

A COMPARISON OF THE APPROACHES TO CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE ANALYSIS

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Abstract. Nowadays, customer experience is receiving much attention in scientific and managerial community. Scholars and practitioners state that customer experience is the next area of competition. For a long time, there has been a call for a uniform, accurate definition, definition of its components, and the development of the customer experience frameworks. As this topic is new, there has been a considerable fragmentation. The question is if the fragmentation is still present and how can we address it.

The aim of this paper is to summarize research on customer experience analysis and to explore and compare the dimensions describing customer experience listed in seven conceptual models with findings from 17 research projects on customer experience conducted after the year 2010. The purpose of this is to summarize recent knowledge, get the most comprehensive view on customer experience and its possible decomposition, and to reveal possible relationships between the dimensions.

Based on a review of the available literature, the paper juxtaposes several approaches to customer experience analysis and compares their results to find similarities and differences among them. In the first step, the dimensions and factors of the customer experience were extracted from the seven models to analyze customer experience and they were compared with each other. This resulted in a set of dimensions and factors. In the next step, customer experience factors and dimensions were extracted from 17 practical research papers on customer experience. Finally, based on their descriptions and found similarities, the dimensions and factors were put together into several groups, as this grouping and creation of the new universal set of dimensions might solve the fragmentation issue.

Keywords: *Customer experience (CX), dimensions, research methods, scale development.*

JEL Classification: M31.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of customer experience is considered as the new direction of focus in the area of marketing. While the goods and services are becoming commoditized, the experiences provided to costumers are considered so unique that they create the next level for differentiation and the new field for competitive battles too (Badgett et al., 2007; Bolton et al., 2014; Meyer & Schwager, 2007; Reinartz & Ulaga, 2008; Schmitt, 2003). Experience management improves trust, customer satisfaction, loyalty, financial performance, and influences customers' behavior

across the range of contexts, quality and duration of the relationship between brand and customer (Ballester & Aleman, 2001; Britton & Rose, 2004; Demangeot & Broderick, 2006; Hardyman et al., 2015; Klaus, 2011; Klaus & Maklan, 2012; Nguyen et al., 2014; Klaus, 2014a; Moorman et al., 1992). Aware of all that, managerial and scientific community is trying to understand the experience (Frow & Payne, 2007; Johnston & Kong, 2011; Klaus, 2014b; Klaus & Maklan, 2013; Lemke et al., 2011; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015; Schouten et al., 2007). They are analyzing the whole process from the creation of experience, its measurement, mapping the outcomes to its improvement (Voss et al., 2008). However, several problems were identified through years, such as the lack of the definition of the customer experience, the lack of corresponding measurements, and the lack of complex customer experience framework (Maklan & Klaus, 2011). The main problem remained the same, and it is related to how companies view the customer experience (Klaus, 2013a).

The crucial prerequisite of analyzing customer experience is the ability to take the role of a customer. But the companies are still struggling to leave their business process view and, instead, to adopt the customers' perception of customer journey. Thus, they are not able to understand the customers' roles and customers' cognitive, affective, emotional, social, physical responses and, worse, they can't affect these results in the desired way or co-create the experience with the customer (Bolton et al., 2014; Cho & Park, 2001; Gentile et al., 2007; Jones & Sasser, 1995; Laming & Mason, 2014; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012; Payne et al., 2008; Schmitt, 1999; Verhoef et al., 2009).

Based on this shortage in customer experience management, several researchers developed methods and frameworks for making customers' language more understandable for the managerial sphere (Parasuraman et al., 1988, 2005; Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003; Fornerino, 2006; Gentile et al., 2007; Verhoef et al., 2009; Klaus & Maklan, 2012).

