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A Methodical Inquiry Into Practice and Theory
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Experiential Discourse in Marketing

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Experiential Discourse in Marketing

A methodical inquiry into practice and theory

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The PhD School of Economics and Management

Experiential Discourse in Marketing:

A methodical inquiry into practice and theory

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Copenhagen Business School

Doctoral School in Economics and Management

Department of Marketing

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EXPERIENTIAL DISCOURSE IN MARKETING

Abstract

The subject of this thesis is the experiential discourse in marketing: how experience is researched by scholars as well as understood and delivered by practitioners. While experience-based approaches have been accepted and implemented by consultants, scholars have yet to comprehensively embrace experience as an academically robust concept (Holbrook, 2007; Palmer, 2010).

An experiential perspective seeks to delve deeper into cognitive and emotional levels concerning consumption (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). In order to gain insight into the intricacies of experience, a large data set consisting of conference speeches and interviews was qualitatively analyzed, applying content analysis (Kassarjian, 1977).

The findings reveal that there are many lessons to be learned about how practitioners design and deliver experiential offers. Compared to the cases often cited as part of the experience economy, which are typically manifested in retail environments, consumer products and staged events, the findings reveal a more nuanced discourse and a broader range of experience offerings representing many industries, including: hospitality, software, documentary film making, science, gaming, banking, and environmental design.

The data shed light on several aspects worthy of further research. How an experience adds value, supports values, and is meaningful to the user is crucial. Understanding a user's goals is important in order to be able to design appropriate interaction touch points yet allow fluid engagement. In addition to shaping experience environments, whether physical or virtual, the findings reveal that practitioners exhibit an astute sensitivity to context and process. Moreover they are concerned with

affording "flow," meaning optimal experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003): not only for users but also for themselves. The focus on purposeful activity and change suggests that experience is part of an innovation discourse, potentially creating better offers and relationships. This resonates with academic and business communities alike.

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Resumé (dansk)

Emnet for denne afhandling er oplevelsesdiskurs i marketing: hvordan oplevelser udforskes videnskabeligt, og hvordan de forstås og iscenesættes i praksis. Mens oplevelsesbaseret erfaringer er blevet accepteret og implementeret i praksis, har den akademiske verden endnu ikke taget konceptet oplevelse til sig og accepteret det som et akademisk koncept (Holbrook, 2007; Palmer, 2010).

Et erfaringsmæssigt perspektiv søger at dykke dybere ned i kognitive og følelsesmæssige niveauer der relateres til forbrug (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). For at få indsigt i de komplekse oplevelser, er en kvalitativ indholdsanalyse (Kassarjian, 1977) udarbejdet på baggrund af et materiale af kvalitativt data bestående af konferenceindlæg og interviews.

Undersøgelsens resultat giver et mere varieret billede af hvordan oplevelser er designet og hvordan det leveres i praksis. Sammenlignet med de eksempler, der ofte anvendes i oplevelsesøkonomien, såsom oplevelser i detailhandlen med produkter og iscenesatte begivenheder, viser undersøgelsens resultater en mere nuanceret diskurs og en bredere vifte af oplevelsestilbud, der præsenterer mange brancher, bl.a. hoteldrift, software, dokumentarfilm, forskning, spil, bankdrift og miljødesign.

Datamaterialet kaster lys over flere aspekter, der bør analyseres yderligere. Hvordan en oplevelse skaber værdi, understøtter værdi og er meningsfuld for brugeren er af afgørende betydning. Det at forstå brugerens mål er vigtigt for at være i stand til at designe et passende interaktionsmønster men stadig efterlade rum for flydende engagement.

Ud over at forme oplevelses miljøer, fysiske eller virtuelle, viser resultaterne at, i praksis udvises der en sensitivitet og forståelse over for konteksten og processen. Endvidere er de opmærksomme på muligheden for "flow" for at opnå den optimale oplevelse (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003): ikke kun for brugerne, men også for dem selv. Når fokus er på målrettet aktivitet og forandring, bliver oplevelse en del af en innovation diskurs, med potentiale for at skabe bedre tilbud og relationer. Dette giver genklang i både erhvervslivet og den akademiske verden.

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1. TOPIC INTRODUCTION

There seems to be a great deal of ambiguity around what we know and understand about experience, specifically the experience economy, and experience as an academically robust construct, worthy of being developed as a managerial tool (Palmer, 2010). Experience is not defined by the American Marketing Association beyond an experience curve effect, essentially an economic, operational context (www.marketingpower.com, accessed 26 August 2011). "The new differentiator today is customer experience," (Mascarenhas et al. 2006:397) yet what does this mean and how do companies address experience in their offerings? What advantages does the experiential view afford companies?

Frow and Payne (2007) relate that companies are *not* creating superior customer experiences. Is this the case? As a research problem, it is interesting to look beyond overt consumption to better understand experience by analyzing a broad range of practitioners' approaches to designing experience offerings. How do practitioners help their customers (users) to achieve desired outcomes? What themes emerge that can inform the experiential discourse, or experiential view, in marketing, moving the conversation forward? How can a fresh, scholarly approach to customer experience potentially improve how companies relate to users?

The real world is complex with a myriad of uncontrollable, idiosyncratic variables. Addressing the user, or recipient, as the focal point, experience is multi-faceted, situation-specific, dynamic and subjective: the content and context take on many forms. This is indeed, as an example, illustrated by the significance of the entertainment industry, from film and music, to console games and smartphone apps.

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It appears that the current experience economy discourse presents a tactical and myopic view of what constitutes good experience. Are marketing scholars researching pertinent experience elements? There are experience offerings that are auto-telic, or intrinsically rewarding, yet it seems as if often-cited experience examples are materialistic, or offering some sort of extrinsic reward. How can an updated experiential discourse, based on inductive, systemic case study research (Gummesson, 2002), reveal new avenues to pursue?

1.1.1 AIM OF THE DISSERTATION

Current research shows that experiences (the experience economy and creative industries) account for a large share of economic growth in many, particularly Western, countries (Danmark skal vinde på kreativitet: Perspektiver for dansk uddannelse og forskning i oplevelsesøkonomien, 2005). There are, however, many ways to perceive experience and there is neither a real, accepted definition of experience nor a consistent understanding of the concept of customer experience.

Experience is not only manifested in conspicuous consumption but also in many other forms and contexts. Generally speaking, many industries are facing commoditization of their offerings. Firms are simultaneously struggling with differentiation challenges while attempting to build and maintain good relationships with customers. Customers today have an unprecedented degree of choices; anytime, anywhere. It is also challenging for businesses that customers are fickle and quick to punish perceived shortcomings. Other stakeholders, such as investors, can also be extremely demanding (Gummesson, 2008b; Payne & Holt, 2001).

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Experience is not only the "what" that is delivered, but also the "how," or process. The challenge is to understand "why" a product, event, good or service, is perceived as a good experience and what motivates a user to engage. A key obligation of research is ongoing reflection and dialog (Lovelock & Gummesson, 2004). Kotler et al. (2009) refer to postmodern marketing which suggests that scholars critique or challenge some of the basic understandings of marketing. A post-modernistic perspective acknowledges social experiences as: "an interplay of myths which produce regimes of truth and that much of what we understand or believe about the individual, self, freedom, structure and so on is arbitrary and short-lived, fleeting rather than essential and fixed" (ibid: 27).

The aim of this dissertation is to contribute with new insights, grounded in data, to inform the experiential view in marketing and shed light on defining experience and useful variables to explore. In order to avoid superlative inflation, experience is referred to as "good" experience, or simply "experience," throughout the report. One could argue the merits of discussing "superior" or "excellent" experience, but this might confuse rather than move the conversation forward. Moreover, customer, user, and often consumer are used interchangeably throughout this paper; although the term "user" seems to be the purest form. An individual does not have to be directly monetarily engaged, as a paying customer, with a company in order to have an experience. Consider using Google, Wikipedia, a public park or library.

1.1.2 CONCEPTUALIZING EXPERIENCE

The language of "experience" is important to observe and analyze because language brings forth reality; hence an epistemological approach. This includes

linguistic references, expressions of attitudes and evaluations (Krippendorf, 2004) of experience.

How is experience articulated? What is an experience? Experience is plagued by terminological confusion. "Experiences are private events that occur in response to some stimulation. Experiences involve the entire living being. They often result from direct observation and/or participation in events---whether they are real, dreamlike, or virtual" (Schmitt 1999a: 60). Referred to as the "logic of experience," American philosopher John Dewey stated the origin of knowledge is precisely living experience. It is not logical theorems that govern our thinking. Dewey's concept of experience focuses on the relation, rather than duality, between individual and social aspects. While experiences are always individual, they derive from our common, collective world of experience (Dewey, 1938). Dewey's perspective on knowledge represents an empiricist view (knowledge arising from our senses), such as Aristotle, and Dewey sees knowledge bound with activity; hence learning and doing (Jashapara, 2004).

1.1.3 ETYMOLOGY OF EXPERIENCE

Referring to the Century Dictionary, wordnik.com (http://www.wordnik.com/words/experience/etymologies#) cites the term experience as deriving from:

> Middle English *experience, experiens*, from Old French *experience*, French
> *expérience* = Provencal *experientia, esperientia* = Spanish Portuguese
> *experiencia* = Italian *esperienza, sperienza, esperienzia, sperienzia*, from Latin
> experientia, a trial, proof, experiment, experimental knowledge, experience,
> from experien(*t*-)*s*, present participle of *experiri*, try, put to the test, undertake,

undergo, from ex, out, + periri, go through, in past participle *peritus*,

experienced, expert: see expert and *peril.*

Figure 1: Graphically depicted definition of experience. www.visualthesaurus.com

As a noun, experience can be defined as, 1) the accumulation of knowledge or skill that results from direct participation in events or activities, such as competences, 2) the content of direct observation or participation in an event, and 3) an event as apprehended (www.visualthesaurus.com). As a verb, experience is 1) to go through (live through), see, undergo, 2) to know, live, as in have first-hand knowledge of states, situations, emotions, or sensations, relating to mental or physical states (ibid.).

1.1.4 EXPERIENCE USAGE

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The multiple meanings of the term experience are 1) subjective and personal, referring to one's internal state and 2) objective and environmental, as in job experience (Kolb, 1984). In the context of experiential learning theory, these two forms of experience interpenetrate and interrelate in very complex ways (ibid.). Boswijk et al. (2007) claim that in the experience economy literature, experience is *always* about "a sensation or feeling; the act of encountering or undergoing something" (2007:11).

Experience, similar to quality, does not necessarily have a positive valence. Experience is not always good or enjoyable, but that does not necessarily imply that it is bad or without value. It is important to discover something new, acquire an appreciation or even recognition. Dewey (1960: 176) states, "Qualities per se are *had* or experienced. Not simply located in a subject or object: they are "in" a situation or context."

In terms of more current language usage, experience has many nuances and meanings which are context contingent. In German, for example, experience can be defined through *Erfahrung* (a noun) and *Erlebnis* (a verb) (Boswijk et al. 2007). Danish also has a parallel distinction; *erfaring* and *oplevelse*: essentially practical knowledge and an experience gained through an adventure. In English, experience is classified as a noun or a transitive verb while the meaning of an experience is conveyed in context. This fragmented use also contributes to terminological confusion.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RELATED WORK

The preceding chapter discusses the etymology and vocabulary of experience. Moreover, it is pertinent to understand how experience is addressed in the literature and to identify not only previous findings but also to discover a potential theoretical vacuum and to clarify a point of departure.

Marketing is a comprehensive field encompassing wide-ranging perspectives. Although the concept of customer experience is addressed in many aspects of marketing, a review of the literature suggests that experience is typically viewed from a narrow perspective. In order to conduct research on extant work concerning experience, it is pertinent to look for literature on experience as well as to identify gaps and anomalies (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). How has experience been understood and addressed by marketing researchers?

After careful review and coverage, a purposive sample, representing pivotal articles (Randolph, 2009) from the literature, is presented. To provide a clear and balanced picture of the current knowledge and collective understanding of the experiential discourse in marketing, this chapter is organized conceptually (ibid.), or by key constructs, and divided into three main sections:

1. The first part addresses the works that establish experience as an imperative in marketing.

2. The second section reviews the literature on services marketing. Like experience, services are inherently intangible by nature yet an integral part of an offering.

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3. Section three reviews pertinent literature on relationship marketing; more specifically, the importance of nurturing relationships and how an experiential view relates to relationship marketing.

The three sections are divided into subsections that identify core literature streams that are relevant to an experiential perspective.

SECTION 1: THE EXPERIENTIAL VIEW IN MARKETING

Experience is broad in scope; so broad that it encompasses every aspect of a company's offering (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). Customer experience involves the responses, which are internal and subjective, that customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company (ibid.). Carbone (2004) equates experience with a value proposition in that ultimately how we feel in an experience is what we begin to associate as value with a particular brand. More recently, the notion of competing on experience emerged, recognizing that customers typically have many choices of vendors, suppliers, retailers, and partners to include in their networks. How does the literature illuminate an experiential discourse? Rayport and Jaworski (2005) relate customer experience to customer perception and interpretation, modified by interactions and relationships with a company, its products, and brand. Furthermore, interfaces, or interface systems, mediate customer experience through efficient and effective front office management (ibid.).

Schmitt (1999b: 53-4) notes three simultaneous developments that have contributed to a shift from traditional "features and benefits" marketing towards experiential marketing, namely:

1. The omnipresence of information technology

2. The supremacy of the brand

3. The ubiquity of communications and entertainment

In other words, external artifacts can act as catalysts for the inner experience because they are sensory. Important to this expression of experience is the way in which things interact. The interaction between individual qualifications and social conditions is where experiences are created; things interacting in certain ways are experience (Dewey, 1925). The American philosopher Dewey emphasizes that experiences are often inchoate; while we experience things they are not necessarily composed into *an* experience (Dewey, 1934/2005).

Dewey also notes that facing an uncertain or problematic situation is the provocative element in experience, or that which arouses our intelligence (Dewey, 1938). Not only do we apply previous experience to gain knowledge, but also our ability to gain new knowledge is based on our capacity to reflect on the relation between our actions and their consequences (ibid.). "In discourse about an experience, we must make use of these adjectives of interpretation" (Dewey, 1934/2005: 38).

2.1.1 EXPERIENCE DISTINCTION

Creating value and customer retention are core concepts in marketing, yet how does experience augment a company's offering or create value? Holbrook (1999; 1996) considers the consumption experience as value, derived from the interaction between a user and product (good or service). Experiences occur in a process in which interactions take place in a certain setting – whether or not a physical one – between the individual and other people, including perhaps the offering party, which can be an economic party (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). Boztepe (2007) refines interaction value as not necessarily utilitarian, as in gifts, but also particular to a socio-cultural setting.

Furthermore, a harmonious combination of product properties and what users and their specific context(s) add to product interaction create user value (ibid). Understanding and delivering customer experience also enables a company to create value and gain competitive advantage, thus augmenting branding efforts through strengthening emotional ties (Voss, 2004).

How is customer experience represented in marketing research? Scholars have approached and defined the concept of customer experience through many perspectives. One current paradigm stems from companies offering unique experiences that consumer's not only want but will also pay a premium (Patterson et al., 2008; Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

2.1.2 EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

Pine and Gilmore published "The Experience Economy" in 1999, in the midst of the dot-com bubble (1985-2001). It is set during a time of high speculation in Western economies and significant growth in the then new Internet field and related technologies. Pine and Gilmore state that future economic growth lies in the value of experiences and transformations. This context is evident in the terminology, or vocabulary, used in their book. Pine and Gilmore write about "staging brand experiences," "experiencing the richness," and prescribe how to design experiences in order to engage customers. Pine and Gilmore stress that businesses must orchestrate memorable events for their customers as goods and services are no longer enough. Pine and Gilmore go so far as to claim that the experience economy is the new economic offering, which can be understood to mean a paradigm shift. Quite a bold claim indeed, considering the definition of paradigm (requiring new scientific

attitudes, methods and techniques) according to Kuhn (in Lovelock & Gummesson, 2004; Gummesson, 1997).
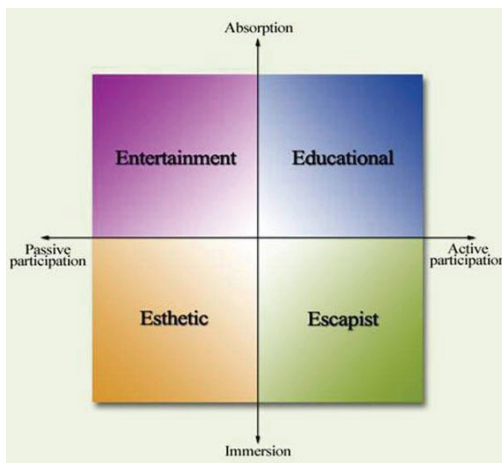
Figure 2: Realms of experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1999)
(http://srdc.msstate.edu/ecommerce/curricula/exp_economy/module1_4.htm)

Pine and Gilmore connect the memory of the transaction to the product, which becomes the experience, while goods and services are props. Their matrix model (see above) includes four experience realms: esthetics, escapist aspects, educational aspects, and entertainment aspects. These are classified on the basis of two dimensions: participation (active vs. passive) and connection (absorption vs. immersion). They define entertainment as a passive aspect of experience, not requiring immersion or active participation. Pine and Gilmore also emphasize the importance of impressions, which are the takeaways of the experience. The authors ascertain that experiences are as distinct from services as services are from goods. While

experiences and services are both intangible, they note that buying an experience includes paying to spend time enjoying a series of memorable events that a company stages. They consider services, in general, as uneventful activities and experiences at the heart of entertainment. They portray a sequence, or development, of the economy where, just as the service economy commoditized goods, the experience economy is commoditizing services. While Pine and Gilmore position experience distinctly different from services, and tee-up for a forthcoming transformation economy, many researchers refer to service experiences.

In their more recent work, Pine and Gilmore (2007) have identified "authenticity" as a new business imperative. Consumers today, they claim, are very discerning and increasingly question that which is real and that which is fake. Pine and Gilmore believe authenticity to be the primary buying criterion today; a consumer sensibility. They posit that consumers are more sensitive to an offering being authentic than to price and quality. Businesses today, they claim, are challenged with rendering authenticity, meaning that consumers perceive a company as authentic. A problem arises when companies proclaim authenticity rather than rendering it (ibid.). One could critique that this is quite a stark assertion and hardly universal. Do poorer societies think this way? What about products beyond the consumer or opulent realm?

2.1.3 EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING

Part and parcel to the emotional appeals of a company and its brand, Bernd Schmitt's research focuses on marketing aesthetics and sense marketing (Schmitt, 1999a, Schmitt & Simonson, 1997). The concept of experiential marketing, or customer experience marketing, is meant to move beyond a traditional features and

benefits, product-centric focus. Experiential marketing addresses the importance of a sensory appeal as part of an overall value creation strategy (Schmitt, 1999b).

Additionally, Schmitt emphasizes customer experience management in order to differentiate offers by better integration, which leads to a better customer experience. A better customer interface yields a better brand experience (ibid.), yet a better understanding of how brand experience impacts consumer behavior would be helpful in formulating brand strategy (Schmitt, 2009). Zinkhan (1999) notes the implications of brand loyalty as a behavioral concept, closely linked to repeat purchase and market share. Brakus et al. (2009) relate that brand experiences occur when consumers search and shop for consumer brands. More recently, Palmer (2010) proposed an integrated framework (see below) that recognizes the emotional bases that affect customer experience and form attitudes. Palmer notes that brand relationships inform encoding:
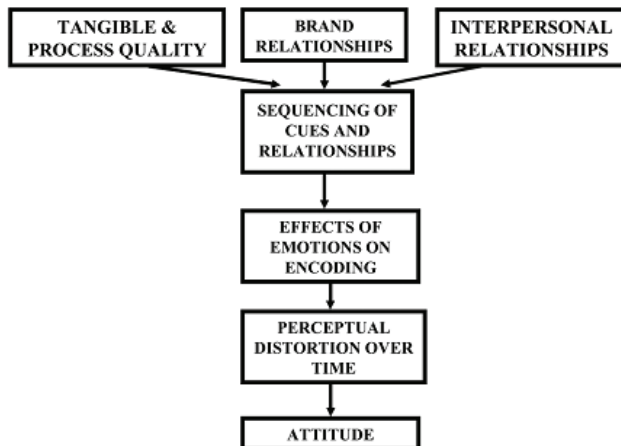
Figure 3: A conceptual framework for the construct of customer experience (Palmer, 2010)

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Mascarenhas et al. (2006) and Schmitt (1999a, 1999b, 2003) emphasize that in order to achieve growth in proliferated and commoditized markets, firms must compete on experiential and emotional levels. Experiential marketing views customer experience as a starting point for the service relationship (Schmitt, 2003). Firms must develop the aesthetics of their offerings because emotions, in many products, play a major role (Schmitt & Simonson, 1997). A shift---from value creation being product centric to experiences---is also supported by Mascarenhas et al. (2006) and Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004a). The challenge lies within the realm of creating meaningful experiences that create value and provide meaning to the individual customer in a specific context (ibid.). This implies neither mass customization nor commoditization, but a genuine interest in understanding who a company's customers are and why they buy the company's product.

2.1.4 EXPERIENTIAL CONSUMPTION AND EMOTION

Prior to the current experience economy discourse, Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) conducted research in consumption experience with an emphasis on emotional components, the "experiential view." The experiential view considers consumption as involving a steady flow of fantasies, feelings and fun. They elaborate that consumption is "a primarily subjective state of consciousness with a variety of symbolic meanings, hedonic responses, and esthetic criteria" (ibid:132). Drawing on literature in psychology, the authors investigate emotion space in order to shed light on experiences that stem from using goods and services. They conclude that consumption experiences are complex and important to research in order to better understand value from a customer perspective. Addis and Holbrook (2001) suggest

striving to balance products between two extremes, namely utilitarian and hedonic consumption.

Consumption is often related to product use in a pleasure-based approach (Holbrook et al., 1984; Jordan, 2000). Jordan developed a framework of four pleasures, as factors, that inform product design (ibid.). This framework suggests a means of structuring thoughts regarding pleasure rather than offering an explanation of why people experience pleasure. The four factors: physio, socio, psycho, and ideo, embrace practical, emotional and hedonic sources of pleasure. From a usability point of departure, Jordan's focus is on how to design products in order to evoke pleasure. Likewise, Belk et al. (2003) present arguments for more research in consumer consumption regarding desire (core passionate consumption) as compared to needs and wants.

Frow and Payne (2007) consider two consumer behavior perspectives, information-processing and a decision-oriented approach, which they describe as traditional, also referred to as the cognition, affect and behavior (CAB) approach. The second perspective relates to experiential consumption which emphasizes emotional aspects in the consumption experience.

An extensive study on the role of emotions and the role of arousal in emotions by Bagozzi et al. (1999) finds that the terminology surrounding emotion is inconsistent and confusing. Central to managers and consumers alike, an emotion is:

…a mental state of readiness that arises from cognitive appraisals of events or thoughts; has a phenomenological tone; is accompanied by physiological processes; is often expressed physically (e.g., in gestures, posture, facial

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features); and may result in specific actions to affirm or cope with the emotion, depending on its nature and meaning for the person having it (Bagozzi et al., 1999:185).

By contrast, a mood is longer lasting and lower in intensity than an emotion. Attitudes, compared to the "umbrella" term affect, which refers to mental feeling processes, are often viewed as instances of affect. Others consider attitudes more narrowly, as evaluative judgments. In measuring emotions, Bagozzi et al. (1999) found that marketers tend to measure emotions on closed scales (dichotomous or questionnaires), and, not surprisingly, measurements vary a great deal.

Emotions are indeed ubiquitous in marketing research; emotions are also discreet and difficult to cluster without bias. For this study it is perhaps most useful to address emotions as "markers, mediators, and moderators of consumer responses" (Bagozzi et al., 1999: 193), and to examine the role that emotions play in experience offerings.

Experiential consumption research is also concerned with contextual, symbolic and non-utilitarian aspects of consumption (Payne et al., 2008). Christensen et al. (2007) combine the two perspectives, contending that customers "hire" products or services in order to get a job done. They claim that focusing on the job is more productive than focusing on good product ideas, and also support this with Eric von Hippel's lead user methodology (see e.g. von Hippel, 1994). Christensen et al. (2007) also suggest that companies segment their markets by the job that needs to be done. Job, in this context, is defined as the fundamental problem that a customer needs to solve in a given situation. The objective is to better understand the situation, also as the unit of analysis, rather than the customer. By better understanding the job, and by

interviewing and observing customers, product improvement is achieved by improving the experience dimensions (ibid). Christensen et al. (2007) contend that situations, not products, engender emotions. The experience dimensions, however, are not specifically defined, and the reader is still left with a feeling of ambiguity. Experience is indeed ambiguous (Hoch, 2002), and many studies have found that people are even more averse to ambiguity than risk (Hoch, 2002; Hofstede, 1991).

2.1.5 UNDERSTANDING EXPERIENCE AS A MEANS TO CUSTOMER INSIGHTS

Striving to understand customers is one of the basic activities of marketing as a discipline. Understanding consumer/customer behavior also consistently continues to receive high (research) priority, as well as "new approaches to generating customer insights" (Marketing Science Institute Research Priorities 2008-2010).

A relatively new concept, the "perfect customer experience," is being embraced by many companies but has yet to receive much attention in the academic literature (Payne & Frow, 2005). It is widely agreed that customer experience is an important force in marketing, yet gathering and deploying customer information from all channels, as well as being able to integrate customer information with other relevant information, is still challenging (ibid).

Can customer insights shed light on how experience relates to a brand? De Chernatony and Segal-Horn (2003) describe a brand as 'a cluster of functional and emotional values which promise a particular experience.' They do not, however, address what that experience entails, or how the brand should deliver that experience. Bendapudi and Leone (2003) view consumers as active co-producers of brand meaning, rather than passive receptacles of brand identity projected by marketers.

Considering affective components, experiences seem to be more user-centric than brand-centric. Certainly emotions are human and a brand can evoke emotions, not feel emotions. In a recent study, Zarantonello and Schmitt (2010) found that consumers not only look for brands that will provide experiences that are unique and memorable, but also have preferences in experiential appeals, from holistic to utilitarian.

2.1.6 BAD EXPERIENCE

A diametrically opposed approach to understanding what a good customer experience entails is to examine what constitutes a poor experience. Patterson et al. (2008) conclude in a recent study that an uninspiring shopping environment and poor customer service, even to the extent of being adversarial, resulted in the demise of a very established and formerly well-respected retail environment in Liverpool, U.K. They chose this example for several reasons, including a critique of the larger, often-cited, successful companies that are chosen as cases by Pine and Gilmore in *THE EXPERIENCE ECONOMY* (1999). Patterson et al. (2008) suggest that smaller companies might even feel alienated by the world-class, mega-marketer companies that are known for customer experience, and that a useful comparison is difficult to envision. Based on their case study, they also found that customers were dissatisfied with mixed communications, e.g. discount and luxury simultaneously. Bad experience can be alleviated, to some extent, by recognizing and eliminated negative cues (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Boswijk et al., 2009).

2.1.7 PARTICIPATION EXPERIENCE

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While companies have become increasingly aware of value creation through experience offerings, many managers have confused experience with providing entertainment without being engagingly creative (Berry et al, 2002). A newer perspective on the experience economy is more than the familiar excite me, entertain me, and feed me (Boswijk et al., 2007). It is important to recognize that consumers are looking for personal, and often social, experiences that create meaning in their life (ibid.). Experience is a process and form of behavior, involving interactions where feelings and emotions play an important role (ibid.). Boswijk et al. (ibid.) advocate developing meaningful experience concepts with the direct participation of the customer. This is in the spirit of co-creation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a), albeit with a strong emphasis on managerial aspects. Similarly, mass customization has had a deep impact on business models, allowing companies to consider customers as valid interlocutors (Addis & Holbrook, 2001).

A critique of the current experience economy discourse is that the research is too aesthetic focused with a disregard to corporeal aspects, meaning the importance of the physical body in experiencing and remembering an experience (Joy & Sherry, 2003). Joy and Sherry (ibid.) emphasize the importance of understanding the somatic, multi-sensory, nature of the consumption experience. Processing experiences, they iterate, is crucial in unforgettable consumer experiences, and the current experience economy fails to address the body's sensory potential for grasping experience. Pine and Gilmore (1999) do, in fact, address engaging the five senses but also warn not to "over service" in the name of customer experience. Due to the situational and subjective nature of perceived experience, choosing the right sensory combinations is indeed a tough call.

2.1.8 EXPERIENTIAL VIEW CHASM

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Experiences are by no means trivial (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a) and the concept of the experience economy is still in the pre-theory stage, lacking empirical evidence (Boswijk et al., 2009). Many of the experience economy examples exhibit a bias towards the consumer products, hedonistic, and opulent realms; and often in a physical space. What are other relevant examples of experience worth scholarly attention?

The literature addressing the experiential view is overwhelmingly based on buyer-seller interaction and what the firm has to gain from the relationship; a managerial perspective. The focus is operational and value is derived from a customer buying experience as an economic offering. While this is often the case, such examples have been overwhelmingly promulgated in the business press. Value in a non-monetary sense is ignored unless it directly relates to a transaction or a focus strategy. This perspective also ignores value for not-for-profit offering parties and value for an individual as an offering party. Moreover, experiential consumption is more than needs and wants, whether expressed or latent, also involves desire, which can be rational or emotional.

SECTION 2: EXPERIENCE IN SERVICES MARKETING

A traditional definition of services regards the fundamental unit of exchange, services, as distinguished from products through intangibility, as services marketing traditionally involves differentiating through manipulation of tangible clues (Shostack, 1977). This holds true for experience as well, therefore the service marketing literature is well suited for the experience space. Services are dynamic, experiential processes, and this is well-documented in the marketing literature (Grove & Fisk, 1992).

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Essentially, products are experiences, whether they are manifested as goods or services (ibid.). Lovelock and Gummesson (2004) note that most services performances are transient experiences, yet the output is not necessarily perishable. Lovelock and Gummesson (ibid.) use the metaphors of a surgical procedure, from a patient's perspective, and education, from a student's perspective, to illustrate their point of some service results actually being durable. The notion of services being synonymous with intangibility is misleading as outcomes can be highly tangible. Are experiences a more useful approach to understanding the longer-lasting outcomes of services?

2.1.9 SERVICE LANDSCAPE

Lovelock and Gummesson (2004) express serious concern about the future of services marketing. They point out several weaknesses in services marketing due to dominance, or over emphasis, on traditional distinguishing service parameters: intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability and perishability. This list, they illustrate, continues to grow, only adding to the confusion surrounding services marketing in trying to distinguish the field from goods marketing. They comprehensively support their claims, including documenting how services marketing is treated as a sub-discipline of manufactured-goods marketing management. This is promulgated by documentation in textbooks and Lovelock and Gummesson (2004) suggest a call for action in new ways of relating to customers. Perhaps an experiential perspective could be beneficial in terms of relating to customers and how we understand services.

