



Customer experience in the business-to-business context: drivers, measures and consequences

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ABSTRACT

The concept of customer experience (CE) has received increasing attention since the 1990s as researchers in the marketing field have sought to understand its relationship with customers' behaviour. While there has been a wealth of studies undertaken that have explored CE in relation to business-to-consumer (B2C), there has been limited empirical work carried out on business-to-business (B2B).

This study aims to fill this knowledge gap by examining CE within the B2B context. It first attempts to define the concept of CE in B2B by examining the range of existing pertinent literature. Then, through the use of data from customers of B2B professional service providers in the UK, the study identifies the dimensions of CE and their relative drivers. It also explores the influence of time when present customer experience is formed, and perhaps most importantly, the outcomes of CE in relation to the customer's satisfaction and subsequent reported behaviour towards the professional service provider in terms of repeated purchase and word-of-mouth.

To help ensure a comprehensive study with insightful results that would contribute to the CE concept, the research undertook two studies. Study 1 employed a mixed-method approach for the purpose of empirically deriving measures for CE. It also served to confirm the proposed conceptual framework. The purpose of Study 2 was to validate the newly developed measures identified from Study 1 and test the research hypotheses in terms of investigating CE as a multi-dimensional construct, the impact of past experience on present experience as well as assessing the drivers and the reported outcomes of CE. Thus, a panel study of B2B customers was employed and a longitudinal study was completed.

Findings from this research provide insights into the CE concept in the context of B2B. They empirically validate the measures of CE, address its drivers including the impact of time, and through longitudinal data, demonstrate how B2B customer loyalty can be attributed to CE management to a considerable extent. Indeed, by sharing these findings, practitioners will better understand what leads to more efficient CE management, enabling them to reap the advantages of providing superior experiences for their customers.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to

My wife Wahbah and my children Yusuf, Younes and Yaqub, for their
continued love and support

My mother and father, for their great support and inspiration

My brothers and sisters for their continued encouragement

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF TABLES	x
CHAPTER 1:	1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
1.1. Introduction	1
1.2. Background of the research	1
1.3. Problem and rationale for the research	3
1.4. Research aim and objectives.....	9
1.5. Research methodology	10
1.6. Key contributions	11
1.7. Outline of the thesis	12
1.8. Conclusion	13
CHAPTER 2:	14
FRAMING THE NOTION OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE.....	14
2.1. Introduction	14
2.2. Growing interest in customer experience	15
2.3. Customer experience and other related constructs	17
2.3.1. <i>Customer satisfaction and customer experience</i>	18
2.3.2. <i>Service quality and customer experience</i>	19
2.3.3. <i>Relationship quality and customer experience</i>	21
2.3.4. <i>Customer relationship management and customer experience</i>	22
2.3.5. <i>Customer engagement and customer experience</i>	24
2.4. The definitions and measures of customer experience	25
2.4.1. <i>Customer experience through customer journey</i>	34
2.4.2. <i>Customer co-creation of experience</i>	36
2.4.3. <i>Customer experience and touchpoints</i>	39
2.5. What creates customer experience?.....	43
2.6. Conclusion	48
CHAPTER 3:	50
B2B RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AND MODEL DEVELOPMENT FOR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE	50
3.1. Introduction	50
3.2. B2B relationship marketing.....	51

3.3.	The buying centre	55
3.4.	Managing business relationship types	57
3.5.	Relational perspective for the customer experience	60
3.6.	Customer experience with professional service providers in B2B.....	66
3.7.	Model development of CE in B2B and research hypotheses	72
	3.7.1. <i>Building the dimensions of customer experience in B2B</i>	74
	3.7.2. <i>Drivers forming customer experience in B2B</i>	80
	3.7.3. <i>Consequences of customer experience in B2B</i>	88
3.8.	Conclusion	92
CHAPTER 4:		94
RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY AND METHODOLOGY		94
4.1.	Introduction	94
4.2.	What is meant by “research”?	95
4.3.	The research process.....	95
4.4.	Research philosophies	97
	4.4.1. <i>Core assumptions for the research process (ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods)</i>	97
	4.4.2. <i>Research paradigms</i>	100
	4.4.2.1. <i>Positivism</i>	100
	4.4.2.2. <i>Interpretivism</i>	101
	4.4.2.3. <i>Critical realism</i>	102
	4.4.2.4. <i>Critical realism: A paradigm for customer experience in the B2B context</i>	102
4.5.	Scale development process	106
4.6.	Study 1 (mixed methods).....	109
	4.6.1. <i>Research design for the qualitative phase</i>	111
	4.6.1.1. <i>In-depth interviews</i>	112
	4.6.1.2. <i>In-depth interview data collection</i>	113
	4.6.1.3. <i>In-depth interview participants</i>	116
	4.6.1.4. <i>Interview analysis techniques</i>	120
	4.6.2. <i>Research design for the quantitative phase</i>	123
	4.6.2.1. <i>Data analysis technique for the quantitative phase</i>	124
4.7.	Research design for Study 2 (Panel).....	125
	4.7.1. <i>Panel design</i>	127
	4.7.2. <i>Time lags (length between waves)</i>	128
	4.7.3. <i>Data collection method</i>	129
	4.7.4. <i>Sampling procedures</i>	130
	4.7.4.1. <i>Population and panel eligibility criteria</i>	131
	4.7.4.2. <i>Sampling frame</i>	132

4.7.4.3.	<i>Sampling technique</i>	132
4.7.4.4.	<i>Sample size</i>	134
4.7.4.5.	<i>Sampling implementation and validation</i>	135
4.7.5.	<i>Variable measurement scales</i>	136
4.7.5.1.	<i>Customer experience measures</i>	136
4.7.5.2.	<i>The supplier's core offerings</i>	137
4.7.5.3.	<i>The supplier's augmenting offerings</i>	139
4.7.5.4.	<i>Exchange climate</i>	141
4.7.5.5.	<i>Bonding</i>	143
4.7.5.6.	<i>Satisfaction</i>	145
4.7.5.7.	<i>Reported Behaviour</i>	145
4.7.6.	<i>Questionnaire design</i>	145
4.7.7.	<i>Analysis technique</i>	149
4.7.8.	<i>Potential sources of errors and treatments</i>	154
4.8.	Summary of sampling strategies and profiles for Study 1 and Study 2 .	157
4.9.	Conclusion	159
CHAPTER 5:		161
DATA ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS TESTING		161
5.1.	Introduction	161
5.2.	Study 1 (mixed methods) findings	162
5.2.1.	<i>Qualitative in-depth interview findings</i>	162
5.2.1.1.	<i>Emergent descriptors for the theme of factual response</i>	162
5.2.1.2.	<i>Emergent descriptors for the theme of sagacious response</i>	174
5.2.1.3.	<i>Emergent descriptors for the theme of emotional response</i>	186
5.2.1.4.	<i>Emergent descriptors for the theme of social response</i>	197
5.2.1.5.	<i>Summary of the CE emergent themes and descriptors</i>	203
5.2.1.6.	<i>Confirming experience drivers</i>	205
5.2.1.7.	<i>The importance of past experience</i>	206
5.2.1.8.	<i>Confirming experience consequences</i>	208
5.2.2.	<i>Quantitative phase: Scale refinement and purification</i>	211
5.2.2.1.	<i>Data analysis</i>	211
5.3.	Study 2 (panel) findings: Scale validation and hypotheses tests	220
5.3.1.	<i>Wave 1 (t-1) data analysis</i>	221
5.3.1.1.	<i>Descriptive analysis</i>	221
5.3.1.2.	<i>Normality test</i>	226
5.3.1.3.	<i>Scale reliability test</i>	228
5.3.1.4.	<i>Psychometric qualities of the CE measures (scale validation)</i>	230
5.3.2.	<i>Wave 2 (t) data analysis</i>	238

5.3.2.1.	<i>Nonresponse bias (attrition) analysis (Wave 2)</i>	238
5.3.2.2.	<i>Invariance analysis</i>	239
5.3.2.3.	<i>Reliability test</i>	240
5.3.2.4.	<i>Psychometric properties of all measures</i>	243
5.3.2.5.	<i>Structural model and hypothesis testing (H2–H5)</i>	259
5.3.2.6.	<i>Assessing the model fit of the structural model</i>	260
5.3.2.7.	<i>SEM model comparison (nested model)</i>	261
5.3.2.8.	<i>Structural model results and hypothesis tests</i>	262
5.3.2.9.	<i>Hypotheses test results</i>	264
5.3.3.	<i>Wave 3 (t+1) data analysis</i>	269
5.3.3.1.	<i>Nonresponse bias (attrition) analysis (Wave 3)</i>	270
5.3.3.2.	<i>Mediation analysis with logistic regression and hypothesis (H6–H7) results</i>	271
5.3.3.3.	<i>Hypothesis results</i>	271
5.4.	Conclusion	274
CHAPTER 6:		277
DISCUSSION		277
6.1.	Introduction	277
6.2.	Defining customer experience and its dimensions in B2B	278
6.2.1.	<i>Factual response</i>	279
6.2.2.	<i>Sagacious response</i>	280
6.2.3.	<i>Emotional response</i>	281
6.2.4.	<i>Social response</i>	282
6.3.	Customer experience drivers	282
6.4.	Customer experience consequences	288
6.5.	Conclusion	291
CHAPTER 7:		292
CONCLUSIONS		292
7.1.	Introduction	292
7.2.	Meeting the study objectives	292
7.2.1.	<i>Conclusion for the first objective: Identify the dimensions of the CE concept in the B2B context</i>	292
7.2.1.1.	<i>Factual response</i>	294
7.2.1.2.	<i>Sagacious response</i>	295
7.2.1.3.	<i>Emotional response</i>	296
7.2.1.4.	<i>Social response</i>	296
7.2.2.	<i>Conclusion for the second objective: Identify the drivers of customer experience in the B2B context and their relative significance</i>	297

7.2.3. Conclusion for the third objective: Examine the influence of time in the formation of the present customer experience	300
7.2.4. Conclusion for the fourth objective: Examine the consequences of a positive customer experience in terms of customers' satisfaction and subsequent reported behaviour.....	302
7.3. Conclusion of the methodology.....	303
7.4. Theoretical contributions.....	305
7.5. Managerial implications	313
7.6. Limitations and future research	315
7.7. Conclusion	317
REFERENCES.....	319
APPENDIX 1: In-depth Interview Discussion Guide.....	347
APPENDIX 2: Questionnaire for the Scales Validation.....	350
APPENDIX 3: Questionnaire for Wave 1	358
APPENDIX 4: Questionnaire for Wave 2	367
APPENDIX 5: Questionnaire for Wave 3	381

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Main dimensions of CE in B2B.....	76
Figure 2 Customer experience dimensions in B2B.....	79
Figure 3: The general customer experience conceptual framework in B2B	91
Figure 4: The hypothesised model	92
Figure 5: Research process for the B2B customer experience study	96
Figure 6: The scale development process	108
Figure 7: The sampling process	130
Figure 8: Different sampling techniques.....	133
Figure 9: The questionnaire design process	146
Figure 10: CFA results	231
Figure 11: CFA results after model improvement	232
Figure 12: The revised conceptual model	237
Figure 13: CFA for the experience drivers	245
Figure 14: CFA for all measures before model improvement	251
Figure 15: CFA for all measures after model improvement	252
Figure 16: The hypothesised model (H2–H5).....	260
Figure 17: Hypothesis test results (H2–H5).....	263

Figure 18: CE model in B2B.....	312
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LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Definitions of the core assumptions of the research process	98
Table 2: A summary of positivism and interpretivism.....	101
Table 3: Arguments for and against the mixed-methods approach.....	110
Table 4: Interview participants’ details.....	119
Table 5: Interviewees’ responses with regard to the re-purchasing period for professional service providers.....	128
Table 6: Longitudinal sample size and variables collected.....	135
Table 7: Explanatory table of sampling strategies and profiles	158
Table 8: The emergent descriptors for the factual response theme, along with illustrative quotes	174
Table 9: The emergent descriptors for the sagacious response theme, along with illustrative quotes	185
Table 10: The emergent descriptors for the emotional response theme, along with illustrative quotes	197
Table 11: The emergent descriptors for the social response theme, along with illustrative quotes	202
Table 12: A summary of the themes and descriptors of CE that emerged from the in-depth interviews, along with illustrative quotes.....	203
Table 13: CE drivers as identified by the participants in the in-depth interviews ...	205
Table 14: The importance of past experience, as suggested by participants during the in-depth interviews.....	207
Table 15: The importance of satisfaction as a consequence of experience, as suggested by participants during the in-depth interviews	209
Table 16: The importance of repurchases and word of mouth as consequences of experience, as suggested by participants during the in-depth interviews	210
Table 17: The ages of the participants	211
Table 18: The genders of the participants	212
Table 19: The industry settings of the participants	212
Table 20: Responsibility in gaining experience	213
Table 21: The roles of the participants.....	213
Table 22: The professional services used by the participants	214
Table 23: Descriptive statistics and normality test	215
Table 24: Factual response reliability test.....	216
Table 25: Sagacious response reliability test	217
Table 26: Social response scale reliability test	217

Table 27: Emotional response scale reliability test.....	217
Table 28: The total variance explained	218
Table 29: The pattern matrix ^a	219
Table 30: The study variables collected during Waves 1, 2 and 3.....	221
Table 31: The regions of the participants.....	222
Table 32: The ages of the participants	222
Table 33: The genders of the participants	223
Table 34: The company sizes of the participants	223
Table 35: The industry settings of the participants	224
Table 36: Responsibility in acquiring the experience	224
Table 37: The roles of the participants.....	225
Table 38: The professional services used by the participants	225
Table 39: Normality test.....	227
Table 40: Reliability analysis for factual response	228
Table 41: Reliability analysis for sagacious response.....	229
Table 42: Reliability analysis for social response.....	229
Table 43: Reliability analysis for emotional response	229
Table 44: Standardised regression weights	232
Table 45: Squared multiple correlations	233
Table 46: Convergent and discriminant validity for the experience measures	235
Table 47: Reliability test	241
Table 48: Psychometric properties of the experience drivers	246
Table 49: The total variance explained	249
Table 50: The pattern matrix ^a	249
Table 51: Standardised regression weights	253
Table 52: Squared multiple correlations	255
Table 53: Psychometric properties of all measures.....	258
Table 54: Nested model comparison.....	262
Table 55: SEM results for hypotheses H2–H5.....	268
Table 56: Squared multiple correlations	269
Table 57: The impact of CE on the customer’s reported behaviour and the mediation effect of customer satisfaction through logit.....	274
Table 58: Valid items for measuring factual response.....	295
Table 59: Valid items for measuring sagacious response	295
Table 60: Valid items for measuring emotional response.....	296
Table 61: Valid items for measuring social response	297

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

This thesis investigates customer experience (CE) within the business-to-business (B2B) context. It develops and validates a new scale for measuring CE using data from the customers of professional services providers in B2B in the UK as well as examining how past experience influences present experience and how CE can explain customers' reported behaviour towards the professional service provider. This chapter outlines the background, problem and rationale of the research, the aims and objectives, research methodology, and provides a summary of the thesis structure.

1.2. Background of the research

The Marketing Science Institute states that management and delivery of CE are still fundamental research challenges, and this is largely due to the growing number of interactions between suppliers and customers. However, another factor is CEs' strong and positive influence on the firm's bottom line performance. Many papers have tried to investigate the concept of the CE, its drivers and implications upon company performance, yet CE has still not been clearly defined. Moreover, its measurement depends upon an estimation of some kind. An example of this would be a study that simulates the customers' decision to upgrade their service contract based on the service experience they have received (Bolton et al., 2008). In this research, the customer's perception of the time it takes to solve

a negative occurrence was estimated and used to measure CE. It is worth noting that certain studies that followed have offered a far more detailed discussion of CE, such as that produced by Lemon and Verhoef (2016), which essentially confirms the oversimplified technique of measuring CE via proxies. Furthermore, as with the majority of studies (cf. Bleier et al., 2019; Verhoef et al., 2009), this bid to conceptualise CE (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016) has concentrated heavily on the subject from the B2C angle.

The concept of CE received significance in the literature in the 1990s (Carbone and Haeckel, 1994; Johnston, 1999; Pine II and Gilmore, 1998, 1999). In spite of the fact that CE has attracted the attention of both professionals and scholars, the literature review reveals that there is a dearth of studies on this significant topic in B2B exchanges. An early definition of the term ‘customer experience’ was given in the consumer behaviour literature by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), who define it as a concept that is restricted to customers’ emotions impacted by interaction with the product or service consumed. Later, time was recognised as a key parameter in the formation of the present customer experience (Gupta and Vajic, 2000; Verhoef et al., 2009). Perhaps the prevalent definition of customer experience is that provided by Verhoef et al. (2009, p.32), asserting that the “customer experience construct is holistic in nature and involves the customer’s cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses to the retailer”. However, this definition is very broad and lacks empirical evidence, and it reinforces the view that customer experience is a multi-dimensional construct.

Most of the previous studies not only fail to provide empirical evidence of customer experience, instead relying primarily on conceptual work (Berry et al., 2006; Haeckel et al., 2003; Hogan et al., 2005; Jain et al., 2017; Poulsson and Kale, 2004;

Schmitt, 1999; Shaw and Ivens, 2002; Verhoef et al., 2009), but are also restricted to the B2C context (Brakus et al., 2009; Edvardsson et al., 2005; Homburg et al., 2017; Kandampully et al., 2018; Klaus and Maklan, 2013; McLean and Wilson, 2016; Puccinelli et al., 2009; Schouten et al., 2007). To provide a true understanding of the customer experience in B2B, it is necessary to conceptualise it by providing empirical evidence, taking into account the nature of the experience that evolves over time (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016) and the B2B environment characteristics, which this research aims to do.

1.3. Problem and rationale for the research

The necessity of conceptualising CE in B2B stems from the importance that experience occupies during business exchanges. Delivering a positive customer experience is a key driver for business success (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016) particularly in B2B where CE plays a central part in customer's satisfaction and behavioural outcomes (Chen and Chen, 2010). Understanding CE provides the necessary knowledge for the better management of the supplier resources as well as achieving higher rates of customer loyalty (Jain et al., 2017). In addition, given the importance of interpersonal relationships in B2B (Palmer, 2010) as well as the long-term nature of most B2B exchanges (Tuli et al., 2007), understanding CE in B2B is crucial.

The increasing importance of customer experience comes as a result of the progression of the economy into an experience economy (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998, 1999) where managing CE is a key constituent for building customer loyalty (Crosby and Johnson, 2007), achieving competitive advantage and differentiation (Bolton et al., 2014; Jain et al., 2017; Palmer, 2010; Verhoef et al., 2009). Schmitt (1999) argues that companies focus on creating experience for their customers, supporting the idea

that “what people really desire are not products but satisfying experiences” (Abbott, 1955, p. 40),

Surprisingly, despite the growing interest in the CE, empirical attempts to explore CE from the point of view of B2B are extremely limited. They focus on innovation management, product development and CE as a result of collaborating with the supplier (cf. Al-Zu’bi and Tsinopoulos, 2012; Magnusson, 2009; Petersen et al., 2003). It is fair to say that the research relevant to B2B is that by Lemke et al. (2011), although even they focus on the B2B customer experience along with that of consumers in the B2C. Therefore, the result lacks adequate clarity and significance for B2B, and CE, in this context, continues to be insufficiently explored. In addition, despite their interesting contribution using the repertory grid technique, they focused on one dimension of the experience which is the cognitive response (hedonism of product category, involvement, product complexity, relationality), hence lack the holistic nature of CE as a multi-dimensional construct consisting not only of the cognitive response but also emotional, behavioural, sensorial, and social ones (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). As a result, their conclusions lack a clear picture of the CE concept as well as generalisability.

In another example, lacking empirical evidence, Zolkiewski et al. (2017) provide a theoretical framework focused on managing CE and the outcomes for the customer. They suggest a conceptual model that captures a general strategic approach to understanding CE in B2B. However, the model is too broad, and it is neither clear what CE is consisting of nor what the customer’s outcome would be.

More recently, McColl-Kennedy et al. (2019) adopted text mining and a big data approach to uncover B2B companies’ learnings. However, in spite of considering both cognitive and emotional responses, their work still does not clearly capture other important dimensions of the CE such as the social response (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016;

Verhoef et al., 2009) that may develop during business exchange between suppliers and customers (Paulssen and Roulet, 2017). Moreover, the cognitive experience they have modelled was constrained to complaints, compliments and suggestions, which do not provide an overall reflection of the cognitive process the customer goes through when evaluating the supplier's performance in B2B such as meeting objectives, meeting deadlines, meeting budget (Gounaris, 2005).

One surprising fact is that, disregarding the restricted scope of previous studies, they deal with the CE concept in a vague way. They fail to define CE or its measurement clearly; instead, they use proxy measures such as satisfaction and service quality. Service quality is conceptualised in multichannel settings as the quality of CE across several channels (Sousa and Voss, 2006). Likewise, the CE with the service provider is directly related to the level of satisfaction the customer has (Chandrashekar et al., 2007).

Customer experience is a distinct construct (Lemon and Verhoef 2016). However, in order to present its importance, it is worth discussing how it differs from other related marketing constructs such as satisfaction, service quality, relationship quality, customer relationship management (CRM) and customer engagement. Customer satisfaction refers to the expected level of service/product compared to what is actually gained (Oliver, 1980). Satisfaction occurs as a result of the experience because customers judge their satisfaction level based on the experience they perceive; hence, experience is an antecedent of satisfaction. It is worth noting that experience is not separate/isolated from satisfaction, since satisfaction takes place as a result of the experience gained and for this, we can argue that experience occurs prior to satisfaction (Kranzbühler et al., 2018; Mascarenhas et al., 2006).

In terms of service quality, it can be argued that CE is more comprehensive than service quality as experience represents the customer responses to the company's offerings during the customer's entire purchasing journey (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016); thus, it is

plausible that experience takes place before, during and after the purchase process. Moreover, service quality is a key aspect for experience formation, hence it has been considered an antecedent of CE (Mittal et al., 1999). Indeed, it can be argued that customer experience is distinct from service quality and investigating it is more crucial (Lemke et al., 2011; Maklan and Klaus, 2011; Payne et al., 2008).

With regard to the relationship quality construct, its most agreed upon measures are trust, commitment and satisfaction (Crosby et al., 1990; Hennig-Thurau, 2000; Hewett et al., 2002). It can be argued that these measures are inevitable in business relationships, and hence are important to understand the CE concept which takes place during relationships and interactions between exchange partners (Lemon and Verhoef 2016; Verhoef et al., 2009). To illustrate this, trust, the degree of confidence between suppliers and customers (Das and Teng, 1998), may influence CE because it decreases efforts needed to monitor business relationships (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Commitment, the measure of the ongoing relationship (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), may have an influence on the CE because the continued relationship reflects the level of ties and engagement among individuals involved. It can be argued that trust and commitment can be antecedent of experience while satisfaction (as discussed earlier) can be a consequence of experience.

The difference between the customer relationship management (CRM) and CE is highlighted by Meyer and Schwager (2007). They outline that CE represents the subjective response of the customer towards a firm, whereas CRM represents what a firm knows about the customer history record such as orders, returns and purchases. Additionally, CE represents customer responses to the encounter (Verhoef et al., 2009), whilst CRM seeks to handle interactions between customers and firms (Hu et al., 2013) paying attention to chasing customers' actions.

Customer engagement involves more interactive customers. It has three dimensions: cognitive, emotional and behavioural that lead to customer's involvement (Brodie et al., 2011) through direct contribution (purchasing behaviour), and indirect contribution (incentivised referral programmes, word-of-mouth, and the customer's feedback) (Kumar et al., 2010; Pansari and Kumar, 2017). In order to see the boundaries between customer engagement and CE, let's consider one of the most important CE definitions suggested by Lemon and Verhoef (2016) who posit that CE involves customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial, and social responses towards a firm through the entire purchase journey. From this, it is reasonable to argue that CE is broader than customer engagement as customer engagement focuses on cognitive, emotional and behavioural measures, whereas customer experience also uses further measures such as sensorial and social. Further, it can be argued that customer engagement involves the customer's actions towards the firm through feedback, whereas this is not necessary with CE. Moreover, CE takes place through the entire purchasing journey, whereas customer engagement may not; hence, CE is more crucial.

Another surprising point comes when considering the fact that the literature related to B2B marketing has shown how the aspects of organisational buying behaviour, along with the unique traits of the B2B sectors (e.g. inertia between supplier and customer), render the two contexts (B2B and B2C) adequately different to justify the examination of CE in relation to B2B. This is especially true when B2B customers are likely to stay loyal to their suppliers if they have a positive experience with them (Verhoef, 2003). It can therefore be argued that offering a pleasant customer experience is more critical to a B2B supplier than it is to B2C manufacturers or service providers (Avlonitis and Gounaris, 1999), and so without a well-reported and empirically approved conceptualisation and measurement of CE in a B2B context, an

important gap exists in the literature. Filling this gap helps to make the extant literature both more meaningful and pragmatic; two attributes that are important in pushing forward the existing literature (Moorman et al., 2019).

While there are a multitude of explanations for this gap, two in particular are worth looking at, and they both relate to CE's experiential and behavioural nature. The first is the substantial departure made by the marketing field from utilising methods that rely on self-reported measures, even though these are essential when studying behavioural and experiential constructs such as CE. Although this departure is probably a fair decision, considering the reasonable concerns about using certain data, such as the bias from common method variance, the reality is that it is still very difficult to use impartial data to capture CE as the concept is highly subjective. The second factor relates to the context of B2B. It is far simpler in the B2C context to formulate experiments to examine behaviours or experiential occurrences and overcome any concerns related to subjective data. With that said, the B2B environment is obviously far more challenging in terms of creating experiments that adequately control for all applicable conditions that must be restricted before the findings are dependable. Another challenge to overcome within the B2B context is the willingness to participate in experiments.

Indeed, this is true when considering the complexity of the B2B context. In B2C, the experience is individually perceived by the consumer, while in B2B there are many individuals in the decision-making team (Hakansson et al., 2009) who are involved in the procuring and liaising process with the supplier, and thus it can be found that different individuals perceive different experiences depending on their interactions with the supplier and their objectives and roles in the firm (Zolkiewski et al., 2017) which makes CE more difficult to capture. Furthermore, during a B2B

exchange, the purchasing party's priorities and motivations are different from those of a customer in a B2C interaction such as the more rational motivation of the B2B customers associated with their commercial decisions.

The study of customer experience is still an emerging stream of research in marketing, and it has been limited to the consumer context (Brakus et al., 2009; Chang and Horng, 2010; Homburg et al., 2017; Kandampully et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2011; Klaus and Maklan, 2012) despite the profound importance that customer experience also has for suppliers in the B2B context (Chen and Chen, 2010; Lemke et al., 2011; Palmer 2010). Moreover, customer experience accumulates over time (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Verhoef et al., 2009), but no empirical evidence exists to demonstrate the process by which past experiences combine with the most recent ones to explain customer satisfaction and reported behaviour in B2B. Thus, the specificity of B2B exchanges calls for a particular examination.

1.4. Research aim and objectives

With this significant literature gap in mind, together with the likely reasons behind it, this research aims to reveal insight into the CE concept, its management and what it means for the suppliers of B2B services, and contribute to previous studies by carrying out a thorough examination of this important subject in the context of B2B. Our findings are designed to assist practitioners and academics alike by giving them a better understanding of B2B customers' experiences, and enabling them to measure and manage those experiences more effectively.

To meet this, the study seeks to deliver on the following research objectives:

1. Identify the dimensions of the CE concept in the B2B context.

2. Identify the drivers of CE in the B2B context and their relative significance.
3. Examine the influence of time in the formation of the present customer experience.
4. Examine the consequences of receiving positive customer experience in terms of customers' satisfaction and subsequent reported behaviour.

1.5. Research methodology

To deliver the research objectives, the empirical data were collected through two studies. Study 1 has a mixed-method approach, involving both qualitative and quantitative phases. The qualitative phase is necessary to generate the measures of CE as well as confirm the conceptual model, while the quantitative phase helps to collect the first quantitative sample to refine and purify the newly developed measures. Thus, Study 1 helps meet the first and second research objectives. Study 2 is a panel study which helps to collect the second quantitative sample required to validate the measures of CE through the first wave. In Study 2, the data are collected longitudinally from the same sample to statistically examine the impact of past experience on the present experience as well as to assess the relative drivers; and also to provide empirical evidence of the impact of the experience on customer satisfaction and reported behaviours in terms of repeated purchase and word-of-mouth. Thus, Study 2 helps to meet the third and fourth research objectives.

To collect Study 1 data, 12 in-depth interviews were conducted in Scotland with business customers using professional service providers in the areas of advertising and marketing agencies, legal firms, and accounting and auditing firms.

The quantitative study relied on 146 completed responses using the same criteria as the qualitative study. Study 2 relied on longitudinal data in the UK collected from the sample with a timeframe of three-month intervals. A questionnaire was also distributed to customers of the professional service providers, using a sample of 447 respondents in the first wave, 260 in the second wave, and 202 in the third.

1.6. Key contributions

This study advances our understanding of the CE concept in B2B using empirical data from the customers of professional service providers in the UK. It builds on and extends previous findings by addressing how CE is measured, what drives it and what the influence of the CE on the customer behaviours is in the B2B context where the gap remains significant.

By fulfilling the research objectives and sharing the findings of the two completed studies, this research provides key contributions to the existing literature: (1) This research offers empirically validated measures of the CE concept pertinent to the customers of professional service providers; (2) It also offers empirical examination of CE drivers; (3) Using longitudinal data, it examines the influence of time and offers how past experience impacts present experience; (4) It also reveals how a customer's repeated purchases and word-of-mouth in B2B is attributed to the delivery of the CE, thus helping professional service providers to improve customer loyalty and acquisition.

The research is just as significant from the point of view of practitioners, as it highlights the dimensions of the CE and its drivers and implications, enabling practitioners to gain an understanding of the ways and means that lead to increasingly efficient CE management and decision making before recognising the advantages of providing their B2B customers with better experiences.

1.7. Outline of the thesis

Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter which provides an overview of the research subject, the research problem and the aim and objectives of the research, as well as briefly outlining the methodology, contribution and the thesis structure.

Chapter 2 provides the literature review in which various sources of literature related to the CE concept are examined and reflected upon in detail.

Chapter 3 provides the literature review discussing B2B relationships management. This chapter also presents the development of the conceptual framework and the research hypotheses for the study.

Chapter 4 discusses the research philosophy that led to the selection of the methodology and techniques applied in this research. This is achieved by reviewing the available methods and indicating the most appropriate method with the necessary justification.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of Study 1 (mixed method) and study 2 (panel) conducted in this thesis. It also covers the data analysis and interpretation as well as the hypotheses testing.

Chapter 6 displays the findings from Study 1 (mixed method) and Study 2 (panel) against the backdrop of prior studies from the pertinent literature. It also discusses the findings of the research with regard to the research objectives.

Chapter 7 draws conclusions for each research objective based on the findings presented in all previous chapters. It provides the methodology conclusion, theoretical

contribution and managerial implications, and then finally it outlines the limitations of the study and offers suggestions for future research.

1.8. Conclusion

This chapter has provided an introduction to the research by discussing the background, outlining the problem, rationale, aim and objectives, and justifying the importance of expanding our understanding of customer experience in B2B. An outline of the two studies completed in this research has been detailed, as well as the contribution of the study and overview of the thesis' structure. The following chapter will provide a review of the pertinent literature on CE.

CHAPTER 2:

FRAMING THE NOTION OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

2.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to consolidate and critique the existing literature surrounding customer experience (CE). More specifically, it considers the importance of the CE construct in relation to marketing outcomes as well as why customer experience is a distinct construct from other related constructs such as customer satisfaction, service quality, relationship quality, customer relationship management and customer engagement and how it relates to/builds on them.

Following this, the chapter discusses various definitions of customer experience, the theories about it and different measurements which have been presented. More importantly, other perspectives on the customer experience such as customer journey, customer co-creation and touchpoints have been discussed in order to understand the aspects surrounding the experience concept. Afterwards, the factors driving customer experience are discussed highlighting the gap in the B2B context.

In considering this orientation, the literature will be analysed to assess what has occurred in the past in relation to the customer experience construct. Thus, the aim of this chapter is twofold. First it will consider the importance of the concept of CE as a unique construct, highlighting the links with other related marketing constructs. Second, it will introduce the concept of the CE highlighting the definitions and measures, and how it is created. In addition, it will consider the gap pertinent to the existing experience studies particularly in the B2B environment in order to provide a

significant theoretical foundation for building the research framework in the subsequent chapter 3.

2.2. Growing interest in customer experience

Substantial attention has been paid towards the importance of customer experience due to its ability to create competitive advantage and sustainability for companies (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Verhoef et al., 2009). As a result, the appropriate creation of a positive customer experience should be one of a company's first concerns (Meyer and Schwager, 2007; Verhoef et al., 2009). Being able to provide a distinctive customer experience aids in the creation of economic value for companies, and Pine II and Gilmore (1999) have designated the current generation of the economy as an “experience economy”. In addition to competitive advantage, customer experience is also important for building a close relationship with customers (Berry and Carbone, 2007).

Both academics and business professionals have realised that a favourite or preferred customer experience positively influences desired marketing outcomes such as satisfaction, loyalty and word of mouth (Klaus and Maklan, 2013; Kranzbühler et al., 2018). However, even though it has been acknowledged as a worthy consideration (Palmer, 2010), there are limited empirical-based frameworks conceptualising customer experience (Kranzbühler et al., 2018; Verhoef et al., 2009). For example, an attempt to conceptualise the customer experience in B2B was made by Lemke et al. (2011). They conducted a study, including 40 interviews with customers in both B2B and Business-to-Consumer (B2C) contexts, which revealed that experiences such as hedonism, involvement, product complexity and

relationality contribute to relationship outcomes (i.e. commitment, purchase, retention, word of mouth). It must be noted that while this study was fundamentally qualitative in nature, its findings have not yet been validated with quantitative work, nor has a clear understanding been provided in terms of customer experience in B2B.

Later, Klaus and Maklan (2013) considered CE's importance through its direct links to the desired marketing outcomes, namely: customer satisfaction, word of mouth and repurchase intention. Triantafillidou and Siomkos (2014) concur that there is evidence that word of mouth and behavioural intention, as a post-consumption process, have been influenced by experience consumption. Thus, managing the experiential offering is vital if companies want to achieve their marketing strategy outcomes, and they should pay particular attention to their offerings in order to get positive word of mouth.

Even before these findings, Mascarenhas et al. (2006) had affirmed that a number of firms were already constantly paying attention to total customer experience in order to create long-lasting customer loyalty. They observed that revealed purchase and usage behaviour are the key markers of behavioural loyalty. Moreover, it is often conditioned by customer satisfaction, and is historically measured in the purchasing of one's brand and/or competing brands (Mascarenhas et al., 2006). Thus, if a company provides a preferred customer experience, this leads to the creation of loyal and long-term customers. As a consequence of this action, those companies grow, reap benefits, become more sustainable as business entities and are more competitive in the market.

CE plays a significant role in the success of a commercial entity because it focuses on a customer's responses to a company's product offering throughout the

customer's entire purchase journey (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016); its significance must therefore be expounded. However, indeed, while studies have considered the conceptual influences of CE in B2C, what is missing is profound research in the B2B context, which would enable companies to gain a clearer understanding of the experience the customers with their suppliers in order to allow better management and delivery of satisfactory experiences.

To conclude, this part has highlighted the increase of interest in CE in relation to marketing outcomes. However, when building the conceptual framework in Chapter 3, a deeper discussion will be provided in terms of how customer experience influences relevant marketing outcomes in B2B.

Significantly, the importance of CE not only relies on identifying how it links with marketing outcomes, but also requires an understanding of the extent to which the CE construct is distinct and perhaps relates to/builds on other similar marketing constructs. This will be discussed in the subsequent section.

2.3. Customer experience and other related constructs

Early attempts that sought to understand the notion of customer experience revolve around a broad economic perspective that experience is a distinct economic offering different from goods and services, given that a customer enjoys a memorable consumption when buying either goods or services, thus originally buys an experience first and foremost (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998). This is not surprising as it can be traced back to a very early finding by Abbot (1955), who argued that people are not seeking a product but actually seeking a desirable experience. Thus, it can be concluded that customer experience is not a relatively new emergent concept. As a result, a key

question arises here with regard to what extent the concept of customer experience is distinct from or builds on other related customer-based constructs such as customer satisfaction, relationship quality, service quality, customer relationship management, and customer engagement. A more in-depth discussion on each of these constructs follows in the next sections.

2.3.1. Customer satisfaction and customer experience

Given the essence of customer satisfaction, which is the expected level of the performance of the service/product offered in relation to what is actually obtained (Oliver, 1980), we understand that the concept of experience is not in isolation from the concept of satisfaction but rather, beyond that, the level of the customer satisfaction will be determined according to the experience received as a result of dealing with a product/service provider, hence we believe that the customer experience concept is distinct from customer satisfaction, and more importantly, satisfaction is an important consequence of experience (Kranzbühler et al., 2018; Mascarenhas et al., 2006).

However, previous studies suffer from certain confusion with regard to the two concepts: customer experience and customer satisfaction. For instance, the customer experience concept is virtually directly linked with the concept of satisfaction to explain the degree of loyalty customers are prepared to show to the seller (Chandrashekar et al., 2007). Similarly, an estimated experience with regard to the extent to which the customer's expectations are fulfilled has been used as a measure of satisfaction (Gerpott et al., 2001).

More importantly, it can be argued that both customer satisfaction and customer experience are inseparable in terms of occurrence. Furthering this point, Mascarenhas et al. (2006) have discussed the notion of customer satisfaction being influenced by the total customer experience; Grace and O’Cass (2004), through an empirical study of 254 bank customers, determined that the more positive a customer’s perception of service experience is, the more positive their feelings, brand attitudes and satisfaction levels are. This in turn would inevitably lead to more loyalty towards the bank or an establishment in general. Another study of 447 customers in the tourism sector found that perceived experience has a direct influence on satisfaction (Chen and Chen, 2010). Based on these studies, it is obvious to see the importance of the customer’s experience in influencing satisfaction, which is undoubtedly a significant factor in achieving the customer’s needs and wants and ensuring continuity or obtaining new customers.

2.3.2. Service quality and customer experience

Attention and development of service quality as an important marketing concept has been majorly considered since the 1980s due to the increase in the importance of service marketing (Zeithaml et al., 2006) with its intangible features such as skills, information, knowledge and relationship (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). The critical question here is to what extent is the customer experience distinct from the service quality concept.

To begin with, service quality encompasses the assessment of the service performance in terms of consumer expectations and perceptions, and the most widely known model for measuring this is SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The

literature around SERVQUAL is massive and well documented, so the purpose here is not to review these enormous studies that have particularly sought to validate this scale, but rather to briefly confirm that it is not built for today's experience focus. Despite the wide use of SERVQUAL, it has been challenged by many scholars due to its conceptual problems (Cronin and Taylor 1992), methodological issues, particularly when employed in B2B services due to the origin of its development in the consumer context (Gounaris, 2005), and also its controversial generalisability and outcomes (Maklan and Klaus, 2011; Newman 2001; Seth et al., 2005).

Arguably, customer experience is more comprehensive than service quality as the experience focuses on the customer responses to the company's offerings throughout the entire purchasing journey (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016); hence, it can be believed that experience probably occurs before, during and after the purchase. More importantly, service quality is an important factor for experience; therefore, it has been considered an antecedent of customer experience (Mittal et al., 1999). Indeed, it can be argued that customer experience is distinct from service quality (Payne et al., 2008) and investigating it is more crucial.

However, some ambiguity still exists. For example, one pattern that is apparent in the literature, particularly regarding a service-related experience, is to blur the borders between customer experience and service quality, for instance, the concept of multichannel service quality considered to represent the general quality of the service experience encountered by a customer (Sousa and Voss, 2006).

To conclude, although the field of service quality has been well documented in the marketing literature, the presence of customer experience has been lately recognised as a distinct construct (Lemke et al., 2011; lemon and Verhoef 2016).

2.3.3. Relationship quality and customer experience

Relationship quality has been mainly developed in the B2B context and is considered one of the most important constructs in the relationship marketing literature (Woo and Ennew, 2004). The main focus of relationship quality is to evaluate the strength of the relationships between suppliers and customers (Smith, 1998) as well as the overall climate of the relationships in the business context (Johnson, 1999).

Previous studies have almost exclusively conceptualised relationship quality as being made up of three measures: trust, commitment and satisfaction (e.g. Crosby et al., 1990; Hennig-Thurau, 2000; Hewett et al., 2002; Smith, 1998), while Rauyrueen and Miller (2007) have some variability by adding perceived quality to these three measures. However, others have a different view of the measures of relationship quality, such as Woo and Ennew (2004) who view relationship quality as a higher order of cooperation, adaptation and atmosphere. Trust and commitment are important measures in the marketing relationship (Gounaris, 2005; Hüttinger et al., 2012).

In terms of the link with CE, it can be argued that the most agreed relationship quality measures such as trust, commitment and satisfaction are inevitable in business relationships, and thus are important to understand the CE which occurs as a result of interactions and relationships during business exchanges (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Furthering this, trust, as a degree of confidence and reliability between exchange partners (Das and Teng, 1998), is an important relationship measure (Kang et al., 2013) and may have an influence on the customer experience, because it lowers the

efforts required to monitor a business relationship (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Commitments, as a measure of the ongoing business relationship (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), may also have an influence on the CE because the continued business relationship reflects the extent of the level of ties and engagement within individuals involved.

Relationship quality helps to inform an understanding of customer relationships, hence a better understanding of the CE construct and its related antecedents and consequences. CE is a distinct construct from relationship quality, given that relationship quality measures such as satisfaction can be a consequence of experience as discussed earlier (in the satisfaction section), whilst trust and commitment can be antecedents of the experience. A detailed discussion around trust, commitment and satisfaction as well as other antecedents and consequences of the CE will be provided in the subsequent chapter when discussing the model development.

2.3.4. Customer relationship management and customer experience

The origin of customer relationship management (CRM) evolves from the technology context during the 1990s in order to handle the customer's technological solutions. CRM is often used synonymously with relationship marketing (Parvatiyar and Sheth, 2001); however, relationship marketing seeks mainly to build strong relationships with customers, while CRM focuses on producing maximum value results for the various stakeholders through optimising these relationships as suggested by Payne and Frow (2005, p.168) who define customer relationship management as “a strategic approach that is concerned with creating improved

shareholder value through the development of appropriate relationships with key customers and customer segments. CRM unites the potential of relationship marketing strategies and IT to create profitable, long-term relationships with customers and other key stakeholders”. Within this context, further studies have linked the appropriate use of CRM strategies with the customer life value which in turn leads to an increase in shareholder’s value (e.g. Kumar and Shah, 2009).

In terms of the connection between customer experience and customer relationship management, Payne and Frow (2005) argue that the strategic approach of CRM helps to identify whether the superior customer experience is due to the value proposition. Meanwhile, the difference between customer experience and CRM is outlined by Meyer and Schwager (2007). They suggest that customer experience focuses on the subjective response of the customer towards a company, while CRM focuses on what the company really knows about the customer history record such as orders, returns and purchases. Moreover, customer experience focuses on the customer responses to the encounter (Verhoef et al., 2009), while CRM seeks to handle interactions between customers and their firms (Hu et al., 2013) focusing mainly on chasing customers’ actions.

However, customer experience extends beyond CRM (Homburg et al., 2017) and it is a more integral approach as it helps to overcome CRM challenges such as customer retention (Palmer, 2010), and hence, it can be argued that customer experience is broader and more crucial than CRM. Customer experience includes people’s cognitive responses and emotional feelings towards their service /product providers and also how this delivered experience can determine the long-term customer loyalty (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

2.3.5. Customer engagement and customer experience

Customer engagement has emerged due to the growth of interest in customer management during this decade. In short, engaging customers means making them more interactive and encouraging them to initiate contact with a company and thus companies reap more profits. The following discussion seeks to identify to what extent the customer experience differs from customer engagement.

Various definitions have been expressed to clarify the customer engagement concept from different angles. For example, Pansari and Kumar (2017, p. 295) define customer engagement “as the mechanics of a customer’s value addition to the firm, either through direct or/and indirect contribution.” This definition is based on earlier work by Kumar et al. (2010), where direct contribution refers to purchasing behaviour, and indirect contribution refers to referral behaviour through incentivised referral programmes, influencer behaviour such as word-of-mouth, and knowledge behaviour through the feedback the customer provides to the firm. From these definitions, we can see that customer engagement is holistic and comprises many customer’s activities. However, Brodie et al. (2011) have a different view of the nature of the customer engagement as they see it as a psychological condition that takes place in a particular context due to interaction and co-creation of the customer experience and it has three dimensions: cognitive, emotional and behavioural. From this definition, it can be seen that customer engagement is an incentivised condition that is cognitively, emotionally, and behaviourally processed and ultimately leads to participation and involvement with the firm. Within this stream, Vivek et al. (2012) provide a broad definition focusing on the intensity of the customer’s participation that can be triggered by either the customer or the firm.

In order to see the border between customer experience and customer engagement, let's present one of the most recent customer experience definitions by Lemon and Verhoef (2016, p. 71) who define customer experience as “a multidimensional construct focusing on a customer’s cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial, and social responses to a firm’s offerings during the customer’s entire purchase journey.” From this definition, we can argue that customer experience is broader than customer engagement as customer engagement focuses on three dimensions, cognitive, emotional and behavioural (Brodie et al., 2011), while customer experience has more dimensions (cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensorial and social). Moreover, it can be argued that customer engagement involves the customer actions towards the firm, while the customer experience may not. More importantly, customer experience occurs during the entire purchasing journey of the customer (before, during, and after purchase), while customer engagement may not. On the other hand, it can be argued that participation or engagement of the customer with the firm leads to an experience. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) considers engagement as part of the experience. Thus, it is believed that customer engagement is related to customer experience, and moreover investigating customer experience is more important as it would provide a deeper understanding of the marketing relationships and customer behaviour from a broader and holistic view. The subsequent chapter discusses the various definitions and measures of the CE highlighting the gap in the literature.

2.4. The definitions and measures of customer experience

When attempting to define a construct, it makes sense to begin with a more general linguistic definition of the concept in question. The Oxford Dictionary’s definition of “experience” refers to “an event or occurrence that leaves an impression on someone”. Two

factors emerge instantly when examining this broad definition: its singularity, as shown by its emphasis on an “event” as opposed to “events” plural, and also the way it refers to the “impression” that said event will have on the person. While the aforementioned singularity may help to define experience in general, there remains a possibility that the recipient may be subject to repeated exposures. This is particularly true in a business environment, as sellers will want to build a long-lasting relationship with their customers. Therefore, when defining the word “experience” in relation to business, the singularity could refer to adding an extra “single layer” of a repeated event, with each placed on top of the next, and building up during the ongoing relationship, leading to the customer’s experience becoming something that accumulates as time goes by (Schmitt et al., 2015; Verhoef et al., 2009), and the experience in the present will be connected to the past experiences with the business agent in question (Mittal et al., 1999; Naylor et al., 2008). With regard to the latter point relating to the “impression” that is left after successive exposures, the CE-focused literature has tended to concentrate on the emotional or physical interaction that the buyer experiences with the product or service (Candi et al., 2013), which can be seen as cutting across the purchasing process’s numerous stages and the buyer’s encounters with the seller, such as the pursuit of alternatives, consumption and the stage that follows the sale (Verhoef et al., 2009).

An early attempt to define CE was confined to the perspective of satisfied experience in the following: “what people really desire are not products but satisfying experiences” (Abbot, 1955, p. 40). However, the 1980s was the era of developing understanding around the concept of customer experience. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) were among the first to define it in 1982. They explained CE as a personal event or occurrence, rooted in interaction with the consumed product or service, which adds important emotional significance. According to Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), early measures of experience connect the consumption of experience to the pursuit of

pleasure and hedonism. This definition restricts the customer experience to only the consumption process and ascribes the experience generated to product consumption, therefore lacking the connection with customers' behavioural outcomes. Their view of the experiential concept was purely conceptual with no empirical evidence, and limited to the symbolism, hedonism and aestheticism of the consumption. The limitations of these ideas are to be expected, given that they were developed in the early stages of customer experience analysis.

