

Brand Experience

A study on how to design for targeted service brand experiences

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ABSTRACT

Competition amongst service brands is increasing and service organizations need to differentiate themselves by providing customers with unique brand experiences. Hence, there is a growing need for practical guidance on how to transform brand strategy into relevant customer experiences. This article explores brand experience in the context of services, and examines how one can design for targeted brand experiences. Literature studies investigate the following questions: What are the fundamentals of a service? What is brand experience, and why is it important in the context of services? What service design methodology exists relating to brand experience? Based on findings from these literature studies, the article presents a tool that facilitates the development of a targeted service brand experience.

KEYWORDS: Brand experience, service brands, service design

1. INTRODUCTION

The dynamic, global business environment drives companies to constantly seek competitive advantage through the development of innovative products, services, and systems. Underlining the importance of “technology push” and “market/demand pull”, a company’s ultimate aim is to develop revolutionary products and services (Brem & Voigt, 2009). Therefore, understanding user behavior, use, and shortcomings of products and services is essential to discover and create “value opportunities” (IDEO, 2009).

However, complementary to the above context, managing user and customer experiences should be perceived to be of equal importance for achieving business success, especially when it concerns the delivery of consistent and trustworthy services.

In this case, simply making promises about a service brand is not enough; the brand promise must consistently be delivered when experiencing the service. Hence, perceiving brand experience as a transitional medium between brand strategy and customer experience, is essential for service organizations when improving or developing new services (Clatworthy, 2012). However, several researchers believe that research about brand experience in the context of services has not kept pace with the development of the service sector (Da Motta Fihlo, 2010; de Chernatony et al., 2010; Clatworthy, 2009). Therefore, companies are searching for methods and tools to better align customer experiences with brand strategies.

The overall aim of this article is to explore brand experience in the context of services, and examine how one can design for targeted brand

experiences and thus develop stronger service brands. This article, therefore, will elaborate on how the transition of brand strategy into customer experience can be managed through a service design methodology. In this research context, the following main question will be addressed: *How can a service organization create better customer experiences by developing new or enhanced services in conjunction with a targeted and complementary brand experience?*

The main question is broken down and addressed through three sub-questions:

(RQ1) What are the fundamentals of a service?

(RQ2) What is brand experience, and why is it important in the context of services?

(RQ3) What service design methodology exists related to brand experience?

(RQ4) What type of method or tool should be developed to facilitate the development of a service brand experience?

1.1 Method and Structure

This article is based on a comprehensive literature review, of articles in the field of branding and service design. As such, new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated (Toracco, 2005). Literature searches were mainly conducted by accessing and cross-referencing scientific articles, which were available on Google Scholar and databases that are part of Bibsys.

This article has the following structure. First, to get a holistic overview and answer RQ1, a summary of the fundamentals of a service is given. In this section, the article also discusses why experiences are important for service design. Furthermore the article attempts to answer RQ2 by reviewing a fairly new brand construct, which is Brand Experience, and discusses this in relation to services and customer loyalty. With respect to question RQ3, existing methodology on how to measure brand experience by using the Brand Experience Scale (Brakus et al, 2009) will be reviewed, before discussing the applicability of selected methods

within service design for targeting a company's desired brand experience. The article particularly focuses on Clatworthy's (2009) work on developing the Target Experience tool, which is the first process model addressing the transition between brand strategy and customer experience. Also, the article places emphasis on Newbery and Franham's (2013) framework for integrating experience, brand and value. In this context, Da Motta Fihlo's (2012) work on The Brand Experience manual is also reviewed.

Finally, based on the outcome of the literature review, an early stage proposal of a Brand Experience tool will be presented, which aims to facilitate the process of designing targeted service brand experiences.

