Experiential Marketing in an Age of Hyper-Connectivity

Experiential Marketing in an Age of Hyper-Connectivity:

Navigating the Customer Experience Journey

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CONTENTS

PREFACE

Introduced by Pine and Gilmore (1999) and Schmidt (1999) a few decades ago, the concept of experiential marketing has emerged as a response to the shift towards the experience economy and the progression of value towards experiences. However, over the last twenty years, the consumption landscape has changed drastically. The omnipresence of the internet, social media, online communities, and, more recently, virtual and augmented reality, robotics, digital sensory worlds, and immersive digital spaces have brought about potentially lasting changes in the everyday consumption space. Consumers and brands have found that traditional marketing, with focus on functional features and benefits, emphasizing rationality of consumer decision making, and narrowly defining product categories and competition require adaptation to the new realities. Enter experiential marketing, the alternative to traditional marketing in the context of a changing landscape, the hyperconnected world, which eventually turned to be a nurturing environment for experiential marketing, and therefore to scholars and practitioners of the discipline. Gradually, academic and practitioner interest has proliferated towards understanding, and explaining the consequences of, activities and strategies that have at their core, the experience of, and from, product and service offerings.

Embracing the experience focus by companies and consumers alike, resulted in a large lexicon of a plethora of terms related to experiential marketing, such as experience marketing, customer experience marketing, user experience, experiential consumption, experiential purchase, experience design, experiential value, among many others. Thus, there is a lot of value, for companies and for their customers, to focus on each of these areas. For the scholars of experience, however, there is an impetus to obtain better distinction and a clearer delineation between all these terms, concepts, and strategies, that have at their core the essence of experience.

We note that the term "experience" is rich in its nature, focus and dynamics. Experience can describe both an action and a state. Within the context of experiential marketing, an experience can be used to describe not only the process through which a brand becomes known to a customer, but also the act of interaction and participation at each brand touch point, the resulting affective state, and even the final outcome as acquired by skill or learning.

Further, experiences themselves range in intensity from mundane to extraordinary and memorable, and summarize the consolidated and integrated information received through all our senses. Thus, a better understanding of experiential marketing, as a strategic focus of a company, must start with a clear definition of the experience employed. A larger implication of this observation is that the field will be able to move forward by developing better and more innovative measures of the experience.

Although extant literature has conceptualized and defined customer experience in various ways (e.g., Verhoef et al. 2009; Lemke et al. 2010), based on Klaus and Maklan 2013; p. 228), we define customer experience as 'the customer's cognitive and affective assessment of all direct and indirect encounters with the firm, relating to their purchasing behavior'. As such, customer experience holds the cumulative assessment arising from a longer process of brand–customer interaction across multiple channels, elicited through functional, sensorial, and emotional clues. Thus, we must go beyond traditional marketing to meet consumers' interest driven by the rich environment in which consumption occurs. Indeed, research shows that, over time, consumers' preferences shift toward more experiential purchases, that is, purchases with an experience component, such as travel or concerts, because in many instances, these purchases can provide greater satisfaction, and happiness (Gilovich, Kumar and Jampol 2015). For consumers, experiential purchases tend to evoke fewer negative feelings, and fewer social comparisons than material purchases. In fact, they can even be a bigger part of our identity than material purchases.

For business, experiential marketing can be the differentiating force in a commoditized marketplace cluttered with very similar core offerings. A well-planned and designed experience, through which consumers interact with the brand at the many touchpoints during the customer experience journey, can be the ultimate success factor and help establish a lasting association between the consumers and the brand. This concept has already become, or on its way to becoming a promising marketing strategy. As firms are not insulated from the hyperconnected physical and digital world in which they operate, adapting to and embracing experiential marketing is how organizations that successfully manage the online shopping experience and bridge the offline and online realms achieve sustainable competitive advantage. Firms should consciously create, measure and improve customer experience touch points at each stage of the customer experience journey, as part of delivering their customer value proposition. Creating a unique marketing experience by engaging consumers on multiple personal levels will have a strong impact on consumers' behavior, which can affect their

purchase and repurchase intentions, loyalty, and ultimately the financial performance of the firm.

