

An Assessment of Customer Experience Concept: Looking back to move forward

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Introduction

Based on the overarching research purpose of this paper centered around building a new CX conceptual framework, the research objectives are: (1) to identify the main knowledge structure of customer experience; (2) to understand how the knowledge structure of customer experience has changed over time.

Background to customer experience

It seems that Customer experience (CX) has attracted considerable attention. Since the term first emerged in Carbone and Haeckel (1994) published in marketing management in an article on customer experience engineering, it has been a magnet of countless propositions and interpretations (Tynan and McKechnie 2009). This growth of academic attention is most visibly demonstrated in the multiplicity of definitions in extant CX literature. In a CX review paper, Jain et al. (2017) combed through the labyrinth of CX literature and collected a total of twenty-two CX and CX-related (e.g., service experience, consumption experience) definitions. CX has been variously characterised as a journey (Johnston and Kong 2011; Rawson, Duncan, and Jones 2013), a stage (Pine and Gilmore 1999; Tynan and McKechnie 2009), an immersion (Grundey 2008), or as a reaction to a series of touchpoints (Gentile, Spiller, and Noci 2007; Homburg, Jozić, and Kuehnl 2017; Lemke, Clark, and Wilson 2011; Lemon and Verhoef 2016; Meyer and Schwager 2007).

In a recent systematic review of CX literature, Kranzbuhler et al. (2018) made a call for “an integration and synthesis of the literature” (p. 436). Their review of CX literature (extending from 1982 to 2016) came to the conclusion that the CX construct suffers from what management literature called an *umbrella syndrome*. According to organizational behaviour theorists, Hirsch and Levin (1999) argued that popular umbrella constructs can become too all-encompassing for its own good; in other words, when something means *all things to all people*, it can end up meaning *less*. In a critical review of CX, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2013) implored serious CX researchers to focus more on developing

integrative framework based on existing constructs, rather than introducing *more and more constructs* and terminologies in an already crowded knowledge field. Lemon and Verhoef's (2016) extensive conceptual-historical narrative of the CX concept also noted with some dismay the multiple definitions in literature and the need for serious researchers to appropriate only widely accepted definitions.

If there is one thing the majority of reviewers agree on, it is that at this stage of concept development, theoretical consolidation must take precedence over enlargement. While most would agree with the prognosis, what remains highly problematic is still the prescription. What form and shape should the CX framework assume? How can we arrive at a structure that will sufficiently encapsulate the multi-faceted nature of the CX concept? In their CX review, Homburg et al. (2017) suggest that to be successful in integration, the key is locating a novel, simple, parsimonious perspective, yet sufficiently generous in order to house the many strands of CX theories. Therefore, we assert that a rigorous examination of CX foundational intellectual structure is required.

Based on the overarching research purpose of this paper are, two research objectives are: (1) to identify the main knowledge structure of customer experience; (2) to understand how the knowledge structure of customer experience has changed over time. To achieve the research goal, our strategy is use bibliometrics methods. The bibliometric analysis tracking customer experience literature over into three intellectual eras (1996-2010, 2011-2016 and 2017-2019) provides researchers and readers with a longitudinal overview of CX's intellectual structure. We noted that qualitative reviews offered valuable insight about CX concepts and all identified the underlying knowledge structure in CX literature. However, none has quantitatively investigated the knowledge structure of CX or identified the themes behind this construct through quantitative literature review approach, and bibliometrics methods.

This study makes two major contributions to the customer experience literature (CXL). Firstly, it provides the first full-scale bibliometric analysis to date of the CXL's intellectual structure using co-citation metrics. Second, The deployment of bibliometrics is apt at this juncture because a number of CXL's difficulties arise from the complexities of its mixed and diverse literary traditions. An analysis of its intellectual structure allows to ascertain with greater precision the sources and solutions to these persistent problems so that future CX research can be built on a stronger and sounder knowledge base and footing.

To begin with, we introduce the bibliometric approach with multi-dimensional analysis (MDS), the hierarchical cluster analysis (HCA), the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) as the

co-citation methods implemented, followed by the study findings. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of implications.

Method

Adhering to establishing a bibliometric protocol (Samiee and Chabowski 2012; Chabowski et al. 2010; 2013; 2018), the identification of articles was initiated with a search for keywords. From an initial review of CX literature, 30 keywords were identified. To mitigate research bias, six independent reviewers with extensive background in CX research were invited to review this list. As a result, the following keywords were shortlisted: experience, customer experience, consumer experience, service experience, brand experience, service dominant logic, consumer research, services marketing, and service design. Based on the final list of nine keywords, the search in the WOS database yielded 412 articles. Articles were selected based on a keyword being found in one of the four fields in the WOS database: author keywords, abstract, reference-based article identifiers, and title (Cornelius et al. 2006; McCain 1990; Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruíz-Navarro 2004; Schildt et al. 2006; Thomson Reuters 2009). In order to increase the validity of the results, all papers were reviewed. Furthermore, to reduce any bias, the exact selection criteria was defined beforehand, with three independent scholars having conducted the selection (Baumgartner and Pieters 2003; Kunz and Hogueve 2011; Zupic and Čater 2015).

From the 412 articles, a total of 7,684 citations were retrieved. The data were classified under three periods: (1) 1996–2010 (hereafter P1); (2) 2011–2016 (hereafter P2); and (3) 2017–2019 (hereafter P3). In determining the span of the three eras, the development of key intellectual eras to CXL was applied as a guide. For example, citations in P1 (1996-2010) reflect early CXL writings dominated by service marketing literature. Citations in P2 (2011-2016), on the other hand, depict the “golden age” of experiential marketing literature with exemplars like Schmitt (1998), Pine and Gilmore (1999) and Gentile et al (2008). Lastly, the citations in P3 (2017-2019) mirror the maturation of CXL as a whole with contributors taking a more integrative approach. Exemplars in this era are Schmitt and Zarantonello (2013), as well as Lemon and Verhoef (2016). A coding process was employed to ensure consistency. By using the frequency count in *bibexcel*, researchers were able to compile a list of highly cited articles from the sample.

Afterwards, the co-citation matrix was created where each value in the matrix demonstrates the number of times two papers were co-cited in a third document, since the most highly referenced CX articles can be perceived as the most influential in the CXL (cf.

Kuhn 1996). Typically, to obtain a fair or good model for bibliometric analysis, the use of around 25 documents is considered optimal (Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruiz-Navarro 2004). Adhering to this industry practice, the current study adopted for further analysis 26 publications for P1, 21 publications for P2 and 22 publications for P3.