2. THE FUNDAMENTALS OF SERVICES

Kotler and Keller (2012, pp. 378) defines a service as; "any act or performance one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything; its production may or may not be tied to a physical product." Hence, a service is an intangible commodity and fundamentally differs from a product because of its intangibility (de Chernatony et al., 2011). That a service is intangible means that it cannot be seen, felt, tasted or touched in the same way as goods. For instance, when you purchase a plane ticket, you are purchasing the service during the flight, neither the plane nor the printed ticket. The assessment of whether a service is good or not is determined by the level of satisfaction the consumer has after he or she experiences the flight journey. Therefore, services are often described and discussed from an experience and experiencing perspective. From the company's viewpoint a service can be seen as a set of processes, which constitute a performance or activity, involving a selection of diverse stakeholders (De Chernatony et al, 2011). However, from a customer's perspective the most important aspect is how a service is experienced (Da Motta Fihlo, 2012; Johnston and Kong, 2011). That being said, a company cannot offer an experience, but only lay the foundations for an

experience (Da Motta Fihlo, 2012; Sandstom et al, 2008).

Complementary to the intangible experience, Zeithaml et al. (1985) present three other unique characteristics of a service; (1) heterogeneity, (2) inseparability of production and consumption, and (3) perishability.

A service is heterogeneous because it contains a number of different touch-points. Touch-points are the points of contact between a service provider and customers. During interaction with a service, a customer might utilize many different touch-points (Clatworthy, 2011). For instance an airline has a number of different touch-points such as websites, self-check in machines, airplanes, flight attendants etc. Each time a person relates to, or interacts with a touch-point, they have a unique experience, which is difficult to standardize. Customers also differ in their individual demands, expectations and assessment criteria over time. Consequently the perception of a service might differ from one person to another (de Chernatony et al., 2011). Hence, services are described as heterogeneous.

Inseparability of production and consumption means that production and consumption of services happen at the same time (Zeithaml et al., 1985). Consumers may actively participate in the production process, and are often actively involved in improving the service through an iterative evaluation and co-creation process.

For instance, self-check-ins at airports provides a good example showing consumers indirectly involved in co-creating the service through continuous and active feedback. However, consumers need to be aware of the role they are expected to undertake as it can affect service delivery (de Chernatony et al, 2011).

The last unique characteristic presented by Zeithaml et al. (1985) is perishability, which means that services cannot be saved or stored. For example if guests have booked a table at a restaurant and never show up, the opportunity to make use of the service is lost. Also, some services are bought long before they are

experienced and consumed, such as insurances and pensions. It then becomes highly important to develop a strong brand to prevent competitors from luring customers with counter promises, before the customers have even experienced the service from their initial service provider (de Chernatony & Riley, 1999).

3. SERVICE DESIGN

As a consequence of the growth of the service sector, the field of service design is expanding rapidly both in practice and in research. Also, service marketers are recognizing new service realities, such as the emergence of empowered customers, mostly due to social media, and the need to satisfy employees as well as customers given the importance of positive employee attitudes to customer satisfaction (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Thus, user needs are becoming more complex and experience driven, and there seems to be a growing need for service design methodologies providing practical guidance on how to design for great customer experiences.

A commonly used definition of service design is “design for experiences that reach people through many different touch-points and that happen over time” (Lockwood, 2009, pp. 174). Touch-points are therefore central in service design, as the sum of all experiences from touch-point interactions forms the customer’s opinion of the service (Clatworthy, 2009). The purpose of applying service design methodology in design is to better understand implicit and explicit needs of customers, in order to achieve user-friendly and user-relevant services that stand out from competitors with similar services (Mager, 2008). However, as mentioned earlier, the field of service design is expanding. In particular, there is an emerging stream of research concerning branding of services, emphasizing the value-adding processes that lead to customer experiences (de Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003; Berry, 2000). In addition to improving customer experience, service design is highly relevant when thinking about improving an organization’s brand (Lockwood, 2009).

4. SERVICE BRANDS

Service brands provide a “bundle” of experiences through the services’ touch-points, and the customers reflect their experiences through this presented bundle to obtain an overall impression of the service. As competition amongst service brands is increasing, service providers, as well as service designers are starting to realize the importance of having a strong corporate brand. Not only is it important to deliver great customer experiences, but also to differentiate the company from others by offering customers and users distinct experiences with the brand of the respective service company (McDonald et.al, 2001). Strong service brands allow customers to better visualize and understand intangible services. They also reduce customer’s perceived risk of buying services, which are difficult to evaluate prior to purchasing the service (Berry, 2000). However, many service companies fail to consider all the touch-points where customers interact with the service brand. They fail to see the brand as a holistic experience, and that everything experienced by the customer is the brand (de Chernatony & Cottam, 2006). Do airlines, for example, understand this if they have long baggage drop lines, dirty seats for passengers, coffee-stained tray tables and indifferent staff?