To further showcase the importance of experiential marketing in a hyperconnected world, we have edited a collection of readings that introduce the reader to some of the critical concepts within the field of experiential marketing, covering a broad range of contexts. Such a broad focus enables us to address some of the themes critical to experiential marketing, as included in the sections below.

Section 1: The state of experience and experiential marketing

The objective of this section is to introduce critical research questions that prevail in the academic world and offer scholars of experiential marketing a few starting points for future research. One of the most difficult aspects of embracing experiential marketing is the unclear distinction and delineation among the offerings, which can include tangible offerings from clothing to experiences and personal transformations, and the strategies and tactics associated with the implementation of an experiential marketing strategy. To this end, in the introductory chapter, titled "Customer Experience and Experiential Marketing: a Research Framework", Dr. Batat provides a clear description of the concept of customer experience, including the importance of the multitude of touch points between a customer and the brand, and emerging strategies designed around integrating experiences in the overall experiential marketing strategy. This chapter also sheds light onto valuable research methods and focuses on qualitative research and its potential to gain deeper insights into the experiential marketing.

In the second chapter, "Awe Experience and Consumer Behavior", Dr. Park and Dr. Howlett expand on one of the core elements of the experience economy, introducing the experience of awe, its nature, and psychological consequences. In understanding the future of experiential marketing and the marketing potential of experiential transformations, the researchers draw attention towards a less researched type of experience, which, in the context of the Covid 19 era, has the potential to become a central issue. Among elements central to awe are feelings of connectedness others, and the collective aspect of experience. Given the fact that Covid 19 has completely transformed how we all connect, communicate with each other, including our collective perception of the future, we believe that awe experiences hold a great future potential for research.

Section 2: the experiential consumption environment

The second section brings together a focused approach regarding the role that physical, digital, and sensorial stimuli play in experiential marketing. In the first chapter of this section, titled "Experiential Conspicuous Consumption on Social Media", Dr. Anlamlier highlights the role of social media, as an omnipresent environment, within which, the consumption of material products can shift owners' perceptions from material to experiential at the post-purchase phase. The author describes how the experiential framework of Sense, Feel, Think, Act and Relate connects with social media and explain the essential features of social media that require alignment with experiential product characteristics. In the second chapter of this section, titled "Lifestyle Fashion Retailing in China: Redesigning the Consumer Journey", Ms. Yini Chen and Dr. Ting Chi focus on the design of shopping experiences in physical stores. The authors pay attention to environmental stimuli and employ a qualitative study to reveal how lifestyle fashion stores could induce positive internal states and favorable hedonic and utilitarian evaluations for their customers. In the third chapter in this section, titled "Capitalizing on the crossmodal correspondences between audition and olfaction in the design of multisensory experiences", Dr. Carlos Velasco and Dr. Charles Spence provide an experimental view on how soundscape and olfactory stimuli influence consumers evaluations in the context of a hedonic product. As researchers and practitioners are increasingly looking to incorporate audio-olfactory associations in the design of multisensory experiences, the authors present interesting future opportunities that can systematically influence human experience.

Section 3: a practical perspective on experiential marketing

The final section brings to the reader more practical and innovative approaches regarding customer experiences and experiential marketing. In the first chapter of the section, titled "Experiential Marketing: A supporting Role for Promotional Products", Dr. Jaime Noriega takes a practitioners' approach and makes the case for using promotional products as a vehicle for implementing an experiential marketing focus, where functional and/or aesthetically attractive and interesting promotional products can influence a consumer to experience extemporaneous thoughts not just about the brand, but also about the attributes for which the brand is known. In the concluding chapter titled "Understanding customer experience: asymmetry effects of touchpoints on hotel booking decision", Dr. Kim highlights the hyperconnected

world of today's consumption environment defining a customer's journey. Dr. Kim's experimental findings highlight the distinctive influences of customer experience collected from different touchpoints on customer decisions.

In conclusion, firms and brands have started to consciously move away from considering experiential marketing simply as a tactic within the existing marketing campaigns. Experiential marketing has come of age to become a significant part of the customer value delivery strategy and is occupying a more central role in brands' overall marketing strategy. Thoughtful use of technology to augment experiences, the consideration the customer experience throughout their entire consumption journey, and a focus on creating immersive experiences by using all emerging senses will prove beneficial to firms implementing a customer experience strategy. To that end, we are excited to present thoughtfully selected articles that can provide researchers, doctoral students, and practitioners with a primer on experiential marketing and also a roadmap for future research in this fast-growing field.

