



CALL FOR PAPER

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES ON CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE: DIGGING KNOWLEDGE ACROSS SECTORS

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***Mercati e Competitività* invites submissions for a special issue on “Past, present and future challenges on customer experience: digging knowledge across sectors”**

Experiential marketing roots its origin in the early 1980s (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Holbrook & Corfman, 1985), when academicians started to suggest a shift from primarily utilitarian conceptions of consumer behaviour towards an expanded experiential and phenomenological perspective where hedonic, symbolic, and aesthetic aspects of consumption are key aspects to be considered when grasping to fully understand consumption acts. Since then, the experiential paradigm has been attracting huge attention from both the researchers belonging to different disciplines (e.g. marketing, sociology, anthropology, psychology, etc.) and the industry. Overtime, different frameworks have arisen, where consumer experience has been conceptualized as a combination of escapism, aesthetics, entertainment and education (Pine & Gilmore, 1999), or dimensions of strategic experiential modules (Schmitt, 1999), namely sensory experience (SENSE), emotional experience (FEEL), thinking experience (THINK), operational experience (ACT) and related experiences (RELATE). More recently, both theoretical and empirical studies have showed that a key challenge for any marketers is to be able to provide authentic and memorable experiences (Gibbs & Ritchie, 2010).

The experiential view is no longer new, but the dual hedonic/utilitarian concept has continued to interest academic writers across the decades, with retailing and tourism emerging as two paradigmatic experiential service settings. Indeed, retailing has been a preferred field for applications and replications of experiential dimensions of shopping values (e.g. Mathwick et al., 2001; Petermans, et al., 2013) while, within research set in a tourism context, adopting an experiential paradigm has been even scarcer (Ritchie et al., 2011). In tourism-related literature, most of the existing studies

have investigated the tourist experience on-site (e.g. Williams, 2006), whilst less attention has been given to experiences in supporting services (e.g. accommodation, food, transportation, wineries, etc.).

Despite the long and deep range of works devoted to this domain, there is a wide diversity and range of meanings attached to the concept of experience, causing a lack of universal consensus on its definition. Indeed, the word “experience” is among the most used and misused in marketing literature, and a need of framing what experience is and how it can be defined still remains. Furthermore, no single model of experiential consumption has emerged (Titz, 2007). Hence, there is still an interest for further research aimed at framing and delimiting what the “consumption experience” is and how it relates to other notions, such as brand experience (Andreini et al., 2018; Brakus et al., 2009), or service experience (Blocker & Barrios, 2015).

Customer experience is related to other main and pivotal contemporary topics that this special issue is meant to cover, such as consumer value and value co-creation.

Consumer value has been considered at the very heart of any experiential approach to consumer behaviour (Holbrook, 1999; Wu & Liang, 2009). Albeit, understanding the process of creating and attributing value has interested a relevant number of scholars, who have long agreed on a lack of consistency concerning the nature of value, its characteristics and its conceptualisation and measurement. Although authors recognise that service value is multidimensional, there is no consensus on the number of types or on the criteria for classifying and assessing them. Recently, Gallarza et al. (2017) carried out, proposed and validated a third-order value model in the hotel sector that captures the resulting eight value types (efficiency, excellence, play, aesthetics, status, esteem, ethics, and escapism as an adaptation of spirituality). The case-specific nature of this research (i.e. set in the hotel sector) calls for future adaptations and replications of this higher-order structure in different service settings. Longitudinal studies might be also useful to capture the dynamics of the industry, demand and society and to further advance the knowledge of processes and interaction in the context of experience consumption. Recently, academicians have started to investigate how experience/service consumption can contribute to positively influence the lives and well-being of individuals (Anderson & Ostrom, 2015). In this strand of research (i.e. transformative service research), a “new” type of value (i.e. transformative value) is considered to acknowledge the “social dimension of value creation that generates uplifting change for greater well-being among individuals and collectives” (Blocker & Barrios, 2015, p. 1). In tourism-related literature, transformative value has been considered as what the travellers can gain from travel experiences in term of reconsidering the personal value system as opposed to others’ (Kirillova et al., 2017a, 2017b), and therefore digging knowledge on the multidimensional customer experience in terms of building or renewing the self, learning, opening one’s mind, fostering understanding, enrichment, growth, and development (Reisinger, 2013). In current literature, this “new” value has been mainly theoretically conceptualised and qualitatively investigated. Future research could propose studies attempting to develop and validate scales to measure it and/or consider it alongside other types of value when quantitatively investigating the

influence of different value types on satisfaction, memorability and behavioural intentions.