5. BRAND EXPERIENCE

This section will review the term “brand experience”, and explain the different dimensions of brand experience. In addition, it will discuss the relationship between brand experience and customer loyalty, as well as emphasizing why brand experience is an important catalyst for creating successful service brands.

5.1 What is brand experience?

De Chernatony et al., (2011, pp. 31) describes a brand as “a cluster of functional and emotional needs that enables organizations to make promises about a unique and welcomed

experience.” Thus, if a brand is a promise about a unique and welcomed experience, then a *brand experience* is the fulfilment of that promise through the customer’s experience with the brand. Consequently, brand experience is the transition between brand strategy and customer experience (Da Motta Fihlo, 2012).

Brakus et al. (2009) conceptualizes brand experience as “subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are a part of a brand’s design and identity, packaging, environments and communications.” In other words, each interaction between a consumer and a tangible or intangible brand artefact, which awakes subjective consumer responses, is characterized as a brand experience. A brand experience can be broken down into four dimensions: Sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioural (Brakus, et al., 2009). The sensory dimension involving brands promoting awareness of one or more of the five senses (hearing, sight, smell, touch and taste); the affective dimension being brands evoking feelings or sentiments; the intellectual dimension involving brands having the ability to make consumers think or feel curious; and the behavioural dimension referring to when a brand is being consumed, making the consumer act or feel a certain way (Wood, 2000).

Ambler et al. (2002) explains that brand experiences are created when customers consume the brand, talk to others about the brand and seek out brand information through promotions, events, and so forth. Thus, in the context of services, brand experience can be seen as the sum of consumers’ perceptions at each touch-point, whether it being perception through advertising, or during contact with service providers (Alloza, 2008). Therefore experiences should be designed in a manner that enhances brand image and consistently reinforce the brand promise throughout all the touch-points. If not, the value of the brand is at risk (Glatstein, 2012). Delivering brand experience is not about superficially being engaged in visual

communication practices, such as advertising, where promises are given but not kept. It is about delivering the brand promise throughout all the service touch-points first.

5.2 Customer loyalty and service recovery

Brakus et al. (2009) explains that brand experiences can vary in both strength and intensity. They can be positive, or negative, spontaneous and short-lived, or deliberate and long lasting. The study indicates that brand experience has a behavioural impact, and affects consumer satisfaction and loyalty directly or indirectly. In previous research literature on experience and customer behaviour, it has been found that strong experiences promote better memory, because information is more vivid and concrete, and requires more elaborative internal rehearsal and self-generation of consumers (Houch and Deighton, 1989). This means that if the consumer has strong and positive brand experiences, he or she will remember this, and the chances are that he or she will choose the same brand again. However, if the customer's experience differs from the brand promise, customers will rely on their own experiences and not the promise communicated through advertising (Berry, 2000). A positive, memorable and holistic brand experience of a service can therefore contribute to establishing a trustworthy relationship with the customer, and will over time be rewarded with loyalty if the promise is delivered. For services, therefore, it is vitally important to ensure that the customer experience consistently delivers upon the brand promise. When the branding process is done to perfection, the consumer's perception of the brand will be the same as the brand's proposition (Motto Filho, 2012).

In reality, the delivery of a service experience may not always happen according to plan. In situations where service expectations are not met because of mistakes, the question arises how service loyalty can be saved. This brings us to the concept of "Service Recovery". Service recovery refers to the actions a company takes to

address customer's complaints regarding perceived failure of a service (Spreng et al, 1995). If service recovery is implemented effectively, it will enhance the customer's perception of the brand. This means that, although the brand promise was not delivered in the first instance, a "make it right" attitude of the company may even accelerate and sustain customers' loyalty as they experience and appreciate the "goodwill". Given this context it is important to ensure service recovery measures are considered in designing the brand experience.