1. CONCEPTUAL MODELS AND THEIR DIMENSIONS

As customer experience is in the focus of scholars for more than five years, several research projects on customer experience analysis were conducted. Some of the authors used SERVQUAL as their guide for analyzing customer experience; however, this approach was found inappropriate because of its limitations to fully capture the complexity of customer experience (Sureshchandar et al., 2002; Ladhari, 2009), because it focuses only on analyzing the gap between expectations and actual delivery (Parasuraman et al., 1988). On the other hand, SERVQUAL proved to be universal enough to be valid and reliable across a wide range of service contexts (Maklan Klaus, 2011).

Researchers tried to establish new standards for measuring the customer experience (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003; Gentile et al., 2007; Verhoef et al., 2009; Klaus & Maklan, 2012). Some models reflected the rise of the e-commerce, some build upon old approaches with the intention to deepen the understanding of customers' perception. Hence, the dimensions of some models are more concrete

and focused on the customer as an emotional human being, some are, on the other hand, focused on the process of acquiring goods or services.

2. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Within the exploratory research, a review of the available literature on customer experience models and practical research projects is used for the extraction of dimensions for their later comparison.

2.1 Exploration of Conceptual Models

The set of seven models was selected as the most mentioned, cross-referenced or unique models that represent gradual development in this field, especially their key dimensions through which they perceive customer experience. SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988) model was chosen because of its universality (Maklan & Klaus, 2011), the weight other researchers give to it, and because it is the oldest model used by researchers while analyzing customer experience. E-S-QUAL model (Parasurman et al., 2005) was then chosen, because it is considered as an improved version of SERVQUAL, ready for technological and online world. Another model reflecting these changes in the global market and so chosen for the comparison is eTailQ (Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2003). Consumption experience model (Fornerino, 2006) was chosen because of its unique focus on the experience while consuming art and because of its influence on the next chosen model called Customer experience model (Gentile et al., 2007). This model and Conceptual model of customer experience (Verhoef et al., 2009) were chosen because they were used by Klaus & Maklan (2012) for comparison with their new EXQ model. And EXQ model was chosen because it is the most recent result of the scientific effort to come up with the appropriate framework or model to customer experience analysis. During the model selection, emphasis was put on their date of publication to be evenly spread over time.

2.2 SERVQUAL Model

There are five dimensions of SERVQUAL scale (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The first one is reliability representing the ability of the provider to reliably and accurately deliver a service that he promised to the customer, which involves, for example, keeping promises related to the delivery, pricing, or complaint handling. The second one is responsiveness, in other words, the willingness to help customers, to provide prompt service and the attitude of personnel towards customer complaints, requests, and questions. The third dimension of SERVQUAL scale is assurance, the overall ability to build the trust and confidence between the company and the customer. The next one, empathy, evaluates individual approach and the attention the company provides to each customer. And the fifth dimension, tangibility, contains the appearance of all the elements that represent the service in the physical form (e. g., facilities, equipment, personnel).

2.3 eTailQ Experience Model

Wolfenbarger & Gilly (2003) in response to the growing phenomenon of e-commerce developed the four-item scale for measuring customer experience in the online environment. The first item of four is website design, which includes all the elements at the website that can influence customer's experience, such as navigation style, information search, ordering process, or personalization. Fulfillment/reliability dimension evaluates the accuracy of the description of the product on the website and the delivery of the right product at the promised time. The next dimension is the customer service, which should be quick, responsive, and helpful. The fourth dimension, security/privacy, is based on the security of payments and the privacy of all shared information.

2.4 E-S-QUAL Model

Parasuraman et al. (2005) also reacted on the popularity of e-commerce and modified accordingly their SERVQUAL scale. The result is a new four-dimensional scale called E-S-QUAL. The first dimension is efficiency covering the ease and speed of accessing and using the website. Fulfillment reflects the credibility of the information about availability and delivery date and the degree to which they are fulfilled. System availability is all about correct technical functioning of the website. The last privacy dimension evaluates the safety of the website and how company handles and protects the customer's personal information.