To analyse the co-citation data, a multi-method was exerted: Exploratory factor analysis (EFA), hierarchical cluster analysis (HCA), and metric multidimensional scaling (MDS) were used to investigate the intellectual structure of CXL; the advantages of using three methods allow for a comparison with bibliometric data, providing underexplored topics for future CX research (Samiee and Chabowski 2012). MDS is the method used mostly in the research to identify influential works (Knoke and Yang 2008; Marsden 1990; McCain 1990). Adhering to research-wide practices, stress values that are good (less than .10) or fair (between .10) are regarded as an acceptable standard (Kruskal 1964; Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruiz-Navarro 2004). In the current study, a good stress value of .058 was obtained in the P1; .054 in P2; and .048 in the P3. A maximum standardized distance of .25 or less was then applied to determine which research groups were explicable and lucid (Hair et al. 1998). Research groups and cliques were then identified on the basis of this assumption. It should be noted that research groups are defined as groups consisting of at least two publications, while a research clique refers to three or more influential works grouped together (Alba and Moore 1983; Wasserman and Faust 1994). HCA, on the other hand, by using the bottom-up approach (e.g., Charvet et al. 2008) builds layers and layers of agglomerated data through the merging of clusters until they form a pyramidal hierarchy. In contrast, the EFA method, where the items can load on to over one factor, can illustrate the span between? multiple factors (Zupic and Cater 2015).

Co-citation Results

As indicated in our results, the intellectual structure of CX research is noticeable. In this section, the MDS, EFA, HCA findings are discussed, as they relate to the co-citation analysis for each time period (1996-2010, 2011-2016; 2017-2019) aiming to evaluate the longitudinal underpinnings of CX research.

Intellectual Structure of Customer Experience

MDS Results: 1996-2010 (P1)

An evaluation of Figure 1 demonstrates eleven research groups from the first period of our study. Three related groups in the general area of hedonic consumption experience (Groups 1, 6, 7) are centred on hedonic and service experiences (Holbrook and Hirshman

1982; Shaw and Ivens 2002). They also cover peripheral topics of extraordinary hedonic experience (Arnould and Price 1993) and brand community (McAlexander et al. 2002). Together, these groups clearly demonstrate the experiential marketing literature in the early CX domain.

<<<Insert Figure 1>>>

Emphasizing on service experience (Group 3 and Group 4), the concentration on servicescapes model (Bitner 1992), one aspect focuses on service dominant logic (SDL) (Vargo and Lush 2004) while another on service encounters (Bitner 1990). Relatedly, the research clique concentrating on customer perception of service quality (Group 10) provides a multi-item instrument for quantifying the service expectation perception (Parasuraman et al. 1985; Parasuraman et al. 1988) and the customer behavioral consequences of service quality (Zeithaml et al. 1996). This unveils the service marketing efforts in the CX domain.

Placing emphasis on consumer behaviour (Groups 8 and Group 9) is the basis for the research during this period. Rather than foregrounding the experience alone, the relevance of insights at a managerial level are indicated; this includes satisfaction and purchase, actual repurchase behaviors (Oliver 1980; Mittal and Kamakura 2001) and consumption-related emotions (Richins 1997). In a related group (i.e. Group 11), the concentration on experience design and loyalty behavior introduced an approach that includes emotional responses as mediating factors between the physical and relational elements and loyalty behaviors (Pullman and Gross 2004; Shostack 1984). This reveals the satisfaction and loyalty research efforts in the CX domain.

Research on customer-brand relationship and brand community (namely Group 5) provides the relationship premise at the level of consumers' lived experiences with their brands. By combining relationship, branding and sociological theories become associated with consumer behavior (Fournier 1998; Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). In a related group, the concentration on experience design and loyalty behavior (Group 11) experience design and loyalty behavior. In a related group, the concentration on total customer experience and economic experience (Group 2) is a unique topic. This theme shows that the holistic customer experience consists of both functional and emotional dimensions (Berry et al. 2002; Pine II and James 1998).

2011-2016 (P2)

We identified seven groups in this period (see Figure 2). A focus on service quality (Group 6 and Group 7) signals the continued significance of service marketing in the CEL. Parasuraman et al. (1988) and Zeithaml et al. (1996) display the early effort of service quality model in CEL, while Vargo and Lush (2008) and Payne et al. (2008) focus on continuing the evaluation of new service-dominant logic.

<<<Insert Figure 2>>>

Four related groups emphasizing brand experience (Groups 2-5) include four dimensions of brand experience on brand experience model and process (Brakus et al. 2009), as well as four components of CX (Pine and Gilmore 1998). To complete this chain, one aspect is the focus on creating a hedonic experience to customers (Holbrook and Hirshman 1982), while another emphasizes customer experience creation at a managerial level (Gentile et al. 2007). As a set, this chain shows the multifaceted nature of experiential marketing and branding in the CX domain. A research clique emphasizing total customer experience (Group 1) indicates the expansion of topics related to strategies for different stages of consumption experience in CXL.

2017-2019 (P3)

Figure 3 presents the four research groups in this period. An emphasis on brand experience and customer experience (Group 1) shows the comprehensive perspective in recent CX research. By incorporating topics related to branding process, research established a staged approach to CX during this time period (Brakus et al. 2009; Verhoef et al. 2009). The study of customer journey and brand experience (Group 2) reveals differentiated stages of purchase during the CX. This is important in the evaluation of CX (Brakus et al. 2009; Lemon and Verhoef 2016). A research clique emphasizing total customer experience for Group 3 (Gentile et al. 2007; Holbrook and Hirshman, 1982; Meyer and Schwager 2007; Verhoef et al. 2009) and Group 4 (a conceptual model for customer experience quality and its impact on customer relationship outcomes).

<<< Insert Fig 3 here >>>

HCA Results

1996-2010 (P1)

The HCA method identified four clusters in the P1 containing different intellectual structure which have had an influence on the knowledge structure of customer experience, as shown in figure 4. The HCA findings for the P1 are similar to the MDS results; however, the differences in both methods show the precise nature of applying each method. Service quality (cluster 1) reflects the scholarly attempts for developing scales for assessing service quality in retailing and service firms from a customer perspective. Service design (Cluster 2) investigates the influence of firm physical surroundings on customer experience. Similar to cluster 2, branding (Cluster 4) represents the relationship among different aspects of service elements (both online and offline) associated with creating an enhanced customer experience as an important role in determining the success of a service/retailing firms. Finally, consumer research (Cluster 3) investigates the stimulus related to the symbolic, social, and hedonic aspects of experience.

2011-2016 (P2)

For P2, service dominant logics (Cluster 1) highlight that customer experience is not limited to a single form of a firm offering, while the entire service ecosystem impacts on customer experience in which it is intertwined with value. Drawing on overviewing of service and service quality literature, online marketing (Cluster 2) aims to provide a set of components of what makes an online experience compelling for customers. Additionally, this cluster aspires to identify the key outcomes of this compelling experience. In alignment with the two previous clusters, service marketing (cluster 3) approaches customer experience as a strategic perspective by mainly focusing on how managers can create value in form of experience for their customers (Fig. 5).

2017-2019 (P3)

For P3, service design (cluster 1) depicts articles based on service-dominant logics, that are related to measuring customer experience in both online and offline environment. Closely linked to cluster 1, (Experiential marketing) cluster 2 offers a strategic framework for experimental marketing. It is noteworthy that the work of Lemon and Verhoef (2016) aims to empirically relate customer journey to customer experience. Finally, retailing (Cluster 3) focuses on the influence of macro factors on customer experience in a retailing setting (Fig. 6).

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EFA results

1996-2010 (P1)

For the first period of analysis four factors emerged from the EFA analysis. Service design (Factor 1) is concentrated on service design branding (factor 2) shows how branding is related to the customer experience. Service marketing (factor 3) represents the relationship of service quality and customer satisfaction. Finally, online marketing (factor 4) reveals how customers' experience is related to online marketing (Fig. 7).