2.1.10 SERVICE DOMINANT LOGIC

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Vargo and Lusch (2004a; 2004b) identify a new dominant logic emerging in marketing, namely service-centered logic. They put forward that service provision, rather than goods, is fundamental to economic exchange. They propose that this new logic broadens our understanding of marketing compared to goods exchange. Lusch et al. (2006) claim that service-dominant logic rejects the traditional distinction, between goods and services, by considering the *relationship* between goods and services. This view considers goods (tangible products) as facilitators, or distribution mechanisms, of service. "Competing through service" has to do with grasping the distinctions between G-D (goods-dominant) and S-D (services-dominant) logic, between operand resources and operant resources, between value delivery and value creation, between embedded value and the co-creation of value (ibid.). It also concerns treating employees, value network partners, and customers as collaborators that work with the firm to co-create value for all stakeholders. Competing through service is about grasping and applying these ideas better than the competition (Lusch et al., 2007).

Vargo and Lusch also state that the customer is always a co-producer, and the value is determined by the fit between customer needs and the solution offered. They conclude by stating that "a service-centered view is customer oriented and relational" (2004a:11). By rationalizing service logic do we understand services as experiences (Schembri, 2006)? Schembri suggests that Vargo and Lusch's rationalistic philosophy is inadequate in accommodating the experiential meaning of services for consumers (ibid.). Schembri further argues that Vargo and Lusch do not "take into account the meaning of activities and things in action as they relate to each other" (Schembri, 2006:385).

2.1.11 VALUE CREATION PERSPECTIVE

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Many scholars agree that service is not so much an activity, or category of market offerings, as it is a perspective on value creation (Edvardsson et al., 2005; Grönroos, 2006). Customer value in the S-D logic context is created through service experiences and relationships; firms market *with* customers and not *to* them (Aitken et al., 2006). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004b) explicitly depict value as shifting to experiences. There exists an interaction between the firm and consumers and this is the locus of value creation and value extraction. The central components, "building blocks of interaction," (ibid: 9) are: dialogue, access, transparency, and understanding of risk benefits.

Figure 4: DART model: building blocks interactions for co-creation of value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b)

The focus is on experiences outcomes, where customers get what they want and the benefit for the firm is in productivity terms (ibid.). But what is the experience for the offering party and how is value created?

Concerning services and value creation, Grove, Fisk and Joby (2003) conducted a survey involving forecasts from ten services experts on the future of services

marketing. They found that there is an interest in further explication of the service delivery process in two areas, namely customer-employee interface and customers' experience in general. This view is further supported by Lovelock and Gummesson (2004), who cite that published insights of practical examples of how services are created, designed, delivered, and marketed are in short supply. They note that many marketing scholars have relied on their own experiences, as consumers of retail services (e.g. banking, travel, restaurants), for research. What, then, are more varied examples of experience offerings? Due to the nature of services, a classification addressing the degree of customization (from low to high) compared to the degree of differentiation (from core to augmented) can be useful in visualizing the service landscape (Lovelock & Wright, 1999). These service criteria, however, do not relay the experienced service or inform how, or who, creates value.

Lages and Fernandes (2005) proposed a new scale, Service Personal Values (SERPVAL), in an attempt to measure the personal value of services. It is meant to augment Zeithaml's service value model (Zeithaml, 1988) with a more abstract service personal value level, "the highest level," and Kahle's (1983) list of values (LOV). Lages and Fernandes (2005) want to distinguish between previously researched individual values to more personal values. It is through personal values, they posit, that customers choose service strategies. Understanding this is a customer orientation and an opportunity for companies to build stronger relationships.
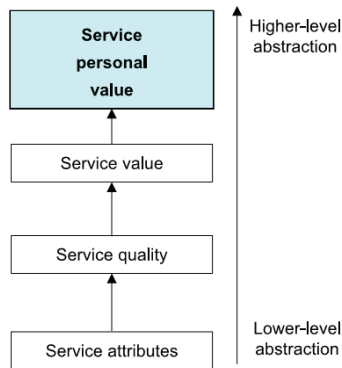
Figure 5: Service personal value and the means-end approach (Lages & Fernandes, 2005)

2.1.12 SERVICE QUALITY

An important distinction between service quality and customer experience is that customer experience concerns how the customer feels about the delivered service. A common denominator between the two is the relationship (Gummesson, 1994). Fullerton (2005) identifies service quality as a key construct in services marketing, closely tied to customer loyalty.

In trying to understand services, much of services marketing research has been concerned with measuring service quality; perhaps even too much so (Lovelock & Gummesson, 2004; Berry, 2000). Measuring and managing service quality was initially promulgated by the SERVQUAL technique, developed by Parasuraman et al. (1985). The basic premise of SERVQUAL, or service quality framework, is to enable companies to bridge gaps between customer expectations and perceptions. SERVQUAL is also known as the RATER framework. RATER is an acronym for its components: Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy and Responsiveness

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(Zeithaml et al., 1990). Among many criticisms, Buttle (1996) argues that these five dimensions are not universal and that consumers use standards other than expectations in evaluating service quality. Buttle (ibid) asserts that theoretically the SERVQUAL framework focuses on the process of service delivery and not the outcomes of the service encounter. SERVQUAL is a technology for measuring and managing service quality (Buttle, 1996), and a tool designed to measure customer satisfaction in terms of expectations and perceptions (Berman, 2005). However, SERVQUAL does not address the form that expectations take or the extent to which customers are able to correctly classify items into their a priori dimensions (Buttle, 1996). Other dimensions of service quality and services marketing, not just service quality measurement, demand attention (Grove et al., 2003).

Earlier studies on satisfaction and service quality emphasize post-service satisfaction evaluation, which are cognitive processes (Liljander & Strandvik, 1997). We are lacking research on affective components of evaluations while earlier life quality research shows that it is possible to experience negative and positive emotions simultaneously (ibid.). Price et al. (1995) found that failing to meet minimum standards, for example, of promised service, are much more likely to evoke negative emotions and associations. Emotions account for a great part of the "attraction" of a service, meaning the type of service that is goal directed (Liljander & Strandvik, 1997). In a comprehensive study, Liljander and Strandvik (ibid.) found that there is a need for further investigation of the role of emotions in satisfaction in service consumption. They cite examples of theatre, opera, concert performances, and films; all of which are high in emotional content (goal directed) and today would be considered an experience offering. Regarding emotions in a service quality context,

Liljander and Strandvik (ibid.) suggest a need for further research on "a zone of tolerance," other types of service, as well as services in different user contexts.

2.1.13 TECHNOLOGY AND VALUE-ADDED

One salient user context concerns technology. Technological aspects are important to marketing in that they not only facilitate but also enable experience delivery. Mass customization, miniaturization, consolidation, e-business, and the Internet: many technological innovations are part of an overall perceived experience. However, existing and emerging technologies are seen as facilitators of experiences rather than enhancers of products, features and functions (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2003). Self-service technologies, advise Usunier and Lee (2009), are inherently culture- bound. It is vital to know how users perceive self-service: is it efficient and effective or impersonal, indicating poor service? Information technology (IT), emphasizes Day (2003), contributes little to creating better relationships with customers; it is merely necessary. Regarding technology and CRM, Payne and Frow (2006) found that companies must ensure buy-in: "Happy employees will affect customer's experience" (Payne & Frow, 2006:156). More recently, Patrício et al. (2008) address the impact of technology, (see e.g. Rayport & Jaworski, 2005) as it is infused in service design, on customer experience.

Technology can also enable value to be co-created by customers through the product and/or service interaction experience (Patrício et al., 2008). Rather than the value of a product being embedded in the tangible product or exchanged through transactions (ibid.), Vargo and Lusch (2004a; 2004b) also support this view as part of the service-centered paradigm, where customers transform (co-create) value (Gummesson, 2008b). An example, as noted by Normann and Ramírez (1993), is

IKEA, who wants its customers to understand their role as creating value, not consuming value. This notion of value-in-use (phenomenological value) perceives the customer as a "value creator rather than a value destroyer," hence an input to a value-creating process (Michel et al., 2008; Normann, 2001:98; Vargo & Lusch, 2004a). Research to date suggests relatively little is known about how customers engage in the co-creation of value and there is a need for stronger conceptual underpinnings in understanding value propositions as well as managing the process of value co-creation (Payne et al., 2008).

All firms can do is make value propositions (Grönroos, 2000; Vargo & Lusch, 2004a,) and design high-quality interactions that enable customers to co-create unique experiences (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b). This consumer-company interaction is not only the locus of value creation but also key to unlocking new sources of competitive advantage (ibid.). The task of the firm is one of innovation in robust experience environments since no one can predict an individual service experience (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2003).

2.1.14 SERVICE ENCOUNTER AND INTERACTIONS

Service experience benefits are created during the delivery phase, which is the service encounter (Kasper et al., 2006). The service encounter, which is preceded by service expectations, is more clearly understood when considering traditional service industries: financial services, transportation, distribution, entertainment, hospitality and tourism, health services and infrastructure services (ibid.).

Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) emphasize that no two customers are alike, and each customer will have unique demands or experience a service in a unique manner.

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Kasper et al. (2006) describe the service encounter, or interaction, as a subjective experience for the customer, where both the customer and service provider contribute to the production of the service. Similarly, and much earlier, Grönroos (1982) refers to interactive marketing, or that which takes place during the interactions when production and consumption occur simultaneously.

Surprenant and Solomon (1987) define the service encounter as a dyadic interaction between the customer and service provider. This definition draws on their earlier work suggesting that "service encounters are role performances" (Solomon et al., 1985) in which both customers and service providers have roles to enact. They refer to the service experience in a broader context of which the actual human-to-human encounter is a part (ibid.). Other scholars regard the service encounter as the moment of interaction between the customer and the firm (Lovelock, 1988; Surprenant & Solomon, 1987) or the "moment of truth" (Normann, 1984). Bitner et al. (1990) stress that the service encounter *is* the service (firm) from the customer's point of view, which is also echoed by De Chernatony and Segal-Horn (2003).

An important concept relating to service tangibility is *servicescape.* As part of the work in consumer service evaluations (Bitner, 1992), servicescapes recognize that service experiences are surrounded and shaped by a built environment, incorporating ambience, function, and design, in addition to a social environment comprising service providers and other customers (ibid.). Bitner emphasized the importance of managing the physical aspects of servicescapes as (a) a sensory *package* designed to elicit emotional responses; (b) a *facilitator* to shape customer behavior and enable efficient flow of activities; and (c) a *differentiator* to distinguish a service provider from its

competitors, signal the intended market segments at which the service is targeted, and differentiate higher priced offerings from less expensive ones.

Berry et al. (2006) describe the customers' perception and understanding of experience through service clues; functional, mechanic, and humanic interactions:
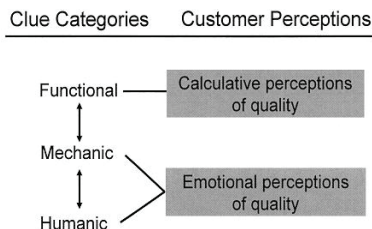
Figure 6: Clue influences on customer perceptions (Berry et al., 2006)

These clues influence a customer's thoughts, feelings and behavior. Like Zaltman (1997), the authors feel that too much emphasis has been placed on rational (functional) evaluation, rather than emotional, in evaluating customer service experiences. It is through interaction with a company that customers' acquire stories to tell.

Shostack (1985) defines the service encounter somewhat more broadly as "a period of time during which a consumer directly interacts with a *service*." Her definition corresponds to Solomon et al. (1985) in taking into account numerous aspects that the service firm might offer where the consumer might interact. These include a firm's personnel, its physical facilities, and other visible elements which can detract from the overall subjective experience.

Shostack's definition does not limit the encounter to the interpersonal interactions between the customer and the firm, as she suggests that service encounters

can occur without any human interaction element. Also in regard to service encounters, Czepiel (1990) noted that 'little is known about the elements of style and substance that buyers (or sellers) use to judge encounter or relational performance.' "What is lacking is a good conceptualization of the kinds (or styles) of interaction that clients look for in making their evaluations" (ibid: 17). "Because services are processes, the actual steps involved in delivering and receiving the service (traditionally called the service "operation") assume tremendous marketing importance" (Fisk et al., 1993:31). Being crucial to the overall evaluation, what more can we learn about how users evaluate a service, an experience, or a service encounter?

Companies choosing to compete on customer experience are concerned with mapping interactions, or touch points, in order to understand how customers interact with their product, whether the product is a good or service (Dubberly, 2008; Sawhney et al., 2006). Mapping services in order to get a profitability overview can also be expressed (see below) as links in the service-profit chain (Heskett et al., 1994/2008). Based on their earlier work in 1994, Heskett et al. stress the importance of customers and front-line personnel in service delivery.
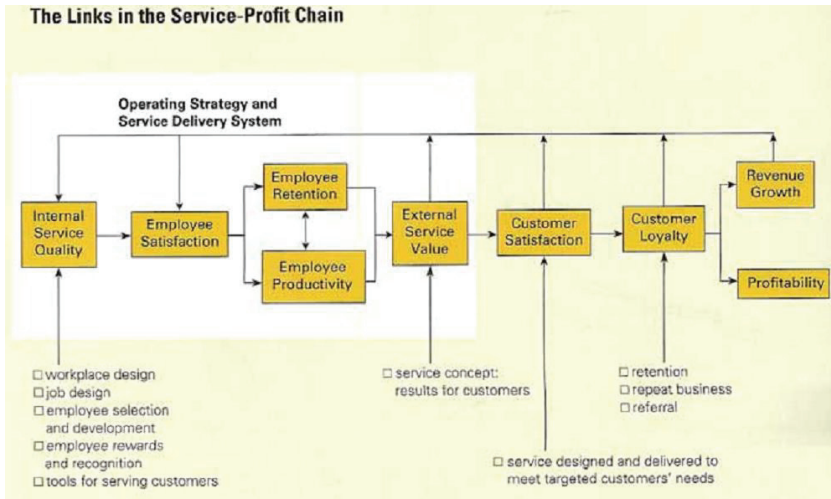
Figure 7: Service-profit chain (Heskett et al., 1994/2008:120)

Employee satisfaction is critical to measure as it has a direct impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty, as well as employee retention and productivity (ibid.). While the service-profit chain depicts a blueprint of activities, it assumes the steps to be linear and does not identify, let alone develop, emotional aspects of the process.

A particularly vivid example of an emotional service encounter is in narrative form. Arnould and Price (1993) conducted in-depth research about white-river rafting down the Colorado River. The natural setting (environment), the role of the guides, and, of course, the other participants, play a vital role in the overall experience of a trip. Rather than the complex relationships between the client's expectations and the service satisfaction outcomes, the rafting experience narrative is central to the overall evaluation of the consumption experience. In temporal and economic terms, pre-trip planning, the actual days that the trip unfolds, and the post-trip reflections are analyzed. The research focused on the post-trip impressions and revealed sensations of

transformational experiences including personal growth, a feeling of closeness to nature, overcoming challenges, teamwork and perseverance: user, not brand-centric. Arnould and Price (ibid.) also note that both extremely positive and extremely negative emotions can culminate into a highly satisfying experience.

2.1.15 SERVICE CONCEPT

A comprehensive perspective in services marketing is the service concept: the *how* and *what* of service design. Goldstein et al. (2002) recognize the service concept as an important driver for service design, as it brings strategic intent into service design planning. The authors point out that while operational and tactical issues are sufficiently addressed, the current literature fails to bring strategic issues to service design. Their service concept model also addresses service recovery, part and parcel to satisfaction.

More recently, service as a concept has been made operational through service characteristics (Edvardsson et al., 2005). This is distinctive to the Nordic perspective (see e.g. Grönroos, 1982), compared to the American perspective, which defines service quality dimensions in terms of functional and technical qualities (Brady & Cronin, 2001). Indeed, the quality of the interaction is one dimension that customers use when evaluating the outcome of a service experience (ibid.). Can the quality of an interaction be better understood in experience terms?

2.1.16 SERVICE INNOVATION

Given the significant growth in the service economy within recent years, service innovation requires attention, and companies are more interested than ever in understanding and measuring the returns on marketing investments (Marketing

Science Institute Research Priorities 2008). There is a lack of rigorous attention to the uniqueness of service innovation as compared to goods (tangible products) innovation (Bitner et al., 2008). This is attributed to human, interpersonal delivery factors and there is a need to focus on process and experiential innovation (ibid). One technique, service blueprinting (Bitner et al., 2008; Shostack, 1982) is a customer-focused approach to mapping the service experience. Originally developed by Shostack, service blueprinting has evolved as an effort to depict intangible services processes and is useful in designing and redesigning service development stages. Conceived as a way to manage services, there are four aspects to the service blueprint: process identification, isolation of fail points, establishing the time frame, and analyzing profitability (Shostack, 1982). Similar to quality function deployment (QFD), service blueprints can make customer requirements more explicit and illustrate where a company falls short in meeting customer expectations (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). This can be constructive in service development but may not reveal aspects of a desired service, or experiences that have not been articulated.

The Service Experience Blueprint (SEB) is a method developed to assess customer experiences across channels, as many service experiences today are indeed multi channel, and through multiple interfaces (Patrício et al., 2008). While the original service blueprint model focused on efficiency, SEB is designed to include customer experience. By identifying process components, as well as service clues, SEB incorporates and manages customer requirements by using technology support (ibid.).

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Understanding clues, articulate Berry et al. (2002), are important to the service experience. Conceptualizing service as a whole, or sum of, many types of clues has important implications regarding service design (ibid; Patrício et al., 2008).

2.1.17 EXPERIENTIAL VIEW AND SERVICES MARKETING: AREAS OF NEGLECT

While scholars have previously viewed technology, or IT, only as a service enabler, innovations in technology as a service could shed light on new ways and means of interacting with customers. So many of our daily interactions with companies are through technology rather than personal, therefore this is a significant experiential component worth investigating further. Services that are delivered through better technological solutions are critical to the marketspace and can help companies to better identify clues that are important to users, thereby gaining customer insights that can lead to improved interactions and a better understanding of user needs, wants and desires.

Service quality measurements, or scales, are often concerning productivity; a functional perspective. Are there assumptions here that everyone is getting what they want? Are there affective components from the offering providers' perspective that motivate innovation in services that lead to a better experience for the provider as well?

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In addition to providing good quality and competitive service levels, companies today are challenged with creating an emotional connection to their customers or risk being at a competitive disadvantage. This emotional connection suggests that experience is highly relevant to relationship marketing. There are many options, and the more successful the relationship-building initiative proves itself, then the greater the risk of imitation (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996). Ravald and Grönroos also posit that providing superior value is a prerequisite to long-term customer relationships. Additionally, they found that the underlying construct of customer satisfaction is more than perceived quality. Value is also determined by the sacrifice that the customer has to make (ibid.). It is reasonable to conclude that companies that do not offer value in the minds of the users will not be able to build and sustain relationships.

Interactions are a prerequisite to having a relationship. Facilitating interactions between service providers and the customer, during the consumption process, was the approach taken by The Nordic School, in the 1970's, over thirty years ago (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Grönroos, 2006). Facilitating and managing interactions became a productive focal point in marketing theory rather than exchange (Grönroos, 2006). Similarly, process is what is essential in services marketing, not transactions (ibid.). Approved in October 2007, The American Marketing Association's current definition of marketing includes exchange and lists stakeholders, but is otherwise very broadly formulated:

> Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large (www.marketingpower.com).

The previous definition, from 2004, is interesting to compare:

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> Marketing is an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders (Harker & Egan, 2006; www.marketingpower.com).

This earlier definition starts with the organization and supports a relationship marketing context (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2000 in Grönroos, 2006). The link between mature services and relationship marketing, in a growth phase, is to a great extent service quality (Berry, 1995). Berry notes, "…relationship marketing fits the salient characteristics of services" (ibid: 243).

A customer as an active participant is manifested in many types of buyer-seller relationships. Brown and Swartz (1989) found that inconsistencies, or gaps, between expectations and actual experienced services were detrimental to a longer term client-provider relationship. Identifying gaps and initiating the appropriate strategies and tactics for achieving more congruent expectations and experiences lead to a more positive service encounter and, in turn, positively affect the relationship (ibid.).

Studies emphasizing interaction, buyer-seller relationships, and networks are well researched (Håkansson & Snehota, 2000; Palmatier et al., 2006; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2002): a central assumption being that better relationships lead to superior customer experiences (Payne & Frow, 2005). Ritter et al. (2004) emphasize the importance of managing business relationships, also within a network context, as relationships are one of a company's most valuable resources. The "goodwill" of a relationship is just as important to preserve and enhance as managing hard assets (Levitt, *THE MARKETING IMAGINATION,* in Gruen et al., 2000).

The focus on the importance of relationships emerged from industrial marketing research (e.g. Levitt 1983; Webster 1992) as well as services marketing. The term

relationship marketing, coined by Berry (1983), is defined as attracting, maintaining and enhancing customer relationships (Berry, 1983; Payne & Frow, 2006). Turnbull and Wilson (1989) consider social relationships less binding and more easily broken (Barnes, 1994) compared to a structural bond between buyer and seller. Barnes (1994) also reports that industrial marketers have advocated establishing and cultivating buyer-seller relationships but are unclear concerning the motivation and commitment being mutual.

Relationship-oriented approaches have been increasingly advocated over the past years (Gummesson, 2002; Gummesson, 2008a; Grönroos, 1994; Shah et al., 2006, Vargo & Lusch, 2004a; Webster, 1992;), and Sheth and Parvatiyar (2002) argue that relationship marketing is still more of a domain rather than a true discipline. While marketing is founded on the principle of exchange, relationship marketing is about interaction and activities; an important and fundamental distinction (Möller & Halinen, 2000; Sheth & Parvatiyar 2002).

Further articulating relationship marketing, Morgan and Hunt (1994:22) refer to "all marketing activities directed toward establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges." Underpinning relationship marketing is the notion of managing the relationship and attempts to operationalize various processes (Tzokas & Saren, 2004). This delineation is intended to help define the value proposal, including segments, delivery and performance as they relate to value (ibid.).

The process nature of relationship marketing is dynamic as well as systemic. This demands a deeper understanding of how to manage services elements as well as other interaction variables. Most researchers agree that high services levels go hand-in-hand with higher quality, business performance, and customer loyalty. Bell et al.

(2005) heed a word of caution to managers when "loyalty" locks customers in, rather than being a choice, and customers incur switching costs; not a desirable situation.

2.1.18 CUSTOMER RETENTION

Over the years, a broad range of tools and technologies have been suggested in relationship marketing, mostly involving customer retention (Tzokas & Saren, 2004). The central premise is that customized messages are possible when customer behavior is better understood (ibid.).

One-to-one marketing (e.g. Pepper & Rogers, 1997) emerged in the 1990's and highlighted the potential of moving from mass marketing, a "one- size- fits- all" approach, to an individualized marketing approach. One-to-one, or 1to1, marketing, is enabled by mass customization, a term coined by Davis (1987) and promulgated by Pine (1993). Mass customization has profoundly changed the way businesses view customer behavior (Addis & Holbrook, 2001). Mass customization brought a disruptive change that has also impacted relationship marketing in firms' recognizing the significant role that individual subjectivity plays in consumption (ibid.). Still based on the principles of relationship marketing, the one-to-one marketing approach was aided by technology and database management in the form of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) (Payne & Frow, 2006).

In order to clarify two potentially confusing, yet related, terms, CRM, in the strictest sense, refers to software that tracks data about customers' actions. These data are more or less historical information such as purchases, returns, payment and the like (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). Widespread disappointments with CRM systems illustrate how difficult it is to improve customer-relating capabilities (Day, 2003). To many,

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CRM is not only software but more of a marketing discipline that strives to apply technology in order to deliver more personalized marketing communication (www.marketingpower.com):

> …CRM seeks to create more meaningful one-on-one communications with the customer by applying customer data (demographic, industry, buying history, etc.) to every communications vehicle. At the simplest level, this would include personalizing e-mail or other communications with customer names. At a more complex level, CRM enables a company to produce a consistent, personalized marketing communication whether the customer sees an ad, visits a Web site, or contacts customer service (ibid. accessed 25 October 2011).

Generally speaking, however, database and direct marketing traditions are more grounded in practice, rather than theory, with a managerial emphasis on efficiency of marketing activities (Möller & Halinen, 2000). In customer relationship management, the company views itself as the arbiter of the relationship (Sawhney, 2002). Similarly, the traditional marketing concept views the customer as an operand resource – a resource to be acted on (Webster, 1992).

Sheth and Parvatiyar (2002) note that regarding professional services, one-to-one marketing involves relationships with individual clients, as well as dedicated organizational resources to that individual relationship. Sawhney (2002) points out that relationships shouldn't *relate to* customers but more collaborate, or *work with*. Striving to understand customers' expressed and latent needs, as well as being able to deliver solutions to address those needs, has long been part and parcel to being a marketing-oriented company (Narver et al., 1998; Slater & Narver, 1999). 'Customers expect service basics; fundamentals, not fanciness; performance, not empty promises' (Parasuraman et al., 1991:40). Indeed, twenty years ago the service discourse was about delight and exceeding customer expectations.

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Marketers have, without a doubt, accepted that customer retention is important in sustaining a business (Kotler & Keller, 2008). Moreover, customer retention represents a significant part of the research on value creation (Payne & Frow, 2005; Payne & Holt, 2001; Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). A marketing orientation culture, of which customer retention is a part, also requires commitment from employees in creating superior value for customers (Narver et al., 1998; Day, 1994). Grönroos (1994), however, stresses the importance of intelligent relationship building, where long-lasting customer relationships should be analyzed for their profitability in the long run. Companies are still interested in new customer acquisition, yet all firms are being forced to rethink how they relate to their customers, above and beyond a transaction mind-set (Day, 2000).

Day (2000) stresses the desirability of committed relationships. Typically the most profitable, they are the most difficult for competitors to imitate, or even understand, therefore they lead not only to loyalty but also competitive advantage. Day (2000) cautions that not all relationships should be nurtured at the same level, therefore a continuum (see below) can help to illustrate where firms should emphasize their market-relating capabilities.
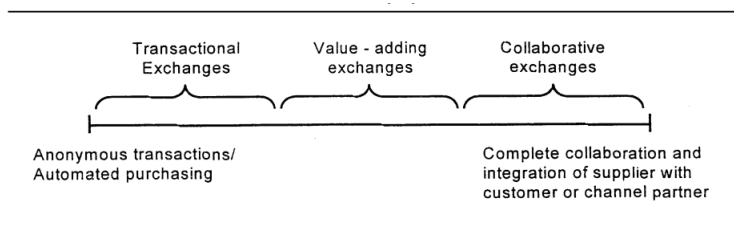

Figure 8: The relationship spectrum (Day 2000)

Nurturing the relationship is important, notes Day, in helping firms to overcome the "gravitational pull toward the transaction of the exchange spectrum" (ibid: 25). Trust and efforts at unity counterbalance anticipated conflicts in relational exchanges (Dwyer et al., 1987). Morgan and Hunt (1994) identify commitment and trust as key to cooperative behaviors that are conducive to relationship building. But how do companies nurture relationships and bond with customers and partners? What are the drivers of this distinctive capability?

2.1.19 RELATIONSHIP TYPES

In previous decades, extensive research has been conducted to reveal relationship types and taxonomies (Cannon & Perreault, 1999). They contributed to this body of research by identifying buyer-seller relationship connectors, or characteristics. They studied customer satisfaction and customer evaluation of supplier performance and found the highest satisfaction is derived from a cooperative systems relationship (ibid). Their work is based on the customer's, not the seller's, viewpoint and operational factors. That is to say, relationship outcomes are measured in terms of increasing efficiency, and managing uncertainty and dependence are in focus. Social aspects of the buyer-seller relationship are disregarded.

Being highly customer-oriented means having a strong commitment to customers, as well as trying to create customer value and understanding customer needs (Narver & Slater, 1990; Shah et al., 2006). Rather than examining the type of relationship as the unit of analysis, an experiential view requires a relationship interaction focus: relational exchanges (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) rather than discrete transactions. Metcalf et al. (1992) identify four elements that are exchanged by a buyer and seller: a product or service, money, information and sociality. They define

sociality as being manifested in interpersonal relationships and involving trust and empathy. The two outcome variables are cooperation and adaptation, with adaptation modifying the extent of investment in the buyer-seller relationship (ibid.).

Relational exchange, also considering temporal aspects, is very complex (Möller & Halinen, 2000) and empirical efforts on how to define relationship types, as well as research, have been extremely limited (Reid & Plank, 2000). How can relationship types be based on, or defined by, a desired experience?

2.1.20 COLLABORATION: CO-PRODUCTION, CO-CONSUMPTION, CO-CREATION

Sheth and Parvatiyar (2002) suggest co-production and co-consumption as relationship drivers and state that the boundaries between suppliers and customers are blurring. Gummesson (2008b) iterates that suppliers should not be concerned with managing customer relationships, but rather with interacting with customers in relationships. This, he stresses, resonates with the marketing concept and is not manipulative. How then do marketers understand user experiential needs and how do they, in turn, relate to users?

Another co-creation perspective is along the lines of collaborative marketing; the valuable process of partnering with the end-user to maximize value (Sawhney, 2002). Customer-relationship management is essentially an "inside-out" approach, making the proposition that the company, rather than the customer, is the relationship arbiter (ibid., 2002). Similarly, Rosenberg and Van West (1984) support a collaborative marketing approach in order to achieve more mutually satisfying and profitable long-term relationships with customers. They also note that the outcome of a relationship is often, in (North) American culture, considered to be more important than cultivating

the relationship itself. In other words, partners---customers, suppliers, or even employees---may have a higher turnover rate as long as the desired outcome, typically in financial terms, is met. Values that are important to customers in the long term are not lower prices but typically dependability, employment opportunities, safety, health improvement, quality of life considerations, ecological responsibility and community involvement (ibid:2001).

In order to build upon the concept of co-creation, and to begin to better understand how to manage co-creation, Payne et al. (2008) developed a framework that supports Prahalad and Ramaswamy's (2004b) work on value being created through experiences:

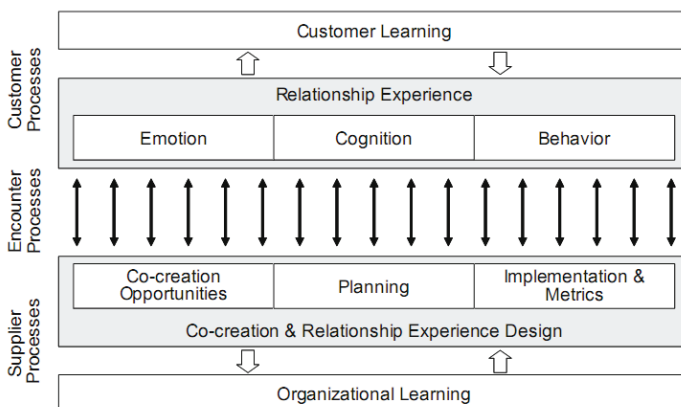Figure 9: A conceptual framework for value co-creation (Payne et al., 2008)

Payne et al. (2008) acknowledge customer learning as a part of the process, yet learning from the supplier perspective, is in an organizational rather than individual context. "Processes include the procedures, tasks, mechanisms, activities and interactions which support the co-creation of value" (Payne et al., 2008:85).