2.5 Consumption Experience Model

Fornerino (2006) in his research analyzed customer experience from the perspective of the attendees of the concert and the viewers of the movie. He also identified five basic dimensions of customer experience perception. The first dimension called sensorial/perceptual is the dimension that reflects the stimulation of senses. Affective dimension references to the moments of strong emotions, excitement, joy, pleasure, or sadness. The third, called physical/behavioral, describes the visible manifestations aroused by the most intense moments. Social is the next dimension that relates to the interaction, even the communion, with other people (friends but also unknown). The last one is the cognitive dimension containing thoughts produced during the event whether they are related to it.

2.6 Customer Experience Model

Gentile et al. (2007), drawing on passing literature, created a model with six main dimensions of customer experience. Sensorial dimension, simply put, contains everything that affects the senses. The aim of elements within this dimension is to provide good sensorial experience through sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell to arise, for example, excitement, satisfaction, or esthetic pleasure. Emotional dimension is based on influencing the moods, feelings, and emotions to create an emotional relation with the company, brand, or its products. The third, cognitive dimension, incorporates customer's thinking and conscious mental processes. To influence experience from the cognitive perspective, the company may engage its

customers by using their creativity, problem solving abilities, or lead them to revise their ideas and expectations. Pragmatic dimension is closely connected with the act of doing something in practice and the concept of usability. Through the lifestyle dimension, the company affirms shared values and beliefs with the customer through the product, its consumption, and use. The sixth, relational dimension, derives from customer's social context, relationship with other people, and his ideals. To influence experience from this point of view, the company can through its products encourage the customers to use or consume together, to create the communities of fans or make the customers feel sense of belonging to a social group or community.

2.7 Conceptual Model of Customer Experience

Verhoef et al. (2009) developed a conceptual model of customer experience creation based on the prior re-search. The first dimension in this model is social environment. This dimension is based on customer-to-customer interactions, for example, customers' interactions with other customers in retail space, interactions with family, or friends shopping with the customer. The second, service interface, is similar to the first one but with the difference that it stands on the interactions between the customer and company employees (e. g., retail staff, service personnel). Retail atmosphere dimension consists of all aspects of the retail such as in-store music, color of the interior, placement of the equipment, etc. Assortment represents the ability of the company to provide a wide range of different, unique and quality products. Price dimension consists of all the benefits the company can pro-vide, from loyalty programs, personalized promotions to customized products. Customer experience is nowadays perceived from the multi-channel perspective, and so the experience of one channel can have an impact on the experience in another channel. This fact is captured by the sixth dimension called customer experiences in alternative channels. The last dimension, retail brand, takes into account that customers in many cases buy products from one brand in the store of another brand and so the resulting experience is determined by the experience provided by both these brands.

2.8 EXQ Framework

In 2012, Klaus & Maklan (2012) published a paper where they conceptualize and validate their own method for measuring the customer experience called EXQ. From the wide variety of sub-dimensions, they defined four main dimensions that influence overall perceived experience. The first dimension, product experience, advocates that customers want to have an opportunity to choose from a range of products and to have ability to compare different offerings. The dimension of the outcome focus is based on reducing the customers' transaction costs (e. g., searching for new providers). The moments of truth reflect the quality and the flexibility of the service that company provides to the customer once any complications arise. The fourth dimension, peace of mind, represents all the customer's appraisals, mainly of emotional character, of his whole customer journey.

2.9 Dimensions of Customer Experience Models

Table 1 summarizes the customer experience dimensions of the models above. Although some of the models also describe many sub-dimensions, only the main dimensions were chosen for better comparison of the models.

Table 1. Overview of the dimensions of customer experience models

SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman <i>et al.</i> , 1988)	eTailQ experience (Wolfinger & Gilly, 2003)	E-S-QUAL (Parasuraman <i>et al.</i> , 2005)	Consumption experience model (Fornerino, 2006)	Customer experience model (Gentile <i>et al.</i> , 2007)	Conceptual model of customer experience (Verhoef <i>et al.</i> , 2009)	EXQ framework (Klaus & Maklan, 2012)
Reliability	Website design	Efficiency	Sensorial/ Perceptual	Sensorial	Social environment	Product experience
Responsiveness	Fulfillment/ Reliability	Fulfillment	Affective	Emotional	Service interface	Outcome focus
Assurance	Security/ Privacy	System availability	Physical/ Behavioral	Cognitive	Retail atmosphere	Moments of truth
Empathy	Customer service	Privacy	Social	Pragmatic	Assortment	Peace of mind
Tangibility			Cognitive	Lifestyle	Price	
				Relational	Customer experiences in alternative channels	
					Retail brand	