6. MEASURING BRAND EXPERIENCE

Today, consumers not only buy products and services in order to fulfill functional needs but also to get the emotional experiences related to the purchase (Morrison & Grane, 2007; Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010; Walter, 2013). For instance, consumers are willing to pay almost 50 NOK for a small cup of coffee to purchase the 'Starbucks experience', which is double the price compared to a coffee at a traditional café (Walter, 2013). Because of this increasing trend, marketers and designers ask themselves; how do consumers experience a brand? How is brand experience measured? Does brand experience affect consumer behavior? Brakus et al (2009) seek answers to these questions through their study on brand experience, and how this influences brand personality, which is defined as the set of human characteristics, associated with the brand (Aaker, 1997)

6.1 The brand experience scale

As previously mentioned, Brakus et al. (2009) conceptualize brand experience as sensations, feelings, cognitions and behavioral responses evoked by brand related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments. As an extension, they also developed a scale to measure brand experiences based on the above conceptualization. To measure the intensity of the consumer's brand experience, the four brand

experience dimensions were tested on three items each using a Lickert scale (See figure 1). The research provides a well-tested and well-defined framework, which can be used to determine the overall degree to which a brand evokes experiences, as well as measure the intensity of consumers' experiences with that particular brand.

Item	Factor		
	Sensory/ Affective	Behavioral	Intellectual
This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses.	.75	.34	.19
I find this brand interesting in a sensory way.	.63	.47	.15
This brand does not appeal to my senses. ^a	.59	.35	.22
This brand induces feelings and sentiments.	.82	.13	.27
I do not have strong emotions for this brand. ^a	.72	.12	.38
This brand is an emotional brand.	.75	.13	.17
I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use this brand.	.18	.80	.22
This brand results in bodily experiences.	.33	.77	-.03
This brand is not action oriented. ^a	.13	.72	.27
I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand.	.39	.12	.76
This brand does not make me think. ^a	.26	.11	.80
This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem solving.	.15	.24	.75

Figure 1: The brand experience scale (Brakus et al, 2009)

Brakus et al. (2009) also discuss the direct and indirect effects of brand experience on consumer behavior. Since experience gives value to the consumer, they assume that the more a brand evokes multiple experiences, and therefore has a higher overall score on the brand experience scale, the more satisfied a consumer is with the brand. Furthermore, experiences that lead to pleasurable outcomes, are those that the consumers would want to relive. Brand

experience is therefore predicted to affect both consumer satisfaction *and* customer loyalty.

In the attempt to predict behavioral outcomes, strong correlations among brand experience, brand personality and consumer satisfaction and loyalty, were identified. This implies that the accompanying brand personality is an important part of the value delivered to consumers through service experiences.

6.2 Impact and limitations of the brand experience scale

Walter (2013) tested the brand experience scale in an attempt to measure the Brand experience of the BMW brand. She pointed out that if the framework for measuring brand experience proves to be valid and consistent after further testing, brand experience might be seen as an individual attribute of the brand construct. Also, the strong correlation between brand experience and customer loyalty could help marketers improve customer retention. In addition, the brand experience scale would give significant guidance on how to design for, and measure brand experience. Thus, the implications of the brand experience scale could be significant for marketing practitioners (Walter, 2013). Underlined by Brakus et al (2009, pp.65) further illustrates this by stating: "The scale will be useful for both academic research, and marketing practice. As marketers engage in projects to understand and improve the experience their brand provides for their customers, they can use the scale for assessment, planning, and tracking purposes." That said, Walter's (2013) finds that it can be difficult to distinguish between the four-brand experience dimension sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioral, and suggests that the dimensions should be further investigated to find out whether consumers actually understand the meaning of each statement.

This rises to the question whether dimensions are useful in service design methodology, when designing for targeted brand experiences even though the brand experience scale does not distinguish between product brands and service brands

7. BRAND EXPERIENCE IN SERVICE DESIGN

Brand experience has more recently caught the attention of service designers, as the connection between brand strategy and customer experience has become highly relevant concerning service innovation. However, surprisingly little research has been undertaken providing practical guidance on how to design for targeted brand experiences. The danger with not having a clear process on how to make the transition between brand strategy and customer experience can result in the emergence and development of additional service touch-points which may not automatically contribute to a desired brand experience (Clatworthy, 2012). Therefore, there is a need to bridge the gap between brand strategy and customer experience through focusing on brand experience in the design process. This section will review existing service design methods and tools providing practical guidance on how to design for targeted brand experiences.