Later in the 1990s, more definitions emerged. Carbone and Haeckel (1994, p.1) put forward a similar explanation stating that CE refers to the “takeaway impression formed by people's encounters with products, services, and businesses—a perception produced when humans consolidate sensory information”. They considered that experience had been measured as a collective of impressions. Customers' impressions are evaluated continuously and separated into a pair of groups: an emotional group and a rational group. These impressions are either clear and visible or very superficial, constituting a general idea. These considerations came out of research in relation to Disney and retailing, hence this study lacks the potential to be appropriately applied to the measurement of experience in B2B. Similarly, choosing a psychological approach, Otto and Richie (1996) decided that subjective and emotional interaction experienced by the consumer should be known as service experience; this phenomenon is very important in evaluating the experience perceived, and satisfaction with the service provider. Their study was conducted in the tourism sector in scale development, but it lacks both understanding and applicability in B2B.

Later, possibly in an attempt to be inclusive in describing how CE occurs rather than defining it, Pine II and Gilmore (1998, p.98) posited that “an experience occurs when a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event. Commodities are fungible, goods tangible, services intangible, and experiences memorable.” Their work, although important in defining and conceptualising customer experience as a new paradigm, tends to be highly related to the economic side and lacks empirical evidence. What is key here is describing experience as a memorable event, thus establishing the importance of time in forming experience. Time as an important cause of experience will be further discussed in the subsequent section.

Further, in a conceptual work that lacks empirical evidence, five types of experience are introduced by Schmitt (1999). We develop sensory experience through the senses such as hearing, taste, smell and sight. Affective experience is the experience of the individual’s inner feelings and moods. These emotional feelings may be positive or negative towards the product, brand, marketing campaign or other marketing activities. It is therefore necessary to identify the effects or stimuli that create a certain feeling. The next type of experience is think experience, which requires a process of mental thinking and cognition, for example in solving problems and engaging customers creatively. Act experience improves the lifestyle of customers by making them engaged in physical experiences, giving them various alternatives and interactions. The final type is relate experience which is a combination of all the above-mentioned experiences as well as a concept of going beyond them by relating individual to a social community.

Thus far, these definitions are in the early stages of development of the experience construct and none of these definitions is able to capture every aspect of a customer's interaction and engagement with suppliers, providing neither a clear and comprehensive understanding nor empirical evidence of the experience.

Soon after that, Gupta and Vajic (2000) contributed by stating that experience is a socially created and context-specific phenomenon; and with this in mind, the appropriate theoretical framework for studying it should focus on the complex relationship between individuals cognitively and contextually. Also, it should transform the analysis from cognition into social interaction. Accordingly, experience is created through individual social activities. Haeckel et al. (2003) correspond in their definition with this idea of emotional involvement as they note that total experience is about the feelings customers take away having consumed a product. Additionally, they warn that companies that treat the customer experience in isolated pockets of their business will be disappointed with the outcomes. In line with this, Shaw and Ivens (2002) agree that customer experience is not only physical or emotional, but a combination of both. They also state that throughout their experience journey, consumers instinctively compare their experience with their expectations. However, it must be noted that though these studies are potent, they lack empirical evidence in both B2C and B2B contexts.

Later, Poulsson and Kale (2004) extend Pine II and Gilmore's (1998) ideas of CE being staged by the product provider by describing a "co-creation" between provider and customer in which the customer derives value from the intensity of the feelings associated with the experience. It is justifiable to believe then that a successful customer experience is wholly positive, engaging, enduring and socially

fulfilling in its physical and emotional aspects across all major levels of one's chain of consumption. Moreover, it is brought about by a distinct market offering that calls for active interaction between providers and consumers (Mascarenhas et al., 2006). This considered, a customer experience is built over an extended period of time, starting before the actual sales experience or transaction to include interactions before and after actual consumption of goods (Voss and Zomerdijk, 2007). Unlike Shaw and Ivens' (2002) two-part categorisation of customer experience, Poulsson and Kale (2004) collaborated to decide on five dimensions. These are: personal relevance, novelty, surprise, learning and engagement. The first dimension, personal relevance, refers to the inner state of the individual and willingness to engage in a particular experience. The second dimension, novelty, can be defined as a shift in terms of stimuli from previous experience (Poulsson and Kale, 2004). The third dimension is surprise. They consider this the most important feeling that forms an experience. An experience is surprising when a customer has unanticipated outcomes against predetermined expectations, and thus, in order to provide a customer with a surprising experience, suppliers should evaluate customers' expectations beforehand – or at least know what they will think about the offering. The fourth dimension is learning. To be able to say that learning occurs, we must take into consideration some items related to learning such as motivation, cues, response and reinforcement. The fifth dimension is engagement. Engagement means customer participation and can be caused in an experience by direct interaction; for example, customers would be engaged when the provider gives effective feedback. Again, these propositions are entirely well founded, but this study lacks evidence in a B2B context.

Moreover, although considered and determined with a slant towards the B2C side of things, Mascarenhas et al. (2006) identify a further measure of total experience focusing on both physical and emotional experiences, but also paying particular attention to the unique marketing offering that can include high customer engagement with the provider. The developed customer experience from a business interaction with the provider contains an internal component that can be classified as emotional, intellectual and social, and has an external component related to physical attributes of the actual product, whether tangible or service-based, at all points of contact and engagement with the provider. Hence, a customer retains the experience that developed before, during and after product consumption (Mascarenhas et al., 2006). Since emotional and subjective experience is completely personal, it may vary from time to time and also depends on the extent of the person's perception of it (Mascarenhas et al., 2006). Although this study lacks a longitudinal element to validate the evidence of time, it clearly shows the importance of conducting longitudinal studies to determine the extent of change and impact of past experiences on the present. This notion will be further elaborated upon in a separate part later. In addition to this, a further study by Gentile et al. (2007), related to B2C aesthetic sense, pleasure and excitement, conceptualised several dimensions of experience: sensorial, emotional, cognitive, pragmatic, lifestyle and relational. Similarly, Brakus et al. (2009) developed five dimensions of experience: sensory, affective, intellectual, behavioural, and social. This is a scale development for brand experience, again lacking evidence in B2B.

Perhaps the most significant conceptual framework was introduced by Verhoef et al. (2009). They outlined that customer experience consists of cognitive,

affective, emotional, social responses and added the total customer experience through the purchase lifecycle (i.e. search, purchase, consumption, after-sale phase). This is broad and includes experience components from previous research and has added some elements that influence the customer experience in retailing. This was a conceptual work used as a tool for inspiring further studies.

Probably, the relevant work for the B2B context is that by Lemke et al. (2011). This study echoes the much earlier work of Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) in the way it highlights using hedonistic qualities to measure successful customer experience. In this study, CE is defined as “the customer’s subjective response to the holistic direct and indirect encounter with the firm, including but not necessarily limited to the communication encounter, the service encounter and the consumption encounter” (Lemke et al., 2011, p.848). This definition does not clearly define CE, as the statement “...including but not necessarily limited to...” reveals that the boundaries and the ingredients of CE remain subject to further interpretation. In addition, it is more relevant to the B2C context rather than B2B, as evident by the reference to the “consumption encounter”.

Once more, ignoring the B2B context, two studies delved further into measuring customer experience. Using mortgage experiences, Klaus and Maklan (2013) decided that experience consists of four dimensions. The first is product experience. This dimension refers to the available choices of offerings that the customer can choose from. The second is outcome focus, which concentrates on reducing transactional costs. The third is moments of truth; this dimension refers to the way that it impacts customers when they deal with a service provider when a problem occurs, and it also reflects the flexibility and skills of the provider. The fourth

is peace of mind. This dimension is associated with the emotional experience of the customer before, during and after purchase. This is an empirical study using scale development in one single service setting (mortgage) and therefore lacks the potential for general application, even for B2C. The second study conducted by Pareigis et al. (2012) confirms what others have specified before it: that customer experience consists of cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses to service providers (Pareigis et al., 2012) and therefore must be measured accordingly. This was an empirical study lacking evidence in the context of B2B.

As mentioned above, many studies have been conducted with regard to defining customer experience construction in B2C, while the B2B context has clearly not been sufficiently considered. The reason for this will be further elaborated upon in the subsequent chapter when considering CE in a B2B context, highlighting key differences in buying behaviour between B2B and B2C. However, given the considerations of a variety of the dimensions of the CE, it is clear that the existing studies share in common two broad dimensions of experience: cognitive and affective responses. Moreover, Lemke et al. (2011), Lemon and Verhoef (2016), Pareigis et al. (2012), Verhoef et al. (2009) and Walter et al. (2010) all agree about the holistic nature of CE.

The subsequent part discusses the customer experience journey in order to understand the various experience perspectives throughout the customer purchasing journey.

2.4.1. Customer experience through customer journey

Customer experience has been conceptualised in terms of the customer's purchase journey as a multi-dimensional construct focusing on the cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensorial, and social responses of the customer towards a supplier's offerings (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Customer journey refers to the purchase cycle in which the customer goes through three phases: the first phase is pre-purchase; the second phase is purchase and the third is post-purchase. This also in line with earlier research by Voss and Zomerdijk (2007), Verhoef et al. (2009) and Puccinelli et al. (2009). Understanding the customer journey helps in understanding the different perspective of the experience during the customer purchasing cycle. The following discusses each of these phases.

The pre-purchase phase includes aspects of the customer's interaction with the product/service prior to the business deal and commercial transaction. This phase incorporates aspects such as need recognition, information search and evaluation (Puccinelli et al., 2009) which may form the initial experience of the customer prior to purchase (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Although experience may start from the beginning of goal recognition (Pieters et al., 1995), little evidence has been provided to support this.

The purchase phase considers the experience gained during the purchase process. This phase encompasses the interactions with the product/ service from the beginning of the selection process until the completion of the payment process (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). This phase, however, is well documented in the marketing literature; for example, marketing mix (Kotler et al., 2018) and atmosphere (Hussain

and Ali, 2015) affect the purchasing decision. Recently, research on customer experience and the customer purchase process has been extended towards the online context (McLean and Wilson, 2016; Rose et al., 2012).

The post-purchase phase is the phase where the customer has a complete idea of the product/service ordered. It is considered the most important phase as it reflects the customer experience after the use of the product or service. This phase covers behaviours related to the true consumption and usage process of the requested product/service (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016); hence, the experience gained through this phase is critical because the customer is able to actually reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of the product/service used. Experience studies related to this phase are limited to the B2C context (e.g., hedonic consumption [Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982], retailing [Carbone and Haeckel, 1994], tourism [Otto and Richie, 1996], consumption [Haeckel et al., 2003], aesthetic experience [Gentile et al., 2007], mortgages experience [Klaus and Maklan, 2013], and cross sectional [Homburg et al., 2017]).

Understanding the phases of the customer purchase journey leads to an understanding that experience is holistic in nature. In addition to this, it can be argued that the post-purchase phase is considered the most crucial phase for investigating experience, because through this phase the potentiality to obtain a more complete overview of what happened in the previous phases is possible, as well as it being plausible that the customer is able to form a justifiable experience after the product/service consumption, which gives a true reflection of the experience that the customer has gone through. However, mapping customer experience through customer journey within B2B remains a key challenge due to the complexity of the environment such as

multiple contacts across different levels in the firm (Hollyoake, 2009). In B2B, a humble attempt by Andersson et al. (2017) sought to capture customer experience through customer journey, but it was restricted to the emotional perspective using a qualitative method without providing a complete understanding of the customer experiences that may be formed through different encounters and purchasing journeys; importantly, it neglects the holistic and multidimensional nature of the experience construct (Lemon and Verhoef 2016; Verhoef et al., 2009). Thus, understanding customer experience through the customer journey needs more research with empirical evidence. The subsequent part focuses on the customer co-creation of experience.

2.4.2. Customer co-creation of experience

Researchers progressively realise the importance of customers' involvement in the co-creation process of new products/services (Caru and Cova, 2007; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Verleye, 2015). When considering co-creation, it's important to differentiate between co-creation and co-production. While co-production of customers means that functions are transferred to the customers from the organisations (e.g. self-checkout), co-creation takes place when the customer takes part through purposeful behaviours that tailor the service experience in a unique way (e.g. designing a holiday with holiday makers) (Bolton and Saxena-Iyer, 2009).

However, with the emergence of several studies on co-creation, there is still a lack of deep understanding of the factors that lead to this creation and the link with the customer experience is still ambiguous, particularly in a business environment. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) view the co-creation of the experience from the value viewpoint suggesting that experience co-creation entails customers and

suppliers deciding to collaborate with the intention of creating value. Hence, co-created experience is the basis for generating value for firms. Additionally, co-created experience encompasses customers who choose to engage in the co-creation process, based on their needs, with their suppliers (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Further, Caru and Cova (2007) echo this perspective by suggesting a spectrum of consuming experience. Midway through that spectrum of the experiences which are mainly constructed by customers where they design their own experience (e.g., traditional products, non-profit organisations, organic foods etc), or experiences are primarily constructed by suppliers (e.g., fashion, brands, toys etc) there are co-created experiences which involve development from both customers and their suppliers (e.g., sports, tourism, adventure etc). Clearly, the focus of these studies is particularly on the consumption perspective within the consumer context for which there is also a lack of complete understanding of the key factors behind experience co-creation that may develop as well as the influence on customer behaviour.

There has been an attempt by Payne et al. (2008) to understand how the co-creation of experiences enhances customer learning. In their model, they suggest that relationship experience comprises cognition, emotions and behaviour, and the customer is involved in a process of learning depending on the customer's experience through the relationship with a supplier. At the same time, suppliers gain more understanding about their customers which allows for more enhanced experiences provided and more opportunities offered. Although this co-creation experience focuses on the learning process, which gives suppliers more knowledge about their customers, it doesn't consider the social response to the relationship experience which is an important dimension of the experience (Gupta and Vajic, 2000; Lemon and

Verhoef, 2016; Mascarenhas et al., 2006; Schmitt, 1999; Verhoef et al., 2009). Additionally, the model is limited to the consumer market.

A further study by Verleye (2015) investigates co-creation from the customer viewpoint considering customer characteristics (e.g. expected co-creation benefits), readiness of the customer to take the role as co-creator, availability of the technological tools for supporting the co-creation process, positive connectivity of the customers. This study was conducted among students who were familiar with technology tools. Although it focused on co-creation design services, it didn't consider the interaction relationship at the professional level which would provide more insight into experience co-creation. Thus, this study, despite its contribution, does not offer a full understanding from the customer experience perspective.

There are various views of co-creation in the marketing literature, such as co-creation of the value (Vargo and Lusch, 2004), co-creation of offerings (Bolton and Saxena-Iyer, 2009), co-creation of the voice of the customer (Jaworski and Kohli 2014), co-creation of experience in tourism (Buonincontri and Micera, 2016), co-creation of experience in social media (Rialti et al., 2018), and co-creation of experience in the servicescape (Roy et al., 2019). Despite these various studies on experience co-creations, they do not offer a clear understanding of what exactly creates this experience and what the outcome of this experience is.

The literature holds different views of customer co-creation in the B2B context, and the link with a full understanding of the customer experience remains inadequate. For example, in B2B relationships, "value is experienced over the duration of the service" (Lambert and Enz, 2012, p.1603). They view value as an inseparable event without a clear distinction with experience; however, value is an outcome of the

experience co-creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Other researchers have focused on managing co-creation of value in both B2C and B2B (Payne et al., 2008), value co-creation in B2B services contracts (Ng et al., 2010), co-creation activities in both B2C and B2B (Roser et al., 2013), value co-creation in B2B technology services (Komulainen, 2014), co-creating value within B2B service networks (Chowdhury et al., 2016), co-creation of value experiences (Kohtamäki and Rajala, 2016), brand value co-creation (Iglesias et al., 2017).

To conclude, based on the above literature review, it can be argued that the literature on customer co-creation mostly focuses on value co-creation through customer experience, and more importantly, this link does not clearly provide an in-depth understanding of the customer experience. Customer experience, its causes and outcomes are still not clearly understood, particularly in B2B.

2.4.3. Customer experience and touchpoints

Touchpoints are the points of contact between customers and their sellers. Although utilising touchpoints helps firms to build a good brand image and customer loyalty (Hogan et al., 2005), customer experience is developed as a result of interactions with a service/product provider through various touchpoints (Frow and Payne 2007; Rawson et al., 2013; Stein and Ramaseshan, 2016). From this viewpoint, these touchpoints may occur during various points of time throughout the customer purchase journey (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Verhoef et al., 2009; Zomerdijk and Voss, 2010).

Moreover, a touchpoint is viewed as “an episode of direct or indirect contact with the brand” (Baxendale et al., 2015, p.236). This view resonates with an early suggestion by Meyer and Schwager (2007) where a touchpoint can be directly and

indirectly linked to a company. Meyer and Schwager (2007) posit that direct touchpoints are typically launched by customers and take place during the purchase or usage process, whereas indirect touchpoints, in most cases, encompass spontaneous contact with the customer through, for instance, recommendations or criticisms from peers, advertisements, news, reviews, reports etc. From this perspective, it can be argued that direct touchpoints can be controlled by a company, whilst indirect touchpoints are not necessarily controlled by a company. Supporting this perspective, in a retailing context, Verhoef et al. (2009) further argue that customer experience is not necessarily developed through under-controlled retailing elements such as service interface, retail atmosphere, assortment and price, but rather through elements beyond the retailer's power, such as impact from other individuals/shoppers and aim of shopping. Moreover, these direct and indirect touchpoints are subjectively perceived by customers, and hence customer experience is highly subjective in nature (Lemke et al., 2011).

A closer insight on touchpoints for customer experience is proposed by Lemon and Verhoef (2016) who determine four classifications throughout the customer journey: company-related, business partner-related, customer-related, and external factors. Company-related touchpoints are those touchpoints which the company can design, manage and control such as loyalty programmes, advertising and websites, as well as other brand-related attributes of the marketing mix such as product attributes, sale force, package, price and service. Similarly, with the addition of a business partner as a mediator between a firm and customers, business partner-related touchpoints are those touchpoints where both the company and its partners (e.g. marketing agencies, distribution channels) are jointly involved in designing and managing them. In

contrast, customer-related touchpoints are those touchpoints where the customer has the control rather than the firm, such as the customer choice of a suitable payment method during the purchase process. Finally, the external touchpoints are those touchpoints where the customer or the firm has no influence on the customer experience, such as other customers, peer recommendations and environment. To conclude, from this perspective, touchpoints occur through all the customer journey phases and it can be argued that company-related, business partner-related and customer-related factors are direct touchpoints, while external factors are indirect touchpoints (Meyer and Schwager, 2007).

More importantly, despite the extensive overview of the customer experience touchpoints by Lemon and Verhoef (2016), surprisingly, they have considered touchpoints as part of the experience, which raises confusion about the difference between touchpoints and experience; for instance, they have stated that “These touch points are customer actions that are part of the overall customer experience” (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016, p.78). Here we can see that they have claimed that customer actions towards the firm are touchpoints themselves, and more importantly these touchpoints are considered to be part of the customer experience which makes them a component of experience. However, it can be argued that touchpoints are antecedents of customer experience, not experiences themselves. Thus, a further study to clearly understand more completely the key dimensions of customer experience and its antecedents is required to address this confusion.

Unlike lemon and Verhoef (2016), who look from the angle of managing and controlling the touchpoints, Payne et al. (2017) propose a further classification of the touchpoints based on personal and non-personal interaction from the consumer

perspective and posit that personal touchpoints are those when the consumer directly interacts with the company, while non-personal touchpoints are those in which the personal interaction is absent from the interaction.

There are also different perspectives on touchpoints; for example, Anderl et al. (2016) classified touchpoints based on who initiates the interaction into customer-initiated and firm-initiated. Another study by Baxendale et al. (2015) highlights the importance of a multiple touchpoints perspective (e.g., brand advertising, retailer advertising, in-store communications, WOM, peers' observations, and traditional earned media) on changes in brand preferences taking into consideration the frequency and positivity of these touchpoints as well as the valence of the customer interaction. Using data from the real-time experience tracking method, they found that in-store communication has the most influence among other touchpoints. More recently, touchpoints have been investigated in terms of potential exposure, considering three factors: reach, frequency and positivity (Ieva and Ziliani, 2018). Notably, the above studies have expanded our understanding on touchpoint classification; however, they have focused on the consumer context and the link with a full understanding of customer experience is still unclear.

In terms of B2B touchpoints, there are a few attempts to define them; for example, Aichner and Gruber (2017) classify them into six categories: human-related, product-related, service-related, communication related, spatial-related, and electronic-related. Their findings confirm human-related touchpoints (e.g. meetings, sales staff etc) as the most important to receive customer satisfaction. Despite focusing on touchpoints in B2B, their work mainly considered the importance of these touchpoints for customer satisfaction, ignoring customer experience which has been

identified as an important antecedent of customer satisfaction (Berry et al., 2002; Klaus and Maklan, 2013; Kranzbühler et al., 2018; Mascarenhas et al., 2006). Another study by Hollyoake (2009) has suggested the importance of reviewing touchpoints in order to better monitor customer experience; however, this study is purely conceptual and lacks empirical evidence. A further study by Beverland et al. (2007) focused on brand touchpoints; however, this study lacks connection with customer experience. More recently, McColl-Kennedy et al. (2019) identify a number of touchpoints in a heavy assets industry setting. These touchpoints are: parts, field, workshop, invoicing, control centre, security, and credit and finance. These findings lack generalisability as B2B settings are basically diverse, and what is important for one setting might not be important for another; hence, touchpoints vary in terms of importance (Zolkiewski et al., 2017).

Nonetheless, for a true understanding of customer experience, a comprehensive view of customers' interactions in B2B is required. This is can be more challenged in B2B cases, as touchpoints are far more likely to take place within employee's different roles as well as across companies (Meyer and Schwager, 2007; Zolkiewski et al., 2017).

The subsequent part discusses what creates CE, highlighting the gap in the pertinent literature, particularly in B2B.

2.5. What creates customer experience?

The causes of experience need to be identified in order to understand the dynamics of the experience and how it is created (Walter et al., 2010). However, much emphasis has been placed on the causes of successful B2C customer experience rather

than B2B. Schmitt (1999, p.57) indicates that “experiences occur as a result of encountering, undergoing or living through things”. Experience is formed as a result of external stimuli such as the core service offering, and the performance and interaction process with the service provider (Berry et al., 2006). Since the interaction process and the service offering have different characteristics and environments in B2B, and also due to the lack of empirical evidence for these findings, a further investigation on the B2B context should take place. In addition to this, Meyer and Schwager (2007) affirmed that it is logical that a customer constantly sets expectations based on past experience with the supplier. In the light of this, the customer always compares the previous experience with the current experience and therefore makes judgements on the current experience either positively or negatively. Nevertheless, experience evolves over a certain time and includes learning over time, which implies that past experience is a vital driver of the development of the experience (Gupta and Vajic, 2000). In a holistic, conceptual work on customer experience, past experience has been referenced as a significant dimension in developing a theory-based model due to its role in influencing present experience. Not only is customer experience restricted to the engagement and interaction with the retailer, but also experience develops over time during the purchase lifecycle (Neslin et al., 2006; Verhoef et al., 2009). This leads to the conclusion that experience is not only a spur-of-the-moment occurrence but also evolves over a period of time, and therefore past experience contributes to shaping present experience. The validity of any measure of past experience must be supported by data collected over an extended period of time. Yet there is no study to measure the role of past experience in B2B due to the high cost, both financial and temporal, associated with this type of study.

Further, Berry et al. (2006) identified three antecedents for creating customer experience named as clues. These are, namely, functional clues (technical quality of the offering), mechanic clues (tangible quality associated with the service) and humanic clues (service provider behaviour). These clues together make up the so-called experience and directly affect the extent to which the customer assesses the service provided. In spite of the lack of empirical validation, the following can be concluded: experience is gained by what the supplier offers as well as the interaction process with the supplier. To continue, Voss and Zomerdijk (2007) did not clearly provide an answer to what causes experience but rather outlined five stages (phases) for customer experience creation: physical environment, service employees, the innovative service delivery process, involving fellow customers and back office support. This, justifiably, was an empirical study but focused on innovation services and lacked the necessary understanding of the causes of experience. Similarly, several drivers of experience have been put forward through a study conducted by Walter et al. (2010), namely, core service, physical environment, social interaction, price, payment, atmosphere, guest and occasion. However, this study was conducted in one single setting in restaurants in the B2C context and consequently, the results cannot be generalised for B2B interactions because of the different nature of the work in the business context and different individual interaction objectives. Another example of an industry-specific study which is useful for B2C but not B2B was the study of Swedish public transport by Pareigis et al. (2012). They noted three fundamental constellations that drive experience: identifying, sense-making and using. These findings are related to one single setting in B2C and cannot be used in B2B due to the different aspects that B2B has.

More importantly, while some may argue that Verhoef et al.'s (2009) model of customer experience creation, determinants, dynamics and management strategy has provided holistic drivers of experience that can logically be applied to B2C or B2B interactions, this is not the case. Verhoef et al.'s holistic drivers are the social environment, the service interface, the retail atmosphere, the assortment, the price, customer experience in alternative channels, the retail brand and past customer experience. The social environment refers to the impact of the customer experience due to other customer behaviour in a store; service interface refers to the service person, technology, co-creation and customisation. The retail atmosphere also has an impact on customer experience; this includes design, scents, temperature and music. The assortment could also be described as variety, uniqueness and quality in a store. Another important experience driver is price, which includes loyalty programmes and promotions. Customer experience from an alternative channel is the cause of the current customer experience; for example, the impact of the customer from one channel, such as a store, may be affected by other channels such as the Internet. They also considered the retail brand as the cause of the experience. In addition, past experience is a significant driver of current experience. The categories of their holistic drivers can probably be considered and applied to B2B customer service, although not in their current iterations. A researcher would have to redefine them for the purposes of a B2B application. Proof of their inadequacy is as follows: for example, social environment, which states that the impact of the customer in a store is affected by other customers, cannot be used in B2B as the social environment could be based on other commercial interests and objectives rather than a single individual objective. Also, the retail atmosphere aspects that affect the customer are not applicable in B2B

as the interaction might be happening in the supplier or customer office or through a phone call or other atmospheric interactions. In addition, the moderators described in their model cannot be shifted wholesale to B2B; for example, the type of store, location, culture and season is invalid in B2B due to environmental differences. Therefore, drivers within the B2B context still need to be investigated further.

A further study of customer-perceived performance and value in professional B2B services (consultants, engineers, project management, IT consultants, etc.) by La et al. (2009) identified three factors affecting the perceived performance which related to individuals: interpersonal skills, technical skills and customer orientation. Also, the same study identified two more factors related to the organisation that affect the perceived performance: innovation and reputation. The results generally support the hypotheses that customer-perceived performance is impacted by a firm's internal resources (e.g., technical skills, customer orientation and innovation). In addition, this relationship is contingent upon the country of origin effect, while client-perceived value is moderated by the client's buying experience (La et al., 2009). This study presents a valuable overview of the antecedents of the performance evaluation in B2B professional services; however, it lacks other important exchange drivers such as climate and social exchange as well as the influence on behaviours.

Now, it has been established that experience is produced through dealing and communicating with the service provider and that it is multidimensional. The extant literature, with regard to experience causes, is restricted to the B2C context. Since purchasing process is a key factor driving experience, and customers' buying behaviour in B2B is different from B2C (Jain et al., 2017), it is not applicable to employ B2C experience drivers in a B2B context. As a result, since stimuli in B2B

have different forms and commercial perspectives, applying B2C experience drivers would be inadequate. Thus, an investigation of experience causes or “drivers” is more than necessary. The area of customer experience is so rich and diverse that it is absolutely necessary to split the drivers into B2C concerns and B2B concerns, for the most reliable and generally applicable results – this holds true for apposite measurement of customer experience as well. Additionally, an unavoidable factor in the proper measurement of customer experience is time, especially in the B2B context. The distinguishing feature of a B2B measurement model that has considered and collected data over an extended period of time is one that will best serve an understanding of the dynamic of the customer experience. As noted previously, while conceptual studies have been undertaken, or empirical data collection achieved, none can be relied upon for consistent reference because of their lack of generalisability.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter has comprehensively reviewed the literature relating to customer experience and the limitations of previous studies. It has sought to capture three major parts of the concept of customer experience. First, the importance of the customer experience has been discussed in terms of the marketing outcomes and other related marketing constructs. This chapter has presented how CE is distinct, relates to and builds on other important marketing constructs. Second, the existing definitions and measures of the experience have been presented. Furthermore, other CE aspects such as customer journey, customer co-creation and touchpoints have been discussed. Third, what causes experience has been discussed and the limitations in the literature have been provided.

This review of the literature clearly indicates the significant gap in the literature and the need for a further understanding of CE. The subsequent chapter will provide a review of the pertinent literature on B2B relationships and will also provide the development of the conceptual model and research hypotheses.

CHAPTER 3:

B2B RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AND MODEL DEVELOPMENT FOR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

3.1. Introduction

At its core, this thesis investigates the customer experience in B2B. Customer experience results from relationships and interactions as established in the previous chapter; hence, it is important to demonstrate the pertinent literature on relationship management in B2B. The purpose of this chapter is twofold: first, identifying the boundaries of the focal construct of the customer experience in B2B; second, building the conceptual model which is drawn from both the pertinent theories in the previous literature review chapter and this chapter.

This chapter discusses the boundaries of the study and focuses on the importance and relevance of the study to marketing theory. First, it presents B2B relationship marketing to understand the nature of the relationships. Second, it discusses the buying centre and why B2B is different from B2C. Third, it demonstrates managing business relationship types and discussing the difference between relational and transactional approaches in order to provide the rationale behind the approach this study adopts. Fourth, it presents how the relational perspective links with customer experience and its importance in B2B. Fifth, it discusses the experience of the customers of professional service providers in B2B which this thesis focuses on. These five sections provide a clear picture of the boundaries of the customer experience examined by this study.

This chapter also presents the development of the conceptual framework for the CE in B2B. It discusses relevant theories of experience in the B2B environment, highlighting the dimensions of the CE, drivers and consequences in B2B in order to provide a significant theoretical foundation for building the research framework and research hypotheses.

3.2. B2B relationship marketing

Relationship marketing, at its heart, has an interest in improving the experiences of customers (Bonnemaizon et al., 2007). The development of the customer experience will be primarily driven by relationships and interactions the customer has with companies (Biedenbach and Marell, 2010; Berry et al., 2006; Verhoef et al., 2009). Thus, it is vital to understand the relationships between customers and their suppliers to understand the experience gained through these relationships.

The first appearance of the term relationship marketing in the services literature dates back to Berry (1983) who defines it as gaining, sustaining and improving multi-service relationships with customers. With this early appearance of an interest in relationship marketing, several studies have emerged that revolve around the main idea of relationship marketing, which is attracting new customers, maintaining existing customers, and building a long-term relationship with them (e.g., Akbari et al., 2016; Izquierdo et al., 2005; Payne, 1994).

During the 1990s more attentions was paid to building better relationships with customers. As a result, several definitions emerged with different perspectives. For example, in the trust and commitment context, relationship marketing is defined as

“all marketing activities directed toward establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges” (Morgan and Hunt, 1994, p.22). Similarly, though very brief, relationship marketing is viewed as “relationships, networks, and interaction” (Gummesson, 1994, p.2). Further, a much broader definition suggested by Grönroos (1996, p.7) states “relationship marketing is to identify and establish, maintain, and enhance relationships with customers and other stakeholders, at a profit, so that the objectives of all parties involved are met; and that this is done by a mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises”. Grönroos’s definition is considered one of the most important definitions of relationship marketing and has been corroborated by many scholars (e.g., Hunt et al., 2006; Saungweme et al., 2010). Later, from the economic perspective, relationship marketing is defined as “the ongoing process of engaging in collaborative activities and programs with immediate and end-user customers to create or enhance mutual economic, social and psychological value, profitably” (Sheth et al., 2015, p.123).

When discussing relationship marketing in B2B, it is important to reference the contribution that the Industrial Marketing and Purchasing group (IMP) has played. The IMP group was founded in 1978 with the aim of investigating the interaction and relationship issues among customers and suppliers in industrial marketing. Although the emergence of the term relationship marketing dates back to Berry (1983), as mentioned earlier in this section, its origins also resonate in the work of the IMP group. The IMP project has been conducted by researchers in Europe from the UK, Sweden, Italy, Germany and France in the year 1982 to propose the interaction model between suppliers and customers in B2B. The criticism of traditional marketing (marketing mix) includes a recognition of the lack of understanding of the reality of the business

market as well as the inadequate picture of the nature of the relationships between customers and suppliers and this prompted the IMP project to take place. Thus, the purpose of the IMP project was to investigate the importance of business relationships and understand the active interactions between customers and suppliers. Within this context, B2B market is characterised by long-term relationships rather than short term transactions, more closeness and cooperation between suppliers and customers rather than distancing, hence the B2B market is considered more stable (Ford and Håkansson, 2006a; Håkansson, 1982). Furthermore, the IMP group work believes in focusing on building a long-term relationship where both customers and suppliers mutually benefit. The interaction model is the most significant contribution of the IMP, which suggests that the interaction is a spectrum of short-term episodes (product/service, information, financial and social), long-term relationship behaviours, atmosphere and environment which engage customers with suppliers in relationships. This model highlights the importance of investing in relationship marketing in order to develop a good and lasting relationship between customers and suppliers as well as generating more financial benefit (Palmatier et al., 2007).

Similar to the IMP group, the Nordic School in North Europe has contributed to the development of relationship marketing particularly from the service marketing perspective. Despite the fact that the term relationship marketing first appeared in Berry (1983), there are roots for the development of relationship marketing going back to the Nordic School through different perspectives such as long-term interactive relationships (Gummesson, 1987), managing relationship marketing and networks (Gummesson, 1994), and successful relationship marketing strategy (Gronroos, 1996). Consequently, the main objective of relationship management is to build, develop and

sustain relationships. Furthermore, it incorporates network development, establishing customer databases and communication management (Palmer et al., 2005).

Nonetheless, relationship marketing is primarily developed in B2B research (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Palmatier et al., 2008); it also has a presence in the B2C context (Berry, 1995; Ravald and Grönroos, 1996; Verhoef, 2003). The relationship marketing perspective developed as a challenge transactional (traditional) marketing, that basically sought to create short-term customer relationships (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995). The transactional approach was insufficient in fulfilling customers' expectations and needs as well as keeping customers loyal for a long time (Berry, 2002). Accordingly, Vargo and Lusch (2014, p.12) posit that "marketing has been transitioning from a product and production focus to a consumer focus and, more recently, from a transaction focus to a relationship focus"; hence, the marketing scholars' interests in relationship marketing increased and focused more on the relationship marketing outcome related to customer retention and acquiring new customers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002; Mokhtaruddin et al., 2018).

Despite the growing interest in relationship marketing, the business continuation between suppliers and customers needs more evidence for a thorough understanding; for instance, those customers who have good relationships with their suppliers are those who maintain business (Gerpott et al., 2001; Palmer, 2010) and it is important to understand how customer experience plays a role in this continuity. Further, relationship marketing literature has not paid much attention to customers' various emotions and how these emotions may influence the continuity of the relationships with suppliers (Palmer, 2010). Although, the emotional perspective needs to be given further consideration in the relationships with customers (Verhoef

and Lemon 2015), there is some attention, but limited, paid to these emotions, such as intimacy, by Bügel et al. (2011). The following section discusses the buying centre and B2B characteristics.

3.3. The buying centre

B2B is characterised by the buying centre which refers to all individuals involved in the buying process for a particular service or product (Johnston and Bonoma, 1981). B2B buying behaviours is substantially different from B2C buying behaviours. In B2B, more individuals are involved in the purchase decision process; people from different managerial levels in the organisation might be involved in procurement, and therefore several experiences are perceived. In B2B, experience arises from direct and indirect engagement between suppliers' employees and customers' firm employees; thus, measuring it is undoubtedly a complicated endeavour (Zolkiewski et al., 2017). In contrast, in B2C, usually one final customer perceives the experience, so experience is individually measured.

Another key difference is the length of the relationship. Business relationships in B2B tend to be longer (Fill and Fill, 2005) and characterised by inertia (Avlonitis and Gounaris, 1999; Coviello et al., 2002). The decision making is connected to firm objectives; therefore, the amount and calibre of information required is high and the buying decisions are more logical and rational (Ellis, 2010). Also, buyers are responsible for an organisation's purchasing policies and choices and use various criteria that reflect both the organisation's goals and behaviour within a broader framework of inter-firm dependencies (Buvik, 2001), as well as their own individual idiosyncrasies stemming from a number of factors that could range from their career-

cycle to their own psychographic characteristics (Bonoma and Shapiro, 1983; Crittenden et al., 2002). Arguably then, given such significant differences between the two contexts, it would be rather naive to try to capture CE simply by extrapolating what we presently know about CE, hence the need to consider CE in its own, context-specific right.

Additionally, B2B demand is derived (Grewal et al., 2015) and a customer usually looks for a specific supplier who is able to meet certain needs (Ford, 2002), hence customers expect a positive experience from their suppliers every time they interact. Since interaction is the basis of experience formation (Gentile et al., 2007), successful suppliers are those who positively interact and build good relationships with their customers.

Perhaps the limited amount of measurement and understanding of the customer experience within the B2B context is due to the complicated business environment. At its core, experience in B2B is created by the interaction and relationships between suppliers and customers (Biedenbach and Marell, 2010). Customers in business markets focus predominantly on functionality or performance, whereas customers in consumer markets focus primarily on sensory areas (taste,...etc) (Anderson et al., 1999). The findings of Coviello et al. (2002) show that B2B considerations are more relational, while B2C considerations are more transactional. In B2B, the experience is an integral function of appropriate management of a customer and can potentially include many individuals who fulfil different functions (Hollyoake, 2009) as mentioned earlier. Hakansson and Snehota (1995) agree that within the B2B domain, the relationships are compound in nature and usually contain numerous points of contact.

It is clear that there are significant differences between the considerations of the B2B and B2C customer experience markets. In other words, B2B and B2C customer experiences are driven by different factors. This calls for the conceptualisation of experience in B2B. The following section discusses managing business relationships.

3.4. Managing business relationship types

Suppliers need to manage business relationships for the purpose of maintaining and expanding their business because, as a result of well-managed relationships, suppliers may expect future contracts, given the characteristic of inertia of the business market discussed in the previous section. So, to successfully manage the relationships, it is important to manage and understand the customer experience since the latter is influenced by business relationships (Homburg et al., 2017; Zolkiewski et al., 2017).

Business relationships range from transactional to relation exchanges. Transactional exchange “involves single, short-term exchange events encompassing a distinct beginning and ending” (Gundlach and Murphy, 1993, p. 36) where suppliers and customers focus on standard products at a competitive price (Day, 2000). In contrast, relational exchange “involves transactions linked together over an extended time frame. These exchanges trace back to previous interactions and reflect an ongoing process” (Gundlach and Murphy, 1993, p.36), and rely on collaboration and social bonding between suppliers and customers (Day, 2000). It is vital to discuss these types of relationships in order to identify which type is more relevant for the B2B customer experience that this thesis focuses on. Thus, more in-depth discussion follows.

At the beginning of the 1980s, there was an interest in shifting from the transactional paradigm to the relational paradigm (Vargo and Lusch 2004). This shift comes as a result of seeking to build a long-term relationship with customers because the transactional paradigm which is represented by the marketing mix is no longer capable of meeting the growing interests of business relationships and handling the new marketing needs (Gronroos 1994, 2008). However, from the relational perspective of marketing such as developing and managing relationships, Gronroos (1994) also believes in the role of transactional marketing together with relational marketing. Similar to what Gronroos (1994) argues and despite the great interest on the relational approach over the transactional approach (O'Malley, 2014), other scholars believe in the complementary role of the transactional approach, through, for example, integration (Lefaix-Durand and Kozak, 2009; Pels et al., 2000) and coexistence of the transactional approach along with the relational one (Styles and Ambler, 2003). This complementary viewpoint is evidenced by dealing with various challenges and different managerial practices to fulfil customers' needs (for more details see Coviello et al., 2002).

Within this stream, the findings of Coviello et al. (2002) show that consumer and goods companies are more transactional, while service and business companies are more relational. This perspective also corresponds to earlier work by Gronroos (1991) who suggests the continuum of the marketing strategy in which suppliers position themselves according to various situations. This strategy includes relational marketing end, transactional marketing end, and several situations in between; for example, service businesses aim more at a relational end, whereas consumer goods aim more at a transactional end.

When looking at the B2B environment, it can be argued that the relational perspective is pivotal, especially in the field of services (Coviello et al., 2002), due to the characteristics of the business environment. To clarify this point, let's consider the number of customers in B2B which is relatively low compared to the number of customers in B2C (Ellis, 2010; Fill and Fill, 2005), that makes service providers in B2B seek to keep their business customers longer (Theron et al., 2013); hence, adopting a relational aspect in B2B is more than important. This is true, particularly in the professional services, as the interpersonal interactions between professional service providers and their business customers is crucial for maintaining a long-term relationship (Lian and Laing, 2007). More details about professional services will be discussed in a separate section later.

The relational perspective has also been evidenced by the work of Palmatier et al. (2006). They conducted empirical research to investigate relationship marketing (RM) using meta-analysis and found that RM is more functional when efforts are directed towards building personal relationships with individuals from the business firm. In addition, they outlined that RM is more efficient when customers perceived it in critical situations such as service offerings, channel exchanges and business markets.

Relational selling has undergone four stages of evolution as outlined by Arli et al. (2018). They highlight that the origin of relational selling is initially developed from the individual selling that is characterised by transactional and personal efforts. Afterwards, it developed to incorporate the perspective of the customers. Second, the concept of a buying centre has emerged as an inevitable consequence of the intensive competition. In this stage, both sellers and customers are more engaged in

collaborative activities in order to effectively and efficiently achieve the desired results. Third, they recognise adaptive selling where the main focus is given to thoroughly understanding the customer's needs and wants. The final stage is customer orientation and solution selling which mainly focuses on addressing the customers' problems as a result of shifting towards a service economy. In this stage, more attention is given to maintaining relationships and customer retention. These stages explain how the relational perspective is developed as an investable approach.

To conclude, the relational perspective plays a pivotal role in B2B due to the importance of establishing and maintaining long-term relationships with customers. Thus, the relational perspective is more crucial than the transactional one. Further discussion with regard to the rationality behind selecting the relational perspective for the customer experience in B2B is provided in the subsequent section.

3.5. Relational perspective for the customer experience

The previous section clarified the different types of business relationships and concluded that the relational perspective is pivotal particularly in B2B service marketing. However, this conclusion is not new and has been outlined in previous studies. So, what is critical is the link with customer experience in B2B. This section will discuss the relational perspective of customer experience in detail.

Given the equal importance of CE for both manufactured goods and services, it is not surprising that the current literature has comprised attempts to structure CE in both contexts (e.g. Brakus et al., 2009; Grewal et al., 2009). In effect, the structure of the CE is adapted to reflect its relevant context. For example, sensory experience has been considered as an essential dimension of CE within manufactured goods, whereas

it is not necessarily essential for services; however, the servicescape may probably allow sensory-driven experience to appear.

This thesis exclusively focuses on services as a means to eliminate potential aspects of CE coming from product usage. When B2B customers receive value from an offering that combines manufactured goods and services, certain aspects of the B2B customer experience may not be visible enough to allow theory development and a measure to study it (see Gummesson and Polese, 2009). Besides, while many B2B suppliers may still depend on products and technology superiority to gain competitive advantage, technology is increasingly becoming a commodity for suppliers in several sectors; the number of suppliers who claim a competitive advantage based solely on the technical superiority of their manufactured offerings has significantly decreased (Vargo and Lusch 2004). Arguably, for the majority, competition and competitive advantage are therefore primarily driven by either price or suppliers' ability to produce a relational advantage via the superior experience they deliver to their customers (Kranzbühler et al., 2018).

Indeed, the relational perspective is highly relevant to the business environment in which companies seek to establish long-term relationships with their customers. Moreover, due to the intensive competition of today's world, it is not an easy task to compensate for lost customers or win new ones. This put companies under pressure to fight for survival in the market and seek to hold a sustained competitive advantage (Hamad et al., 2015).

Usually, some companies seek to adopt promotional strategies such as price cuts (Hellman, 2005) and loyalty programmes (e.g., rewards {Dagger and David 2012}) for the purpose of sales increases and to generate more profits, and perhaps these are considered successful solutions in the short term; however, when considering

the long term, it is not guaranteed that these solutions will generate more repurchases. On the other hand, considering the relational perspective and building a long-term relationship with customers requires suppliers to focus on delivering a positive customer experience because the positive experience leads to repeated purchases and word of mouth (Chen and Chen, 2010; Kranzbühler et al., 2018). Delivering a positive customer experience will not only lead to understanding the customers behaviour, but will also lead to getting more information about them and that will help suppliers to manage their resources more efficiently, satisfy their customers, and increase their profits.

Customer experience basically leads to relational marketing outcomes in several ways. For example, the relationships between customers and suppliers which emerge during business exchanges can involve another approach and perhaps may develop into a personal relationship. This personal relationship may include joining various social experience activities (Paulssen and Roulet, 2017). Thus, it can be argued that enjoying social experiences may represent the level of the strength of the relationships between the individuals in the suppliers' and customers' firms. This may also reflect the ongoing business between the two firms.

Moreover, the relational customer experience can generate advantages for both customers and suppliers. Customers will enjoy bespoke offers and highly customised options and hence they will be more satisfied and happier with their suppliers (Berry et al., 2002; Frow and Payne, 2007; Kranzbühler et al., 2018). Additionally, it can be argued that if customers receive a positive experience, they will maintain a long-term relationship with their suppliers and hence avoid the risk of switching cost (Blut et al.,

2016), saving the time it would take to search for alternatives (Hansen et al., 2008) and operating with more safety.

In terms of the advantages for the suppliers, they will not only reap profits through the increase in their financial performance by repeated purchases (Kranzbühler et al., 2018), but moreover they will benefit from the ability to improve their decision making as a result of gaining more understanding of profitable relationships with customers (Zolkiewski et al., 2006) which, in turn, will lead to the best delivery of the experience that the customers are looking for. In effect, this will enhance their competitiveness in the market and their ability to satisfy their customers and retain them in the long run.

Empirical work by Bolton et al. (2008) provides insights into building long-term relationships with customers. They suggest that customers upgrade their contracts with their service providers in B2B based on the perceptions of the decision maker in the relationship with the service provider, the experience with the contract-level, and interactions between customers and variables related to the contract-level. They also suggest that service providers are required to better control and manage their relationships in order to motivate their customers to upgrade their contracts. However, the attempt to model the customer's decision to upgrade the level of a service contract using the time to resolve a (negative) critical incidence as a proxy for CE is yet a further confusion and not clearly provide a comprehensive understanding of the CE. What about the customers who did not report a complaint and subsequently their experience was not recorded? What about the customers who did not actually have a complaint? How do we measure such customer experiences, and how can we factor them into a model that can potentially explain their subsequent behaviour?

When considering business contracts, whether they are long or short, arguably, embedding the relational perspective of the customer experience is important. If a customer has signed a long-term contract with a supplier, the customer will continue with this supplier as long as they have good relationships and receive a positive experience, and thus the relational perspective is embedded within such a contract. On the other hand, if the customer has signed a short-term contract with a supplier, again the relational perspective has to be embedded for the opportunity to sign future contracts with this supplier. Thus, the relational perspective is vital when considering the customer experience either for long-term contracts or even for single and short-term based business contracts. As a result, when we try to assess the customer experience the focus relies on the basis of an individual project with the potential for future business to also capture the effect from the past experience as this thesis does. This helps in understanding the outcome in terms of the experience for the customer as a result of signing a project to a specific supplier and the supplier's delivery of this project.

Nevertheless, companies that have allocated resources for improving relational interactions do not necessarily guarantee more profits from some loyal customers (Cortez and Johnston, 2017) because some loyal customers are unprofitable and they would prefer to secure lower prices due to their long-term relationship considerations (Reinartz and Kumar, 2003), hence they will seek to receive more competitive offers and discounts. In this regard, some loyal customers are not necessarily the most profitable ones and thus customer retention is not an easy task. In effect, it can be argued that companies focusing on delivering a great experience to their customers are more likely not only to have customers return, but also customers will recommend

these suppliers to their peers through WOM (Chen and Chen, 2010; Ha and Perks, 2005). WOM will help companies to get new customers and hence generate more profits (Molinari et al., 2008). In brief, improving a company's profitability is likely due to the experience the customer has during the interaction process with suppliers (Cortez and Johnston, 2017); however, this view needs empirical evidence to investigate the reported behaviour and that is what this thesis aims to investigate.