2.10 Similarities in Dimensional Decomposition

In the description of the dimensions and the table above, we can find several similarities. The reliability, assurance, fulfillment, and system availability dimensions from SERVQUAL, eTailQ, and E-S-QUAL models are all about building trust between the company and the customer. The website design, efficiency, pragmatic, and outcome focus dimensions from eTailQ, E-S-QUAL, Customer experience models, and EXQ framework have a common aspect of the ease of use. The responsiveness, customer service, service interface, and moments of truth dimensions from SERVQUAL, eTailQ, Conceptual model of customer experience, and EXQ framework share the factor of service that company/employees provide to customers. The affective, emotional, and peace of mind dimension present in Consumption experience, Customer experience models, and EXQ framework are built upon the perception of the consumer as a human being with emotions. The social, relational, and social environment dimensions

from Consumption experience model, Customer experience model, and Conceptual model of customer experience are connected through social context and influence of other people on the customer. Tangibility, website design and retail atmosphere from SERVQUAL, eTailQ, and Conceptual model of customer experience are referencing to the environment in which the customer makes a purchase or related pre- and post-activities.

2.11 Exploration of Research Projects

After 2010, more than a dozen of scholar research projects on customer experience consisting of dimensional decomposition were conducted, mostly in Europe and Asia. Table 2 creates a summary of 17 of them with the additional information about the methods of data collection and data analysis, industry/field, year of publishing, and country of data collection. From this set of papers, used or observed dimensions and factors of customer experience will be later extracted as was done in the case of conceptual models.

Table 2. Overview of approaches and methods to analyse customer experience with additional information

	Author	Methods		Industry/ field	Year of publishing	Country of data collection
		Data collection	Data analysis			
1	Chang & Horng (2010)	Questionnaire	EFA, Cronbach's alpha, CFA	Clothing & accessories, food & beverage	2010	Taiwan
2	Maklan & Klaus (2011)	Soft laddering interview	EFA, CFA, IFI, CFI, SEM	Banking	2011	UK
3	Sirapracha & Tocquer (2012)	Questionnaire	EFA, Cronbach's alpha, MANOVA, ANOVA	Telecommu- nication	2012	Thailand
4	Rose <i>et al.</i> (2012)	Online questionnaire	SEM, Cronbach's alpha	Online shopping	2012	USA, Europe
5	Wijaithammarit & Taechamaneestit (2012)	Questionnaire	Cronbach's alpha, SEM, Path analysis	Supercenter shopping	2012	Thailand
6	Badgare & Jain (2013)	Informal interview	EFA, Cronbach's alpha, CFA	Multiple	2013	India

	Author	Methods		Industry/ field	Year of publishing	Country of data collection
		Data collection	Data analysis			
7	Klaus <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Soft laddering interview	EFA, CFA, IFI, CFI, SEM	Banking	2013	Italy
8	Klaus & Maklan (2013)	Online and printed questionnaire	EFA, CFA, SEM	Multiple	2013	UK
9	Klaus (2013b)	Soft laddering interview	Exploratory research, ECT	Online retail	2013	UK, USA, Sweden
10	Garg <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Questionnaire	EFA, Cronbach's alpha, CFA	Retail banking	2014	India
11	Chauhan & Manhas (2014)	Questionnaire	EFA, Cronbach's alpha, ANOVA, comparative analysis	Aviation	2014	India
12	Balaji <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Online survey	EFA, CFA, SEM	Media consumption	2015	International
13	Shim <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Online survey	EFA, CFA, MANOVA, ANOVA, SEM	Online shopping on the apparel website	2015	International
14	Menachem <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Questionnaire	EFA, Cronbach's alpha, CFA	Telecommu- nication	2015	India
15	Chahal and Dutta (2015)	Questionnaire	EFA, Cronbach's alpha, CFA	Banking	2015	India
16	Stein & Ramaseshan (2016)	Semi-structure interview	SIT, inductive thematic analysis, cross- case analysis	Multiple	2016	Australia
17	Kashif <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Questionnaire	Harman's one- factor test, CFA, SEM	Healthcare	2016	Malaysia