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This collaboration concept is unique as it is not characteristic of other types of marketing relationships (e.g. Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2002). The relationship experience, conclude Payne et al. (2008), leads to customer learning. Many authors agree with this perspective of customers as active participants, with the potential to enhance service quality as recipients, and for the service provider as well (e.g. Solomon et al., 1985). Schembri (2006) notes that it is important to recognize the extent to which customers desire to participate varies, from a passive to a very active role. Encouraging customers to be co-producers is viewed as the next frontier of competitive effectiveness, where customer and supplier engage in a mutually beneficial co-production process (ibid.) and is based on economic rationale. Bendapudi and Leone (2003) point out that the psychological implications of customer participation in co-production have been neglected.

2.1.21 CO-CREATION COMMUNITIES

Another pertinent way to collaborate with customers, or users, is through communities. "Communities of practice (CoP) are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in these areas by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger et al., 2002:4). CoP, which are knowledge-based social structures, are part and parcel to social learning (Wenger et al., 2002).

Initially, communities-of-practice were formed in order to capture, or document, knowledge within an organization in order to gain competitive advantage (ibid.). In a co-creation context, companies use the input and knowledge of communities outside of the organization in order to develop new products and services. This recognizes that sources of innovation do come from outside the company (see e.g. von Hippel).

Tapping into the community as a resource is a starting point for culling new ideas and to encourage community members to create (Piller et al., 2005). This also supports mass customization opportunities (ibid.). To be sure, many companies are very successful at leveraging communities: Harley Davidson, Starbucks, Apple, and LEGO just to name a few. This is indeed a viable business model and an effective production model where the company is the arbiter of value (Darmody, 2009).

Communities (CoP) are manifested in many different forms (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). The pertinent types of communities are well described in the literature. Kozintes et al. (2009) developed a matrix that plots communities through their collective orientation, from very specific purpose to more general, and level of collective innovation concentration which relates to member involvement or dedication.
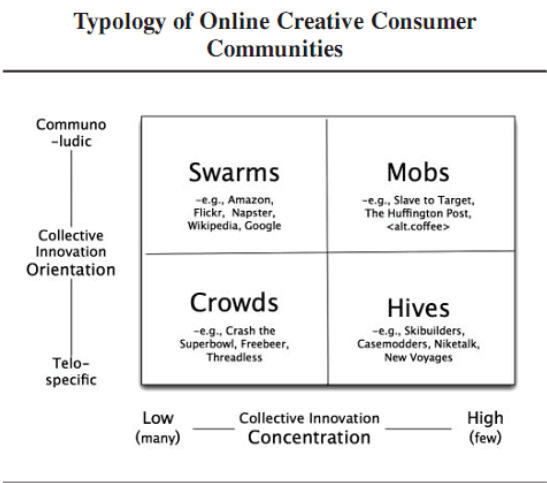
Typology of Online Creative Consumer Communities

	Low (many)	High (few)
Communo-ludic	**Swarms** –e.g., Amazon, Flickr, Napster, Wikipedia, Google	**Mobs** –e.g., Slave to Target, The Huffington Post, <alt.coffee>
Telo-specific	**Crowds** –e.g., Crash the Superbowl, Freebeer, Threadless	**Hives** –e.g., Skibuilders, Casemodders, Niketalk, New Voyages

Collective Innovation Orientation

Collective Innovation Concentration

Figure 10: Typology of online creative consumer communities (Kozintes et al., 2009)

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In recognizing the general enthusiasm for CoP, Schwen and Hara (2003) suggest some cautionary notes in building online communities. There can be a tendency to over-romanticize the idea of the community; members must be motivated, not forced. Similarly, the fabric of the community should not only emerge but also be nurtured (ibid.). Schwen and Hara's research shows that "a healthy CoP is one in which the practitioners find personal and profound meaning in their work" (ibid:261).

Interacting with communities presents companies with several marketing challenges, such as relinquishing control and attracting the interest of consumers that will offer their productive capabilities (ibid.). The right ambience for this social production also has to be explicit and in place (ibid.).

2.1.22 EXPERIENCE IN RELATIONSHIP MARKETING: AREAS REQUIRING ATTENTION

Experience in relationship marketing is often referenced in the literature on customer experience management. Managing customer experience is becoming increasingly established as a competitive parameter in many businesses, particularly in consumer goods and services, tourism, retail spaces, and on-line environments (marketspace). The term "customer experience management" is defined by Bernd Schmitt (1999a:17) as: "the process of strategically managing a customer's entire experience with a product or company." According to Holbrook (2007), much of the work surrounding customer experience management seems to be more along the lines of practical wisdom rather than scholarly research.

Customer Experience Management also refers to data that capture subjective thoughts (www.marketingpower.com), which can prove to be more ambiguous. Due to the complexity of context specific variables, notes Palmer (2010), it is difficult to

measure customer experience in a way that is operationally acceptable. Perhaps experiences can be designed as a platform (Schmitt, 1999a), but the actual perceived experience lies within the customers' mind; just as perceived quality and value are subjective evaluations.

Delivering a memorable experience is not the same as understanding the service from a customer's perspective (Stuart, 2006). Therefore, in order to design experiences, companies need to understand that the starting point, as well as the destination, is the user, a human. How can businesses learn how to engage customers, beyond a functional relationship, even to the extent that they are intrigued, challenged, and learn something new? Experience could be viewed as a distinctive capability that can facilitate interactions, thereby adding value and reducing customer sacrifice leading to improved relationships.

Payne and Frow (2008:87) relate that the customer's experience of a supplier "…is a culmination of the customer's cognitions, emotions and behavior during the relationship." Moreover, understanding how a customer uniquely integrates and experiences service-related resources is a source of competitive advantage through innovation (Michel et al., 2008). Similarly, it behooves marketers to remember that customers, or users, have their own interests at heart, and experience is what we seek to understand. Overlooked is the experience of the offering provider, as an individual as well as a part of a company or network. How do providers view experience and how does experience contribute to relationships?

2.1.23 EXPERIENCE AND INNOVATION

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Since the inception of the experience economy, many other labels have emerged, often by trend researchers or futurists, as possible claims about where we are headed. Promulgated by technology and a fast-moving world, we have seen a proliferation of descriptions: Support Economy, Pull Society, Engaging Economy, and the aforementioned Transformation Economy, just to name a few. Clearly, there is no "one-size fits all" solution, so what do companies do?

Faced with sluggish growth, globalization, and commoditization, many companies view innovation as a key to success (Sawhney et al., 2006). While traditional views of innovation have been concerned with technology and product development, newer views are broader in scope and address business innovation (ibid). Business innovation is about new value creation, not new things (ibid.). In their studies on how and why innovations develop over time, Van de Ven et al. (1999) consider innovation as a source of (company) growth and personal satisfaction.

Companies that are able to identify and pursue neglected innovation dimensions can change the basis of competition leaving other firms at a distinct disadvantage (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005; Sawhney et al., 2006;). Much of the current research treats customer experience as a business innovation dimension, defining customer experience as redesigning "customer interactions across all touch points and all moments of contact" (Sawhney et al., 2006). Co-founder Larry Keeley of innovation consultants The Doblin Group (www.doblin.com), classifies customer experience ("how customers feel when they interact with your company and its offerings") as one of ten types of innovation ("the identification and development of a viable new business concept"). Along with channel and brand, Keeley (2010) considers customer experience as belonging to the innovation category of delivery: "Innovation can be the

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submarine that you sneak into the safe harbor of an unwary competitor, or it can be the clever entreaty you use to begin a fantastic lifelong relationship with your customer" (http://www.doblin.com/AboutUs/ourteam.html#).

This suggests that the innovation - and experience discourses are related in that something new is discovered or created in the process. Indeed, Drucker (1985) stated that 'at the heart of innovation activity is to create purposeful and focused change in an enterprise's economic or social potential.'

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Experiences are complex and subjective in terms of evaluation. Experiences can be manifested through products and their use, whether they are goods, services, events or a combination.

Existing customer experience research is typically based on cases from well-known and large companies, e.g.: Apple, Google, Harley Davidson, IKEA, LEGO, and Starbucks. With a consumer and product bias, do such cases inform us of the factors, variables, constructs, and perceptions of experience in other contexts? Do we understand how to integrate experience, in a relational context, and expand the existing knowledge?

The experiential view recognizes that consumers are feelers, as well as thinkers and doers (Addis & Holbrook, 2001) that desire change. Works on the experience economy view experiences as products to be developed, staged, and delivered.

Many services marketing researchers view experience as the product and seek to understand experience as a service. The goal is to deliver the desired service and gain customer satisfaction and loyalty in the long term.

The literature on relationship marketing shows that meaningful customer experiences and emotional bonds between business partners are even more important than rational motivations in creating loyalty (Bitner et al., 2008). Although organizational buying behavior theory has long recognized the importance of personal attributes and dyadic relationships, the emphasis has primarily been on objective criteria and measureable parameters; a functional approach. Indeed, much work in marketing has spotlighted understanding and measuring operational aspects of a relationship, which are, of course, important to any business, including not-for-profit

enterprises, such as governments and charitable organizations. The Nordic school in particular acknowledges facilitating and managing interactions, as well as processes, rather than transactions. Managing relationships with numerous stakeholders (Payne & Holt, 2001) and network members is also recognized as being important to nurture.

Many relationships today are built and maintained virtually. Online communications are a significant part of experience and users have so many choices. By orchestrating and/or leveraging Communities of Practice, CoP, companies are able to harness input for new product development. Undoubtedly, the Internet, the connectivity and access it affords, has a tremendous impact on our lives (see for example Castells, 1996; Rifkin, 2000). This marketspace offers many opportunities to delve deeper into interaction in an experiential context.

There seems to be an inconsistency between conventional wisdom and the marketing literature. Experience is difficult to study; therefore we have a limited understanding of experience sources. Co-creation is one perspective of an experiential point of departure but it is not comprehensive. Citing Karl Marx (1867), Humphreys and Grayson (2008) note that the idea of consumption involving work is not new. The value chain, in a Porterian sense, is still there whether companies choose to outsource activities to consumers or not (ibid.). When customers do work for a company, decreasing company costs, how does this affect perceived value?

As noted by Grönroos (2000), customer value in marketing literature has for the most part addressed the value of the customers for the firm rather than value to the customer (Payne & Frow, 2006). Therefore, an outside-in approach could provide insights as to what customers want in terms of experience with a product, service, company or even brand.

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Regarding value, Vargo and Lusch (2004a) focus on Service-Dominant Logic, predominantly value in use, and Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004a) view the customer as a co-creator of value, always. The assumption that co-production always facilitates better customization of the product (Wind & Rangaswamy, 2001; Wind & Rangaswamy, 2000 in Bendapudi & Leone, 2003) is problematic and disregards participation in an experiential context.

Similarly, the co-creation perspective, with the customer as co-producer, assumes co-creation to be a universally satisfying experience. Is there a postulation in co-creation that customers are becoming more skilled at designing, or leveraging resources for their experience? Research on the role of the customer in the co-design process is scarce (Piller et al., 2005). Overlooked is that customers face new uncertainties and risks when co-designing (ibid.). Piller et al. (ibid.) refer to this phenomenon as "mass confusion," drawing on Pine's (1993) reference to mass confusion as a metaphor for the drawbacks that customers incur through mass customization interaction. What kind of experiences, beyond what we know, are users seeking? These needs and wants can, of course, be overt (manifest), but does co-creation address latent needs?

Without a doubt, experience is subjective (Addis & Holbrook, 2001), yet what are the pertinent elements and underlying drivers that make up a good experience? Are marketing scholars researching those elements that comprise good experience, beyond recognizing that experiences are subjective, situational and unique?

One could assert that the current approach to understanding experience is a narrow interpretation, outmoded and not very useful. Rather than trying to manage, or control, an experience, it might serve companies to focus on facilitating users in

effectively processing experiences with a company's offering. This would require a shift from the unit of analysis being the customer as co-creator (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a), to the experience offering as a journey, contemplating what it potentially can afford not only the user but also the offering provider.

In the experiential discourse, creation and content have in many ways been addressed, but perhaps context has been overlooked (Ardill, 2007). Indeed, Wroe Alderson wrote that marketing should be thought of in terms of systems, and systems within wider systems (Alderson, 1965 in Wooliscroft, 2008). Focusing on providing experience opportunities that speak to users' intrinsic motivations, such as learning, could yield a more integrative, comprehensive approach to marketing, while simultaneously providing an opportunity to align the organization and to augment perceived value by the user. Compared to a dichotomous approach, e.g. transaction vs. relationship, considering the experience as the unit of analysis addresses the relationship; interactions, involvement, and situations.

True to the marketing concept (see e.g. Kirca et al., 2005), the point of departure for studying customer experience is outside of the organization and in the marketplace. In researching the breadth and depth of experiences offerings, companies can learn how to gain loyalty and build better relationships with customers. Similarly, marketing scholars can gain insight into consumer behavior and perceived value, which are core marketing concepts. It is a challenge to understand the relevance in "experience" as a business focus, which is just not labeled experience economy.

There are a myriad of implicit beliefs surrounding business and customer experience, and reframing the customer experience can lead to innovative solutions (Välikangas & Gibbert, 2005). Neither co-creation nor customer experience are new

concepts, yet continuously iterating and interpreting old and new data can reveal innovative combinations of extant theory (Lovelock & Gummesson, 2004). Choosing an appropriate label for a new concept is a challenge that faces scholars in all disciplines (ibid.), yet there is a need to articulate new insights to move the research agenda forward.

SECTION 5: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research is not about proving or confirming propositions but more concerned with searching for new insights and cohesiveness. Based on the literature review, what is in-between, overlooked or even invisible? In order to better understand the experiential discourse, in the literature and in practice, the following research questions are identified:

1. What is the essence of experience and how is experience articulated in the literature and implemented in a commercial context?

2. What factors underlie and nurture interaction from an experiential perspective?

3. What are substantive phenomena relevant to the experiential discourse that offer additional insights for the marketing research community to explore?

The research questions inform the categories in the conceptual framework, which in turn form the basis for organizing the data and inductively developing meaning; a constructivist research paradigm (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

SECTION 6: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: EXPERIENTIAL DISCOURSE IN MARKETING

The conceptual framework helps to frame the purpose of this study and guide the research, providing the underlying structure for the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). The descriptors are based on the literature review as well as personal input, guided by the aim of the dissertation. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that it is

better to have some idea of what you are looking for even if that idea changes over time.

Experience is mediated by several variables that are logically related, yet abstract ideas that are central to the research problem. The variables are useful as analytic categories, or descriptors, to code the findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Graphically depicted below, the conceptual framework identifies the experiential view in marketing as well as areas of neglect. The framework also serves as a "working tool" to provide structure in terms of organizing the findings (ibid.:61).

	means to cust insight	value capture	business org. approach
Experiential descriptors			
customer focus	surveys/metrics	profit	functional
sense of urgency, competitive advantage	touchpoints, servicescape	customer satisfaction	mechanistic
service offering, value-added	co-creation	customer retention	operational
building relationships	communities of practice (CoP)	customer loyalty	psychology-based
⇕	⇕	⇕	
Pivotal components to augment the experiential view			
individual value-based	observation	profit	interpretivistic
values-based	dialog	loyalty	systemic
desire to play/learn	social constructs	learning	integrity

Figure 11: Conceptual framework: Experiential view in marketing; new variables to explore?

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3. THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS OF EXPERIENCE

The purpose of the literature review is not only to present previous relevant research on experience, but also to identify key issues in published knowledge and ideas; aspects which warrant further investigation. The propositions serve as an initial frame of reference to analyze the findings. Derived from the literature review, the following propositions, a "space" for the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008), are identified:

3.1.1 COMPARED TO MORE FAMILIAR EXAMPLES, EXPERIENCE OFFERINGS ARE MORE VARIED IN FORM, PURPOSE, AND PARTICIPATION.

Experience as manifested in products (Belk et al., 2003) and services (Arnould & Price, 1993; Lovelock & Gummesson, 2004) is often studied in the consumer realm in a seller-buyer transaction context; the experience economy (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Pine & Gilmore, 1999). What are other examples, perhaps more nuanced, that are worth researching (Addis & Holbrook, 2001; Palmer, 2010), that can update the experiential discourse in marketing?

3.1.2 EXPERIENCES ARE NOT NECESSARILY ARTICULATED BY CUSTOMERS BUT OFTEN INSTIGATED BY A "SELLER," OR OFFERING PARTY.

Co-creation has, to a significant extent, dominated a discourse on customers' not only knowing what they want, but also wanting to participate in the production of a product or service (Bendapudi & Leone, 2003; Humphreys & Grayson, 2008; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b, Vargo & Lusch, 2004a). This approach disregards sellers', or offering providers' experiential needs, wants, and desires that inform an experiential

offering (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). These can be expressed in many ways, such as idealistic goals (Lages & Fernandes, 2005), beyond a profit focus.

3.1.3 UNDERSTANDING EXPERIENCE CONTRIBUTES TO VALUE CREATION PERSPECTIVES.

Value is manifested in many ways and can shed light on the experiential view (Addis & Holbrook, 2001; Boztepe, 2007; Holbrook, 1999; Lages & Fernandes, 2005). It is important to understand how practitioners design value offerings as well as an appreciation for the subjective nature of value. The broad spectrum of value as it relates to experience is determined by the user, perceived value, and can inform the derived meaning of an offering. There are other pertinent expressions of value that are not part of the current discourse addressing experience.

3.1.4 EXPERIENCES ARE MORE USER-CENTRIC THAN BRAND-CENTRIC.

"Saturated markets and tough competition have leveled the differences between brands to their physical elements" (Mascarenhas et al. 2006: 400). Branding as an encompassing business concept has also addressed an experiential view with regard to brand equity (Schmitt, 2009) and loyalty (Brakus et al., 2009). Rather than branding, the essence of an experience that resonates with a user is through an interaction (Mascarenhas et al., 2006; Patrício et al., 2008; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b). Many firms spend substantial resources on branding and recognize that consumers make choices based on experiential aspects of an offer (Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010). Thus, experience could lend itself to be a better descriptor for meaning derived from an interaction.

3.1.5 EXPERIENTIAL DISCOURSE IS AKIN TO INNOVATION

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Experience suggests something new or positive change. Innovative solutions to existing problems or latent needs extend beyond services marketing. Innovation evokes "new" and our technology-driven world presents many opportunities as well as challenges.

In being distinct from invention, innovation should add value (Bitner et al., 2008), whether that value stems from the supplier or is co-created with the buyer (Michel et al., 2008; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2003). Understanding interactions and experience help companies to become more innovative in developing their businesses (Sawhney et al., 2006) and relationships.

4. METHODS USED TO INVESTIGATE THE AIM OF THE STUDY

CONTENT ANALYSIS

The focus of this study on the essence of customer experience is addressed by applying qualitative analysis rather than quantitative tools and metrics. Many companies "measure" customer experience through a myriad of tools: call centers, surveys, scores, and complaint management systems, just to name a few. These actions are often a part of customer service and intended to create satisfaction and, ultimately, loyalty, but they do not necessarily shed light on how customers *feel* about a product. To address these gaps, a qualitative process can reveal why an experience is meaningful or affords perceived value.

In order to address the scope of experience, content analysis, which is an empirically grounded method and an exploratory process (Schmidt & Hollensen, 2006) is applied. Qualitative content analysis is a methodology that applies an inductive approach; inferences from texts to phenomena outside those texts (Krippendorf, 2004). Qualitative content analysis is also referred to as ethnographic content analysis in that it "emphasizes the role of the investigator in the construction of the meaning of and in texts" (Bryman & Bell, 2003:195) and an interpretivist approach (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). It is useful in searching for coherent meaning structures in a "text," by classifying elements and assigning labels or categories. Categories are allowed to emerge from the data, searching for underlying themes (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Compared to many research methods, content analysis is unobtrusive. There is no bias in terms of research questionnaire design as the researcher analyzes existing communications, such as speeches, texts, interviews and

images (ibid.), and utilizes a set of procedures to make valid inferences (Weber, 1985). There is, however, no such thing as flawless research (McGrath et al., 1982).

The manifest content is transcribed and content analysis is meant to reveal latent meanings and relationships between different content samples. The data are examined in a thematic analysis which involves searching for themes across speeches and interviews, subsequently developing a storyline, in narrative form, of the emergent themes (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). One purpose of content analysis is to identify the signs and symbols as the units of analysis, the message, rather than the communicator or the audience (Kassarjian, 1977). A central idea, or issue, in content analysis is that categories may comprise many words using simple techniques which can reveal high reliability and validity regarding symbolic content (ibid).

In order to conduct content analysis, after transcription, the text is coded, meaning broken down, into manageable categories. Coding is systematic and an objective description of the communications content (Kassarjian, 1977), that partitions and avoids overlap. Important to note is that the specific coding categories are emergent, a posteriori, from the data set. Selective reduction is the central idea in content analysis in order to analyze and interpret message characteristics. As expressed by Holsti (1969), 'any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages.'

The type of content analysis for this data is relational analysis. Relational analysis builds upon more traditional conceptual analysis by not only looking for the existence of certain words, but also examining the relationships among concepts in a text (Krippendorf, 2004). The purpose of this content analysis, which is an inductive, qualitative approach, is not word count but keyword in context.

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Content analysis is an appropriate method as the data to be analyzed are perceptual, meaning based on the participants' descriptions and explanations of their work as it relates to experience. A goal of content analysis is to develop a set of categories that adequately and meaningfully captures salient aspects of the material (Mayring, 1983 in Grove et al., 2003). By approaching the data set with an exploratory, open mind, the intention is to shed light on the scope of experience. This also includes searching for updated terminology, insights, and observations. Content analysis should expose not only variations in the findings, a divergent approach, but also serve to delve into the nature, or essence, of experience and its relationship to marketing. The data set is intended to reflect this observation and the analysis should reveal new examples that can inform the experiential discourse in marketing. The underlying question is what do practitioners do in order to understand experience as part of an offering, and how do they attempt to design, or ideate, and innovate, the perceived customer experience? While the participants inform the "what" and "how," the analysis should shed light on the "why," helping to reduce the ambiguity surrounding experience.

DATA SOURCE AND COLLECTION

The data set is twofold: A series of speeches delivered at the Gel Conference, and open interviews with five visionary leaders. This represents a non-probability sample, specifically a judgment sample, as good prospects are identified for accurate information (Kotler et al., 2009).

Gel stands for Good Experience Live and is an annual conference, held every spring, in New York, NY, and once in September 2006 in Copenhagen, Denmark. Started in 2003, Gel was the first conference to focus on exploring "good experience

in all its forms - in art, business, society, technology, and life" (Mark Hurst: http://www.gelconference.com/). Gel is the only conference that focuses on good experience in such a broad context, i.e. not industry or target-group specific. One stipulation is that the host, Mark Hurst, does not invite consultants to speak. He designs the program and speaker line-up in themes, but intentionally avoids dictating the message. Hurst invites speakers to communicate their own impressions and opinions of what defines a good experience (http://goodexperience.com/2010/11/how-to-become-a-gel-s.php). With an intention to provide an outlet to inspire and learn about experience, the conference attendees are from a wide range of industries and represent a myriad of job functions. Other notable conferences that address experience in some form are:

- TED (Technology Entertainment Design), whose tag is "ideas worth spreading"
- PINC (People Ideas Nature & Creativity) in The Netherlands, Peter van Lindonk, director. The PINC conference focuses on passion as a general theme
- Usability Week, organized and run by the Nielsen Norman Group, an online usability conference
- UX Week conference, run by a consulting firm, Adaptive Path. Focus on experience in a usability context.
- MX Managing Experience, also run by Adaptive Path. Addresses leaders in organizations that are working with experience strategy.
- The Net Promoter Conference. Focus on Fred Reichheld's Net Promoter Score (NPS) metric, "measuring experience."

The data are based on speeches from 2005-2009, which yields a total of six conferences and 111 speeches or performances. Each speech, which is the coding unit,

is typically 20 minutes in length. The speeches are transcribed from a dvd (the first years) or from an online video, posted on www.gelconference.com.

The data set also comprises interviews. The informal interview approach lets the participants shape the conversation as the interviews are intentionally unstructured and open-ended. Although starting with guiding questions and core concepts to start the conversation (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008), the interviewees (also referred to as speakers or practitioners in this study) are allowed to tell their story about how they understand experience from their own perspective: narrative interviewing (ibid.). The speakers were selected based on their high profiles and are well-known in their respective fields; architectural design, consulting engineering, and television drama production; very different sources.

A consulting engineering project, including architects and engineers, is knowledge work and the manifest project is usually meant to last many years. The clients, such as the government or private companies, can be representatives of the general public or other users. Projects are capital intensive, typically having a long time span, and concern for safety is top priority. How do engineering consultants and architects think about experience in their services, also considering various stakeholders who might have diverse needs and wants?

Television drama production also involves knowledge work. The end user is the general public and projects are designed to appeal to different user groups. The Danish Broadcasting Corporation is owned and operated by the state. Television production is expensive and the foundation is not commercial or funded by advertising income. It's the taxpayers who foot the bill so budgets are strictly scrutinized. In producing

programs, public service is top of mind, as well as quality. Finally, it is important that people actually like the programs.

DATA CODING

The beginning of the inductive analysis is to reduce the raw data, which are the transcripts. Starting with the conceptual framework as a point of departure for the variables that mediate experience , a coding scheme was developed to frame the emergent, in vivo (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008) categories: Firstly, "what," meaning a description of the work or project, and the experience as the speaker described it. Secondly, "why" the speaker was interested in this experience; what was the initial motivation, or driver, to work with this experience for this person? Thirdly, note "where" the experience takes place is noted, meaning what is the medium or how is that experience offered, or manifested. The final code is the "how," meaning experience process, delivery, or implementation. Please note that the transcripts and coding scheme (essentially the raw data), and the list of the speakers are too voluminous to be included as an appendix. These documents are in a separate file, available upon request.

ANALYSIS BOUNDARIES

The unit of analysis is the delivered speech, or interview, by a practitioner which inherently yields a great deal of latitude. This study does not involve any customer or user studies, other than what the speaker or interviewee chooses to divulge, e.g. regarding desired outcomes from their perspective.

5. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

It is important and challenging to transfer the raw data into meaningful findings. In presenting the findings, it is vital to remain objective while also including enough detail to provide a comprehensive understanding. The narrative explanations and inferences are driven by the data and identify the most important issues (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). This chapter is somewhat lengthy yet there was an abundance of material that was relevant to the exhaustive search for meaning from the data.

The content analysis coding scheme categories help to find common threads, and presenting the data involves choosing pieces of the data that "tell the story of the research" (Bloomberg & Volpe 2008). Aggregating the data is challenging and choices have to be made as to what are partitions and what are replications (McGrath et. al, 1982). In order to address the research questions, the data should contribute to:

- What: what is the essence of the offered experience, the unit of analysis?
- Why: what is the motivation and underlying intention of the offering party?
- How: what is the medium for delivery and reach of the experience?

The emergent themes are a posteriori findings and presented here in a logical flow, rather than being presented in chronological order: what constitutes an experience, how are experiences designed, and examples of implementation. The findings are guided by the descriptors from the conceptual framework (Chapter 2) and represent the most important issues. Note that the data (speeches) that did not reveal a significant contribution were omitted from this chapter and all of the interviews are included.

EXPERIENTIAL DISCOURSE IN MARKETING

5.1.1 Finding 1: Experience through storytelling takes on many forms

The following data excerpts represent experiences through storytelling and from three different media: radio, film, and a book. Each speaker reveals what they do as well as their motivation in their work.

What may seem like a tiny detail can indeed become a surprising and engaging story. Ira Glass is the host and producer of the most popular radio show in the United States, "This American Life." "The American Life is a weekly public radio show that has close to two million listeners on more than 500 stations and 250,000 podcast listeners. In explaining why the show is so different, Glass says the sometimes some of the best stories are hidden in a news case that is expected to be strictly documentary:

> The rarest thing when you listen to radio or watch television is to be surprised. A new thought or new way, something you haven't pictured that way. Especially rare is a happy, pleasurable surprise. People don't talk enough, the importance, in the context of a news show, about how people take pleasure in their work.

Glass informs that the aesthetics of news are often not appreciated. He feels that the serious and funny should be allowed to collide. He is critical of the typical, familiar, format with a very serious story that might end with a silly punch line or a blooper reel. Keeping serious and funny separate are, according to Glass, "a failure of craft." He says that journalism is supposed to be documenting what the world really is, not making it less interesting, yet:

> … most broadcast news, through an accident of aesthetics, the world that they describe, is a world utterly without surprise, joy and pleasure and humor. Most broadcast journalism makes the world seem smaller than it is, and by making stories whose aesthetic is surprise, which is what our show is, making stories that are constantly showing look how different this is, how much more interesting something is than you would think it, and constantly searching for stories

where there will be little surprises all the way through and all along, it is reasserting that the world to its proper size and reasserting that the world is a place where surprise and pleasure and joy and humor exist. It makes things hopeful.

The funny moment, according to Glass, is often the most revealing as well. The search for surprise entails a lot of people conducting research and countless interviews. What might be most useful for a story for the radio show is often useless in other contexts. Sometimes what we do is very contrary to what others are doing, but we want to "portray people exactly at human scale."

Another important ingredient, in addition to "taste," that Glass attributes to the success of "This American Life," is structure. Structure provides effective communication for radio, and the metrics show just how long people keep listening. Glass explains that they have an easy-to-learn recipe about structure and when "to throw you bait," which is suspense.

> Suspense has been created because it feels like something is about to occur. The fact pattern of the story is not that interesting but it feels like something is about to occur. It gets to the heart of what a story is and how we are built to engage in a story. In its most basic form, a story is really just a sequence of actions, where this thing leads to this next thing which leads to this next thing. It's not about logic or argument but about emotion…it is not about reason in any way. The way we are built… If we hear any sequence of actions begin and take motion, no matter how simple, really. We can feel the accumulation of events; like it's heading somewhere. The events themselves raise events and answer a question.

> Narrative is like a machine, raising questions and answering them. It's like a train that has a destination. Knowing how to manipulate that and handle that is the beginning of being able to tell a story. One of the differences between our shows and other shows on public radio is that we don't start a show with a list of what's coming up on the program. I feel like this is a singularly uninteresting way to start something and on our show we just start something, action going. If we can draw you into the dream of it then you will be inside it before you can even think of why you are inside it or what it is and it is far more irresistible. And then you are there in the middle of this thing, somehow useless, but you are there and you can't get out and you have to find out what is going to happen next.

An emotion that Glass feels is overlooked is "cringing." This physical reaction, says Glass, is very important in that is occurs in an instant and is really about fear. Cringing happens when we are confronting someone, or something, and we realize that "we are not who we think we are; the world sees us differently than we see ourselves, and not in a good way." What makes a story powerful is not the action part. That alone is not satisfying. A story needs to move on to "what is bigger, the universal something that is so powerful."