2011-2016 (P2)

As for the second period, the results of EFA analysis also revealed four factors. Retailing (factor 1) highlights how different elements have influence on customer experience in a retailing context. Service design (factor 2), similar to factor 1 in previous factors, stresses the importance of service design in delivering a satisfactory customer experience. Service-dominant logics (factor 3) aims to show how customer experience can positively result in value co-creation with the customers. Finally, along similar lines, service marketing (factor 4) investigates how managers can co-create value with their customers in the form of customer experience (Fig. 8).

2017-2019 (P3)

As for the third period, Experiential marketing (factor 1) reflects the experimental marketing. In addition, this factors aims to develop a framework for this approach to marketing. Retailing (factor 2) highlights the importance of creating superior customer experience in a retailing context. Finally, sensory marketing (factor 3) indicates the new trend in customer experience, also called sensory experience (Fig. 9)

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Discussion

Multi-method Comparison

A bird's eye view of the MDS, HCA, and EFA analysis show the outlines of three major clusters that share epistemological and ontological heritage of customer experience. Each period not only contains an intertwining of related research groups, clusters, and factors agglomerated from the MDS, HCA, and EFA analysis process, but also a constellation of independent events within its immediate proximity.

Although the data for all three applied methods have been identical, the outcomes of each method are different. However, all three applied techniques established valuable tools for identifying the related subfields in the configuration of highly cited articles in each period. It is evident that each of the analysis yields different outcomes which could not have been attainable by a single method. In the following sections these three main interrelated subgroups of customer experience are described.

Subgroup 1- Service Marketing

1996-2010 (P1)

In P1 the events representing service marketing literature congregate on groups 1, 3, 4, 6, 7 in MDS analysis, cluster 1 in HCA analysis, and factor 1 in EFA analysis as a single cluster on the left side of the map. Our papers originating from service marketing literature constitute the largest grouping in all three periods. The high citation metrics validate the received view among CX reviewers (Homburg et al. 2017), namely that early CX literature is heavily populated with contributions from service marketing literature. The confinement of service marketing literature within the bounds of a single cluster are closely interwoven with the focus of earlier citers exclusively on the service aspects of the CX, an observation also attested in Folstad and Vale's (2018) customer journey review.

This closely-knitted cluster can be further decomposed into three service research theme groupings in the service marketing subgroups:

Theme 1: Customer Experience Design and Analysis

Research group (11), cluster (2), and factor (1), mainly feature two papers on service design by Pullman and Gross (2004) and Shostack (1984), both pioneers of the concept of service marketing design. Folstad and Vale (2018) noted that service blue-printing, first developed by Shostack (1984) and later rehabilitated by Bitner (2008), represents a precursor of the customer journey construct.

Theme 2: Customer Experience Measurement

Research group (10), cluster (1), and factor (4) comprises papers centred around the service quality measurement including the two papers featuring Parasuraman as the first author (1985, 1988) and Zeithaml et al (1996).

Theme 3: Extensions of Customer Experience Theory

The core is represented by the research groups (3, 4), cluster (2), and factor (1) consisting of Bitner's (1992) paper on servicescape and Vargo and Lush's (2004) paper on service-dominant logic. Service dominant logic brings an experiential dimension into CX

literature through the concept of co-creation, whilst Bitner's servicescape opens the way for the integration of environmental factors into service marketing literature.

Three important observations should be made at this stage. First, in all streams of CX-related research, the context of the study is still service-based. Second, whilst the emphasis of CX design and CX measurement is primarily processual, the highly citation scores of Bitner (1992) as well as Vargo and Lush (2004) demonstrates a growing interest among contributors to integrate the more experiential aspects of CX experience into their analysis. Third, a firm-based or organisational perspective of CX is markedly absent. Questions like "How should organizations be structured in order to successfully manage the customer experience?" or "How do organisations need to adapt to the complexity of the customer journey?" are not addressed. According to Lemon and Verhoef (2016), so far, the customer journey and channel literature has made little progress in providing a meso level perspective of how firms can manage the entire customer journey and experience.

2011-2016 (P2)

In the second period, the service marketing mainly disintegrates into Group 7, Cluster 1 and Cluster 3, Factor 2, linked through service quality. Additionally, service marketing is anchored on Cluster 1 and Factor 4 through the value of co-creation. Such split alignment between these two concepts demonstrates a perspective shift among CX scholars. The movement away from a monotonic service-based context to a multi-varied context embraced inputs from other strands of CX writings in the experiential marketing. The carry-over of these two themes also indicates that co-creation and service quality remain important elements in the conception of CX among service marketing writers.

2017- 2019 (P3)

In P3, the service marketing cluster underwent further changes. Relinquishing the intellectual structure of customer experience in three different periods, and Period 2, in Period 3, service marketing events are dispersed across the bibliometric results. Firstly, six of the service marketing events (Bitner 1992; Lusch and Vargo 2008; Vargo and Lusch 2004; Zomerdijk 2010; Zeithaml 1996 Parasuraman, 1988) are spread out on cluster 1 in the plot. The only outlier in the radial is Pine and Gilmore (1999). Radial formations evolved because events that fail to achieve sufficient pooling to become a research group, find themselves entangled to core themes of experiential marketing literature. This

thematic entanglement shows the inextricable links between the service marketing literature and the experiential marketing literature.

Secondly, service marketing events (Verhoef et al, 2009; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Lemke 2011) have migrated to the core assimilating with other experiential marketing events, and they became integral components of the 4 major research groups in this Period 1) research group (1, 2, 3, 4); Cluster (2, 3); Factor (1, 3). As an exemplar, Verhoef et al.'s (2009) paper, an agglomeration of the factors that go into the creation of a customer experience model, transited from a distal position in P2 to emerge as the most highly cited paper in P3. Although the proposed model is built on service marketing theories, Verhoef et al (2009) recognized a plurality of non-service factors: importance of past customer experiences, store environments, together with service interfaces including psycho-social factors such as store brands on future experiences.

Subgroup 2: Experiential Marketing

1996-2010 (P1)

In P1 the 7 events that make up the experiential marketing cluster congregate in the centre of the MDS plot. The cluster consists of an interlocking formation of 4 research groups, (1, 2, 6, 7), cluster (2, 3), and factors (2, 4). Linking the research groups 6 and 7 at the core, could represent Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) paper on the experiential dimension of consumption. Holbrook (2018) has been very clear that the objective of their paper (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982), was to bring attention to the lesser known hedonic dimensions of consumer experience categorized as "fantasies, feelings and fun" in contrast to the more developed functional dimensions of consumption activities. Conserving the cognition-affect-behavior-satisfaction (C.A.B.S.) sequence of so-called information processing model, the authors associate a hedonistic character with the consumption experience (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). An experience is referred to as hedonic when its goal is the pursuit of pleasure (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982).

Complementing the works of Holbrook and Hirschman, Mehrabian and Russel's (1974) paper on environmental psychology, represented by V10 on the MDS map, clarifies the interactions between the individual and the environment by identifying three basic emotional responses: pleasure, arousal and dominance. The PAD model includes pleasure and the sensations (i.e. arousal) that are interwoven with experience in Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) model.