3. RESULTS

There are dozens of differently named dimensions, but most of them can be categorized into the dimensional groups defined by the models from Chapter 1. For example, outcome focus, efficiency, interactive speed, ease of use, perceived control and benefits, usability convenience, online functional elements, speed, comfort, interface usability, navigation and technological dimensions can be, based

on their definitions, clustered together. Service providers, moments of truth, customer service, satisfaction of employees, service experience, employees, recognition, service, customer care, employee–customer interaction can together create another cluster. Third cluster can be composed of other customers, customers' companions, connectedness, social presence, presence of other customers, relational and communicative dimensions. Customers themselves, peace of mind, mood and affective dimensions are also very similar to each other. Price, customization, sale promotions, value for money, interactivity can be considered as the basis for the next cluster. Dimensions sharing the next cluster are the ones called physical surroundings, atmosphere, context familiarity, servicescape, store/gallery & self-service, and atmospheric. Trust, communication, reliability and billing create the next one. Product-oriented cluster is formed by product experience, packaging, distinct, remote features, watch, network. There are also two small clusters. The first consists of lifestyle and behavioral dimensions, and the second one consists of product presence and sensory dimensions.

But there are also present new dimensions that cannot be simply clustered with the dimensions from Chapter 1. One such cluster includes dimensions called brand, brand experience, and brand image. Then there is the cluster of telepresence, joy, leisure, online hedonic elements, and hedonism. The third cluster groups aesthetics and online aesthetics. Core service and core dimension create the fourth cluster. The fifth cluster comprises the service process and process dimensions.

Some dimensions are too universal, lack sufficient description, or unique so they can't be clearly clustered with other dimensions from other research projects. These dimensions are: challenge, skill, merchandise, product availability, accessibility, advertising, service mix, post purchase experience, marketing mix, customer interaction, value addition, novelty, safety, and intellect

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Secondary research of papers aimed at analyzing customer experience shows that, continuously through the years, several models that reacted on the changes in market environment emerged. There is also already a significant amount of practical research projects from different industries. Most of the authors use the dimensions of customer experience devised for their specific research. Only a tiny portion precisely reflects any of the models. This gives rise to the hypothesis that there is the existence of fragmentation in the dimensional decomposition of customer experience. Although there has long been a call for unification in the field of customer experience, it seems that it has not happened yet. On the other hand, it allowed the authors to describe customer experience in a much richer way. Despite this, their descriptions of dimensions suggest that they overlap each other and so might be grouped into less than sixteen clusters. This number is only rough, and the possibility of clustering needs to be verified by further research based on more advanced research methods. As the result, a new scale of dimensions could be developed while maintaining a richer descriptive potential gained through the analysis of customer experience research papers from Chapter 2. This could help to define the scale that could be enough rich to be used in most research projects, and

it could also help non-scientific sphere to better understand the dimensions of customer experience.

An interesting finding is that the dimensions related to user experience seem very similar to the dimensions found in customer experience, just applied in the virtual world. This creates the next hypothesis that the dimensions of user experience are similar to the dimensions of customer experience. It might be valuable to verify this correlation, and possibly analyze and incorporate the knowledge from more user experience research projects. Nowadays, the user experience plays an increasingly bigger role in the overall customer experience. In addition, this could indicate to the need for closer cooperation between customer experience and user experience departments and, thus, be a new factor of the success for companies in the world where experience is the main differentiator.

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