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SECTION 1:

THE STATE OF EXPERIENCE AND EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING

CHAPTER 1

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING: A RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

WIDED BATAT

THE FOUNDER OF THE EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING MIX (7ES), ENTREPRENEUR, RESEARCHER, AND PROFESSOR

Abstract

At the heart of the new paradigm of experiential marketing, the customer experience is a holistic and multidimensional concept. It refers to the set of emotions and feelings felt by a customer before, during, and after purchasing a product or service. It is the result of all the interactions a customer can have with the brand or the company. Therefore, the customer experience is the complex result of heterogeneous elements and factors involved in the customer journey. Besides, the nature and components of the customer experience can vary greatly depending on the field of activity, perspective, and framework. In some domains, the customer experience will be essentially felt at the point of sale/service, while in others, it may be much more fragmented across different touchpoints. It is also centered on the experience of using the product. Thus, the implementation of successful experiential marketing strategies requires a good understanding of what customer experience is and what its components are to adapt marketing tools to the profile and characteristics of the new consumer's behaviors both online and offline. In this chapter, I shed light on the shift in paradigm from traditional marketing to experiential marketing. Then, I explain the principles of the experiential approach to understand how the experience concept has been transferred to the marketing field. Finally, the foundations for new experiential marketing will be developed in line with the evolution of consumer behaviors and the emergence of new consumption trends to offer businesses and scholars comprehensive insights in terms of experiential strategies.

"Experience is a concept that is unavoidable in contemporary marketing strategies to the point that almost all products and services are now sold as – experience."
(Wided Batat, Experiential Marketing, Routledge, 2019)

In the current context characterized by the evolution and diversification of the offerings, the dominance of communication technologies, and the rise of new consumer trends, companies should question their marketing model as well as the methodological tools to analyze the marketplace and emerging behaviors alongside physical and symbolic needs of consumers. On the one hand, the advent of new hedonic consumers, better-informed, and seeking pleasant and memorable experiences (Batat, 2019) highlights the importance for marketers to go beyond a purely utilitarian consumption logic, which is limited to the usage value and the functional benefits that the consumer can derive from the consumption and purchase processes. On the other hand, the recent COVID-19 global pandemic crisis that occurred in late 2019 has emphasized the importance for firms to focus more on consumers' emotions and offer experiences where consumers can feel enchanted, as stated by Batat (2020): "*In the 'new normal,' companies should implement a more bottom-up marketing strategy. Thinking needs to shift from a product-centric to a more customer-centric logic as well as from traditional marketing—based on the 4Ps or 7Ps of Kotler—to the new experiential marketing and its 7Es.*"

Therefore, integrating consumers' perceptions and their experiential, symbolic, hedonic, ideological, subjective, and emotional needs into the offer is vital to create a competitive advantage by enhancing consumer enchantment (e.g., Batat, 2019; Schmitt, 1999; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Following an experiential perspective, the act of consumption is no longer seen in terms of destruction but rather as an activity where the consumer can create meanings and new usages within a predefined sociocultural context. Consequently, companies should focus on consumers' functional needs and provide the consumer with consumption and purchase experiences full of emotions and pleasure that generate memorable sensations.

Prior marketing studies (e.g., Schmitt, 2010; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982) have emphasized the importance of adapting marketing tools to better understand the consumer experience and its dimensions in all business sectors, ranging from tourism and culture to ordinary consumer activities. Therefore, the application of experiential marketing is essential to design innovative and emotional consumer experiences that are both satisfying and profitable. Companies need to change their way of thinking and doing by integrating at the center of their

strategies and business models the consumer through promoting strategic thinking by adopting a consumer-centric approach. This approach requires adapting marketing tools to better understand and analyze the components of the experience, the profile and characteristics of the new consumer, and off and online consumption practices (Schmitt, 1999). This chapter will first explain the shift in paradigm from traditional marketing to experiential marketing. We then outline the principles of the experiential approach by explaining the genesis of the experiential theory to understand how the experience concept has been transferred to the marketing field. The thoughts that structure experiential marketing will be developed in line with the evolution of consumer behaviors and the emergence of new consumption trends to provide companies and marketing scholars with rich insights through exploratory research approaches, which both practitioners and researchers in marketing could consider.