Indeed, managers in the suppliers' firms are likely to join relational interactions for the purpose of enhancing the firm's competitiveness in the market as well as maximising financial performance (Hunt et al., 2006). Simultaneously, customers are more inclined to maintain business relationships as long as they receive positive experiences from their suppliers (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Moreover, it is worth noting that acquiring new customers is not an easy task and is usually associated with costs such as promotions, advertising, and time to understand customers' needs and behaviour (Belch and Belch, 2003; Michaelidou et al., 2011; Reinartz et al., 2005). Given that those customers who received a positive experience will not only maintain the relationships with their suppliers, but will also go beyond that and spread a good reputation about their suppliers among their peers through WOM, it is reasonable to argue that, in the end, this will enable suppliers to obtain new customers with the lowest possible costs compared to the costs associated with launching new advertising and sales promotions. However, this view is not underestimating the role of advertising and sales promotions, but such costs often outweigh the gain that a firm will experience in the short term; hence, when it comes to considering managing a firm's resources and balancing between the costs for the supplier to acquire new customers through promotions and the costs needed to establish positive WOM, it is

worth considering, initially, the experience the suppliers deliver to their customers. Thus, it makes sense for the suppliers to focus more attention on delivering positive experiences to their customers to achieve relational outcomes such as retention and WOM.

To conclude, the relational perspective of CE in B2B is crucial (Palmatier et al., 2007), because suppliers are looking to deliver a positive experience to their customers in order to maintain a long-term relationship with them and attract more (Chen and Chen, 2010). The next section reports on the experience for the customers of professional service providers in the business context which this thesis focuses on.

3.6. Customer experience with professional service providers in B2B

This thesis focuses on investigating the experience of business customers in services and goods sectors as a result of interactions and exchanges with their professional service providers. Business customers from a range of industry sectors (services and goods) make extensive use of professional services, including those offered by accountants, financial advisors, lawyers, and consultants (Freeman and Dart, 1993; Sonmez and Moorhouse, 2010). Since professional services are important for small, medium and large business customers (Čater and Čater, 2009; Sonmez and Moorhouse, 2010), investigating customer experiences in these various businesses will be of great importance for professional service providers in terms of drawing up strategies, decision making and managing resources.

Professional services are defined as “those whose primary assets are a highly educated (professional) workforce and whose outputs are intangible services encoded with complex knowledge” (Greenwood et al., 2005, p.661). Surprisingly, there is a

lack of understanding about customer experience with professional service providers and the influence the experience may have on loyalty behaviours in B2B (Lemke et al., 2011; Palmer, 2010; Payne and Frow, 2004; Zolkiewski et al., 2017). The following discussion outlines the importance and relevance of investigating the experiences of business customers with professional service providers.

Professional services firms play a significant role in B2B due to providing business customers with advice and solutions needed to run their businesses and to achieve competitive advantage (Casidy and Nyadzayo, 2019). Despite the growing interest in using professional services from both services and goods sectors (Sonmez and Moorhouse, 2010), there is still a paucity of studies dealing with the business environment (Walsh et al., 2015), particularly in terms of understanding how customers perceive the experience provided by the professional service providers and how this experience informs customer behaviour.

Buying professional services such as advertising, legal and computing is considered high risk and costly; however, in spite of the higher risk associated with professional services, there are potential profit opportunities from purchasing professional services, such as improvements in business performance (West, 1997). Furthermore, the high importance of professional services (e.g. engineering, advertising, consulting, accounting, law firms, etc) is usually related to the high expertise and competencies of their employed staff (Løwendahl et al., 2001). Therefore, the possession of high expertise and quality offerings by a professional service provider may lead to a potential positive experience received by a customer during a business exchange and interaction.

Previous studies within B2B professional services, that have focused on investigating the selection criteria and assessment of professional service providers, have surprisingly neglected to investigate the perceived experience from the customer point of view. For instance, a study by Ellen and Barksdale (2003) has focused on staff capability, personal chemistry and customer orientation when purchasing from a professional service provider. Another example is the study by West (1997), in the context of purchasing from advertising agencies, where the key relationship criteria valued by customers are: understanding customers' needs, communication skills, quality of people assigned to the task, sharing information, trust, cooperation and willingness of the advertising agency to adapt. Furthermore, Sonmez and Moorhouse (2010) outline some criteria in the context of purchasing professional services for skills training in sales and managers' development; they reveal six main dimensions that customers are looking for: reputation, organisational capabilities, product, cost, knowledge and understanding, and competence when choosing their service providers. It is obvious that the literature has paid good attention in terms of the purchasing and selection criteria of the professional services providers, while the experience gained as a result of the interaction with service providers is not yet clear.

Other stream of research in B2B professional services has focused on assessing the performance of the service provider and its consequences. For example, building on IMP interaction theory, a study by Woo and Ennew (2005) investigates service quality and its consequences. They suggest that B2B professional service quality is represented by six types of interactions: product/service exchange, financial exchange, information exchange, social exchange, cooperation and adaptation, and these dimensions have an impact on customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions.

However, their study doesn't provide a customer evaluation of experience gained but rather it measures the influence of quality on satisfaction and intentions. Moreover, it neglects customers' emotional responses which is important for evaluating how customers feel towards their professional service providers and how the service providers perform (Jain et al., 2017; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). In addition, it focuses only on one single industry setting (engineering consultancy firms in Hong Kong). Moreover, the experience construct is multidimensional and different from the quality construct as established in the previous chapter (Klaus and Maklan, 2013; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Verhoef et al., 2009), thus Woo and Ennew's findings are challenging in terms of generalisability.

Surprisingly, a study by De Brentani and Ragot (1996) on the success factors for new professional service providers suggest the importance of delivering a satisfactory experience during the service process; however, there is no clear understanding of the kind of experience required and what the experience consists of, and moreover, by referring to a "satisfactory experience", it raises confusion between satisfaction and experience, given that satisfaction is the outcome of the experience (Berry et al., 2002).

Further, Čater and Čater (2009) investigate the customers of market research agencies, considering emotional and rational motivations for customer loyalty. They found that there is an impact of trust and social bonds on customers' emotions represented by affective commitments, whereas knowledge and adaptation affect the rational perspective in terms of relational benefits. Despite their insights with regard to investigating the emotional and rational aspects of the customer and how that will influence the customer's loyalty, this doesn't offer a complete assessment of

professional service providers' offerings relating, for example, to delivery performance (Ulaga and Eggert, 2006), price (Monroe et al., 2015), innovation (La et al., 2009) and service support (Day and Barksdale, 1992). Moreover, it focused on one single professional service which is the market research agency and, hence, it lacks the potential for generalisability.

Another study by Trasorras et al. (2009) focused on assessing the value of professional services rather than providing an understanding of the experience. Their study includes professional services such as attorneys, financial professionals, physicians, dentists and private investigators. They found that there is a highly significant relationship between services and customer behaviours. Similarly, La et al. (2009) investigate customer-perceived performance and value in professional services; this includes consultancy, engineering, management services, IT services, etc. Although, these studies provide a useful picture of the antecedents of performance evaluation in B2B professional services, they don't provide a thorough understanding of the other important exchange drivers such as the climate of the meeting and social bonds that may develop during business exchanges as well as the influence on the reported behaviours.

Further, professional services firms need to create highly tailored services for their customers, hence their offerings should be customised (Madhavaram and Hunt, 2017). Customised offerings involve an extensive process that requires individuals with advanced expertise and skills to organise their efforts. Madhavaram and Hunt (2017) have developed a model for customised offerings taking into consideration the intellectual elements such as the knowledge of the employees, technical capabilities, and creativity. Additionally, they considered the internal social elements as an

antecedent of the intellectual elements. However, the study provides insights into the importance of providing customised offerings in B2B professional services, though it is not clear how customers perceive these offerings and how customers behave as a result of obtaining a customised offering.

More recently, Wang et al. (2019) have studied the role of content marketing activities (e.g., in-person events, digital events, digital content) on sales opportunities for international consulting service providers. Their findings outline that content marketing can play a role in sales leads and opportunities for the professional service providers. However, this study focuses more on digital marketing from the supplier's perspective rather than the customer's point of view and also it doesn't provide a clear idea on customer experience and behaviours that lead to the increase of sales opportunities.

Other studies in professional B2B services have focused on different perspectives such as determinants of customer satisfaction (Patterson et al., 1996), value strategy (Lapierre et al., 1999), customer zone tolerance and service quality (Ho et al., 2015), personal relationships (Lian and Laing, 2007), behavioural intentions for the customers of freight services (Molinari et al., 2008), brand sensitivity (Casidy et al., 2018), value (Schertzer et al., 2013), scale development for measuring the reputation of professional service providers (Walsh et al., 2015), service strategy (Kowalkowski and Ulaga, 2017), and value of branding (Guenther and Guenther, 2019). Despite these various studies on professional services in B2B, they have not provided a clear understanding of the experience the customer receives as a result of dealing with their professional service providers and how this experience could

influence a customer's reported behaviour. Thus, a significant gap in the literature remains unexplored.

Business customers in services and goods sectors are looking to establish good relationships with their professional service providers (Casidy and Nyadzayo, 2019). As a result, relationships will lead to either positive or negative experiences. Usually, having a successful interaction (Ng et al., 2016) and good interpersonal relationships (Sarapaivanich and Patterson, 2015) are associated with successful service delivery from the customer's point of view, but what about the impact of past experience on the customer's evaluation of the services and what about the behaviour of the customer in either sustaining or terminating the relationship should a negative experience occur. Thus, measuring experience provides a pivotal role in a professional services journey, where customers are seeking to acquire the best professional services providers to operate their businesses effectively and build a long-term relationship as long as they are satisfied with the service provided (Casidy and Nyadzayo, 2019; Sarapaivanich and Patterson, 2015). The subsequent section provides detailed discussion around building the research framework and presents the research hypotheses.

3.7. Model development of CE in B2B and research hypotheses

The discussion in the previous sections of this chapter has introduced B2B relationship management, highlighting the boundaries of the customer experience in B2B. In line with the previous chapter, which has considered the concept of customer experience, outlining the potential value of the customer experience, definitions and measures, and the limitations, this part considers relevant theories for building the

customer experience conceptual model in B2B as well as providing the relevant research hypotheses.

Due to the importance that experience occupies in the business world (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Verhoef et al., 2009) and the lack of a clear definition of the experience concept and its influence on loyalty in B2B (Lemke et al., 2011; Palmer, 2010; Zolkiewski et al., 2017), it is necessary to develop a research framework for customer experience in B2B, taking into account the nature of the relationships between customers and their service providers, and also the most important variables that exist in the business interaction environment. In addition, the importance of time in influencing the experience gained needs to be considered (Gupta and Vajic, 2000; Verhoef et al., 2009). Thus, the purpose of this section is to provide the basis for building the theoretical framework and the pertinent research hypotheses for customer experience and to provide details on each variable influencing experience during business exchanges with professional service providers.

Given the need to develop a conceptual framework for the experience in B2B, it is worth providing a brief explanation of the theoretical development mechanism. Theory refers to “an interrelated set of constructs (or variables) formed into propositions, or hypotheses, that specify the relationship among variables” (Creswell, 2014, p. 86); this definition is in line with a popular definition of theory by Kerlinger (1979, p. 64) who describes it as “a set of interrelated constructs (variables), definitions, and propositions that presents a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining natural phenomena”. A variable refers to “a characteristic or attribute of an individual or an organization that can be measured or observed and that varies among the people or

organization being studied” (Creswell, 2014, p. 84). Creswell (2014) notes that the function of a theory within a discussion is to explain (or predict) phenomena that occur in the world. Researchers express their theories in research proposals in different ways, such as a number of hypotheses or visual models (Creswell, 2014). This study states its theories in the form of interrelated hypotheses and visual models.

Nevertheless, for the purpose of developing a new theoretical framework, it is necessary to clarify the variables of the study to enable the theoretical model to be built in a systematic and measurable way. Once the variables are clarified, the research hypotheses and theoretical framework are presented. The following discussion focuses on defining CE in B2B and clarifies each experience dimension as well as the research hypotheses.

3.7.1. Building the dimensions of customer experience in B2B

As mentioned earlier, the existing literature on CE in the B2B environment is scarce and mainly focused on conceptualising experience in a broader scope without providing a clear definition of the experience and also lacking empirical evidence (Palmer, 2010; Payne and Frow, 2004; Zolkiewski et al., 2017). However, the first attempt was by Lemke et al. (2011), but, as mentioned in the previous chapter, their attempt was qualitative in nature and simultaneously considered both B2C and B2B, which made it hard to capture a deeper understanding of the pertinent aspects of experience in B2B. The single attempt that has appeared in the literature that aimed to investigate CE in B2B from a holistic perspective is by McColl-Kennedy et al. (2019). The authors conceptualised and measured CE according to two core dimensions, namely “cognitive” and “emotional responses”, but failed to explain, justify or defend how and why

they have not considered the other three responses (“sensorial”, “behavioural” and “social”) of experience that past researchers have identified as key dimensions comprising the overall experience that results each time the buyer interacts with the seller. Thus, to address this issue and build relevant dimensions of experience in B2B it is important to consider the characteristics of the B2B environment with respect to the holistic definitions of experience that emerged in B2C. The key characteristic of the B2B context is the organisational buying behaviour. The following will further illustrate how each dimension of experience has been developed.

In organisational buying behaviour theory, there are two main paradigms that guide academic research: rational and behavioural (Woodside and Ferris-Costa, 2006). The rational paradigm is usually implicit and considered deductive in explaining what happens during the phases and outcomes in organisational buying behaviour. Within the rational paradigm, some relevant questions emerged such as: How does an organisation deal with a buying opportunity or problem, how does an organisation search for alternatives and perhaps how does it evaluate the supplier performance? More importantly, in the rational paradigm, the participants are able to provide accurate reports about what has happened. In contrast, the behavioural paradigm refers to an explicit and inductive approach in explaining what happens in terms of phases and outcomes. In the behaviour paradigm, questions are raised, such as: What are the participants’ thoughts, feelings and actions during different buying phases? The essential assumption of the behavioural paradigm is that participants are partially able to accurately report what happened. Considering both rational and behavioural paradigms for organisational buying behaviour, we can conclude that the rational paradigm results in cognitively factual responses because it enables the participant to

fully and accurately report what happened or perhaps evaluate the supplier performance, whereas the behavioural paradigm does not necessarily rely on facts because participants are partially able to assess the service performance or articulate what happened; with this stream, other supportive assessments and more interpretations are required, for example incorporating more participants in order to be able to provide accurate reports in terms of buying decisions or evaluations of a supplier's performance (Woodside and Wilson, 2000). The behavioural paradigm also requires affective responses (feelings) to reflect on participants' buying behaviour (Woodside and Ferris-Costa, 2006), and that is in line with Wenstøp (2005) who argues that feelings are an important component of the decision-making process. As a result, two main dimensions of experience, namely cognitive and affective responses, appeared in B2B in relation to the two major organisational behaviour paradigms. Thus, our initial working definition of CE is: *Customer experience in B2B is the customer's cognitive and affective responses as a result of business interaction and exchange with a supplier.* This definition echoes that recently suggested by McColl-Kennedy et al. (2019).

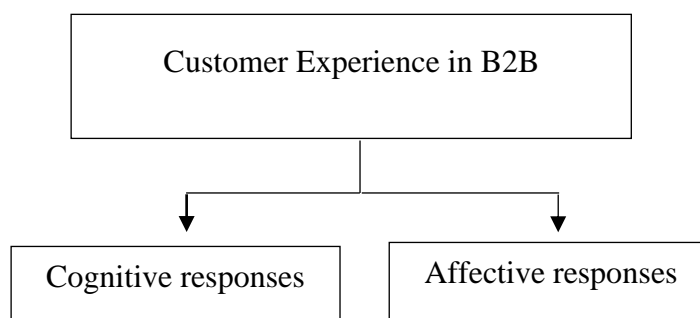


Figure 1 Main dimensions of CE in B2B

However, this definition is, probably unduly, missing certain dimensions that foundational work on CE (e.g., Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Schmitt, 2003; Verhoef et

al., 2009) has identified as important that may also be relevant in the B2B context. Given our initial working definition of CE, the next step will focus on clarifying these two dimensions of experience, namely cognitive and affective responses, in relation to the holistic definitions of experience in B2C and the literature on B2B.

The cognitive concept has appeared in a vast amount of B2C experience literature and has two dimensions: the physical response (Berry et al., 2002, 2006; Gentile et al., 2007; Shaw and Ivens, 2002; Schmitt, 1999; Verhoef et al., 2009) and the mental response (Gentile et al., 2007; Otto and Richie, 1996; Schmitt, 1999; Verhoef et al. 2009). Physical responses in B2C refers to the responses generated through the tangible characteristics of the service/products; these responses are mainly driven by functional clues (Berry et al., 2002, 2006) and also cognitively perceived. In this respect, in the B2B context, the physical responses are about factual judgments and are usually held to be objective and provable. Factual responses are related to observable facts such as meeting the due date for delivery, meeting budget requirements and achieving objectives (Gounaris, 2005; La et al., 2009). Thus, we call this the *factual* response.

With regard to the mental dimension of CE, there is broad consensus that this side of CE represents the customer's response to events that cannot be objectively manifested yet requires the customer to get cognitively involved in assessing the event before forming an experience. Such events may include, for instance, how promptly the supplier responds, the ability of the service provider to "understand" the needs of the customer or the supplier's "openness" and "creativity" in exploring and finding solutions for the customer (e.g. Gounaris, 2005; La et al., 2009). We call this the *sagacious* response to capture the mental effort and the strain the customer puts in to

forming experiences using clues that are rather subjective in nature yet require cognitive processing and, as such, are open to different interpretations.

In addition to the factual and sagacious responses, the emotional dimension of the customer experience refers to the reaction to the affect which creates moods and feelings; experience involving the emotions may be created to generate an affective association with the company as appeared widely in the B2C literature (Brakus et al., 2009; Gentile et al., 2007; Jain et al., 2017; Klaus and Maklan, 2013; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Meyer and Schwager, 2007; Pareigis et al., 2012; Schmitt, 1999; Verhoef et al., 2009; Walter et al., 2010). Within this, Berry et al. (2002) argue for two categories of service clues: recognising clues of experience related to functionality and clues of experience related to emotions. In the B2B literature, there is strong support for the assumption that emotions are an important determinant for customers during their decision-making processes and how they feel inevitably influences their final judgment (Korhonen et al., 2008; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2019; Wenstøp, 2005), hence we call this the *emotional* response.

Further to the factual, sagacious and emotional responses, a social dimension always exists. Linked to the literature review, the social dimension is mentioned in the studies related to the B2C context (Gupta and Vajic, 2000; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Mascarenhas et al., 2006; Schmitt, 1999; Verhoef et al., 2009), which is the social response to the environment surrounding the consumer. Since the social environment in the business context is different in nature because it may require formation of personal relationships between managers of the two companies and perhaps outside work, attendance at meetings and activities, it is therefore worthwhile to focus on this dimension and study it individually. Social bonds are the mutually shared personal

friendships and links between suppliers and customers (Wilson, 1995). When two companies operate, they inevitably engage in exchanges, and this generates a social space in their communication. In B2B, the social dimension of experience is the outcome of the relationship that emerges as two enterprises come together to do business (Chang et al., 2012; Paulssen and Roulet, 2017). Thus, we call this the *social response*.

Linked to the above discussion with regard to experience dimensions, the initial working definition of the CE can be amended to: *Customer experience in the B2B is a multi-dimensional construct consisting of factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses that a customer has as a result of business interaction and exchange with a supplier.*

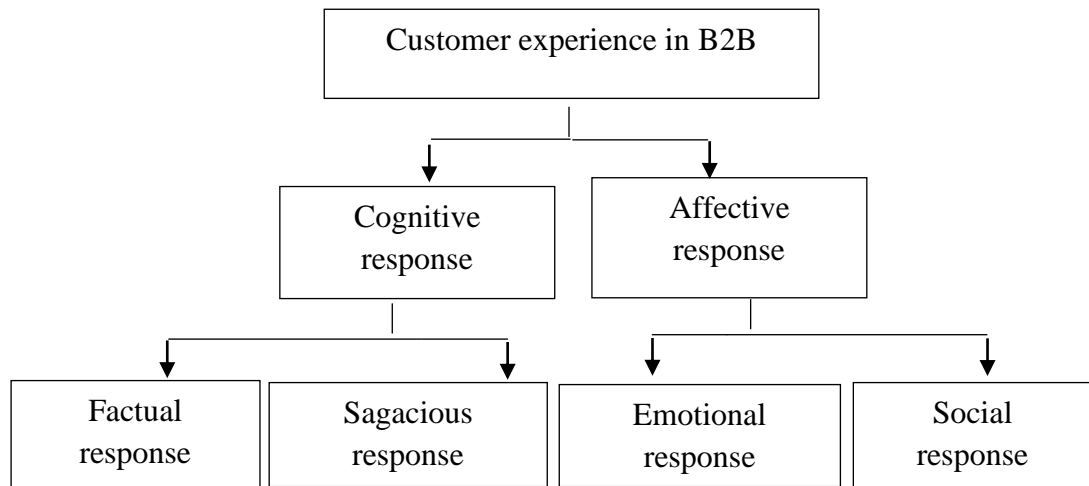


Figure 2 Customer experience dimensions in B2B

Drawing from the pertinent literature and the above discussion, the following hypothesis has emerged:

(H1) Customer experience in the B2B context is a multi-dimensional construct consisting of factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses that a customer has as a result of business interaction and exchange with a supplier.

3.7.2. Drivers forming customer experience in B2B

Experience accumulates over time; therefore, past customer experience may have an influence on present customer experience. Due to the fact that experience evolves over time and includes a learning element (Gupta and Vajic, 2000), it is important to incorporate past experience in modelling the formation of present experience. This is in line with the more recent work of Verhoef et al. (2009) and Lemon and Verhoef (2016), which attempted to conceptualise customer experience over time, but their work lacked empirical evidence.

It is clear that past experience must be an antecedent of present experience when considering the value of experience in general due to the nature of experience potentially changing over time (Bitran et al., 2008; Mascarenhas et al., 2006; Meyer and Schwager, 2007; Neslin et al., 2006; Palmer, 2010; Poulsson and Kale, 2004). This argument can also be supported by a further literature not directly related to customer experience but rather related to the importance of individuals' past memory over time (Kanawattanachai and Yoo, 2007). As a result, drawing from the above discussion, it is worth investigating how past experiences interact with present experiences. Since cognitive response consists of factual and sagacious responses, it is expected that both factual and sagacious responses from the past (t-1) will jointly influence the factual and sagacious responses in the present (t). Similarly, as the affective response consists of emotional and social responses, it is expected that both

the emotional and social responses from the past (t-1) will jointly influence the emotional and social responses in the present (t). Thus, the following hypotheses emerged:

(H2a) The customer's factual response from the past (t-1) will influence both the factual and the sagacious responses in the present (t).

(H2b) The customer's sagacious response from the past (t-1) will influence both the factual and the sagacious responses in the present (t).

(H2c) The customer's emotional response from the past (t-1) will influence the emotional and the social responses in the present (t).

(H2d) The customer's social response from the past (t-1) will influence the emotional and the social responses in the present (t).

In addition to the influence of time, the customer experience is also influenced by what the supplier offers as well as how this is offered. Gronroos (1984) provided two main dimensions that impact services in the business environment: the technical dimension, which is related to what is offered, and the functional dimension, which is related to how this is offered.

The technical dimension can be categorised into two main supplier offerings: *core offerings* and *augmenting offerings*.

The core offerings are those offerings which any supplier is expected to provide, while augmenting offerings are those the supplier can differentiate from among other competitors (Keller, 2000). In addition, looking at the literature on relationship marketing in B2B, there are essential supplier offerings that are considered to be the most important and are usually referred to as core offerings.

Delivery performance is a key constituent of the supplier–customer relationship (Olsen and Ellram, 1997). Ulaga and Eggert (2006) suggest that delivery is very important in a relationship and consider it to be the second most important driver. On-time delivery, flexibility of delivery and accuracy in delivering the right product or service are the main criteria for determining delivery performance by customers, hence delivery performance is an important driver of experience.

Another aspect of the core offering refers to the capability of utilising technical or intellectual know-how to provide a business solution to a customer’s problem (La et al., 2009). Several studies on professional services propose that a provider’s technical quality is one of the attributes that customers use when evaluating a provider’s performance (Ellis and Watterson, 2001). Thus, technical quality is a driver of experience.

In addition, Zeithaml’s (1988) model evokes that price is a factor of perceived quality. Therefore, a price can drive an experience. Pricing is a major interest in B2B; however, little research has been conducted on this driver thus far (Monroe et al., 2015). Thus, this study referred to the variables of delivery performance, technical quality and price as supplier *core offerings*. This refers to the offerings that are important for driving a cognitive response (factual and sagacious).

The second type of supplier offerings is augmenting offerings, which accompany the core offerings. As one of the important aspects of the customer–supplier relationship (Hadjikhani and LaPlaca, 2013), adaptation is defined as being able to make adjustments to the offer or the process of exchange (Hakansson, 1982). With adaptation, in B2B, suppliers and customers build a long-lasting relationship, and the supplier in such a relationship may adjust offerings based on the customer's

requirements. In such a context, there are grounds to expect that an important counterpart-specific, or symbiotic, adaptation may take place. Hence, one can expect suppliers to adapt to the particular requirements of important customers (Brennan et al., 2003). In addition, adaptation facilitates the interaction process and hence it impacts experience (Hakansson, 1982; Brennan et al., 2014), and this is why it has been selected as a driver of experience.

In addition to the adaptation, service support concerns the range of accompanying services provided by the supplier when purchasing a service in business markets (Ulaga and Eggert, 2006) and is important in shaping the supplier offerings (Anderson et al., 1999). Along with the importance of service support in professional service provider selection criteria (Day and Barksdale, 1992), recently, service support has been considered in the third stage of post-purchase during the conceptualisation of customer experience by Lemon and Verhoef (2016) via purchase lifecycle. Within this context, the service support provided by the supplier through business exchange (Ulaga and Eggert, 2006) can play a role in shaping customer experience.

Moreover, a supplier's ability to improve and develop existing or new products or services is considered a valuable asset by customers (Ulaga, 2003; Walter et al., 2001). Innovation attempts to leverage the customer's ability to compete in the market. Innovation has been identified as one of the most important factors affecting perceived performance in professional services (La et al., 2009). Therefore, innovation is often seen as a principal source of the customer's experience. As such, innovation is considered a driver of experience.

Further, professional service reputation is part of an intangible aspect of the offering associated with a sense of security and lower perceived risks on behalf of the customer. Reputation is considered one of the most important drivers and tops the list during the selection of a professional provider (Dawes et al., 1992; La et al., 2009; Sonmez and Moorhouse, 2010); thus, reputation should be further investigated in relation to the experience perceived. Thus, we refer to the variables of adaptation, service support, innovation and reputation as *augmenting offerings*. Suppliers' augmenting offerings refer to the offerings that are important for driving a cognitive experience response (factual and sagacious). Drawing from the above discussion, the following hypotheses emerged:

(H3a) The supplier's core offerings (the delivery performance, technical quality and price) have an impact on the factual and sagacious responses.

(H3b) The supplier's augmenting offerings (the adaptation, service support, innovation and reputation) have an impact on the factual and sagacious responses.

In terms of the functional dimension that is associated with how the service is perceived (Gronroos, 1984), it can be categorised into two main functional dimensions of interest in B2B: *exchange climate* and *bonding* during interaction between suppliers and customers. Linked to interaction theory, atmosphere is one of the most important constituents in the IMP interaction model (1982) in B2B. Atmosphere occurs when both parties interact with each other (Su et al., 2008). The relationship between suppliers and customers is dynamic and influenced by the individual emotions that exist between them. The relationship is affected by the nature of the interaction and the individuals engaged in it. The overall atmosphere of the relationship is considered

a measure of cooperation and closeness (Su et al., 2008; Woo and Ennew, 2004). A positive atmosphere of interaction generates the development of a reciprocally enjoyable long-term relationship between suppliers and customers (Wren and Simpson, 1996). Thus, atmosphere influences a customer's affective response.

Another aspect of the business exchange process is the sharing of technology and information, as they are the main factors which facilitate the task of interaction between the buyer and the seller. This is because, when the technological systems of the buyers and sellers are well matched, a smooth interaction occurs (Brennan et al., 2014; Hakansson, 1982), and this smoother interaction leads to affective response as a result of the moods or feelings generated. Information sharing refers to the amount of information exchanged during the interaction which has an impact on the relationship amongst parties. It is apparent that customers appreciate the exchange of accurate information (Whipple et al., 2002). Information sharing influences the overall supplier–customer relationship (Hüttinger et al., 2012; Whipple et al., 2002). Technology sharing, on the other hand, refers to the capability to cope with technological changes, the supplier's technological tools that are used on a day-to-day basis, and the ability to improve rapidly in the future based on market needs. These drivers affect supplier–customer relationships. Shared technology facilitates the interaction between suppliers and customers (Carr and Smeltzer, 2002; Hüttinger et al., 2012). Drawing on the above discussion, we can conclude that the variables of atmosphere, information sharing and technology sharing are responsible for driving customer affective response. We refer to these variables as *exchange climate* and this study will further investigate the importance of the exchange climate in driving affective response (emotional and social).

The second type of functional dimension is bonding. The key constituents of social bonding are trust, commitment and personal relationship. Trust connotes a high degree of confidence between partners (Das and Teng, 1998) and is among the important selection criteria when dealing with professional service providers (Day and Barksdale, 1992). Kang et al. (2013) view trust as a part of the development of a relationship and a key component of relationship quality. Moorman et al. (1992, p.315) defined trust as “a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence”, and it exists when there is a high degree of confidence in a partner’s reliability and integrity (Chenet et al., 2010; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Palmatier et al., 2006). Thus, trust is an important variable in driving the affective dimension of experience. Commitment is another driver of social bonding. Morgan and Hunt (1994) describe commitment as a significant key factor in relationship marketing. Commitment has been addressed in a considerable body of relationship marketing literature and been defined as “an exchange partner believing that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it; that is, the committed party believes the relationship is worth working on to ensure that it endures indefinitely” (Morgan and Hunt, 1994, p. 23). Consequently, a high level of commitment helps to stabilise the relationship. Trust and commitment stimulate a relational bond (Gounaris, 2005). Hüttinger et al. (2012) argue that trust and commitment are important drivers of the supplier–customer relationship and are considered to be among the drivers affecting the relationship. Relationship commitment stands for the superior level of ties among individuals engaged. It alludes to how organisations or individuals are actually involved in a relationship and the extent to which they sustain the relationship over time (Park et al., 2012). Thus,

commitment is another important variable driving the affective dimension of experience.

Additionally, personal relationship is a critical driver in the process of purchasing professional services (Lian and Laing, 2007). Personal relationships which exert a positive influence on the essential atmosphere of a relationship (Hüttinger et al., 2012) can therefore comprise the social elements of a relationship which have a considerable effect on a customer's decision to deal with a supplier. Personal relationships are at the heart of the relational exchange. Customers take personal relationships into account as an important aspect of purchasing. Lian and Laing (2007) divided personal relationships in two types: professional and social relationships. Professional relationships are associated with work issues and social relationships are created out of the working environment; hence, they lead to the strengthening of professional relationships as well as impacting satisfaction with the service provided. Thus, personal relationship is an important driver of the social response.

Based on the above discussion, trust, commitment and personal relationships are the principles of the construct we call *bonding*, and this study will further investigate the importance of the bonding variables in driving affective response (emotional and social). Thus, the following hypotheses emerged:

(H4a) Exchange climate (atmosphere, information sharing and technology sharing) have an impact on the emotional and social responses.

(H4b) Bonding (trust, commitment and personal relationship) have an impact on the emotional and social responses.

3.7.3. Consequences of customer experience in B2B

Customer experience matters because it affects satisfaction. B2B customers are inclined to remain loyal to their suppliers for as long as the customer receives a satisfactory experience from their business with the specific supplier (Verhoef, 2003).

It has been argued that companies should pursue experience offerings leading to satisfaction (Berry et al., 2002). The perfect customer experience is defined in this quote by Frow and Payne: “‘advocacy’ typically implies achieving a very high score on customer satisfaction” (Frow and Payne, 2007, p. 92). Within this stream, total customer experience affects customer satisfaction (Mascarenhas et al., 2006). Additionally, positive customer experience influences marketing outcomes such as satisfaction, loyalty and WOM (Klaus and Maklan, 2013; Kranzbühler et al., 2018). Also, experience directly influences satisfaction and intentions (Chen and Chen, 2010). While the role of past experience is important, as discussed previously, the extant literature lacks empirical evidence testing the effect of both the past and current experiences on satisfaction (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Verhoef et al., 2009). Satisfaction is important for many reasons, but one of the most important is the fact that there is a strong correlation between satisfaction and further customer behaviours (Innis and La Londe, 1994), so satisfaction will be further investigated in the customer experience model. Thus, the following hypotheses emerged:

(H5a) The greater the customer’s factual response, the more satisfied the customer will be with the supplier.

(H5b) The greater the customer’s sagacious response, the more satisfied the customer will be with the supplier.

(H5c) The greater the customer's emotional response, the more satisfied the customer will be with the supplier.

(H5d) The greater the customer's social response, the more satisfied the customer will be with the supplier.

Linked to the prior discussion in this section, the importance of customer experience stemmed from the importance of the impact on satisfaction and loyalty behaviour, which are the most important marketing outcomes (Chen and Chen, 2010; Klaus and Maklan, 2013; Kranzbühler et al., 2018; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Mascarenhas et al., 2006; Meyer and Schwager, 2007; Verhoef et al., 2009). Customer experience measures are usually linked to behavioural intentions (Klaus and Maklan, 2013; Triantafillidou and Siomkos, 2014). Surprisingly, there is no empirical evidence measuring the impact of experience on reported behaviour.

It has been noted that customer experience creates other benefits for service providers. According to Ha and Perks (2005), customers use their previous experiences when making repurchase decisions. Chen and Chen (2010) recognised an indirect effect of customer experience on behavioural intentions, which is mediated by perceived value and positive behavioural intentions which frequently represent customer loyalty. Customer loyalty is an important outcome of a marketing relationship due to its ability to ensure long-term customers. Keeping loyal customers is often less costly than gaining new ones and thus the reported behaviour should be investigated rather than intentions. Loyalty refers to the behavioural intentions in terms of repurchase intention and willingness to provide positive WOM (Andreassen and Lindestad, 1998). East et al. (2008, p.215) defined WOM as “informal advice

passed between customers”. Since intentions are not fixed and may change over a period of time (Sutton, 1998), it is worth investigating the reported behaviour of customers to identify whether they purchased again from the same service provider (repeated repurchase) and recommended it to their peers (WOM).

Further, it is obvious that the influence of satisfaction on intentions is well documented in marketing literature. There is another important gap that should be addressed too, however: there is no attempt to measure how satisfaction affects reported behaviour as conditioned by experience. Thus, this study undertakes a further significant investigation by exploring the direct influence of the customer experience on repeated purchase and WOM, as well as the indirect influence of customer experience on reported behaviour through satisfaction. It is worth testing the main motive behind the repeated purchase and WOM. Thus, this study will collect the responses from customers at a different point in time after project completion (t+1) in order to capture their reported behaviour. For this reason, the following hypotheses emerged:

(H6a) The greater the experience that the customer receives from the supplier, the more repeated purchase from the customer.

(H6b) The greater the experience that the customer receives from the supplier, the more word-of-mouth from the customer.

(H7a) The greater the experience that the customer receives from the supplier, the more satisfied the customer will be, hence the more repeated purchase from the customer.

(H7b) The greater the experience that the customer receives from the supplier, the more satisfied the customer will be, hence the more word-of-mouth from the customer.

The following Figure 3 summarises the general customer experience framework in B2B and Figure 4 displays the hypothesised relationships.

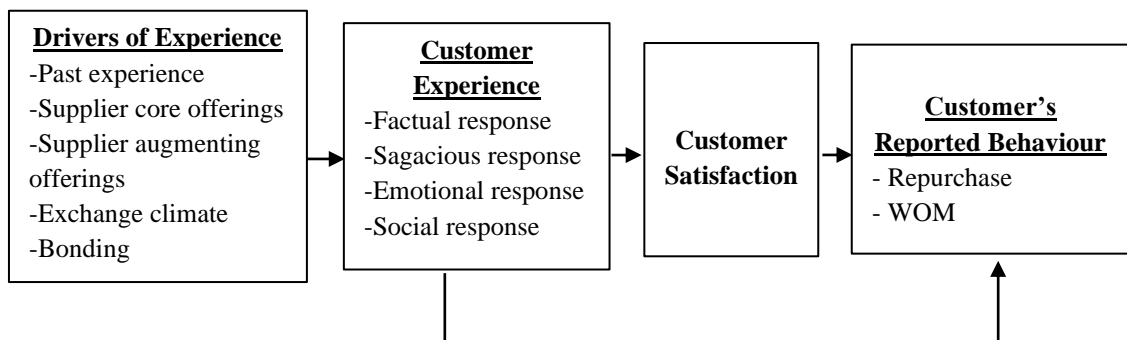


Figure 3: The general customer experience conceptual framework in B2B

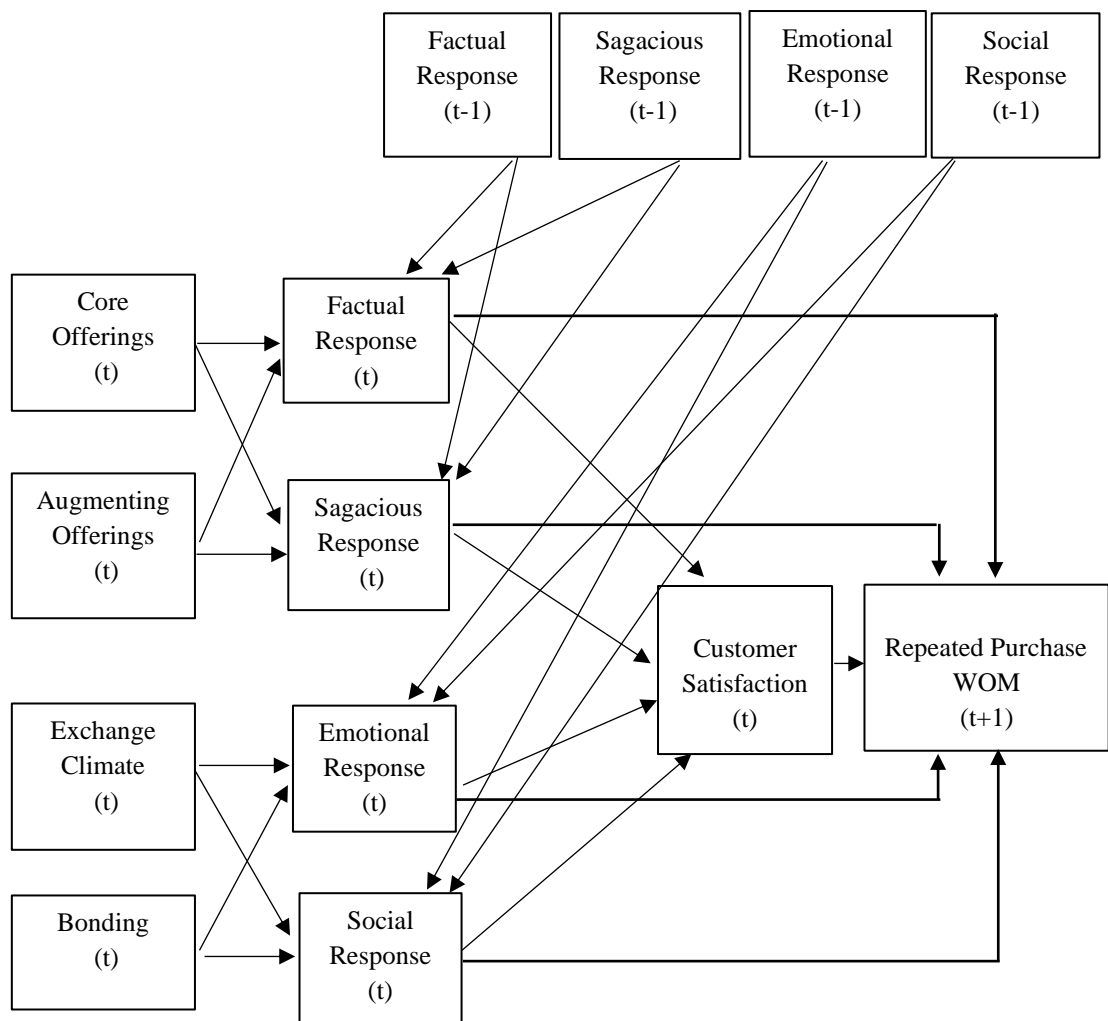


Figure 4: The hypothesised model

3.8. Conclusion

This chapter has provided information on the importance and relevance of the study to marketing theory, and in particular, it has identified and explained the boundaries of the focal B2B customer experience construct. It has discussed B2B relationship marketing, the buying centre, relational and transactional approaches in business relationships, and also provided the rationale for selecting the relational

approach for the customer experience investigation. Moreover, it has further provided the importance and relevance of measuring experience for the customers of professional services in B2B.

This chapter has also built upon the literature review in order to justify the intended conceptual framework for the project and has defined what customer experience is in B2B. It has considered the foundational dimensions of customer experience: factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses. It has also considered the ways in which the drivers of experience influence these fundamental dimensions. It has noted that experiences from the past, the core offering of the supplier and its potential augmenting, the exchange climate and the bonding efforts between customer and supplier all play a significant part in the creation of a present experience, and thus the result of customer satisfaction and behaviours. Further, written hypotheses were provided to describe the relationships verified in the research framework and the hypothesised model was displayed.

Although the variables clarified in this chapter have helped to establish the theoretical basis for the potential relationships surrounding customer experience, a further investigation is needed in order to develop and validate the items to measure each experience dimension – factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses – as well as confirming the proposed conceptual framework. In the next chapter, the research philosophy and methods of this study will be discussed in detail.

CHAPTER 4:

RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY AND METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

The second and third chapters discussed in detail the literature relevant to customer experience and provided the limitations of the previous studies. Following that, the customer experience model in B2B was developed, offering a justification for each variable used in the model as well as formulating the research hypotheses.

In this chapter, the methodology will be discussed by reviewing the available philosophies and methods, considering what purpose each method serves and detailing the pros and cons of each. The most appropriate method for this research will be indicated with the necessary justification.

To generate the data required to meet the aim of this investigation and test our hypotheses, two studies were completed. The purpose of the first study was to empirically derive a measure for CE. The first study involved qualitative investigation to produce the measures of CE and a quantitative one for purifying and refining the newly developed measures. Hence, a mixed-methods approach was employed. The qualitative research also served to confirm the conceptual framework variables. The purpose of the second study was to independently validate the scales for measuring CE, to assess the impact of past experience on present experience as well as to examine the drivers and the reported outcomes of CE. Hence, a panel of B2B customers was formed, longitudinal research was completed and thus the hypotheses were tested (*H1-H7*).

4.2. What is meant by “research”?

Research can be defined as a process of developing knowledge by seeking out and exploring new things (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2002). A more technical definition of research is that it is “a systematic and methodical process of enquiry and investigation with a view to increasing knowledge” (Collis and Hussey, 2013, p.2). In this respect, knowledge gained from research is acquired through conducting extended analysis of any subject matter, in a systematic way.

Research on business studies and management faces a difficulty in data collection due to the fact that business people are busy people and are not keen to participate in data collection unless a commercial advantage is seen (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Moreover, research implications should have a practical link or actionable implications. Managers are usually educated people and may therefore be on a similar cognitive level as the researcher; in essence, researchers must be prepared to make it worthwhile for a business practitioner to engage in research.

4.3. The research process

Similar to the concept of research itself, its process is logically systematic with a view to producing knowledge (Collis and Hussey, 2013; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). It is common to provide visualisations of a systematic research process and its steps. The following Figure 5 explains the research process used in this study to achieve the research objectives required for its academic contribution.

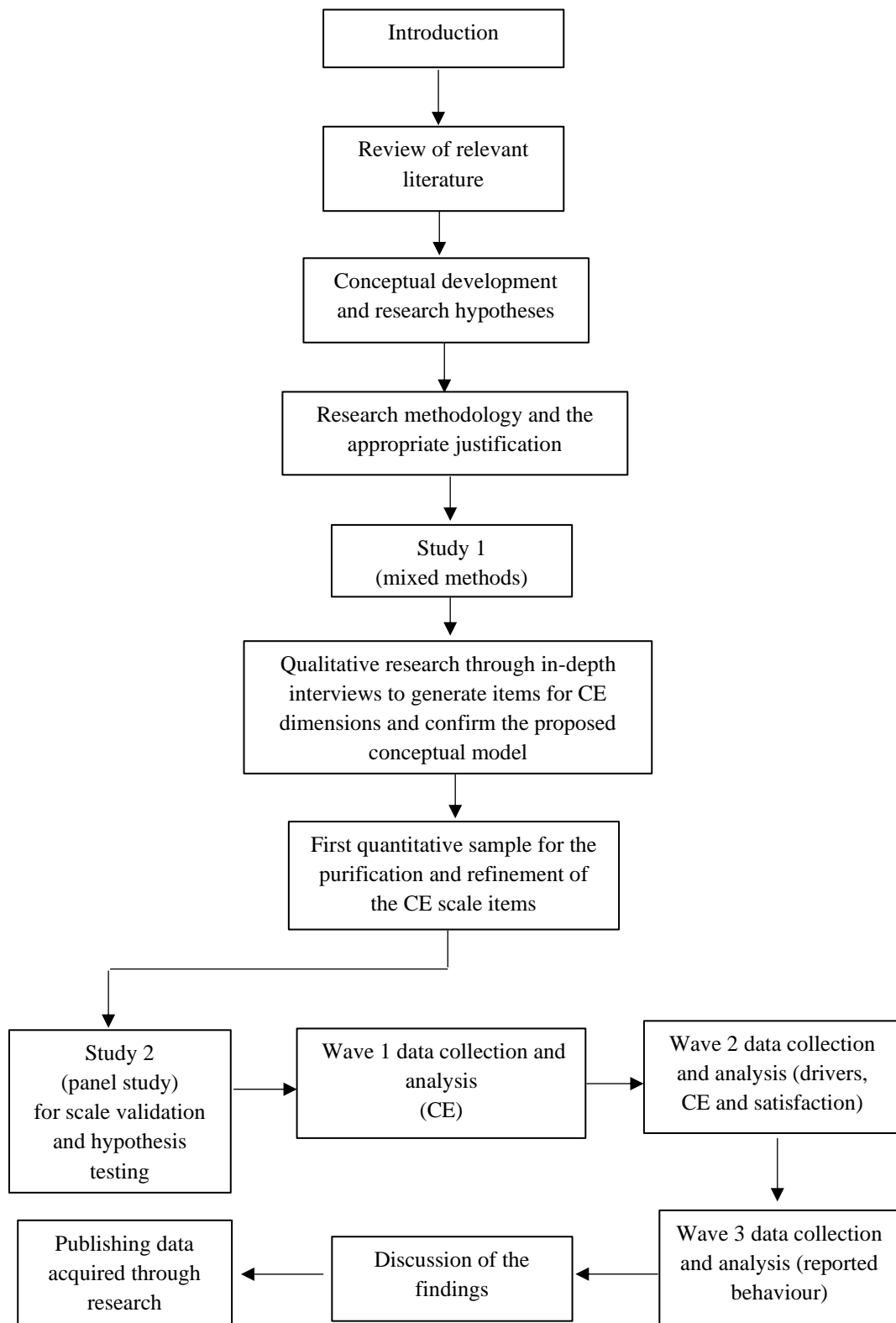


Figure 5: Research process for the B2B customer experience study

4.4. Research philosophies

Founding research within the context of a proper philosophical base is an essential prerequisite for precise and successful social science research (Blaikie, 2007). Many researchers in management and business studies do not pay attention to the research philosophy and this is a mistake; without the lens of the research philosophy, the research outcomes can be adversely affected (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018).

