Exploring the Holistic Customer Experience Gestalt through its Elements: An Abstract

Karim Sidaoui, Jamie Burton, and Babis Theodoulidis

Abstract Customer experience (CE) is the essence of what constitutes the interaction of a service and a customer. It is multidimensional and comprised of cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial, and social elements resulting from a direct or indirect interaction with a firm (Lemon and Verhoef 2016, p. 71). CE has many definitions and descriptions of its constituent elements, which adds a layer of complexity in constructing comparable studies across the board. This fragmentation poses limitations for new researchers who attempt to study CE, described as "widely used, and abused", and at the risk of being "dismissed because of the ambiguous manner in which it has been applied" (Palmer 2010, p. 196).

To this extent, the aim of this work is to (i) explore the definitions of CE and its elements, (ii) analyze conceptual and empirical studies relating to these elements, and (iii) from the previous two objectives incorporate a bottom-up approach, producing a unified elemental mapping framework enabling a more integrated and holistic manner in which CE is studied and observed in both academia and practice. Following the objectives for this work, we conduct a systematic literature review (SLR) search pertaining to CE and its elements, analyzing the different conceptualizations of its meaning and empirical foundations. We then extract and semantically group the CE elements into a unified list. After reviewing and analyzing our results we note that the literature defines CE through socioeconomic, phenomenological, or a combination of these lenses. Furthermore, we observe that these lenses are driven along service and customer centric perspectives. We build upon the inductive experiential mapping scheme used by Lofman (1991) to build a sub-elemental framework from the unified CE element list we obtained.

From a theoretical standpoint, we attempt to redefine CE from the extant SLR. Additionally, we propose a sub-elemental mapping framework which would alleviate some of the conceptual fragmentation we highlighted in studying CE. From a managerial standpoint, we aim at addressing CE managers and executives by providing them with a theoretically-driven framework enabling them to map their

K. Sidaoui (✉) · J. Burton · B. Theodoulidis
University of Manchester, Manchester, UK
e-mail: karim.sidaoui@manchester.ac.uk; jamie.burton@manchester.ac.uk;
b.theodoulidis@manchester.ac.uk

organizational CE. As a result, a standardized means to measure and better understand CE in practice could be achieved. As a way forward, our mapping framework could provide a starting point to potentially connect technology-driven methods using artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms to for example, utilize text-mining, and heuristic internet of things to map experiential data. This would enable researchers and managers to conduct studies in different contexts and domains, providing a customer-centric approach to CE while subsequently contributing to our holistic understanding of this concept.

Keywords Customer experience · Experiential elements · Systematic review · Customer centric · Artificial intelligence · Framework

References Available Upon Request