From Traditional to Experiential Marketing: The Paradigm Shift

Consumption has transformed, since the 1970s, into an activity where the consumers have become emotional and social actors (e.g., Ingwer, 2012; Arnould and Price, 1993), seeking unique and pleasurable experiences while satisfying their functional needs (Alderson, 1957). Following this logic, Batat (2019) has recently emphasized the limits of the traditional marketing approach based on using the marketing mix of 4Ps or 7Ps (Kotler, 1986), a dominant tool that is still used nowadays by marketing professionals as well as in academia.

According to Batat, the transition from a cognitive process based on a utilitarian logic that has long prevailed in the marketing field to an experiential approach can be reflected in a change in the paradigm linked to the questioning of established behaviorist models (e.g., Khan, Dhar, and Wertenbroch, 2004) that highlight the process of information processing by the consumer. Therefore, the limitation related to traditional marketing that follows a cognitive logic is mainly associated with the definition of the consumer as a rational economic actor and decision-maker, which is considered as a narrow vision that does not help companies and scholars capture the paradoxes and the irrational behaviors of consumers (e.g., Batat and Frochot, 2013; Batat and Wohlfeil, 2009; Bandura, 1977). Thus, adopting an experiential approach allows companies to deepen their understanding of consumers' behaviors and the meanings they assign to their consumption

experiences embedded within a specific sociocultural setting (Batat, 2015) and are shaped by many macro forces (Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

The experiential approach has been recognized in the area of consumer behavior since the late 1950s by questioning two basics of the consumer behavior model: product evaluation and consumer rationality (Batat and Frochot, 2013; Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). Regarding product evaluation, the idea behind this questing is related to the statement that products cannot be limited to their tangible attributes because they do carry meanings and other symbolic aspects that consumers may value (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Mathwick, Malhotra, and Rigdon, 2002; Holbrook, 1999; 1994). As a foundation in behaviorist models, consumer rationality does not integrate emotions as an essential component in decision-making. For instance, compulsive behavior and buying fashion and luxury products are among the purchase experiences that lead us to question consumer rationality and product limits, which only consider physical features (Pullman and Gross, 2004). That is why to understand better the complexity of consumer behavior and the decision-making process, marketing researchers and professionals should integrate other elements such as consumers' meanings, situational factors, previous experiences, and the emotions generated, which can positively or negatively affect both the purchase and the consumption experiences.

Prior research that examined the characteristics leading to the differentiation between the traditional and the experiential approach in marketing (e.g., Batat, 2019; Schmitt, 1999; Pine and Gilmore, 1999,1998; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982) identified three main factors to explain the shift in the paradigm: the type of the product, the characteristics of the consumer behavior purchase process, and the competition on the marketplace. Thus, while traditional marketing does not integrate the emotional dimension and consumer's subjectivity, experiential marketing allows companies to go beyond the pure satisfaction of the needs expressed by consumers who would be more interested in living experiences full of emotions, pleasure, hedonism, socialization, sharing value, and recognition (e.g., Firat, Sherry, and Venkatesh, 1994; Ward, 1974). Therefore, the rise of the experiential approach in marketing has created a new experience economy (Gilmore and Pine, 2002), which have two key fundamentals: designing an experiential package in which the experience constitutes a new offering and considering the experiential value that comes from the interaction of the individual with the product/service as the outcome of the experience. Table 1 summarizes the main differences between traditional marketing and experiential marketing.

Table 1: Traditional Marketing vs. Experiential Marketing

	TRADITIONAL MARKETING	**EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING**
FOCUS	Functional and benefits of products	The meanings of consumer experiences
PRODUCT	The product and the competitors are closely defined	Consumption is a holistic experience
CONSUMER	The consumer is a rational decision-maker	The consumer is irrational and emotional
METHOD	Quantitative (questionnaires)	Immersive, ethnography, subjective introspection

The experiential approach applied in the marketing field was born with the works of the researchers Holbrook and Hirschman, who published two founding articles on the topic. The first one on the hedonic consumer behavior (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982), and the second article, lays the foundations of the experiential theory in consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). Having identified the limits of traditional marketing theories mentioned earlier in this chapter, these scholars proposed a theoretical framework, which can overlap with the conventional approaches in different consumption settings. Nevertheless, Holbrook and Hirschman did not reject traditional marketing (e.g., Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan, 2010; Kotler and Keller, 2006) and its behaviorist consumption theories (Kotler, 1986), but recommended developing a new analytical framework for certain types of consumption domains such as leisure, art, culture, and entertainment. Their model aimed to respond to the behaviors that were differentiated by consumers' emotional response, sensorial aspects, and attraction to playfulness.