Easterby-Smith et al. (2018) outlined four reasons which demonstrate the importance of recognising the philosophical approaches in business studies. First, understanding of the research philosophy helps to understand the reflexive role in research methods. Second, understanding of the philosophical foundations aids in better clarifying the research design. Third, having knowledge of the philosophy makes it easier to identify which research design works best for the intended study. Fourth, understanding the research philosophy guides researchers in adapting or creating a new research design beyond their past experience. Hence, before establishing what is best for measuring customer experience in the B2B context, the research philosophy adopted by this study should be explained. The following section seeks to clarify the philosophical basis of this research.

4.4.1. Core assumptions for the research process (ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods)

The four main assumptions that underpin research design are: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods and techniques (Collis and Hussey, 2013; Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). The specifics of these are detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Definitions of the core assumptions of the research process

Core assumptions	What is it about?	Questions we ask
Ontology	Philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality	What is reality? What types of beings are there? How is it that different types of beings exist? What is type?
Epistemology	A general set of assumptions about ways of enquiring into the nature of the world	What is knowledge? How do we know what we know? How is knowledge acquired?
Methodology	A combination of methods used to enquire into a specific situation	What questions am I asking and what kind of conclusion do I hope to draw? How can I best research this question? What data are available?
Methods and techniques	Individual techniques for data collection, analysis, etc.	How can I collect and analyse these data? How does this method or technique help me to answer my research question? Is this method or technique appropriate to the context and research question I am investigating?

Source: Easterby-Smith et al. (2018)

The sequence of a research design goes through these four assumptions, starting with ontology as the first step in establishing the research approach, then followed by epistemology, then methodology and finally the methods and techniques used.

Ontology refers to the philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Ontology is interested in the nature of entities.

Therefore, ontologically, this research considers the nature of customer experience in the B2B context to be a subjective entity. Further, it also considers its influences on the positive outcomes of customer experience such as customer loyalty and repeat business.

Epistemology refers to the premises about the ways of enquiring into the nature of the world (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Epistemology is mainly focused on what is accepted as valid knowledge and it is interested in investigating the relationship between research and researcher (Collis and Hussey, 2013). So, as it can be acknowledged that positive customer experience has an influence on further positive outcomes in the business world, from an epistemological perspective, the nature of customer experience and its dimensions is an investigable entity. Why and how does it have the effects that it does, and what are the variables that affect it? How can (and should) customer experience be observed and measured?

Having established the ontological and epistemological aspects of a study, the methodology is the next consideration. Methodology is the way research techniques and methods are combined to investigate a particular matter (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). This involves data collection and analysis. The analysis focuses on variables and causalities, and it considers the structure and duration of the research to be undertaken. In the case of B2B customer experience, as the previous literature suggests, these data should be quantitative, qualitative and gathered systematically over an extended period of time, but this cannot be done accurately without the appropriate methods or techniques.

Methods are different from methodology. Instead of planning and designing research, which are the concerns of methodology, methods refer practically to the strategies used for data collection and analysis (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018).

4.4.2. Research paradigms

Once the core assumptions have been considered, it is necessary to choose a research paradigm. A research paradigm is “a framework that guides *how* research should be conducted based on people’s philosophies and their assumptions about the world and the nature of knowledge” (Collis and Hussey, 2013, p.43). A paradigm can also be defined as a consensus concept of how scientists think and explore the world (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). So, it is a way of thinking and guides us in terms of how knowledge can be interpreted through systematic thinking. There are three philosophical paradigms in scientific research that help to identify and interpret knowledge. The first philosophical paradigm is positivism, the second interpretivism and the third critical realism. These philosophies have been taken into account and the most ideal for the appropriate analysis of customer experience in the B2B context has been selected. The bases of these paradigms are detailed and the justification for the one chosen has been provided.

4.4.2.1. Positivism

Positivism is a paradigm that emerged in the natural sciences. It is based on the idea that social reality is objective and is not influenced by the way it is examined. The research incorporates a deductive method to offer explanatory theories for understanding social phenomena (Collis and Hussey, 2013). The key idea of

positivism is that the social world exists externally, and that its properties should be measured through objective methods (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018).

4.4.2.2. Interpretivism

Interpretivism is a paradigm that arose in response to positivism critiques. It supports the notion that social reality exists in our minds and is therefore subjective. Accordingly, an interpretivist assumes that social reality is influenced by the way it is examined. The research incorporates an inductive method in order to provide an interpretation of a social phenomenon within a given context (Collis and Hussey, 2013). Interpretivism, also known as constructionism, refers to the assumption that reality is determined by individuals instead of objective and external factors, and thus it is important to value how people make sense of their own experience (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). The following Table 2 provides a summary of positivism and interpretivism (social constructionism).

Table 2: A summary of positivism and interpretivism

Key aspects	Positivism	Interpretivism
Researchers	Must be independent	Is part of what is being observed
Human interests	Should be irrelevant	Are the main drivers of science
Explanations	Must demonstrate causality	Aim to increase general understanding of the situation
Research progresses through	Hypotheses and deductions	Gathering reach data from which ideas are included
Concepts	Need to be defined so that they can be measured	Should incorporate stakeholder perspective
Units of analysis	Should be reduced to the simplest terms	May include the complexity of whole situations
Generalisation through	Statistical probability	Theoretical abstraction
Sampling requires	Large numbers selected randomly	Small numbers of cases chosen for specific reasons

Source: Easterby-Smith et al. (2018)

4.4.2.3. Critical realism

The third scientific paradigm, critical realism, is an approach to social research with an explicit ontological position, which combines features of both positivism and interpretivism (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Critical realism means that there is an independent world of objective reality existing independently of human knowledge that has a definite nature or essence which is knowable (Bhaskar, 1975).

Wynn and Williams (2012) assume that critical realism leverages elements of both positivism and interpretivism to offer a new way to develop knowledge. Whilst positivism is mainly involved in testing, verification and falsification, and prediction of generalisable theories about an objective reality (Chua, 1986), interpretivism concentrates on reality as a human construction that can exclusively be understood subjectively (Kroeze, 2012). In particular, critical realism admits the role of the subjective knowledge of social actors as well as the existence of independent structures that allow these actors to follow particular activities.

Given that this paradigm acknowledges the nature of a thing as independent but still experiential, it is what will be adopted in this research and the following rationale will discuss this in detail.

4.4.2.4. Critical realism: A paradigm for customer experience in the B2B context

Critical realism has been widely adopted in management and marketing (Easton, 2002; Hunt, 1994; Johnson and Duberley, 2000; Zinkhan and Hirschheim, 1992). The fact that this is a research project grounded in the world of business immediately makes it a favourable paradigm.

Bhaskar (2008) argues that reality in critical realism incorporates the depth of realist ontology by postulating a stratified ontology composed of the real, the actual and the empirical. The viewpoint of the real is that there are mechanisms that have causal powers to generate a phenomenon; these generative mechanisms may be unseen, but their influences are observable. The actual is the events and non-events produced by mechanisms; these may be observable or unobservable. Experienced events are the empirical which have relative causal power and can be observed by people. Mechanisms are essentially the ways of acting or working of structured things such as physical objects or social processes; therefore, mechanisms exist as the causal powers of things. Sayer (1992, p.104) defines causal powers in the following way: “To ask for the cause of something is to ask ‘what makes it happen’, what ‘produces’, ‘generates’, ‘creates’ or ‘determines’ it, or, more weakly, what ‘enables’ or ‘leads to’ it”.

Critical realism is the most suitable philosophy for the research of customer experience because the reality of customer experience is stratified. Customer experience exists in the real domain as there is a knowledge gap to identify the causal mechanism of the effect of customer experience on purchasing behaviour in a B2B context. Likewise, customer experience exists in the actual domain as not every effect of customer experience on purchasing behaviour is easily observable when activated. Bygstad and Munkvold (2011) note that the aim of critical realism is to reveal the mechanisms that cause the outcomes. Those mechanisms are not easily observable.

Critical realism believes that social phenomena essentially have meaning; therefore, that meaning is not only exteriorly descriptive of them but fundamental to them (Sayer, 2000, p.17). In addition, according to Blaikie (2009), critical realism

incorporates the epistemology of neo-realism. The epistemology of neo-realism suggests that instead of the surface outlook of nature, it can be vital to contemplate entities or procedures that have never been observed to further understand the essence of things. The production of knowledge is indeed a human pursuit and relies on the particular details and processes of its generation; these can be founded facts, theories, models, methods and techniques of study that are conducted by researchers at a particular time and place. Critical realism helps us “investigate and identify relationships and non-relationships, respectively, between what we experience, what actually happens, and the underlying mechanisms that produce the events in the world” (Danermark, 2002, p. 21). As the existing reality is complicated and not understood by our superficial interpretation, critical realism tries to comprehend the mechanisms beneath causal relationships (Danermark, 2002); therefore, the critical realist attempts to unveil causal mechanisms of the phenomena investigated. In this respect, the key feature of the research, as a social phenomenon, is to investigate the causal mechanisms of the relationships between the customer experience and the marketing outcomes of customer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, in the spirit of critical realism, the research conducted is determined to contribute more knowledge to causal explanations of the impact of customer experience on purchasing behaviour.

Whilst adopting a critical realist paradigm concentrates the research on exploring the mechanisms and structures influencing a social phenomenon, it must be noted that critical realism functions through *retroduction*. Bhaskar (2009, p. 7) defines retroduction as moving “from a description of some phenomenon to a description of something which produces it or is a condition for it”. Likewise, Downward et al. (2002) state that retroduction is the central logic of inference related to critical realist

epistemology. Time is an important factor in this research due to the consideration of past experience and the necessity for systematic data collection over an extended period. In this vein, this research will consider what produces customer experience in B2B.

As critical realism postulates both the entity of independent reality, which can only be fallibly obtained by humans, and the capability of science to access this reality in an expectantly progressive approach, using a critical realist's lens, this research will attempt to convey the underlying reality from various standpoints in order to go beyond perceptual limitations based on the epistemological tenets of reconciled knowledge, unobservability and the feasibility of various mechanisms. The concept of methodological triangulation, where both qualitative and quantitative methods are employed, has been recognised as reflecting the importance of involving multiple approaches to support causal analysis on the basis of a diversity of data types and sources, analytical methods and theoretical perspectives (Wynn and Williams, 2012).

In addition, critical realism acknowledges that reality consists of multiple forms of entities or structures such as social, physical or conceptual. Each one has distinctive emergent attributes, powers and tendencies. Different means of developing knowledge are entailed by different structures and their properties, where the use of different methods and perspectives is required. Therefore, applying a multimethod approach is the most appropriate for measuring customer experience and its consequences due to the diversity of the contextual variables (Palmer, 2010). Additionally, applying a multimethod approach enables researchers to control the effect of the potentially various prejudices of the research processes and outcomes (Wynn and Williams, 2012).

To conclude, the heart of this research is the goal of recognising the causal mechanism, that is, the measuring of a customer's experience, and in so doing, studying its drivers and effect on satisfaction and subsequent behaviour. It is undeniably an ideal fit within the paradigm of critical realism.

4.5. Scale development process

The extensive review of the literature helped to form a conceptualisation of the dimensions that potentially comprise the notion of CE (factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses). Following Churchill's (1979) and DeVellis' (2016) scale development recommendations, two different studies have been conducted. Study 1 is a mixed-methods approach comprising two phases. The first phase is qualitative research represented by 12 in-depth interviews for the purpose of identifying items that could potentially produce a valid measure for the four CE dimensions (factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses) that were developed from the literature, and the second phase is quantitative research for the purpose of collecting the first quantitative sample of 146 to purify and refine the developed scales.

Study 2 is separate from Study 1. Study 2 is a longitudinal study comprising three waves from the same sample. It allowed the collection of the second quantitative sample required for scale validation and hypotheses tests. In total, 447 companies participated in Wave 1. This initial sample of 447 companies produced two independent sub-samples, which were used for different purposes. The first sub-sample consists of the 187 companies that participated in Wave 1 but failed to meet the eligibility criteria to enter Wave 2 or simply did not respond to our call. I used the responses from these 187 companies to validate the scale for CE. The second sub-sample consists of the 260 companies that survived in Wave 2 and, eventually, 202

participated in Wave 3. The data collected in Wave 2 and Wave 3 allowed the drivers and the predictive validity of the CE measures to be assessed. The detailed process of each of these stages along with their justification is presented in separate sections below.

The following Figure 6 explains the overall scale development process.

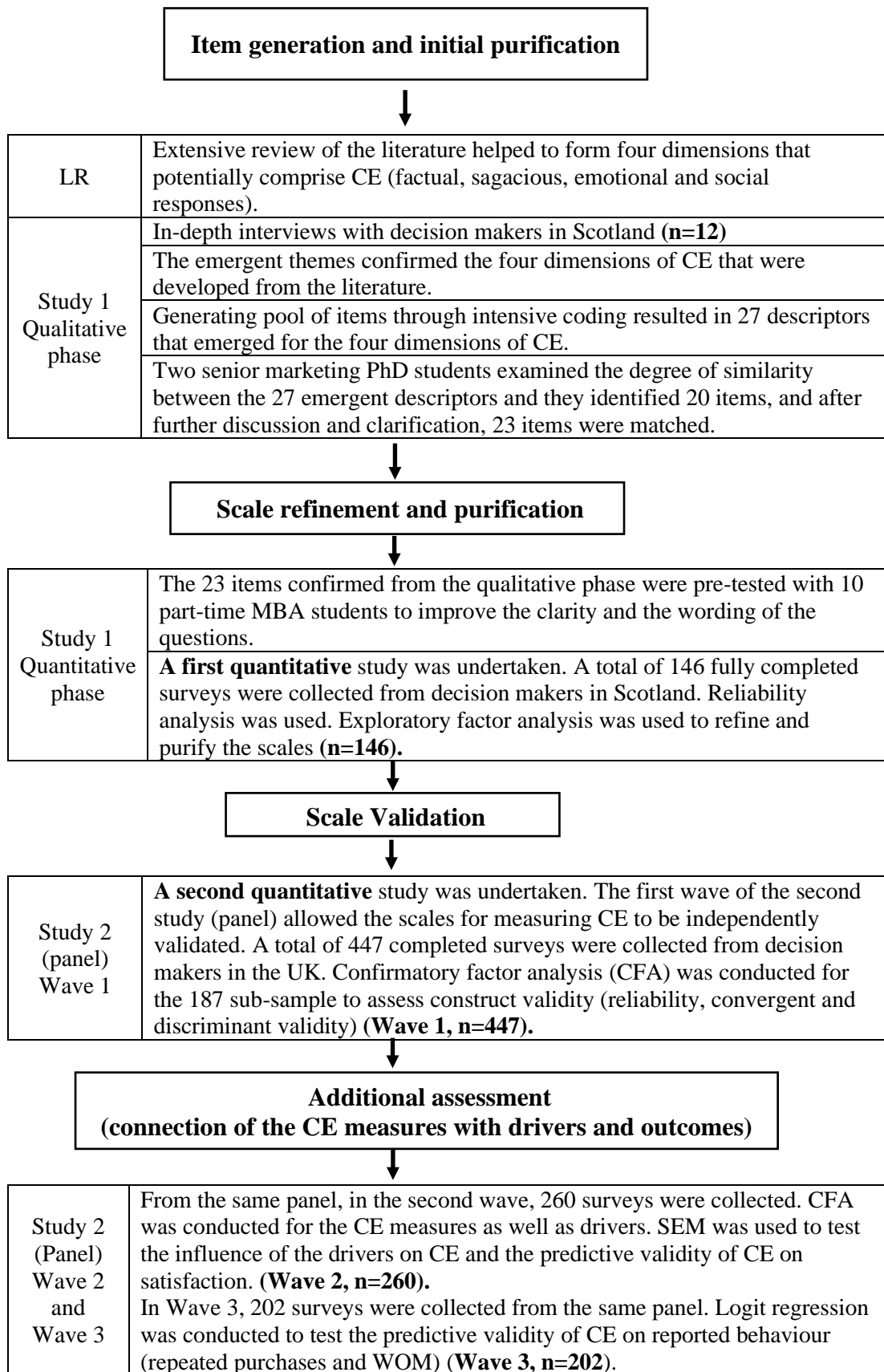


Figure 6: The scale development process

4.6. Study 1 (mixed methods)

The purpose of Study 1 is twofold. First, the study was designed to empirically develop a measure for gauging CE. Second, the study serves to confirm the proposed conceptual framework. As such, Study 1 had two phases. The first phase involved qualitative research conducted to produce the items for measuring CE dimensions as well as confirming the suggested model. The second phase relied on quantitative data to allow the purification and refinement of the items that the first phase had generated. Hence, Study 1 relies on mixed methods.

Mixed methods rely on the integration of methods from various research approaches, to combine qualitative and quantitative data to address a specific set of research objectives (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Easterby-Smith et al., 2018).

The benefit of using mixed methods is to better obtain a more valid and reliable interpretation of the phenomena investigated rather than using one single method (Collis and Hussey, 2013) and that was necessary to meet our first research objective with regard to identifying the dimensions of CE in the B2B context as well as the second research objective about identifying the drivers of CE.

It is important to highlight the pros and cons of the mixed-methods approach. These pros and cons are outlined by Easterby-Smith et al. (2018). Mixed methods are considered worthwhile because they have the ability to provide new viewpoints on research questions, to add to the trustworthiness of outcomes, to offer generalised findings, and to give profound perceptions that illustrate why things occur. On the other hand, there are several critiques around the adoption of mixed methods. It could be difficult and problematic to bring together two different paradigms in the same study framework due to the different underpinning assumptions underlying the

qualitative and quantitative approaches, which indicates that it may not be easy to combine two parts in the same study (Bryman and Bell, 2015). This argument is weak because it suggests that paradigms are entirely separate with no potential for combination. However, it is acceptable to combine two methods in one study due to the more accurate and solid results they produce, as has been done in the past. Moreover, in recent years, the practice has become more widely adopted in business studies (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The following Table 3 explains the summary of the pros and cons for mixed-methods adoption.

Table 3: Arguments for and against the mixed-methods approach

Arguments for mixed methods	Arguments against mixed methods
They increase confidence and credibility of results	Replication is difficult
They can increase validity	They take up more resources and often more time than single-method studies
They stimulate creative and inventive methods	Their use requires a competent overall design
They can uncover deviant dimensions	The researcher needs to be skilled in the use of both methods
They can help synthesis and integration of theories	It is not helpful if one method simply provides window dressing for the other
They may serve as a critical test for competing theories	
They can combine confirmatory and exploratory research at the same time	
They can present greater diversity of views	
They can provide better inferences	

Source: Easterby-Smith et al. (2018)

Based on the above discussion, it is believed that the mixed-methods approach fits well for informing this empirical investigation and delivering the first two research objectives. The following section discusses the research design for the qualitative phase in detail.

4.6.1. Research design for the qualitative phase

As outlined earlier, the literature helped to form the dimensions that comprise the concept of CE in B2B (factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses) as well as to develop the conceptual framework. But in order to measure the CE dimensions, we still need the items which contribute to these dimensions. Thus, a qualitative study is considered for two reasons. First, it will help to produce the items that make up and measure the four dimensions of experience already drawn from the literature review (factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses). This will be achieved through conducting in-depth interviews and generating a pool of items following the suggestion of scale development by Churchill (1979) and DeVellis (2016). Second, the qualitative study will provide a more valid and robust conceptual framework by confirming the suggested variables already identified from the literature review that helped to build the model. This will be achieved through confirming the categorisation of the different drivers of the supplier's technical offering into core and augmenting offerings, and also confirm the categorisation of the antecedents for the affective drivers of CE into exchange climate and bonding, as well as confirming the consequences of CE. Therefore, the main objectives of the qualitative phase are to:

- Develop items for measuring the four dimensions of customer experience in B2B.
- Confirm the variables in the proposed conceptual framework.

Qualitative research includes in-depth interviews, focus group, observation and projective techniques (Malhotra et al., 2017). The following subsections will detail the plan for the research design in the qualitative stage, highlighting the justification

for adopting in-depth interviews, data collection, population and sampling and an interview analysis technique.

4.6.1.1. In-depth interviews

In order to generate the items for measuring the dimensions of CE in B2B and to confirm the proposed conceptual model, in-depth interviews were conducted. In-depth interviews were adopted for the following reasons: (1) they provide great insights and rich data to better the understanding of the experience as they can be used to investigate individuals' responses, impressions, attitudes and behaviours (Wilson, 2010); (2) in-depth interviews are direct and personal, which ideally allows participants to engage meaningfully with an interviewer to uncover underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes and feelings about a topic; (3) they allow free exchange of information between interviewer and interviewee; (4) they are easier to arrange as the degree of flexibility is relatively high among other qualitative methods (Malhotra et al., 2017).

However, despite these advantages of the in-depth interviews, there are some challenges when selecting this method such as: (1) they are time consuming; (2) they are costly, particularly when the participants are located in different geographic areas; (3) participants may be concerned about confidentiality issues which may affect the quality outcome; (4) interviewers need to have interview skills; (5) analysing and interpreting the data might be difficult (Malhotra et al., 2017; Wilson, 2010).

An interview is a primary data collection method in which a sample of interviewees are asked questions to discover what they feel, think or do; it can be carried out in three different forms: structured, unstructured and semi-structured

(Collis and Hussey, 2013). An unstructured interview refers to open-ended questions and/or no preparation in advance; it allows for an evolving or free-flowing interview process. Conversely, a structured interview requires closed questions with yes or no answers, very brief and quick answers, or even a predetermined list of answers (Collis and Hussey, 2013). Semi-structured interviews are used when preparing questions to motivate the respondent to debate and develop other questions during the interview (Collis and Hussey, 2013).

Semi-structured interviews help the researcher to acquire more insight and understanding rather than the structured interview where the respondent is restricted to certain answers (Malhotra et al., 2017). Semi-structured interviews appear to be the most appropriate method for studying B2B experience because they help to both control and adapt the flow of information needed throughout the interview; they also help to probe unexplored issues that are raised during the investigation (Malhotra et al., 2017). Hence, semi-structured interviews are adopted in the qualitative phase of this work.

4.6.1.2. In-depth interview data collection

Interviews can be conducted by telephone and recently, this has been seen as quite common in marketing research (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The telephone interview is preferred over the personal interview due to a number of reasons. As outlined by Bryman and Bell (2015), unlike the personal interview, the telephone interview is considered cheaper and easier to control. This is because the personal interview requires the effort and money to travel to a specific location. Sometimes this is inconvenient, and especially so when each party is based far from the chosen

location. Although telephone interviews do involve a cost, it is still less than the cost of personal interviewing. Hence it is preferred for this study. Although the telephone interview lacks the benefit of body language, an interviewer can always rephrase a question to ensure that the intended meaning is grasped by the interviewee. Perhaps the most important feature of the interview via telephone is that the respondent is not affected by the personal characteristics of the interviewer. A non-physical interview eliminates the potential for positive or negative bias towards the interviewer. Therefore, the results are less affected by personal characteristics which may prejudice the result.

However, despite the benefits of telephone interview, it is not free from limitations compared to personal interview; for instance, some people can't be contacted by phone, a telephone interview is shorter than a personal interview, respondents don't reveal as much information on sensitive issues as they do in a personal interview, and face expression is sometimes important to judge whether the respondent clearly understands the question asked (Bryman and Bell., 2015).

Considering the benefits of using telephone interviews and due to the fact that the intended participants are business managers geographically dispersed around Scotland, it is clear that personal interview is not a feasible choice. It is difficult to travel to their cities to meet them due to the cost and effort needed. Moreover, business managers are busy people and arranging face-to-face meetings is rather complicated (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). In addition, this study does not cover sensitive issues (such as bullying and drug use) for which personal interview is preferred. Therefore, telephone interviews are the most appropriate for interviewing business managers and as a result, this approach is adopted for the qualitative phase.

In order to conduct the in-depth interviews, it is necessary to prepare an interview guide (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). The interview guide is a prepared list of areas and questions to be discussed during an interview. When preparing a topic guide, the research objectives, research design and sampling strategy should be revisited to make sure that the interview will achieve the intended purpose, and should be organised around three sections: opening questions, questions around key topics and closing questions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018).

The interview guide used in this study can be seen in Appendix 1. The preparation of this interview guide was done according to the phases outlined by Wilson (2012, p.111). The first phase was the introduction phase, which includes the objective of the session and explains the nature of the discussion and the general agenda of topics to be followed. The second phase was the discursive phase, which includes general topic areas to be discussed and potential prompts and stimulus material. The third phase was the summarising phase, which includes prompts for summarising what has been discussed and gives thanks to participants.

The best way to conduct interviews is using the laddering technique (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). The laddering-up technique is a way to understand more about the statement made by a respondent (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018), for instance, by asking the question “Why?” The laddering-down technique is a way to seek more evidence from respondents (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). For instance, it could involve the question: “Could you please give an example of this?” Both versions of the laddering technique were adopted within the interviews conducted.

Being biased is a primary concern within the interview process (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). During a telephone interview there is still opportunity for bias, so

to minimise the possibility of bias being introduced to the responses as a result of the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee, a “probe” is a useful tool. Probing simply means repeating the initial question when the interviewee strays from the point (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). With these interviews, this technique was adopted on many occasions to get the interviewee back to the point of the topic under discussion. Another important concern during the interview process is building trust with the interviewee by ensuring confidentiality. It was also important to speak in clear language and avoid any scientific terms that could be misunderstood by the interviewee (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). All of these issues were taken into account during the interviews.

4.6.1.3. In-depth interview participants

Given the study’s research design, the preparation for the interview involves to the definition of the population that the study addresses (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Having established that the main focus of the study is to investigate customer experience in the business market, Study 1 focuses on small- and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) that procure professional services in Scotland. The reason behind this selection is that they account for 99% of UK businesses and also, they make considerable use of professional services including those provided by accountants, financial advisors, lawyers, and consultants (Freeman and Dart, 1993; Sonmez and Moorhouse, 2010).

SMEs have been selected due to the growing and continuing interest in obtaining services from professional service providers for the purpose of supporting business operations. At the same time, professional service providers are seeking to build and maintain long-term relationships with these business customers

(Sarapaivanich and Patterson, 2015) in order to gain their loyalty, which is not an easy task (Casidy and Nyadzayo, 2019).

Business customers dealing with professional services should have strong relationships (Casidy and Nyadzayo, 2019). Consequently, the gained relationships will lead to the either positive or negative experiences. Usually, having a successful interaction (Ng et al., 2016) and good relationships (Sarapaivanich and Patterson, 2015) are associated with successful service from the customer's point of view. Businesses are perpetually competing and are always seeking to acquire the best professional service providers to operate their businesses effectively and build a long-term relationship (Sarapaivanich and Patterson, 2015; Casidy and Nyadzayo, 2019). Accordingly, building a long-term relationship is based on positive experience. Thus, the customers of professional services in B2B are investigated due to the nature of the long-established relationship that usually involves multiple encounters, providing a good basis for research in service markets and which plays a pivotal role in the professional service journey with customers thus able to explore CE from a more holistic perspective.

Senior managers of business customers who worked closely and liaised with professional services providers, including marketing agencies, legal firms, and accountants and auditor firms within Scotland, were selected for interviews. Those managers are solely or jointly responsible for and have experience of liaising with professional services companies during the business exchange. Managers were required to have used at least one of the professional services in the past and reflected on it. Further, the project could not be ongoing during the time of the interview and should have not been completed more than a month before. This time framework

allowed the participants to have a fresh memory of their overall experience with the service provider. The selection of managers was from a range of industry settings (services and goods) in order to provide a wider perspective and a more comprehensive application since professional services are important for both services and goods sectors. Thus, managers were interviewed from a range of industry sectors (services sectors such as agencies, communication, education, and health, and goods sectors such as manufacturing and retailing).

In qualitative research there are three main sampling methods: snowball or networking sampling; judgemental or purposive sampling; and convenience sampling (Collis and Hussey, 2013). Snowball sampling refers to including people who are experienced in the phenomena being investigated. During the data collection the respondents are asked to provide the contacts of other people who have had similar experiences. Judgemental sampling includes people who have strong experience in the phenomenon under study. Unlike the snowball approach, judgemental sampling does not pursue other contacts from the respondents. Convenience sampling includes people available at the time of study. Moreover, Malhotra et al. (2017) defined judgemental sampling as a type of convenience sampling, in which elements of the population are selected based on the researcher's judgment, and pointed out that this type of sampling has been preferred in B2B marketing research.

The most appropriate sampling method for this study is judgemental sampling because the respondents have experience in dealing with professional service providers; hence, they are representative of the population based on their experience (Collis and Hussey, 2013; Malhotra et al., 2017) and are qualified to give opinions and therefore make the research more meaningful to the business community.

Qualitative research is characterised by a relatively low sample size (Malhotra et al., 2017). This is because after a certain point, theoretical saturation occurs within the data collected. When theoretical saturation occurs, data collection can be stopped. Although it is occasionally difficult to judge theoretical saturation, it is known to be linked to grounded theory, and it is often used by researchers with other approaches (Bryman and Bell, 2015). In this context, theoretical saturation was reached after interviewing 12 participants as no new emerging information seemed to appear. Hence, 12 interviewees were an adequate sample size. This number further corroborates Malhotra et al.'s (2017) proposition that a small sample size is often adequate for research of this kind. The following Table 4 presents the participants' details.

Table 4: Interview participants' details

Participants	Sex	Job Title	Industry	Professional Services Used	Length of Interview
Participant 1	F	Managing Director	Health	Marketing	45 mins
Participant 2	F	Partner	Manufacturing (Chemicals)	Legal	44 mins
Participant 3	M	Financial Controller	Manufacturing	Accountants	57 mins
Participant 4	M	Managing Director	Leisure	Accountants	53 mins
Participant 5	M	Finance Director	IT/Communications	Marketing	55 mins
Participant 6	M	Owner	Property	Legal	58 mins
Participant 7	M	IT Director	Communications	Marketing	48 mins
Participant 8	M	Director	Engineering	Legal	55 mins
Participant 9	M	Director	Manufacturing	Legal & Accountants	53 mins

Participant 10	M	Owner	Retail	Legal	49 mins
Participant 11	F	Managing Director	Service	Accountants	59 mins
Participant 12	M	Director	Maintenance Services	Marketing	48 mins

Interviews ranged in duration from 44 to 59 minutes and all interviews were recorded. Recording allows a more thorough investigation of what respondents say (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Interviews were conducted using my mobile phone and each interview was recorded using a call recorder app. Each of the interview recordings was transferred onto my laptop to listen to the audio files and transcribed using Microsoft Word. A marketing research company, Taylor McKenzie based in Glasgow, arranged for these interviews based on the research criteria. Consent forms were signed by each respondent and agreement confirmed for their interviews being recorded and used for academic purposes in this thesis. Participants were assured that their personal details would not be disclosed in any part of this study. Thus, their names would remain anonymous as shown in the table above.

4.6.1.4. Interview analysis techniques

As mentioned in the previous section, each interview was recorded and transcribed word for word into Microsoft Word. The general analytical procedure is used for analysing interview data which has three stages: reducing the data, displaying the data and drawing conclusions and verification (Collis and Hussey, 2013; Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2010). Data reduction, also known as coding, is a process in the data analysis phase in which the qualitative research data are selected, discarded, simplified, summarised and reorganised (Collis and Hussey, 2013). Data display summarises data into a diagrammatic form which facilitates the drawing of valid

conclusions (Collis and Hussey, 2013). By following this, codes (either words or phrases) in a form of variables were extracted from the transcripts.

Quantifying data were used for the interviews to help highlight the frequencies and percentage of the emergent codes/themes mentioned by interviewees. To quantify the interview data, a content analysis approach was used. This method chooses certain parts of the qualitative data to convert into numerical data for analysis. It must be systematic in order to be effective (Collis and Hussey, 2013). In order to support the analysis process, the qualitative research analysis software NVivo 12 was used. Although the software is usually suggested for larger amounts of qualitative data, this is not a strict rule for its efficacy. It was used to facilitate the analysis process for the 12 interviews as it helped to manage the analysis more effectively by importing and sorting texts, coding the data, searching for and retrieving text segments, stimulating interaction with the data, and relationship building within the data (Collis and Hussey, 2013). The following steps explain the use of NVivo 12 for the interview analysis in this study as recommended by Malhotra et. (2017): importing interview transcripts into NVivo software; revising notes taken during the interviews; coding (attaching key words to chunks of data or text); storage; search and retrieval (keeping interview documents in organised and named folders so that relevant segments of data or text can be found); connection (linking relevant data segments with each other, forming categories, or clusters); memos (writing up reflective notes or comments); data display (placing reduced data in an organised format); drawing conclusions and verifications; and finally, reporting.

For the purpose of ensuring data validity and reliability for in-depth interviews, it is important to conduct data verification (Collis and Hussey, 2013; Malhotra et al.,

2017; Wilson, 2012). Data verification means seeking alternative explanations for the interpretations of qualitative data via other sources of data (Malhotra et al., 2017). Data validation or verification seeks to ensure its appropriateness through two validation approaches: triangulation and participant validation (Malhotra et al., 2017; Wilson, 2012). Triangulation is a process which facilitates data validation by cross-checking from two sources or more. Participant validation involves taking one's findings back to the participant under study. These participants verify the emergent conclusions and in doing so, give support to the validity of the findings (Malhotra et al., 2017; Miles et al., 2014). Based on that, in order to ensure the validity of the in-depth interviews, this study sought feedback from four participants and they have confirmed the initial thematic conclusions.

The themes that arose from the interviews verified CE's four dimensions. Furthermore, the interviewees assisted in identifying 27 descriptors for said dimensions. In the next step, in an effort to observe the similarity between the 27 descriptors, they were shown to a pair of senior PhD students of marketing who were also given precise instructions. Neither of them was aware of the study's main aim or the procedure I followed to create these descriptors. They were told to match the descriptors to the dimensions of CE. A total of 20 distinct items were created from this process, and each one reflected a specific characteristic of each of CE's four dimensions. After a discussion was carried out and these points were clarified, three descriptors out of the seven that were left were also matched, which led to 23 unique items, which, in turn, were able to capture CE's four dimensions. The next stage was a quantitative phase describing the research design for the first quantitative sample used for scale refinement and purification.

4.6.2. Research design for the quantitative phase

After the in-depth interviews, a first quantitative study was conducted in order to refine and purify the newly developed CE scale based on the 23 items that the qualitative study had identified. The main objective of this phase was to ensure that the scales developed were reliable and ready for the next validation stage. Thus, additional quantitative data were collected and analysed using factor analysis (exploratory factor analysis).

Generally, quantitative research has a structured plan and requires a population sample in order to generate quantifiable insights to allow performance of statistical analysis towards the phenomenon under investigation (Malhotra et al., 2017). Quantitative research is characterised by several features as stated by Wilson (2102). Data collected are more structured and less flexible than qualitative data. The size of the sample is often large compared to the sample size in the qualitative study. Quantitative data can be comfortably replicated and also, it is easy to use for results comparisons. The phenomenon under investigation is described in a quantifiable way. The analysis of the quantitative data is reliant on statistics and perhaps statistical computer software.

In effect, this quantitative research was based on a sample of 400 business customers randomly selected in Scotland (excluding the 12 investigated in the qualitative phase). Suitability criteria for participation were the same as those used in the previous qualitative research, and applicants were phoned to confirm their willingness to participate and their suitability. In total, 237 of the 400 companies fulfilled the criteria and consented to take part. Emails were sent to participants outlining the aim of the study and necessary guarantees regarding their anonymity. A

link was also provided to the SurveyMonkey questionnaire that was carried out via the platform, and a response rate of 61% was obtained (146 complete replies). The sample size required, to perform factor analysis, is five observations per scale item (Hair et al., 2014). Hence, the sample size of 146 completed responses qualified for achieving statistical power. The questionnaire, which can be seen in Appendix 2 was comprised of the various items identified by the qualitative interviews. The questionnaire design followed the guide presented later in Section 4.7.6. In a bid to enhance the clarity and phrasing of the questions, this was pre-tested with a convenience sample of 10 part-time MBA students. The items of the CE were on a 7-point Likert scale where participants are required to give their experience rating for every item from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = neither agree or disagree, 5 = somewhat agree, 6 = agree to 7 = strongly agree.

4.6.2.1. Data analysis technique for the quantitative phase

Version 24 of the statistical software package SPSS was used. No missing values existed because all the questions were mandatory. Firstly, descriptive analysis was used to describe the basic characteristics of the data, and secondly factor analysis was conducted.

Factor analysis is primarily used for data reduction and summarisations (Malhotra et al., 2017). Two types of factor analysis are identified: exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Pallant, 2013). EFA is an early stage process in the research to detect interrelationships among variables, while CFA is a later research process to test and confirm the measured variables that underpin the constructs (Pallant, 2013). At an early stage of the analysis, EFA is

conducted to explore the items underlying the relevant factors and this helps the researcher to identify irrelevant or overlapping items among the factors.

Principal components factoring was used in this analysis, which explains most of the variance in the observed variables. Assumptions for conducting EFA should be met before proceeding with it (Pallant, 2013). These assumptions represent the determinant, which was used to testify computational problems with the factor analysis, the measure of sampling adequacy Kaiser-Meyer-Okin (KMO) used to measure the fitness of factor analysis. Bartlett's measure of sphericity was also used to generally test the significance of the correlation matrix.

4.7. Research design for Study 2 (Panel)

The purpose of Study 2 is twofold: firstly, to collect the second quantitative sample required for validating the newly developed measures of the CE identified from Study 1 and secondly to examine the research hypotheses (*H1-H7*). More specifically, in Study 2, the sample remained the same over time and that's why it is called longitudinal, and was completed in three waves: Wave 1 (t-1) was concerned with collecting the data on CE using the scales developed through Study 1 in order to assess the scale validity and testing (*H1*); Wave 2 (t) was concerned with collecting the experience measures again with its drivers and effect on satisfaction hence examining (*H2-H5*), and Wave 3 (t+1) was focused on reported behaviour after project completion in order to examine (*H6-H7*).

The primary objectives for conducting a longitudinal study are two (Malhotra et al., 2017). The first is to increase the reliability and accuracy of the measurement by reducing or eliminating an individual's response variation, thus protecting the findings from common methods variance. This is done by using a repeated measure to

investigate a respondent's answers within a certain period of time. The second objective is to measure the amount of change in the responses of individuals and the impact of their past responses on the present. Therefore, the longitudinal design helps to meet the third and fourth objectives of this study by providing empirical evidence of the impact of past experience on the current experience and also to examine the relative drivers, as well as explaining the influence on the reported behaviours as conditioned by experience.

Longitudinal data are more robust than cross-sectional data because cross-sectional data require respondents to recall past behaviour or attitudes which are sometimes not accurate due to human memory limitations; thus, longitudinal data provide a more accurate insight due to not relying too much on memory but rather on different investigations over different times. Longitudinal study differs from cross-sectional study due to the fact that in a longitudinal study, the sample remains the same during different points of time of investigations. In contrast, a cross-sectional study takes a single period of time. Hence, the longitudinal study provides more reliable and trusted results around the change of experience and attitudes (Miller and Salkind, 2002).

In this respect, longitudinal research is often time-consuming and costly. There is a propensity to not wish to participate over a long timeframe, and this perhaps causes the dropout rate to be high due to losing interest in participating or due to participants' circumstances changing and their no longer being eligible for investigation. Thus, the design should be carefully planned. In spite of these concerns, longitudinal remains the most effective way to thoroughly understand experience studies.

Usually, the term panel is used to refer to a longitudinal study (Malhotra et al., 2017; Wilson, 2012). “The panel technique involves interviewing the same group of people on two or more occasions. It is used primarily for studying changes in behaviour or attitudes through repeated interviews (‘waves’)” (Miller and Salkind, 2002, p.319). A panel is also defined as “a sample of participants who have agreed to provide information at specified intervals over an extended period” (Malhotra et al., 2017, p. 77) and can be composed of consumers or individuals in companies so that they are able to provide information about changes of behaviour or attitude over time. The subsequent part discusses the panel design.

4.7.1. Panel design

A complete panel means all study variables are measured in each wave of the study, whereas an incomplete panel means not all variables of the study are measured in each wave but rather in different waves. The only case in which a reverse or reciprocal causal relationship can be applied between an independent variable and a dependent variable is when a complete panel design is used, while a normal causal relationship can be applied when using an incomplete panel design (it is possible to test the effect of variables collected in Wave 1 on variables collected in Wave 2 and wave 3). An incomplete panel design doesn't allow a reverse or reciprocal causal relationship (for example cross-lagged, X time1 causing X and Y time2, and Y time1 causing X and Y time2). It is possible to conduct normal causal relationships among variables measured at different points of time when variables are collected in different waves (De Lange et al., 2003) (for example, time 1 causing time 2 and time 3). As long as our research objectives and hypotheses are not seeking to examine a reverse

or reciprocal causal relationship but rather a normal causal relationship, the current research design is considered sufficient (De Lange et al., 2003).

4.7.2. Time lags (length between waves)

The second important consideration is the length of time between the study waves, which is referred to as time lag. De Lange et al. (2003) argue that there is no definite time length to be identified between waves to determine whether the independent variable affects the dependent variable. For example, some researchers suggest that if the study consists of two waves or more, it is preferable to have equal periods between waves (Zapf et al., 1996). There are no definite criteria for determining the length of time within waves, and this process is subjected to the researcher determination based on the nature of the study conducted, the available time and resources (De Lange et al., 2003).

Linked to that, the finding from the first study during the in-depth interviews informs the decision about the length of time between waves. Respondents were asked how often they purchase a service from or deal with a professional service provider. The following Table 5 shows their responses.

Table 5: Interviewees’ responses with regard to the re-purchasing period for professional service providers

Name	Professional services used	Purchasing period	Frequencies (%)
Respondent 1	Marketing	Every 4 months	Every 3 months (55%) Every 4 months (22%) Every 6 months (22%)
Respondent 2	Legal	Every 3 months	
Respondent 3	Accountants	Every 6 months	
Respondent 4	Accountants	Every 3 months	
Respondent 5	Marketing	Every 6 months	
Respondent 6	Legal	Not sure	
Respondent 7	Marketing	Every 3 months	

Respondent 8	Legal	Not sure	
Respondent 9	Legal & Accountants	Every 3 months	
Respondent 10	Legal	Not sure	
Respondent 11	Accountants	Every 3 months	
Respondent 12	Marketing	Every 4 months	

Based on the above table, 9 out of 12 interviewees indicated their purchasing period from the service provider while the rest were not sure exactly when they needed to repurchase. A time frame of three months was selected as it had the highest frequency rate among others (55%).

Further, other considerations were taken into account during data collection, by developing relative screening questions to make sure of the respondents' stability in the job (De Lange et al., 2003) and continuing with the same role in liaising with the professional service provider (see Appendices 3, 4 and 5).

4.7.3. Data collection method

To collect the data from the panel, this research adopted an online survey due to a number of advantages outlined by Wilson (2012) and Malhotra et al. (2017) such as low costs compared to other methods as there are no call charges, no postal fees, photocopying charges and no interviewer cost, quick delivery as it can reach potential respondents very quickly, ability to be easily personalised as the respondents can save changes and complete the survey at a later time, reaching other target groups such as business people, far away respondents, wealthy respondents and public figures. Linked to that, the target population in this study is business people who are located at different sites all over the UK, so online survey was the most appropriate method for reaching them. Online survey also reduces the input errors by the researcher or

interviewer because the survey website can transfer the data into a compatible format for data analysis.

Certain concerns, like sampling frame errors associated with online survey using an access panel in terms of representation of the target group (Malhotra et al., 2017), are dealt with in detail in the sampling process presented later. In addition, in order to avoid the technical issues that might be caused when filling out a questionnaire, participants were able to save their responses and resume at a later, more convenient time. Participants were invited to complete an online questionnaire via email.

4.7.4. Sampling procedures

There are six steps a marketing researcher can follow when specifying a research sample, namely: define the target population; determine the sampling frame; select a sampling technique; determine the sample size; execute the sampling process; and eventually, validate the sample (Malhotra et al., 2017, p. 414). Figure 7 presents these steps.

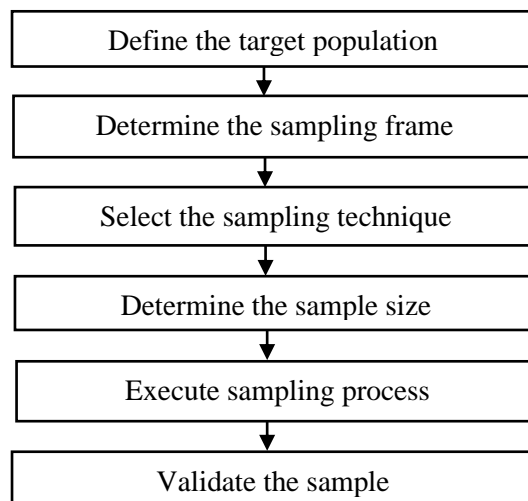


Figure 7: The sampling process

(Adapted from Malhotra et al., 2017)

4.7.4.1. Population and panel eligibility criteria

The definition of the population for Study 2 is similar to Study 1 and moreover, the area of the population was expanded to include all the UK (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland). Large companies were also included besides the SMEs in order to obtain a wider scope of scale application.

Given the study context and main objectives, this study seeks to investigate the customer experience of businesses dealing with professional service providers in the B2B world. In this respect, the participants were managers (marketing manager, purchasing manager, head of department, executive manager, senior manager) in small, medium and large companies across the UK who use professional service companies. These managers were from a range of industry sectors (services sectors such as agencies, communication, education, health and finance, and goods sectors such as manufacturing and retailing). The professional services that the managers use included management consulting firms, IT consulting, advertising agencies, marketing research agencies, legal firms, accountancy services and site developers. A full list of both the customer company and the professional service providers will be presented in the analysis chapter.

With similar eligibility criteria to Study 1, the participants had to have been involved in the delivery of a service project from a provider of professional services and to have liaised with the supplier's delivery team. The rationale for selecting this population has been discussed in detail in Study 1.

4.7.4.2. Sampling frame

The sampling frame is a list of the target population from which the researcher chooses the individuals to be included in the research (Malhotra et al., 2017; Wilson, 2012).

One of the most important sampling frames is the access panel. There is growing interest in the use of an access panel by marketing researchers (Malhotra et al., 2017; Wilson, 2012). An access panel is a database of people who have concurred to participate in surveys and met the eligibility criteria. The increased rejection and non-response rate make recruitment a rather complicated process; thus, sampling from an access panel is appropriate in order to save time and money (Wilson, 2012).

The sampling frame used in this study is an access panel provided by Taylor McKenzie, a marketing research company based in Glasgow, to avoid the risk of a major non-response dropout characterised by longitudinal studies, as well as saving time and accuracy.

4.7.4.3. Sampling technique

Two main classifications of sampling methods have been identified widely: probability and non-probability (Iacobucci et al., 2018; Malhotra et al., 2017; Wilson, 2012). While non-probability does not rely on a chance selection process but rather relies on the researcher judgment, probability is a procedure in which each element of the population has the same chance of being chosen for the sample (Malhotra et al., 2017). Figure 8 displays different sampling techniques.