Glass asks, "Why do we understand that feeling?" Pinpointing this notion came to Glass, serendipitously, when he worked as a tape cutter at a previous job. He would discover certain stretches of a tape that "would be totally mesmerizing, and I would feel every feeling." Questions and answers are dull, but focusing on the feeling is interesting. Putting interview answers together as a portrait makes a story good. Glass illustrates with an example of a production of "Arabian Nights," and the role of Scheherazade. A master story teller, Scheherazade keeps herself alive and when she is told by the king that her life will indeed be spared, she tells the king that she is pregnant with his child. Glass says that this classic story is really about "the power of narrative." He describes narrative as:

> …a back door to a place very deep inside of us. A place where reason doesn't necessarily hold sway…when a story gets inside of us it makes us less crazy. There has to be a person story that you hear, so finally you get a picture story in your head of this is what it would be like to be that person, so you can understand their experience.

Glass suggests that we are given information in a "flawed way." He also concedes that we are "bombarded by narrative." Consider stories on the web, advertisements, television, and songs. So much is yelling at us all day long, "trying to get our attention, to pierce through all the noise of narrative." Glass explains that this

is problematic as this narrative is often not only shrill but also false. It is often because the story has to be sold and the characters are "specimens, like bugs on a slide," "used to illustrate big social principles…or like props in a fake drama reality show." Being able to truly identify with a person in a story, to be able to imagine yourself as that person, is "incredibly rare: and when that happens you totally notice. And it can happen in the oddest places." Real can be found in attitude, and we can empathize with that as being human. It is rare when it happens, but when it does, "you notice, and I think it's important."

Many emotional experiences can and are created through art. In a very unusual film documentary project, Ross Kauffman, co-director and co-producer of Born into Brothels: Calcutta's Red-Light Kids (2004), experienced emotions that he had not anticipated. The film is about the children of the prostitutes in Calcutta's red-light district. The children were given cameras, taught to use them, and asked to document their daily life, living in the red-light district. What were their stories and could they tell them by taking photographs?

The initial purpose of the project was to obtain an authentic view of the children's lives, through their own perspective. Going to boarding school would only have been an unlikely dream, otherwise, as they come from the red light district, a social barrier, and do not have the financial means. According to Zana Briski, the children's photos, that were sold to raise money for their education, are full of so much information (from film clip): "The brothels are filled with children, they are everywhere. And they are so curious, which is why I thought it would be so good to see the world through their eyes."

The filming process was very difficult. Kaufmann and Briski lived for four years on some grants, but more or less without a salary. After the film was completed, they travelled, in connection with showing the film, bringing the photographs taken by the children to sell. Proceeds from the photograph sales went to "Kids with Cameras," a non-profit organization to raise money for their education. "It's funny when you create some art, and there is some emotion that is created through that art." After viewing the film and its strong message, Kaufmann remarks, "…this project gives people an outlet to do something, to express this emotion in some way, shape or form."

Sometimes the most interesting stories about our history are not on the other side of the world but can be found in our own backyard. Journalist and author Russell Shorto lives in Manhattan, more specifically, the East Village. One day, while out on the neighborhood playground with his young daughter, he noticed the tomb of Peter Stuyvesant at St. Marks of the Bowery. Stuyvesant was the Director-General of New Netherland in the middle of the 17th century and Shorto decided to do some research on him for an article. What Shorto found was far too rich for a magazine article and led to a book, *THE ISLAND AT THE CENTER OF THE WORLD: THE EPIC STORY OF DUTCH MANHATTAN AND THE FORGOTTEN COLONY THAT SHAPED AMERICA*.

Stuyvesant was the stern Dutch governor who is credited with losing New Netherlands and its capitol, Dutch Manhattan, to the English. Shorto wants to tell the "forgotten story," how American history was also shaped by the Dutch. In the 17th century, The Netherlands was the melting pot of Europe: the place where people fled. Shorto tells that during this time in Europe, intolerance was a sort of official policy.

The Netherlands, then, had this diversity "thrust upon them" but cleverly exploited diversity in building their empire.

Working with scholar Charles Gehring, who has dedicated his life to translating the original archives of Dutch historical documents, Shorto's work is a historical point of departure. While he does not discredit the importance of English influence on American history, he ponders the Anglo-centrism around the Puritans and Pilgrims. "An initial wonder creates an important spark…why don't I know about this? Is what I know the way it is?" Through his collaboration with Gehring, Shorto learned "the importance of not trusting perceived wisdom as it is told to you." He remarks that telling the correct story requires "diligence and is painstaking." Likewise, critical to telling the story is the "importance of context to meaning."

While writing the book, Shorto was concerned that others would not be interested in reading his book. The book has, in fact, been very successful and Shorto attributes this success to our post 9/11 times. "I think there is a hunger for people to remember what this country is all about, that other side: that we are a mixture of people, bound together by certain things, and that matters and is important." Although the journey was hard, he notes that sometimes something "may seem obscure but is utterly relevant."

5.1.2 FINDING 2: EXPERIENCE IS MANIFESTED THROUGH IMPROVISATION, INTERACTION, THE UNEXPECTED, AND PLAY

A reoccurring theme that emerged from the data suggests that interactions act as an experience catalyst and often provide an unexpected opportunity for further exploration. Interaction takes many forms and immersion is important for

understanding and is conducive to change. The following data suggest a comfort in not

knowing what will happen next---a crucial part of an experience---as well as a delight

in challenging oneself.

Rather than planning an event with expected outcomes, sculptor and boat builder

Marie Lorenz acknowledges that you cannot always plan a journey in detail. In her

own-built boat, Lorenz started a water taxi as an art project. The concept was to

explore the waters around Manhattan; essentially a circumnavigation of the island in a

plywood canoe.

She invited a friend, Joe, and they wanted to:

…take Manhattan as if it were the wilderness, so we had packed way to much camping gear. I
decided that I wanted to take people around Manhattan with just the tidal current. The exchange
was that I get to represent their story on my website: no money involved. You get to ride in my
boat and I get to tell the story.

Lorenz was initially looking for stories about people, her boat passengers, to put

on her website. She posted the story of the first boat ride, with Joe, online. The actual

boat ride was a failure as the boat capsized, and they landed on Roosevelt Island:

…and people loved it. The unexpected was what they wanted as a good experience. I want
people to look at the river and bridges in a different way. Think about the amount of water
moving out there and how significant it has been to the development of New York. Even if you
don't go for an actually ride it's fun to think about someone actually out there in a little boat.

Lorenz explains that through the interaction she received more than she had expected.

Many of the speakers have an idea about what they want to accomplish and use

their website to find connections. In order to challenge himself at being able to play

with his musical creativity, composer Andrew (www.songstowearpantsto.com) helps

people to express feelings in a different way. He started a website and posted free, and

short, songs, based on the quirky ideas that people sent to him. He got so much traffic on the site the he also:

> …started making songs for people on a much more personal level. Music is food for the soul, and since laughter is the shortest distance between two people, then combining inside jokes and anecdotes from people's personal lives, I can create custom music pretty much for any occasion.

While Andrew works through a virtual, on-line medium, Marc Salem derives feedback from face-to-face, non-verbal communication. An expert in kinesics (body language), Salem teaches us that a silent interaction can be very loaded with meaning. Salem says that if we attempt to stifle, or hold back information, for example, orally, we leak it somewhere else. We subconsciously send cues, and this is what Salem, through his background in developmental psychology and education, has learned to read and interpret in a "fun way, not in a supernatural way." Salem uses a wide range of techniques, excluding electronics, to reveal hidden potentials of the mind. By carrying out an exercise with the audience, including five audience members randomly called up on stage, Salem demonstrates how he reads body language, looking for leakage and cues. He reveals to the audience how he "knows" when, why, and how people are lying in the game.

> It is, indeed, what Edward Hall called the silent, or the hidden language. It is the language that most of us speak to most people most of the time.(…) The words that I say become close to irrelevant. What is important is the tone in which I'm using in that case. (…) Context provides far more information.

"How we punctuate ideas," says Salem, is through "putting artificial endings to things." Salem adds that you can "have a lot of fun with the non-verbal element but it *is* a language you can learn." Salem is also interested in "how the mind creates reality

and meaning," and adds that it is "virtually impossible for someone to lie." "If one believes what they are saying then there is very little leakage."

Salem also asks, "What does a smile mean?" A fake smile is "not a smile and easy to tell. A real smile takes some unconscious muscle control, which is very hard." We use "mind games" in order to try to influence each other, and in the games that we play with each other.

Games can, of course, be more traditional and tactile. When he was asked to leave his job, computer architect Robin Burgener took a personal, hobby-level computer project, and transformed it to a hand-held game, 20Q, as well as an on-line game site, www.20q.net.

Running on two, AA batteries, the hand-held 20Q has the computer capacity of a Commodore 64. With an interest in neural networks and artificial intelligence, Burgener wanted to explore how he "could generate revenue off this website as I didn't want to go back to being employed in the high-tech industry."

The popularity of the website also means that a new neural network has to be developed for each language translation. Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) means that the 20Q learns, continuously, as people play the game. It gathers information from what people think rather than what experts know, and it draws its own conclusions and interprets that. The neural network absorbs knowledge from everyone who plays; collective knowledge, a "folk taxonomy."

Burgener explains that the A.I. "can determine the correct object, even when given incorrect information." Part of his challenge is constantly improving the game's technology as players' "purposefully or inadvertently" mislead with "fuzzy data and

ambiguities." This is, of course, why the game is fun to play; trying to trick the computer as it learns from other players as well. Burgener add that the 20Q A.I. "also generates its own knowledge, spontaneous knowledge". "It is a family-oriented experience and all we ask is that people enjoy themselves."

There is a multitude of experiences through the numerous interactions in playing games. Jane McGonigal is a game researcher and developer. She relates what thoughts, elements, and processes go into designing and playing a game. She specializes in pervasive gaming and alternate reality games. With her background in performance studies, McGonigal strives to reach some different goals in gaming, including:

- To increase and diversify engagement in public spaces,
- to connect play with real-life,
- to localize online communities through face-to-face- experience, and,
- to reclaim public space

An important element in her design process is to use "everyday, non-gaming technology (software and hardware; cell phones, pc's) so people can be more playful and use the technology they have on hand." She adds, "Games make it safe to act differently and group public play has momentum and visibility." McGonigal defines her process as "designing alternate social experiences for specific kinds of everyday spaces: crosswalks, airports, bookstores, public payphones," explaining that she intentionally wants "people to act differently," and experience unexpected opportunities."

EXPERIENTIAL DISCOURSE IN MARKETING

For one particular game that McGonigal developed, "Tombstone Hold 'Em," she chose a cemetery as the public space, and for a very particular reason. She was commissioned by a client that had developed a historical game and they wanted McGonigal to "convey the western experience of the gun-game world: the gritty realism to emphasize what was unique about their game." Her research questions included:

- What is wrong with our traditional use of cemeteries?
- What is cemetery culture?
- What is the history of social use of the space?
- What are the universal physical affordances of the space?
- Do I have a personal alternate experience of the space?
- What are the most likely obstacles to new experiences in the space?

She found that, "most people do not return to graves. You rarely encounter people in cemeteries so they (the city) have a hard time justifying space. They (the cemeteries) are losing funding and being moved. There is also a problem of vandalism."

McGonigal's research also revealed that many cemeteries, across the United States, were using the cemetery space differently, what she refers to as "alternative practices." In order to bring the public to the space, McGonigal found that cemeteries were "engaging people who don't have a personal connection to the space, by showing films or offering a dog-walking program."

McGonigal chose the public space of a cemetery as the goal of the game project involved "de-sensitizing violence because it is virtual…so sending gamers to a real

cemetery to help that disconnect." Designing the actual game included an appreciation for what would "be appropriate" for people to do, or how they should behave, in a cemetery. Therefore, the on-line component, which started and organized the game, included specific instructions. The gamers needed an artifact, or a "physical way to show that you are in the game." Similarly, the game included a "tactile element," manifested in instruction cards and poker chips. This helps cemetery visitors to "feel comfortable" and the players to "receive feedback."

Gameplay spilled out into the real world as players gathered in graveyards around the country to play in Tombstone Hold'em

Figure 12: Tombstone hold 'em. www.42entertainment.com/poker/html

"Gaming should be obvious, not hidden, so you don't create two classes of knowledge in the space" stresses McGonigal. She wants to afford an "opportunity to process the untraditional experience," as well as allow the players to receive "feedback in order to improve the game," hence "interaction and engagement." McGonigal's design process addresses:

- How people act and interact (or fail to do so) in a given space,

- What are the affordances (natural and physical) and the social context of that space?

- What other kinds of activity might it enable, specifically more collective, more collaborative and more playful activity.

While McGonigal does not create hidden games, a different approach is exercised by Charlie Todd. Todd is the founder of ImprovEverywhere, a group whose mission is to cause "scenes of chaos and joy in public places." Referring to himself as an "urban prankster," Todd and a few friends, calling themselves "agents," started to create pranks in New York City in order to create their own performances. Only the agents knew what was going on, the idea being to create "positive pranks in a public space." These, according to Todd, are much harder to do, but the agents aim to do large-scale pranks that are "uplifting, fun, and give people a good experience."

Todd calls the pranks "missions," and now has an "army of thousands" that want to be involved. He says that he is "inspired by locations and the hidden potential for comedy." He is often arrested and fined, "more like a slap on the wrist," and always documents the pranks. Immediately after a given mission, Todd follows up with informal interviews, pretending to be an onlooker himself, asking people how they experienced what they just saw. Todd finds it interesting that "everyone's recollection of the experience was so different." Todd notes:

> Experiencing something by ourselves can be frightening. Experiencing something with others can be funny, interesting, and there is comfort in that. More covert than overt, the agents never tell what just happened, or reveal that it was orchestrated. The just leave the scene of the prank because it is more important to give a great story to tell rather than taking credit (for the story).

Designing an experience that is meant to be funny or humorous is common among many of the speakers. The Flying Karamazov Brothers use improvisation in

order to "make play fun." Bob Mankoff, cartoon editor of the New Yorker, asks "what is the purpose of humor?" In answering his own question, he explains that "jokes are about aggression and dealing with a whole range of problems. They are the anesthesia of the heart and we need a lack of empathy." He notes that "modern humor is aggressive," and he sees humor as a "gift," "a creative enterprise, a bulwark against the hegemony of rationalism." While Mankoff views cartoons and humor as "taming," he adds that "funny is in the relationship between your experiences in life and the cartoon."

©Cartoonbank.com

"Of course, you could try another bank, if there _were_ any other banks."

Figure 13: NewYorker cartoon (BobMankoff).

http://marketplace.publicradio.org/standard/display/slideshow.php?ftrv_id=83930

Creating cartoons is one approach to using humor to address problems or think about change. Making sense of a visualization, cartoon or advertisement, as printed matter, is one medium in which to interact; hence, an experience. However, visual information is not always static.

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Watching a live dance performance, according to Henning Rübsam, affords an "awareness of senses." Choreographer/dancer Henning Rübsam directs SENSEDANCE (http://sensedance.org/SENSEDANCE/US.html), a New York City-based dance company.

Rübsam's work also includes building a better vocabulary of movement. He explains that although spectators are physically passive, as an audience, they can feel an "understanding and joy" in dance, as well as appreciate the collaboration required and the "intense moment of beauty." Dance, explains Rübsam, embeds "so much discipline" and is a good performance experience when passion is conveyed through movement and interaction. Because dance is "open to the senses and recreating sense memory," there are opportunities for the unexpected to occur.

In teaching skills and ideas of the theatre to business professionals, Cathy Salit, President of Performance of a Lifetime (http://www.performanceofalifetime.com/index.html), wants to help business leaders "to create new performances in the way that they interact; both with one another, with their peers, people who work for them, people who are above them, and with their clients…and to discover that change is nearer by than they realize." Theatre, she says, "is getting up on stage, being allowed to play a different character...theatre gives you the license to do that." Salit sees improvisation as a catalyst to change:

> We all care deeply about and think about change all the time: relationships, job, ways that we are that we want to change. Change in others, change in the world. It's hard to figure out what it (change) is and it is so hard to create change, to do things differently. The paradox is that change is so nearby and close to us.

Being able to experiment on stage, or in front of a camera, allows one to "try out all different kinds of behavior, which is performance in the language of theatre." This,

Salit explains, is the secret of the actor, performer, and improviser. We already have this innate ability, but theatre provides the access with improvisation as a window. In addition to helping organizations with skills in sales, leadership development, and mentoring, Salit has learned that "people are crying out for the opportunity to play." She teaches, "…in the spirit of improvisation, you always make your partner look good," which displays empathy and a sensitivity to change.

A live performance always runs the risk of making mistakes; and that risk increases the more people that are involved in a performance. The juggling group, The Flying Karamazov Brothers, has to develop its act and find something new, like any other performers. They claim "making mistakes on purpose, just to see what happens," using the unexpected to learn. If the risk of dropping isn't there then watching 'perfection' can be pretty boring. "Juggling teaches us that throwing is even more important than catching. If the toss is right, catching seems to take care of itself:" an interesting metaphor for business.

NEW YORK NOTEBOOK author, Laurie Rosenwald, describes intentionally making mistakes in order "to see something in something else. Finding the solution and then the defining or solving the problem." She says that she begins with "quantity, not quality" because "through speed is how we achieve what we do." In her work as a designer and illustrator, she collects ingredients and elements for a collage and asks "what could this be?"

Mistakes are also part of learning when repairing something that is broken. In creating the beach animals, "Strandbeest," kinetic sculptor Theo Jansen often has to replace the conduit tubes on the animals and finds that he "always makes mistakes

while replacing the tubes and you get the best animal." Through this "good gene

combination" he experiences "shape, movement and energy."

Figure 14: "Siamesis Ypenburg" http//www.strandbeest.com/

The strandbeests are wind-powered and "set out in herds, to live their own lives,

on the beaches." They stay on the beaches, avoiding dry sand, or sand dunes, and the

water. They are equipped with a "feeler, so they can avoid obstacles and turn around."

Theo Jansen wants the creatures "to learn to survive on their own, in the future,"

where the "winning genetic codes will multiply."

5.1.3 FINDING 3: EXPERIENTIAL INSPIRATION STEMS FROM IMMERSION AND BLENDI

(MEDIA, CONCEPTS, DISCIPLINES)

The majority of the participants enthusiastically relate how they are inspired to

create experiences. Sources of inspiration are numerous and personal. Many speakers

refer to being inspired when they are pushed to a limit, disgruntled, or fed up. Ji Lee,

who worked as a creative director at a major ad agency in New York, left his job when

he felt the creative environment was too tough and conservative. He then went out on his own to create "The Bubble Project."

The idea of the Bubble Project was "to create a simple device to transform boring ads into something more engaging and fun for everyone." The Bubble Project also "serves as a disruption; a break from monotony and everyday routine. It invites people to think, become creative, and have fun." Specifically, Lee printed 20,000 stickers in the shape of speech bubbles. He places them on top of advertisements in New York City, for example in the subways and at bus stops. They are purposely left blank, or empty, so people can write on them. He then returns at a later date and documents, by photographing, the results. Lee explains:

> When I first started I didn't know what to expect. Some of the responses were really thoughtful, intelligent, and sometimes mysterious. After collecting a few hundred I realized that there were natural groupings, or categories.

Lee describes the categories that emerged as "natural themes (that) appear, depending on what is happening in the world." Lee identifies them as: social commentary, sex & drugs, politics & religion, media & fashion, art & philosophy, humor, and personal messages. This was not planned by Lee and he realized that people were "not only passive recipients of corporate messages but active participants.

Corporate monolog becomes public dialog."
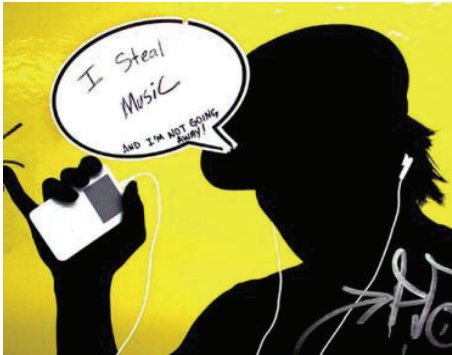
Figure 15: "I Steal Music" www.bubbleproject.com

Lee explains that the bubbles enhance, rather than detract, or deface, the ads. When people learn that he works in the ad industry, as a freelance art director, they seem "confused." He says that he likes advertising, stating that "like money, it's part of our capitalist system and not good or bad by itself: it's what you do with it." The Bubble Project allows people to take back some public space by responding to ads that are so pervasive in public space. "I believe that the bubbles don't destroy but improve the ads. With the bubble, the ad becomes more interesting and engaging."

Paradoxically, Lee found that ad agencies react positively to the project and see it as a way to "connect to people." He says that "when people have fun, good things can happen." Through his website, Lee encourages visitors to download and print their own bubbles, and to subsequently upload their experiences. The Bubble Project has spread outside of New York City, to many countries, and by "bubblers" other than Lee.

Through blending ads and inviting responses, Lee discovers new perspectives on the original messages. In looking for new insights, New Yorker cartoonist Bob Mankoff uses what he refers to as "conceptual blending of two different spheres or associational domains." Sometimes the insights reveal "jumps," that can be "transformed to ideas," and Mankoff says that conceptual blending "inspires and boosts creativity." While he admits that this approach is "not rational," he says that it is "something you participate in." The interaction and engaging in the experience is "cerebral and important."

Mentioned by most of the speakers, making a connection through immersion is a goal in itself. What is it that we can see in neutral information? Photographer and information visual artist, Chris Jordan, was unhappy in his work as a corporate lawyer. He spent his spare time and money on photography with a strong interest in colors as a theme. He found, by chance, a lot of color exhibited through garbage. While he could see the beauty of the images there was an important story to tell. He wanted to convey an underlying, yet important message of the affects of American mass consumption; "the dark side of consumerism." Through the seduction of beautiful images on a grotesque subject, essentially a dilemma, Jordan started to create digital images to depict scale.
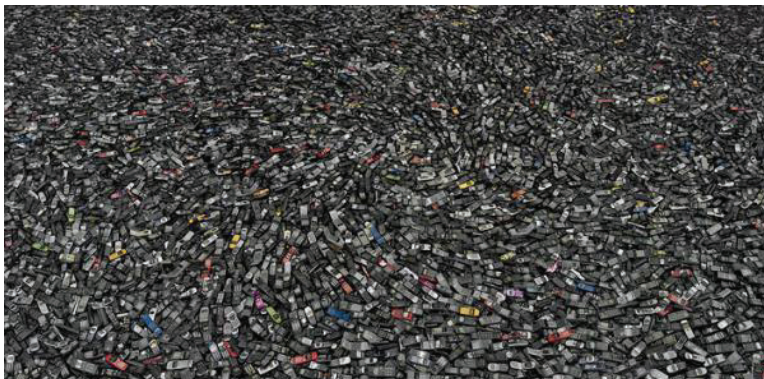
Figure 16: Cell Phones #2, Atlanta 2005. http//www.chrisjordan.com/

Jordan attempts to create a change in behavior by evoking discord through his images. He says that "statistics and raw data are not emotionally meaningful; they do not help you to feel what you need to in order to make necessary, drastic changes." He relates:

> I was unhappy, unfulfilled and stressed out. My creative spirit had burned down to a tiny ember. I have begun to find my way to a more connected and fulfilling life. Now I take obsessively high resolution photographs of piles of garbage.

The visual space is where Jordan can connect with "the other side," what we can't see: "I am fascinated and frightened by the cumulative effect of our consumption." The images are meant to "inspire some reflection on the possibility of a new kind of consumer ethic, where we think less like individual predators." Jordan suggests that we:

> ...would act a little more like ants or bees. It would involve relinquishing a little bit of our individual liberty in exchange for our collective well-being. I don't know exactly how it would work and I don't have the answers, but it does seem like a conversation worth having.

Figure 17: Depicts 106,000 aluminum cans, the number used in the U.S. every thirty seconds. http://www.chrisjordan.com/gallery/rtn/#cans-seurat

By blending video and creating Internet art, Net artist Vuk Cosic creates "unusual things" with ASCII. ASCII in an acronym for American Standard Code for Information Interchange, a character encoding scheme. Trained as an archaeologist in Slovenia, Cosic wanted to create "poetic 3D pictures" in ASCII, which he calls part of "hacker folklore." Through his artwork, relying on computers and constrained by the 95 printable ASCII defined characters, Cosic wants to make ASCII more interesting and to reflect on "why technology is meaningful." Using characters to create art dates as far back as the Egyptians, as well as early typewriter character art. Cosic, however, adds the moving, video dimension, to create games, film clips and music videos. Cosic's advice is to do "something useless, seriously." He says it is easy to "do good" from that point of departure, as Net art is not only in its own context, but also available to anyone with access to the Internet; therefore it's democratic and not limited to galleries. Cosic wants to know and explore what is in between lines of texts and in between pages. Cosic pontificates, "If you've never done useless stuff then there is no way you can have a career."

Blending is also expressed through software, as an underlying technology, in physical products. Here it is the user interface that affords the experience. In his work, interaction designer Christopher Bauder 'always tries to find and create interfaces that don't need explanation.' One example of this is the Tone Ladder, which Bauder says is "good interaction experience design." By using MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) protocol, Bauder infuses tones on the rungs of the ladder so you can play the ladder as a musical instrument, using your entire body to manipulate and immerse yourself in creating desired effects.

> So for the ladder you know how it works. You step on it, you touch it, (and) you can use it to reach up high. It's a tool…you already know how it works. So if you add some additional functions, that work the same way, you create a totally different interface by using something you don't have to learn to use…The tone ladder works for all kinds of ages, without explanation. You don't have to play an instrument.

Bauder's work and projects focus on interaction expressed through technology-based user interfaces and the human body. He aims to integrate and blend technologies to free us from equipment, allowing for creativity and freedom of expression through movement.

Figure 18: "Tone Ladder," Christopher Bauder. The Driskell Group:

http://farm1.static.flickr.com/97/235382100_c0ada7bf72.jpg

While many speakers express a reactionary motive as a driving force of their

work, most of the speakers cite looking for the unexpected and being inquisitive and

curious, in order to learn and express themselves through their work. Belgian designer

Ann de Gersem, Design Academy in Eindhoven, Netherlands, wanted to learn more

about people with autism and the kinds of jobs that autistic people perform. How do

they think? What kind of skills do they have? Her research showed that they are

typically working in the "high tech or IT world." Additionally she learned that autistic

people cannot "think in concepts like a normal person."

De Gersem tells the story of how pleased she was when she found a chocolate

factory in Belgium that specifically hires autistic employees. With permission from

the factory, "you can take them to their limits," she chose two, Frieda and Matthias,

out of 17, to work with and learn from. De Gersem did not know what to expect but

she was looking for inspiration and wanted to design objects with an autistic

viewpoint. As chocolate was their world, she decided to 'create objects made of

chocolate, from chocolate molds that reflect their personalities.' She also stipulated that the object had to be a daily object. The photo below depicts some of the objects, the teapot, cup and saucer, which are made of chocolate.

Figure 19: "Frieda," De Gersem. http://culiblog.org/2006/06/autistic-chocolate/

By appreciating the craftsmanship of Frieda and Matthias, de Gersem says that she learned a lot about patience and going slower in her work. She sums up, "if you respect the chocolate and the persons, nothing can go wrong."

Respecting people and context is evident in artist and designer Leni Schwendinger's work as well. Schwendinger was commissioned by the city of Glasgow, Scotland, to enhance the environment of the Kingston Bridge over the River Clyde. By blending urban design and lighting design, Schwendinger creates lighting environments for architectural and public spaces. This particular project is called Chroma Streams.

Figure20:Chromastreams.http://www.archpaper.com/e-board_rev.asp?News_ID=1721

Schwendinger's goal was to make "a city more legible through light" and to make:

> ...sense of our jumbled urban environment with light. The nighttime environment in cities in not as highly regarded as daytime. In urban design, the thought is around the city in the daytime.

Her challenge was to improve this large-scale bridge, with heavy traffic, and make it beautiful. She starts by a visit to the site, then "absorbs the sight, and looks for something to love." She found that the Kingston Bridge was hollow inside so she chose to use this "faux" space as a "sky slot; an aperture where you can see the sky." Schwendinger explains that she wants to create "markers and legibility through light." She starts by creating "serial sketches, storyboards, and think in terms of time." She also conducts "in-depth research to find the users, also abstract uses, of the site."

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For the Chroma Streams project, she wanted to communicate to people and to reflect the relationship between the tide flow and traffic flow. She studied existing traffic charts and a grading system called "levels of service" (LOS) to have an idea of "something measureable." Schwendinger uses a traffic sensor, for each direction of traffic, in order to depict the traffic volume. She also has tidal flow information on the river Clyde and made a connection manifested in "144 states of light for tide and traffic as they relate to each to her; moment of update, every minute." She calls this a "true connection" and an "intuitive pallet to describe, in an artistic way, the phenomenon of traffic flow."

> I like to create sequences that are read through viewing, immersion in color and light…are an experienced and re-experienced environment in a new way. How to bring that forward? How to impact, in terms of scale, this environment and legibility to explain this idea?

Schwendinger use of blending creates "a communication device out of infrastructure; a comparative, interpretive, moment." She elaborates:

> The rhythmic and tonal qualities of Chroma Streams arise from everyday occurrences familiar to Glaswegians. Separating traffic from the driving experience allows the familiar to be viewed within its larger, artistic, context. Relating traffic and tide---the Broomielaw's two great flows--- allows us to contemplate a chance interrelationship between nature and the manmade.

> To lift this everyday of occurrences, the frustration of driving, the wondering about the traffic, the forgetting of the river, connecting them and bringing the natural and the manmade together, and reinterpreting and envisioning cities and infrastructure through light.

Referring to bridges in a metaphorical sense, Erin McKean says that "dictionaries are like bridges; think about where they lead." At the time of her talk, in April 2007, McKean, a lexicographer, was principal editor of the New Oxford American Dictionary. She says that "world propositions influence how we make a dictionary." She also notes that "people think that a dictionary is a moral arbiter of

words," but is quick to stress that "the words in the dictionary are a tool box. The number one criterion is that the words are useful to writers and readers." McKean points out that "language-data English is a democracy and people vote with their tongues." Referring to the butterfly metaphor, she also emphasizes the importance of context for language, in that "taking a word out of context kills it."

A widespread inspiration reference amongst the speakers is immersion; passionate, deep, focus. For many, this immersion manifests itself in the form of visualization. For Dee Breger, Director of Microscopy, Department of Materials Science and Engineering, Drexel University, the visualization source comes from one-celled plants and animals. In using powerful electron microscopes, Breger "illustrates objects scientifically," revealing "aspects of truth," to create art. While electrons are monochromatic, meaning that they don't carry color, photons do. "You have to know, learn, how to interpret your images" cautions Breger. She explains that "the monitor screen is like a window in a plane where you can hover, zoom in and out."

Figure 21: "Fungal Spores P2998," Dee Breger (by permission from artist).

http://micrographicarts.com/F.html

Breger describes the experience of eyeing the objects as a "tactile feeling," and "sensory-location, smell, taste beauty." She adds that it is a "privilege to be able to investigate and explore the micro world---these ultra-tiny objects---that are descriptive and delight." Rather than the experience being one-way, Breger refers to an interaction: "telling stories and multi-layered stories."

Bregers' source and inspiration to visualization stem from microscopic images found in nature. Max Gadney, head of design for the BBC news website, is challenged with visualizing the online news. This presents a completely different source and time perspective in terms of deadlines. Gadney applies information graphics knowledge and must "understand the heritage, background and context" of the news. He relates that "external forces can mess with the integrity of messages," and, just as advertising, "attention seeking is an issue that affects visual journalism."