Therefore, the experiential approach invites marketing professionals and scholars to rethink marketing research and strategies (Kozinets, 2002; Zaltman, 1997) and the tools in the light of the new experiential context studied. Thus, the interest is related to sensory and non-verbal stimuli, thanks to tangible and verbal ones (Agar, 2011). The main difference between experiential marketing and traditional marketing is the purpose of the consumption, which no longer focuses on maximizing the usefulness of a good, but more on maximizing lived experience, which is evaluated on symbolic and aesthetic criteria (Batat, 2019). As a result, consumers will seek to maximize their emotional benefits and evaluate the experience based

on the pleasure they derive from it. In this perspective, we no longer measure the experience in the light of customer satisfaction but more about the intensity of the memory and the pleasure that constitute an integral part of consumer enchantment. For example, Lush, a chain of stores, develops cosmetics based on essential oils produced from organic plant materials (fruits and vegetables) offers real customer experiences in the cosmetics market by focusing on the consumer's senses to transform their purchase experience. Lush, therefore, stimulates several senses such as smell and taste that are enhanced through products that release scents that spread to the streets. The products are also associated with food flavors (e.g., chocolate, sugar, honey, coconut). In this case, offering and designing sensorial experiences instead of products is an essential competitive advantage. As Pine and Gilmore (1990) stated, the services provide the stage, and the goods are the accessories that allow the creation of a memorable consumer experience. Therefore, the memorability of the experience is a crucial element of success as it enhances consumer loyalty and contributes to creating positive word-of-mouth.

For marketers, the experiential perspective has the merit of enriching the understanding of specific consumption and purchasing behaviors, especially in the area of cultural consumer products and leisure activities in general. It also highlights the vital role of emotions in the evaluation and the enhancement during the consumption experience (Cuff et al., 2016; Dewar et al., 2009). Therefore, in following an experiential logic, the company will acknowledge the idea that the aim of the purchase process is not only about consuming a product but about living experiences and interacting with the product (Carù and Cova, 2004) in a particular sociocultural context to immerse the consumer by integrating individual's senses. In experiential marketing, the consumer expresses a growing quest for immersion through varied experiences to explore a multiplicity of new meanings to give to one's life. Thus, for companies, experience constitutes a fourth category of offer alongside commodities, products, and services (Carù and Cova, 2003).

Experience to Keep up With the Emerging Consumer Trends

Today, companies are witnessing new emerging consumption trends that lead them to consider innovative ways of communicating with new consumers who are becoming more emotional, digital, and paradoxical in their behaviors. Offering experiences instead of products is then a proper way to keep up with the emerging consumer trends and thus create and share

value with their clients (Carù and Cova, 2006). To connect with their customers, companies should rethink their relationship with their customers by emphasizing the symbolic aspects of the meanings these consumers assign to their consumption experiences and the emotions that emerge within their experiences in connection with the company (McCracken, 1986). Therefore, adapting to the advent of these new consumers by changing their marketing paradigm to shift towards a more experiential approach seems necessary for companies to develop a sustainable competitive advantage. To do so, companies have to learn more about the profile and characteristics of the new consumer and which experiences they should offer to fit with the tangible (e.g., quality, functional) and intangible (e.g., social, emotional) needs of the new consumer (McGrath, Sherry, and Levy, 1993). The transition from a logic centered on the product and its tangible attributes to a philosophy focused on the consumption experience of the new consumer can thus be achieved by incorporating three key aspects that characterize the new consumer behavior: engagement, postmodernism, and "phygitized" consumption practices (Batat, 2019). These three aspects are developed in the section below.