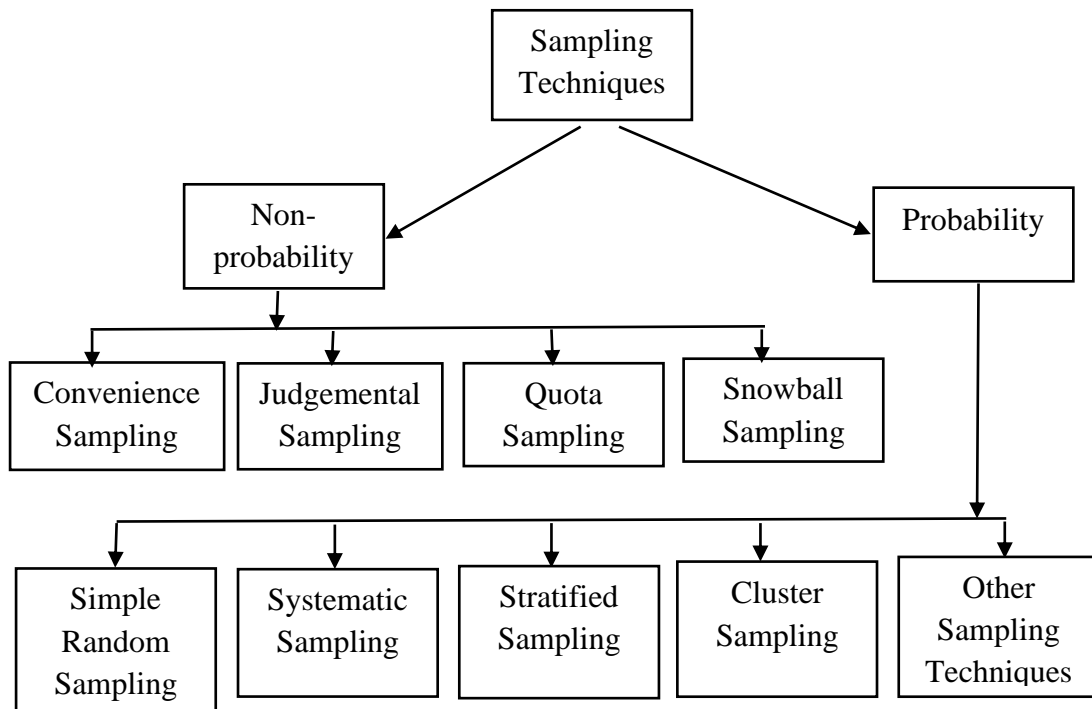


Figure 8: Different sampling techniques

(Adapted from Malhotra et al., 2017)

Probability sampling has several advantages, such as: the results are projectable to the whole population, the sampling error can be calculated and the sample represents the population. However, there is a significant disadvantage in that it increases cost and time (Wilson, 2010). On the other hand, non-probability also has some advantages, such as: the cost is relatively low, it can be conducted quickly due to fewer restricting procedures, it has a low sample size and it can reach the most significant participants. However, this type of sampling is not free from drawbacks, such as: indicative results instead of definitive, sampling errors can be calculated and the extent to which the sample represents the population is obscure (Wilson, 2012).

Regardless of the disadvantages of non-probability sampling, it is the most widely used and conducted by a wide range of researchers because of the lower cost

and reasonable time associated with it. Given that this research seeks to broaden the existing theory of customer experience by testing the hypotheses formulated rather than focusing on results generalised to a population, non-probability sampling is the most appropriate method. Therefore, this research adopted non-probability judgemental sampling in which the sample is deliberately selected from a population of interest based on the researcher's judgement (Malhotra et al., 2017). Moreover, judgemental sampling is considered the most appropriate and recommended for B2B marketing studies due to a relatively small target population (Malhotra et al., 2017).

4.7.4.4. Sample size

Sample size is a crucial part of a research process and must be carefully considered (Malhotra et al., 2017; Wilson, 2012). Sample size refers to the number of elements that should be investigated in order to obtain the required data for analysis. Several factors should be considered when determining the sample size such as the nature of the research, resources available, the nature of the analysis, sample size in similar studies and completion rate (Malhotra et al., 2017).

To mitigate the attrition of response rate associated with longitudinal studies, a large sample size should be obtained. Thus, a large sample of 1,000 UK companies were initially contacted. Following an explanation of the purpose and process of this study, 447 companies agreed and participated in the first wave. From the same sample of the first wave, only 260 completed the second wave and eventually from the same sample of the second wave, 202 companies survived the process and participated in the third wave of data collection. More importantly, the sample size was affected by the data analysis method, and the typical sample size for conducting the SEM

technique was considered in accordance with Kline (2015, p.16) who recommended a typical sample size of 200 cases when using SEM; however, attention should be paid to the complexity of the model and the number of parameters. In this respect, the hypothesised model would be tested through three waves: Wave 1 (t-1) in March 2017, Wave 2 (t) in July and Wave 3 (t+1) in November 2017.

4.7.4.5. Sampling implementation and validation

The fifth step of the sampling process was then considered. The implementation of the sampling process had been conducted. The following Table 6 illustrates the longitudinal plan with sample size and variables collected for each wave.

Table 6: Longitudinal sample size and variables collected

Variables	March 2017 Wave 1 (t-1)	July 2017 Wave 2 (t)	November 2017 Wave 3 (t+1)
Drivers		✓	
Experience	✓	✓	
Satisfaction		✓	
Reported behaviour			✓
Sample size	447	260	202

The final step involved sample validation. To validate the sample, a comparison of the data collected with the target group has to be considered to ensure that the sample matches the population. Screening of the demographic data helps to achieve this validation (Malhotra et al., 2017). In line with this, the data collected for this study matched the target population and satisfied the eligibility criteria for the panel.

4.7.5. Variable measurement scales

4.7.5.1. Customer experience measures

The measures of customer experience used in the questionnaire relied on the scales that were developed through Study 1. Having identified the four dimensions of CE in a B2B context (factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses), the items from Study 1 were employed using a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=somewhat disagree, 4=neither agree nor disagree, 5=somewhat agree, 6=agree, 7=strongly agree).

To assess factual responses, participants from the panel were asked to indicate their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale including: (1) Met the delivery deadlines; (2) Met our budget; (3) Met our specifications; (4) Achieved our objectives; (5) Produced solutions that led to increase in our company's effectiveness; (6) Provided high-level reports and presentations.

To assess sagacious response, participants from the panel were asked to indicate their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale relating to the following: (1) Were adaptive to our needs and requests; (2) Responded quickly when needed; (3) Completed the work in an innovative way; (4) Produced innovative solutions and ideas; (5) Used the most recent techniques to complete the task; (6) Demonstrated a good understanding of the challenges we face; (7) Helped improve our performance.

To assess emotional response, participants from the panel were asked to indicate their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale related to the following: (1) Doing business with this supplier is always in a warm and friendly climate; (2) I feel our supplier is honest; (3) I feel our supplier is transparent; (4) I really respect the work of our supplier; (5) It is pleasant to do business with our supplier; (6) We have nothing

to worry about when doing business with our supplier; (7) This supplier puts all our fears at ease.

To assess social response, participants from the panel were asked to indicate their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale relating to the following: (1) Friendship with the supplier's management is welcome; (2) Because of our business, the supplier invites us to attend social events; (3) We enjoy each other's company in a social setting.

4.7.5.2. The supplier's core offerings

To assess the supplier's core offerings variables (delivery performance, technical quality and price), the study relied on scales derived from marketing literature as follow:

Delivery performance

Delivery performance scale items were developed by Chumpitaz and Paparoidamis (2007) as part of measuring professional services, relationship satisfaction, trust and commitment in a B2B context. They used an effective 2-item scale: (1) "Your supplier is aware of your needs concerning distribution of advertising material"; (2) "The delivery of advertising material is always on time". Both items received a factor loading of over 0.85 and reliability over 0.84 in their study. The measuring scale was a 10-point Likert scale ranging from "1" ("completely disagree") to "10" ("completely agree"). For the purpose of this study, these two items were found to be appropriate to adopt for measuring delivery performance of the professional service providers. Therefore, the following items were used in the

questionnaire to measure the delivery performance: (1) Company X is aware of my needs concerning distribution of service material; (2) Company X always delivers the service on time. Company X refers to the professional service provider. Respondents were asked to give their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”).

Technical quality

Technical quality has been used in a wide range of marketing literature. In order to measure the technical quality in B2B, this study adopted a scale developed by Rentz et al. (2002) to measure the technical knowledge skills for salesperson performance. The factor loadings were between 0.75 and 0.92. This scale was later used by La et al. (2009) in order to measure perceived quality by the customers of professional services in B2B on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“poor”) to 5 (“excellent”). They used a 5-item scale.

For this study, five items were used on 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”) including: (1) Has knowledge of our markets and products/services; (2) Has knowledge of his/her own company’s procedures; (3) Has knowledge of his/her firm’s competitors’ products, services and sales policies; (4) Has knowledge of his/her firm’s product features and benefits; (5) Has knowledge of our operations.

Price

Measuring price has appeared in several sources of marketing literature and appeared also in professional services in B2B. A study by Whittaker et al. (2007)

examined the relationship between value, satisfaction and intention in business services. Apart from their scale, they used two items to measure price as well as quality, while at the same time focusing on customers of consulting firms based in the UK. A further study by Molinari et al. (2008) used a 4-item scale to measure the impact of price, as a value construct, on behavioural intentions in a B2B professional services context. Scale items achieved reliability of at least 0.70. This study adapted Molinari et al.'s (2008) scale. However, two items out of four were adapted. The other items of Molinari et al. (2008) were irrelevant to our context as one of them is more related to the value concept and the other is too generic in terms of the quality concept. A 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree") was used. These items included: (1) Company X offers a reasonable price; (2) Company X offers a better price compared with other firms offering similar.

4.7.5.3. The supplier's augmenting offerings

To assess the supplier's augmenting offerings variables (adaptation, service support, innovation and reputation), the study relied on scales derived from marketing literature as follow:

Adaptation

In order to measure adaptation in B2B professional services, this study adapted a scale from Woo and Ennew (2004, 2005). Their study focused on examining the IMP interaction dimensions on the customers of the consulting agencies in B2B. Four items were included in this study using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). These items included: (1) Company X constantly

improves technical capabilities to keep abreast of new developments; (2) Company X proactively offers us new technical solutions when conditions change; (3) Company X makes operational changes when required by our team; (4) Company X is able to coordinate the various disciplines when required by our team.

Service support

This study adapted a scale from Eggert and Ulaga's (2006) study that investigated buyer-seller relationships in B2B. Their measurement for service support was comprised of a 4-item scale. One item from the original scale was excluded because it was found to be not specific but instead was suited more to measuring a service in general. For the purpose of this study, three items were included on a 7-point Likert scale: (1) Company X is available when we need information; (2) Company X provides appropriate information; (3) Company X responds quickly when we need them to.

Innovation

The innovation measurement scale was used in La et al.'s (2009) study as an antecedent of performance in B2B professional services. This scale was originally derived from De Brentani (2001). This study only adopted a 6-item scale from La et al. (2009). The items on the 7-point Likert scale included: (1) Company X constantly introduces innovative ideas in addressing and solving problems; (2) Company X offers new services consistent with existing client operating systems; (3) Company X thinks differently from other firms in solving client problems; (4) Company X frequently

introduces new methodologies, approaches or solutions; (5) Company X regularly offers new products and services; and (6) Company X is an innovative firm.

Reputation

This study adopted the scale for measuring corporate reputation developed by Caruana (1997). This scale is comprised of 14 items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and it was used to measure the reputation of providers of professional services. The reliability of this scale was reported as 0.92 and it was later adapted in a recent study by La et al. (2009). This study adapted four items from Caruana (1997) on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The scale included: (1) Company X is a long-established company; (2) The employees of Company X are well trained; (3) Company X is a sound company; and (4) Company X has strong management. In addition, to properly measure the professional service provider, the study adapted two further items from La et al. (2009). These items were on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). These items were: (5) Company X has expertise in this specific area; and (6) Company X provides sound solutions for customer problems. These combined scales provide an accurate measurement for reputation as defined in this research.

4.7.5.4. Exchange climate

To assess the exchange climate variables (atmosphere, information sharing and technology sharing), the study relied on scales derived from marketing literature as follow:

Atmosphere

Regarding B2B relationship quality, Woo and Ennew (2004) developed measurement scales for IMP dimensions; one of these scales is related to the atmosphere between the professional service provider and its customers. This study adopted their scale, which is comprised of three items on a 7-point Likert scale. The items are: (1) I consider the general atmosphere surrounding the working relationship with Company X to be harmonious; (2) I regard the overall relationship with Company X as close; and (3) I believe mutual expectations for the project have been established with Company X.

Information sharing

This study adopted the scale used by Woo and Ennew (2005) to measure information sharing. As mentioned previously, Woo and Ennew's study focused on investigating the impact of relationship components on behavioural intentions in B2B services. The scale used in this study was comprised of three items on a 7-point Likert scale: (1) Company X submits technical documentation that is easily understood by our team; (2) Company X submits technical documentation that meets our needs; and (3) The technical information supplied by Company X is adequate.

Technology sharing

The scale used by Paulin et al. (2000) for measuring technology sharing in business, its effectiveness and professional service has been adapted in this study. The scale is comprised of four items on a 7-point Likert scale including: (1) The technology used by Company X improves the efficiency of our relationship; (2) The technology

used by Company X helps us to reduce our cost of doing business; (3) Company X has instituted procedures that facilitate our use of technology; and (4) Company X has invested considerable time and effort in developing electronic information exchanges with our company.

4.7.5.5. Bonding

To assess bonding (trust, commitment and personal relationship), the study relied on scales derived from the marketing literature as follow:

Trust

Trust has been widely used in marketing literature. A significant study by Moorman et al. (1992) used a trust scale measuring relationships between providers and users of market research in service marketing. This scale was adapted later by Sharma and Patterson (1999) to investigate the antecedents of customer relationship commitment in the context of a professional service. A recent study by Chumpitaz and Paparoidamis (2007) used two items to measure trust for the customers of B2B professional services. This study adapted the scale used by Sharma and Patterson (1999). From the original scale, five out of the seven items were used. After pilot testing, two reverse coded items were deleted because the other items were found sufficient to measure trust. The final full survey included three items to measure trust on a 7-point Likert scale, namely: (1) Company X can be relied on to keep promises; (2) Company X is trustworthy; and (3) I have confidence in company X.

Commitment

A number of studies used commitment in marketing literature, but a limited number is attributed to B2B professional services. A study by Chumpitaz and Paparoidamis (2007) used three items to measure commitment in professional B2B services. However, commitment measurement is not new in marketing literature. One of the most significant studies that has dealt with commitment measures in B2B services is by Sharma and Patterson (1999). This study adopted the commitment scale used in Sharma and Patterson's (1999) study, which attempted to explore the causes of customer relationship commitment in B2B professional services. Three items were used on a 7-point Likert scale, namely: (1) I am very committed to the relationship with Company X; (2) I intend to maintain my relationship indefinitely; and (3) I should put maximum effort into maintaining my relationship with Company X.

Personal relationship

A recent study by Stuart et al. (2012) used four items to measure interpersonal relationships developed with suppliers in B2B. These items have been significantly altered to suit the context of our study; thus, the researcher concluded the following items on a 7-point Likert scale, including: (1) Company X staff like to talk with people; (2) People from Company X are friendly; and (3) Company X tries to establish a personal relationship.

4.7.5.6. Satisfaction

To assess satisfaction, one single item was used to measure the customer's overall satisfaction anchored from 1 (Totally Unsatisfied) to 7 (Totally Satisfied) with the supplier.

4.7.5.7. Reported Behaviour

A dichotomous (Yes/No) variable was used to measure repeated purchase to find out whether the customer repurchased from the supplier. Similarly, a dichotomous (Yes/No) variable was used to measure WOM to find out whether the customer recommended the supplier to their peers.

4.7.6. Questionnaire design

It is very important to develop a rigorous questionnaire in order to effectively collect the designed data. Questionnaires should be designed properly to encourage participants to become involved in a project (Malhotra et al., 2017) as poor questionnaire design will lead to the poor collection of information (Wilson 2012; Iacobucci et al., 2018). The questionnaires used for the panel study can be seen in Appendix 3 for Wave 1, Appendix 4 for Wave 2 and Appendix 5 for the final Wave 3. To design the questionnaire for this research the steps suggested by Iacobucci et al. (2018), Malhotra et al. (2017) and Wilson (2012) were followed. Figure 9 presents the questionnaire design process.

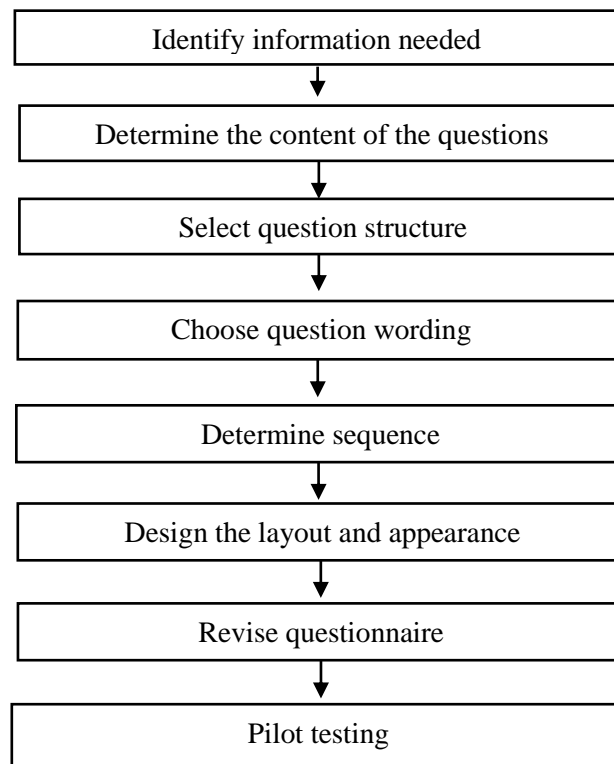


Figure 9: The questionnaire design process

(Adapted from Iacobucci et al., 2018; Malhotra et al., 2017; Wilson, 2012)

The first step in the questionnaire design was specifying the information required. The level of information required was identified by reviewing the research problem, objectives, hypotheses, target participants, level of detail required, and type of analysis to clearly identify the information needed. The next step was to identify the content of the individual questions. This was done by identifying the most important and necessary questions to obtain the desired information. In this phase, the least important questions were eliminated and only high priority questions were retained.

Questions have two forms: unstructured and structured. Unstructured questions are open-ended questions, for which participants can use their own words

(Malhotra et al., 2017). The major drawback of unstructured questions is that they are considered costly and time-consuming for coding (Malhotra et al., 2017). These types of questions are not suitable for self-administered online questionnaires (Malhotra et al., 2017) as employed in this stage of this research. Structured questions are questions that can be answered in specific way and can be multiple choice, dichotomous or use a scale (Malhotra et al., 2017). In multiple choice questions, the participants have the opportunity to select one or more relative answers from different choices (Iacobucci et al., 2018). These types of questions were used to collect the demographic information of the participants. The second type of structured questions are dichotomous questions, for which the answers are restricted to “Yes” or “No” (Iacobucci et al., 2018; Malhotra et al., 2017). These types of questions are used in this study to collect data about gender, include some screening questions, and also the reported behaviour. The third type are scale questions where respondents are asked to determine numerical measures for their attitudes, opinions and feelings (Wilson, 2012). One of the most important scale types is Likert. Likert scales are defined as a type of scale measurement that enables participants to provide their level of agreement ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Malhotra et al., 2017; Wilson, 2012). This research adopted a 7-point Likert scale for which participants were required to give answers from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = neither agree or disagree, 5 = somewhat agree, 6 = agree, to 7 = strongly agree. A 7-point scale was used rather than a 5-point scale because it provides more choices for participants, hence it was preferred by the researcher.

Wording is another critical aspect of developing a questionnaire as poorly worded questions can lead to inappropriate meaning and perhaps rejection by

participants (Malhotra et al., 2017; Wilson, 2012). The researcher followed the wording guidelines for developing the questionnaire suggested by Malhotra et al. (2017) and Iacobucci et al. (2018): define the issue, use ordinary words, use unambiguous words, avoid leading or biased questions, avoid implicit alternatives, avoid implicit assumptions, avoid generalisations and estimates, and use positive and negative statements.

The order of the questions has a similar importance to their wording. Questions were set in an appropriate and logical order (Malhotra et al., 2017; Wilson, 2012). In this respect, there are some guidelines to help design a questionnaire using the proper sequence: opening questions should be interesting and encourage participants to give answers; questions about the same subject should be grouped together to avoid confusing participants; difficult questions should be placed at the end to avoid losing participants' involvement in the project from the beginning; and general questions normally come before particular questions (Iacobucci et al., 2018; Malhotra et al., 2017; Wilson, 2012). All the previous guides were considered.

Layout and appearance were other important issues to be considered when designing the questionnaire because they have an effect on the participants' response rate (Iacobucci et al., 2018; Malhotra et al., 2017). In our questionnaire, the first page welcomed respondents and the last page thanked respondents for their time, and the heading and progress of information were well presented.

Pilot testing is a mandatory step before a final survey goes live (Malhotra et al. 2017). Pilot testing means trialling the developed questionnaire on a small group of people to check whether improvements are needed before its final launch (Iacobucci et al., 2018; Malhotra et al., 2017; Wilson, 2012). The pilot test sample is usually

small, with between 10 and 40 participants (Wilson, 2012). With that in mind, this research conducted pilot testing for the two studies completed. In the quantitative phase of Study 1, pilot testing was conducted with 20 respondents and slight editing to the questionnaire appearance was made. In Study 2, pilot testing was conducted with 40 respondents in the first wave and slight editing and changes were made with regard to the questionnaire's physical characteristics. For the second wave, 20 respondents were used for pilot testing and slight changes were made to the questionnaire. For the third wave, pilot testing for 15 respondents was conducted with no changes or editing to the questionnaire. Once the questionnaire was appropriate, free from mistakes, with no further need for improvement, the final online survey went live.

4.7.7. Analysis technique

Construct validation with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

One of the main purposes of CFA is to examine construct validity (Hair et al., 2014). CFA is a technique used for estimating a measurement model through identifying whether the factors (constructs) and the loadings of observed (indicator) variables on them confirm the theory basis (Malhotra et al., 2017). CFA is a powerful and preliminary technique to test the measurement model validity before proceeding with structural equation modelling (SEM) (Byrne, 2016; Hair et al., 2014).

Construct validity is the extent to which the measured items are actually reflecting what they claim to measure (Hair et al., 2014). Construct validity includes convergent and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2014; Malhotra et al., 2017). The following discusses convergent and discriminant validity.

Convergent validity is achieved when the items of the same constructs share a high proportion of variance (Hair et al., 2014). Convergent validity is assessed through factor loadings. Factor loadings should be statistically significant and at least 0.50 (0.70 or higher are considered ideally) (Hair et al., 2014). Also, convergent validity is assessed through the average variance extracted (AVE). AVE is a measure of convergence among the items reflecting a latent construct. It reflects the average percentage of variation explained (extracted) among the construct's items (Hair et al., 2014). Adequate convergence is achieved if AVE is 0.50 or greater (Hair et al., 2014). Construct reliability, sometimes called composite reliability (CR), is a measure of internal consistency and also a measure of convergence. CR is a squared sum of factor loadings and the sum error variance, and the construct is adequately reliable when CR is 0.70 or more (Hair et al., 2014).

Discriminant validity refers to how a construct is unique and is defined as the degree to which a construct is genuinely distinct among other constructs with regard to how much it correlates with other constructs and how uniquely the measured items solely represent this construct (Hair et al., 2014). Discriminant validity occurs when the construct explains the variance of its variables rather than what it shares with any other constructs (Hair et al., 2014; Malhotra et al., 2017). A more robust way to achieve discriminant validity is when the AVE for any two constructs is greater than the square of the correlation between them (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2014; Malhotra et al., 2017). In other words, discriminant validity is established when the square root of the AVE of any two constructs is greater than the correlation coefficient between them (Malhotra et al., 2017).

Model fit

To assess the model fit, goodness-of-fit indices should be considered. There are several fit indices the researcher can use to identify the overall fit of the model (Byrne, 2016). Scholars classified two fit indices: absolute fit and incremental fit (Iacobucci, 2010). Absolute fit is an overall goodness-of-fit measure for the structural and measurement models. This measure does not take into account a comparison with a specified null model (Hair et al., 2014). The most important absolute fit measures include chi-square (χ^2) statistic, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), the root mean square error (RMR) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The incremental fit indices are goodness-of-fit indices that gauge how well a specified model fits relative to some alternative baseline model. The baseline model is a null model specifying that the measured variables are uncorrelated (Hair et al., 2014). The most important incremental fit indices include: the comparative-fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and normed fit index (NFI). In terms of the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), there is a decline in using this index due to the sensitivity to the sample size and the improvement of other fit indices (Hair et al., 2014). Likewise, the normed fit index NFI is less useful for complex models because of the higher index values that inflate the estimate of model fit (Hair et al., 2014). In addition, the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) is somewhat equivalent to the NFI. Thus, GFI, NFI and TLI can be ignored. In this study, the most important model fit indices were reported to be χ^2 , CFI and RMSEA. The subsequent paragraphs explain them in detail, highlighting their accepted values.

The chi-square statistics (χ^2) is “a test of perfect fit in which the null hypothesis is that the model fits the population data perfectly” (Diamantopoulos and Siguaaw,

2000, p. 83). When χ^2 is statistically significant, this indicates a poor model fit because the null hypothesis is rejected. On the other hand, insignificant χ^2 indicates a good model fit (Byrne, 2016). The χ^2 test is very sensitive to the sample size and highly unlikely to achieve a significant p value when there is a large sample size (Byrne, 2016) as in our study. Therefore, the normed chi-square (χ^2/df) is calculated as a measure of overall fit (Hair et al., 2014). The proportion of the chi-square to the degrees of freedom is preferably within the acceptable range of 2 to 5 as suggested by Marsh and Hovecar (1985).

The CFI is widely used and is the most important of the incremental fit indices as it is an enhanced version of NFI and also has several other advantages such as its insensitivity to complex models (Hair et al., 2014) and lower susceptibility to sample size (Marsh et al., 1996). Values above 0.90 are considered a good model fit (Hair et al., 2014).

The RMSEA is considered one of the most informative criteria in assessing the model fit (Byrne, 2016) because it explicitly tries to correct for both model complexity and sample size by including each in its computation, and it represents how well a model fits a population, not just a sample used for estimation (Hair et al., 2014). Values between 0.01 and 0.05 are considered a good fit, values between 0.05 and 0.08 represent a mediocre fit, and values higher than 0.08 are a poor fit (Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2000; MacCallum et al., 1996).

Structural equation modelling

This research used the SEM analysis technique to examine the research hypotheses for the first and second waves (*H1–H5*), while the final hypotheses (*H6–*

H7) were tested with logistic regression because the dependent variable was dichotomous (Iacobucci, 2012). SEM is of value to provide a comprehensive analysis of longitudinal data due to its flexibility and usefulness for understanding causal relationships and answering research questions for panel data (McArdle and Nesselroade, 2014).

Furthermore, there are many reasons for using SEM in longitudinal analysis. SEM has three main characteristics that make it very valuable in panel data analysis (McArdle and Nesselroade, 2014). First, longitudinal SEM is employed due to having earlier time events about the participants under investigation (past experience) and SEM estimators, indices, and goodness of fit provide a better picture and a deeper understanding of the case under investigation (McArdle and Nesselroade, 2014). Secondly, SEM enables us to include unobserved variables, which are known as latent variables. Latent variables are variables that are not measured in a direct way but are connected to a theoretical model. Hence, SEM is a powerful technique in working out complicated models (McArdle and Nesselroade, 2014). Thirdly, SEM helps to decide which is the most appropriate model for analysis, such as the model that has invariant parameters among occasions (McArdle and Nesselroade, 2014). Despite the Longitudinal SEM benefits, one of the most frequent considerations is the need to use a large sample, which represents the population, to proceed with adequate statistical analysis.

Longitudinal structural equation modelling (LSEM) has been used in business studies but the frequency of its usage is still relatively low due to the fact that the longitudinal studies themselves are limited compared to cross-sectional studies in businesses. LSEM provides a holistic analysis of the causal effect of variables

collected during different waves. SEM can perform analysis on multi-variable and multi-wave models and can assess the causal effect of different latent variables on others, whereas this ability is not provided by other techniques such as multiple regression or correlation (Zapf et al., 1996). SEM helps to constrain parameters among those variables, which is helpful in longitudinal studies to identify which model serves best (Byrne, 2016) (this is clarified in the analysis using model comparison when constraining the direct effect of past experience on present experience).

SEM can be conducted using statistical software such as AMOS, SmartPLS LISREL, EQS and MPlus. SEM was adopted in this study using AMOS 24. The hypothesised model was analysed using maximum likelihood parameter estimation. AMOS 24 (analysis of momentum structures) is one of the best statistical pieces of software for performing SEM for both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies. AMOS is used to analyse longitudinal models and is used to assess measurement and structural models. AMOS has many advantages such as the ability to draw graphics, its ease of use, its friendly interface, and the fact it can handle various multi-level and multi-wave models. In addition, AMOS is preferred by many researchers because there is no need to insert computing orders such as LISREL, SAS, MPlus, R, CALIS and EQS. Many longitudinal studies have used AMOS to perform SEM such as Laschinger et al. (2004), Kim et al. (2007), Brunner et al. (2008), Kim et al., (2009), Obadia (2010), Lowry et al. (2015), and Rubio et al. (2015). AMOS was adopted due the benefits of its use and its available licence through the university.

4.7.8. Potential sources of errors and treatments

Nonresponse is a critical threat to the validity of a longitudinal study as well as an inherent feature of the panel; thus, it must be avoided as far as possible (Taris,

2000). Nonresponses are one of the most important issues that face many researchers when conducting longitudinal studies, hence they should be examined. Selective or non-random nonresponses may result in serious concerns regarding the validity of the research because it heavily increases sample bias, which, in turn, negatively affects the ability to generalise findings (De Lange et al., 2003; Taris, 2000).

Three types of nonresponses occur in longitudinal studies: initial nonresponse, attrition, and wave nonresponse (Taris, 2000). Initial nonresponse occurs when respondents refuse to participate in the first wave but agree to participate later; this type of nonresponse is very rare. Attrition (drop-out) is the most common type of nonresponse and occurs when respondents participate in the first wave but refuse later waves. Wave nonresponse occurs when particular respondents participate in some waves.

To avoid nonresponse (attrition) bias, three precautionary handling methods have been suggested for a panel study (Taris, 2000). First, collect enough contact details of the respondents so they can be re-contacted when needed. Second, provide incentives to motivate respondents to participate in the project and perhaps subsequent waves to ensure their continuity. Third, persuade respondents by informing them of the importance of their participation to the success of the research project and explain the value of their contribution.

Analytical methods to detect selective nonresponse bias (De Lange et al., 2003) should also be considered. This can be done through analysis techniques using chi-square among demographic variables (e.g. place, age, gender) for responders and non-responders (Menard, 2002) to identify whether there is a significant difference regarding selective nonresponse bias that affects the results.

This study uses the precautionary strategies suggested by Taris (2000) to deal with the issue of selective nonresponse bias. Respondents' contact details were obtained to be able to re-contact them for the next waves and each participant was given a unique code. Moreover, participants were informed about the importance of their contribution to the study for both the academic and business world. Moreover, this study conducted nonresponse bias analysis as recommended by De Lange et al. (2003). A comparison of the variables between responders and non-responders was conducted (De Lange et al., 2003) using the chi-square test among the demographic variables as suggested by Menard (2002).

Other sources of error were also considered, such as random sampling errors, which occur when the selected sample does not represent the population. To address this, as explained during sampling validation, demographic data screening was conducted (Malhotra et al. 2017) and the data collected matched the population. The other source of errors was response errors, in which the participants gave wrong answers or their answers were either incorrectly recorded or analysed (Malhotra et al., 2017). Response errors can be made by participants or the researcher. Participants' errors can be attributed to an inability or unwillingness to give correct answers due to unfamiliarity, tiredness, type of question, or perhaps intentionally misreporting due to avoiding socially unacceptable answers or embarrassment (Malhotra et al., 2017). To minimise this, a strict approach to the questionnaire design is adopted as well as a pilot launch to check their answers before the final launch. In addition, participants were assured of confidentiality for their peace of mind. Researcher's errors include surrogate information errors, measurement errors, population definition errors, sampling frame errors, and data analysis errors. Surrogate information error occurs

when the information needed for the research problem is different to what the researcher has obtained (Malhotra et al., 2017). To address this issue, an extensive literature review was conducted to clearly define the research problem and the conceptual model was verified, thus this issue did not exist. Measurement error refers to errors in the scales used to measure the constructs (Malhotra et al., 2017). This was not an issue because the measures of CE had been developed and empirically validated and additionally, rigorous established scale measures were used for the remaining variables as previously discussed in the variables measurement section. Population definition errors occur when the actual population is different from the population defined by the researcher (Malhotra et al., 2017). This issue was not a concern as the population of interest was clearly defined based on the research objectives and it was checked that the panel met the eligibility criteria. Sampling frame errors occur when the sample drawn from the sampling frame is inaccurate (Malhotra et al., 2017); to avoid this issue, an access panel was used as previously explained in the sampling process. Data analysis errors occur when inappropriate analysis is conducted, resulting in incorrect interpretation and findings (Malhotra et al., 2017); to avoid this issue, the data analysis techniques were clearly considered, seeking rationale and evidence, as previously explained in the justification of the data analysis.

4.8. Summary of sampling strategies and profiles for Study 1 and Study 2

The following Table 7 provides a summary of the sampling strategies and profiles for each data collection in both Study 1 and Study 2 conducted in this thesis including sample size, data collection method, purpose of the data, data collected, industry settings of the participants, participants' industry size, professional services used by participants, and position of the participants.

Table 7: Explanatory table of sampling strategies and profiles

Study 1								
Mixed methods	Sample size	Data collection method	Purpose of the data	Data collected	Industry settings of the participants	Participants' industry size and place	Professional services used by participants	Position of the participants
Qualitative	12	In-depth Interviews	Generate items for the four CE dimensions + confirm the conceptual Framework	Generated 23 items of CE + Confirmed the conceptual framework	Range of industry sectors (services sectors such as agencies, communication, education, health and finance, and goods sectors such as manufacturing and retailing)	Small and medium-sized business customers in Scotland	Management consulting firms, IT consulting, advertising agencies, marketing research agencies, legal firms, accountancy services and others	Managerial levels such as managing director, senior manager, purchasing manager, head of department, marketing manager, executive manager
Quantitative	146	Questionnaire	CE scales refinement and purification	CE				
Study 2								
Panel	Sample size	Data collection method	Purpose of the data	Data collected	Industry settings of the participants	Participants' industry size and place	Professional services used by participants	Position of the participants
Wave 1	447	Questionnaire	CE scale validation with 187 sub-sample, test H1	CE	similar to Study 1	Small, medium and large business customers in all the UK (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland)	Similar to Study 1	Similar to Study 1
Wave 2	260	Questionnaire	Test H2-H5	CE, drivers, satisfaction				
Wave 3	202	Questionnaire	Test H6-H7	Repeated purchases and WOM				

4.9. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the research philosophy and research methodology employed. It has illustrated the research designs for two studies completed in this thesis. It has explained and provided justification for Study 1 (mixed methods: qualitative and quantitative). The main purpose of the qualitative phase was to develop the items for measuring the CE dimensions and to confirm the conceptual framework. The data collection method was discussed, including in-depth interviews as well as discussing the participants' characteristics, interview protocol and analysis techniques. The main purpose of the quantitative phase was to empirically refine and purify the measures developed through the qualitative phase; for the quantitative phase, full details were presented in terms of the data collection method using an online questionnaire as well as the analysis process using EFA for the purification of the CE measures.

The main purpose of Study 2 was to independently validate the CE measures through the first wave, thus testing the first research hypothesis *H1*. Through Waves 2 and 3, the remaining research hypotheses *H2–H7* were tested with regard to how past experience influences present experience, drivers of experience and consequences of experience in terms of both satisfaction and reported behaviour, thus a panel design was formed. To achieve that, an online questionnaire was found to be the best technique to gather the required information from the panel. The data collection and questionnaire design process were discussed in detail. Research measures were also presented showing the scale items. The sampling process and the potential for errors were discussed taking into consideration panel issues and possible treatments. Finally, a pilot test was conducted to check whether the questionnaire required improvements

before the full survey went live. The following chapter presents the analysis for Studies 1 and 2.

CHAPTER 5:

DATA ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS TESTING

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of Study 1 (mixed methods) and Study 2 (panel) conducted in this thesis. Study 1 presents the findings of the qualitative phase through in-depth interviews during which the items of the four experience dimensions (factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses) were developed. In addition, the findings from the in-depth interviews confirm the variables of the theoretical framework (experience drivers and consequences). The quantitative phase of Study 1 presents the analysis of the first quantitative sample collected for refinement and purification of the items identified from the in-depth interviews using exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

Study 2 focuses on the analysis of the second quantitative sample collected during three waves. In the first wave, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is used to assess the scales' validity (reliability, convergent and discriminant validity); the result of *H1* is also presented. In the second wave, nonresponse (attrition) bias analysis is used to ensure the sample is representative over time. Invariance analysis for the measures used in more than one wave is also conducted to ensure that the measures are variant over time. CFA is used again prior to examining the structural models and the results of hypotheses *H2–H5* are presented. In the third wave, nonresponse (attrition) bias analysis is used to investigate whether the sample is still representative, and, finally, mediation analysis with logistic regression and hypotheses *H6–H7* are presented. The next subsection presents the findings of Study 1, followed by the findings of Study 2.

5.2. Study 1 (mixed methods) findings

5.2.1. Qualitative in-depth interview findings

This section presents an illustration of each emergent theme along with the relevant identified descriptors. A summary table of the emergent descriptors of the CE constructs will be provided in this section. Further, experience drivers and the importance of past experience as well as the consequences of the experience will be presented.

5.2.1.1. Emergent descriptors for the theme of factual response

In-depth interviews revealed significant items that underlie factual response. Customers reflect on these items of experience based on facts, which is why it is called factual response. In the following paragraphs, these items for the factual response will be presented providing quotations from the respondents to further strengthen and clarify these emergent themes.

1- Met the delivery deadline

Meeting deadlines is found to be a factual response to the service provider's delivery performance. Customers do not want to be left at the bottom of the pile; they do not expect to be prioritised to the top of the pile either, but they expect a reasonable turn around. Respondent 1 commented about the importance of understanding the pressure of deadlines:

“The key elements in what I would say in experience is people who understand the pressure of deadlines, you know that they’ve got to supply us so we can keep this little chain going in a rhythm. Uhm, yeah...” (Respondent 1)

Similarly, Respondent 3 outlines the importance of meeting a deadline by his solicitor and further confirms that meeting deadlines is an important item when judging performance for a service.

“Meeting the deadline and working to my satisfaction. I don’t employ lawyers enough to create criteria, so therefore I just use my own judgement as to whether I think they performed well or not.” (Respondent 3)

Respondent 4 highlights the importance of meeting deadlines and says it is a major concern along with ensuring there is an exchange of information about the delivery time with the service provider and further confirmation regarding the service being provided ahead of time.

“I would say it was probably that and the proactive communication – they were the two major influences. So, again it’s that seeing something before it happens or stuff being delivered on time or ahead of schedule.” (Respondent 4)

Similarly, Respondent 5 confirms that delivering the service on time is a key item of experience and further notes that it would have a consequence in terms of the consideration about maintaining business with the service provider.

“I think, in general, delivery experience is one of the key elements. If the company can't deliver what it says on time then you don't have any confidence in it. It can have an impact on your view of doing business in that line in the future.” (Respondent 5)

Respondent 8 confirms that a good delivery experience is based on receiving a service on time. This indicates that meeting a deadline is a key item when a customer assesses the service provider's performance.

“Well, there was a deadline. So, I gave them the deadline and they knew what the deadline was, and they provided the service on time. So, in that respect it was a good delivery experience.” (Respondent 8)

In a similar way, both Respondents 9 and 12 confirm how meeting a deadline is important in their experience. Respondent 9 notes that delivering a service on time is a key item along with a short time spent on problem solving. Similarly, Respondent 12 outlines that judging whether an experience is good relies on receiving it within the timescale.

“The key elements would be: how much time it involves me in, whether I can get a quick and easy answer to the problem, and whether materials are delivered to us on time.” (Respondent 9)

“The experience with them was very good so their adaptation was very, very good. Their output was excellent and it was all done within the timescale.” (Respondent 12)

From the above quotations of the respondents, it is clear that meeting deadlines is a key item of the experience the customer has with the service provider. Customers are

looking for the service to be delivered on time, so meeting deadlines is an important item for the factual response the customer has during the business exchange with the service provider.

2- Met our budget

Meeting customers' budgets is another factual item that the customer experiences from the service provider. Customers want the levels of service costs to suit their budget. This can be regarded as a fact. The following quotes clearly highlight how meeting a budget is important for customer experience. Respondent 6 confirms that the service should suit a customer's budget and further shows a reluctance to pay any price to receive the final service.

"It has to be done on time. It has to be done with the least possible problems and it also has to suit my budget. I will not pay at any cost to get to an end result. It has to be within a budget." (Respondent 6)

Additionally, Respondent 7 highlights that price is a priority concern when dealing with the service provider. This indicates that the cost of the service has to be within the customer's financial capability.

"I think that experience is going to be based around other factors as well, such as price and how much people are charging for their services. Then, at the end of the day, it is going to be about how good they are at their job and how quickly they can respond to any problems that you might have." (Respondent 7)

Similarly, Respondent 9 outlines that price is an important item to judge the experience. He indicates that he is now being charged less because the service provider has established his own company rather than the previous company located in the city centre at which the price was much more expensive.

“Well, that is obviously reflected in the price. He was working with a much larger city centre company and they were much more expensive. He is now set up in a smaller company and that has actually worked out better for us because we are not charged as much for the same service. Obviously, a city centre company is paying city centre rent and business rates and they’ve got to pay that somehow.” (Respondent 9)

Likewise, Respondent 10 highlights that the price paid was good for the service provided and further notes that the price was negotiated to the best possible extent. This indicates that the service provider should seek to meet the budget of the customer.

“The price – we are extremely happy with the price that we paid. I’m afraid that under commercial confidentiality I can’t tell you the specifics of that. The price that we negotiated we feel was very fair and gives an element of profit for the agency as well as good value of money for us. You can lean on people until there is next to no money in it but if you pay rubbish then you get rubbish that’s the bottom line of it. If you want the best you need to pay the money required by the best agencies.” (Respondent 10)

When speaking about his experience, Respondent 12 confirms that it is based on certain items and one of these important items is meeting the budget.

“That is the criteria, I guess. Was it good? Was it on budget? Was it done on time? If you meet those three things then you’re kind of happy. In this instance we were, as all

these things were met. It was done in the right timescale and with the right price so it was fine.” (Respondent 12)

These comments above clearly confirm the importance of meeting the budget as a key item for factual response.

3- Met our specifications

The interviews highlight that customers use facts to judge the perceived performance of the service provider. Meeting customers’ specifications and requirements is an important item for factual response. Customers judge whether the offerings from service providers have met their specifications and requirements. In the following, more illustration is provided using respondents’ quotes. Respondent 1 outlines the importance of having a customised service, obviously based on certain needs, and states that:

“Well, we expect a personal service. We expect a personal experience from, shall I say, the personnel. We expect good quality delivery, experienced delivery, courteous, we want a good working relationship with our suppliers.” (Respondent 1)

In a similar way, Respondent 5 further adds that he has a checklist of specifications to be met and how the service provider can achieve these specifications. This indicates that meeting specifications is an important item for factual response.

“I’ve got that checklist that I’ll go down and I’ll go through that with all services. What is key that the service provider can give me confidence that they can deliver what I’m looking for.” (Respondent 5)

Respondent 6 adds that it is important for the supplier to be able to meet customer specifications and requirements.

“Well, I look for a supplier who has the ability to meet our requirements.” (Respondent 6)

Similarly, Respondent 11 shares her experience with the recent service provided and highlights that the ability of the service provider to comply with the existing IT framework of her company is important. This certain specification should be carefully considered by the service provider.

“I would be looking for a company who could work within my existing IT framework. I’m not looking to invest any more money in IT so would be looking for a company that can complement the current set up that we have.” (Respondent 11)

Likewise, it can be seen that Respondent 12 comments on the importance of the service provider to understand his needs and specifications. His experience is affected by the ability of the service provider to meet his specifications in detail.

“... have they listened to my certain needs in detail and responded to them? Have they understood what they have to do and have they delivered that?” (Respondent 12)

From the quotes mentioned above, it is clear that customers will judge their experience based on how good the professional service providers are at meeting certain customer specifications, thus meeting specifications is an important item for factual response.

4- Achieved our objectives

Achieving objectives is a key item for factual response as the interviews reveal. Customers record their experience based on the outcomes of the service obtained from the service provider. They look for their objectives to be met. Respondent 7 comments on the main items forming an experience from hiring a professional marketing agency. He outlines the importance of achieving the desired objectives from the professional service provider such as beneficial outcomes, brand awareness, and increased profits.

“Ultimately profitability, if you are asking someone to create a brand for you or create marketing for you, if you see a financial result of a marketing campaign then it’s quite measurable how successful that has been.” (Respondent 7)

Similarly, Respondent 11 highlights that the key item when working with the service provider is seeing whether the objectives are met.

“The main elements whilst I’m working with a provider would be my objectives.”
(Respondent 11)

Likewise, Respondent 12 shares his experience on hiring a marketing agency with regard to achieving his company’s objective of increasing the number of followers on social media.

“Well, we have recently taken on a non-executive director to bring some more wide-ranging experience to the board. He has introduced us to a marketing company who has helped us to get our message out regarding our social media and blog posts and updates for our websites. We have found the experience very, very good, I have to say. The company concerned has had a representative basically on the telephone for us at

any time for the past two to three months and she has been excellent. The volume of tweets has gone up substantially. We're not using Facebook or anything like that but certainly our Twitter feed is now well read – we have nearly 1,000 followers on twitter. It's going quite well, yes.” (Respondent 12)

Similarly, Respondents 1 and 5 add the following statements in support of the importance of meeting objectives when working with the service provider

“Well, we need to see whether our objectives are achieved.” (Respondent 1)

“If I have objectives set out to what I need to achieve then that would be one of the things.” (Respondent 5)

The comments from Respondents 7, 11, 12, 1, and 5 clearly confirm the importance of objectives being met when obtaining a professional service; thus, achieving objectives is a key item that feeds into customers' factual response.

5- Produced solutions that led to an increase our company's effectiveness

Customers are keen to see improvement in the company's effectiveness due to the solution provided and employed from the service provider. Respondents 11 depicts her experience regarding the importance of having solutions that lead to increasing her small firm's effectiveness through achieving desired goals.

“The solution provided by this service provider helped our small firm to successfully achieve the desired results effectively.” (Respondent 11)

Similarly, Respondents 7 and 2 share the same idea and further comment on the importance of having successful solutions leading to an increase in company effectiveness. The following statements confirm both of their experiences.

“Well, the main thing is that, in the end, it helped us increase our effectiveness.”

(Respondent 7)

“It is worth mentioning that the solution provided by our solicitor has led to an increase in the efficiency of our team, this legal problem was time-consuming.”

(Respondent 2)

Further, Respondents 4 and 5 resonate in terms of how important the solution provided is for their experience. Respondent 4 shares his experience with the accountancy firm and reports that it helped to enhance his business. Likewise, Respondent 5 outlines that the marketing consultant provides an effective consulting solution in terms of business expansion.

“Well, I have to say...accounting solutions have helped to improve the performance of our company, especially in terms of efficiency.” (Respondent 4)

“This company provided us with a consulting solution that contributed in one way or another to improve the effectiveness of our company in several aspects; perhaps the most important is increasing our business.” (Respondent 5)

The findings suggest that, while it is quite important to have a good solution from the service provider, it is also quite obvious that customers are linking the solution provided to their company's effectiveness; thus, providing customers with a positive

solution that leads to an increase in their company's effectiveness is a key item for factual response.

6- Produced high-level reports and presentations

The comments of the respondents with regard to the importance of having a high standard level of reports and presentations is also a necessary item for factual response. Several respondents share their experience with their professional service providers. Respondent 3 suggests how important it is to have high-standard and accurate accounting reports.

“What I liked from her is that she provided us clear and easily understandable reports of a high standard.” (Respondent 3)

In a similar way, Respondents 9 and 6 confirmed the importance of having high standard reports. Respondent 9 depicts his experience with the service provided and outlines that the reports provided were of high quality as he was expecting. Respondent 6 shared a similar experience and added that the reports submitted were undoubtedly at a premium level.

“... also, high standard reports were presented as expected.” (Respondent 9)

“There is no doubt that the reports presented were of a high standard of quality and discipline.” (Respondent 6)

Likewise, Respondent 8 confirms that the reports of the solicitor were incredible and helped to clarify the issue.

“The final reports were amazing and these reports helped explain the problem smoothly and gracefully.” (Respondent 8)

Additionally, Respondent 11 outlines the importance of the reports being carefully prepared and how that helps the service provider to give a good experience to the customer.

“The final statements made by the accountant were meticulously prepared to reflect the extent of his delegation and effort.” (Respondent 11)

The findings show that customers are looking for high-level reports and presentations when reflecting on their experience during the service provider’s work, thus it can be seen that producing high-level reports and presentations is an important item for factual response.

Table 8 summarises the emergent items for factual response.