7.1 Targeting Experience

Clatworthy (2009) presents the Target Experience tool, which is a service design tool that can be used to target desired experience of the brand with respect to brand strategy. The tool is part of the AT-ONE method, a well-known service design method developed to enhance the New Service Development (NSD) process. AT-ONE being an acronym for: Actors, touch-points, offerings, needs and experience. The method sheds light on how service innovation can be developed from different perspectives. The Target Experience tool can be categorized in the “experience” perspective. The goal of the tool is to assist an NSD team in specifying a target experience for the new service, that is aligned with the brand strategy, and which can be documented and used in the project (Clatworthy, 2009).

The tool is divided into three steps. The first step is about transforming brand’s DNA into a project relevant brand personality where the desired

result is a common understanding of the service’s personality within the project group (Clatworthy, 2009). A brand’s DNA refers to its distinctiveness, novelty and attributes, in comparison to competitors (Nworah, n.d.). In the second step, brand personality is converted into target experience words and emotional take-aways. The third step facilitates situational enactments based upon experience words to develop, refine and describe an experience target. Clatworthy (2009) believes that the combination of the experience words, accompanying associations, and films, supported by brand personality deliverables, leads to a target experience that can form the basis for developing guidelines for a branding strategy of a typical service. Prospectively, a well planned branding strategy and its guidelines can be used as a framework for future service design work. By using the tool, the service organization can scope a target or ideal for how the brand should be experienced throughout its service touch-points.

From the work done on the target experience tool, Clatworthy (2012) believes that it is surprising to see that service organisations have not yet embraced behaviours, interactions and experiences as central elements of their brand manuals. Their brand manuals mainly focus upon visual identity, rather than customer experience. Therefore, there is a significant potential to improve brand specifications, whereby the model could work as a tool to supplement today’s brand manuals.

7.2 Using brand to develop value-added touch-points

Newbery & Franham (2013) believe that business and design need a common understanding and shared perspective to collaborate. There is need for a framework that facilitates business and design to jointly achieve goals and share processes that make it easier for either of them to implement (Newbery & Franham, 2013). Based on this, Newbery & Franham recently presented a method for addressing how brands can be integrated into design in ways that go deeper

than simply applying a logo or following brand guidelines. The method provides tools and frameworks that can help business and design experiences. The method also provides avenues for different stakeholders to cooperate by integrating brand, value, and customer experience in building engaged project teams (Newbery & Franham, 2013).

Newbery & Franham’s (2013) method consists of three levels, each providing different frameworks (see figure 2). In level 1, a Brand concept, Brand Value pillars and specific value propositions are developed. According to Newbery & Franham (2013) a brand concept is analogous to the basic underlying belief of a religion or a spiritual belief. Because, all religions have principles that people who believe in them agree to use them to guide their actions. Brand value pillars are analogous to these tenets. The next step describes how to specifically transfer these values to customers through features, products and services.

In level 2, using a Brand attribute framework develops Brand attributes. These are qualities that help differentiate brands, and give the team a foundation for building and differentiating experiences that add value to customers.

In level 3, the team use the Brand attributes to determine how a given Brand value pillar is used to create value in a way that reinforces the experience of the customer at specific touch points (Newbery & Franham, 2013).

Similar to Clatworthy (2012), Newbery & Franham (2013) recognize the lack of brand guidelines addressing experience. They suggest that the outcomes from the frameworks can function as a Brand’s DNA for future evolution and innovation. It helps bring the brand out of the visual guidelines policy and gives it an active role in delivering value and a focus on experience.