Responsible Experiences to Satisfy Engaged Consumers

The new consumers see themselves as responsible market actors who should be engaged in the environment as they are aware of their consumption activities' social, ecological, and economic impacts (e.g., Batat, 2019). The new consumer is more eager to criticize companies and reject brands and products that do not integrate a responsible dimension in their offerings. Consumer responsibility and ethical behaviors have been the subject of extensive works in marketing and consumer behavior literature (e.g., Frochot and Batat, 2013). This responsible consumption, which gives an ethical meaning and a social utility in the act of purchase, leads consumers to develop a thoughtful approach to their consumption activities. Thus, to avoid rejection and connect strongly with this new consumer through the values expressed, companies should integrate into their experiential strategies the fact that today's consumers can no longer be considered as passive market actors and they can express their engagement through their consumption practices (e.g., Heinonen et al., 2010; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). The fundamental ideology is to consume what is essential. To behave responsibly, these new consumers assess products when making decisions according to the product's potential to do good or bad at social, economic, and environmental levels. Companies should then adapt to this trend and incorporate socially responsible business practices at all stages from

production to consumption to fit with the needs of these consumers. For example, H&M is now offering a new service that allows consumers to give back their worn clothes that the company will purchase for less than 10 USD. The clothes are classified into four categories: resalable (sold as secondhand items at very affordable prices), reusable (as material to make everyday textiles), recyclable (e.g., to produce energy).

Experiences Adapted to Postmodern Consumers

To understand the foundations, origins, and implications of postmodernism in the field of experiential marketing and consumption, we should first locate the rise of postmodernism in choosing modernity as a starting point in Western societies. Modernity can be grasped according to two dimensions: the economy through industrialization and culture by referring to creativity and transgression (Brown, 1998; Firat, Nikhilesh, and Venkatesh, 1995). In marketing, several scholars have brought various criticisms to the foundations of modernism in the consumption field (Thomas, 1997; Batat, 2019). These critics integrate the idea that consumption and production are not just economic acts but also cultural and experiential processes (Venkatesh, 1992). As a result, the disapproval of modern consumer society has given rise to new forms of consumption, allowing the shift from the "modern" to the "postmodern" era.

Postmodernity, therefore, refers to a structural change in the individual and society linked to the end of a modern period, which had created modernity, and the advent of the digital and experiential age as we know it today (Batat, 2019). Postmodernity offers a rich analytical framework that is adapted to the new experiential era in the post-industrial society, which now expresses intangible, including symbolism and emotions. Following the postmodern logic, new consumer values have emerged, such as ecology, independence, feminism, responsibility, fragmentation, and tolerance. Altogether, these new values generate consumer paradoxes that the company should integrate when designing experiences by broadening the traditional marketing perspective based on an interpretation primarily cognitive of the consumer buying process (Batat, 2019).

Phygital Experiences for Digitized Consumers

Today, new mixed consumption experiences are booming thanks to the ubiquity of digital technologies in our daily lives. According to Castelli (2016), the characteristics of these consumption experiences are not

exclusively physical nor entirely digital. However, they merge the features of the two worlds: digital and physical, which give rise to a third context of consumption in a logic of bringing together the digital and physical context: phygital (Batat, 2019). The phygital environment is a context of consumption integrating gateways set up by companies between the different physical (offline) and digital (online) channels so that customers can switch from one to the other without too much difficulty by guaranteeing them consistency in the experiential journey from the physical context to the digital and vice versa.

The customer experience in the phygital setting represents a significant challenge for companies in the years to come. For companies, it is essential to create effective and efficient digital customer experiences that are embedded in daily habits by using technologies and digital devices (e.g., Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2012; Denegri-Knott and Molesworth, 2010). For example, the use of beacon technology (a small box with Bluetooth technology that enables the company to exchange with its customers in the store via their smartphones) is an excellent example of the importance of combining physical and digital worlds. These technologies allow companies to digitize the physical customer experience at the point of sale. Quantified-self experience is another example of the phygital customer experience that highlights self-quantified experiences. Consumers appreciate self-quantified experiences when they use apps and connected objects to monitor, control, optimize, and improve their behavior themselves (Kedzior, 2015). Augmented reality, digital concierge services, and experiences derived from 3D printing are examples of phygital experiences.

