The CX Scale: Towards a Holistic Measure of Customer Experience

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Keywords: *Customer experience, customer journey, touchpoint, scale development*

Description: *Since a CX measure is missing in the marketing literature, we develop and validate the CX scale that consists of six experience dimensions (i.e., affective, cognitive, sensorial, physical, relational, and symbolic), using data from written experience descriptions, in-depth interviews, item screening and sorting studies, as well as online surveys.*

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Question

Providing a superior customer experience (CX) throughout the entire customer journey has become a leading management objective. Today's customers interact with different experience providers (e.g., brand, personnel, other customers) through various touchpoints (e.g., advertisement, online shop, store) during all customer journey stages (i.e., pre-purchase, purchase, post-purchase). To manage marketing activities throughout such diverse customer journeys, companies need a customer-centric, holistic measure that quantifies CX.

To date, researchers have mainly focused on the conceptual investigation of CX as a subjective, co-created, and holistic construct that covers multiple dimensions (e.g., De Keyser, Lemon, Klaus, and Keiningham, 2015; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Schmitt, 2011). Little work on measuring CX exists. Extant studies that develop experience scales are limited to a specific domain of the CX concept, such as brands (e.g., Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello, 2009) or services (e.g., Verleye, 2015), so that they cannot be applied to any customer journey. These scales weight the construct's dimensions and each CX equally, although research indicates that different CX dimensions and single CXs might be more or less salient for customers overall CX (Ariely, 1998).

To overcome these research limitations, we ask: How to measure CX throughout the customer journey as a multidimensional construct, while accounting for distinct customer journey elements (i.e., experience providers, touchpoints, stages) and differential weights for individual CXs?

Method and Data

To develop the CX scale, we followed established scale development procedures (e.g., Churchill, 1979) and conducted a multi-method research process including five studies.

To generate an initial item pool for the CX scale, we first reviewed research papers, business books, and practitioner reports. Second, we asked 29 students to write down and describe a self-selected customer journey (study 1), and third, we interviewed 21 customers about their last customer journey (study 2) which were audiotaped and transcribed to 208 single-spaced pages.

To reduce the initial item pool, we first asked 18 experts from the field of marketing and psychology to evaluate to which extent each item can be applied as a measure of its respective CX dimension and underlying conceptual domain (study 3). Second, 162 customers were recruited for an item-sort task (study 4) and asked to assign each item to a CX dimension that, according to their individual judgment, it best reflects.

Finally, we run an online survey (study 5) with 1,348 customers who evaluated a single CX (e.g., brand in pre-purchase stage) in a retailing context (i.e., clothing). To purify and validate the CX scale, we conducted iterative confirma-

tory factor analyses, resulting in an 18-item scale that revealed good model fit in both the overall sample and all experience provider (i.e., brand, personnel, other customers) and customer journey stage (i.e., pre-purchase, purchase, post-purchase) subsamples.

Summary of Findings

CX is a six-dimensional construct covering affective, cognitive, sensorial, physical, relational, and symbolic experience dimensions. To capture these dimensions within the CX scale, we developed an easy to implement 18-item scale that can be applied to every individual customer journey, as it accounts for different experience providers (e.g., brand, personnel, other customers), touchpoints (e.g., advertisement, online-shop, store), and stages (i.e., pre-purchase, purchase, post-purchase). Empirical results reveal sound psychometric properties of the CX scale, mirrored in its reliability and dimensionality, as well as convergent, known-group, and nomological validity. Further, results show that flow is an antecedent of CX, whereby customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth are consequences of CX.

Key Contributions

This research entails three contributions to the body of existing literature and to management practice. First, a robust and implementable measurement scale that is organized around customer journey elements. Second, a refined understanding of the CX construct with all its underlying dimensions, embedded within a nomological network of other marketing constructs (i.e., flow, satisfaction, word-of-mouth). Third, an approach for the aggregation of single CXs as well as CX dimensions to an overall CX measure based on customer-specific weights. [The Marketing Science Institute financially supported this project.]

References are available on request.