Credibility and integrity are crucial. In journalism, you have to work with what you "know so far" and there can be an "image gap," meaning that there are no images to accompany or illustrate the story. Gadney asks:

> Is news meant to look a bit hurried and rushed? Does it belittle what happened? It's it simple or simplistic? Mixed metaphors? People can't imagine weight but volume. We must be sure of our facts. What does truth look like? If you don't have a photo, what's the next best thing? We don't quite know, so a pencil sketch. …(We are) dealing with people's demise so you have to be careful, sensitive.

> Should a newspaper publish things that it doesn't know? It's just that we shouldn't pretend. That's honest. I've been looking up the definitions of authenticity and integrity and there's something in between there, as long as we're honest.

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The target audience for online news is, of course, the general public. Katy Börner, Professor of information science, Indiana University, works to bring knowledge to the general public through science maps. Science maps are visualizations; "sense making in taking enormous data sets and bringing out the patterns of knowledge that lie hidden inside." Science maps address the problem of information "being lost in space." Providing some context to the complexity, Börner conveys:

> During the 15th century-one person can make major contributions to many areas of science (Leonardo Da Vinci), in the 20th century-one person can make major contributions to several areas of science (Albert Einstein), and in 21st century-one person can make major contributions to a specific area of science

Börner reminds us that today there are "many scientists alive and producing," and she asks, "How can we connect and make use of what we collectively know? How can we manage this flood of information?" She admits that:

> …search engines are great for fact-finding but they don't give you a bird's eye view so it is hard to get an overview of emerging trends and patterns, outliers, research frontiers, and the growth and evolution of certain social networks you are a part of. This is what science maps try to provide; one solution out of many in order to make better use of what we know.

Börner views "maps as stories, in many different shapes." Illuminated maps reveal the vitality of different research areas through their brightness. The maps are also "like a clock, showing how science is interconnected." An example is a map that visually represents scholarly researchers and other information seekers move from journal-to-journal. Börner explains that the social sciences and humanities are much better connected to the natural sciences than expected. In fact, most scientific domains, including the social science and humanities, are highly interdisciplinary.

Börner continues to probe, "What metaphors work best for science maps?" "How can you organize (scholarly) knowledge in space; to store it and make use of it, (as in) reference systems, such as the Periodic Table?"

Is information, and how we measure it, random? How can our brains perceive so much novelty and information? According to Jim Bumgardner, we reduce the amount of content. As a programmer and data visualization expert, Bumgardner sees beauty in simplicity. His interest in information theory led him to kaleidoscopes, or more specifically, kaleidoscope simulations. Bumgardner describes kaleidoscopes as the "balance between randomness and symmetry."

Ultimately random, a "good kaleidoscope makes you feel that you almost understand what is happening, but not quite: just out of reach. When there are limits to what we understand, then interesting things start to happen---and this is a good thing." Bumgardner sees randomness as "a point of view" and "a complexity that we don't understand." He emphasizes his point by quoting Arthur C. Clarke: "any sufficient technology is indistinguishable from magic."

The previous examples illustrate the use of computers to visualize information and help us to make sense of complexity. Interactive and textile designer Ane Lykke uses textiles as "any kind of material." She sees textiles as a way to "access our senses and multiple-layered experiences." Textiles help to "shatter our preconceived notions of the space around us." Ane Lykke defines space through movement and interaction. If you stand still then the textile appears as a graphic print. The following photo is Ane Lykke in her exhibition, "Mind The Gap:"

Figure 22: "Mind the Gap," Ane Lykke. http://anelykke.com/Spatial/mind-the-gap.html

The experience of the space is individual and different for each visitor to her installation. She wants visitors to feel as if they make a difference when they engage, invited by the textile material, as the space unfolds through movement and stimulates us.

> If you get personally engaged and realize that you make a difference, I think this influences you in a positive way. To create less static surroundings which are more willing to communicate with people and to create more presence in our everyday life. Not leaving you to lose consciousness but reminding you that you are here and alive.

Nille Juul-Sørensen thinks about experience as engaging: from multiple perspectives and in many contexts. Having left Denmark to work as associate director at ARUP, cultural differences in how we perceive experience are top of mind. Architect Juul-Sørensen's experience is international, spanning projects in Denmark (Copenhagen METRO), in Sweden (Ericsson's headquarters in Lund), as well as Italy and Hong Kong. A self-proclaimed "tech fan," Juul-Sørensen cites many examples of poor usability and communication that should be addressed holistically: from the

(unsatisfactory) design of his Blackberry to companies that are organized with too much hierarchy and silos, which lead to poor internal communication. It is a cultural attitude that hinders innovation.

> Attention to detail is so important and amenities should also be beautiful; and so many are poor at (technical) drawing. "You lose influence during the idea phase if you can't draw. The innovative are usually able to draw; not because drawings are pretty, but drawings tell the essential. Pictures kick start something completely different, also with clients!

"At ARUP," relates Juul-Sørensen, "we try to map the emotional dimensions of a product and how that relates to innovational dimensions. Too often the emotional aspects are forgotten or ignored." As an example, Juul-Sørensen reflects on a recent project involving nano technology. "The technology is amazing," he says, "but we have to understand why people, women and men, buy. When we better understand this then we can better create markets."

According to Juul-Sørensen, who is also the jury chairman of the bi-annual INDEX design award, we need to start thinking in systems. Countries such as Finland do this and they are successful. It is a different way of thinking; very different and longer term. He asks: When will your building start talking to you? When will your clothes start talking to you? Can you imagine that your grandchildren will never see garbage? When will you start getting money back from your energy provider because you used less? How far are we from such dreams?

When discussing innovation, Juul-Sørensen would like for society to dream and think like JFK; reaching the moon as a goal. That could be in reaching an "energy neutral" goal in ten years, or undergarments that measure "how you are doing" in a medical sense. It is a question of vision and a mission to be the best, and that is what sparks innovation.

5.1.4 FINDING 4: EXPERIENCE DRIVES CHANGE; A JOURNEY

A desired change and that path, or journey, to achieve change emerged as a significant experiential factor for the practitioners. A transformational experience, according to Ron Pompei, can be achieved by combining "commerce, culture and community ('C3')." The integration of these elements can transform the way people socialize and interact through the environment or physical space. In his work as Principal and Creative Director of Pompei A.D., Pompei and his group apply the 3C philosophy to their design projects. Originally trained as an artist, sculptor and designer, Pompei says that experience is not about the destination but the *journey*; and this is where potential transformation occurs.

A visit to a retail store, for example, should spark a feeling of "aha," or "heart and gut rediscovery." In designing the space it is important that the chosen artifacts are "relevant, authentic and intimate." Pompei takes a multidisciplinary approach to design and wants a project that; "...evokes eternity, expressing all of humanity, freedom, sharing values, integrating aspects of the senses." Pompei describes a transformation experience as a "combination of the good, the true and the beautiful in creating events, products, services or experiences."

By journey, Pompei means moving from one place to another emotionally rather than physically. Such a journey may require deep concentration or the opposite; completely letting go. The question is, how do we grow?

Linda Stone ponders about how many of us live today. She calls it "anytime, anywhere, any place lifestyle." She coined the term "continuous partial attention" (in 1998) to describe this lifestyle as problematic. Stone is a writer, consultant, and former executive at Apple and Microsoft. She observes:

> Our profound truth is that we operate in an increasing noisy world, trying to stay on top of everything. Our yearning and fulfillment are more and more coming from wanting to get to the bottom of things, wanting stillness, wanting a sense of fulfillment and wanting a sense of meaningful connection.

Close to 20 years work at Apple and Microsoft combined, Stone learned that "the sweet spot of opportunity was always in that place where human desire met a new technology, or met a marketing message, or met a new product." She adds that "human desire was always essential in that equation," and desire is the gap between where we are and where we would like to be. We have witnessed such a desire through instant messaging (IM) technologies. Their success reflects our "strong desire to connect and be part of a network."

Many of us are familiar with multi-tasking, which is often used in a positive, productive context. Multi-tasking implies efficiency and effectiveness, and doing things that do not require a "heavy cognitive load." Continuous partial attention, stresses Stone, is different:

> With continuous partial attention you are motivated by a desire to be a live node on the network. You want to be connected, busy, in demand; that's what makes us feel alive in this day and age. We want to scan for opportunity, the best activity, or the best people at any time and at the very heart of it is that we don't want to miss anything and that is very different from multi-tasking.

As an example, continuous partial attention becomes problematic when people gathered in a room, enabled by wireless technology, spend the entire time e-mailing and messaging rather than being physically present in the room. In trying to keep up, says Stone, "It's almost as if we have expected our personal bandwidth to keep up with the ever-increasing bandwidth that technology offers us." "…input comes from all directions and we are always scanning." Continuous partial attention can create an "artificial sense of constant crisis" and stress that we might be missing out.

Stone does offer that there is a trend in moving away from continuous partial attention. "We are so accessible that we are actually inaccessible. We have so much powerful technology that we feel powerless." Engaging in social networks through computers provides access, but not necessarily meaningful connections. And that, says Stone, is what people are longing for. Our constant accessibility, to communicate and to let ourselves "be communicated to," does not allow us to reflect and breathe. This is important because "innovation relies on reflection."

An example of our constant accessibility is e-mail. Stone says that, "the way we are using e-mail is ceasing to serve us in so many ways." She suggests, "think before you send, to increase quality of life." In observing trends, Stone notes that we want to block out noise and:

> …we are about to make a shift from connect, connect, connect, and the network as a center of gravity, to a new center of gravity with new opportunities. We are moving into a place where we want protection, filtering, and a sense of meaningful relationships: A sense of belonging. These qualities are going to characterize the types of products and services that are going to be interesting to us going forward, that are going to engage us. We are transitioning from an era of scanning for opportunity to an era of discerning opportunity. We have gone from asking "what do I have to gain?" to "what do I have to lose by paying attention to all of this?"

The networks, both online and offline that we are drawn to are those that resonate with "messages of meaning, belonging, protection and trust." Because we cannot and choose not to be constantly connected, our scarcest resource is our attention. "What we do with our attention defines us and what our companies do with attention define our companies." In a work context, as employees, we want our employers to allow us to discern opportunities rather than being told to embrace everything. While many companies have been successful in removing features that did not add to "ease of use," this is approach is no longer enough. The new mantra,

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differentiator and opportunity, say Stone, is "improves quality of life." People want products and services that not only enhance quality of life but also help us to filter, or block out noise, and create a meaningful connection. Similarly, she claims that this is a new benchmark. We look for products and services, features, or messages that "help us to use our attention as wisely as it possibly can."

Author of *SIMPLE TRUTHS* and Minister of Christ Church United Methodist, New York, NY, Stephen Bauman thinks a lot about the meaning and quality of life. He asks, how do you define success? What do you want at the end of your life? His point is that through his work and life experience, he has found that whenever he is:

> …at the bedside at someone near death, I have never ever ever heard any one of them lament that they wished they could have spent more time on the job, or made more money, or been freed from commitments. Instead, persons near death invariably speak, invariably speak, about relationships: with themselves, with significant others, perhaps with God. Sometimes this talked is laced with longing, sometimes with regret, sometimes with great gratitude.

Bauman defines simple truths as "not easy or shallow, but elemental, organic." He explains that we have simple truths and they sit deep within us---and ultimately simple truths are what bind us together.

Bauman says that simple truths "tweak" at least three things: human dignity, integrity, and mature love. He asks, "what is a good life, when all is said and done? What is the common good that binds us all together?" Bauman assures us that human dignity, integrity and mature love are not the "provenance of any given religion, any given nation, any given individual. These things belong to all of us. In fact, I would say that they animate all of us…"

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Realizing a simple truth can be triggered by interaction or a conversation with another person. Sister ES, The Order of St. Helena, tells the story of how she used to be very anxious about what people would think of her. When the "worst" imaginable happens, and you 'give up,' meaning that you are relieved of worrying about consequences, then you are transformed. She calls this "celebrating the freedom of your spirit." This type of change is naturally mental.

Desired change manifested in physical products, such as architectural constructions, are core to Duncan Wilson's work. Wilson is an engineer in the "Foresight" group at ARUP in London, England (http://www.driversofchange.com/). ARUP is the world's largest "independent firm of designers, planners, engineers, consultants and technical specialists offering a broad range of professional services" (http://www.arup.com/). During the interview, Wilson explains that the Foresight group was founded to research tomorrow's customers for ARUP. Through workshops and projects, Wilson's team works on improving spaces. They use three methods: 1) Prototyping, which he explains is similar to the product development company IDEO's mock-ups. The other methods are 2) facilitating and 3) interacting, which are meant to help business units to better define strategic issues around long-term development. But how does the Foresight group think about and work with experience?

Wilson and his team conduct workshops for potential clients. A workshop typically starts with what he calls "brain food." They strive to bring in speakers that have a different perspective, something new for the audience. Follow-up activities help to get the participants to "think of the information differently, for example using personas. Or to think about a particular environment or journeys through spaces, such

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as a journey through an airport." Constructing a tangible, physical model with a story around it, helps to explain the experience.

The purpose of the exercise is to get people to think differently, but what are the drivers of change? Wilson says they could be demographic, as an example, but it is open-ended and on many levels, depending on what the client wants. By understanding the experience leads to understanding future scenarios "about how people are going to be interacting" with the products that the client makes. Wilson relates that they want people to think in innovation terms and refers to the 3M definition of innovation, "Successful exploitation of new ideas." You have to ask, says Wilson:

> …what kind of experience do you anticipate people will be wanting, expecting, desiring? So personally I see the experience thing as a common thread in everything. I haven't been to one event where they have explicitly talked about experiences.

In experience terms, Wilson is personally interested in collaboration tools or tools that make "working life easier." He feels that there is "a disconnect between people and the end user," stating that he has not figured out how to overcome that problem. When working on user-focused design he has encountered difficulties in engaging design teams. The problem, he suggests, is that the "user is a client that specifies what they think is needed." Wilson clarifies by asking:

> …how then to interact with a client to change his idea of what's needed? He would argue that he is responding to what the market is asking for and I think that within that it often comes out as base measures, such as cost per square foot. So it's harder to understand how you would measure a better experience, when people talk about things like productivity as an indicator of a better experience as the only reason for making the workplace a nicer experience.

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At the time of this interview (Autumn 2005), the Foresight group at ARUP was about to embark on a project for DTI, Department of Trade and Industry. The project was entitled, "Building Awareness for the Enhanced Workplace**."** Wilson explains that while we have quantitative measures, such as energy use in a space, they only inform the macro level. What we do not yet understand is the micro level: sensor networks that can sense and actuate. He calls this the "wireless, digital layer," that can "make the space a better place for people. Capturing information and getting it back to people so they can interact with it." The Foresight group wants to learn how this will change people's perspective of space, rather than how they use the space. Can we measure mood? We don't know what these things are, says Wilson, but we do have a few ideas and we can only explore and attempt to measure. At ARUP Foresight, they try to "talk about a different future world and not just the commercial world now." It's a question of tomorrow's customers, and "if you have more than one loyalty card then you are not loyal."

Another example of desired change is expressed by architect and structural engineer and associate director at ARUP, Daniel Bosia is the global practice leader for the Advanced Geometry Unit (AGU). This cross-disciplinary group includes not only engineers and architects, but also mathematicians and a quantum physicist. During the interview, Bosia explains that the AGU (http://www.arup.com/Services/Advanced_Geometric_Design.aspx) has worked with some of the world's most famous architects, including Enric Miralles, Daniel Libeskind, I.M. Pei, OMA, and Rem Koolhaas. Bosia tells that when working with architects, "AGU supplies engineering support, deep support, getting involved, and winning the competition." Bosia adds that the group "brings a lot of intelligence to the

work, developing concepts that architects wouldn't have come up with." Working in collaboration with architects is, "productive, useful, and a fruitful way of working. But we also have projects where we are the protagonists and we win competitions and offer designs." Often, explains Bosia, the client is a developer and AGU appoints architects. This means that they also control the master plan and have the contract with the client. Bosia clarifies:

> It's a kind of two-way relationship where we invite them where they would normally invite us. Our role was never confined to only the sizing of structure, the articulating of structure. Structure is basically the very deep support to the form, then structure became form. The two came hand-in-hand. In that context then we are very good at forming form and creating form, articulating form; rather than just being constrained to sizing of member within that form. Not just engineering in the traditional sense, even when it's in collaboration.

> Now because we see structure in a broader sense, not just a physical structure which holds the building up, but also structure in the way that you articulate the program of the building…. e.g. Battersea project, the circulation of the cars and the pedestrian flows within this complex, massive plan, is deeply structured. The structure becomes a diagram of circulation, a program of organization of space: The building design around the program. The form of the building is a reflection of the internal organization.

One project that Bosia personally championed was in Hyde Park, London, namely the first Serpentine Pavilion 2002 (Toyo Ito, architect). Bosia explains that they worked with a new client who wanted a different kind of experience in a different kind of space: "A completely different space that was taking him where he hadn't been…and he thought that would be the future, where he wanted to go."

Figure 23: Serpentine Pavilion, Hyde Park London

http://www.serpentinegallery.org/2002/06/serpentine_gallery_pavilion_20_3.html

Bosia relates that his group likes to:

…revisit traditional ways of conceiving of space, going back to the Greeks and Romans where symmetry and certain geometric rules were applied to structure space. Those never change. Even main mainstream architects, like Rem Koolhaas, are still using those criteria in organizing space.

Bosia explains that AGU does not have preconceptions of order and symmetry but employ a "lateral point of view" and investigates other systems of organizing space which are not based on symmetrical, Cartesian organization. This is one example of where AGU moves their clients forward: to rethink how space is formed. A developer, explains Bosia, is interested in what we have to say because he realizes that he has to deliver quality to his clients in order to sell his properties.

ARUP, explains Bosia, strives to create a working environment that seeks to create new concepts, markets and enterprises. Some spaces, such as "showcase space,"

or 4000 seat theater spaces, do not yet exist in London. A big retail shopping mall, for example; what is the shopping mall of the future? What is the office space of the future? AGU is completely different from other groups at ARUP; less mainstream, more niche. "Perhaps we can create a market, which might become a bigger slice of market, which looks for a different type of organization of space, a different kind of structure."

Bosia tells that different clients work on different levels and have different needs. Every engineering group has selected clients; relationship-based of which trust is an important part. This is traditional for architects, yet AGU, which is research-based, takes a different approach by going directly to the client or developer:

> The kind of projects that come our way are the kind that the others (ARUP groups) would struggle to handle from a geometric point of view. We have selected the people that work in AGU and have grown around the work of Cecil Balmond, around fairly complex geometric work. So a kind of community of practice is formed around a certain geometrically demanding, highly structured space.

This means that AGU, compared to other engineering groups, needs to "spend a good slice of our time" in pure research in geometry, mathematics, physics, and so on, to enrich their work and in developing ideas. The group members are also occupied with teaching and academic connections (Architecture Architecture Association in London; University of Pennsylvania, Non-Linear Systems of Organization Research Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania). An interest in other types of projects leads to interesting and enjoyable collaboration. We can be engineers, architects, or part of the design team. We can deliver on a complex master plan that is deeply structural and infrastructural, which is several components and not just purely programmatic (algorithms). Bosia adds:

> Unfortunately, in construction there isn't a lot of innovation in materials because there isn't the need. Making a building in carbon fiber doesn't make sense: No savings. You aren't designing an aircraft. If you think of it in a deeper sense, it may be interesting. In sculptures…an interesting way of thinking of material. But when you do a building there isn't a material that will make a building better. The new materials that are used in other fields are not suitable, not commercially viable. Masonry technology has died, steel introduced and high tech took over. Finite element analysis, which has come out of concrete and steel structure technologies, can be abandoned: you need to go somewhere else, constantly rethink of processes, design analysis of construction of a building.

Regarding costs in a project, the engineering phase involves budget considerations, called "value engineering." This is "basically checking that we are actually delivering the best possible value so we are questioning materials."

Head of FRI (the Danish Association of Consulting Engineers), Lars Goldschmidt thinks a lot about user experience. FRI is the trade association of Danish consulting firms providing project management and services in building and construction, as well as environmental, energy, and IT industries (http://www.frinet.dk/). The majority of FRI's members carry out their work outside of Denmark due to the very small size of Denmark. So what does consulting engineering have to do with user experience? What is experience in service in the engineering world?

Interviewee Goldschmidt explains that his interest in experience started with a general firm perspective and progressed more specifically to an engineering point of departure. Working with a professional group from several branches, including retail, tourism, and the Danish state department of research, they asked, "What is the experience economy? How do different types of "soft" companies address the emotional dimension of the products they deliver?" Their research, which culminated in a book, *FØLELSESFABRIKKEN*, ('The Emotion Factory'), showed that regardless of

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which industry they analyzed, the customer experience, from sales process to delivered product, was undoubtedly a significant parameter for the customer to buy again. Of course that is very general, admits Goldschmidt, but the 'intensity' of the experience and how much experience plays a role in the decision to purchase varies widely. What is central is the relationship to the customer. If we understand this emotional relationship, says Goldschmidt, then we are better able to plan, albeit by remaining humble. Customer relationships are typically long-term and often our customers don't understand what we are delivering. Therefore, trust in safety of the product, and a confidence that we are not cheating them (the customer), are crucial experiential dimensions.

Customers of engineering services, says Goldschmidt, are typically wealthy. This means that they have many choices of where to obtain the services and products they need. For the consultant, this presents a differentiation challenge and uniqueness can be manifested through customer experience. Above and beyond technical expertise, we have to understand emotional and cultural aspects of what we deliver: this is a radical development in the engineering world. Working with architects we also think about the aesthetic dimension, but user experience is new. Not just an aesthetically beautiful building, but what is it like to use or live in? Functionality is not enough and a wealthy society demands more. We have to take the end user experience into account more.

If we focus on the customer relationship specifically, relates Goldschmidt, trust and confidence in engineering consultancies are a given. The other relationship aspect is experience; a feeling that you learn something.

EXPERIENTIAL DISCOURSE IN MARKETING

> A problem in the consulting world is that we are very sales focused. That actually means that it is in our interest to leave a client with a bigger problem than he initially had so he will buy from us again. That is, of course, a good business model for repeat sales. The problem is that in the long term it builds up an animosity towards consultants; a feeling that consultants create more problems than they solve. It is not quite as acute in construction as it is in management consulting, and management consultants face a challenge in delivering an experience to the customer that makes him smarter.

Goldschmidt firmly believes we are moving in that direction. If customers feel smarter, that does not mean lost sales. On the contrary; customers do have problems and they want to talk to sensible people about them, not to be dependent on consultants. Such a dependency inevitably leads to customers wanting to break free.

A great part of experiences are immediate, as in a single time dimension. This could be comfort, joy, a positive relationship with mutual understanding; all of which are important to the development of a process. Experiences are also how you reflect on a past relationship. What is important to our craft, says Goldschmidt, is how we think about the experience we want to emphasize while we are in a relationship, during the actual process. We are undoubtedly focused on the business and aware that our partners, and other stakeholders, have different interests. Although we have different interests, the experience that we have while we are together, a feeling that we grow by speaking with each other, somehow makes us want to talk to each other. Goldschmidt asks, "Isn't that completely legitimate?" The experience can also be about something that someone has created for you and that you would like to have happen again.

The traditional point of departure in the experience economy is entertainment. In order to include that perspective, an interview with Ingolf Gabold, head of drama at Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DR) was conducted. Gabold shared how he thinks about experience in his work in producing successful television drama series. When

asked about sources of inspiration, Gabold immediately answered "reality" and "human relationships." Through thorough research for a story that has social-ethical implications, Gabold stresses that they live up to a public service standard, not commercial productions. And his department, DR Fiction, creates experiences for viewers.

Social-ethical considerations guide the productions, and Gabold is personally fascinated by the human mind and imagination potential. Television as a medium, says Gabold, is somewhere between fiction and non-fiction. While many things are factual, such as cars and houses, many things build an imaginary universe. It is interesting, says Gabold, to ask ourselves what we do with reality and what it does to us.

When working with the screenwriters, Gabold tells that they discuss language use in detail as it is so important to staging. The manuscript is revealed through language and the greatest experiences are those that do something to you, what he calls "mindblowing." Mindblowing experiences are the ones that knock you off your feet. Those experiences you have, says Gabold, where you wake up the next morning and you feel that your life is somehow different or changed since yesterday. This, he emphasizes, has nothing to do with event culture. It's about creating a huge mirror where people can see their own reflection. It can be exciting and beautiful.

Television is a limited medium compared to seeing a film at the cinema, says Gabold, but it boils down to communication; and experiences are a form of two-way communication. You can only try to be very open, hoping people are curious, and then invite people to play.

Gabold explains that his team has a particular target group in mind when producing a show. Each production has a guiding theme, such as identification,

fascination, and information. When a story is factual, Gabold and his team ensure that their research is accurate. They also work with a concept of exposing viewers to a different "arena" in order to challenge a world view or opinion that is different from what one would normally think. This addresses fascination, tells Gabold, and the world they present is not always a pleasant world; pedophilia, as an example: "It can be risky and we worry about losing viewers and viewer ratings. People often give a show a low rating if they don't like the content, not because they don't believe in its good quality. That is because a good experience is fascinating."

The most important parameter Gabold's team works with is identification. It is through identification a viewer thinks and questions. We go to great lengths, says Gabold, to ensure that characters represent the four segment types depicted in the MINERVA model: Modern-pragmatic (blue), modern-idealistic (green), idealistic-traditional (pink), and traditional-pragmatic (purple) (by sociologist Henrik Dahl and A.C. Nielsen on lifestyles in Denmark, see e.g. http://www.itu.dk/courses/DFMN/F2005/Henrik%20Dahl.htm). Gabold explains that using this model gives an overview, for balance. The authors do not work with this model, "it's dirty and it's marketing," but the producers and Gabold do.

> It helps to give the characters credibility in the segment where they belong. It can be anything from the characters' choice of vacation type and destination to what they choose to do in their spare time in the series. There are small details and characteristics that help to keep the characters' role authentic.

Gabold explains that experiences are individual and have individual intensity. His team employs an "experience intensity scale" that plots an experience from familiar, exciting, and unknown. Those experiences that are unknown, or most surprising to a viewer, are the most intense.

By thinking of experience through identification, 'holding up a mirror for the viewers,' Gabold says that they know that people 'identify positively with characters they like and negatively with characters they don't like.' Having the fundamental identification in place is very important in commercial success and that is good business, explains Gabold. Several of the DR series have won international awards (Emmy, Prix Italia) and Gabold pointedly strives for world-class productions. It affects the budgets they get to work with and attracts international partners for co-production projects.

In addition to the attention Gabold and his department get from outside of DR, the internal environment is affected as well. The bar for the ambition level has been significantly raised, almost to a point of hysteria. This is particularly manifested in the producers' feeling of ownership. This phenomenon presents leadership challenges for Gabold, who has acquired an expertise in leading creative people, or "prima donna leadership." Concurrent with this is a performance anxiety but he sees this as positive and exciting. Gabold refers to his own leadership style, or philosophy, as "I am not in control but in charge of." It works well and is about delegating through the hierarchy of the system. It also involves coaching; how we listen, explain, and understand each other. Gabold detests the word "control" and clearly communicates that department's work is driven by the writer, or author. It is the writer's vision they produce and s/he is indisputably the captain of the ship.

When asked on how he appeals to emotional senses, Gabold explains that details, even tiny details, are extremely important:

…language usage, words, music, colors, costumes, framing, editing rhythm, etc. are of course charged with meaning. Nothing must be random…If a detail is conflicting then it tires you, rather than absorbing you, because it gives meaning, you experience noise.

Gabold stresses that he doesn't prioritize entertainment but experiences:

If an experience production is also entertaining, then that doesn't hurt. But there has to be a layer or some form of ethical, social inclination discourse. This has to do with being a public service rather than commercial station. We are part of making a Danish citizen to a person that is better able to live and choose and exist in a democratic society. We might be looking at a good story, but what are we going to do with it? Not to be patriarchic, like we were in the 60's and 70's: That would be outdated, politically incorrect and impossible. I see it as a cultural process.

Regarding culture, Gabold believes that Danish audiences are able to understand and absorb much more complexity than just a few years ago. He cites the fact that more people are going to movie theaters to see Danish film productions, and believes that Danish film and television production complement each other.

Gabold sees his own role as professional and thorough but not reflecting his personal work. It is not his drama they are producing, he says, but the entire creative team's skill has to be led in the same direction. He holds what he calls "paramount meetings" with the team where minute details are ironed out, including rhythm and pace. He doesn't hide the fact that he prefers to work with people he has worked with before. It provides for a better understanding, communication, and chemistry.

Gabold makes it clear that experiences and experience production is a mutual relationship. You have to reach out and get involved in the experience or it is nothing more than event culture.

5.1.5 FINDING 5: CONSTRAINTS, LESS CONTENT, AND FEWER CHOICES ARE CONDUCI TO EXPERIENCE

Several speakers refer to experience through simplicity in many contexts. In product design, for example, not focusing on simplicity can result in "feature trap" (Peter Skillman, VP User Experience, Palm). "The proposition that users want more features often leads to poorer user experience in the end. An example is the "megapixel" rush in cameras. In blu ray television screens, super high resolution, it is just one, two mega pixel images."

Skillman iterates that designers and product managers need to ask, "What is the need you are trying to solve?" He warns that "you can be driven to pick solutions, but you have to consider the significant amounts of downside."

> So how do you avoid the feature trap? Focus on needs, not technologies (engineers have difficulty with this)…the key is to eliminate frustrations…problem-solving design approach.

Similarly, Alex Lee, President, OXO International, relates how poor design affects functionality. In designing kitchen tools for the elderly or handicapped (e.g. arthritis patients or people with poor eyesight), OXO applies the principles of universal design, also known as inclusive design. The constraints of the user are inherent in formulating design problems, yet by focusing on this group, the resulting products are enjoyed by a diverse group of users who appreciate the simplicity and effectiveness of the products. By having the same product for all, there is not stigma attached to using a certain product.

OXO does not limit their new product design to internal sources. On the contrary, many outside of the organization send new product ideas to the company and Lee attributes the "diversity of people (coming together) creates good experience." Skillman and Lee also note that they use observation techniques in order to understand

and phrase the design problem correctly as users are not necessarily able to articulate needs.

Lee adds that the products are "easier to use, beautiful, ingenious and thought provoking." He also describes them as "obvious," which is supported by Skillman's observations in how children approach problem solving with multiple iterations. "They don't waste time seeking power. They don't sit around talking about the problem; they just prototype and test, experiencing directly, jumping in and doing it."

"Executing beauty on the basics" is how Jason Fried, Founder, 37 Signals, refers to making products, particularly software, less complex. He sees the notion of "less" as a competitive advantage. He says that less money, for example is good, because:

> Borrowing money gets you in to debt which doesn't produce good answers. Debts force you into making bad decisions that will not improve the product. Money doesn't buy you time or passion, only salaries. You can market products today at almost no cost. People seem to think you can solve problems by throwing more money at them. (…) If you give people more money they see it as a resource and not a constraint and constraints are good for creativity. You need money for salaries--- Fewer people also means fewer "screw ups." (…)
>
> You have to always work on the next most important things and not a lot of things. Bells and whistles are not basic services that lead towards a good experience.