Table 8: The emergent descriptors for the factual response theme, along with illustrative quotes

Emergent Theme	Emergent descriptors (items)	Illustrative quote	Number and percentage of participants (n = 12)*
Factual Response	Met the delivery deadlines	<i>“The key elements in what I would say in experience is people who understand the pressure of deadlines.”</i>	7 (58%)
	Met our budget	<i>“It has to be within a budget.”</i>	5 (41%)
	Met our specifications	<i>“Well, we expect a personal service. We expect a personal experience from, shall I say, the personnel.”</i>	5 (41%)
	Achieved our objectives	<i>“The main elements whilst I’m working with a provider would be my objectives.”</i>	5 (41%)
	Produced solutions that led to an increase our company’s effectiveness	<i>“The solution provided by this service provider helped our small firm to successfully achieve the desired results effectively.”</i>	5 (41%)
	Provided high-level reports and presentations	<i>“What I liked from her is that she provided us clear and easily understandable reports of high standard.”</i>	5 (41%)

* The numbers and percentages in the last column reflect the participants who made this specific comment or something very similar, thus contributing to the identification of the specific theme.

5.2.1.2. Emergent descriptors for the theme of sagacious response

In-depth interviews disclosed important items underlying sagacious response. Customers reflect on these items using more subjective measures, which is why it is called a sagacious response. The following depicts these items along with providing illustrative quotes from the respondents.

1- Were adaptive to our needs and requests

The ability of the service provider to adapt to the customers’ needs is important in creating a positive experience. Supporting this, Respondent 5 outlines the importance

of adaptation to his certain needs in order to obtain a distinctive service. He also reports that a bespoke service with a good price is highly preferred.

“I would rather have somebody who understands our business and the product they are trying to sell – they can adapt it to meet our needs at reasonable price rather than someone saying that they can do it on price.” (Respondent 5)

Similarly, Respondents 11 and 12 further confirm the importance of the service provider being adaptive. Respondent 11 highlights that she would switch to another service provider if the current one is not able to adapt to her needs. This clearly shows how being flexible and adaptive to the customer’s needs is significant in terms of giving the customer a good experience. Additionally, Respondent 12 comments that his experience was fantastic because the service met his needs.

“If they weren’t adaptive, you simply couldn't continue with them because they wouldn’t have the solution of every business challenge that any other business may have. It’s very important you to go to a company that are willing to adapt, change and mould their service to what you need rather than a catalogue of one-size-fits-all. That wouldn't appeal to me. Being flexible and adaptive are very important elements for the provider that I’m going to go with.” (Respondent 11)

“The experience with them was very good so their adaptation was very, very good. Their output was excellent and it was all done within the timescale.” (Respondent 12)

Respondents 1 and 3 likewise share their experiences. Respondent 1 reports that it would be essential for the marketing agency to adapt to her specific needs and the goal

she wishes to accomplish. Similarly, Respondent 3 describes how the hired accountant attempts to be flexible in achieving what is needed.

“Also, adaptation to my certain requirements and the objective we need to achieve would be important.” (Respondent 1)

“We have also noticed that the accountant is somewhat interested in trying to reconcile what we need and what can be done.” (Respondent 3)

From these findings it can be seen that Respondents 5, 11, 12, 1, and 3 confirm the importance of the service provider to deliver an adapted service that meets their certain needs. Customers would have a positive experience if the service provider adapts, suits, and adjusts the service according to their needs. Thus, the item of being adaptive to customers’ needs and requests is a key item for sagacious response.

2- Responded quickly when needed

Another item of the sagacious response is the quick response of the service provider once the customer needs help. How quickly the service is provided can affect the customer experience. Supporting this, Respondent 2 shares her experience with a legal adviser; she is very keen for his quick response once required:

“With our legal supplier, again when we phone them up, we want to speak to the named person. We want them to solve our problem within a reasonable timescale. We expect an answer within the working day or the next working day. If we have to prompt them, give them a call, find out what has happened or what the delay is, we expect them to put their foot on the gas and give us an answer.” (Respondent 2)

Similarly, Respondents 1 and 7 comment on the importance of the service provider providing a quick response once needed. Respondent 1 confirms her need for a rapid answer when a problem occurs, while Respondent 7 further adds that his assessment of the service provider would be based on how quickly urgent problems are answered.

“Sometimes you need a quick response when you're having an emergency problem.”

(Respondent 1)

“Then at the end of the day it is going to be about how good they are at their job and how quickly they can respond to any problems that you might have.” (Respondent 7)

Additionally, Respondents 8 and 9 use examples of their experience with service providers. Respondent 8 shares a good experience with his legal adviser because of easy communication and rapid answers. Similarly, Respondent 9 adds that the time spent responding to a problem is a great concern.

“To be honest, our solicitor is easily approachable, and quickly responded when needed and this may be via phone call, email or even texts.” (Respondent 8)

“The key elements would be: how much time it involves me in, whether I can get a quick and easy answer to the problem.” (Respondent 9)

It is clear from the above quotes that respondents highlight the importance of a prompt response when dealing with any relevant inquiry. If customers' problems are not handled in a timely fashion, customers would have a bad experience, thus the item of responding quickly when needed is a key item for sagacious response.

3- Completed the work in an innovative way

Interviews have revealed that finishing a task in an innovative manner appears to be another item for sagacious response. Respondent 1 shares her experience with the marketing agency. She was impressed by the way the task was completed.

"Well we found that, they've changed it, tweaked it, done this, which is a good thing."

(Respondent 1)

Further, Respondent 5 outlines how his experience is affected by getting an innovative outcome at the end.

"Ultimately, the service was obtained in a nice and creative manner." (Respondent 5)

Additionally, Respondents 7 and 12 share their experiences in relation to this. They support the importance of a service being completed innovatively. Respondent 7 expresses that he had a good experience as a result of the creative service received from a marketing consultancy. Similarly, Respondent 12 is keen for innovative completion of the service.

"We were surprised at the end; the service was creatively completed and that definitely reflected on our experience." (Respondent 7)

"Also, I'd rather see a completion of the project in a creative and innovative way."

(Respondent 12)

These findings from Respondents 1, 5, 7 and 12 outline the importance of having a service innovatively completed. They agree that innovative services play an important

role in their experience, thus completing work in an innovative way is a key item for sagacious response.

4- Produced innovative solutions and ideas

The production of innovative and new ideas by the service provider plays a role in creating customer experiences. Several respondents share their experience supporting this notion. Respondent 1 recalls her experience and stresses the importance of the marketing agency offering new ideas.

“Our service provider has got to keep moving forward, keep changing and tweaking, and introducing new ideas, new things like that.” (Respondent 1)

In a similar way, Respondent 7 also shares his experience and confirms that he was impressed by the new task delivered by the marketing consultancy firm. It was different from what he expected and he further describes it as successful work.

“I wanted them to create a logo and a webpage and I basically let them choose whatever they wanted. I left them for a month or so and when I came back, they created something completely different to what I would have guessed they would have done but it was really good. We used it with great success and it’s been a big success.”
(Respondent 7)

Additionally, Respondent 9 further supports the importance of having creativity and new ideas from the accountant. However, accountancy in business does not necessarily involve much innovation; he asserts that providing new ideas would be very helpful for his business and his experience.

“I don’t think in the accountancy world there are many opportunities for innovation. If I am looking for innovation, to be perfectly honest with you, I am looking for my accountant to come to me and tell me ways that I can avoid paying x, y, z amount of tax. So, innovation for me is if my accountant comes to me and tells me he has thought of a great idea that can stop me paying as much commercial company tax as I do: let me hear what you’ve got to say, great, that is innovation to me.” (Respondent 9)

Likewise, Respondent 12 reports the main reason behind hiring a professional marketing service. He confirms the importance of the introduction of new ideas by the marketing agency for the sake of flourishing his business.

“I think innovation was the reason that I went to the agency, so it is very important, yeah. They did provide some new ideas using good new technology and design techniques.” (Respondent 12)

Respondents 1, 7, 9, and 12 confirm the importance of getting innovative ideas from the service provider. Customers experience the creativeness of the supplier, offering judgement about whether the service provider has provided innovative and new ideas; thus, producing innovative solutions and new ideas is a key item for sagacious response.

5- Used most recent techniques to complete the task

The interviews reveal that customers have a good experience when the service provider uses recent techniques to accomplish the task. In this respect, Respondent 1 shares her experience and reports the importance of using recent techniques such as

online tracking and providing regular information, which are of great help. The service provider should use the most up-to-date techniques available.

“We also noted that they used modern techniques such as online tracking and kept us regularly informed.” (Respondent 1)

Similarly, Respondents 3 and 4 recall their experience outlining some recent techniques provided by the service provider. Respondent 3 is impressed by the accountant’s use of modern analytical software to complete the task. Respondent 4 confirms the need to secure the data with recent techniques.

“She was using apps and analytics software, which was good for our job.”
(Respondent 3)

“It was important for updating a security protocol for our data.” (Respondent 4)

Similarly, Respondents 5 and 12 share their experience supporting this notion. Respondent 5 had a good experience with the marketing agency as a result of its use of recent up-to-date techniques to deliver the service. Likewise, Respondent 12 was impressed about their use of an attractive design.

“They gave us a brilliant advice on how to move to digital media. They used their own tools and recent technologies to strengthen our brand.” (Respondent 5)

“One of the most important things that resonates in my mind is their use of attractive designing.” (Respondent 12)

The findings from these quotes above confirm how important it is for the service provider to use the latest techniques to finish the task, as customers have a good experience when they do. Therefore, using recent techniques is a key item for sagacious response.

6- Demonstrated a good understanding of the challenges we face

Understanding the current challenges that customers face is another important item that emerged during the interviews. Service providers need to fully understand the aspects of the problem to construct more effective and positive experiences with their customers. Respondent 2 asserts that it was crucial for her legal adviser to perceive all issues surrounding the aspects she faces.

“Realising the problem and understanding all the potential surrounding aspects were very important to me.” (Respondent 2)

In a similar way, Respondents 4 and 1 support the importance of the service provider to present good knowledge of the issues they face. Respondent 4 shares his experience with his accountant by asserting that demonstrating good knowledge is viable for the problem he wants to fix. Further, Respondent 1 advises that her service provider was a decent listener and attempted to gather almost anything necessary to understand the issue.

“He demonstrated understanding of the problem we wanted to solve.” (Respondent 4)

“He was a good listener for the problem and tried to summon up everything possible to reach a satisfactory solution.” (Respondent 1)

Moreover, Respondent 5 adds his experience about having a succinct description of the problem that helps him to recall the experience.

“After a long meeting, the problem was briefly summarised.” (Respondent 5)

Additionally, Respondents 6 and 9 provide further support for this notion. Respondent 6 asserts the importance of the problem being well comprehended by the service provider otherwise it wastes time rather than tackling the issue. Respondent 9 shares his good experience and mentions that a good understanding of the problem leads to a promising solution.

“If the problem is not well understood, we will waste our time with him. The main primary goal is to address the problem.” (Respondent 6)

“Yah... it was a positive experience. You know, a good understanding of the problem is important if we want to reach a successful solution.” (Respondent 9)

From the quotes above, it can be concluded that customers share positive experiences in terms of how their service providers demonstrate a good understanding of the problem they face, thus demonstrating a good understanding of the problem the customer faces is a key item for sagacious response.

7- Helped improve our performance

The other item of experience the interviews revealed is the ability of the service provider to help the customer to improve performance. Respondent 1 reinforces this, when sharing her experience with the marketing agency. She comments on the

importance of having an increase in her company's performance through an increase in activity.

"We noticed an improvement of our company's activity." (Respondent 1)

Concurrently, Respondents 3 and 7 further support how the service provider helps to improve their company's performance. Respondent 3 states that the accountant assisted in eliminating the chaos in the job. Similarly, Respondent 7 outlines the improvement in his company's performance as a result of buying from the marketing consultancy.

"The service provided from the external accountant has helped to clear up the mess in our work." (Respondent 3)

"Overall, performance was much better after purchasing this service." (Respondent 7)

Respondents 10 and 12 share their experiences and highlight the importance of improving their company's performance as a result of obtaining the professional service. Respondent 10 asserts that legal issues are annoying so solving them makes people more comfortable and certainly impacts on a company's performance. Respondent 12 confirms the improvement in his company's performance as a result of hiring a marketing agency.

"Generally speaking, solving legal problems gives you peace of mind and lets you focus on your work, and this definitely affects the institutional performance."
(Respondent 10)

“As expected, there was an improvement that reflected on our performance.”

(Respondent 12)

These findings from Respondents 1, 3, 7, 10 and 12 show that the customers seek improvement in their company’s performance when reflecting on their experiences with their service providers, thus helping to improve the company’s performance, is a key item for sagacious response. Table 9 summarises the emergent items for sagacious response.

Table 9: The emergent descriptors for the sagacious response theme, along with illustrative quotes

Emergent Theme	Emergent descriptors (items)	Illustrative quote	Number and percentage of participants (n = 12)*
Sagacious Response	Were adaptive to our needs and requests	<i>“If they weren’t adaptive you simply couldn’t continue with them.”</i>	5 (41%)
	Responded quickly when needed	<i>“If we have to prompt them, give them a call, find out what has happened or what the delay is we expect them to put their foot on the gas and give us an answer.”</i>	5 (41%)
	Completed the work in an innovative way	<i>“Well we found that, they’ve changed it, tweaked it, done this, which is a good thing.”</i>	4 (33%)
	Produced innovative solutions and ideas	<i>“Our service provider has got to keep moving forward, keep changing and tweaking, and introducing new ideas, new things like that.”</i>	4 (33%)
	Used most recent techniques to complete the task	<i>“We also noted that they used modern techniques such as online tracking and kept us regularly informed.”</i>	5 (41%)
	Demonstrated a good understanding of the challenges we face	<i>“Realising the problem and understanding all the potential surrounding aspects were very important to me.”</i>	6 (50%)
	Helped improve our performance	<i>“We noticed an improvement of our company’s activity.”</i>	5 (41%)

** The numbers and percentages in the last column reflect the participants who made this specific comment or something very similar, thus contributing to the identification of the specific theme.*

5.2.1.3. Emergent descriptors for the theme of emotional response

In-depth interviews helped to reveal items underlying emotional response. Customers feel happy, comfortable, warm, pleasant, and have peace of mind during a business exchange with the professional service provider. The following quotes from the respondents will clarify that in more detail.

1- Doing business with this supplier is always in a warm and friendly climate

The climate of the meeting is described as warm and friendly by several respondents who reflect on their positive experience. Respondent 2 supports this notion by stating that to get a good experience, it is essential to have a warm and friendly meeting with the legal adviser.

“The tone of the meeting or the tone of the conversation is important. It was a warm and friendly climate.” (Respondent 2)

In a similar way, Respondents 3 and 4 share their experience confirming the importance of having a warm and friendly climate with their professional service providers. Respondent 3 outlines that he is looking for a friendly climate with his hired accountant. Moreover, Respondent 4 highlights the way the climate of the meeting should be and asserts the warm and friendly overall atmosphere.

“To be quite precise and to the point, I am looking for a friendly climate during the meeting.” (Respondent 3)

“I think it’s the way that you deal with each other in a warm and friendly, respectful manner. Sometimes in professional contact that is very key.” (Respondent 4)

Moreover, Respondents 8, 9 and 11 recall their experience and outline the importance of the climate of the meeting. Respondent 8 agrees on the need for a warm meeting with his legal adviser. Similarly, Respondent 9 affirms the friendly and welcoming meeting with his service provider. Respondent 11 supports this by identifying a positive experience as a result of having a warm discussion environment.

“It’s different dealing with people in different types of business, but in legal terms I want to be sure that we have 100% a warm meeting.” (Respondent 8)

“The meeting was fairly friendly.” (Respondent 9)

“Warm conversation makes a positive feeling and that what I felt.” (Respondent 11)

These findings, therefore, suggest how important the climate of the meeting is for the respondents’ experience. A warm and friendly meeting with customers has a key influence on their feelings; thus, it can be concluded that a warm and friendly climate with the service provider is a key item for emotional response.

2- Honest feelings towards the supplier

Customers’ feelings during business exchange with suppliers play a great role in their experiences. Customers are looking for an honest feeling with the service provider they work with. In this respect, Respondent 4 expresses his positive feelings towards his accountant as a result of the service provider’s honesty.

“He was honest. So that certainly made me positive towards their firm.” (Respondent 4)

Similarly, Respondents 2, 8 and 11 share their experiences and further confirm the importance of an honest service provider. Respondent 2 describes her accountant as an honest person, whilst Respondent 8 highlights that he prefers working with an honest legal adviser. Respondent 11 asserts that honesty is very important to her.

“They were very honest.” (Respondent 2)

“I hate false pomposity; I would have been less inclined to engage with a dishonest lawyer.” (Respondent 8)

“Honesty is one of the most important things.” (Respondent 11)

Respondent 12 supports that by highlighting his positive experience. He comments on the importance of the honesty of the marketing consultancy he worked with.

“I prefer to deal with an honest service provider. Also, to be as relaxed as they need to be because I don’t think there needs to be formality in particular circumstances.”
(Respondent 12)

From the quotes above, it is obvious that customers are keen to work with an honest service provider. Honesty is very important during a business exchange; thus, honest feelings towards the service provider is a key item for emotional response.

3- Transparency of the service provider

The interviews also reveal that transparency between customers and service providers is important. Respondent 3 explains the importance of working with a transparent service provider by stating that:

“Because again, especially when it is a professional firm, you want somebody who is transparent.” (Respondent 3)

In a similar way, Respondents 4 and 7 comment about their feelings during an interaction with their professional service providers. Respondent 4 describes his accountant as an open and transparent person and this is important for his positive experience. Respondent 7 highlights the importance of transparency right from the outset.

“They gave the impression that their conduct is all about you and that they have got your back. It was open and welcoming and transparent.” (Respondent 4)

“So again, you want the early introductions to inspire transparency.” (Respondent 7)

Likewise, Respondents 8 and 9 support the importance of transparency with their service provider. Respondent 8 shares his experience with a legal firm and confirms that the legal transparency was a significant aspect. Additionally, Respondent 9 supports this by insisting on the importance of having an initial meeting with the legal firm and further outlines the importance of achieving transparency and confidence.

“The transparency is quite key.” (Respondent 8)

“As I said, I would never buy a business service over the phone – I would always have a meeting... The lawyer should be transparent and confident.” (Respondent 9)

From these findings, it can be seen that transparency is a key item in terms of the customers’ feelings towards their professional service provider; thus, transparency is a key item for emotional response.

4- Respectful work from the supplier

The interviews also reveal that respect is another important emotion during a business exchange. Several respondents support the importance of respect. Respondent 5 shares his experience with a professional marketing consultancy firm. He depicts that respect should be developed throughout the meeting.

“... In that meeting you have got to build up a level of respect. We have to have a meeting and they have got to show an interest and understand what our business needs and demands are.” (Respondent 5)

Respondents 6 and 7 outline their views in a similar way. Respondent 6 confirms that he respects the work of the legal advisor and further asserts he is not interested in purchasing services from an unknown provider. Similarly, Respondent 7 confirms that the work provided by the marketing agency was respectful because of the friendly face-to-face meeting.

“We respect their work... I wouldn’t buy services from anybody with whom I didn’t have a positive relationship, experience or a positive atmosphere.” (Respondent 6)

“They have provided a respectful work...as previously stated, you need to be friendly with the people you are dealing with. If you can’t be friendly and speak on a one-to-one basis then you shouldn't be dealing with that person or company.” (Respondent 7)

Moreover, Respondents 8 and 10 share their experience supporting the importance of respect. Respondent 8 confirms that the relationship with the service provider should be highly characterised with respect. Likewise, Respondent 10 experiences great respect from his legal consultant due to his openness, welcoming attitude, and, more importantly, the work completed.

“So, it is highly important that we have not only a working relationship but a friendly working relationship with high respect.” (Respondent 8)

“I respect him a lot and respect what he helps me with...My lawyer – I can go in and I can sit down and ask for a cup of tea – and then have a conversation about plans, holidays and what is going on later in the month; then we talk business. Whatever he tells me I accept it because I have to accept it and that is just the way it is.” (Respondent 10)

It can be seen that the above findings from interviews confirm how important the feeling of respect is when working with professional service providers; thus, a respectful service provider is a key item for emotional response.

5- It is pleasant to do business with our supplier

A feeling of pleasure when working with the service provider is another important emotion that customers reflect in their experiences. In this respect,

Respondent 1 supports the importance of pleasure. She confirms being pleased due to working with the marketing consultant.

“We are so pleased to work with him. He was affable and efficient. I don’t get upset.”

(Respondent 1)

Similarly, Respondents 2 and 3 share their experience supporting this assertion. Respondent 2 confirms she experienced a pleasant feeling as a result of the nice working relationship with her legal consultant and further reports that she would switch to another one if the working relationship with her current legal adviser was not good. Respondent 3 further confirms that a meeting with his accountant was quite pleasant.

“Absolutely, it was a pleasure to work with this lawyer. As in all matters of business, people are impressed by people. If they hadn’t been approachable and friendly and willing to do the kind of work then we would have been looking for someone else.”

(Respondent 2)

“It is pleasant to have a meeting with her. It happened that most of our interactions with her via telephone or by video call, so we tend not to meet face to face that often. When we do so she is very nice and very efficient, and the atmosphere is one of mutual respect and efficiency.” (Respondent 3)

Respondents 7 and 8 share their experiences, highlighting the importance of a pleasurable experience when working with the service provider. Respondent 7 confirms he feels pleased to hire the marketing consultancy firm. Likewise, Respondent 8 depicts that the working relationship with his legal adviser is pleasant.

“We are pleased to have them. I think having a supplier like the one we dealt with who is very enthusiastic, very open to all suggestions and one that came with lots of different ways of marketing the business rather than changing the business and one that researched the industry.” (Respondent 7)

“Having a pleasant relationship helps you also feel positive and motivated.”
(Respondent 8)

Respondent 11 also supports the importance of the pleasant feeling by outlining that she had a good experience due to the pleasant working relationship and positive atmospheric interaction with her accountant.

“Sure, it was a pleasure. The interaction was very positive from the outset. Having a very positive experience by interacting with an enthusiastic company made me increase my belief in their offering.” (Respondent 11)

In the above quotes, respondents confirm that they have a pleasant working relationship with their service providers, which creates a positive experience with this service provider. Therefore, a pleasant feeling is a key item for emotional response.

6- We have nothing to worry about when working with this supplier

Respondents also reveal that worry is not a concern when working with their service providers. Several respondents support this claim. Respondent 1 describes her feeling when working with the marketing consultancy firm she used as peace of mind, which also grew over time.

“Working with this service provider gave you that peace of mind that you could feel developing over time.” (Respondent 1)

Additionally, Respondents 2 and 3 depict the same feeling. Respondent 2 confirms that she stopped worrying after dealing with a legal advisor. Likewise, Respondent 3 confirms his positive attitude towards his accountant and confirms that he has nothing to worry about when he wants to share information.

“They have put the worries out of my mind... Again, it gives me respect for them – that I know they are putting all their cards on the table and telling me everything that is happening there from A–Z.” (Respondent 2)

“You do not have to worry if you have something you want to share with her. She is very open.” (Respondent 3)

Additionally, Respondents 5 and 9 show the same feelings. Respondent 5 confirms that his worries disappeared as a result of hiring the marketing consultancy. Respondent 9 supports the peace of mind that is felt as a result of the clarity of the information provided by the service provider as well as the good relationship developed.

“Working with them is free of worries and brings peace of mind...finally got what we need.” (Respondent 5)

“He gave me peace of mind. He explains things to me in fairly simple terms because he knows I won’t understand if he gets too technical, and that’s the good thing about

dealing with the same person all the time – they get to know you and understand you – they understand what level of communication to use.” (Respondent 9)

Similarly, Respondents 11 and 12 support the same feeling. Respondent 11 highlights that her worries have been taken away by the accountant. Respondent 12 outlines that he felt a peace of mind and no further worries as a result of the good work provided by the marketing consultancy.

“Concerns have gone after working with this accountant.” (Respondent 11)

“It gave you peace of mind. You weren’t worried that there would be elements that would disappoint you. You trusted that they would do a good job so you weren’t concerned in any way that it wouldn’t meet your expectations.” (Respondent 12)

From the findings that Respondents 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, and 12 reveal, it can be seen that working with service providers gave them peace of mind and cleared their worries, thus the feeling of having nothing to worry about is a key item for the customers’ emotional response.

7- Put all our fears at ease

Respondents also reveal that working with their service providers put their fears at ease. Supporting this, Respondent 1 describes her feelings by stating that the marketing consultant was available to answer her questions and that put her at ease.

“Working with this service provider put my worries and concerns at ease. They would have the appropriate answers to ease my concerns, shall I say.” (Respondent 1)

Respondents 4 and 8 also further support this. Respondent 4 advises that he no longer has fears because the data is securely stored with his accountant. Further, Respondent 8 adds that his fears were put aside right from the first meeting with his legal adviser.

“I have no fears about our data as the security system they have used was good.”

(Respondent 4)

“Concerns were dispelled after the first meeting and I was relieved.” (Respondent 8)

Moreover, Respondents 10 and 12 share their experiences, which supports this feeling. Respondent 10 confirms that he has fewer concerns and fears as a result of the positive reply from his legal adviser. Likewise, Respondent 12 comments on his experience with a marketing consultancy firm. He confirms that he has no more fears because the service provided was as he expected.

“Certainly, our fears become less because of the positive response from him.”

(Respondent 10)

“It puts your mind at ease and gave you that peace of mind that you knew that what was being developed and worked upon was going to future proof – you knew that you weren't going to have to go back and review and refresh in six months' time. And cutting edge; you know that it would be current and work on multiple platforms. No more fears!” (Respondent 12)

From the above findings it is clear that easing customers' fears is important through working with their service providers; therefore, putting customers' fears at ease is a

key item for the customers' emotional response. Table 10 summarises the emergent items for emotional response.

Table 10: The emergent descriptors for the emotional response theme, along with illustrative quotes

Emergent Theme	Emergent descriptors (items)	Illustrative quote	Number and percentage of participants (n = 12)*
Emotional Response	Doing business with this supplier is always in a warm and friendly climate	<i>"The tone of the meeting or the tone of the conversation is important. It was a warm and friendly climate."</i>	6 (50%)
	I feel our supplier is honest	<i>"He was honest. So that therefore that certainly made me positive towards their firm."</i>	5 (41%)
	I feel our supplier is transparent	<i>"...because again especially when it is a professional firm you want somebody who is transparent."</i>	5 (41%)
	I really respect the work of our supplier	<i>"... In that meeting you have got to build up a level of respect."</i>	5 (41%)
	It is pleasant to do business with our supplier	<i>"We are so pleased to work with him. He was affable and efficient. I don't get upset."</i>	6 (50%)
	We have nothing to worry about when doing business with our supplier	<i>"Working with this service provider gave you that peace of mind that you could feel developing over time."</i>	7 (50%)
	This supplier puts all our fears at ease	<i>"Working with this service provider put my worries and concerns at ease. They would have the appropriate answers to ease my concerns, shall I say?"</i>	5 (41%)

* The numbers and percentages in the last column reflect the participants who made this specific comment or something very similar, thus contributing to the identification of the specific theme.

5.2.1.4. Emergent descriptors for the theme of social response

The interviews reveal that during the business exchange, service providers and their customers develop a social network. This network of communication develops

into friendship and people attend events or enjoy each other's company as part of the business. The following quotes from respondents explain that in more detail.

1- Friendship with the supplier's management is welcome

Several respondents confirm that they welcome the friendship with their service providers. Respondent 6 confirms this by advising that he welcomes a business friendship with his legal adviser.

“So, I like to become friends, but not too close friends; I like to know a bit about the background.” (Respondent 6)

In a similar way, Respondents 8 and 3 support this. Respondent 8 asserts that the business friendship developed with his legal adviser as a result of feeling comfortable when working with him and because of the good advice received. Respondent 3 also confirms that he likes to talk with his accountant in a friendship environment.

“The comfort factor and the fact that we get good advice is something that sways us, and because of that a business friendship developed. If his price is there or thereabouts with others, that's okay if he is a little bit expensive.” (Respondent 8)

“I like to deal with people that I have a connection with. Whilst you obviously have to build up trust and knowledge of your suppliers, it's best to deal with people that you like. I'm not saying that everybody is a family, but it is good to know your suppliers so that you can talk to them on a one-to-one basis away from the business.” (Respondent 3)

In addition, Respondents 7 and 11 provide further support for the desirability of developing a business friendship with their service providers. Respondent 7 comments that he is happy to establish business friendships. Respondent 11 describes her accountant as an open person and ready to establish a business friendship if she wanted.

“Business friendship is welcomed as long as we are happy with what we get from them.” (Respondent 7)

“We found our accountant was approachable and friendly. I like to think of people being decent and down to earth and what you see is what you get. I don’t like it when someone has airs and graces and to be somebody that they are not. I don’t like that sort of person, so our accountant came across as being the type of person that I could sit and talk to and go out for a meal with if I wanted, so that made us feel very comfortable.” (Respondent 11)

From these quotes, it can be concluded that business friendship is welcomed as suggested by respondents, thus business friendship with service providers is a key item for social response.

2- Attending social events

Another important social item that emerges from the interviews is attendance at social events. Respondent 4 supports this notion by stating that he was invited to a social event held by the professional accountancy firm he used.

“We have been invited to celebrate the success of establishing a new business opportunity they have had. This makes you feel as belonging in a broader family.”

(Respondent 4)

Similarly, Respondents 2 and 3 assert their willingness to attend social events with their service providers. Respondent 2 adds that she has known her legal adviser for a long time so they enjoy attending social events. Respondent 3 confirms the same by stating that he is willing to attend social events.

“We have a very long business relationship, so we sometimes enjoy social events.”

(Respondent 2)

“I do not mind being involved in social events with her as long as I am available.”

(Respondent 3)

Respondents 9 and 11 confirm their availability for attending social events. Respondent 9 states that he sat and had a cup of tea with his accountant to discuss business matters. Likewise, Respondent 11 indicates that attending social events helps to enhance business relationships.

“I have received an invitation email from them to sit together and discuss some expectations...and yeah we sat together and had a cup of tea.” (Respondent 9)

“I think responding to social calls helps to generate understanding and build more trust.” (Respondent 11)

All the above quotes from the respondents show the importance of responding to social calls from their service providers and attending social events with them. Therefore, attending social events is a key item for social response.

3- We enjoy each other's company in a social setting

Another item that emerges from the interviews is the enjoyment between customers and their service providers in a social setting. Respondent 8 highlights the importance of having some social contact with the service provider for business success.

“The most social aspect of the relationship is having a cup of tea or a biscuit in one of our offices. And this is important for business!” (Respondent 8)

In a similar way, Respondents 4 and 10 support the importance of enjoying the company of their service providers in a social setting. Respondent 4 comments on the importance of socialising with his accountant to enhance the business relationship. Respondent 10 confirms the enjoyment of a discussion beyond business matters.

“In terms of socialisation, it is important, and I'd like to keep it to the business level...They portrayed confidence and established trust early on, so we got the impression that they were committed to us from the get-go.” (Respondent 4)

“We usually enjoy talking about things outside the work.” (Respondent 10)

Respondents 9 and 12 share the same experience with their professional service providers. Respondent 9 supports the importance of socialising with his service provider. Likewise, Respondent 12 confirms his enjoyment in business social aspects.

“I do not like to keep business completely separate; for the business’ sake it is OK to socialise.” (Respondent 9)

“I like engaging in social activity that helps to build business relationships, I welcome social invitations.” (Respondent 12)

From these findings, respondents have confirmed their enjoyment in socialising with their service providers; thus, it can be concluded that enjoying each other’s company in a social setting is an important item for social response. Table 11 summarises the emergent items for social response.

Table 11: The emergent descriptors for the social response theme, along with illustrative quotes

Emergent Theme	Emergent descriptors (items)	Illustrative quote	Number and percentage of participants (n = 12)*
Social Response	Friendship with the supplier’s management is welcome	<i>“So, I like to become friends, but not too close friends; I like to know a bit about the background.”</i>	5 (41%)
	Because of our business, the supplier invites us to attend social events	<i>“We have been invited to celebrate the success of establishing a new business opportunity they have had. This makes you feel as belonging in a broader family.”</i>	5 (41%)
	We enjoy each other’s company in a social setting	<i>“The most social aspect of the relationship is having a cup of tea or a biscuit in one of our offices. And this is important for business!”</i>	5 (41%)

** The numbers and percentages in the last column reflect the participants who made this specific comment or something very similar, thus contributing to the identification of the specific theme.*

5.2.1.5. Summary of the CE emergent themes and descriptors

The following Table 12 provides a summary of the four CE themes and relevant descriptors as well as illustrative quotes for each emergent item.

Table 12: A summary of the themes and descriptors of CE that emerged from the in-depth interviews, along with illustrative quotes

Emergent Theme	Emergent descriptors (items)	Illustrative quote	Number and percentage of participants (n = 12)*
Factual Response	Met the delivery deadlines	<i>“The key elements in what I would say in experience is people who understand the pressure of deadlines.”</i>	7 (58%)
	Met our budget	<i>“It has to be within a budget.”</i>	5 (41%)
	Met our specifications	<i>“Well, we expect a personal service. We expect a personal experience from, shall I say, the personnel.”</i>	5 (41%)
	Achieved our objectives	<i>“The main elements whilst I’m working with a provider would be my objectives.”</i>	5 (41%)
	Produced solutions that led to an increase our company’s effectiveness	<i>“The solution provided by this service provider helped our small firm to successfully achieve the desired results effectively.”</i>	5 (41%)
	Provided high-level reports and presentations	<i>“What I liked from her is that she provided us clear and easily understandable reports of high standard.”</i>	5 (41%)
Sagacious Response	Were adaptive to our needs and requests	<i>“If they weren’t adaptive you simply couldn’t continue with them.”</i>	5 (41%)
	Responded quickly when needed	<i>“If we have to prompt them, give them a call, find out what has happened or what the delay is we expect them to put their foot on the gas and give us an answer.”</i>	5 (41%)
	Completed the work in an innovative way	<i>“Well we found that, they’ve changed it, tweaked it, done this, which is a good thing.”</i>	4 (33%)
	Produced innovative solutions and ideas	<i>“Our service provider has got to keep moving forward, keep changing and tweaking, and introducing new ideas, new things like that.”</i>	4 (33%)
	Used most recent techniques to complete the task	<i>“We also noted that they used modern techniques such as online tracking and kept us regularly informed.”</i>	5 (41%)

	Demonstrated a good understanding of the challenges we face	<i>“Realising the problem and understanding all the potential surrounding aspects were very important to me.”</i>	6 (50%)
	Helped improve our performance	<i>“We noticed an improvement of our company’s activity.”</i>	5 (41%)
Emotional Response	Doing business with this supplier is always in a warm and friendly climate	<i>“The tone of the meeting or the tone of the conversation is important. It was a warm and friendly climate.”</i>	6 (50%)
	I feel our supplier is honest	<i>“He was honest. So that therefore that certainly made me positive towards their firm.”</i>	5 (41%)
	I feel our supplier is transparent	<i>“...because again especially when it is a professional firm you want somebody who is transparent.”</i>	5 (41%)
	I really respect the work of our supplier	<i>“.. In that meeting you have got to build up a level of respect.”</i>	5 (41%)
	It is pleasant to do business with our supplier	<i>“We are so pleased to work with him. He was affable and efficient. I don’t get upset.”</i>	6 (50%)
	We have nothing to worry about when doing business with our supplier	<i>“Working with this service provider gave you that peace of mind that you could feel developing over time.”</i>	7 (50%)
	This supplier puts all our fears at ease	<i>“Working with this service provider put my worries and concerns at ease. They would have the appropriate answers to ease my concerns, shall I say?”</i>	5 (41%)
Social Response	Friendship with the supplier’s management is welcome	<i>“So, I like to become friends, but not too close friends; I like to know a bit about the background.”</i>	5 (41%)
	Because of our business, the supplier invites us to attend social events	<i>“We have been invited to celebrate the success of establishing a new business opportunity they have had. This makes you feel as belonging in a broader family.”</i>	5 (41%)
	We enjoy each other’s company in a social setting	<i>“The most social aspect of the relationship is having a cup of tea or a biscuit in one of our offices. And this is important for business!”</i>	5 (41%)

The table presents the 23 items that were eventually matched to the original themes that the qualitative data allowed to emerge.

** The numbers and percentages in the last column reflect the participants who made this specific comment or something very similar, thus contributing to the identification of the specific theme.*

5.2.1.6. Confirming experience drivers

Participants were asked to identify different drivers of experience they see as comprising what their supplier offers and classify them into core and augmenting offerings. The results reveal that technical quality, delivery performance (in meeting deadlines) and price represent core offerings of the supplier, whereas reputation, innovation, adaptation and service support are considered as points of differentiation that augment the overall offering. Further, participants were asked whether these drivers are of importance to them. In the same vein, the functional outcomes were confirmed from the encounter with the supplier. The results from the participants confirmed the drivers of the exchange climate during business exchange represented by atmosphere, information sharing and technology sharing, whereas the drivers of bonding are comprised of trust, commitments and personal relationships. Moreover, participants were asked to confirm the importance of these drivers. The following Table 13 explains the findings of these drivers of the customer experience.

Table 13: CE drivers as identified by the participants in the in-depth interviews

Experience drivers		Number and percentage of participants who confirmed the importance of the drivers (n = 12)*
Core offerings	Delivery performance	10 (83%)
	Technical quality	12 (100%)
	Price	9 (75%)
Augmenting offerings	Adaptation	11 (91%)
	Innovation	7 (58%)
	Service support	10 (83%)
	Reputation	9 (75%)

Exchange climate	Atmosphere	12 (100%)
	Information sharing	9 (75%)
	Technology sharing	7 (58%)
Bonding	Trust	12 (100%)
	Commitment	11 (91%)
	Personal relationship	9 (75%)

In the preceding table, it is clear that all the drivers have been confirmed by the participants with high percentages ranging between 75% and 100%. The two drivers of innovation and technology sharing are confirmed by seven participants (58%). Those who are less inclined to favour innovation and technology sharing are customers of legal firms in which innovation and technology are not a huge concern.

5.2.1.7. The importance of past experience

During the in-depth interviews, the importance of time in creating experience is confirmed. Interviews support the notion that experience is accumulated over a period of time. Several respondents state that their experiences are built up over time, hence the role of past experience should be further investigated. Supporting this, Respondent 1 shares her experience by asserting that she likes to deal with people she has had a previous experience with. In the same vein, Respondent 2 comments that the relationship with her legal adviser has developed over a period of time. She evaluates the present performance of the legal adviser based on the past experiences she has had. Respondent 9 confirms the importance of the role of past experience by showing his willingness to continue dealing with the service provider he already knows. Moreover, Respondent 11 is clear about the importance of past experiences. She suggests that it

is necessary to take past experiences into consideration when evaluating a new one. She further adds that past experience cannot be overlooked particularly when dealing with your current service providers or even starting new relationships. In addition, Respondent 12 recalls his experience in a similar way and further provides that the key elements for his present experience are attributed to the previous ones. Additionally, Respondent 3 confirms the importance of past experiences in his business relationships.

From these findings, it is clear that past experiences have a role in influencing present experiences. The following Table 14 presents the respondents' quotes discussed above, showing that 50% of them confirm how past experience impacts on present experience.

Table 14: The importance of past experience, as suggested by participants during the in-depth interviews

	Illustrative quotes	Number and percentage of participants (n = 12)
Importance of past experience	<i>"We deal with people that we know that we trust and who we have had experience with before. We pretty well work in harmony."</i> (Respondent 1)	6 (50 %)
	<i>"But legal relationships tend to be built up over a number of years. You measure on their previous advice and the delivery of that advice and the accuracy of that. It's a thing you build up."</i> (Respondent 2)	
	<i>"That's the good thing about dealing with the same person all the time - they get to know you and understand you - they understand what level of communication to use."</i> (Respondent 9)	
	<i>"Just what I said that your past experience must be taken into account when you are dealing with your present experience. You can never forget what has happened in the past - good or bad - whilst working with existing or starting new relationships."</i> (Respondent 11)	
	<i>"The main one would be is if you have worked with them before and had a good experience. If you have worked with them before would be one of key elements."</i> (Respondent 12)	
	<i>"I would say previous experience is important."</i> (Respondent 3)	

5.2.1.8. Confirming experience consequences

The interviews also confirm the consequences of the experience the respondents have. Several respondents express their satisfaction as a result of a positive experience they have with their service providers. Respondent 5 asserts that he is satisfied when projects are completed by the marketing consultancy firm because his needs are met. Other respondents also speak about the importance of satisfaction. Respondent 7 confirms that he was satisfied after a project was completed by the marketing consultancy firm. Similarly, Respondent 3 mentions that it was crucial to be satisfied with the final work collected from his accountant. Respondent 9 comments that he was satisfied due to the positive results he got from the legal adviser. Finally, Respondent 11 confirms that if she was not satisfied with the service provided by the accounting consultancy firm, she would look for another.

The following Table 15 presents the respondents' quotes discussed above, displaying that 41% of respondents confirm how satisfaction is important as a result of the experience they have shared. The importance of experience stems from the impact of the experience on satisfaction. An experience obtained positively by customers is a main factor for the continued business relationship until a time that suppliers let customers down.

Table 15: The importance of satisfaction as a consequence of experience, as suggested by participants during the in-depth interviews

Emergent consequences	Supportive quotes	Number and percentage of participants (n = 12)
Satisfaction	<p><i>“When you get through to the final bit there is a feeling of satisfaction that you have got a service that meets your needs.”</i> (Respondent 5)</p>	5 (41%)
	<p><i>“At the end of the day yes there is satisfaction that you have managed to get something of value for your company.”</i> (Respondent 7)</p>	
	<p><i>“Well I’ve said before that satisfaction is important. I need to know that the information I am collecting from my accountant is correct.”</i> (Respondent 3)</p>	
	<p><i>“I am satisfied with the results that we are getting.”</i> (Respondent 9)</p>	
	<p><i>“I’m quite satisfied with what he does and if he wasn’t there are plenty others that you meet at networking conferences that would happily provide the same service.”</i> (Respondent 11)</p>	

In addition, the interviews support that experience matters because it affects behaviours such as repurchase and word of mouth. Respondent 1 highlights that she will repurchase and maintain business with a marketing consultancy firm as well as recommend it if she has a good experience. Similarly, Respondent 5 supports that he will maintain business with a marketing consultancy firm, if all the aspects of the experience are well perceived, and further recommend it. Additionally, Respondent 2 asserts that she will maintain business with her legal consultancy firm as well as recommending it to her peers providing that she has received a good experience and been satisfied. In a similar way, Respondent 4 confirms his willingness to keep maintaining the business with the legal firm he uses and recommend it as long as he has positive experiences. Respondent 12 outlines that the marketing consultancy used would be the first choice for repurchasing due to the good experience from many

perspectives such as understanding his business needs and the good business relationship they have; he also further adds that he would recommend them.

The following Table 16 presents the respondents' quotes discussed above, showing that 41% confirm that they would maintain business with their service providers and recommend them as long as they have good experiences. It is obvious that customers' good experiences create good business for service providers in terms of repurchasing and word of mouth.

Table 16: The importance of repurchases and word of mouth as consequences of experience, as suggested by participants during the in-depth interviews

Emergent consequences	Supportive quotes	Number and percentage of participants (n = 12)
Repurchase and WOM	<i>“If they give us a first-class service in our experience it will make us go back to them - return business - recommend them that’s a positive attitude that is what we would do.”</i> (Respondent 1)	5 (41%)
	<i>“This needs to be an all-round experience - their telephone manner, their delivery manner. If it's a positive experience - again costing, pricing - if it's a positive experience we would go back to them definitely and also recommend them.”</i> (Respondent 5)	
	<i>“Satisfied. If I wasn’t satisfied for any reason, I wouldn't be going back to them and recommend them.”</i> (Respondent 2)	
	<i>“Consequences of that experience would be that I would go straight back to that legal firm without hesitation and I would then recommend them.”</i> (Respondent 4)	
	<i>“We just automatically assumed that we would use this company and recommend it. You have used them before - you understand them and they understand you and they understand your kind of corporate image that you are trying to project - so it was a certainty that we would use them, so it was fundamental.”</i> (Respondent 12)	

5.2.2. Quantitative phase: Scale refinement and purification

The main purpose of this phase is to refine and purify the newly developed scales for measuring customer experiences that the in-depth interviews revealed using the factor analysis (Churchill, 1979; DeVellis, 2016). An online survey was disseminated to 400 business customers of professional service providers in Scotland. In total, 146 fully completed answers were received. Participants in this phase were asked to reflect on their experience with a professional service provider they had used. The following explains the data analysis process beginning with the descriptive analysis to describe the basic characteristics of the study sample.

5.2.2.1. Data analysis

Descriptive statistics

Table 17 below presents the ages of the sample population, which ranged from 18 to 64 years.

Table 17: The ages of the participants

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18–24	4	2.7
25–34	34	23.3
35–44	49	33.6
45–54	41	28.1
55–64	18	12.3
Total	146	100.0

Further, the following Table 17 shows the genders of the sample, comprising 54% male and 45% female participants.

Table 18: The genders of the participants

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	80	54.8
Female	66	45.2
Total	146	100.0

Table 19 below presents the different industries in which participants worked. Participants were from several industry settings such as agencies, communications, construction, education, finance, health, manufacturing, the public sector, retailing, travel, and others.

Table 19: The industry settings of the participants

Industry settings where participants work	Frequency	Percentage
Agency	3	2.1
Communication	10	6.8
Construction	11	7.5
Education	16	11.0
Finance/banking	6	4.1
Health	8	5.5
Manufacturing	15	10.3
Retail	19	13.0
Travel	6	4.1
Other industry settings	52	35.6
Total	146	100.0

As this research focuses on the experience gained during business exchange with professional service providers, Table 20 below outlines the participants' responsibility in gaining experience. This totalled 56% for individuals solely responsible for gaining experience and 43% for those jointly responsible for gaining experience and liaising with service providers.

Table 20: Responsibility in gaining experience

Responsibility of the participant in gaining experience	Frequency	Percentage
I am the sole individual in the company who is responsible for, and has experience in, liaising with professional services companies	82	56.2
I am jointly responsible for, and have experience in, liaising with professional service companies	64	43.8
Total	146	100.0

The study targeted participants at a managerial level within a company. It can be seen that various managerial roles and senior levels were occupied by participants, as outlined in Table 21 below.

Table 21: The roles of the participants

Roles of the participants in the company	Frequency	Percentage
Managing Director	39	26.7
Senior Director	15	10.3
Senior Manager	35	24.0
Purchasing Manager	8	5.5
Head of Department	26	17.8
Marketing Manager	3	2.1
Executive Manager	4	2.7
Other managerial roles	16	11.0
Total	146	100.0

The participants were further asked about their most frequent experience (not older than a month) to ensure they still had a fresh memory of that experience and could reflect on it. As displayed in Table 22 below, the professional service providers used

by customers manage consulting firms, IT consulting, advertising agencies, marketing agencies, legal firms, accountancy services, site developers and others.

Table 22: The professional services used by the participants

Who the most frequent experience was with, not more than a month before	Frequency	Percentage
Management consulting firms	18	12.3
IT consulting	43	29.5
Advertising agencies	16	11.0
Marketing research agency	9	6.2
Legal firms	13	8.9
Accountancy services	25	17.1
Site developers	13	8.9
Other service providers	9	6.2
Total	146	100.0

Normality test

The normality test is the most fundamental consideration when conducting quantitative analysis to identify whether the data collected is normally distributed (Hair et al., 2014). Kurtosis and skewness should be conducted to test data normality. While kurtosis refers to the peakedness or flatness of the distribution compared to the normal distribution, skewness is a measure of distribution symmetry compared to the normal distribution (Hair et al., 2014). Values of skewness and kurtosis outside -1, +1 are considered substantial according to Hair et al. (2014); however, George and Mallery (2010) accept a range between -2 and +2.

The following Table 23 shows the result of means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis values for each variable. It is obvious that most of the values for skewness and kurtosis fell within the acceptable range except for a few exceptions,

according to Hair et al. (2014), but all the values are within the acceptable range according to George and Mallery (2010).