The interlocking of research groups (1, 6, 7) represent a very interesting but telling alliance. An event (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982) is centripetal, linking two papers with

very different orientation. In research group 6, it is linked to McAlexander (2001)—an ethnographic study of Jeep owners as a brand community. In research group 7, it is related to Shaw and Ivens (2002), a practitioner guide cataloguing the experiences of two senior executives from Dell Computers. This event is, in turn, linked to V1, Arnould and Price's (1993) interpretive study of the experience of river rafting. The conflation of papers of such divergent genres and categories exemplify the sense that the origins of the CX concept is as much rooted in the applied press (Tynan 2009) as it is in academia. This amalgamation would prove to be a conundrum for the development of theoretical development of experiential marketing literature.

2011-2016 (P2)

Period 2 can be described as the golden era of experiential marketing represented by a cluster of 7 events organised as an interlocking network of 5 research groups (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), Cluster (3); and Factor (1). In Period 2, the paper by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), visualized in the MDS map, continues to maintain its pivotal position at the core. Linking research group 4 and 5, it demonstrates once again that among citers, the paper continues to be perceived as the theoretical “dogma” of experiential marketing, also described as a “pillar of the so-called experience economy and experiential marketing” (Cova and Cova 2012).

In the second paper, (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982) exploring the propositions and premises of hedonic consumption, the authors defined hedonic experiences as “those facets of consumer behaviour that relate to the multisensory aspects of one's experience with products where multisensory means the receipt of experience in multiple sensory modalities including tastes, sounds, tactile impressions and visual images” (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982. p.92).

This conceptualization is contingent on three *a priori* conditions: (1) embodied: embodiment in this context is the phenomenal state by which an individual feels located and active in an environment including a sense of location, bodily agency and ownership (Grabarczyk and Pokropski 2016); (2) sensual: a representation of experience is multisensory in dimensions including auditory, visual, tactile, olfactory and taste; and thirdly, (3) somatic: hedonic experience originates in a change in bodily state (Damasio 1997) revolving around the two-stage afferent and efferent nature of a psycho-physiological state (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). External changes displayed in the exteroceptive maps of vision or hearing may trigger an action programme that causes a change in body state, thus, arousing feelings or images of pleasure or displeasure.

In P2, the search for an experiential marketing model to “*managerialize*” the theoretical assumptions of hedonic consumption began in earnest. Pine and Gilmore’s (1998) stated objective of the publication, namely “to supply the managerially inclined reader with the tools to begin staging compelling experiences” (Pine and Gilmore 1998), is a typical piece of literature represented in this period. In spite of the misgivings with the many versions of experiential marketing in the popular press, Holbrook (2000) did find broad consent with the tenor of two prominent experiential marketing propositions. The conceptual heart of both Schmitt’s and Pine and Gilmore’s (1998) works, according to Holbrook (2000), is that memorable experiences involve different degrees of participation (embodied), engagement (sensual) and immersion, described as a state of deep engagement in a medium (somatic) and these features articulate in spirit the premises and propositions of hedonic consumption theory. Therefore, experiential marketing, at root, can be defined as the offering of experiential episodes with hedonic potential for (1) hedonic-oriented cognitions or fantasies; as (2) hedonic-related affects or feelings, and (3) as hedonic lifestyle such as various play and leisure-oriented aspects of behavior or simply, fun; that, in turn, results in the mental, emotional or physical experience of pleasure.

In P2, the most highly cited paper is Gentile et al.’s (2008) that provided the first theoretical outline of experiential marketing. Gentile et al. (2004) suggest that what contributes to the creation of experiential marketing value is not so much the selling of stand-alone experiential offerings, such as amusement parks, zoo or museum visits, movies, football matches but the embedment of hedonic potential in the transactional environment. In this perspective, companies do not sell or stage experiences, but they rather provide a palette of hedonic devices, artefacts, themes, multisensory settings, at different stages of the customer journey, conducive for the evocation of hedonic experiences (Caru` and Cova 2003; 2007).

Experiential marketing can include purposeful embedment of hedonic devices in the customer journey enabling the customer to live all the moments of the relationship with a company in a “delightful” way, even beyond expectations (LaSalle and Britton, 2003). Or, as Schmitt (1999) points out, a marketer can manipulate “the environment and setting for the desired customer experiences to emerge”. Allowing customers to co-create their own hedonic experience with the company (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004) transforms experiential marketing from an industry-specific concept into ubiquitous marketing logic. Hedonic episodes add spark, vitality and engagement to all stages of the consumption process (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Schmitt and Simonson, 1997). Pine and Gilmore

(1998) rightly observed that the “concept of selling an entertainment experience is taking root in businesses far removed from theatres and amusement parks” (p. 99).

2017-2019 (P3)

In P3, with the exception of Verhoef et al. (2009), the highly-cited works continues to be dominated by same stable of papers from the experiential marketing cluster - Gentile et al. 2007; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Pine and Gilmore 1998; Brakus et al. 2009 and Schmitt 1999) and among them, they form the content of 4 research groups (1, 2, 3, 4); Cluster (2, 3); Factor (1, 2, 3) within the core of the experiential marketing cluster. Despite the increasing academic attention experiential marketing is garnering, much of the literature represented here remains descriptive and practitioner-oriented with no new inputs to advance the conceptualisation of the experiential marketing thought.

Subgroup3: Branding Meaning

1996-2010 (P1)

In P1, at the upper end of the axis, research Group 5, Cluster (4), factor (2) consists of two min articles: Fournier’s (1998) seminal work which provides a framework for consumer-brand relationship, and Muniz and O’Guinn’s (2001) article on brand community. At the lower end, the cluster is represented by research group 8 and 9, pivoted around Oliver’s two papers on satisfaction (1997, 1980). Oliver (1999) explores satisfaction as a staging ground for “loyalty formation” (Fournier and Yao 1999), since the satisfaction-retention dyad is the basis for developing long term consumer-brand relationship.

Mittal and Kamakura (2001) argue for a more nuanced perspective of the construct beyond the disconfirmation structure. By arguing for context-dependent methodology, they advocate the inclusion of the nature/extent of response bias as a mediator of satisfaction rating. That is, satisfaction not only has a structure, but it also has a context and meanings as well. By overlooking meaning, prior research on satisfaction has produced only a faint resemblance to the culturally constituted and personally driven consumer experiences we observed (Fournier and Mick 1999). It seems inarguable that expectations of consumption meanings arising from the individual, cultural and social context of the consumer are important factors in determining the meaning of satisfaction itself. Casting it phenomenological and semiotic viewpoints, Fournier and Mick (1999) suggest that ‘meaningless satisfaction is no satisfaction at all’.

This research oversight is not a problem confined to satisfaction studies. A consensus is now emerging that understanding brand personality and other brand relationship

variables is contingent on the understanding of brand meanings (Batra 2019). Researchers are beginning to realise the accrual of consumer-generated meanings (Arvidsson 2005; Mick and Buhl 1992) is the mechanism through which consumers can establish deep personal relationships with a brand (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998; Fournier 1998). Consumers modify brand meanings and use them for their own purposes. They may consume them personally, privately, or join a “brand community” and become active co-creators of brand meanings (Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001; Schau, Muniz, and Arnould 2009). Managing brands is, in essence, about managing brand meanings (Allen et al., 2008; McCracken, 2005; Sherry, 2005).