Fried also adds that less time helps you to create a simple solution that is easier for people to understand.

In praise of constraints, Barry Schwartz, professor of social theory and social action, Swarthmore College and author, *PARADOX OF CHOICE: WHY MORE IS LESS*, relates that constraints help us not to have unrealistically high expectations that lead to a disappointing experience. "More options yield anticipated or actual regret" in that we inherently know there is an opportunity cost. Research shows that "we (in the U.S.)

now have more money, more clinical depression, more incidents of suicide; we feel worse."

> What makes people really happy is close relations to other people: Limits our choices, constrains us (due to responsibilities and desires to help others), which circumscribes the world of what is possible…an improvement.

A somewhat different view of constraints is expressed by music composer, Andrew (www.songstowearpantsto.com). By not choosing the content, which is user generated, but composing music to what people want to express, Andrew sees constraints as a creative challenge, hoping for humorous results. "People write to me and tell me what they want me to include in a song. As you can see, I love to poke fun at people and I use constraints to creatively go somewhere funny."

Illustrating constraints on a larger scale is Rick Smolan's photography project. Rick Smolan, founder and CEO, Against All Odds Productions, wanted to capture "a day in the life" of Australia. The concept was to get a large team of hand-picked photographers to geographically spread out all over Australia and capture photos during the same 24-hour period. 35 publishers rejected backing the project, a photography book, saying that the idea was "stupid" and "chaos." The rejecting publishers were convinced that photos, "taken on a day when nothing happened," would not be of interest to anyone. Rick was looking for surprises and interesting stories and didn't want to dictate the content to the photographers beforehand.

Citing a personal relationship with the Prime Minister of Australia, whom Smolan had photographed before, the project got support in terms of products (airfare, film) but did not have any cash flow to work with. So through the financial constraints, Rick explains:

> We flew 100 photographers, first class, to Australia. I couldn't pay anybody. We all, all of my staff, were sleeping on the floor in sleeping bags; this is really a low rent operation. ...I tell you, you get very creative when you think you are going to jail. I mean we were signing receipts for things that we had no way of paying for unless this was the best-selling book in history.

5.1.6 FINDING 6: COLLABORATION, CONNECTING, AND COMMUNITY ENABLE EXPERIENCE

A pertinent theme that emerged from the data is the role that community, and the collaboration and connection potential a community affords, plays in experience; whether online or in a more traditional, geographical sense. The concept of space is important: Physical, shared, and its abstract effects. Empowering, being able to access others, and forming communities are facilitated by technology, e.g. mobile or the Internet. One well-known community is http://www.wikipedia.org/, founded by Jimmy Wales. With a mission of "radical idea---free access, free license---to everyone on the planet," Wales describes the "experience as a user and a producer," not referring to customers. He states that a "strong community requires a big vision to motivate," realizing that quality is important, "not just cool and fun." He describes community members as "passionate people" who also exhibit "respect for the individual." Wikipedia and Wikimedia, that he also heads, are not-for-profit organizations. He says that the experience must be "memorable" and that requires "listening, accommodating" as the "social concept of cooperation (is a) neutral point of view."

Craig Newmark, founder and head of San Francisco-based craigslist.com, also says that "the people who use our site are the people who run our site." Similarly, he cites "listening and staying out of the way" and "giving people a break" as a business philosophy. He says that when "people didn't ask for permission but started re-

purposing the site for what they needed it for" it became user-driven. In running the site, Craigslist doesn't "police or monitor the site but users can flag for removal. A kind of voting democracy, but it really does work." Craig works from a "culture of trust-acting and expecting people to act in a trustworthy manner. The Golden Rule seems to work". He says that "power is being redistributed to us all", and "it's all about getting other people to get other people to change the world."

Like wikipedia.org and craigslist.com, the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) is a not-for-profit, community-based organization. The President and CEO of HCZ, Geoffrey Canada, approaches obtaining support for the organization in a blunt, pragmatic manner. He presents crime statistics ("we know where they (criminals) come from, which communities") and the cost structure of "putting and keeping people in jail." Harlem Children's Zone is a long-term (birth through college) education project for Harlem, New York City.

One salient difference between this project and previous government-run projects is that this one is extremely successful. According to Canada, "public schools in poor communities produce failure by design."

> Every day we are challenged by people who tell us why there are things we will never do. Things that can't be solved, questions that can't be answered, things that are too complicated, systems that people have put in that you can't change because no one does it that way.

Canada attributes the success of HCZ to people in Harlem "rebuilding community and getting (people) re-engaged." Previously, children were left adrift---"broken playgrounds and filthy parks, graffiti everywhere." His goal is to "recreate a community that acts and looks like it cares for its children." By considering "outcomes

of success compared to costs," it's a "simple choice." In terms of community support he adds:

> People need to believe that it is possible. Once you do a building, then you can do a block. Once you do a block—once there is tangible evidence that something works—suddenly, people believe again, that this *is* possible.

Communities are not always built intentionally. Ted Dewan, an artist, author, illustrator and activist, started leading a community, by happenstance, through his "Roadwitch Trial" project. He was angry about cars taking over the roads on his street, Beech Croft Road, in Oxford, England. He felt that people, particularly children and the elderly, had a right to "the spaces between buildings." When the municipality wouldn't help him to do something about speeding cars and too much traffic, Dewan took matters into his own hands. By creating the "Beech Croft Living Room," cars had to slow down. Dewan initially furnished the space (the road) and realized that his neighbors starting adding effects.

> The sense of ownership is intoxicating. The illusion that this was a room was very believable. It really did work as a traffic calming device. The space between houses is ambiguous and suggests the presence of people and some kind of creativity.

Figure 24: Beech Croft Road. http//www.roadwitch.org.uk/

> It's profoundly relaxing, sitting in a forbidden space. Once you are on to something...I saw a pattern. Magical things appear: Kids come out, people on the street, traffic is slower. I'm very proud of the way that something special has happened on a very ordinary street. People who aren't necessarily artists or even interested in things creative are now putting up mischievous traffic art. We don't talk about the weather on this street. We talk about, `what are we going to do next?´

Dewan adds that the children are "growing up in an environment where they are seeing the experience of activism and how to combine fun and creativity with politics. And they see their parents enjoying themselves." Roadwitching has caught on internationally, by word-of-mouth, and Dewan aspires to "prick some holes in the popular delusion that roads are primarily for cars and not for life."

In a similar vein, many years earlier, architect Jan Gehl worked on transforming significantly large parts of the public space of downtown Copenhagen to a pedestrian street, Strøget. Gehl published *Life Between Buildings* in 1971. Through his work as an urban design consultant, Gehl continues to strive to improve the quality of urban

life by focusing on the needs of pedestrians and cyclists, from car-dominated to

pedestrian-oriented. He remarks:

> The invasion of cars has been a major upsetting element. We are gradually finding out that there is more to a city than parking and getting around in cars. Public life is well worth pampering and inviting.

How is this shared environment of public space used? Gehl researches the

history of public space and identifies three important roles:

1. As a meeting place of man, to meet and develop our culture

2. A market place to exchange goods and services

3. A connection space where we could get from one place to the other.

To clarify, Gehl adds:

> In old cities, meeting, market and moving were in fine harmony; all done by people, in good balance and harmony in the same space. Then we have another type of city, the invaded cities, after WWII. Moving in, pushing people outside. Kids had to run faster to cross the streets. Conditions for man in his shared environment became more undignified.

Gehl informs that it is important for cities to acknowledge and "remember who

the client is," namely "Homo sapiens." Central to this notion is respecting the human

body: "human movements, human senses, human interaction and human behavior."

Those cities that have made improvements and consider "how we communicate with

each other and how our behavior is geared" are what Gehl refers to as "re-conquered"

and evidenced by "quality and invitation." The re-conquered cities are, in addition to

Copenhagen: Barcelona, Lyon, Strasbourg, Freiburg, Portland, Curitiba, Cordoba and

Melbourne. The common characteristics of these cities are that they all:

…realize that public life is something we like, important for democracy, and feeling safe in society. That we meet face-to-face, rub shoulders, meet people from other ethnic, cultural, social groups.

Gehl explains that people need space for "unfolding: Proper transportation systems, infrastructure and proper bicycle lanes, not just painted lines." By implementing changes, one street at a time, "many more people are walking in the city and spending more time in the city."

Communities are also intentionally designed, in a concrete, problem-solving context. Steffen Gulmann and his associates at 11 Design in Copenhagen were challenged to re-brand and improve the atmosphere of the city of Randers, Denmark. The process involved trying to capture the "current identity, uniqueness, and soul of the city," and subsequently take initiatives to spark the changes that would improve Randers' image. The changes, which were improvements, often involved rethinking the public space usage. "This huge road that had divided the place in two is now a rambla." Although Rambla is specific to Barcelona, this comparison immediately conjures up an image of an area that is filled with many varied activities, for locals and tourists alike: Sidewalk cafés, street artists and performers, and flea-market like stands.

Gulmann explains that he and his colleagues were deeply immersed and dedicated to this project. Early in the research process they identified the city council as not only uncooperative but also a very negative factor. 11 Design realized that the success of the Randers image project was dependent on the city's citizens taking pride in and ownership of the many changes. "If we could raise an atmosphere within the city with the influential people and with the public as such, the city council, sooner or later, would have to listen."

Communities are also formed as a social tool and a means to collective action. Clay Shirky, professor and author of HERE'S COMES EVERYBODY; THE POWER OF ORGANIZING WITHOUT ORGANIZATIONS, remarks that "web-based tools, mobile telephony and so forth, are changing the way society gets together and takes action." Through his research in social networking, Shirky is preoccupied with how the spread of networked communications creates an "intersection of consumer experience and collective action." When consumers are dissatisfied with a company: its products, behavior, or actions, they have a "coordination advantage" enabled by, for example, the Internet. So while a disgruntled group of customers are "physically distributed," they are now "socially coordinated," and usually with "no financial motivation whatsoever." This means that companies no longer have "information advantage" as users can "take advantage of this community produced and shared resource," which forces companies to think about customer service.

5.1.7 FINDING 7: CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN BUSINESS IS A MINDSET

There are numerous, familiar examples of companies that implement customer experience as a part of business strategy, particularly in retailing. The cases in the data set reveal insights into lesser-known examples, specifically: gambling, financial services, consulting engineering, restaurant, wine-making, and hotel industries.

Many are familiar, either personally or through the media, with Las Vegas and its casinos portrayed as an adult playground. We immediately conjure up images of a high roller at a Black Jack table, or craps table, throwing dice, surrounded by jeering onlookers. Or we see the rows of slot machines, almost everywhere and anywhere. We think of the gambling industry, in many ways, as masters of entertainment. The

gambling industry is exactly what fascinates MIT professor, cultural anthropologist and documentary filmmaker, Natasha Schull.

Schull has been researching the industry for more than 15 years, starting with her dissertation. She is particularly interested in the dramatic turn the industry has taken over the past three decades. It has gone from a "social form of gambling, played at tables, with other people, to asocial forms of gambling, played at video terminals." She has learned that "it's the slot machine that drives the industry today…what are the consequences of this turn to machines for human experience?"

Schull's research started with her thesis, where she interviewed casino managers, architects, interior designers, and many others involved in designing casinos and the playing environment. Make no mistake, nothing is left to chance: Mirrors, accounting practices, acoustics, even twists in the carpet. It all fits together in a system, a strategy, and what Schull refers to as a "complex machine." Yet the contemporary corporate casino, with all of its calculating strategies, is exactly was intrigued her:

> Something about this account that I came up with always felt a little too neat. At the edges I was left wondering. How are we supposed to understand this highly controlled, perfectly managed, environment of the casino? How do you put that together with out of control, sometimes unmanaged, even irrational, experiences that are unfolding inside the casinos? Is there any relation between the two?

Schull did find that the gambling machine is the link between design and play. It is all about the machine, its surrounding environment, leading people to the machines and keeping them there. This is called the "concentrated point of contact, where you have an opportunity to get inside the head of gamblers." Undoubtedly, the "rise of gambling machines has totally transformed what casinos look like."
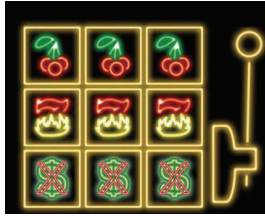
Figure 25: Video poker machine. http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2009/vegas-tt0520.html

The two types of casino layouts are for tourists or locals. Tourist casinos are designed to be more "jumbled and distorted." This, explains Schull, is because tourists are on vacation and want to be spun around, feel disoriented and lost. Local casinos are much different as the gamblers are regulars, typically a more mature market. A casino designer told Schull that locals cut through the confusion and "want to be lined up, like cattle at the trough." Locals also have a strong preference of machines (70% preference of machines in 1984 while 20 years earlier it was only 30%).

In addition to the locals' preference of machines, 2/3 of the residents of Las Vegas gamble. And 2/3 of those are heavy gamblers, which is defined as at least twice a week, with sessions lasting four hours or more. Gambling is considered at a moderate level when it is once or twice a month, with sessions lasting up to four hours.

Locals also prefer easy access to gambling machines, which are not hidden away and "look the same." On the contrary, machines are ubiquitous and openly displayed in the supermarkets, gas stations, and at the gates in the airport. The gambling behavior for the locals, especially, is also very distinctive in that it is not about

winning. It is about staying in the flow of the activity. Locals also prefer to play video poker, the industry "cash cow, work horse, golden goose." The locals, or users, call video poker by a different set of names: "electronic morphine" and the "crack cocaine of gambling." Ironically enough, posters on the wall, or pamphlets, for Gamblers Anonymous are often next to the machines. A vast therapeutic network "has been spawned by these machines."

Another way to describe staying in the flow of the activity is "the zone." "The zone is this dissociated state in which time, space, the value of money, social relations, and even a sense of the body itself dissolves and falls away." Part of being in the zone is to be alone, in your own space, and to escape without having to take other people into account. It is also described as insulating yourself from any kind of interaction. Schull interviewed not only the gambling industry players and designers, but also many gamblers:

> This gambler told me, 'the things going on around me are gone, zoned out. I actually do not hear or see anything around me; the whole world is spinning around you---a kind of dizziness---like a really fast-working tranquilizer.' That's what she's getting out of these machines.

Gamblers strive to be in the zone. In fact, Schull heard time and time again how annoying it was to win. As counterintuitive as that sounds, the point is not that gamblers want to lose but they definitely want to stay in the zone without interruption. While the gamblers talk about the zone, the gaming industry refers to "continuous gaming productivity." It is a "rational, calculated, scientific version to what gamblers experience as the zone." The explicit aim of game developers is to keep people at the machine, gambling, as long as possible. The term in the industry is "player extinction," which means that you literally are at the machine until you are out of

money. Ergonomic design and technology play an important part: credit cards rather than coins, for continuous play, and push buttons are faster than pull handles.

Infused technology also includes a feature, or feedback system called "dynamic play rate." This senses how fast you are playing and will adjust the graphics accordingly to the individual player. Outside of the machine, the chair represents ergonomics aspect of comfort and design. 38 degrees is apparently the right slope, or angle, of the chair so the gambler doesn't tire as easily. What is the right height of the seat with respect to the buttons on the machine? Sharp edges on the chair are also circumvented in order to avoid the legs falling asleep. Schull describes this as a link between the flow of the gamblers circulation is linked to the flow of their time and money into the machines.

Schull notes that the "spread of gambling technology has transformed not only the economic physical landscape of Las Vegas but also the experiential landscape of inhabitance." Much of this change is due to immersion touch technology. This means that a few button choices give you instant feedback and are designed to give the player a "confirming sense of transaction." Schull questions the attention that is given to human experience and wonders how we can better integrate technology with experience. To be sure, attention to all of our senses, or elements of experience, is addressed by the machines. She refers to this as "how to attend to human desires," and adds that conferences, e.g. Global Gaming Expo, are held on this theme. Research in the industry is massive in terms of amounts of data and technological sophistication. More specifically, research concerning ongoing connectivity with players is an overt topic and players are asked directly how they can be kept at the machine. By understanding a player's "pain point," meaning detecting (using an algorithm) when a player on the floor is about to abandon the game and leave, casino personnel, known

as "luck ambassadors," are dispatched to offer the player a meal coupon or some sort of other bonus.

Schull does not believe that the gaming machine designer intentionally set out to create addicts, but there is a dark side to this kind of "engineering of experience." For the industry, it makes business sense to "extract more and more money from players" yet player extinction is not sustainable. The current model is to:

> …treat everyone who sits down as a potential addict until all their means are depleted. Perhaps there are ways to tweaking the logic from player extinction and profit maximization to optimization as maximization is unsustainable.

Author, entrepreneur and "agent of change" Seth Godin takes a different approach to identifying an experience opportunity. Godin sees potential in identifying what he calls "broken," where making things unbroken can be beneficial. He defines broken in a very personal, subjective context, simply, "if you think it's broken, it's broken." Godin says that if companies do not think about how they interact with people on the short term then they will inevitably hurt their brand in the long run. It is essential, then, for companies to seriously consider what they are asking a customer to do in the context of the perceived experience. Companies must, says Godin, make it easy for customers to interact, so people can do what they need to do. And that presents an "opportunity to deepen a relationship."

Like many industries, relationships are core to companies in the financial services industry. Sona Chawla is responsible for customer experience at wellsfargo.com. She relates that "customer experience is a critical component of online sales and marketing," and recognizes that "customers are diverse and don't fit any stereotype." On a positive note she adds that the lack of stereotypes makes their

work "more fun and challenging." The challenge revolves around customer insights and being able to project findings on the website. Chawla also stresses that it is a question of "helping users with what they need, "by identifying problems and suggesting solutions." She calls their ongoing research process "injected learning in a contextual sense and moving it forward."

Chawla is accountable for the customer experience of the online channel and President of Retail Banking at Commerce Bank, Dennis Diflorio, works with the retail channel. Diflorio says that there is a lot of "hidden potential" in financial services. Like many industries, the banking industry as a whole experiences low growth, a lack of customer loyalty, commoditization, and the industry is mature. Rather than growth through mergers and acquisitions, Commerce Bank has been very successful by focusing on the customer experience. The primary experience they focus on is convenience. Commerce Bank decided to see themselves as a growth retailer; quite the opposite of their competitors. They have chosen to invest in customer service in order to grow their "way to prosperity."

How do they define convenience? Through service. The bank is open seven days a week and only closed three days a year. They try to think beyond the product and were the first to get rid of fees and cater to children in their branches. But that, says Diflorio is the easy part. The ongoing challenge, or "propelling advantage," is sustaining advantage and "getting customers to fall in love with our brand rather than buying our product." Diflorio calls this getting back to basics:

> In everything we do we focus on customer experience and service: we design it, we demand it, and we measure it (and) reward it with our people. All of our design starts from the customer's point of view. The banking industry has too many solutions looking for problems. Too many technologies developed that nobody really wants.

As an example, Diflorio cites outsourcing call centers and other examples of automation as not being based on customer experience but manifestations of cost-cutting and "poor design from the corporate executives." Repeat business, iterates Diflorio, is not about high-pressure cross selling but service. Service sells and it's about word-of-mouth fans, what he calls "buzz." A critical element is the corporate culture: "our people speak volumes within our culture…you can't acquire, merge or convert culture…great companies are built from scratch." Diflorio divulges that they spend "even more money internally to give people focus and a sense of purpose on the job." It is what he calls connecting the external and internal brand.

But what is the process to build a corporate culture based on service? Diflorio says that their business is a "contact sport" and you have to "bring your sense of humor to work. No one wants to work for a bore." It is important to be passionate about what you do, and the philosophy is that if your employees are having fun then your customers will too.

Fun is not the approach to customer experience that Credit Suisse took in redesigning their branches. David McQuillen, Vice President of Customer Experience, realized that Credit Suisse was not accessible; neither to its employees nor customers that were blind, deaf, in a wheel chair, or otherwise just elderly. Identifying this problem became a project: to make Credit Suisse accessible to people who have disabilities.

While such a project may seem obvious, McQuillen initially had a difficult time in getting executive support: He was even faced with those who thought the project was absurd. He was asked, "Why don't we just tell blind people not to use our website and they should just call the call center, make it so much easier for everybody,

wouldn't it?" This internal support challenge made McQuillen realize that the problem was really grounded in the business mindset. And how do you change a mindset?

McQuillen chose to use an immersion technique that takes people through the experience themselves in order to make them feel and understand with their heart and mind what it's like to be disabled.

> So (seats himself in a wheelchair) my whole team, each one of us, spent a day in a wheelchair for a week…And I figured that these would be the kind of problems I'd end up seeing: Going down the hallways, opening doors, sitting at a desk…and realize that the copier is hard to use. I learned that we have to make our buildings more accessible. I definitely learned that we need to make our bathrooms more accessible. But there was something that I wasn't prepared for at all. I was expecting to be a little embarrassed, that everyone will be looking at me and that I would have to answer a bunch of awkward questions about this project…I don't want all this attention on me. Actually, I got the complete opposite---and this was really disturbing. When I went down to that canteen, I came in there no one looked at me. Even people I knew, who caught my eye, looked away. As if I was a phantom. I was invisible.

McQuillen describes his discomfort in being consistently ignored and wanting to escape. The few who did acknowledge his presence seemed almost to be patronizing. It is the way that people treat you that matters and dignity is so important. "You are not unable to do things. You're just in a chair."

McQuillen is convinced that emotions are very powerful in processing and understanding experiences. "I went into this thinking we have to improve our buildings---I came out of thinking that we have to change the way people think." Do we have time in business for emotions? We are busy people, which holds true for most business people. While people seem to feel comfortable with "smileys" to illustrate how customers feel, it doesn't really work. Smileys don't "create a sense of urgency for action" or tell you what customers really go through in order to do business with you.

To carry out the experience immersion project, McQuillen and his team took their entire executive board, one at a time, through three bank branches. They were asked to perform tasks that a customer would, such as exchanging currency or opening an account. They were also asked to observe customers to try to "teach them to look at the humans moving through the bank." The executives were also asked to sit down and talk to a customer, and finally they were asked to navigate on the website. Many of the board members had never tried to do that before.

The executives did not enjoy the experience immersion project if the number of last minute cancellations and attempts to get out of the project were any indication. McQuillen tells that for some it was extremely uncomfortable and painful. One reason is that they became aware that a chart showing whether or not a customer is satisfied does not reveal information about the quality of customer experience. Once the executives actually survived the terrifying act of talking to a customer, they became very excited about the project and wanted to fix the problems.

Even though the average age of Credit Suisse's customer is 67, there was initially a lot of resistance to the accessibility project. The executives didn't see a convincing business case. Wouldn't it cost a lot of money without showing any profitable returns? To understand what it is like to be disabled, McQuillen conducted some very specialized in-depth workshops, included having the executives eat lunch in the dark with a meal prepared by the blind (Blinde Kuh). They learned how we use our other sense when we can't see and how that affects conversation and how we interact with others. The concrete change that resulted from the experience immersion project, says McQuillen, is that they were able to change the way people think. And that is powerful.

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In business terms, Lars Goldschmidt says that having people in the front line that others want to talk to is a strong competitive advantage. It is beyond useful---a craft. To conscientiously give another person a good experience while you are together, an experience of something greater, is indeed a craft. Most people in our industry, reflects Goldschmidt, became engineers because we were good at something other than human relations. We can survive in this business due to our technical skills, such as precise calculations, and being nerds. But those consultants who continue to sell to the same customers, the smart customers, are those that are able to create relationships that are personal, based on trust, and a feeling of well-being in being together. It creates loyalty over time and is by no means trivial. It is a calling.

Such skills, says Goldschmidt, can be acquired. He calls it "empathetic curiosity," which is a sense of the impact of what you are saying and the relevance of the message to the receiver. The empathy part is based on Søren Kierkegaard's philosophy, relates Goldschmidt, and is important in understanding that if you want to influence another person then you have to understand their position. The curiosity piece goes a little further in that most of us are quick to tell another person that they are wrong when they say something that does not fit our mindset. The point is that from their point of view, it probably isn't wrong. We should ask ourselves why it is right for that person, and that helps our attitude toward that person:

> If I don't understand something, then I use a technique where I ask myself, 'Why is this sensible?' 'What is your perspective that I don't understand?' Such techniques can be learned if a person is genuinely interested in other people. It leads to a much better experience in being with others because you think about how you affect another person rather than emphasizing what you say is technically correct. For any good experience, it is a basic condition to feel seen, heard and understood. If a customer doesn't feel that then he will often think, 'What am I doing here?'

Customers want to be made smarter and we have to build upon their own competences. What we create together leads to a good relationship. Doing the same boring things in the same way leads to boredom rather than flow. No getting around it, says Goldschmidt, the task has to be developing and fun! It might be borderline professional but it has to be fun and a learning experience. The bandwidth in face-to-face communication is infinitely great and the basis and context for all other forms of 'narrow' communication. The experience has to be reformulated for each link in the delivery chain, not just pushed through. Every level in the organization has to understand experience, and Goldschmidt is not convinced that top management always knows what is going on at the front line.

In the consulting engineering business, the focus is on delivering the right thing, in terms of functionality, and efficiency. Our customers take functionality as a given, so they focus on price. If a customer doesn't see any quality difference then they buy 'cheap.' That means that there is only innovation when the customer is willing to pay for it. We have a lot of innovation for the brave customers, but otherwise it's limited and not radical. The need on its own does not drive renewal regarding known and latent needs. Sensitivity to the customer provides a lot of opportunities and we have to inspire each other, both ways. We have to be able to tell the customer that they have a certain need whether that need is technological, aesthetic, or cultural. Our ability to understand the context for the products we deliver is very important. There is a great innovation potential in applying an anthropological approach and we want to avoid hiring engineers only. That makes the environment too homogenous and is problematic. When different professional cultures meet it establishes a mutual

curiosity and strengthens not only the internal environment but also the external, with respect to customers. It just starts with technology…

How a service is delivered, and received, is indeed critical to the perceived customer experience. Service delivery can take on many forms: doctor to patient, HR manager to employee, technology developer to user. A very familiar example of service delivery is experienced during dining. Restaurant owner and author of *SETTING THE TABLE,* Danny Meyer says that people come back to a restaurant due to "a spirit of hospitality and welcome; a sense of community." Although the final outcome can be a good experience, the "spirit of hospitality is infused with the outcome…what goes into it sets it apart." Why do people come back? "Because of the way you make them feel. It goes beyond the food, décor and service."

Meyer has his own formula for performance: Quality + Service = Performance. Performance, however, is not enough. To drive his point home, Meyer explains that you notice things when they (things) don't work, not when they *do* work. The difference, he says, is hospitality. To explain:

> Service tells us how well we delivered on our promise while hospitality is a measure of how we make people feel while they are receiving that service. In hospitality, the person believes you (the deliverer) are on their side. It is when something happens for you, not to you.

Meyer elaborates that the word "thoughtful," meaning thinking and feeling, is always present with hospitality. A high "HQ," or hospitality quotient, is what thriving organizations have: human dialog as opposed to a one-sided, service monolog. A key difference is that service can be explained in a manual whereas a high HQ "means that you can derive pleasure from delivering pleasure." Meyer believes that "we can take the experience economy a step further. I think people are seeking hospitality."

The emotional skills that make up a high HQ, says Meyer, cannot be taught: and people want genuine, not fake. By focusing on hiring people with hospitality skills is a way for companies to differentiate themselves. Meyer says that this is so important because "we are living in a day and age where feeling is absolutely everything:"

Delivering experience, or hospitality, in his business, Meyer observes that experience can be broken down into components, or four questions to be addressed:

1. What is it and what does it do?

2. How does it feel?

3. What is its context? Context is everything…

4. What kind of community develops around it?

Community is so important to Meyer in his business that he also wants his restaurants to contribute to improving the New York City neighborhoods where the restaurants are located. He sources his raw materials locally as much as possible and strives to ensure that his restaurants reflect the right context in the neighborhood where they operate.

In a completely different location, John Williams, founder, Frog's Leap Winery in Napa Valley, California, says that "how we farm our grapes has changed the experience." His business philosophy is "to make wine fun and only make a good product." In 1987, Williams bought his first vineyard and wanted to grow organically-grown grapes, without really having thought matters through:

> It wasn't about not using chemicals so much as not needing chemicals. Our wines got better and
> we were able to eliminate chemicals. Our wines got more intense, the soil and vines were
> healthy. And the health of our farm workers and their quality of life. Are they happy? What

about our buildings…are they environmentally sound? What about the energy we are using? Now we are solar powered. Our wines got more vitality, freshness…

In focusing on organic farming as the core product and core experience, Williams constantly asks, "what do we want to be as a company when we grow up?"
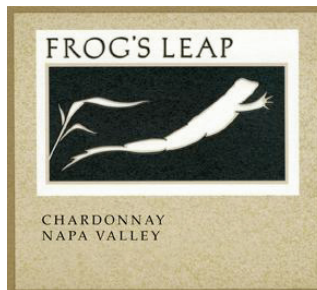
Figure 26: "Times fun when you're having flies," www.frogsleap.com

Quality of life through experience is also expressed by Chip Conley, founder and CEO of Joi de Vivre, "joy of life," boutique hotels. Conley's journey started by looking for his own happiness. Disgruntled by his career as a commercial real estate developer, he wanted more: his job was not his calling. Conley identified that what he didn't like about the commercial real estate industry was its transactional nature and being based on adversarial negotiations. Through his search for his own happiness he extended the journey to finding happiness for his company.

Wanting to give the business world another chance, he chose to explore the hotel industry. This industry appealed to him as he could see much more of a "conciliatory, cooperative kind of environment." Simply put, "It felt like if we did our job well and treated people well and they enjoyed themselves, then we would do well as a company."

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At the age of 26, Conley borrowed money and decided to open his first hotel in a sketchy neighborhood in downtown San Francisco, California:

> I went out and bought a motel in the Tenderloin of San Francisco. The Tenderloin had a place called the Caravan Lodge. When you walked in the lobby, and it's the only place I've ever seen this, right behind the front desk, they had the nightly rates posted and right underneath, almost in the same font, it had the hourly rates posted. The Caravan Lodge was famous for being the "no tell motel:" it's where you went on your lunch hour, and the biggest corporate account was Vinnie and his girls.

Conley revamped and renamed The Caravan Lodge "The Phoenix." The hotel was a motel built in the 1950's, with 44 rooms around a swimming pool. Conley had a clear vision of his target group, which he describes as the kind of people he wanted to meet: rock and roll bands and people in the music industry. Another, more rational reason for the segment choice, "Generally speaking the Hiltons and the Marriots in the world didn't want these people staying in their hotels." Conley's strategy worked and an "odd collection of Hollywood folks started staying in this funky motel together."

Conley learned what he refers to as, "You are where you sleep." This, he says, "really defines what people are looking for from their hospitality experience." A boutique hotel is smaller, more "stylized and unique." In order to address and attract his target group, Conley used Rolling Stone Magazine as "the touchstone." He chose to do this as magazines are niche-and lifestyle oriented. Additionally, "…if they get it right a magazine has a very close relationship with its core subscribers."

