We can see that Ovo Energy are rated much higher by our scoring method than EDF throughout this time period. Both companies are getting slightly worse with time but the difference with EDF is much greater. It is important to consider what the scores actually mean. A positive score says that customers, on average, had a positive emotional response and perceived the attitude of staff positively, overall they had a positive experience. Conversely, a negative score says that customers had a negative emotional response and perceived a negative staff attitude, they had a negative experience. The greater the score (both positively and negatively), the stronger the feeling that customers experienced either a positive or negative experience.

So, with this in mind we can see that initially Ovo Energy customers are, on average, having a positive experience. This is true in 2011 and in 2012, but in 2013 customers are just beginning to have more of a negative experience than a positive one. However, for EDF in 2011 the feeling of having a negative experience was strong and it has just gotten stronger with time.

So how does this compare to actual performance? In the last few years the "Big 6" have seen customer numbers decrease and "eco focused" companies have seen their customer bases grow. One reason for this could be that customers are dissatisfied with the larger companies and so are leaving to try the smaller eco companies who have developed a great reputation for good customer service. I think we can see evidence for a link between customer satisfaction and growth in customer numbers.

So, in summary, we have seen is that by looking at the customer experiences over time we can identify trends in customer feelings. We have seen that we may be able to use this to predict either a growing or declining customer base and hence we can try to identify causes for customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction and attempt to either improve our falling image or keep adding to a good reputation. Finally, I feel it is important to say that we can do all of this just with the readily available resource that is real customer feedback, and that to not use this resource is to miss out on the chance to gain this kind of real insight.

I think I might have made the right move switching to an eco-focused supplier!