2011-2016 (P2)

In P2, the events no longer exist as a cluster, represented in the MDS plot by a single event – i.e. that of Brakus et al. 2009. Since Brakus et al. (2009) is linked to Pine and Gilmore 1998) and onwards to the interlocking connection of the experiential marketing core, most citers effectively view Brakus et al (2009) only as a “branding extension” of experiential marketing literature, rather than a separate literary representation. Although Brakus et al. (2009) provided a basis for conceptualizing brand experience, as an experience by brand-related stimuli.

As result, the intellectual inputs of branding meaning based on a branding paradigm were not further developed or exploited for CX consumption. For example, to date, few researchers in the CX field have acknowledged and integrated the semiotic doctrine that focuses on the morphology of signs, symbols. Semiotics positions meaning at the nucleus of consumer behavior defining the meaning a brand as a system of signs and symbols that engages the consumer in an imaginary/symbolic process that contributes tangible value to a product offering” (Oswald 2007). As such, it provides a rich metalanguage for semiotic consumer research. Through its distinctive and wide-ranging literature, semiotics can advance theory development and substantiate expanded methodologies for symbolism research from acquisition and consumption to disposition behaviours.

2017-2019 (P3)

In P3, branding literature is still represented in the MDS space as a single event (Brakus et al, 2009). But in this MDS space, Brakus et al. (2009) is entrenched in the core of the experiential marketing cluster as a component of two important research groups (1, 2); Cluster (2); Factor (1). In the context of our discussion, the deeper the integration of brand experience into experiential marketing cluster further exacerbates, the wider

concerns that CX literature continues to suffer from a lack of adequate intellectual inputs from the branding domain.

The analysis of the service marketing cluster demonstrates that, while the research on the processual aspects of CX is vibrant and prolific, the content of CX remains captive to a service-oriented approach. To overcome the insularity, service marketing literature needs to deal with/address? theoretical vulnerabilities in service marketing literature represented by the set of persistent problems continues to hamper the intellectual development the CX concept.

The analysis of the experiential marketing cluster shows that experiential marketing addresses a vital aspect of CX through the offering of hedonic experience. Different events of the customer journey evoke different type of customer experience(s) (Holbrook, 2000). Service-oriented events evoke service experience, brand-related stimuli evoke brand-based customer experience (Brakus et al. 2009) and hedonic-potentiated events evoke hedonic experiences.

The analysis of the brand meaning cluster shows that the existing contribution of branding knowledge to CX literature remains superficial and inadequate for the task of explicating the semiotic, symbolic and contextual dimensions of a customer journey. By ignoring the brand meaning context of a branding paradigm, many of the crucial socio-psychological aspects of CX remain unexplored. Different dimensions of customer experience require the application of different competences, different tools and devises based on a different marketing logic.

Based on the findings of MDS, EFA, HCA during the three periods (i.e. 1996–2011, 1993–2002, 2017–2019), we identified three general trends in the intellectual structure development of the CXL. As shown in Figure 10, this approach offers great details into the CX domain changes over the time span of this study.

<<<Insert Fig 10 here>>>

Conclusion

At the beginning of the paper, we spelled out 2 research objectives as a roadmap to guide the development of the thesis. In objective one, to analyse the major intellectual components of CXL's intellectual structure through a bibliometric analysis. The results from the bibliometric analysis of the three discreet literary periods, enabled us to identify major clusters of writings, colleges of influences and crucially, pinpoint the source of the

persistent problems. In objective two, to understand how the knowledge structure of customer experience has changed over time. Based on these findings, we suggest a new schema to re-align the CX knowledge base rationalising and differentiating the contributions from service marketing literature, experiential marketing literature and branding literature.

Case study

Customer experience: ViewStream

ViewStream (not its real name) is one the top three TV streaming services in Finland. ViewStream has hundreds of millions in revenue and tens of thousands of customers. The system provides on-demand broadcasts of TV channels and online content packages and also enables customers to watch live broadcasts on TV, computer, mobile phone or other mobile device. There are four phases in the process of streaming TV services to customers: 1) impulse for purchasing; 2) purchasing; 3) implementation, use and maintenance; and 4) termination. Researchers from Lappeenranta University used interviews and focus groups to study the factors that affect customer experience and value-creating factors at different phases of the service process.

Customer-based factors

The most important customer-based factors during the impulse phase are consumption goals and personality traits. Consumption goals include price and, 'anytime and anywhere' availability. Personality traits concern the personalities of the image of the service provider as well as the customer. In the words of a Sales Manager:

'Some people just want an iPhone. When we ask them why, they claim that there is no rational reason, it just suits well with their personal traits.'

The most important customer factors are resources and attitudes. If customers have resources such as finance, knowledge and skills, they are more likely to have positive experience in the purchasing and implementation phases, for example, by requesting customisation of the service. Attitudes are also important during the purchasing and implementation phases. The Marketing Director explained:

'Basically, we have two kinds of customers. The ones that know very well what they need and only want to purchase it. They want a fast and simple delivery process and nothing extra.'

During the use and maintenance phase, the more skills or resources customers can use to take advantage of services, the more are likely to have positive experience with service. Customers with open attitudes to new solutions are more likely to have positive experience with the service during this phase. In the words of the Marketing Director:

'Customers are continuously developing their digital skills and capabilities and hence they are more likely to have positive experience. That causes challenges for service providers to handle.'

During the termination phase, the most important customer factors are attitudes related to the service. Decisions on whether a customer relationship is terminated or use of the service is stopped depend on the extent to which those factors were positive or negative. Customers who stop using the service for negative reasons or because of a negative experience are usually not willing to be engaged, while those who stop using the service but did not have negative experiences are more willing to engage. As the Customer Service Director explained:

'We are following terminating customers and asking reasons. If the reasons behind leaving are negative customer experience. That has an effect to customer's willingness to be engaged to this phase of the process.'

Summarising customer-based factors, implementation and use of services should be effortless. Solving customers' problems and turning them into positive experiences will help to build CEB. In the termination phase, it must be easy for the customer to stop the service because this enhances the customer's trust in the provider. However, it is also important to provide incentives for customers to extend their contract and that customers have a positive overall experience of the value of the streaming TV services. The main value-creating factors are broadcast quality, comprehensive content, the opportunity to watch on all types of devices, the opportunity to watch anytime and anywhere and the ease of purchasing and implementation. Customer experience is an important factor that affects CEB, especially in the use and maintenance phase.

Firm-based factors

The most important firm-based factors during the impulse phase are related to brand, rewards and incentives, which are especially important for special campaigns, such as those occurring during holidays. As the Customer Relationship Manager explained:

'Traditionally rewards and incentives are commonly used to enhance customer experience. Currently the brand makes customers want to have enhanced customer experience.'

The social dimension together with processes and platforms are most important in the purchase and implementation phase. Platforms can be physical or digital, but customers want them to be social. As the Head of Customer Experience explains:

'Most digital services are still bought in traditional high street stores. The number of digitally purchased services is rising, but there still has to be a social dimension.'