It is well accepted that customer experience can be viewed from multiple perspectives including the customer, the firm, or both in the co-creation process (Chandler & Lusch, 2015). Value co-creation “is the joint, collaborative, concurrent, peer-like process of producing new value, both materially and symbolically” (Galvagno & Dalli, 2014, p. 644). In such a scenario, consumers become a kind of “working consumers” (Dalli & Cova, 2009), actively shaping/making their lived experience in a marketscape in which consumers and producers live in a continuum between co-harmony and co-destruction (Plé & Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010). The role of subjective and lived consumer experience in value co-creation/co-destruction is an emerging topic that would merit further attention to deepen our understanding about how customers live this experience (e.g. Galvagno & Dalli, 2014) and about how the co-creation/destruction of experiences - eventually mediated and facilitated by Information and Communication Technologies, Social Media, Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality - might contribute to render them memorable/unmemorable. This research trajectory would merit to be developed to consider the challenging role that the uprise of sharing and collaborative economy has been exerting since the very last few years, also providing consumers with the opportunity to transform their self (Decrop et al., 2018).

Research investigating experiences usually takes a process and/or an outcome-based perspective (Lin & Kuo, 2016), and underlines that one of the major challenges in developing an exceptional and memorable experience is to create a connection among different offline and online touchpoints within the customer journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Voorhees et al., 2017). This calls for further developing the existing theoretical and empirical knowledge (e.g. Barwitz & Maas, 2018; Kranzbuhler et al., 2017) about how the consumer experience can be designed and lived in multichannel decision-making settings (e.g. retailing, tourism, hospitality and leisure).

All that said, and without limiting the scope of the papers to be submitted, this special issue welcomes original empirical or analytical work related to the following topics:

- Cognitive, emotional, sensory, social, spiritual and transformative dimensions of consumer experiences
- Memorable experiences
- Systematic Literature Reviews or state-of-the-art on experiential marketing
- Conceptualisations of customer experience and consumer journey
- Managing service design, service encounters and customer experience
- Open innovation, co-creation, co-destruction and customer engagement approaches in experience design
- Consumer values types and their influence on experience memorability
- Transformative power and value of experience consumption
- Consumer value types and customer experience management in tourism, hospitality and event
- Consumer value types, experiences and cross-sectorial analysis

- Key drivers and consequences of customer experience adopting an offline and/or an online perspective
- Influence of ICTs, Social Media, Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality on experience design and consumption
- Experiential consumption in the era of sharing and collaborative economy
- Consumer experience in multichannel decision-making

The special issue welcomes studies that use a range of methodologies including qualitative (e.g. case studies, field experiments, interpretative phenomenographic research, mobile ethnography, grounded theory, content analysis, quantitative (e.g., structural equation modelling, econometric analysis, cluster analysis) and mixed-methods. Furthermore, it also encourages the submission of studies adopting interdisciplinary and longitudinal approaches to consumption experiences.

Paper submission/selection

Abstract proposals need to be submitted to the guest editors (gdelchiappa@uniss.it - martina.gallarza@uv.es) and to rivista@simktg.it **by 10th November 2018**.

Full papers need to be submitted through the online platform <http://ojs.francoangeli.it/ojs/index.php/mc/about/submissions> **by 10th January 2019**. The platform can be also browsed in English by using the button “language” in the right side of the submission platform.

When submitting a paper, authors need to mention that the paper should be considered for this special issue. To do this, authors are kindly asked to click the “section” button and to tick “SPECIAL ISSUE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE”.

All the papers need to strictly adhere to the specific guidelines of the journal (see: <http://ojs.francoangeli.it/ojs/index.php/mc/about/submissions#authorGuidelines>).

The review process will feature a maximum of two rounds and **final decisions will be made before May 31st 2019**.

Inquiries can be sent to guest editors (gdelchiappa@uniss.it - martina.gallarza@uv.es) and to rivista@simktg.it rivista@simktg.it.

Key dates

- Submission of abstract (up to 750 words): 10th November 2018
- Notification of abstract acceptance: 15th November 2018
- Submission of full paper: 10th January 2019
- Peer review report: 10th March 2019
- Author to revise and resubmit based on peer review report: 10th April 2019
- Notification of full paper acceptance: 15th May 2019

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