In trying to create an experience through cues, Conley chose five words that describe Rolling Stone Magazine that he wanted to apply to his hotel customer base: Funky, hip, adventurous, irreverent, and young-at-heart. He describes The Phoenix as "a crossroads for creative people." Those who fell in love with them, states Conley,

thought of the product as an aspiration or an identity refreshment of how they see themselves.

Conley currently has eight hotels in the Silicon Valley, making him the largest, independent, hotelier in the area (www.jdvhotels.com). The Silicon Valley clientele are more like those that fit Wired Magazine. The brand identity is high tech yet low tech "zones" and décor afford creative space. As an example, the furniture in the guest room is on wheels so the guests can rearrange it to suit their needs.

Another hotel is founded on nurturing, with a different target group in mind:

> We also wanted to create a hotel for the "bobos" of this world, …bourgeois bohemian," or people we call "post W, pre Four Seasons:" Someone who has outgrown the sort of narcissistic, hip, boutique hotel, but isn't necessarily ready for the more conservative Ritz Carlton or Ritz. This is a hotel that is on the San Francisco waterfront, Vitale. We wanted to create a hotel---this is based on Dwell magazine, real simple, based on the five words: urbane, enlightened, nurturing, modern and fresh---huge market, highest occupancy rate of any hotel in the luxury collection in San Francisco.

The distinguishing feature of this hotel is the abundance of "interesting inspirational spaces," including outdoor bathtubs overlooking the bay and a yoga studio.

Although Conley's Joi de Vivre business is thriving now, 2001 was a completely different story. All of his hotels were based in Northern California, not very geographically diverse. In 2001 there was the dotcom bust, the SARS epidemic, and 9/11. The hotel business in general, between 2001-2005, and especially in San Francisco, was historically bad. Conley's business was in serious trouble, and he struggling to stay in business. Conley reverted to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and was particularly intrigued by the peak of the pyramid, self-actualization needs. According to Maslow, peak experiences are occur when you are in

a state of self-actualization. This concept was exactly what Conley was looking for and reminded him in those financially trying times why he started his business. He asked himself, "…if people can aspire to self actualization then why can't companies? That's when we started applying the idea of the hierarchy of needs to the customer experience."

Conley adapted Maslow's pyramid and created what he calls the transformation pyramid: survival needs, success needs, and transformation needs. Conley and his team have trained all of their 3000 employees and he firmly believes that all of us have these needs and aspire to a transformation in life.

Conley bluntly reveals that of the 3000 employees on his staff, 1300 of them clean toilets for a living. He is convinced that they want to progress from job, to career, to calling. How do you move people up a pyramid? Conley purposes that you move them "from the task to the impact or purpose of what they do. You move nurses from being the person who creates pain with a syringe to being the patient advocate." It is a matter of engaging your staff so they begin to "feel like what they are doing is a bit of a calling. They feel it, we feel it, customers feel it, and ultimately peak experiences for the employee create peak experience for the customer, creating peak performance for the company."

Conley addresses not only customers' latent needs, but also expectations. If expectations aren't met, then naturally customers are disappointed: and disappointment is the outcome of "badly managed expectations." A customer satisfaction focus, says Conley, doesn't help companies to succeed because that is at the base of the pyramid. Successful companies, such as Amazon.com, understand the (high) technology and think about our desires. Companies that are able to help

customers express themselves and create transformative experiences for their customers are peak-performing companies. Peak-performing companies help you to seek a higher cause and "imagine something that you hadn't imagined yourself." It's about giving customers what they didn't ask for but what they really wanted. Such offers often become a commodity and then companies have to remake themselves. Conley concludes by quoting FedEx founder Fred Smith. FedEx is recognized as the leader in helping customers to track their packages: "I thought I was in the business of transporting goods. I came to realize that I was in the business of peace of mind."

Conley admits that identifying an unrecognized need may become commoditized over time. Drawing on his own experience he firmly believes that companies, especially in a downturn when the focus is at the base of the pyramid, or survival needs, can turn around if they focus on customer experience:

> …If you actually aspire to those higher needs for your employees, your customers, even your investors, you're actually going to find yourself differentiated and creating loyalty unlike many of your competitors.

EXPERIENTIAL DISCOURSE IN MARKETING

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presents the emergent findings from the GEL conference speeches and personal interviews. Not all of the speeches are included, only those which contribute to addressing the research questions. All of the interviews (five) are, however, incorporated into the findings.

The aim of this study is to understand how practitioners articulate, design and deliver experience in their work, and to look for additional insights that potentially contribute to the experiential discourse in marketing. The seven findings are based on perceptual (Bloomberg & Volpe 2008) information as they are derived from the practitioners' own description and perception of experience in their work.

The practitioners illustrate many different temporal aspects surrounding experience interaction. An experience can be a split second- a click away- as when navigating on a website, searching for information on Wikipedia or Craig's list. An experience can last a few moments more; reading a cartoon, flipping through a magazine or reading an advertisement, driving over a bridge, or using a gadget. An experience interaction can also take longer, such as consuming a meal, listening to a sermon, playing a game, viewing artwork, or attending a performance. Some experiences have a very long timeframe, as portrayed in the examples of education, life-long community dedication, compulsive gambling, erecting a construction in the public space, and personal work life.

Another view of time relates to *timing*. Illustrated by juggling, The Flying Karamazov Brothers explain that "…how we experience time depends on how much information we have to process," and "juggling as meditation, management of time."

When timing is coordinated amongst each other, the experience is "an intimate and real level."

Following is a brief explanation of the findings. The emphasis is on portraying the richness and complexity of the participants' subject matter, across the data, while simultaneously deconstructing the data into useful information (Bloomberg & Volpe 2008). Chapter 6 provides an analysis of the findings, interprets the propositions, and relates them to the research questions that have guided the study.

Finding 1: Experience through storytelling takes on many forms

There are many ways to get emotionally involved and create an awareness of our senses. Watching a dance performance or a film can be a powerful experience even though it is technically "passive" for the onlooker. When a story resonates with us we are freed to express emotion. We can learn the importance of detail and context to meaning, in addition to appreciate questioning preconceived notions of how we think the world is.

Surprise can be a rare emotion and comes in many forms. We know it when we experience it, such as when something serious and something funny collide. We like that emotion and surprise can be communicated well through structure and identifying with characters.

Stories can also help to shape our world view, whether they are fiction or documentaries. We learn something new, regardless of the form, and that is powerful.

Finding 2: Experience is manifested through improvisation, interaction, the unexpected, and play

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Interactions can act as catalysts to experience. An interaction can provide an opportunity for further exploration, a journey, or a spontaneous story. An interaction can be fun and there is pleasure derived from creating something for others. There is also pleasure and pride in serving others to create and deliver a good experience.

In face-to-face interaction, our non-verbal communication, or body language, leaks information through cues. We can interact without speaking and also through games: either individually or with others, in a collective experience. We can also learn from games, and when an interaction is collective we can build a collective intelligence, a "folk taxonomy."

The practitioners reveal that they do have goals, or intentions, when designing an interaction. The intentions include diversity, engagement, connecting play with real life, alternate social experiences, and moving people from an online community to meeting each other face-to-face; a real-life experience.

Game designers cite intentions that are meant to be inclusive, meaning everyone has access to play and is aware of the other players. The goals can also be hidden. A hidden game is intended to be humorous and to create surprise and a sense of joy for the onlookers. The agents of a hidden game get feedback from the reaction of the onlookers and "being in on" the secret. In both cases, a lot of hidden potential for good experience exists.

Not being able to plan something, as in improvisation, also has potential for humor as a funny situation often emerges. Experiencing something funny with others can be more intense, and humor helps us to make sense of our lives and think about change. Change is important to all of us and on many levels. We should not be afraid to try something different in order to make changes.

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Finding 3: Experiential inspiration stems from immersion and blending (media, concepts, and disciplines)

Changes in our work situation can be very inspiring. A disruption, or even confusion, sparks creativity: a reactionary motive. Our perspective can change when our situation changes, forcing us to think differently. We also like to learn how others in different industries, or different walks of life, think.

"Conceptual blending" of different media can be conducive to reflections and new interactions. Sometimes an intentional discord creates the strongest messages that engage thought and can lead to change.

New combinations of technological interfaces at hand can also afford experiences. These experiences can, for example, be artistic, expressed visually, or musical, using your entire body in an immersive context. Context, credibility and integrity are important in visualizing a message or telling a story. We reduce content in order to understand, or make sense of, complexity, yet when things are just out of reach they start to get interesting.

Finding 4: Experience drives change: a journey

Experiences can have profound effects on us, to the extent that they are transformational. Our world is noisy and complicated and we desire meaningful connections, not just to be connected. We look for messages of meaning, belonging, protection and trust. Access to, for example, social networks, is not necessarily meaningful without some degree of involvement, attention or engagement.

What triggers a transformation can be a seemingly small event, such as a meal, or something larger, as when the worst imaginable happens and you survive. A

transformation is also a journey, moving from one place to another; an emotional experience. Meaningful connections and relationships are a part of quality of life: commitments. We seek the good life; human dignity, integrity and mature love.

Change also occurs when we experience different perspectives, outside of one's own industry. Such change can help to illustrate experiential interactions, identify future needs and wants, and lead to innovative solutions and the potential to create new markets. Customers seek uniqueness in products and a user experience that goes beyond aesthetics: Functionality is not enough. Good experience is giving the client more than what they asked for or thought about before coming to you. It's thinking about our future world, not our commercial world here and now. Understanding this experience of giving is a craft.

The practitioners express a regard for high standards in their work; attention to detail is important. How we design affects communication. Considering products, emotional dimensions are closely related to innovation dimensions yet emotional aspects are too often overlooked.

Finding 5: Constraints, less content, and fewer choices are conducive to experience

Many of the speakers cite constraints in a very positive manner. Constraints yield simplicity and help to avoid adding too many features, which detract from a good experience. Constraints are credited with informing good design in physical products, software, and usability. Simply put, more is not better.

Constraints emerge when a diversity of people come together. This provides good ideas and good experience, and we learn from observing people and their

behavior. By watching what people do, we can better phrase a design problem correctly as people are not always able to articulate a problem or latent need.

The notion of time as a constraint also emerges. Time should not be wasted and more time only complicates things. There is high praise here for rapid prototyping in communicating and visualizing ideas.

Constraints are considered good for creativity. This helps us not to set expectations that are too high, leading to disappointment. More options only lead to regret, an opportunity cost. Constraints are also cited as leading to happiness. When our choices are reduced, then we form better relationships, have responsibilities to others, and can manifest our innate desire to help others.

Finally, constraints in a financial context are good because they force us to think of other ways to solve a problem or get a job done. This also frees us from debt, affording financial independence.

Finding 6: Collaboration, connecting, and community enable experience

Collaboration, connecting and community all require a relationship of some sort. Collaboration is enjoyable and important, and so is changing roles. Taking an active protagonist role means that you learn and through learning you can do more for yourself and your client. A relationship is not only the immediate moment, but also reflections on the relationship in the past and how a relationship has developed over time: well being in being together.

Experiences are often manifested in relationships and their interactions. Where do relationships happen? In "spaces." In both a traditional, physical sense as well as much more abstract, as in online, space emerged as a theme in many contexts. Space is

shared and has some abstract effects, such as empowering and providing access. The online space provides a platform for communities to form, meet and grow.

The practitioners also remind us that much of space is public and is designed for Homo sapiens; humans. It is important to remember this in designing space, and also that we have a need to feel safe. Public space can certainly be overwhelming and chaotic, so sometimes the answer is reverting to finding personal space.

Collaboration can bring about change which can also happen when changing the purpose of, or reclaiming, a physical space. When people see the results of change, a spirit of activism emerges and this improves quality of life.

There can be incredible strength in communities in terms of the power to build and change things. Strong communities exhibit a motivating vision, passion, and respect for others. Communities teach participants about listening, accommodating, and a keen awareness of the social concept of cooperation.

Good communities thrive on a culture of trust and redistribute power in a democratic way. Trust is understood in many ways. From a safety perspective, trust is confidence that a company's product will not be harmful. Trust can also be expressed as confidence, where the customer has faith in a company that the customer won't be cheated financially and that the company is delivering the right thing. This is certainly true when we do not understand the goods and services we buy due to their complexity or the expertise required to create a product. Trust is important in loyalty and also as an experience dimension, where emotional and cultural aspects play an important role.

A positive relationship is a good experience; comfort, joy, a feeling of mutual understanding. An experience makes you feel like you learned something; as if you

grow. Customers want experiences that are new and stretch the imagination, and being able to deliver that builds long-term relationships. Coming up with "new" demands pure research but yields competences in return.

Finding 7: Customer experience in business is a mindset

Many different types of industries focus on customer experience to drive their business. This entails many customer interface aspects including technology, environmental design, ergonomics, and service. Interactions are an opportunity to deepen a relationship and this demands listening and trust.

It is important to invest in employees and employers shouldn't be boring. Employees should want to come to work and be passionate about their work, which can extend to customers having fun. Good experience in the work place goes beyond productivity; it concerns making work life easier and better collaboration, as well as making the space better for people. A multi-disciplinary approach in hiring or putting together a team helps to create mutual curiosity.

What makes customers come back is how you make them feel, which goes beyond décor and service. Service is delivering on a promise and service is expected. Hospitality, on the other hand, is more. It is thoughtfulness and about making people feel genuinely welcome; that you are on their side. We often notice things when they don't work, not when they do work.

Employees are crucial in delivering hospitality, which entails deriving pleasure from delivering pleasure. Service can be automated, but hospitality can't be put in a manual. Being able to understand this hospitality emotion is a quality that companies

should look for when hiring new employees as we are living in a day and age where feeling is everything.

Focusing on activities that contribute to healthy workers and healthy products lead to a better quality of life. Doing the right thing leads to a good experience; for employees, customers, and makes business sense. The right thing can also emerge from doing what you want to do, meaning the provider's aspirations, and relying on intuition.

6. ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, AND SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

The previous findings chapter endeavors to authentically depict the voices of the participants while simultaneously being reflective and aware of the aim of this study. The method, content analysis, demands a context sensitivity that leads to themes and an understanding of the material. The data from the numerous sources, in narrative form, expresses multiple perspectives and is organized into emergent findings.

This chapter presents the interpretations, or analysis, of the data and synthesizes information from the findings; what Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to as lessons learned. What are the pertinent insights from the findings and how do they contribute to an updated experiential discourse?

Analysis means to "let loose," and it is important to break complex phenomena into component parts (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2003).Therefore the analysis is iterative and systemic in accordance to the methodology and in reference to the conceptual framework. In addressing the research questions, how, why, or why not, do the findings shed light on the experiential discourse in marketing?

Finally, in reexamining the propositions (Chapter 3), how does the information compare to other studies and what others have to say? What are some possible explanations? What are the discrepancies? This interpretation is meant to add a new dimension of understanding. Beyond identifying the emergent patterns, good theory tries to explain what caused them (Van de Ven, 1989).

FINDINGS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

EXPERIENTIAL DISCOURSE IN MARKETING

In order to synthesize the findings from the data with the conceptual framework, based on the literature review, the variables are addressed and align the research questions to suggest an updated experiential discourse. The three research questions were largely satisfied by the findings.

6.1.1 QUESTION 1: WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF EXPERIENCE AND HOW IS EXPERIENCE ARTICULATED IN THE LITERATURE AND IMPLEMENTED IN A COMMERCIAL CONTEXT'

How experience is articulated in the literature is discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2). In brief, much of the experiential view in the marketing literature is from the perspective of the seller, or offering party. Co-creation has generated substantial of interest in customer participation in production – value in use - yet overlooks latent needs. Experience is relevant to services marketing due to its intangible nature and challenges in creating meaningful touch points. Relationship marketing views experience as a relationship to be managed; a firm-centric perspective that neglects experiential potential through interactions that can augment relationships.

Regarding the essence of experience, the data revealed, through narrative form and interviews, how practitioners identify, conceive, design, navigate, and deliver experience opportunities. Experiences can be entertaining, yet entertainment is not necessarily an experience. The practitioners express perpetual curiosity as a driver to do what they are passionate about. They are also acutely aware and sensitive to user responses and feedback.

Constraints were mentioned by many practitioners as being conducive to experience. This is perhaps counter-intuitive to how we think of experiences in the

experience economy, where the sky is the limit and consumers are taken on a rollercoaster ride and entertained. More than twenty years ago, Shostack (1988) sang the praises of constraints, "bootstrapping," as being beneficial to innovation. Constraints can inform simplicity, creativity, good design, and cost considerations.

Without constraints, new product development risks the focus shifting to features and technology rather than user needs, whether overt or latent. Good design allows customers to make mental maps; focus on key features and jettison everything else (Peter Skillman speech). It is feature use that drives the experience, not the features themselves (ibid.). How Skillman thinks about designing products and leading design teams very much reflects the methodology used by IDEO, where Skillman used to work: Multiple iterations, cross-disciplinary teams, fail early, rapid prototyping, ethnographic research methods to identify latent needs, and sensitivity. Design thinking, as Tim Brown, president and CEO of IDEO says, is about exploring new choices, and the challenge of innovation is to discover new choices (Kleiner, 2009).

The process of developing an experiential view involves new ways of seeing things, also suggesting innovation. Many of the speakers cite a pet peeve or noticing something "broken" and want to "fix it," meaning they think there must be a better way. This is true in product design as well as process, and more comprehensively, as in service design.

How does process moderate experience? The practitioners use a number of methods in order to design experiences, including dialog with users as well as ethnographic approaches. Rather than explicit algorithms, the concepts resemble looser heuristics and are often intuitive. The practitioners do not explicitly distinguish between, or label, an experience as being emotional or cognitive. The process is often

viewed as an exploratory journey that appeals to our senses, such as pleasure derived from play (Kubovy, 1999) and play as a consumption experience (Holbrook et. al, 1984). Humor often plays an important role.

Aesthetic considerations are also important in an experiential design process. Aesthetics can take on a traditional form, as in a beautifully designed product or as an intuitive application. Moreover, in many cases, simplicity is appreciated while other contexts lean more toward managing complexity (see e.g. Donald Norman, www.jnd.org). These approaches embed design thinking in that they are human-centered, innovative, technologically feasible and commercially viable.

Many of the practitioners desire to create a product that users appreciate. This means that practitioners need to understand customer perception in order to design experiences. The end-product, or final outcome, focus is prevalent in co-creation whereas the process, or experiential journey, is also important to the practitioners included in this study. Indeed, content knowledge is not the same as process knowledge.

Many also create experiences based on their own urge to share their art, craft or skill. There is a conviction amongst them that what they have to offer has some value to others, which is neither altruistic nor market-led. They envision a productive potential in consumption. This sense of doing the right thing at the right time is what Aristotle called *phronesis* (Schwartz & Sharpe, 2006). This involves practical wisdom, which is cognitive and motivational (ibid.).

Important to note is that experiences are not only emotional, or about feeling, or the reoccurring theme of play. They are also about thinking, or cognitive aspects: developing our intellect. "When people have the right attitudes and commitment,

learning automatically follows" (Argyris, 1991:100). This is associated with double-loop learning (ibid.) and also relates to cognitive appraisal theory in marketing (e.g. Watson & Spence, 2007). Aside from our instincts and reflexes, we perpetually interpret the realities we confront in order to explain them and to help ourselves how to act (Geertz, 1973).

An experience can also make a connection through an unpleasant experience. Being exposed to new knowledge is not always pleasant but can be a positive experience in that you learn something or are transformed (Kubovy, 1999). An unpleasant aspect can be through any of our senses, such as a visual or a physical challenge (ibid.).

The practitioners indicate that they strive to be nimble in their work. If something isn't working for users or doesn't feel right, then the practitioners do not hesitate to change it. Without this attitude they are like other players on the market and less unique. This is akin to the improvisation metaphor in jazz (John et al., 2006).

Learning and the value in learning is an overarching theme expressed by the practitioners. Learning can be sought after in a purposeful manner or serendipitous. It can be simple or complex; subtle or profound. It can take a split second or be a lifetime endeavor. Regardless of the form, learning is an experience: the new, the unexpected, and even world-view altering. Learning is important to human development and transformation, therefore valuable. Whether the value is simplistic, "make my life easier," in productivity terms, which is comfortable, or even amusing. Christensen et al. (2007) view experience in pragmatic terms, a job to be done.

Learning can also be more profound; "make me smarter," which encompasses knowledge and wisdom. Kolb (1984) refers to an experiential learning process. The

practitioners express sensitivity to proactively bringing their knowledge into the situation at the right time, and this is valuable.

Learning outcomes often drive an experience, including the content and process. Curiosity urges a desire to learn, pleasures of the mind (Kubovy, 1999), and involves concentration and focus. Csikszentmihalyi (2003) reflects that immersion in complex activities is enjoyable and enables one's own self to become stronger and more complex. If our invested psychic energy does not yield a desired result then we don't augment our psychological capital. This relates to learning on an individual level. Conversely, if a user learns something then their time was well spent (ibid.); and that is inherently a good experience and empowering.

From experiential learning theory we know that some experiences are easily grasped and concrete while others are more indirect and less immediate (Kolb 1984). We constantly observe and reflect yet the amount of time we spend on tasks is context dependent. So many things demand our attention, also in our work, and there is a yearning for meaningful work and time spent that affords focus.

An important distinction between learning and experience is that experience does not necessarily require comprehension. Learning is a form of experience and worthy of further research with respect to how we learn through the experiences a company offers us.

Delivering experience is manifested through many channels; online, face-to-face, and public spaces. The contextual relevance determines the appropriate channel. To best describe a common characteristic for the majority of the practitioners, in addition to their preoccupation with experience, would be passionate entrepreneurship; including a company vision and often with an envisioning leader (Hougaard & Bjerre,

2009). Customers are viewed as a source of opportunity and diffusers of innovation (ibid.), yet employees are not to be overlooked. The pride felt by employees in delivering a good experience, and that feeling of being rewarded by the user, are key drivers. Many practitioners refer to an experience mindset when recruiting. Employees are crucial in designing and delivering good experience and there is an emphasis on attracting and maintaining the best talent.

To implement an experiential orientation, the entire organization needs to understand and be aligned around experience; how customers feel about interacting with your product, good or service. This includes front-line employees as well as departments within the organization that may only serve internal customers. Practitioners often make trade-offs in short-term profits as an experiential orientation is a long-term perspective. The horizon might be far away, yet the majority of the practitioners do not mention profit as the salient driver. Employees' enjoyment of their work, not just profit, is the true bottom-line measurement of any activity, business included (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003).

When all of the employees are focused on the customer experience then an understanding of what to do for a user is understood in the same way, thus avoiding conflict within the organization. A focus on the experience, including problem solving, transcends disciplines. Such an organizational alignment can be expressed as a systemic view or systems thinking (Senge, 1993) in a learning organization context. Similarly, on a broader level, the process is often manifested in a systems thinking (O'Connor & McDermott, 1997) approach. Understanding the relationships between the experience offering and human perception make up the constituent elements, also in a larger, societal context (ibid.). A systems view facilitates integrating experience as

a mindset throughout the organization. As the starting point and focus, user experience is not "owned" by a certain department but a commitment by everyone. Implementation involves taking a stance and addresses strategic and tactical issues. From an organizational and psychological perspective, Csikszentmihalyi (2003) notes that if an enterprise does not aspire to be the best of its kind then it will not attract first-rate employees, and will be forgotten.

In a business context, an experiential view is profitable. Through their experiential business orientation, the practitioners refer to more loyal customers and closer customer relationships. The relationship between loyalty and profitability is not new, yet there are many different ways in which companies strive to achieve loyalty.

6.1.2 QUESTION 2: WHAT FACTORS UNDERLIE AND NURTURE INTERACTION FROM AN EXPERIENTIAL PERSPECTIVE?

The language that the practitioners use in describing their work with experience informs the experiential discourse. This language is relevant to how the practitioners nurture an experiential orientation. Derived from the data, the word cloud below is a visualization of the salient vocabulary, or nomenclature, that practitioners use when describing their work in an experiential context:

Figure 27: Experiential innovation word cloud (Lynn Kahle)

How do companies nurture an experiential orientation? Practitioners think and talk a lot about interaction. Interaction is important in exchange and also in continuously creating and shaping our social world through interaction with others. An interaction most likely has a goal and the practitioners try to assess the interaction experience as it is perceived by the user. This can range from simple to complex. The goal of designing a good transaction experience can be manifested in reducing pain (frustration, sacrifice), helping to get a job done, or managing complexity. For a more complex or involved experience, the goal could be to design something engaging, challenging, or enriching. It is important to be able to identify with an experience, which leads to meaning, or an experience that resonates with an individual or group.

As discussed in the literature review, Day (2000) depicts a relationship spectrum. Undoubtedly, companies can have satisfied and loyal customers without an integrated experiential dimension. However, an experiential focus throughout the

exchange spectrum can enhance an interaction and subsequently a relationship. The experience should be integrated and not an add-on component. This is particularly relevant for companies that operate in industries with heavy competition or little perceived differentiation. Experience can also be a desire from the seller's side. Regardless, experiences cannot be understood without taking interactions into account (Dewey 1934/2005).

Many of the practitioners mention trust as an implicit and essential condition to nurture a relationship. This is true for the online space as well as offline and public spaces. There is a prevalent feeling that most people are honest and want to "do good," so trust is not only a starting point but also one of the relationship goals. More recently, this phenomenon of trust between strangers is manifested through the numerous examples of collaborative consumption (e.g. Wikipedia, craigslist).

An important component in nurturing interactions is desired change, or transformation. The majority of the practitioners mentioned how they have changed themselves or improved a situation, place, or product for the better. If change in the mind does not occur then psychic energy has been wasted (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). Diversion can certainly be part of an experience but it does not define the experience.

Change affects experience as user input is seen as positive to product iteration. Change is seen as an improvement or getting closer to getting it right: being open to possibilities and new ways of doing things leads to creative solutions, and this entails experimentation. Pursuing change enables companies to better understand behavior, thus design experience opportunities for different types of relationships while inventing the business.

EXPERIENTIAL DISCOURSE IN MARKETING

Change can be a great motivator and encourage employees to do their best. They need to be stimulated and work in environments that encourage room for expression. Change is not only about productivity but also well-being. Change is also an attitude and demands our attention. Sometimes a company, through change, is influenced. At other times, a company can be influential in driving change.

From the data, relationships to others, and commitment, emerged as important points. Commitment involves a willingness to act without regard for consequences. Commitment relates to persistence (Becker, 1960), as well as passion and discipline (March & Weil, 2005). Commitment also teaches us how to experience pleasure or enjoyment (Becker, 1953), and entails doing the right thing (Kubovy, 1999). We desire to grow, express ourselves, and help each other. This can result in short-term gratification or long-term transforming choices.

Design thinking also describes the practitioners discourse and how they approach an experiential orientation. We know from Simon (1996:11): "Everyone designs who devises a course of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones." This certainly rings true for experiential innovators. Design, according to Zinkhan (1999), is a larger concept than marketing. Why? Because design is a process and applicable to guide the creation of almost anything, even if it is a new idea or process (ibid.).
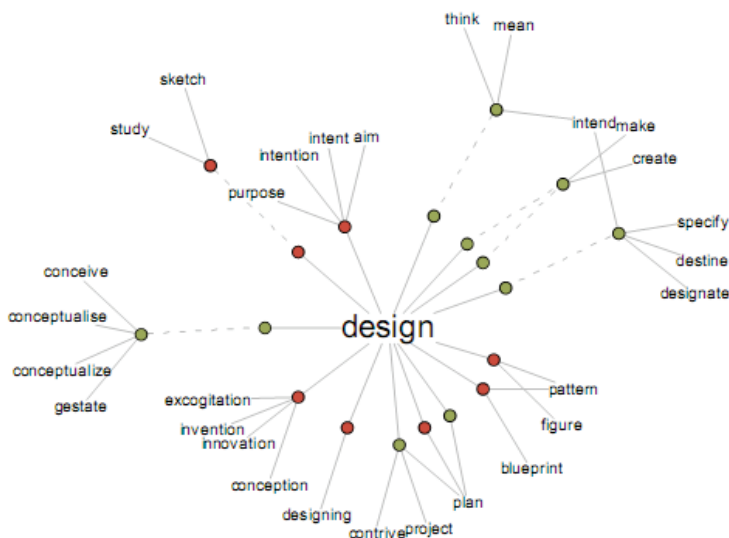
Figure 28: Graphic depiction of design definition. www.visualthesaurus.com

There is also a social dimension manifested through design thinking in that many of the design decisions are influenced by casual interactions and discussions that occur in everyday work. These decisions seem to be made by a more fluid than formal process.

6.1.3 QUESTION 3: WHAT ARE SUBSTANTIVE PHENOMENA RELEVANT TO THE EXPERIENTIAL DISCOURSE THAT OFFER ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS FOR THE MARKETING RESEARCH COMMUNITY TO EXPLORE?

The findings reveal that there is a multitude of experience offerings above and beyond previous case studies which, for the most part, are limited to retail environments and consumer products. The current experience economy is often perceived as event culture and apparently not very interesting for marketing scholars

to research. It is as if the experience economy as defined by Pine and Gilmore is so widely acknowledged, or at least ubiquitous, that it drives rather than describes the entire experience economy. The part of the experience economy that addresses creative industries, such as art, music, and film, however, is relevant and useful to study. There are also many examples in the data which relate to business and business growth, including private industry, government, not-for-profit enterprises as well as those businesses not associated with luxury or conspicuous consumption (e.g. Veblen).

The majority of the practitioners describe experience offerings that are more peripheral than mainstream. There are numerous examples of experiences in the virtual, on-line, space as well as tangible, public space conceptions of experience. Several practitioners deliver experiences in multiple channels, e.g. banks. An interesting research topic could be the challenges these suppliers face in delivering an experience offering that is consistent, regardless of the channel, reflecting current consumption patterns.

Many of the experiences do not involve monetary exchange but participation. The practitioners want to help users to "get a job done," as in online search, navigation and browsing; usability. Many of the examples require more involvement and commitment which relate to consumer behavior theory. Most of the participants express an appreciation for the users' attention; user attention today being a scarce resource. The practitioners are acutely sensitive to the psychic energy required to engage and aware that those activities that yield the greatest psychological capital (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003) are the most rewarding.

Those experiences involving communities are also interesting to study. Communities can be very powerful as a whole and present interesting dynamics and

forces within them. The examples illustrate how community members are driven by compelling experiences that engage and keep them active, and member participation is typically not a paid form of work. The underlying drivers or motivators could be interesting to research in an experiential context, as well as how they relate to social innovation.

Social aspects of experience are not to be ignored. Many innovations have emerged from dialogs with a company's community and good marketers are able to leverage the power of their community for new product ideas and continuous improvement. It is important to note that trust in the community is not necessarily company-led. More often than not, through blogs and other websites, trust in a community is gained through user-generated content, such as reviews. Users often trust each other – strangers - before they trust a company or a critic to evaluate a product or an experience of interacting with a company. This illustrates the power, or strength of weak ties (see e.g. M.S. Granovetter). Good experiences can have a positive effect on what people say and write about a company's offer, generating positive word-of-mouth marketing. Fostering the collaboration potential in communities can help companies to build better relationships to users. This might require harnessing technology, yet enables communication and conversations.