Alongside the social dimension, processes and platforms, rewards and other incentives are most important in the use and maintenance phase. experience can be physical or digital. During the termination phase, the most important firm-based factors are reputation, brand, social factors, rewards and incentives that encourage customers to continue rather than terminate the service. Most importantly to firm-based factors, the company personally contacts customers in order to highlight the importance of customers, their own skills regarding the service and value co-creation in the form of identifying appropriate programme packages.

Context-based factors

Technological developments such as new platforms and social media are the most important context-based factors during the impulse and purchasing phases. Competitors' activities such as new services may also affect CEB during the termination phase. CEB particularly arises from value co-creation in the form of involving customers in channel package design. Summarising context-based factors, any content on any device, anytime and anywhere comprises a major influence on CEB. Summarising findings from the ViewStream case, for positive CEB, processes should be seamless and effortless. Firms need to listen to the customer voice and involve customers in co-creating service design.

Case questions

1. Assess the dimensions of customer experience with ViewStream.
2. Explore the ways to strengthen customer experience with ViewStream and discuss possible obstacles.
3. Consider potential contributions which customers experience would make to ViewStream.

Key terms and definitions

Customer experience: a multidimensional construct focusing on a customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial, and social responses to a firm's offerings during the customer's entire purchase journey.

Servicescape: the physically built surroundings within consumption settings that influence the nature and quality of social interaction

Hedonic consumption experience: those facets of consumer behaviour that are related to the multisensory, fantasy and emotion aspects of one's experience with products.

Brand Experience: A subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments

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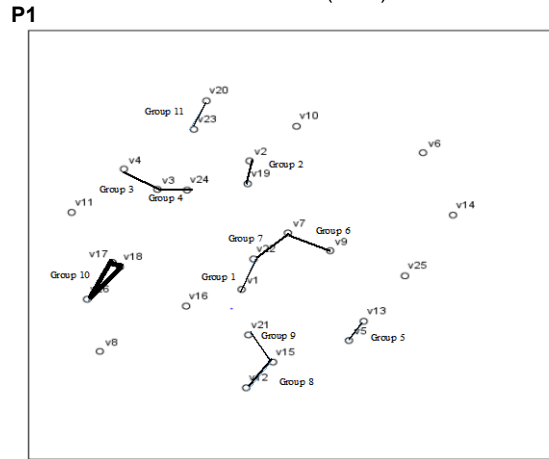
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Fig 1. Customer Experience Literature Intellectual Structure 1996–2010 (MDS)

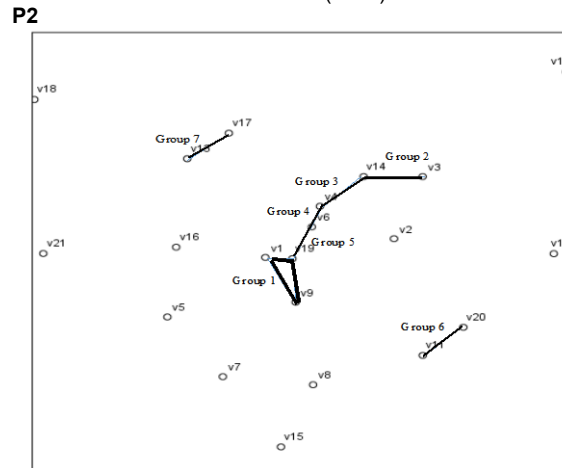


Notes: Stress value = 0.058; standardized Euclidean distance 0.25; bold faced text indicates research clique.

V1 = Arnould and Price 1993; V2 = Berry et al. 2002; V3 = Bitner 1990; V4 = Bitner 1992; V5 = Fournier 1998; V6 = Hoffman and Novak, 1996; V7 = Holbrook and Hirshman, 1982; V8 = Lovelock, 1983; V9 = McAlexander et al. 2002; V10 = Mehrabian and Russell 1974; V11 = Meuter et al. 2000; V12 = Mittal and Kamakura 2001; V13 = Muniz and O'Guinn 2001; V14 = Novak et al. 2000; V15 = Oliver 1980; V16 = Oliver 1997; V17 = Parasuraman et al. 1985; V18 = Parasuraman et al., 1988; V19 = Pine II and James 1998; V20 = Pullman and Gross 2004; V21 = Richins 1997; V22 = Shaw and Ivens 2002; V23 = Shostack 1984; V24 = Vargo and Lush 2004; V25 = Zaichkowsky 1985; V26 = Zeithaml et al. 1996

Group 1 (V1 and V22): extraordinary hedonic experience; Group 2 (V2 and V19): experience economy and total customer experience; Group 3 (V3 and V4): servicescapes; Group 4 (V3 and V24): service dominant logic (SDL) and service encounters; Group 5 (V5 and V13): customer-brand relationship and brand community; Group 6 (V7 and V9) : hedonic consumption and brand community; Group 7 (V7 and V22): hedonic and service experiences; Group 8 (V12 and V15): satisfaction and purchase, actual repurchase behaviors; Group 9 (V15 and V21): consumption emotions; **Group 10 (V17, V18 and V26): customer perception of service quality**; Group 11 (V20 and V23): experience design and loyalty behavior.

Fig 2. Customer Experience Literature Intellectual Structure 2011-2016 (MDS)

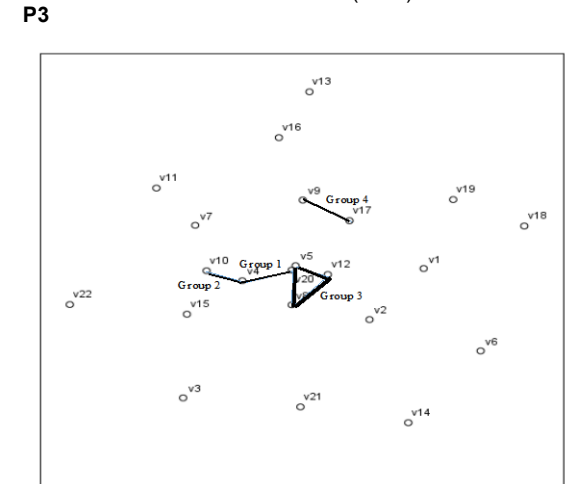


Notes: Stress value = 0.054; standardized Euclidean distance 0.25; bold faced text indicates research clique.

V1 = Berry et al. 2002; V2 = Bitner 1992; V3 = Brakus et al. 2009; V4 = Gentile et al. 2007; V5 = Grewal and Kumar 2009; V6 = Holbrook and Hirshman, 1982; V7 = Klaus and Maklan 2012; V8 = Lemke et al. 2001; V9 = Meyer and Schwager 2007; V10 = Novak et al. 2000; V11 = Parasuraman et al. 1998; V12 = Parasuraman et al. 2005; V13 = Payne et al. 2008; V14 = Pine and Gilmore 1998; V15 = Puccinelli et al. 2009; V16 = Pullman 2004; V17 = Vargo and Lush 2004; V18 = Vargo and Lush 2008; V19 = Verhoef et al. 2009; V20 = Zeithaml et al. 1996; V21=Zomerdiik 2010.