Table 23: Descriptive statistics and normality test

Normality test		Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
		Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Factual Response	Met the delivery deadlines	5.36	1.462	-0.894	0.201	0.473	0.399
	Met our budget	5.32	1.353	-0.591	0.201	-0.181	0.399
	Met our specifications	5.42	1.466	-1.061	0.201	0.734	0.399
	Achieved our objectives	5.36	1.348	-0.794	0.201	0.401	0.399
	Produced solutions that led to an increase our company's effectiveness	5.32	1.388	-0.519	0.201	-0.292	0.399
	Provided high-level reports and presentations	5.14	1.334	-0.586	0.201	0.278	0.399
Sagacious Response	Were adaptive to our needs and requests	5.49	1.250	-0.747	0.201	0.043	0.399
	Responded quickly when needed	5.49	1.366	-1.311	0.201	1.904	0.399
	Completed the work in an innovative way	5.16	1.360	-0.737	0.201	0.257	0.399
	Produced innovative solutions and ideas	5.10	1.445	-0.629	0.201	0.097	0.399
	Used most recent techniques to complete the task	5.27	1.311	-0.782	0.201	0.540	0.399
	Demonstrated a good understanding of the challenges we face	5.28	1.393	-0.857	0.201	0.285	0.399
	Helped improve our performance	5.58	1.285	-0.995	0.201	0.690	0.399
Social Response	Friendship with the supplier's management is welcome	4.96	1.522	-0.823	0.201	0.525	0.399
	Because of our business, the supplier invites us to attend social events	3.96	2.027	-0.231	0.201	-1.252	0.399
	We enjoy each other's company in a social setting	4.21	2.044	-0.287	0.201	-1.100	0.399
Emotional Response	Doing business with this supplier is always in a warm and friendly climate	5.23	1.350	-0.792	0.201	0.684	0.399
	I feel our supplier is honest	5.58	1.247	-0.893	0.201	0.801	0.399
	I feel our supplier is transparent	5.47	1.271	-0.703	0.201	0.173	0.399
	I really respect the work of our supplier	5.55	1.260	-0.959	0.201	0.884	0.399
	It is pleasant to do business with our supplier	5.63	1.221	-1.080	0.201	1.407	0.399
	We have nothing to worry about when doing business with our supplier	5.49	1.304	-0.907	0.201	0.674	0.399
	This supplier puts all our fears at ease	5.33	1.292	-0.635	0.201	0.144	0.399

Reliability test

Reliability is an important procedure to find out to what extent the scale can produce coherent results if measurements are repeated on the characteristics (Malhotra et al., 2017). Internal consistency reliability is one of the biggest reliability concerns and is defined as the internal consistency of a set of items underlying a scale; therefore, it is necessary to check the internal consistency of the scale items before conducting any further analysis (Malhotra et al., 2017). Cronbach's alpha is used to measure the internal consistency reliability. The lower acceptable limit of Cronbach's alpha is a value of 0.60 to 0.70 (Hair et al., 2014). Therefore, Cronbach's Alpha was conducted for each scale. The values for the Cronbach's alpha, presented in the following Tables 24, 25, 26 and 27 are greater than the critical value 0.70, which, therefore, confirms that the scales have internal consistency reliability according to Hair et al. (2014). Thus, the scales are reliable for conducting further analysis.

Table 24: Factual response reliability test

Factual Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Met the delivery deadlines	0.93	35.959	0.813	0.920
Met our budget		37.855	0.761	0.926
Met our specifications		35.617	0.833	0.917
Achieved our objectives		36.951	0.829	0.918
Produced solutions that led to an increase our company's effectiveness		36.669	0.818	0.919
Provided high-level reports and presentations		37.997	0.765	0.926

Table 25: Sagacious response reliability test

Sagacious Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Were adaptive to our needs and requests	0.94	50.250	0.859	0.935
Responded quickly when needed		49.036	0.844	0.935
Completed the work in an innovative way		50.117	0.783	0.941
Produced innovative solutions and ideas		49.020	0.787	0.941
Used most recent techniques to complete the task		49.726	0.844	0.936
Demonstrated a good understanding of the challenges we face		49.638	0.787	0.941
Helped improve our performance		50.078	0.842	0.936

Table 26: Social response scale reliability test

Social Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Friendship with the supplier's management is welcome	0.88	15.628	0.663	0.939
Because of our business, the supplier invites us to attend social events		10.676	0.840	0.784
We enjoy each other's company in a social setting		10.214	0.882	0.742

Table 27: Emotional response scale reliability test

Emotional Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Doing business with this supplier is always in a warm and friendly climate	0.95	46.970	0.713	0.954
I feel our supplier is honest		46.033	0.851	0.942
I feel our supplier is transparent		45.853	0.843	0.943
I really respect the work of our supplier		44.956	0.914	0.937
It is pleasant to do business with our supplier		46.036	0.873	0.941
We have nothing to worry about when doing business with our supplier		46.026	0.806	0.946
This supplier puts all our fears at ease		45.480	0.851	0.942

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

EFA was conducted to assess the underlying structure among the items of CE following Churchill's (1979) and DeVellis' (2016) recommendations for scale development. For the EFA, 146 completed responses from decision makers were analysed.

Factor analysis was conducted for the items in the experience constructs. The determinant, the measure overlap of items, indicated that all the scales were appropriate for applying factor analysis because the results were not zero. A Kaiser-Meyer-Okin (KMO) measure of Sampling Adequacy test indicated that all data were well suited for factor analysis and the sampling was adequate because it was above the critical value of 0.60 (Pallant, 2013). Bartlett's tests of sphericity of the correlation matrix were significant for all scales based on the chi-square value (Pallant, 2013). This indicates that the correlation coefficient matrix is not an identity matrix.

As expected, in line with the findings from the qualitative phase, four significant factors were extracted. Table 28 below shows that the total variance explained by these factors is 78%.

Table 28: The total variance explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings ^a
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	12.972	56.399	56.399	12.972	56.399	56.399	10.628
2	2.355	10.239	66.638	2.355	10.239	66.638	9.478
3	1.781	7.741	74.380	1.781	7.741	74.380	11.189
4	1.028	4.469	78.849	1.028	4.469	78.849	4.044
5	.577	2.510	81.358				
6	.459	1.994	83.352				
7	.445	1.937	85.289				
8	.419	1.821	87.110				

9	.367	1.596	88.706				
10	.321	1.397	90.103				
11	.290	1.262	91.365				
12	.273	1.185	92.550				
13	.235	1.023	93.573				
14	.226	.983	94.556				
15	.202	.877	95.433				
16	.180	.784	96.216				
17	.178	.774	96.991				
18	.147	.638	97.629				
19	.136	.593	98.222				
20	.123	.536	98.757				
21	.110	.477	99.235				
22	.100	.434	99.669				
23	.076	.331	100.000				
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.							
a. When components are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.							

Further, Table 29 below shows the results of the pattern matrix as part of the EFA for the items in the experience constructs; as a result, four factors were extracted and each item loaded highly on a specific factor greater than the critical value of 0.50 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2014). However, Tabachnick and Fidell (2014) argue that only variables that load less than 0.32 should be ignored. Accordingly, the 23 items were retained for the next step of the scale development process, which is scale validation.

Table 29: The pattern matrix^a

Items	dimensions			
	Sagacious	Factual	Emotional	Social
Met the delivery deadlines		0.898		
Met our budget		0.917		
Met our specifications		0.797		
Achieved our objectives		0.782		
Produced solutions that led to an increase our company's effectiveness		0.832		
Provided high-level reports and presentations		0.816		
Were adaptive to our needs and requests	0.818			
Responded quickly when needed	0.801			

Completed the work in an innovative way	0.984			
Produced innovative solutions and ideas	0.926			
Used most recent techniques to complete the task	0.801			
Demonstrated a good understanding of the challenges we face	0.789			
Helped improve our performance	0.745			
Friendship with the supplier's management is welcome				0.680
Because of our business, the supplier invites us to attend social events				0.966
We enjoy each other's company in a social setting				0.963
Doing business with this supplier is always in a warm and friendly climate			0.698	
I feel our supplier is honest			0.971	
I feel our supplier is transparent			0.921	
I really respect the work of our supplier			0.722	
It is pleasant to do business with our supplier			0.799	
We have nothing to worry about when doing business with our supplier			0.753	
This supplier puts all our fears at ease			0.750	
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.				
Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.				
a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.				

5.3. Study 2 (panel) findings: Scale validation and hypotheses tests

Study 2 focuses on the analysis of the panel data collected at three different points of time from the same sample. Various statistical techniques are used to examine the relationships between the study variables using version 24 of statistical software package SPSS and AMOS 24. No missing values exist because all the questions were mandatory.

In Wave 1, descriptive analysis is used to describe the basic characteristics of the panel data. Scales validity analysis (reliability, convergent and discriminant validity) is used to assess the psychometric qualities of the experience measures and *H1* is tested.

In Wave 2, scale validity was conducted again to assess the validity of all variables including repeated measures prior to examining the longitudinal structural models and hypotheses tests (*H2-H5*). In addition, nonresponse (attrition) bias analysis

was investigated to ensure the sample is representative over time. Invariance analysis for the repeated measures was conducted to check whether the measures are variant over time. In Wave 3, nonresponse (attrition) bias analysis was conducted again to check whether the sample is still representative. Mediation analysis through logistic regression was used to test the last hypotheses (*H6–H7*).

Each wave analysis is discussed in detail below. The following Table 30 presents the variables collected in each wave.

Table 30: The study variables collected during Waves 1, 2 and 3

Variables	Wave 1 (t-1)	Wave 2 (t)	Wave 3 (t+1)
Drivers		✓	
Experience	✓	✓	
Satisfaction		✓	
Reported behaviour			✓
Sample size	447	260	202

5.3.1. Wave 1 (t-1) data analysis

An online questionnaire was conducted and completed with 447 participants. As explained in the previous chapter (research design for the panel study), in the first wave, the experience variables were collected. The following parts explain the descriptive analysis of the data, normality test and scale validity with factor analysis.

5.3.1.1. Descriptive analysis

The sample of 447 participants was distributed across various UK regions in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as shown in Table 31. The highest

percentage of the participants was from Greater London at 20%, and the lowest was from Northern Ireland at 0.9%.

Table 31: The regions of the participants

Regions of the participants	Frequency	Percentage
South West	34	7.6
South East	60	13.4
East Anglia	24	5.4
West Midlands	40	8.9
East Midlands	35	7.8
Yorkshire / Humberside	41	9.2
North West	47	10.5
North East	19	4.3
Scotland	36	8.1
Wales	17	3.8
Northern Ireland	4	0.9
Greater London	90	20.1
Total	447	100.0

Table 32 below presents the ages of the sample population, which ranged from 18 to 64 years.

Table 32: The ages of the participants

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18–24	8	1.8
25–34	110	24.6
35–44	141	31.5
45–54	118	26.4
55–64	70	15.7
Total	447	100.0

Further, Table 33 below shows the genders of the sample, comprising 55% male and 44% female participants.

Table 33: The genders of the participants

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	248	55.5
Female	199	44.5
Total	447	100.0

Table 34 below displays the sizes of the companies at which the participants work. Participants were from small, medium and large companies. According to the UK's Company Act 2006, a small company has no more than 50 employees, a medium company has no more than 250 employees, and large companies have more than 250 employees.

Table 34: The company sizes of the participants

Company size	Frequency	Percentage
Just me	73	16.3
1–4 staff	44	9.8
5–9 staff	25	5.6
10–49 staff	61	13.6
50–99 staff	50	11.2
100–249 staff	67	15.0
250–999 staff	57	12.8
1000+ staff	70	15.7
Total	447	100.0

Table 35 below outlines the different industries in which participants work. Participants were from various industry settings such as agencies, communications,

construction, education, finance, health, manufacturing, the public sector, retailing, travel, and others.

Table 35: The industry settings of the participants

Industry settings where participants work	Frequency	Percentage
Agency	11	2.5
Communication	21	4.7
Construction	35	7.8
Education	47	10.5
Finance/banking	36	8.1
Health	25	5.6
Manufacturing	53	11.9
Retail	49	11.0
Travel	13	2.9
Other industry	157	35.1
Total	447	100.0

As this research focuses on the experience gained during business exchange with professional service providers, Table 36 below outlines the participants' responsibility in acquiring the experience for the company. This is 56% for sole individuals responsible for acquiring the experience and 43% who are jointly responsible for acquiring the experience and liaising with service providers.

Table 36: Responsibility in acquiring the experience

Responsibility of the participant in acquiring the experience	Frequency	Percentage
I am the sole individual in the company who is responsible for, and has experience in, liaising with professional services companies	254	56.8
I am jointly responsible for, and have experience in, liaising with professional service companies	193	43.2
Total	447	100.0

The study targeted participants at a managerial level within a company. It can be seen that different managerial roles and senior levels are occupied by participants, as presented in Table 37 below.

Table 37: The roles of the participants

Role of the participants in the company	Frequency	Percentage
Managing Director	111	24.8
Senior Director	51	11.4
Senior Manager	109	24.4
Purchasing Manager	20	4.5
Head of Department	72	16.1
Marketing Manager	6	1.3
Executive Manager	21	4.7
Other managing roles	57	12.8
Total	447	100.0

The participants were further asked about the most frequent experience (not older than a month) to ensure they still had a fresh memory of that experience and could reflect on it. As displayed in Table 38 below, the professional service providers used by customers manage consulting firms, IT consulting, advertising agencies, marketing agencies, legal firms, accountancy services, site developers and others.

Table 38: The professional services used by the participants

Who the most frequent experience was with, not more than a month before	Frequency	Percentage
Management consulting firms	50	11.2
IT consulting	158	35.3
Advertising agencies	41	9.2

Marketing research agency	25	5.6
Legal firms	30	6.7
Accountancy services	94	21.0
Site developers	26	5.8
Other service providers	23	5.1
Total	447	100.0

5.3.1.2. Normality test

To identify whether the data collected was normally distributed, a normality test was conducted (Hair et al., 2014). However, this assumption does not apply to the large sample size (> 200), as our study's data tend to be normally distributed according to Central Limit Theorem. Data normality becomes less of a concern with a large sample size (Hair et al., 2014). However, the normal distribution test was conducted to ensure the normality of the data distribution. Values of skewness and kurtosis outside of -1, +1 are considered substantial according to Hair et al. (2014); however, George and Mallery (2010) accept a range between -2 and +2.

Table 39 below shows the results of the normality test. It can be seen that most of the values of skewness and kurtosis fell within the acceptable range apart from a few exceptions, according to Hair et al. (2014), but all the values are within the acceptable range according to George and Mallery (2010). However, the influence of kurtosis and skewness is low in a large sample size; hence, there is no substantial concern about proceeding with further analysis (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2014).

Table 39: Normality test

Experience measures		Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
		Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Factual Response	Met the delivery deadlines	5.46	1.418	-0.913	0.115	0.422	0.230
	Met our budget	5.41	1.380	-0.800	0.115	0.241	0.230
	Met our specifications	5.56	1.394	-1.156	0.115	1.106	0.230
	Achieved our objectives	5.41	1.326	-0.901	0.115	0.855	0.230
	Produced solutions that led to an increase our company's effectiveness	5.30	1.343	-0.734	0.115	0.259	0.230
	Provided high-level reports and presentations	5.24	1.334	-0.582	0.115	0.016	0.230
Sagacious Response	Were adaptive to our needs and requests	5.52	1.305	-0.827	0.115	0.268	0.230
	Responded quickly when needed	5.61	1.358	-1.126	0.115	1.173	0.230
	Completed the work in an innovative way	5.25	1.330	-0.543	0.115	-0.125	0.230
	Produced innovative solutions and ideas	5.21	1.353	-0.578	0.115	0.050	0.230
	Used most recent techniques to complete the task	5.36	1.285	-0.704	0.115	0.293	0.230
	Demonstrated a good understanding of the challenges we face	5.44	1.372	-0.758	0.115	0.103	0.230
	Helped improve our performance	5.31	1.372	-0.830	0.115	0.520	0.230
Social Response	Friendship with the supplier's management is welcome	4.89	1.565	-0.646	0.115	-0.005	0.230
	Because of our business, the supplier invites us to attend social events	3.98	1.998	-0.190	0.115	-1.242	0.230
	We enjoy each other's company in a social setting	4.14	1.967	-0.233	0.115	-1.057	0.230
Emotional Response	Doing business with this supplier is always in a warm and friendly climate	5.26	1.287	-0.682	0.115	0.620	0.230
	I feel our supplier is honest	5.61	1.282	-0.934	0.115	0.714	0.230
	I feel our supplier is transparent	5.45	1.316	-0.907	0.115	0.813	0.230
	I really respect the work of our supplier	5.57	1.252	-0.940	0.115	0.897	0.230
	It is pleasant to do business with our supplier	5.63	1.215	-1.001	0.115	1.283	0.230
	We have nothing to worry about when doing business with our supplier	5.54	1.257	-0.896	0.115	0.813	0.230
	This supplier puts all our fears at ease	5.32	1.263	-0.783	0.115	0.714	0.230

5.3.1.3. Scale reliability test

Similar to Study 1, scale reliability was checked. Reliability is an important procedure to check to what extent the scale can produce coherent results if measurements are repeated on the characteristics (Malhotra et al., 2017). Internal consistency reliability is one of the biggest reliability concerns and is defined as the internal consistency of a set of items underlying a scale; thus, it is necessary to check the internal consistency of the scale items before conducting any further analysis (Malhotra et al., 2017). Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the internal consistency reliability. The lower acceptable limit of Cronbach's alpha is a value of 0.60 to 0.70 (Hair et al., 2014). Therefore, Cronbach's alpha was conducted for each scale in the study. The following Tables 40, 41, 42 and 43 summarise Cronbach's alpha coefficients to identify the scale reliability.

Table 40: Reliability analysis for factual response

Factual response Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Met the delivery deadlines	0.915	33.040	0.743	0.902
Met our budget		33.536	0.733	0.904
Met our specifications		32.094	0.831	0.889
Achieved our objectives		33.155	0.802	0.894
Produced solutions that led to an increase our company's effectiveness		33.816	0.738	0.903
Provided high-level reports and presentations		34.198	0.717	0.906

Table 41: Reliability analysis for sagacious response

Sagacious response items	Cronbach's Alpha	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Were adaptive to our needs and requests	0.917	42.814	0.829	0.896
Responded quickly when needed		43.630	0.735	0.905
Completed the work in an innovative way		43.951	0.734	0.905
Produced innovative solutions and ideas		43.048	0.777	0.901
Used most recent techniques to complete the task		43.656	0.787	0.900
Demonstrated a good understanding of the challenges we face		42.785	0.780	0.900
Helped improve our performance		46.024	0.578	0.921

Table 42: Reliability analysis for social response

Social response items	Cronbach's Alpha	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Friendship with the supplier's management is welcome	0.890	14.868	0.668	0.942
Because of our business, the supplier invites us to attend social events		10.423	0.850	0.787
We enjoy each other's company in a social setting		10.400	0.875	0.761

Table 43: Reliability analysis for emotional response

Emotional response items	Cronbach's Alpha	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Doing business with this supplier is always in a warm and friendly climate	0.945	45.246	0.715	0.946
I feel our supplier is honest		43.243	0.853	0.933
I feel our supplier is transparent		42.992	0.843	0.934
I really respect the work of our supplier		43.228	0.879	0.931
It is pleasant to do business with our supplier		43.921	0.861	0.933
We have nothing to worry about when doing business with our supplier		44.695	0.773	0.940
This supplier puts all our fears at ease		44.275	0.798	0.938

The values for Cronbach's alpha presented in the tables above are greater than the critical value of 0.70, which, therefore, confirms that the scales have internal consistency reliability according to Hair et al. (2014). Thus, the scales are reliable for conducting further analysis.

5.3.1.4. Psychometric qualities of the CE measures (scale validation)

As mentioned earlier, 447 responses were collected in Wave 1. This sample produced two independent sub-samples. The first sub-sample consists of the 187 companies that participated in Wave 1 but failed to meet the eligibility criteria to participate in Wave 2 or did not respond to our call. The sub-sample of 187 is used to validate the scale for CE.

CFA was conducted to assess the sales validity as shown in Figure 10. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the measurement model were chi-square (χ^2) = 593.297, df = 224, p value = 0.000, CFI = 0.91 and RMSEA=0.09. The value of RMSEA at 0.09 indicates a poor fit (MacCallum et al., 1996). However, it is worth checking the modification indices to assess any chance for potential model improvement (Byrne, 2016).

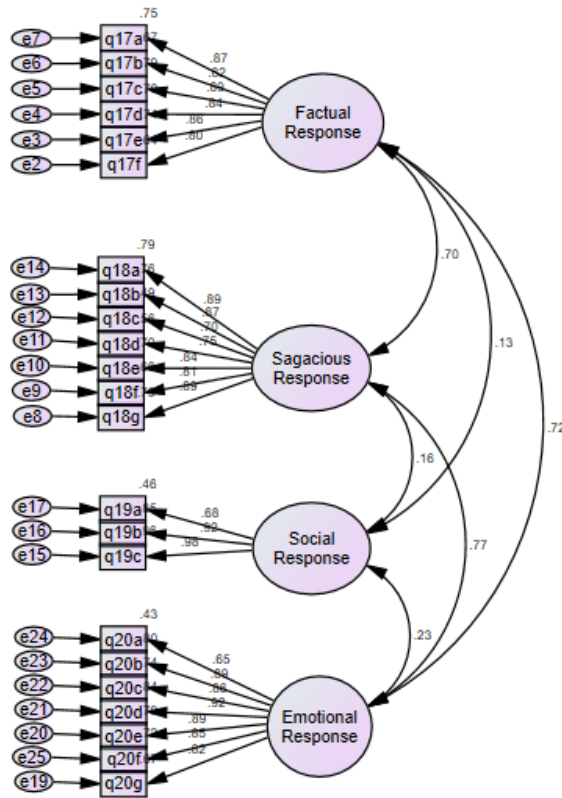


Figure 10: CFA results

Figure 11 below presents the model after modification. The final results of fit would be the chi-square (χ^2) = 514.835, df = 220, p value = 0.000, CFI = 0.92 and RMSEA=0.07.

While chi-square was significant, other values suggest an adequate fit to the model. Therefore, the measurement model is considered an acceptable fit. Moreover, the normed chi-square (χ^2/df) is calculated as a measure of overall fit (Hair et al., 2014). The proportion of the chi-square to the degrees of freedom is 2.3 and this is deemed within the acceptable range of 2 to 5 suggested by Marsh and Hovecar (1985). CFI is higher than 0.90 indicating a good fit (Hair et al., 2014). The value of RMSEA is 0.07 which is less than the critical value (>0.08) (Diamantopoulos and Sigauw,

2000; MacCallum et al.,1996). Based on the findings above, the measurement model satisfied the model fit requirements.

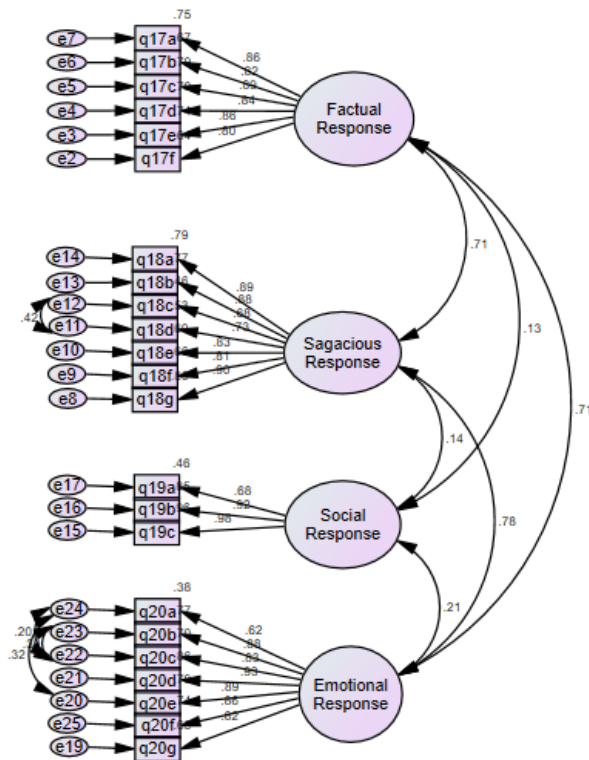


Figure 11: CFA results after model improvement

The following Table 44 summarises the standardised regression weights resulting from CFA. All values are high (no less than 0.30) and significant at $p=0.000$, hence unidimensionality is established.

Table 44: Standardised regression weights

Constructs	Items	Loadings
Factual Response	Met the delivery deadlines	0.865
	Met our budget	0.816
	Met our specifications	0.887
	Achieved our objectives	0.837
	Produced solutions that led to an increase our company's effectiveness	0.858
	Provided high-level reports and presentations	0.801

Sagacious Response	Were adaptive to our needs and requests	0.891
	Responded quickly when needed	0.877
	Completed the work in an innovative way	0.678
	Produced innovative solutions and ideas	0.731
	Used most recent techniques to complete the task	0.832
	Demonstrated a good understanding of the challenges we face	0.809
	Helped improve our performance	0.897
Social Response	Friendship with the supplier's management is welcome	0.678
	Because of our business, the supplier invites us to attend social events	0.921
	We enjoy each other's company in a social setting	0.978
Emotional Response	Doing business with this supplier is always in a warm and friendly climate	0.617
	I feel our supplier is honest	0.875
	I feel our supplier is transparent	0.834
	I really respect the work of our supplier	0.927
	It is pleasant to do business with our supplier	0.891
	We have nothing to worry about when doing business with our supplier	0.823
	This supplier puts all our fears at ease	0.858

Also, the coefficient of determination (R^2) has to be checked, which is the squared multiple correlation of the regression weight indicating “the proportion of the variance of the dependent variable about its mean that is explained by the independent, or predictor variables” (Hair et al., 2014, p. 152). A great influence is attributed to values over 0.25 (Cohen, 1988). The following Table 45 shows R^2 and we can see all the values are over 0.25, indicating that each variable explains a high percentage of its variance and hence represents a better prediction of the dependent variable (Hair et al., 2014).

Table 45: Squared multiple correlations

Constructs	Items	Estimate
Factual Response	Met the delivery deadlines	0.748
	Met our budget	0.666
	Met our specifications	0.786
	Achieved our objectives	0.700

Constructs	Items	Estimate
	Produced solutions that led to an increase our company's effectiveness	0.736
	Provided high-level reports and presentations	0.641
Sagacious Response	Were adaptive to our needs and requests	0.794
	Responded quickly when needed	0.769
	Completed the work in an innovative way	0.459
	Produced innovative solutions and ideas	0.535
	Used most recent techniques to complete the task	0.693
	Demonstrated a good understanding of the challenges we face	0.655
	Helped improve our performance	0.804
Social Response	Friendship with the supplier's management is welcome	0.460
	Because of our business, the supplier invites us to attend social events	0.848
	We enjoy each other's company in a social setting	0.956
Emotional Response	Doing business with this supplier is always in a warm and friendly climate	0.380
	I feel our supplier is honest	0.766
	I feel our supplier is transparent	0.696
	I really respect the work of our supplier	0.860
	It is pleasant to do business with our supplier	0.794
	We have nothing to worry about when doing business with our supplier	0.678
	This supplier puts all our fears at ease	0.735

The measures were then assessed in terms of convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity is achieved because the factor loadings of the measurement items are significant and above 0.50 (Hair et al., 2014). The convergent validity of the measures is established because the average variance extracted (AVE) is greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2014). Convergent validity is evident as the construct reliability is greater than 0.70 (Hair et al., 2014). Discriminant validity is established because the average variance extracted AVE for any two constructs is greater than the square of the correlation between them (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2014; Malhotra et al., 2017).

To sum up, the measures of the experience (factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses) have adequate reliability, convergent and discriminant validity for Wave 1 as shown in Table 46.

Table 46: Convergent and discriminant validity for the experience measures

Constructs	(CR)	(AVE)	(Corr) ²	Convergent	Discriminant
Social Response	0.900	0.755	0.045	Yes	Yes
Factual Response	0.937	0.713	0.511	Yes	Yes
Sagacious Response	0.934	0.673	0.605	Yes	Yes
Emotional Response	0.942	0.701	0.605	Yes	Yes

CR= Construct reliability, AVE= Average variance extracted, (Corr)²= highest squared correlation between factor of interest and remaining factors

Result of the first hypothesis test

Hypothesis (H1) suggests that: *Customer experience in the B2B context is a multi-dimensional construct consisting of factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses that a customer has as a result of business interaction and exchange with a supplier.*

The results from the standardised regression weight in Table 44 indicates that the 23 items the qualitative phase has produced stand and each individual item has a high factor loading on its relevant factor. In addition, the coefficient of determination (R²) in Table 45 indicates that each variable (item) explains a high percentage of its

variance and, hence, a better prediction of the dependent variable (experience dimension). More importantly, from the relevant information in Table 46, it is also evident that convergent and discriminant validity are established for every experience dimension. Based on the findings from the first wave, *HI* is accepted and thus factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses can be considered to be the key responses for CE in the B2B context.

Following the confirmation of *HI*, the original conceptual framework was revised by including the items that underlie the four dimensions of the customer experience (factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses) that the first and second study managed to validate. The following Figure 12 outlines the revised conceptual framework.

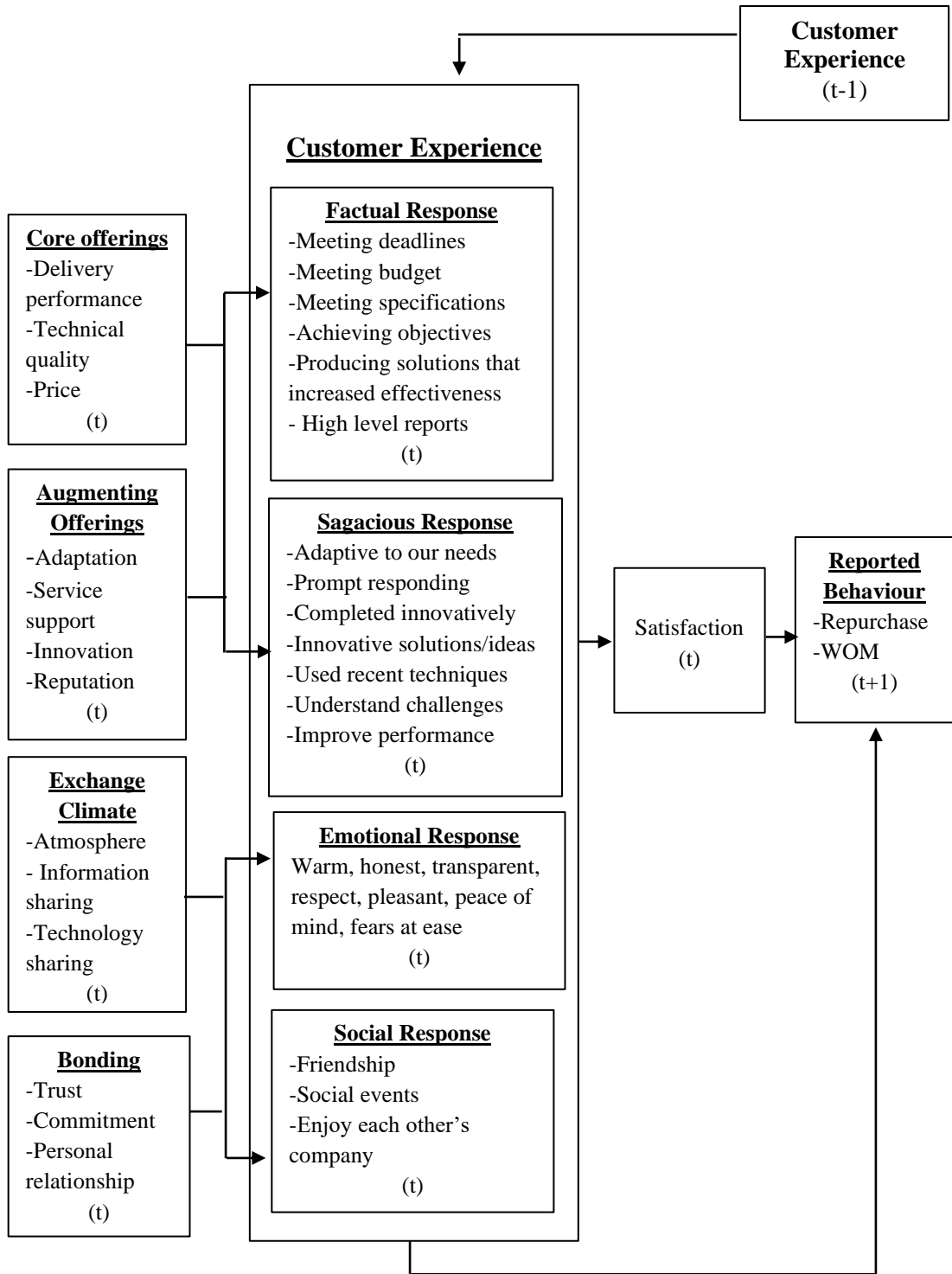


Figure 12: The revised conceptual model

5.3.2. Wave 2 (t) data analysis

This part focuses on the analysis of the data collected during Wave 2, including experiences, drivers and satisfaction. As part of the screening questions, all the respondents had not changed their employer or career and had continued to use the same professional service provider for the same task. As a result, 260 respondents qualified to participate in Wave 2. CFA was used to ensure scale validity (reliability, convergent and discriminant validity) for all variables including the repeated measures prior to testing for the structural models. Nonresponse (attrition) bias analysis was examined to ensure the sample was still representative due to the drop rate over time. Invariance analysis was also examined for the measures to ensure that the repeated measures are invariant over time. The sample used in Wave 2 was 260 out of 447, so there were 187 non-responders; in the following, we will test whether the nonresponses affect the sample. This is called attrition.

5.3.2.1. Nonresponse bias (attrition) analysis (Wave 2)

To test the nonresponse bias, the analysis of the responders (those who responded in Wave 1 and Wave 2 = 260) and non-responders (those who participated in Wave 1 only and dropped out in Wave 2 = 187) should be conducted by comparing the similarities between these two groups (De Lange et al., 2003; Menard 2002). The technique to examine the nonresponse bias (attrition) was Pearson chi-square for demographic variables; place, age and gender (Menard, 2002). The analysis of these variables provides an idea of the extent to which the bias of the selective nonresponse would affect the study's variables. The chi-square test revealed no significant difference among responders and non-responders for the demographic variables; place

($p = 0.45$), age ($p = 0.53$) and gender ($p = 0.25$). Thus, the study is free of attrition bias.

5.3.2.2. Invariance analysis

Invariance analysis was conducted for the four repeated measures of the experience (factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses) during Waves 1 and 2. Invariance analysis is important in longitudinal studies to identify whether the repeated measures are invariant over time. The measures used for the same constructs in different waves should be checked to see whether they are affected by the time change. Invariance is needed because violations of measurement invariance can cause misleading results and interpretations in longitudinal studies. CFA is a useful technique to conduct invariance analysis (Byrne, 2016). We need to test the invariance of the measures of past and current experience to see whether the measures are invariant. If the invariance is established, in reality, we should keep both measures separate because they are invariant. The following explains this process in detail.

Multi-group CFA for latent variable modelling technique was conducted with Amos 24 to test the measurement invariance for the experience measures collected during the first and second waves. This is a necessary analysis for examining the invariance of the constructs for these two groups. Configural invariance was conducted because it enables invariance tests to be used across the two groups at the same time (parameters are tested for both groups simultaneously). Also, in examining for invariance, the configural model fit gives the baseline value against all after the specified invariance models are compared (Byrne, 2016). Configural invariance is

achieved when the model structure is invariable across waves (groups) (Baumgartner and Steenkamp, 1998; Byrne, 2016).

The following analyses indicate that all constructs fulfil the configural invariance criterion. The grouping variable is the time (Wave 1 and Wave 2) and the independent variable is past and present experience. Configural invariance is achieved because the model fit for multi group SEM is good as follows. If we achieve a good model fit, it means they are probably roughly equivalent groups (Byrne, 2016). The results of model fit are $(\chi^2) = 2227.140$, $df = 448$, $p \text{ value} = 0.000$, $CMIN/DF = 4.9$, $CFI = 0.91$, $RMSEA = 0.06$, which are considered within the acceptable range (Gerbing and Anderson, 1992; Hair et al., 2014; MacCallum et al., 1996). Therefore, the model fit is accepted and thus the configural invariance is established. This means the factorial structure for the four experience measures (factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses) are equivalent, indicating that the measures of experience do not vary over time.

5.3.2.3. Reliability test

To ensure the responses from this second wave continued to produce reliable data, Cronbach's Alpha was again examined using the same procedure used with data from Wave 1. The values for Cronbach's alpha shown in Table 47 are greater than the critical value 0.70, which confirms that the scales have internal consistency reliability according to Hair et al. (2014).

Table 47: Reliability test

Variables		Cronbach's Alpha	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Delivery Performance	Company X is aware of my needs concerning distribution of service material	0.83	1.500	0.722	-
	Company X always delivers the service on time		1.633	0.722	-
Technical Quality	Has knowledge of our markets and products/services	0.89	17.348	0.736	0.875
	Has knowledge of his/her own company's procedures		17.472	0.780	0.865
	Has knowledge of his/her firm's competitors' products, services, and sales policies		18.121	0.706	0.881
	Has knowledge of his/her firm's product features and benefits.		17.202	0.787	0.863
	Has knowledge of our operations		17.215	0.714	0.880
Price	Company X offers a reasonable price	0.81	1.328	0.685	-
	Company X offers better price compared with other firms offering similar		1.379	0.685	-
Reputation	Company X is a long-established company	0.92	24.077	0.791	0.913
	The employees of Company X are well trained		24.372	0.716	0.924
	Company X is a sound company		24.137	0.818	0.910
	Company X has a strong management		24.824	0.757	0.918
	Company X has expertise in this specific area		23.857	0.867	0.904
	Company X provides sound solutions for client problems		23.810	0.788	0.914
Adaptation	Company X constantly improves technical capabilities to keep abreast with new developments	0.89	10.530	0.780	0.869
	Company X proactively offers us new technical solutions when conditions change		9.985	0.759	0.877
	Company X makes operational changes when required by our team		10.086	0.780	0.869
	Company X is able to coordinate the various disciplines when required by our team		10.288	0.788	0.866
Service support	Company X is available when we need information	0.92	5.229	0.857	0.890
	Company X provides appropriate information		5.562	0.849	0.899
	Company X responds quickly when we need		4.970	0.854	0.895

Innovation	Company X constantly introduces innovative ideas in addressing and solving problems	0.92	26.429	0.806	0.906
	Company X offers new services consistent with existing client operating systems		27.292	0.723	0.916
	Company X thinks differently from other firms in solving client problems		26.938	0.794	0.907
	Company X frequently introduces new methodologies, approaches or solutions		26.377	0.796	0.907
	Company X regularly offers new products and services		26.163	0.789	0.908
	Company X is an innovative firm		26.157	0.769	0.911
Atmosphere	I consider the general atmosphere surrounding the working relationship with Company X as harmonious	0.89	5.864	0.790	0.849
	I regard the overall relationship with Company X as close		5.451	0.735	0.899
	I believe mutual expectations for the project have been established with Company X		5.302	0.852	0.792
Information Sharing	Company X submits technical documentation that is easily understood by our team	0.92	5.691	0.855	0.893
	Company X submits technical documentation that meets our needs		5.676	0.867	0.884
	The technical information supplied by Company X is adequate		6.046	0.836	0.909
Technology Sharing	The technology used by Company X improves the efficiency of our relationship	0.90	13.119	0.796	0.881
	The technology used by Company X helps us to reduce our cost of doing business		12.601	0.781	0.884
	Company X has instituted procedures which facilitate our use of the technology		12.310	0.832	0.866
	Company X has invested considerable time and effort in developing electronic information exchange with our company		11.874	0.769	0.892
Trust	Company X can be relied on to keep promises	0.92	5.051	0.819	0.919
	Company X is trustworthy		4.892	0.833	0.908
	I have confidence in Company X		4.450	0.903	0.851
Commitment	I am very committed to the relationship with Company X	0.90	6.359	0.832	0.836
	I intend to maintain the relationship indefinitely		6.020	0.809	0.859
	I should put maximum effort into maintaining my relationship with Company X		6.961	0.781	0.881
Personal relationship	Company X staff like to talk with people	0.88	5.100	0.770	0.828
	People from Company X are friendly		5.195	0.796	0.807
	Company X tries to establish a personal relationship		5.031	0.741	0.856

Factual Response	Met the delivery deadlines	0.92	25.763	0.785	0.904
	Met our budget		28.895	0.668	0.919
	Met our specifications		25.682	0.835	0.897
	Achieved our objectives		26.268	0.812	0.900
	Produced solutions that led to an increase our company's effectiveness		26.344	0.771	0.906
	Provided high-level reports and presentations		26.495	0.762	0.907
Sagacious Response	Were adaptive to our needs and requests	0.94	42.132	0.769	0.936
	Responded quickly when needed		40.898	0.823	0.931
	Completed the work in an innovative way		41.970	0.821	0.932
	Produced innovative solutions and ideas		40.623	0.799	0.934
	Used most recent techniques to complete the task		41.493	0.827	0.931
	Demonstrated a good understanding of the challenges we face		42.077	0.777	0.935
	Helped improve our performance		41.675	0.842	0.930
Social Response	Friendship with the supplier's management is welcome	0.91	13.008	0.810	0.905
	Because of our business, the supplier invites us to attend social events		11.142	0.826	0.897
	We enjoy each other's company in a social setting		11.977	0.882	0.846
Emotional Response	Doing business with this supplier is always in a warm and friendly climate	0.94	46.057	0.847	0.935
	I feel our supplier is honest		46.291	0.854	0.934
	I feel our supplier is transparent		46.143	0.773	0.941
	I really respect the work of our supplier		46.041	0.882	0.932
	It is pleasant to do business with our supplier		45.347	0.859	0.934
	We have nothing to worry about when doing business with our supplier		46.387	0.757	0.943
	This supplier puts all our fears at ease		45.879	0.771	0.942

5.3.2.4. Psychometric properties of all measures

Further to the repeated customer experience measures collected during Wave 2, additional data were collected with regard to drivers of experience. The following paragraphs explain the assessment of the psychometric properties for these measures.

Assessment for construct validity should be conducted for every construct used in the model. Using CFA as a preliminary process for SEM (Byrne 2106; Hair et al., 2014; Malhotra et al., 2017), convergent and discriminant validity were conducted.

Due to the large number of driver parameters, a second order was established for the core offerings (comprised of delivery performance, technical quality and price), augmenting offerings (comprised of adaptation, service support, innovation and reputation), exchange climate (comprised of atmosphere, technology sharing and information sharing), and bonding (comprised of trust, commitment and personal relationship) to allow the reduction of the number of parameters in the model, taking advantage from such theoretical representations (Shkedi, 2004). The following analysis presents every step used.

CFA for the experience drivers was conducted. The results of fit are (χ^2) = 2076.807, $df = 956$, p value = 0.000, $CIMIN/DF=2.1$, $CFI = 0.90$, and $RMSEA=0.06$. The measurement model is considered an acceptable fit. $CIMIN/DF$ is within the acceptable range (Hair et al., 2014). CFI is 0.90, indicating an acceptable fit (Hair et al., 2014). The value of $RMSEA$ is 0.06 which is less than the critical value (>0.08) (Diamantopoulos and Sigauw, 2000; MacCallum et al., 1996). The following Figure 13 presents the CFA for the experience drivers.

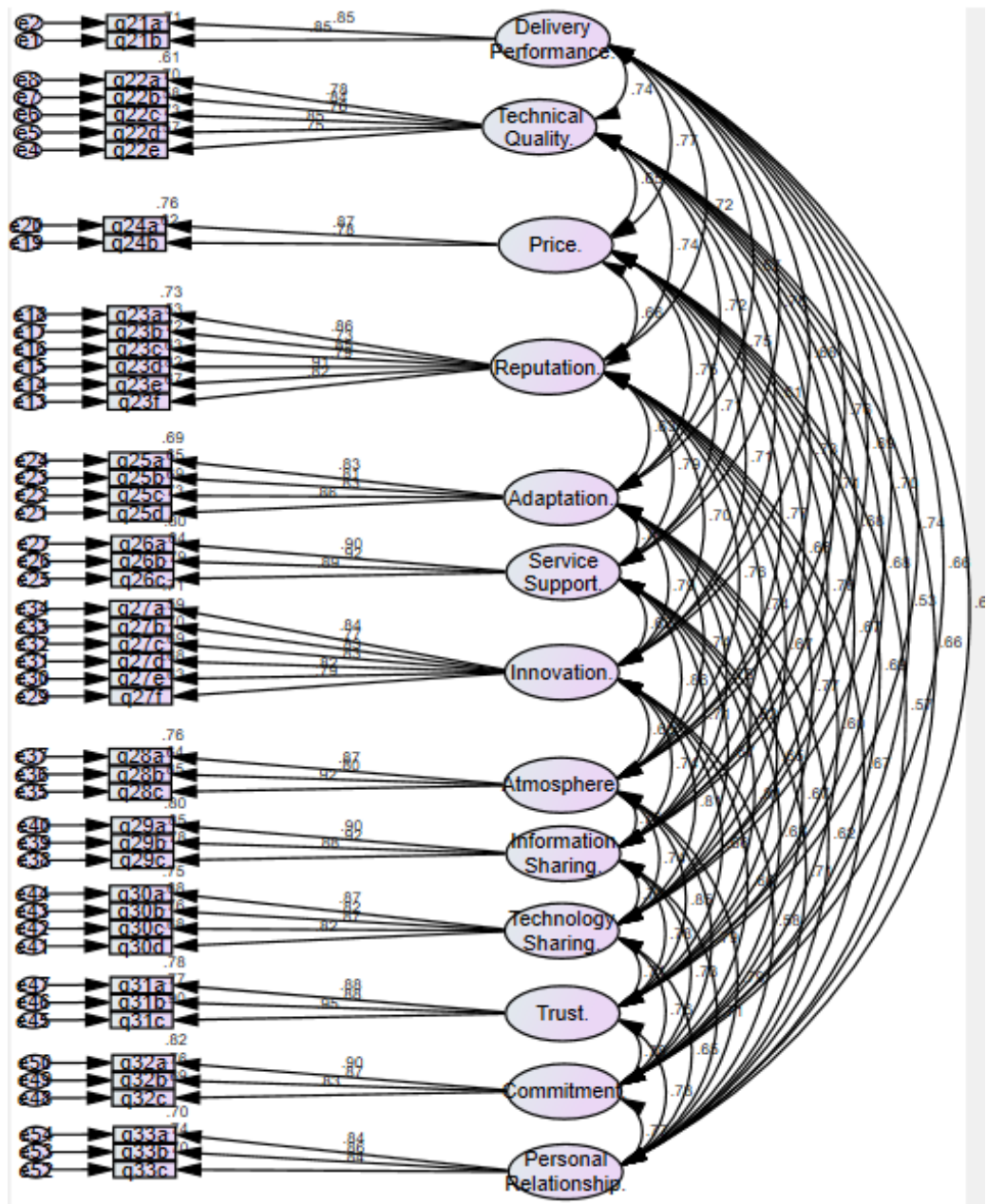


Figure 13: CFA for the experience drivers

Following that, construct validity was explored. Based on Table 48 below, the convergent validity of the measures was established because AVE is greater than 0.50, and construct reliability (CR) is greater than 0.70 (Hair et al., 2014). Discriminant validity is evident because the AVE for any two constructs is greater than the square of the correlation between them (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2014; Malhotra

et al., 2017). To sum up, the measures of the drivers of experience have adequate reliability, convergence, and discriminant validity.