What drives an experience can be challenging to measure as experience is intangible. There are a number of existing tools in use by marketers, such as insight or voice-of-the-customer data, as well as Net Promoter Score (Reichheld's NPS) that work with qualitative and quantitative assessments: many of these revolve around customer satisfaction and loyalty. What satisfies customers and leads to loyalty is a very broad spectrum and perhaps organizations are weak at measuring that great part

of the spectrum that is qualitative. How do we use our senses, such as corporeal, to grasp experiences? Has value been too rationally and narrowly defined? Such indicators would certainly be of interest to practitioners and scholars alike. Experiences are more than events, what Dewey (1934/2005) refers to as transient pleasurable excitations. Experiences also reach beyond a consumptive mindset, centered on activities such as shopping and owning. There are many opportunities to potentially offer more creative appeal. This could be valuable not only to users, but also to those individuals and companies designing experiential offers.

REVIEW OF THE PROPOSITIONS

The propositions (Chapter 3), in statement form, identify, after the literature review, areas that warrant more research in order to increase understanding about experience. What have the findings revealed? Do they support or confirm the propositions? Do they refute or support what is already known? Is something new discovered? The following section addresses each proposition in light of the analysis of the study's findings.

6.1.4 PROPOSITION 1: COMPARED TO MORE FAMILIAR EXAMPLES, EXPERIENCE OFFERINGS ARE MORE VARIED IN FORM, PURPOSE, AND PARTICIPATION.

The findings reveal that this is certainly the case. Experiences are not only manifested in events, products, or retail environments. The practitioners relate how they think about and design experiences in a number of fields. This includes architecture and urban planning when thinking about public space and what a potential space affords a user. An experience can be changing infrastructure or reclaiming space from automobiles for pedestrians, cyclists, and children playing on their street. The purpose of an experience can be to change status quo into a preferred state, which we

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know from organizational theory as well as design thinking (Simon 1996). The examples also revealed a synchronicity, where events are grouped together by meaning and in a new, innovative context.

How we relate to each other is cited as an experience: Face-to-face interaction as well as non-verbal communication. This can be as an onlooker or an active participant in a game. Experience through play is demonstrated by many of the speakers. Play is viewed as a fundamental human pursuit: Something real and not silliness. The examples from the performers reveal that they think about the experience of the user, unlike an artist who might have less altruistic or a different motivation altogether regarding user experience.

Humor is a significant part of experience in that we can change our perspective through humor and put elements together in a new way. Humor in the workplace is well-researched as a way to achieve organizational goals (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006).

Experiences are often in the form of sharing something. This does not have to happen together, or at the same time, but a shared experience enables conversations and that can have a profound impact. Many experiences are collaborative and social rather than driven by a grand corporate communications strategy.

Social experiences are not only subjective but also part and parcel to building relationships (Metcalf et al., 1992; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Payne & Frow, 2006). While understanding and documenting what customers' need and want is very important, this belongs to the realm of customer experience management (Palmer, 2010; Schmitt, 2009; Schmitt, 1999a).

6.1.5 PROPOSITION 2: EXPERIENCES ARE NOT NECESSARILY ARTICULATED BY CUSTOMERS BUT OFTEN INSTIGATED BY THE "SELLER," OR OFFERING PARTY.

Experience design is not always customer led. Many of the participants have a story to tell, an expertise to share, or a vision to pursue. They have a dream they want to fulfill through a product or service and are convinced there is an interest, perhaps even a market for it. In designing a game, making art from garbage to create consumer waste awareness, or choreograph a ballet performance: The experience does not have to be for everyone and that is part of the charm. Maybe the growth is defined in terms of word-of-mouth in disseminating a message or creating buzz rather than profitability. Growth does not have to be consumption-led.

Sometimes the originators and designers of the experience resist the pressure to change, such as Wikipedia or Craigslist, in order to abide by the fundamentals or original intention of the community. This could be manifested in staying true to an original concept by avoiding advertising income in order to monetize a webpage.

The seller also has ideas that are different from, and often more than, the customer requested. In addition to being able to identify a user's latent needs (Slater & Narver, 1999), the seller might have more expertise or their own desire to experience something new. Many of the practitioners are creative types who are not satisfied with business as usual. They also need to push limits in order to have good experiences of their own and remain engaged. True to knowledge work, the rewards in experiential innovation are often intrinsic (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

One challenge is to provide opportunities for users to engage as the experience occurs when there is some sort of interaction. The offer still has to be grounded in

some sort of experience or value for the customer in order to be marketing oriented (ibid.), otherwise it is art and not business.

6.1.6 PROPOSITION 3: UNDERSTANDING EXPERIENCE CONTRIBUTES TO VALUE CREATION PERSPECTIVES.

Above and beyond what we know about value in consumption (Holbrook, 1999) and value in co-creation, value is also developed through collaborative innovation (Kyffin & Gardien, 2009). Most of the practitioners are very clear on how they intend to create value for users and are able to articulate their ideas in an experiential context.

Value is expressed in many forms. An experience is valuable when you dare to do something you haven't done before, what J.G. March calls striking a balance between exploration and exploitation (March & Augier, 2004). This value can be manifested in courage, as in pushing your limits physically (Arnould & Price, 1993). There can also be value in trusting your intuition and emotions over logic, which can seem counter-intuitive or risky. When the results are more than you expected, you are left with a feeling of satisfaction and a sense of gratification in your personal development. The gratification is not necessarily at the end of the experience, as a final outcome assessment. It can be during the process, especially if one experiences flow (Csikszentmihalyi 2002), a subjective experience of full involvement; an optimal experience. Flow, or being "in the zone" while gambling, as an example, is often not based on the final outcome of winning as one might suspect. It is the interaction, even with a machine, that defines the experiential process.

Experience often involves engaging and learning as significant elements of an experiential offering. In learning we are required to reflect on an action or thought.

EXPERIENTIAL DISCOURSE IN MARKETING

Many of the speakers refer to "asking the right questions." This includes questioning status quo or conventional wisdom and a yearning for constant improvement.

Learning as an integral part of experience is stressed by the majority of the practitioners. Learning has many forms and is important, yet ignored in co-creation experience descriptions. Although they acknowledge a quality of customer-company interactions, one of the values in co-creation is extraction of economic value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a). The practitioners talk about making something that people want and not in a firm-centric context.

Kolb (1984) refers to learning as a continuous process that is grounded in experience and the major process of human adaptation. Intelligence, he explains, is shaped by experience and arises as a product between a person and his or her environment. A company offering represents some form of expectations, and the interplay between expectations and experience is where learning occurs (ibid.). Kolb adds that "learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes" (ibid:28). This could be an important clue to marketers. Experience, says Dewey (1934/2005), shapes consciousness. That perspective can also point to the importance of a process focus and how users view a relationship to a company.

An experience that is unexpected can be valuable, such as gaining support for a project or idea, or receiving an act of unexpected kindness. An experience value can be a sense of pride when others begin to take ownership, as in political activism, and a project grows beyond what one had imagined. Connecting people in order to facilitate an action or experience for a user is also value enriching. This can be expressed in helping others to get a job done. A few of the speakers refer to discovering value in spirituality (Boztepe, 2007).

Value can also be created through designing a product, program or artwork, which provides people access to an experience that they would not normally have. This could be products for persons that are handicapped or that don't have specific technical knowledge. The value for the designer was expressed by many of the participants as using simple products, or what technology we have on hand, to create a new experience. Although not specifically related to an experience context, *bricolage* (Louridas, 1999) in design theory is a useful metaphor. When creating a unique experience through blending, one can transform ideas and this value form is a cerebral experience.

The practitioners refer to their own thoughts on value as what they get from an experience or interaction, not just being customer-centric. In the marketing literature, Gummesson (2008b) refers to this in the service-dominant logic context of balanced centricity, where all the stakeholders have a right to satisfying needs and wants.

6.1.7 PROPOSITION 4: EXPERIENCES ARE MORE USER-CENTRIC THAN BRAND-CENTRI

Only a few of the practitioners refer to branding or a brand when speaking of experience. The financial as well as hotel businesses do, and these are certainly representative of companies that operate in highly competitive industries where differentiation can be difficult to achieve and communicate to end users.

Branding is a large part of the experience economy discourse yet the practitioners downplay its importance. It's likely there, implicitly, and in a longer-term context, and closely related to what Fisk and Grove (1996) refer to as impression management. Rather than traditional advertising in building brands, many of the practitioners rely on word-of- mouth and viral marketing. This is an organic approach

where the users are passionate about a product and talk about it because it is remarkable, or worth remarking (e.g. Godin).

Most of the practitioners do not explicitly refer to differentiation or marketing strategy. Some mention experience per se, most do not. A common thread is a path less travelled, or doing something challenging or different. This emerged as a motivating factor: Not beating competitors so much as coming up with better solutions for the good of many.

6.1.8 PROPOSITION 5: EXPERIENTIAL DISCOURSE IS AKIN TO INNOVATION

The practitioners might have pre-defined goals but seem very open to changing them along the way. Many of the practitioners stumbled on to an idea either by leaving their job, through curiosity, or by blending concepts and technology.

Most mention the importance of paying attention to detail to get it right while at the same time not being resistant to change in order to be open to new directions. Many laugh at their original concept and how it changed due to user response. Many are also pleasantly surprised at the amount of interest in their work.

It seems as if many of the practitioners, though not explicitly expressing so, want to afford users an experience that can be characterized by flow. Csikszentmihalyi (2002; 2003) has chartered how it feels to be in flow. In a state of flow, the following conditions are met:

1. Goals are clear

2. Feedback is immediate

3. A balance between opportunity and capacity

4. Concentration deepens

5. The present is what matters

6. Control is no problem

7. The sense of time is altered

8. The loss of ego

How is this relevant to experience? If businesses think of flow as a goal for users and design their products and services accordingly, many aspects of the business fall into place, into a complete wholeness. This includes what to make and how to deliver it. Although businesses can't control a flow experience, they can try to differentiate themselves by affording the user flow.

Drucker (1985) refers to innovation as being at the heart of an activity, where the effort is in creating purposeful, focused change in an enterprise's economic or social potential (Drucker 1954/1998). This is certainly true in this experiential innovation context. Many of the practitioners achieve this by using design thinking— an approach to solving design problems by understanding users' needs and developing insights to solve those needs. This entails not only an iterative process but also a mindset. Design is not an experience and innovation is not an event. However, the data suggest that innovation is a design process involving:

1. Change (desired outcome; what)

2. Process (design; how)

3. Learning (individual transformation; who)

4. Collaboration (social; why)

SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS: EXPERIENTIAL INNOVATION SETTING

While data describe observed patterns, theory explains *why* the patterns are observed or even expected to be (Sutton & Staw, 1995). As a communication activity

as well as a company offering, experiences can be designed with an intention. The offering provider can be motivated by several factors, including a desire to change, play, or to support values. The essence of experience occurs in the interaction and can embed simple usability actions as well as complex, long-term qualities, such as learning or a transformation.

The speaker and interview accounts illustrate, through storytelling, an immersion in context. In understanding experiences, emotions are a powerful force. Experiences are manifested in aesthetics, in surprise, in joy, in pleasure, in play and humor, through identity and aspirations. Experience is about learning, also from artificial life, and intelligent solutions. Learning has been overlooked as an important experiential variable that underlies the meaning users are looking for. Learning implies change, which in turn is innovative.

Globalization and technology that facilitates connectivity, such as the Internet and satellite communications, afford users many choices. Products that users do not like do not survive, while those offerings which are valued, do. This is market-oriented, including market-driven and driving markets approaches (Jaworski et al., 2000), and part of an innovation discourse. Companies are challenged to keep abreast of megatrends and consumer behavior in many contexts.

Simplicity and focus on the task at hand are important experiential innovation factors and many of the speakers express an admiration of simplicity. This is particularly true not only in a usability context but also in design; products, services, and networks. Aesthetics also play an important part in design and can invite user interaction. Termed visceral design, attractive things work better (Norman, 2004).

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Simplicity is a matter of degree. What may be simple for some is more difficult, or less intuitive, for others. Perhaps managing complexity (www.jnd.org) is a more suitable term in that we know that when our skills are not challenged "enough" then we are bored and do not achieve flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). A focus on the task at hand is seen as immersion, e.g. in an activity such as gambling. Such behavior can be addictive (e.g. Loonis, 2003) and is well researched in psychology literature (e.g. Kahneman et al., 1999). We can appreciate the complexity of what goes into making something simple to use or communicate with; but we do not dwell on such experiences in temporal terms or invested psychic energy.

Many of the practitioners attribute their success to communication or the ease of processing information. In other words, more difficult to make yet easier to use (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). This leads to more favorable attitudes to products and services, understood as fluency (Reber et al., 2002). Being able to design and deliver an experience that helps users to have meaningful experiences is an important component in experiential innovation. Complexity does not have to be associated with bad connotations. In fact, complexity is vital to maturity and personal development (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003).

An experiential innovation process is divergent, more fluid than mechanical, and constantly revisits assumptions. Experiential innovation is human-centered and contains a socializing dimension. This reflects a user-orientation and experience innovators need to understand customer perception in order to design experience offerings. In co-creation, there is an underlying assumption that customers can articulate their wants and needs. Experience innovators focus on experiences that the user will find desirable. This is not only innovative but also true to the marketing

concept. Schembri (2006) argues that by taking user experience as a point of departure, companies can better understand the contextual and dynamic nature of services.

Companies cannot control experiences in users' minds. All companies can do is design environments that provide choices and support people in personal story making and creating meaningful experiences (Zuboff & Maxmin, 2004). Marketing scholars have been very interested in social and cultural capital, certainly inspired from Pierre Bourdieu's work, yet perhaps we could learn from psychological capital and an appreciation for the psychic energy a user has to invest and what they get in return (Csikszentmihalyi 2003). This relates to value, learning and change. The process is also of utmost importance and we should create hybrid models that bring various research streams together (Arnould, 2008). Indeed, marketing scholars can learn from other disciplines (Zinkhan, 1999).

Delivering experience value requires companies to build systems that reflect their customers' deepest needs and desires (ibid.). Experiential innovation, then, is more about new value creation. It is not defined so much in transactional or productivity terms, but more so in prosperity and well-being, in a more lasting context. This goes hand in hand with 'design thinking,' Herbert Simon's notion of "transforming existing conditions into preferred ones" (Simon 1996). Somewhere in the space encompassing creativity, social sciences, and scientific disciplines, experience innovators have a design process mindset. Like designers, experience providers help to envisage solutions to problems and give intangible ideas and concepts form. In other words, they see the implicit and "build" the explicit, therefore providing value when something is worth changing.

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The following chart depicts a brief overview, what I call a "paradigm morph of the experiential view in marketing." Derived from the literature review and data, it is my interpretation where I think the bar is raised, the "white space" of experiential innovation, and a contribution to an updated experiential discourse.

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FROM	TO
experience in marketing	**experiential innovation**
brand-centric	**user-centric**
competitive	**collaborative**
complexity	**richness**
consumption	**creativity**
content	**context**
corporate communication	**conversations**
dependency	**autonomy**
disseminating information	**social networking**
entertainment, edutainment	**play, learning**
inquiry	**observation**
mainstream	**periphery**
places	**spaces**
proprietary	**open**
providing value	**supporting values**
tactical events	**meaningful journeys**
work as career	**work as self-development**

Figure 29: Paradigm morph of the experiential view in marketing (Lynn Kahle)

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

Despite all the rhetoric about the experience economy, experience is more than metaphors: our lives are shaped by the experiences we have. The language of experience can be verbal or non-verbal, and it also expressed through design. While spoken language is guided by a set of rules that express meaning, design language also uses visualization to invite interaction.

What are good experiences? Good experiences afford some form of flow, or "optimal experience" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002), to go beyond expectations. Businesses that think about social intelligence to re-design or enhance their offering provide opportunities for users to find meaning in an interaction. The development and implementation of experience-focused interaction for users generates valuable new knowledge and insights into experience opportunities that can strengthen relationships and yield innovation opportunities

This opportunity, or affordance, can even lead to lasting change or transformation. A transformation can be a personal learning experience (Kolb, 1984; Dewey, 1934/2005) and also occur through helping another person or persons. Research shows that such a form of altruism can increase life satisfaction and happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). The point is to experience something that evokes engagement and meaning.

The research indicates that companies can design experience opportunities from a broad range of perspectives; and often in a more subtle form than the current experience economy discourse alludes to. Perhaps the experience economy did not acquire serious scholarly attention, and was to some extent even mocked, as its claims

as a distinct economic offering were too ambitious in terms of a new business philosophy, or paradigm shift.

Marketers, practitioners and scholars alike, have long focused on customer satisfaction and loyalty. The importance of relationship marketing has also played an important role in marketing. Perhaps it is time to change the focus from firm-centric end results to the process. By understanding the process and what a user wants to achieve, as well as how they feel about interactions, companies can improve how they design products and services. The emotions we experience are often contingent on the job to be done, the task at hand, and even a desired journey. Every action reflects a choice; it is not only about the front-end delivery, service recovery, or understanding what already works.

Exchange is a fundamental concept in marketing yet more often than not we think of exchange in a monetary, commercial context. The data reveal an experiential view of exchange that is reciprocal. Exchange can be emotionally connecting, a learning experience, and a collaboration that provides value and supports values. This perspective can provide rich competitive advantage opportunities and is not industry specific.

7.1.1 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Concerning practical implications, this paper addresses a number of avenues for implementing an experiential innovation focus that are important to businesses and of interest to marketing scholars.

The data reveal embedded design thinking and systems thinking perspectives. Design thinking helps to create and critique new ideas. It also helps to identify

problems, or what a user wants to accomplish, and iterate solutions. "Design is not only about initial decisions or concepts by designers, but also about how these are implemented and by what means we can evaluate their effect or benefit" (Heskett, 2002:8).

A systems thinking approach to address experience focuses on understanding the relationships between the elements and processes that make up an experience. Soft systems thinking is useful in addressing those problems that involve human or social components, while hard systems thinking is effective when the problems are well-defined (e.g. entirely technical) (Checkland & Poulter, 2006). Why should companies employ systems thinking? Because users often do. Our experience and lasting impressions are often holistic rather than being reduced to parts. Multi-channel businesses, for example, are acutely aware that a consistent user experience, regardless of the outlet, is very important. To illustrate, users do not appreciate a bank interaction feeling differently depending on whether you are in a physical branch location or conducting online banking. Discrepancies in user perception can be complex, or "wicked" problems, and an ambiguously defined problem is undoubtedly more difficult to solve. Neither systems thinking nor design thinking are part of the current experience economy discourse, yet systems- and design thinking belong to an experiential innovation discourse. Viewing experience as part of an innovation discourse shifts the emphasis from events to business development and a design process. Generally speaking, most businesses aspire to thrive, not just survive.

7.1.2 EXPERIENCE-ORIENTED STRATEGY

An experiential innovation approach goes beyond customer centricity. By opening up the focus from customers to numerous stakeholders, including employees

and communities, both local and online, experiential innovation becomes part of systemic and integrated networks. This often entails an inclusive approach to leadership which focuses on abandoning preconceived ideas about what motivates people as well as trusting people to do the right thing. This is not mysterious but a more pragmatic approach to business. This informs organizational structures that are not hierarchical but more nimble, less formal.

Businesses are essentially competing for attention; our time. We have become so accessible that we are inaccessible. Therefore, in order to engage users, companies, including not-for-profit institutions, have to understand what the user is trying to achieve. It could be "simple," such as a usability task, where a transaction is safe, easy, may be automated, but does the job. This might not take much of our time or require much effort, but it might be the experience we are seeking. The other end of the spectrum is not about simplicity but managing complexity. We might desire to learn something new, experience flow, or somehow transform. Somewhere in the middle of the spectrum is where the user might be looking to engage in play or a social interaction experience. An experiential innovation approach is empathetic and can enhance more effective interaction and a higher order of integration.

7.1.3 PROCESS AND CONTEXT SENSITIVITY

Understanding the context as a starting point informs experience design and innovation. A thorough appreciation of users' needs and wants better equips companies to implement an experiential innovation approach and build superior relationships which can lead to competitive advantage. The data suggest that learning outcomes drive the experience not only through content but also context and process, including value and values. Boztepe writes that defining values as experience is

problematic in that it is elusive; what constitutes user experience is in its "babbling stages" (2007:59). The practitioners exhibit an openness to letting an encounter or story develop as well as a curiosity as to how an experience will unfold.

What we as consumers have come to expect from companies, products, services and events often goes far beyond overt consumption. We desire good experiences that exceed satisfying an expressed need. The experience economy discourse shifted the focus from products and services to our insatiable demand for surprise and entertainment. Co-creation, as an extension of mass customization, allows us to influence a resulting product through personalization. While co-creation advocates designing products *with* rather than *for* customers, the experiential process has been overlooked and therein lies a great part of perceived value. In the spirit of improvisation, focusing on the experience also means "making your partner look good." This demands a great deal of listening, emotional empathy and social intelligence.

Experience should not be dislocated from the product, good or service. The manifest experiences in the data often reflect an expression of what the creators, or suppliers, desire as well as what users want. When companies only listen to what customers want or are able to articulate, then innovation runs the risk of being merely incremental. Real change, or more radical transformation, occurs when there is personal, intrinsic motivation and commitment.

Several themes that illuminate the experience design process emerged from the real-world data. More often than not, good experiences reinforce the aesthetic yet extend beyond hedonism and pleasure. Indeed, experience innovators solve complex problems with intentional changes and improvements; on an individual level as well as

societal, governmental, and sustainability issues. Some of the problems are concrete, others more abstract. Many issues involve play and are designed to challenge us. These intellectual approaches are complex and highly relevant to marketing research. Much focus has been on hard data and measuring what is measurable: soft data have often been overlooked (Mintzberg, 1994) yet there are valuable insights to be gained that relate to experience and behavior. Considering experience as a perpetual path rather than a single event can strengthen a brand. An experiential innovation perspective considers intuition as valid where the practitioners are comfortable in abandoning assumptions and trading off reliability.

7.1.4 POSITIONING EXPERIENTIAL INNOVATION

Experiential innovation is an augmentation to services marketing rather than isolated as the experience economy. The examples from the practitioners are generally more subtle, personal, indirect, and less about the brand. It is important to acknowledge that experience innovators also desire to learn and enjoy fulfilling work. "The choreographer creates a plan for the dance, but the dancer also creates the dance as he brings his own point of view to performing it" (Dubberly & Evenson, 2010). This can include creative problem solving, delivering good products (goods and services) as well as human-centered innovation.

By taking a more comprehensive view, experience in an innovation context is cross-disciplinary and uniting, rather than dividing. Experience can potentially encourage synthesis and assimilation rather than separation and fragmentation, interweaving SDL, co-creation, customer centricity, relationship marketing, and innovation. Experience innovation is not so much a quilt, with separate entities sewn together, but more analogous to threads woven into one coherent tapestry.

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A contribution is not just breakthroughs. It is also re-searching for new insights, advancing knowledge or understanding of a practice or phenomenon (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2009). By analyzing a broad range of examples of how practitioners define and design experiences, wider and deeper perspectives of how we perceive experiences, as compared to the experience economy, are presented.

Why is experiential innovation a new approach? The data revealed new ways of relating to users that engage them, by choice, and offer value. Experiential innovation takes a fresh perspective on the experiential view in marketing together with business innovation. By taking a systemic view and applying design thinking, companies can create a coherent vision of experience for their employees, users, customers, and other stakeholders. Meaningful experiences can be not only enjoyable and worthwhile but also good for our well-being by enabling joy, learning, and intellectual challenges. The experiential innovation learning approach represents a means by which managers can achieve greater clarity about users' interests and thereby improve rigor in designing, iterating, and delivering better perceived experiences.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING EXPERIENTIAL INNOVATION

The experience journey is personal but not out of reach. It can be designed and lead to stronger relationships, loyalty, and learning. Rather than thinking in pure consumption terms, experience innovators think about value creation, often systemically, thus allowing users to experiment and aspire. Experiential innovation is essentially about human needs and problems worth solving.

While this paper has examined how things actually happen rather than how they ought to happen, descriptive rather than prescriptive, there are lessons to be learned:

1. Good experiences cover a broad and often subtle spectrum, not only luxury or hedonistic offers. Consider "no frills" in a usability context to more creative possibilities such as play and learning.

2. Engaging users does not necessarily mean more interaction, more so the right and appropriate interaction for the user's desired job to be done.

3. Process is important yet the ending dominates the entire encounter; end on a high note (Palmer 2010).

4. An experience is always context specific and user defined.

5. Offer conditions that can afford flow (optimal experience) (Csikszentmihalyi (2002; 2003).

6. Experiential innovation is cross-disciplinary, systemic, and calls for design thinking.

7. In delivering experience everyone is responsible. It demands listening and being less risk averse to failure yet committed to doing the right thing.

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There is relevance in "experience" as a business focus, which is just not called experience economy but related to innovation in terms of positive change and business growth.

> I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.
>
> Maya Angelou

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7.1.5 CRITIQUE AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Important to note is the cultural background of the majority of the speakers is nearly homogenous; western, or living and working in a western country. This indicates an affective cultural action style, expressing emotions and feelings more easily and open (Usunier & Lee, 2009). Therefore, expressing emotions is seen as legitimate and useful for action, a pragmatic view, rather than separating emotions from actions (ibid.). This is also true of the Calvinist/Protestant work ethic (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003).

The sample also represents a "wishful thinking" orientation, meaning those cultures that "tend to emphasize enthusiasm, imagination of the future and the capacity of desires to *shape* reality" (Usunier & Lee, 2009:51). The practitioners are consistently enthusiastic about their work and even their self-described mistakes, or shortcomings, are told in a positive context. This enthusiasm can be infectious and present a risk of bias when the listener, or in this case myself, the researcher, take their spoken words as truth. As content analysis is an observational method I cannot observe motives, attitudes, or intentions (Aaker et al., 1998). An ethnographic approach, content analysis emphasizes the allowance of categories to emerge from the data (Bryman & Bell, 2003). If the data set from the practitioners is skewed then this can, of course, affect the interpretations.

There is an emotional energy that creates change. The experience providers do not seem locked into their own business models yet view experience as a point of departure. This requires them to be nimble and less averse to change, exhibiting low uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1991). Further research could shed light on cross-cultural variances that would reflect a different emphasis on experiential innovation.

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Our cultural backgrounds undoubtedly influence our world views. Additionally, generational cohort research shows that what we value is reflected by our age; how we work, communicate, and behave in general (Raines, 2003). What is the applicability of the experiential innovation view across generational cohorts?

There were not enough data to analyze social innovation or experiences for the poor. It could be very interesting to research trends in "slow money" as well as the volunteer sector, which account for a significant part of the economy. Although noted as part of the demarcations of this project, the data does not represent experiences as viewed by users. Frow and Payne (2007:91) note that: "Companies would benefit greatly from learning how other organizations have successfully created outstanding or perfect customer experiences, *as viewed by customers*."

A research problem is driven by incomplete knowledge or flawed understanding, and you solve it not by changing the world but by understanding it better (Booth et al., 2003). I agree with the American poet, the late Archibald MacLeish, who said, "There is only one thing more painful than learning from experience and that is not learning from experience." And the grand old man of modern management, Peter Drucker, said, "The greatest praise an innovation can receive is for people to say: "This is obvious!" (Drucker, 1985).

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EXPERIENTIAL DISCOURSE IN MARKETING

Appendix

TITLER I PH.D.SERIEN:

2004

1. Martin Grieger
Internet-based Electronic Marketplaces and Supply Chain Management

2. Thomas Basbøll
LIKENESS
A Philosophical Investigation

3. Morten Knudsen
Beslutningens vaklen
En systemteoretisk analyse of mo-derniseringen af et amtskommunalt sundhedsvæsen 1980-2000

4. Lars Bo Jeppesen
Organizing Consumer Innovation
A product development strategy that is based on online communities and allows some firms to benefit from a distributed process of innovation by consumers

5. Barbara Dragsted
SEGMENTATION IN TRANSLATION AND TRANSLATION MEMORY SYSTEMS
An empirical investigation of cognitive segmentation and effects of integra-ting a TM system into the translation process

6. Jeanet Hardis
Sociale partnerskaber
Et socialkonstruktivistisk casestudie af partnerskabsaktørers virkeligheds-opfattelse mellem identitet og legitimitet

7. Henriette Hallberg Thygesen
System Dynamics in Action

8. Carsten Mejer Plath
Strategisk Økonomistyring

9. Annemette Kjærgaard
Knowledge Management as Internal Corporate Venturing

– a Field Study of the Rise and Fall of a Bottom-Up Process

10. Knut Arne Hovdal
De profesjonelle i endring
Norsk ph.d., ej til salg gennem Samfundslitteratur

11. Søren Jeppesen
Environmental Practices and Greening Strategies in Small Manufacturing Enterprises in South Africa
– A Critical Realist Approach

12. Lars Frode Frederiksen
Industriel forskningsledelse
– på sporet af mønstre og samarbejde i danske forskningsintensive virksom-heder

13. Martin Jes Iversen
The Governance of GN Great Nordic
– in an age of strategic and structural transitions 1939-1988

14. Lars Pynt Andersen
The Rhetorical Strategies of Danish TV Advertising
A study of the first fifteen years with special emphasis on genre and irony

15. Jakob Rasmussen
Business Perspectives on E-learning

16. Sof Thrane
The Social and Economic Dynamics of Networks
– a Weberian Analysis of Three Formalised Horizontal Networks

17. Lene Nielsen
Engaging Personas and Narrative Scenarios – a study on how a user-centered approach influenced the perception of the design process in the e-business group at AstraZeneca

18. S.J Valstad
Organisationsidentitet
Norsk ph.d., ej til salg gennem Samfundslitteratur

19. Thomas Lyse Hansen
Six Essays on Pricing and Weather risk in Energy Markets

20. Sabine Madsen
Emerging Methods – An Interpretive Study of ISD Methods in Practice

21. Evis Sinani
The Impact of Foreign Direct Investment on Efficiency, Productivity Growth and Trade: An Empirical Investigation

22. Bent Meier Sørensen
Making Events Work Or, How to Multiply Your Crisis

23. Pernille Schnoor
Brand Ethos
Om troværdige brand- og virksomhedsidentiteter i et retorisk og diskursteoretisk perspektiv

24. Sidsel Fabech
Von welchem Österreich ist hier die Rede?
Diskursive forhandlinger og magtkampe mellem rivaliserende nationale identitetskonstruktioner i østrigske pressediskurser

25. Klavs Odgaard Christensen
Sprogpolitik og identitetsdannelse i flersprogede forbundsstater
Et komparativt studie af Schweiz og Canada

26. Dana B. Minbaeva
Human Resource Practices and Knowledge Transfer in Multinational Corporations

27. Holger Højlund
Markedets politiske fornuft
Et studie af velfærdens organisering i perioden 1990-2003

28. Christine Mølgaard Frandsen
A.s erfaring
Om mellemværendets praktik i en transformation af mennesket og subjektiviteten

29. Sine Nørholm Just
The Constitution of Meaning
– A Meaningful Constitution?
Legitimacy, identity, and public opinion in the debate on the future of Europe

2005

1. Claus J. Varnes
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