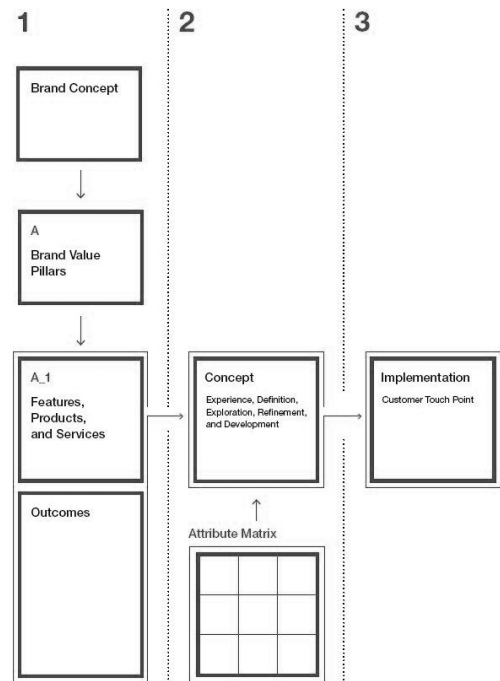


Figure 2: Framework for using brand to develop touch-points (Newbery & Franham, 2013)

7.3 Brand experience manual

As a response to the absence of “experience as a focus area” in current brand manuals, Da Motta Fihlo (2012) suggests the concept of a Brand Experience Manual, to bridge the gap between brand strategy and the NSD teams.

In his study, he found that existing brand manuals are too narrow when it comes to controlling brand expression, and too broad in the description of brand experiences (Da Motta Fihlo, 2012). They are designed to control the brand’s visual expression, and not to propose settings to deliver service experience. Thus, they do not give proper input on the experience the NSD team should design for. “Designing for brand experiences requires a specific sort of brand input, one that focuses on the delivery of the brand values proposition and not only in

communicating it” (Da Motta Fihlo, 2012, pp.671). Mosely (2007), elucidates the importance of a strong brand culture within the corporation, as a mediator between brand proposition and customer experience. Da Motta Fihlo (2012) suggests that a strong brand culture can contribute to aligning the brand expression throughout the multiple touch-points of a service organization. “To properly deliver service experiences, all the touch-points should be aligned, and the people within the corporation should be feeling like they are a part of it” (Da Motta Fihlo, 2012, pp. 672).

The fact that existing brand manuals lack input on desired brand experience, can according to Da Motta Fihlo (2012) be attributed to issues related to corporate cultures within service organizations. Misalignments between brand values and corporate values, complemented by an absence of branding culture, are not a rare phenomenon within organizations. The origin to these problems seems to be of a product-dominant mindset. As production and consumption of goods were clearly separated, brand building was traditionally a marketer’s responsibility (Da Motta Fihlo, 2012). However, as services are characterized by inseparable production and consumption, a strong brand culture, which delivers a consistent brand promise throughout all the different touch-points of the service, is of great significance. The challenge here is to communicate the desired brand experience to the employees and allocate responsibilities.

Dealing with corporate culture is a challenging and complex task. Da Motta Fihlo (2012) therefore suggests the Brand Experience manual, as a method to communicate the firms’ desired brand experience to the whole organization as well as the NSD teams. The Brand experience manual then becomes a medium for communicating the brand proposition. Additionally, the Brand Experience manual should make clear to the service organization what the brand stands for, what the values are, its content, and how to target a desired brand

experience. Hereby, involvement of employees is indispensable for nurturing the brand culture.

8. DISCUSSION

This literature review on brand experience has led to the conceptualization of certain brand experience methods and tools, which can be applied in the development of prospective services. Interestingly, the use of these methods is just as beneficial to the service company as they are to service designers in the NSD process. They help the service organization focus on the experience of the service brand. These methods can be used in developing a common platform for a desired brand experience of the service and help building a brand for the service providing organization. However, existing methods addressing brand experience have not adopted the *dimensions* of brand experience into their frameworks. These dimensions are important, as they can contribute to understanding the totality of the desired brand experience of a service. Hence, as an extension to RQ 3, can a service design tool be developed, based on the brand experience dimensions?

In response to the above RQ, brand experience dimensions as mentioned earlier by Brakus et al (2009), will be used in this article as a basis to propose a tool, for gaining a better understanding of the total brand experience of a service at specific touch-points.