Group 1 (V1, V9 and V19): total customer experience; Group 2 (V3 and V14): brand experience; Group 3 (V4 and V14): experience components and progression of economic value; Group 4 (V4 and V6): customer experience creation and holistic perspective of consumption; Group 5 (V6 and V19): customer experience and holistic perspective of consumption; Group 6 (V11 and V20) : service quality; Group 7 (V13 and V17): co-creation value

Fig 3. Customer Experience Literature Intellectual Structure 2017-2019 (MDS)



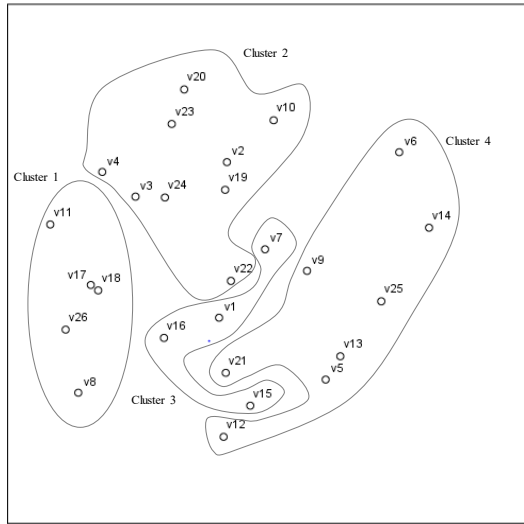
Notes: Stress value = 0.048; standardized Euclidean distance 0.25; bold faced text indicates research clique.

V1 = Bitner 1992; V2 = Berry et al. 2002; V3 = Bitner 1992; V4 = Brakus et al. 2009; V5 = Gentile et al. 2007; V6 = Pine and Gilmore 1999; V7 = Grewal and Kumar 2009; V8 = Holbrook and Hirshman 1982; V9 = Lemke et al. 2001; V10 = Lemon and Verhoef 2016; V11 = Mehrabian and Russell 1974; V12 = Meyer and Schwager 2007; V13 = Novak et al. 2000; V14 = Parasuraman et al. 1998; V15 = Pine and Gilmore 1998; V16 = Rose et al. 2012; V17 = Schmitt 1999; V18 = Vargo and Lush 2004; V19 = Vargo and Lush 2008; V20 = Verhoef et al. 2009; V21 = Zeithaml et al. 1996;

Group 1 (V4 and V20):brand experience; Group 2 (V4 and V10): customer journey; **Group 3 (V5, V8, V12 and V20):total customer experience**; Group 4 (V9 and V17): customer experience quality

Fig 4. Customer Experience Literature Intellectual Structure 1996–2010 (HCA)

P1

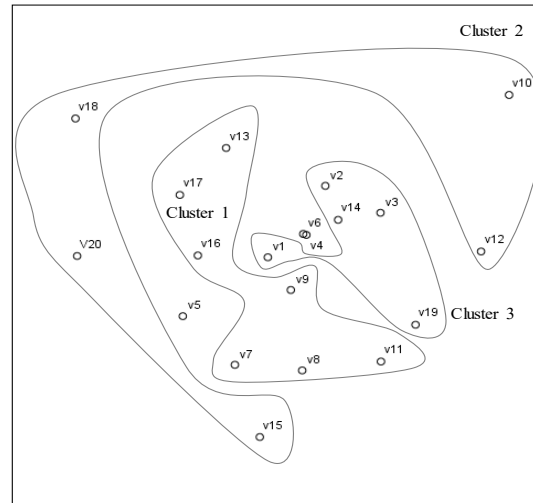


V1 = Arnould and Price 1993; V2 = Berry et al. 2002; V3 = Bitner 1990; V4 = Bitner 1992; V5 = Fournier 1998; V6 = Hoffman and Novak, 1996; V7 = Holbrook and Hirshman, 1982; V8 = Lovelock, 1983; V9 = McAlexander et al. 2002; V10 = Mehrabian and Russell 1974; V11 = Meuter et al. 2000; V12 = Mittal and Kamakura 2001; V13 = Muniz and O'Guinn 2001; V14 = Novak et al. 2000; V15 = Oliver 1980; V16 = Oliver 1997; V17 = Parasuraman et al. 1985; V18 = Parasuraman et al., 1988; V19 = Pine II and James 1998; V20 = Pullman and Gross 2004; V21 = Richins 1997; V22 = Shaw and Ivens 2002; V23 = Shostack 1984; V24 = Vargo and Lush 2004; V25 = Zaichkowsky 1985; V26 = Zeithaml et al. 1996

Cluster 1 (V11, V17, V18, V26, V8): Service quality; Cluster 2 (V20, V23, V10, V2, V4, V3, v24, v19, v2): Service design; Cluster 3 (V15, V16, V1, V7): Consumer research, Cluster 4 (V6, V14, v9, v25, v13, v5, v21, v12): Branding

Fig 5. Customer Experience Literature Intellectual Structure 2011-2016 (HCA)

P2

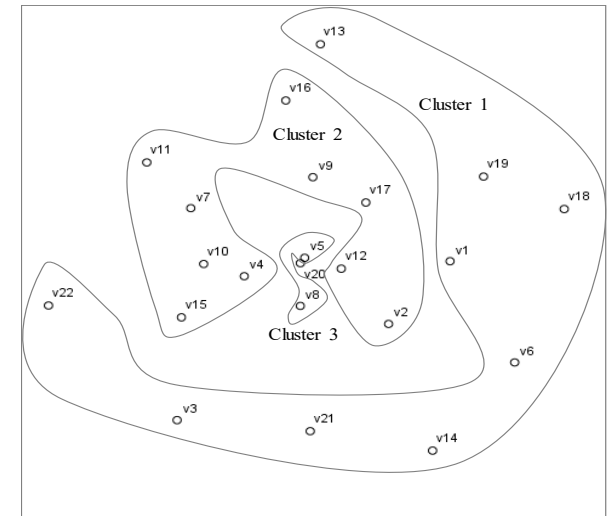


V1 = Berry et al. 2002; V2 = Bitner 1992; V3 = Brakus et al. 2009; V4 = Gentile et al. 2007; V5 = Grewal and Kumar 2009; V6 = Holbrook and Hirshman, 1982; V7 = Klaus and Maklan 2012; V8 = Lemke et al. 2001; V9 = Meyer and Schwager 2007; V10 = Novak et al. 2000; V11 = Parasuraman et al. 1998; V12 = Parasuraman et al. 2005; V13 = Payne et al. 2008; V14 = Pine and Gilmore 1998; V15 = Puccinelli et al. 2009; V16 = Pullman 2004; V17 = Vargo and Lush 2004; V18 = Vargo and Lush 2008; V19 = Verhoef et al. 2009; V20 = Zeithaml et al. 1996; V21 = Zomerdijk 2010.