However, companies today have limited knowledge of what makes these phygital experiences useful to consumers because integrated technologies are new (Batat, 2019). To incorporate new technologies and provide functionally and emotionally satisfying phygital experiences for their customers, companies should then focus on identifying the elements of the phygital customer experience that can create value for them. To meet their customers' needs, companies, therefore, should ensure consistency between the digital customer experience (DCX) and the user experience (UX), since customers do not dissociate the two elements and tend to interpret all events as a unique global experience with the company without distinction (Batat, 2018). For example, a customer can find a pleasant and easy-to-use application (positive UX) and their experience through discussions with the staff of the company that designed the app, after-sales service, assistance, or hotline difficult and unpleasant, which leads to a negative overall digital customer experience (DCX). The opposite is also possible.

To sum up, we can state that by integrating new consumer trends, the company could design coherent, satisfying, and profitable customer experiences throughout different stages that incorporate various components of the overall experiential framework.

The Customer Experience Framework

Customer experience is not a new concept, but its introduction to marketing is recent. Its use in marketing should then be examined through a chronological and multidisciplinary approach to understand its importance in the consumer behavior field (De Keyser et al., 2015). Far from being specific to marketing, the concept of experience was first introduced by philosophers, then in sociology before becoming associated with the consumption and marketing fields. The concept of experience encompasses multiple meanings and includes various stages. There are manifold facets of the experience concept. Following a multidisciplinary review of the literature (e.g., Dewey, 2005; Bourdieu, 1979), we can state that the concept of experience encompasses diverse aspects depending on the perspective and the discipline that studied it. In philosophy, the experience is seen as an ambivalent ideological notion. It signifies the link between individuals with material reality and the formation of knowledge and skills. Yet, at the same time, it is irrational, random, emotional, intangible, and unrelated to the material world. From a philosophical point of view, the experience can be both a starting point and an end. Either it has something to teach us or confirms our knowledge in a confrontation with reality (Batat, 2019).

From a sociocultural perspective, the experience is analyzed according to three primary levels: macro, meso, and micro. In anthropology, John Dewey (1964) defined experience by assigning its individual, symbolic, and cultural dimensions. Experience is, therefore, seen as a source of individualization, which transforms individuals by making them unique and different because they have had experiences that participate in their individualization process. Finally, in marketing and consumer behavior, the customer experience was to replace Customer Relationship Management (CRM), ubiquitous in the 1990s (Payne and Frow, 2004). The interest of researchers and marketers for the new concept of "customer/consumer experience" can be explained by the limits of the CRM that does not incorporate a customer-centric approach and is limited to strategies centered on the product and its physical characteristics, quality improvement, sales through promotional strategies and rewarding customer loyalty.

The different definitions of experience we can find in the marketing literature emphasize the importance of subjectivity and intangible and symbolic dimensions in the purchasing process (e.g., Boddy, 2005; Rambo-Ronai, 1992). The company should then place the consumer at the center of its strategy to reduce the discrepancies between different experiences (e.g., experience expected by the consumer should not be different from the experience wanted by the company). The company can also intervene on the elements that constitute the consumption experience to adjust the offer to the symbolic and emotional needs expressed by consumers. For Pine and Gilmore (1999), the experience should be guided by five key elements: theming, leaving a positive unified impression, eliminating the negative, producing memories that consumers take with them, and engaging the five senses. O'Sullivan and Spangler (1998) identified five dimensions: consumer involvement in the experience, co-production of the consumer in the experience, the relevance of the aspects symbolic of the service, the multifunctionality of the service, and the centrality of experience in the consumer universe of the individual. Many authors have also produced critical elements of the experience that we cannot all list here. Other authors have looked at the conditions that allow the emergence of successful experience; design, sensory marketing, experiencescape, and immersion are critical.

Regarding customer experience stages, marketing scholars (Batat, 2019; Arnould and Price, 1993) state that the consumer experience is part of a longitudinal approach where the time dimension can be divided into four main stages: (1) the anticipation phase of the experience, which brings together activities, information research, budget optimization, planning and expectations in terms of future experiences; (2) the purchasing experience that represents the selection and choice of product and interaction with elements of the point of sale; (3) the experience of consumers who will express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction; and (4) the experience of remembering to relive the previous experience through photographic elements, stories, and discourses classified by the consumer according to significant events. These stages can be analyzed and examined by scholars and companies through using exploratory research methodologies such as ethnography (Arnould, 1998) or subjective introspection (Batat, 2015), which are appropriate methods to capture the "hidden obvious" and tacit meanings of the lived experiences.