8.1 Using brand experience dimensions to develop brand aligned touch-points

Figure 3 presents a first outline of the Brand Experience tool. The purpose of the tool is to gain better understanding and improve touch points by using the brand experience dimensions developed by Brakus et al (2009). An example of a *Service call center* is presented in figure 3, which illustrates how sensory, affective, behavioral and intellectual dimensions influence the behavior and thought processes of the parties involved, who are interacting at the touch-points.

Brand experience dimensions \ Touchpoint	Service call center
Sensory	Tone of voice of service provider should be...
Affective	Customer should feel...
Behavioral	Customer want to do..
Intellectual	Customer should think that...

Figure 3: First outline of the Brand Experience tool

Case specifically, certain dimensions will be more important than others for different touch-points. For instance, the sensory dimension is more important than the behavioral dimension during interactions at the customer service call center, However, the behavioral dimension may be more applicable when launching advertisements to solicit new customers.

8.2 Suggested approach

Figure 4 is presented to illustrate how the Brand experience tool fits in a larger context of a enhancing or designing a service. Initially, the project team should define the desired brand experience by using either Clatworthy’s (2009) or Newbery and Franham’s (2013) frameworks. This should give a basic understanding of the service brand within the project team. Then, by using the Brand Experience tool, the team of service providers should address specific touch-points in relation to each dimension of brand experience, before elaborating on how the touch-points can be enhanced or developed to strengthen the brand experience of the service. Focusing on

customer experience helps to improve brand specifications, which can be used to create a brand experience manual/platform. In turn, this will provide highly relevant input on desired brand experience for the whole service organization, and in future NSD process. The process is iterative because good brands should always be adaptable to change.

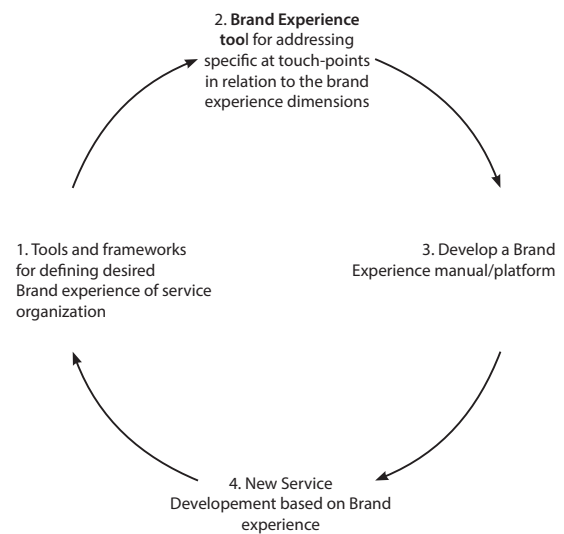


Figure 4: Suggested approach the Brand Experience tool

8.3 Further research

As the tool is presented is in its early stages, it needs to be tested and refined in workshops settings involving employees from a service organization their respective clients and other stakeholders. It is particularly interesting to see whether a team actually understands the meaning of the brand dimensions, and manages to use the tool as it is intended. The usage of he Brand Experience tool together with the existing methods and frameworks presented in this article should also be tested.

Furthermore, it should be explored how the tool can be used in empirical research settings to

assess the brand experience of touch-points in real-life settings based upon actual experiences from real customers. The article also suggests further research on how such a tool can contribute in developing a better understanding of branding, brand experiences and service design within typical business strategies of an organization.

9. CONCLUSION

The motivation for writing this article was to gain a better understanding of how to design target brand experiences for services. Due to increased competition amongst service brands, service organizations need to differentiate themselves by providing customers with unique brand experiences. Therefore there is a growing need for practical guidance on how to align customer experience and brand strategy.

An extensive literature review has led to the two main findings:

- (1) There is a growing need within service organizations to match brand strategy and customer experience to develop competitive services.
- (2) Practitioners have developed methods and frameworks providing practical guidance on how to transform brand strategy into customer experience. However, the conceptualization of brand experience found in literature, consisting of four brand experience dimensions, has not yet been directly applied to service design methodology.

Based on these findings, a conceptual Brand Experience tool is presented. The purpose of the tool is to enhance, or develop new touch-points by using the brand experience dimensions developed by Brakus et al (2009).

Finally, this paper indicates how such a tool can contribute in a larger context within service organizations, and contribute in the development of brand specifications for experience.

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