Cluster 1 (V13, V17, V16, V9, V7, V8, V11): service dominant logics, Cluster 2 (V10, v18, V20, V15): Online marketing; Cluster 3 (V2, V14, V3, V1, V19): Online marketing

Fig 6. Customer Experience Literature Intellectual Structure 2017-2019 (HCA)

P3

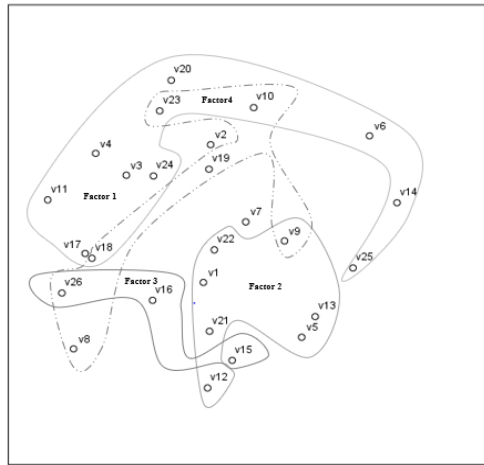


V1 = Bitner 1992; V2 = Berry et al. 2002; V3 = Bitner 1992; V4 = Brakus et al. 2009; V5 = Gentile et al. 2007; V6 = Pine and Gilmore 1999; V7 = Grewal and Kumar 2009; V8 = Holbrook and Hirshman 1982; V9 = Lemke et al. 2001; V10 = Lemon and Verhoef 2016; V11 = Mehrabian and Russell 1974; V12 = Meyer and Schwager 2007; V13 = Novak et al. 2000; V14 = Parasuraman et al. 1998; V15 = Pine and Gilmore 1998; V16 = Rose et al. 2012; V17 = Schmitt 1999; V18 = Vargo and Lush 2004; V19 = Vargo and Lush 2008; V20 = Verhoef et al. 2009; V21 = Zeithaml et al. 1996;

Cluster 1 (V6, V21, V14, V11, V19, V13, V22, V18, V1, V13): service design, Cluster 2 (V7, V12, V15, V4, V2, V10, V9, V16, V17): Experiential marketing, Cluster 3 (V5, V8): Retailing

Fig 7. Customer Experience Literature Intellectual Structure 1996–2010 (EFA)

P1

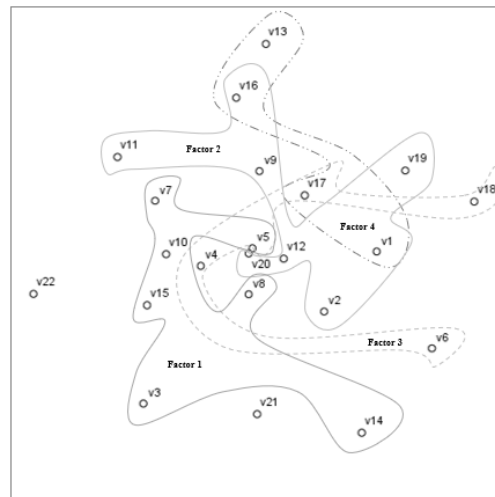


V1 = Arnould and Price 1993; V2 = Berry et al. 2002; V3 = Bitner 1990; V4 = Bitner 1992; V5 = Fournier 1998; V6 = Hoffman and Novak, 1996; V7 = Holbrook and Hirshman, 1982; V8 = Lovelock, 1983; V9 = McAlexander et al. 2002; V10 = Mehrabian and Russell 1974; V11 = Meuter et al. 2000; V12 = Mittal and Kamakura 2001; V13 = Muniz and O'Guinn 2001; V14 = Novak et al. 2000; V15 = Oliver 1980; V16 = Oliver 1997; V17 = Parasuraman et al. 1985; V18 = Parasuraman et al., 1988; V19 = Pine II and James 1998; V20 = Pullman and Gross 2004; V21 = Richins 1997; V22 = Shaw and Ivens 2002; V23 = Shostack 1984; V24 = Vargo and Lush 2004; V25 = Zaichkowsky 1985; V26 = Zeithaml et al. 1996

Factor 1 (V4, V11, V23, V18, V3, V25, V24, V17, V14, V10, V6, V20): Service design; Factor 2 (v21, V12, V1, V22, V5, V9, V13): Branding; Factor 3 (V26, V15, V16): Service Marketing, Factor 4 (V23, V18, V10, V9, V8, V18, V19, V26): Online branding

Fig 8. Customer Experience Literature Intellectual Structure 2011-2016 (EFA)

P2

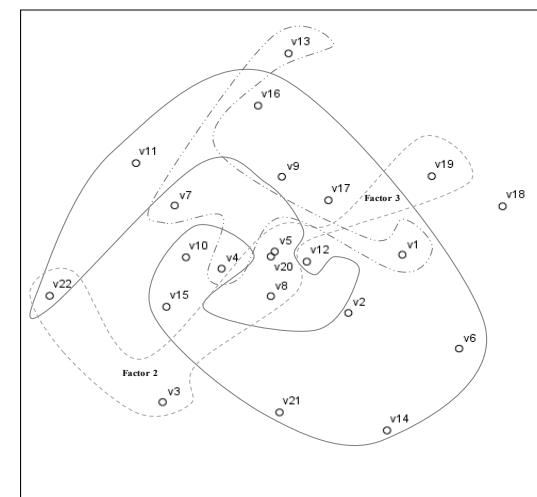


V1 = Berry et al. 2002; V2 = Bitner 1992; V3 = Brakus et al. 2009; V4 = Gentile et al. 2007; V5 = Grewal and Kumar 2009; V6 = Holbrook and Hirshman, 1982; V7 = Klaus and Maklan 2012; V8 = Lemke et al. 2001; V9 = Meyer and Schwager 2007; V10 = Novak et al. 2000; V11 = Parasuraman et al. 1998; V12 = Parasuraman et al. 2005; V13 = Payne et al. 2008; V14 = Pine and Gilmore 1998; V15 = Puccinelli et al. 2009; V16 = Pullman 2004; V17 = Vargo and Lush 2004; V18 = Vargo and Lush 2008; V19 = Verhoef et al. 2009; V20 = Zeithaml et al. 1996; V21 = Zomerdiijk 2010.

Factor 1 (v15, v10, v14, v3, v5, v8, v7): Retailing; Factor 2 (v9, v1, v16, v2, v19, V20, v12, v11): Service design; Factor 3 (V5, V4, V18, V6, V17): Service-dominant logics; Factor 4 (V1, V16, V17, V13): service marketing

Fig 9. Customer Experience Literature Intellectual Structure 2017-2019 (EFA)

P3



V1 = Bitner 1992; V2 = Berry et al. 2002; V3 = Bitner 1992; V4 = Brakus et al. 2009; V5 = Gentile et al. 2007; V6 = Pine and Gilmore 1999; V7 = Grewal and Kumar 2009; V8 = Holbrook and Hirshman 1982; V9 = Lemke et al. 2001; V10 = Lemon and Verhoef 2016; V11 = Mehrabian and Russell 1974; V12 = Meyer and Schwager 2007; V13 = Novak et al. 2000; V14 = Parasuraman et al. 1998; V15 = Pine and Gilmore 1998; V16 = Rose et al. 2012; V17 = Schmitt 1999; V18 = Vargo and Lush 2004; V19 = Vargo and Lush 2008; V20 = Verhoef et al. 2009; V21 = Zeithaml et al. 1996;

Factor 1 (V21, V11, V15, v2, v9, v14, v10, v4, v6, v17, v12, v22, V1, v16): Experiential marketing; Factor 2 (V22, V19, V3, V5, V20, v8): Retailing; Factor 3 (V7, V4, V1, V13): Sensory marketing

Figure 10. Longitudinal Development of Customer Experience Research