Exploratory Research and Customer Experience

In exploratory research, the relevance of insights is increased by the open and not "selective" approach of the researcher who collects everything he/she can see and listen to with as much precision as possible but without prior selection (e.g., Chitakunye, 2012; Ereaut, Imms, and Cullingham, 2002). Exploratory research allows marketing scholars to understand better the market and consumer experiences from a "bottom-up" perspective, whose starting point is the consumer and his/her subjectivity. This approach, therefore, overcomes the limits of quantitative techniques by offering an in-depth and exhaustive analysis of the customer experience through immersion and interaction with consumers using different tools such as ethnography (e.g., Arnould, 1998) or subjective introspection (e.g., Batat, 2015; Gould, 2012; Wohlfeil and Whelan, 2012).

Ethnography is one of the qualitative methodologies that has an exploratory nature and allows marketers and researchers to understand the social interactions between the different market players and capture the symbolic and emotional dimensions that emerge within the experiences of individuals and consumer groups. This immersive method is focused on the individuals and their experiences in a specific sociocultural setting. The main objective is to go beyond the cognitive and rational vision of consumer behavior by incorporating a sociocultural viewpoint. In experiential marketing, ethnography aims to study how experiences and practices are built in a consumer culture and how this culture participates in forming individuals' experiences. Thus, the ethnography uses visual and verbal data through recording behaviors in consumption situations in which the researcher immerses him/herself in the context of consumption studied by socializing with the individuals. The data collection process in a natural setting by the ethnographer, who is seen as a partner, allows him/her to observe the behaviors in real-time instead of reacting to actors on their previous experiences. There are two types of ethnography in marketing: marketing ethnography and market ethnography (Batat, 2019). The first is related to the study of organizations and their marketing actions. The second focuses on studying social actors who constitute the marketplace and the sociocultural context to understand the emerging experiences and behaviors.

For companies, the contribution of market-oriented ethnography to consumer experience understanding is fundamental. Ethnography allows the identification, categorization, and analysis of microcultures and consumer subcultures in which the experiences emerge and are shaped according to

defined codes and standards by community members. While interviews tend to have an individualistic dimension, ethnography looks at consumer groups and communities from a social and collective angle, considering the context where the experience of consumption occurs. Ethnography will then help the researcher capture the emergence of the meaning consumers assign to consumption objects within their experiences.

Regarding personal subjective introspection (SPI), also called auto-ethnography, is a qualitative methodology centered on the individual as an observer of his/her consumption practices and his/her consumer life. This self-centered subjective observation aims to write an introspective narrative dealing with a consumption phenomenon over a period given fueled by personal reflections. To study consumption experiences and functional and symbolic dimensions defined by individuals in their sociocultural context, personal subjective introspection, stemming from experiences of the observer researcher who is also the individual whose behavior is to study, gives access to analyses of the researcher's own experiences (Gould, 2012).

These analyses allow understanding the meanings that the researcher/consumer attributes to his/her consumption experiences. Auto-ethnography gives access to the field 24 hours a day in real daily situations described in a diary. In the implementation process of the methodological scheme using the SPI, the researcher is an integral part of the study and the group of consumers affected by the phenomenon studied. The researcher can cross his/her reflection on his/her behaviors with other social actors who demonstrate similar practices. Given biases such as subjectivity and lack of perspective, combining SPI with different techniques is recommended to consolidate the results (Batat, 2015). Nevertheless, according to researchers, SPI remains a complete method to understand the experience and its tacit and explicit dimensions. Besides, self-ethnography contributes to a better understanding of consumer experiences and perceptions of consumers where conventional qualitative approaches manifest their limits.

Conclusion

This chapter aims to better understand the experiential approach to marketing scholars and professionals. As shown in the above sections, experience is a vibrant and complex concept, which can be approached through different perspectives, disciplines, and strategies. The primary aim of this chapter was to recall the principles, models, and concepts that structure the experiential approach. Thus, understanding the experience should be reintegrated and analyzed within the broader framework of