Table 48: Psychometric properties of the experience drivers

Experience Drivers		Standardised factor loading	CR	AVE	(Corr) ²	Conv	Disc
Delivery Performance	Company X is aware of my needs concerning distribution of service material	0.85	0.83	0.72	0.60	Yes	Yes
	Company X always delivers the service on time	0.84					
Technical Quality	Has knowledge of our markets and products/services	0.78	0.89	0.63	0.56	Yes	Yes
	Has knowledge of his/her own company's procedures	0.83					
	Has knowledge of his/her firm's competitors' products, services, and sales policies	0.76					
	Has knowledge of his/her firm's product features and benefits.	0.85					
	Has knowledge of our operations	0.75					
Price	Company X offers a reasonable price	0.87	0.81	0.68	0.60	Yes	Yes
	Company X offers better price compared with other firms offering similar	0.78					
Reputation	Company X is a long-established company	0.85	0.92	0.68	0.62	Yes	Yes
	The employees of Company X are well trained	0.72					
	Company X is a sound company	0.85					
	Company X has a strong management	0.79					
	Company X has expertise in this specific area	0.90					
	Company X provides sound solutions for client problems	0.81					
Adaptation	Company X constantly improves technical capabilities to keep abreast with new developments	0.83	0.90	0.69	0.68	Yes	Yes
	Company X proactively offers us new technical solutions when conditions change	0.80					
	Company X makes operational changes when required by our team	0.83					
	Company X is able to coordinate the various disciplines when required by our team	0.85					

Service support	Company X is available when we need information	0.89	0.92	0.81	0.74	Yes	Yes
	Company X provides appropriate information	0.91					
	Company X responds quickly when we need	0.88					
Innovation	Company X constantly introduces innovative ideas in addressing and solving problems	0.84	0.92	0.66	0.65	Yes	Yes
	Company X offers new services consistent with existing client operating systems	0.77					
	Company X thinks differently from other firms in solving client problems	0.83					
	Company X frequently introduces new methodologies, approaches or solutions	0.83					
	Company X regularly offers new products and services	0.82					
	Company X is an innovative firm	0.79					
Atmosphere	I consider the general atmosphere surrounding the working relationship with Company X as harmonious	0.87	0.90	0.75	0.74	Yes	Yes
	I regard the overall relationship with Company X as close	0.80					
	I believe mutual expectations for the project have been established with Company X	0.92					
Information Sharing	Company X submits technical documentation that is easily understood by our team	0.89	0.92	0.81	0.61	Yes	Yes
	Company X submits technical documentation that meets our needs	0.92					
	The technical information supplied by the Company X is adequate	0.88					
Technology Sharing	The technology used by Company X improves the efficiency of our relationship	0.86	0.91	0.71	0.68	Yes	Yes
	The technology used by Company X helps us to reduce our cost of doing business	0.82					
	Company X has instituted procedures which facilitate our use of the technology	0.87					
	Company X has invested considerable time and effort in developing electronic information exchange with our company	0.82					
Trust	Company X can be relied on to keep promises	0.88	0.93	0.81	0.72	Yes	Yes
	Company X is trustworthy	0.87					
	I have confidence in Company X	0.95					

Commitment	I am very committed to the relationship with Company X	0.90	0.90	0.75	0.61	Yes	Yes
	I intend to maintain the relationship indefinitely	0.87					
	I should put maximum effort into maintaining my relationship with Company X	0.83					
Personal relationship	Company X staff like to talk with people	0.83	0.88	0.71	0.62	Yes	Yes
	People from Company X are friendly	0.85					
	Company X tries to establish a personal relationship	0.83					

CR= Construct reliability, AVE= Average variance extracted, (Corr)²= highest squared correlation between factor of interest and remaining factors, Conv= Convergent, Disc= Discriminant

Once the constructs are validated with CFA, multi-item constructs can be transformed into composite variables. The drivers of experience were computed to composite variables based on regression weights to prepare the data for analysis.

Following that, EFA was conducted to explore how many relevant factors these 13 composite variables of the drivers have. As explained in the quantitative phase of Study 1 analysis, EFA is mainly used for data reduction and summarisations (Malhotra et al., 2017). The assumptions for the EFA have been met according to Pallant (2013). For the determinant, the measure overlap demonstrated that all the variables are appropriate for applying factor analysis because the results were not zero. KMO, the measure of sampling adequacy test, indicated that all data are appropriate for factor analysis because they are above the critical value 0.60 (Pallant, 2013). Bartlett's test of sphericity of the correlation matrix was significant for all of the scales based on the chi-square value (Pallant, 2013), indicating that the correlation coefficient matrix is not an identity matrix.

As expected, in line with the findings from Study 1, four significant factors have been extracted for the experience drivers. Table 49 below shows that the total variance explained by these factors is 87.7%.

Table 49: The total variance explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings ^a
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	9.184	70.648	70.648	9.184	70.648	70.648	6.813
2	0.935	7.195	77.843	0.935	7.195	77.843	6.928
3	0.711	5.468	83.310	0.711	5.468	83.310	6.734
4	0.577	4.438	87.748	0.577	4.438	87.748	6.891
5	0.462	3.554	91.303				
6	0.302	2.323	93.625				
7	0.235	1.807	95.432				
8	0.146	1.124	96.556				
9	0.125	0.962	97.519				
10	0.114	0.878	98.396				
11	0.086	0.662	99.058				
12	0.070	0.536	99.594				
13	0.053	0.406	100.000				
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.							
a. When components are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.							

Table 50 below shows four extracted factors, and each variable loads highly on a specific factor greater than the critical value of 0.50 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2014). The first factor named ‘core offerings’ includes delivery performance, technical quality and price. The second factor named ‘augmenting offerings’ includes adaption, service support, innovation and reputation. The third factor named ‘exchange climate’ includes atmosphere, information sharing and technology sharing. The fourth factor named ‘bonding’ includes trust, commitment and personal relationships.

Table 50: The pattern matrix^a

Drivers	Augmenting Offerings	Bonding	Exchange Climate	Core Offerings
Personal Relationship		0.860		
Commitment		0.707		
Trust		0.768		
Technology Sharing			0.905	
Information Sharing			0.652	
Atmosphere			0.521	
Innovation	0.763			
Service Support	0.865			

Adaptation	0.729			
Reputation	0.835			
Price				0.694
Technical Quality				0.852
Delivery Performance				0.874
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.				
Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.				
a. Rotation converged in 9 iterations.				

Subsequently, scale validity of all variables including repeated measures should be assessed prior to proceeding with the longitudinal structural equation path analysis (Lowry et al., 2015), as shown in Figure 14 below. The results of the CFA of the measurement model showed a non-satisfactory level of fit. (χ^2) = 3652.243, df = 1586, p value = 0.000, CMIN/DF= 2.3, CFI = 0.87 and RMSEA=0.07. CFI value as the most important index measure does not suggest a good fit for the model. Therefore, the measurement model should be revised to improve the fit by checking modification indices to assess the chance for model improvement (Byrne, 2016). One parameter should be deleted at a time and then the model fit should be checked again to see if any further improvement is required.

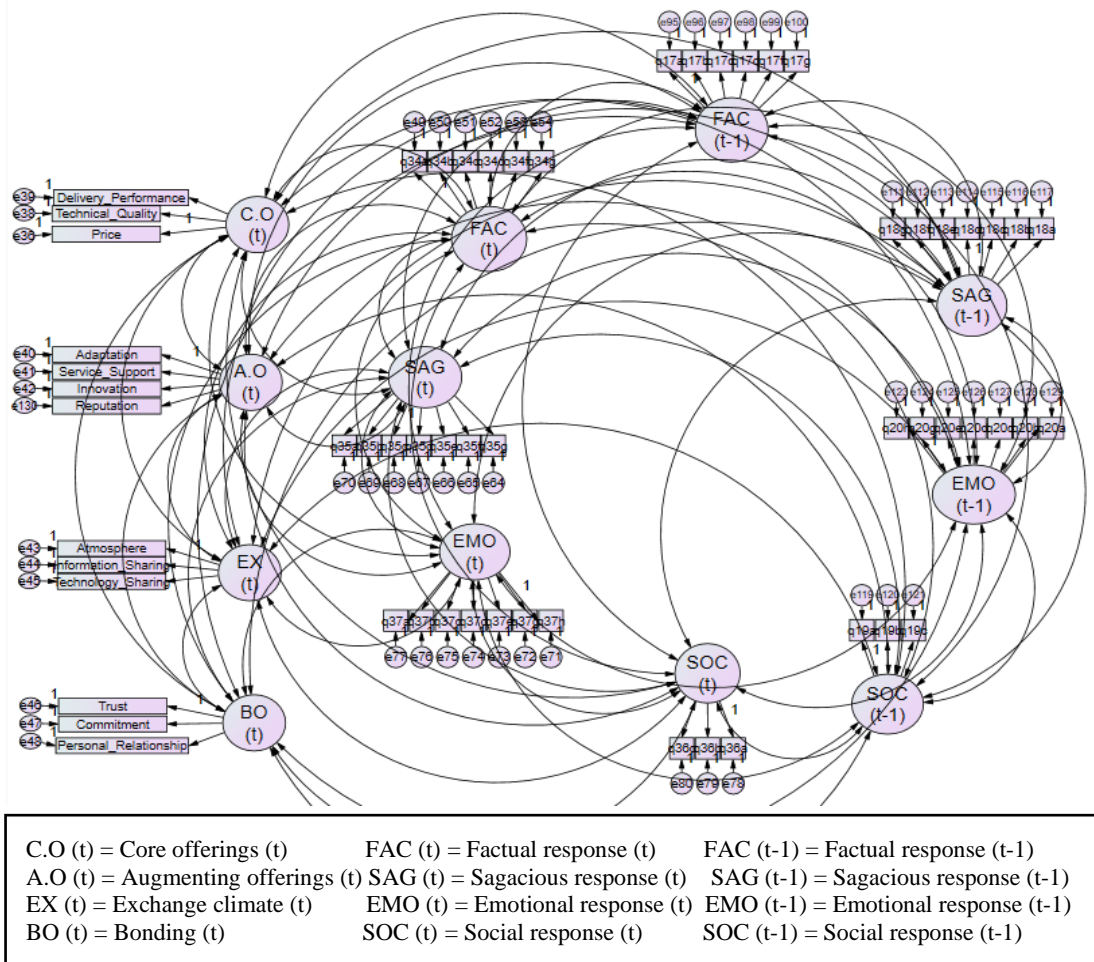


Figure 14: CFA for all measures before model improvement

Covariance between error terms was conducted based on the modification indices as shown in Figure 15 below. Each step was separately conducted because all the parameters are affected and, hence, the model fit should be checked every time (Byrne, 2016).

After conducting all the possible covariance between error terms based on the modification indices, the final results of fit are (χ^2) = 3192.466, df = 1564, p value = 0.000, CIMIN/DF=2, CFI = 0.90, and RMSEA=0.06. The measurement model is an acceptable fit. CIMIN/DF is within the acceptable range (Hair et al., 2014). CFI indicates an accepted fit of 0.90 (Hair et al., 2014). The value of RMSEA is 0.06,

which is less than the critical value (>0.08) (MacCallum et al.,1996; Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2000). Based on the findings above, the measurement model has an acceptable fit.

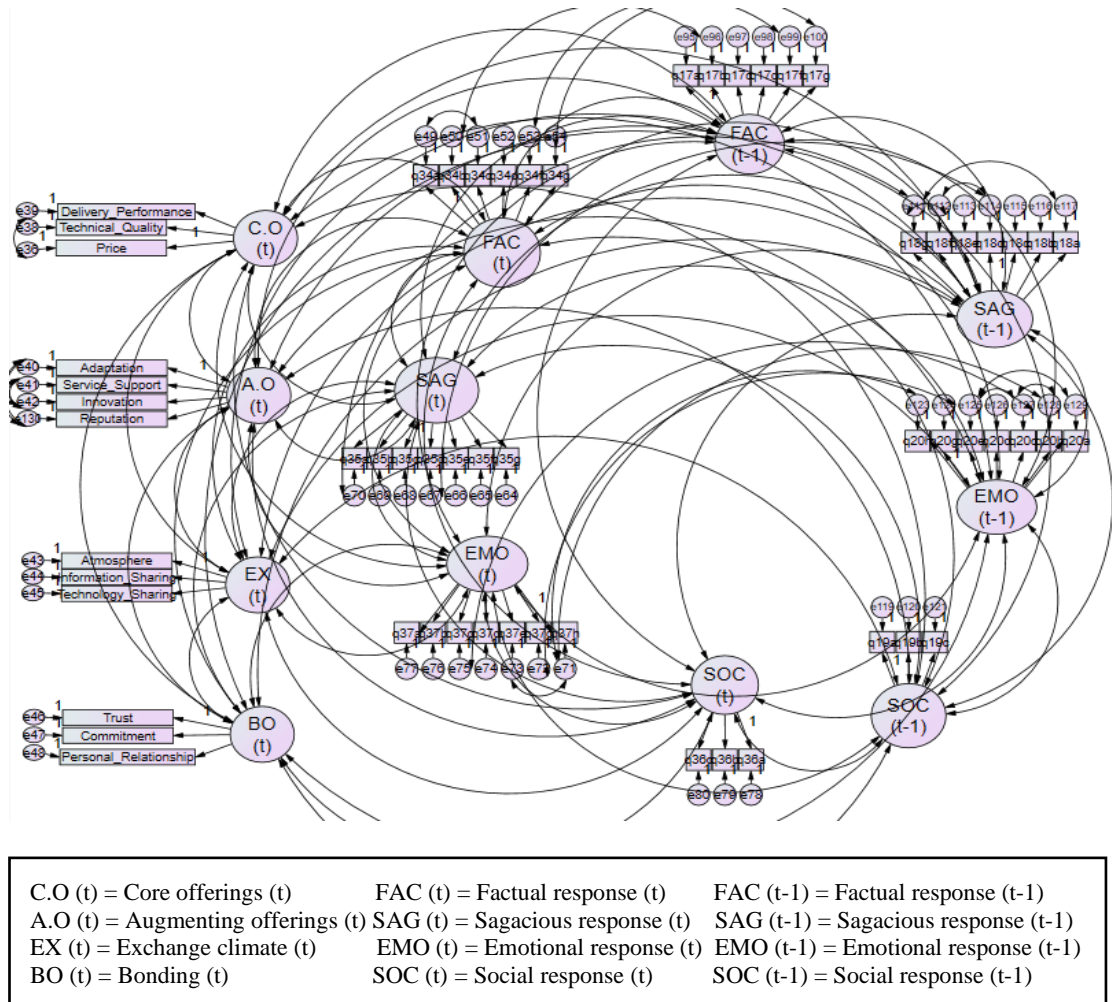


Figure 15: CFA for all measures after model improvement

The following Table 51 summarises the standardised regression weights resulting from CFA. All values are high (no less than 0.30) and are significant at $p=0.000$, hence unidimensionality is established.

Table 51: Standardised regression weights

Constructs	Items	Estimate
Core offerings (t)	Price	0.932
	Technical Quality	0.892
	Delivery Performance	0.913
Augmenting Offerings (t)	Adaptation	0.920
	Service Support	0.849
	Innovation	0.867
	Reputation	0.870
Exchange Climate (t)	Atmosphere	0.898
	Information Sharing	0.913
	Technology Sharing	0.920
Bonding (t)	Trust	0.921
	Commitment	0.907
	Personal Relationship	0.900
Factual Response (t)	Met the delivery deadlines	0.803
	Met our budget	0.695
	Met our specifications	0.859
	Achieved our objectives	0.873
	Produced solutions that led to an increase our company's effectiveness	0.827
	Provided high-level reports and presentations	0.822
Sagacious Response (t)	Helped improve our performance	0.868
	Demonstrated a good understanding of the challenges we face	0.808
	Used most recent techniques to complete the task	0.855
	Produced innovative solutions and ideas	0.826
	Completed the work in an innovative way	0.848
	Responded quickly when needed	0.854
	Were adaptive to our needs and requests	0.812
Emotional Response (t)	This supplier puts all our fears at ease	0.819
	We have nothing to worry about when doing business with our supplier	0.795
	It is pleasant to do business with our supplier	0.914
	I really respect the work of our supplier	0.916
	I feel our supplier is transparent	0.801
	I feel our supplier is honest	0.885
	Doing business with this supplier is always in a warm and friendly climate	0.879

Constructs	Items	Estimate
Social Response (t)	Friendship with the supplier's management is welcome	0.874
	Because of our business, the supplier invites us to attend social events	0.872
	We enjoy each other's company in a social setting	0.937
Factual Response (t-1)	Met the delivery deadlines (t-1)	0.788
	Met our budget (t-1)	0.760
	Met our specifications (t-1)	0.867
	Achieved our objectives (t-1)	0.817
	Produced solutions that led to an increase our company's effectiveness (t-1)	0.727
	Provided high-level reports and presentations (t-1)	0.835
Sagacious Response (t-1)	Helped improve our performance (t-1)	0.766
	Demonstrated a good understanding of the challenges we face (t-1)	0.752
	Used most recent techniques to complete the task(t-1)	0.836
	Produced innovative solutions and ideas (t-1)	0.839
	Completed the work in an innovative way (t-1)	0.774
	Responded quickly when needed (t-1)	0.863
	Were adaptive to our needs and requests (t-1)	0.816
Social Response (t-1)	Friendship with the supplier's management is welcome (t-1)	0.713
	Because of our business, the supplier invites us to attend social events (t-1)	0.900
	We enjoy each other's company in a social setting(t-1)	0.961
Emotional Response (t-1)	This supplier puts all our fears at ease (t-1)	0.840
	We have nothing to worry about when doing business with our supplier (t-1)	0.739
	It is pleasant to do business with our supplier (t-1)	0.891
	I really respect the work of our supplier (t-1)	0.917
	I feel our supplier is transparent (t-1)	0.861
	I feel our supplier is honest (t-1)	0.831
	Doing business with this supplier is always in a warm and friendly climate (t-1)	0.750

In addition, coefficient of determination (R²) should be investigated, which is the squared multiple correlation of the regression weight. The following Table 52 shows R² and we can see all the values are over 0.25, which indicates that each variable explains a high percentage of its variance and, hence, a better prediction of the dependent variable (Hair et al., 2014).

Table 52: Squared multiple correlations

Constructs	Items	Estimate
Core offerings (t)	Price	0.868
	Technical Quality	0.795
	Delivery Performance	0.833
Augmenting Offerings (t)	Adaptation	0.846
	Service Support	0.720
	Innovation	0.752
	Reputation	0.757
Exchange Climate (t)	Atmosphere	0.807
	Information Sharing	0.834
	Technology Sharing	0.846
Bonding (t)	Trust	0.849
	Commitment	0.823
	Personal relationship	0.809
Factual Response (t)	Met the delivery deadlines	0.645
	Met our budget	0.484
	Met our specifications	0.738
	Achieved our objectives	0.761
	Produced solutions that led to an increase our company's effectiveness	0.683
	Provided high-level reports and presentations	0.676
Sagacious Response (t)	Helped improve our performance	0.754
	Demonstrated a good understanding of the challenges we face	0.653
	Used most recent techniques to complete the task	0.730
	Produced innovative solutions and ideas	0.683
	Completed the work in an innovative way	0.719
	Responded quickly when needed	0.729
	Were adaptive to our needs and requests	0.659

Constructs	Items	Estimate
Emotional Response (t)	This supplier puts all our fears at ease	0.671
	We have nothing to worry about when doing business with our supplier	0.633
	It is pleasant to do business with our supplier	0.835
	I really respect the work of our supplier	0.838
	I feel our supplier is transparent	0.642
	I feel our supplier is honest	0.783
	Doing business with this supplier is always in a warm and friendly climate	0.772
Social Response (t)	Friendship with the supplier's management is welcome	0.763
	Because of our business, the supplier invites us to attend social events	0.761
	We enjoy each other's company in a social setting	0.877
Factual Response (t-1)	Met the delivery deadlines (t-1)	0.621
	Met our budget (t-1)	0.578
	Met our specifications (t-1)	0.752
	Achieved our objectives (t-1)	0.668
	Produced solutions that led to an increase our company's effectiveness (t-1)	0.529
	Provided high-level reports and presentations (t-1)	0.697
Sagacious Response (t-1)	Helped improve our performance (t-1)	0.586
	Demonstrated a good understanding of the challenges we face (t-1)	0.565
	Used most recent techniques to complete the task(t-1)	0.699
	Produced innovative solutions and ideas (t-1)	0.705
	Completed the work in an innovative way (t-1)	0.599
	Responded quickly when needed (t-1)	0.745
	Were adaptive to our needs and requests (t-1)	0.666
Social Response (t-1)	Friendship with the supplier's management is welcome (t-1)	0.508
	Because of our business, the supplier invites us to attend social events (t-1)	0.811
	We enjoy each other's company in a social setting(t-1)	0.923

Constructs	Items	Estimate
Emotional Response (t-1)	This supplier puts all our fears at ease (t-1)	0.706
	We have nothing to worry about when doing business with our supplier (t-1)	0.545
	It is pleasant to do business with our supplier (t-1)	0.795
	I really respect the work of our supplier (t-1)	0.841
	I feel our supplier is transparent (t-1)	0.742
	I feel our supplier is honest (t-1)	0.691
	Doing business with this supplier is always in a warm and friendly climate (t-1)	0.563

Construct validity was investigated. Based on Table 53 below, convergent validity is achieved because the AVE is greater than 0.50, and the CR is greater than 0.70 (Hair et al., 2014). Discriminant validity is established because the AVE for any two constructs is greater than the square of the correlation between them (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2014; Malhotra et al., 2017). To summarise, the measures of the measurement model have adequate reliability, convergent, and discriminant validity and are ready for path analysis. The following Table 53 outlines the psychometric properties of the measures.

Table 53: Psychometric properties of all measures

Constructs		CR	AVE	(Corr)^2	Conv	Disc
Core offerings (t)	Delivery Performance	0.937	0.833	0.667	Yes	Yes
	Technical Quality					
	Price					
Augmenting offerings (t)	Reputation	0.930	0.769	0.634	Yes	Yes
	Adaptation					
	Service Support					
	Innovation					
Exchange climate (t)	Atmosphere	0.936	0.829	0.701	Yes	Yes
	Information Sharing					
	Technology Sharing					
Bonding (t)	Trust	0.935	0.827	0.714	Yes	Yes
	Commitment					
	Personal Relationship					
Factual Response (t)		0.922	0.665	0.653	Yes	Yes
Sagacious Response (t)		0.943	0.704	0.637	Yes	Yes
Emotional Response (t)		0.952	0.739	0.714	Yes	Yes
Social Response (t)		0.923	0.801	0.468	Yes	Yes
Factual Response (t-1)		0.914	0.641	0.510	Yes	Yes
Sagacious Response (t-1)		0.929	0.652	0.542	Yes	Yes
Emotional Response (t-1)		0.941	0.697	0.542	Yes	Yes
Social Response (t-1)		0.897	0.747	0.468	Yes	Yes
Fit indices		χ^2/df	2			
		CFI	0.90			
		RMSEA	0.06			

CR= Construct reliability, AVE= Average variance extracted, (Corr)^2= highest squared correlation between factor of interest and remaining factors, Conv= Convergent, Disc= Discriminant

5.3.2.5. Structural model and hypothesis testing (*H2–H5*)

As outlined earlier, SEM is a statistical method which allows a hypothesised model to be tested (Byrne, 2016). After validating the constructs through CFA as presented in the previous section, and achieving a good model fit, all the variables are now ready for a path analysis to test the developed hypotheses.

In terms of the variable satisfaction, it was measured using a single-item measure. Single-item measures are concrete and associated with high predictive validity (Bergkvist, 2015); moreover, reliability and validity of a single item cannot be computed (Hair et al., 2014). However, a single-item measure can normally be incorporated into SEM as an observed variable (Hair et al., 2014). All the latent constructs are transferred into composite variables using regression weights imputation through AMOS. Now, we can proceed to structural model testing.

The following Figure 16 illustrates the hypothesised model and presents the graphical relationships of the structural equation model.

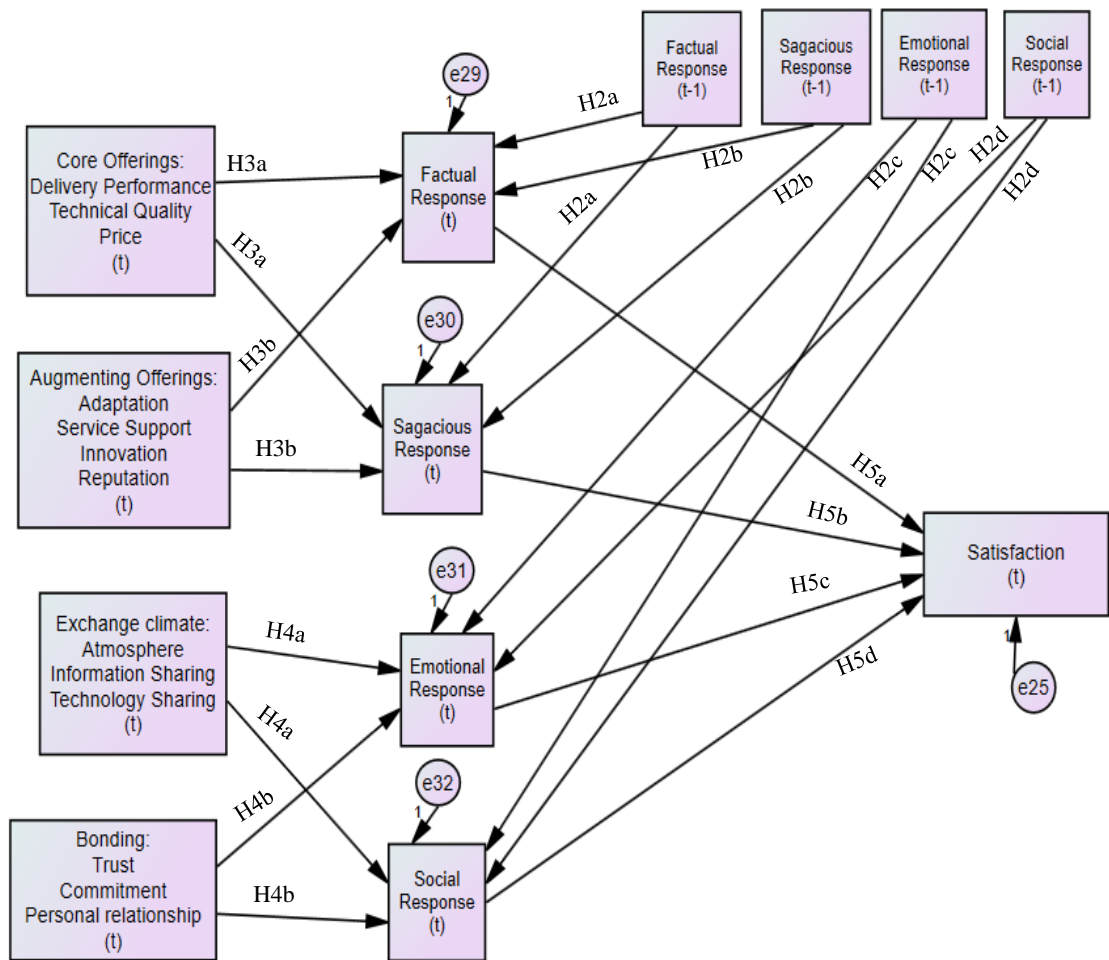


Figure 16: The hypothesised model (H2–H5)

5.3.2.6. Assessing the model fit of the structural model

The results of the fit from the SEM are: chi-square (χ^2) = 59.323, $df = 33$, p value = 0.001. However, the chi-square is significant; the normed chi-square (CMIN/DF) is calculated as a measure of overall fit (Hair et al., 2014). The proportion of the chi-square to the degrees of freedom is 2 and this is considered within the acceptable range of 2 to 5 as suggested by Marsh and Hovecar (1985).

CFI = 0.99, and RMSEA=0.06. CFI indicates an excellent fit (Hair et al., 2014). The value of RMSEA is 0.06, which is less than the critical value (>0.08) (Diamantopoulos

and Siguaaw, 2000; MacCallum et al.,1996). As a result, the structural model satisfies the model fit requirements and there is no need for any improvement.

5.3.2.7. SEM model comparison (nested model)

Before we move to the structural results, we need to conduct a model comparison (nested model) analysis to identify which model serves best: the model with the Wave 1 variables (past experience) paths constrained or the model without constraints. Thus, we need to conduct a nested model comparison. An effective test of alternative models is to consider models of similar complexity, which present varying theoretical relationships (Hair et al., 2014). A powerful approach is by conducting nested models, “where a model is nested within another model if it contains the same number of variables and can be formed from the other model by altering the relationships, such as either adding or deleting paths” (Hair et al., 2014, p.587). Comparing nested SEM models is based on a chi-square difference statistic.

To allow a nested model comparison in our model, the direct path effect of past experience was constrained on present experience to zero. If the difference between two nested SEM models is significant, this implies that the model with more paths explains the data better. If there is no significant difference between two nested models, this implies that the more parsimonious model explains the data equally well compared to the fuller model and is preferred. Table 54 below outlines the nested model comparison results.

Table 54: Nested model comparison

Model	DF	CMIN	P	NFI	IFI	RFI	TLI
				Delta-1	Delta-2	rho-1	rho2
Constrained model	1	14.042	0.000	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.004

As the chi-square difference is significant ($p = 0.000$), the unconstrained model (the model with past experience paths) explains the data better than the constrained model (the model when the effect of past experience on present experience is constrained to zero). Thus, we chose the unconstrained model to proceed with statistical analysis.

5.3.2.8. Structural model results and hypothesis tests

The following Figure 17 presents the SEM showing the parameter estimates (regression weights) as well as squared correlation (R^2). Further, multicollinearity, the “extent to which a construct can be explained by the other constructs in the analysis” (Hair et al., 2014, p.545), was assessed to check whether any issues exist with explaining the dependent variables. The results of the variance inflation factor (VIF) show no serious multicollinearity concerns for the dependent variables.

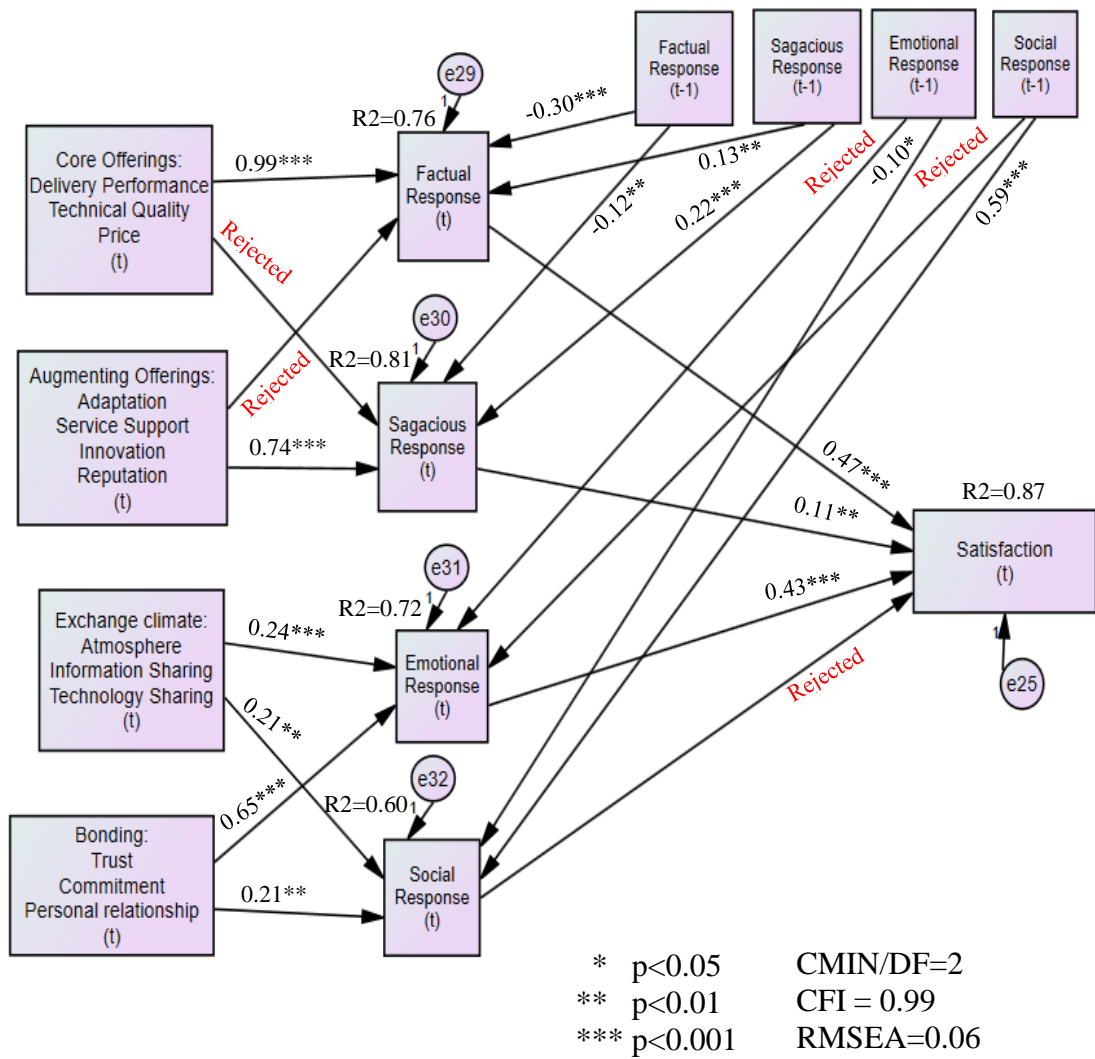


Figure 17: Hypothesis test results (H2–H5)

5.3.2.9. Hypotheses test results

Hypothesis (H2a) suggests that: *The customer's factual response from the past (t-1) will influence both the factual and the sagacious responses in the present (t)*

From Table 55 below, it is clear that the factual response from the past has a significant effect on the factual response in the present (standardised $b = -0.30$, $p = 0.000$) and has a significant effect on the sagacious response in the present (Standardised $b = -0.12$, $p=0.003$).

This is a negative impact which indicates that customers are recording their past experiences and will always demand more positive ones every time. Therefore, it is better for the suppliers to continue to provide services which result in a positive factual response. H2a is accepted.

Hypothesis (H2b) suggests that: *The customer's sagacious response from the past (t-1) will influence both the factual and the sagacious responses in the present (t)*

From Table 55 below, it is clear that sagacious response from the past has a significant effect on the factual response in the present (standardised $b = 0.13$, $p = 0.003$) and also has a significant effect on the sagacious response in the present (standardised $b = 0.22$, $p= 0.000$) This indicates that past sagacious response contributes to explaining both the present factual and sagacious response. H2b is accepted.

Hypothesis (H2c) suggests that: *The customer's emotional response from the past (t-1) will influence the emotional and social responses in the present (t)*

From Table 55 below, it is clear that emotional response from the past has no significant effect on emotional response in the present (standardised $b = -0.01$, $p =$

0.68) whereas it has a negative influence on social response in the present (standardised $b = -0.10$, $p = 0.02$). This is a counterintuitive finding. This can be explained by the fact that emotions express the event of the moment and cannot transit to a further period; however, when it comes to social settings, customers are still demanding, which explains the negative influence of past emotional response on the present social response. H2c is partially accepted.

Hypothesis (H2d) suggests that: *The customer's social response from the past (t-1) will influence the emotional and the social responses in the present (t)*

From Table 55 below, it is clear that social response from the past has no significant influence on the emotional response in the present (standardised $b = -0.06$, $p = 0.07$), whereas it has a positive influence on social response in the present (standardised $b = 0.59$, $p = 0.000$). This indicates that customers are looking for a much stronger social network with their suppliers. H2d is partially accepted.

Hypothesis (H3a) suggests that: *The supplier's core offerings (the delivery performance, technical quality and price) have an impact on the factual and sagacious responses*

From Table 55 it is clear that core supplier offerings influence factual response (standardised $b = 0.99$, $p = 0.000$), whereas there is no significant impact on sagacious response (standardised $b = 0.12$, $p = 0.12$) Thus, if supplier core offerings are positively delivered, customers will have positive factual responses. H3a is partially accepted.

Hypothesis (H3b) suggests that: *The supplier's augmenting offerings (the adaptation, service support, innovation and reputation) have an impact on the factual and sagacious responses*

From Table 55 below, it is clear that augmenting supplier offerings has no significant influence on the factual response (standardised $b = -0.02$, $p = 0.73$) but it has an effect on sagacious response (standardised $b = 0.74$, $p = 0.000$). Thus, if the augmenting supplier offerings are positively delivered, customers will have positive sagacious response. H3b is partially accepted.

Hypothesis (H4a) suggests that: *Exchange climate (atmosphere, information sharing and technology sharing) have an impact on the emotional and social responses.*

From Table 55 below it is clear that the exchange climate influences emotional response (standardised $b = 0.24$, $p = 0.000$) and also influences social response (standardised $b = 0.21$, $p = 0.004$). Thus, if exchange climates are positively perceived, customers will have positive emotional and social responses. H4a is accepted.

Hypothesis (H4b) suggests that: *Bonding (trust, commitment and personal relationship) have an impact on the emotional and social responses.*

From Table 55 below, it is clear that the bonding influences the emotional response (standardised $b = 0.65$, $p = 0.000$) and it influences the social response (standardised $b = 0.21$, $p = 0.006$). Thus, if bonding is positively perceived, customers will have positive emotional and social responses. H4b is accepted.

Hypothesis (H5a) suggests that: *The greater the customer's factual response, the more satisfied the customer will be with the supplier.*

From Table 55 below, it is clear that factual response affects satisfaction (standardised $b = 0.47$, $p = 0.000$). This indicates that if customers have a positive factual response then they will be more satisfied. H5a is accepted.

Hypothesis (H5b) suggests that: *The greater the customer's sagacious response, the more satisfied the customer will be with the supplier.*

From Table 55 below, it is clear that sagacious response affects satisfaction (standardised $b = 0.11$, $p = 0.001$). This indicates that if customers have a positive sagacious response then they will be more satisfied. H5b is accepted.

Hypothesis (H5c) suggests that: *The greater the customer's emotional response, the more satisfied the customer will be with the supplier.*

From Table 55 below, it is clear that emotional response affects satisfaction (standardised $b = 0.43$, $p = 0.000$). This indicates that if customers have a positive emotional response then they will be more satisfied. H5c is accepted.

Hypothesis (H5d) suggests that: *The greater the customer's social response, the more satisfied the customer will be with the supplier.*

From Table 55 below, it is clear that social response does not affect satisfaction (standardised $b = 0.03$, $p = 0.23$), as the p value is not significant. This indicates that satisfaction is not affected by social response. H5d is rejected.

The following Table 55 summarises the SEM results for hypotheses H2–H5.

Table 55: SEM results for hypotheses H2–H5

	Paths	Standardised b	Hypothesis Outcome	
Factual Response	Factual Response (t-1) → Factual Response (t)	-0.30***	H2a	Accepted
	Sagacious Response (t-1) → Factual Response (t)	0.13**	H2b	Accepted
	Core Offerings (t) → Factual Response (t)	0.99***	H3a	Accepted
	Augmenting Offerings (t) → Factual Response (t)	-0.02 ns	H3b	Rejected
Sagacious Response	Factual Response (t-1) → Sagacious Response (t)	-0.12**	H2a	Accepted
	Sagacious Response (t-1) → Sagacious Response (t)	0.22***	H2b	Accepted
	Core Offerings (t) → Sagacious Response (t)	0.12 ns	H3a	Rejected
	Augmenting Offerings (t) → Sagacious Response (t)	0.74***	H3b	Accepted
Emotional Response	Emotional Response (t-1) → Emotional Response (t)	-0.01 ns	H2c	Rejected
	Social Response (t-1) → Emotional Response (t)	-0.06 ns	H2d	Rejected
	Bonding (t) → Emotional Response (t)	0.65***	H4b	Accepted
	Exchange Climate (t) → Emotional Response (t)	0.24***	H4a	Accepted
Social Response	Emotional Response (t-1) → Social Response (t)	-0.10*	H2c	Accepted
	Social Response (t-1) → Social Response (t)	0.59***	H2d	Accepted
	Bonding (t) → Social Response (t)	0.21**	H4b	Accepted
	Exchange Climate (t) → Social Response (t)	0.21**	H4a	Accepted
Satisfaction	Factual Response (t) → Satisfaction (t)	0.47***	H5a	Accepted
	Sagacious Response (t) → Satisfaction (t)	0.11**	H5b	Accepted
	Emotional Response (t) → Satisfaction (t)	0.43***	H5c	Accepted
	Social response (t) → Satisfaction (t)	0.03 ns	H5d	Rejected
Fit indices ($X^2 = 59.323$, $df. = 30$; $CFI = 0.99$; $RMSEA = 0.06$). * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, ns= not significant				

Further, the squared multiple correlation R^2 of the regression weights is presented below to identify the variance of the dependent variables explained by independent variables (Hair et al., 2014). The results show a great influence on

dependent variables because the values are over 0.25 (Cohen, 1988). The subsequent Table 56 presents R².

Table 56: Squared multiple correlations

Dependent variables	Estimate
Factual response	0.76
Sagacious response	0.81
Emotional response	0.72
Social response	0.60
Satisfaction	0.87

1- The predictors of the factual response account for 76% of its variance and, therefore, the error variance of factual response accounts for 24%.

2- The predictors of the sagacious response account for 81% of its variance and, therefore, the error variance of sagacious response accounts for 19%.

3- The predictors of the emotional response account for 72% of its variance and, therefore, the error variance of emotional response accounts for 28%.

4- The predictors of the social response account for 60% of its variance and, therefore, the error variance of social response accounts for 40%.

5- The predictors of satisfaction account for 87% of its variance and, therefore, the error variance of satisfaction accounts for 13%.

5.3.3. Wave 3 (t+1) data analysis

This part focuses on the analysis of the data collected during Wave 3. A final follow-up survey three months later with the same panel was conducted to test the final research hypotheses (*H6–H7*).

As part of the screening questions, all the respondents had not changed their employer or career. As a result, only 202 respondents were qualified to participate in this phase. In this phase, information about the reported behaviour was collected by asking the participants whether they repurchased from or recommended the supplier. The dependent variables (repeated purchase and WOM) are dichotomous variables with yes/no answers, hence mediation with logistic regression was used (Hayes, 2018) to test the direct and indirect effect of the experience on the reported behaviour. This process will be further illustrated in a separate part below. Before proceeding with any further analysis, attrition analysis was conducted and it is discussed below.

5.3.3.1. Nonresponse bias (attrition) analysis (Wave 3)

As conducted with the second wave, to test the nonresponse bias, the analysis of the responders (those who responded in both the second and third waves = 202) and non-responders (those who participated in the second wave only and dropped out in the third wave = 58) should be conducted by testing these two groups (De Lange et al., 2003). The technique used to examine the nonresponse bias (attrition) is the Pearson chi-square for the demographic variables: place, age and gender (De Lange et al., 2003; Menard, 2002). The analysis of these variables provides an idea about the extent to which the bias of the selective nonresponse would affect the study variables. The chi-square test revealed no significant difference among responders and non-responders for the demographic variables; place ($p = 0.14$), age ($p = 0.27$) and gender ($p = 0.53$). Thus, the study is free of attrition bias. Generally, the results of the nonresponse bias analysis recommended by De Lange et al. (2003) and Menard (2002) confirm that the nonresponse is not a result of selective response bias.

5.3.3.2. Mediation analysis with logistic regression and hypothesis (H6–H7) results

Mediation is a causal process when the independent variable affects the dependent variable through another variable called the mediator. To assess the mediation process, it is important to understand direct and indirect effects. Direct effects refer to the relationship between two variables without mediation, for example when X is causing Y, whilst an indirect effect is the relationship between two variables with the existence of a third variable in between called mediator M; for example, when X causes M causes Y (Iacobucci, 2012; Hayes, 2018).

To perform this analysis a powerful tool called PROCESS macro version 3.3 was used. This tool is capable of handling mediation with dichotomous dependent variables (reported behaviour) using logistic regression (Hayes, 2018). PROCESS macro is software developed by Hayes (2018) and can be plugged into SPSS.

5.3.3.3. Hypothesis results

Hypothesis (H6a) suggests that: *The greater the experience that the customer receives from the supplier, the more repeated purchase from the customer.*

From Table 57 below, the study reveals that there is a direct influence of factual response on repeated purchase (2.29) and a direct influence of sagacious response on repeated purchase (2.25). Also, the study reveals that there is a direct influence of emotional response on repeated purchase (0.69) and a direct influence of social response on repeated purchase (0.63). H6a is accepted.

Hypothesis (H6b) suggests that: *The greater the experience that the customer receives from the supplier, the more word-of-mouth there is from the customer.*

From Table 57 below, the study reveals that there is a direct influence of factual response on WOM (1.10), and a direct influence of sagacious response on WOM (1.40). In addition, the study reveals that there is a direct influence of emotional response on WOM (1.16), and a direct influence of social response on WOM (0.65). H6b is accepted.

Hypothesis (H7a) suggests that: *The greater the experience that the customer receives from the supplier, the more satisfied the customer will be, hence the more repeated purchase from the customer*

From Table 57 below, the study reveals that there is an indirect influence of factual response on repeated purchase (1.37) through satisfaction. The study also reveals that there is an indirect influence of sagacious response on repeated purchase (1.43) through satisfaction. Further, the study reveals that there is an indirect influence of emotional response on repeated purchase (1.73) through satisfaction. Since the social response has no significant influence on satisfaction from the previous analysis (SEM), it has been excluded from the mediation test (to perform an indirect test, the independent variable should cause the mediator and the mediator should cause the dependent variable). H7a is partially accepted.

Hypothesis (H7b) suggests that: *The greater the experience that the customer receives from the supplier, the more satisfied the customer will be, hence the more word-of-mouth from the customer.*

From Table 57 below the study reveals that there is an indirect influence of factual response on WOM (1.23) through satisfaction. Also, the study reveals that there is an indirect influence of sagacious response on WOM (1.18) through satisfaction. Further, the study reveals that there is an indirect influence of emotional response on WOM (1.04) through satisfaction. Since the social response has no significant influence on satisfaction from the previous analysis (SEM), it has been excluded from the mediation test (to perform an indirect test, the independent variable should cause the mediator and the mediator should cause the dependent variable). H7b is partially accepted.

To sum up, all the different dimensions of customer experience (factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses) have a direct influence on both repeated purchase and WOM. Moreover, there is an indirect influence of the factual, sagacious and emotional responses on both repeated purchase and WOM via satisfaction. More importantly, factual response has a smaller direct effect on WOM than on repeated purchase. Emotional response, however, has a smaller direct effect on repeated purchase than on WOM. Meanwhile the direct influence of the sagacious response on both reported behaviours (repurchase and WOM) is stronger than the indirect.

These interesting findings indicate how the different dimensions of experience explain the behaviour of the B2B customer. More illustration around these findings is provided in the subsequent discussion chapter.

The following Table 57 summarises the findings of the mediation analysis. All the estimates are significant. In terms of the indirect effect, a Sobel test was calculated to identify the significance level of the parameter estimate (Iacobucci, 2012).

Table 57: The impact of CE on the customer's reported behaviour and the mediation effect of customer satisfaction through logit

Variables		β Coefficients (s.e)		Repeated purchases		
		Repeated Purchase	Satisfaction	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Sobel Statistic
Testing hypotheses H6a and H7a	Factual Response	2.29*** (0.55)	0.92*** (0.04)	2.29***	1.37	3.30***
	Satisfaction	1.49*** (0.45)				
	Sagacious Response	2.25*** (0.57)	0.91*** (0.05)	2.25***	1.43	3.86***
	Satisfaction	1.58*** (0.40)				
	Emotional Response	0.69** (0.25)	0.84*** (0.04)	0.69**	1.73	4.19***
	Satisfaction	2.05*** (0.48)				
	Social Response ¹	0.63*** (0.12)				
		WOM	Satisfaction	WOM		
				Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Sobel Statistic
Testing Hypotheses H6b and H7b	Factual Response	1.10** (0.40)	0.92*** (0.04)	1.10**	1.23	3.46***
	Satisfaction	1.33*** (0.38)				
	Sagacious Response	1.40** (0.43)	0.91*** (0.05)	1.40**	1.18	3.74***
	Satisfaction	1.30*** (0.34)				
	Emotional Response	1.16** (0.36)	0.84*** (0.04)	1.16**	1.04	3.10**
	Satisfaction	1.23** (0.37)				
	Social Response ¹	0.65*** (0.12)				

Level of significance: * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.000

S.E = standard error

¹Mediation effect is not examined for Social Response since the latter was found not to significantly impact upon Satisfaction in the previous stage of the analysis.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has presented the data analysis for the two studies conducted in this thesis. Study 1 used mixed methods comprising two phases; a qualitative phase represented by in-depth interviews and a quantitative phase represented by a questionnaire. The main purpose of Study 1 is to empirically develop the items for measuring CE dimensions in B2B as well as confirming the variables in the conceptual model. The in-depth interviews conducted in this study identified 23 items for

measuring customer experiences and provided confirmation for the variables incorporated in the conceptual framework. The emergent 23 items from in-depth interviews were refined and purified with a first quantitative study with 146 eligible participants. The results showed that the 23 items stand well with their relevant factors (factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses); hence, they were retained for the next step of validation.

Study 2 was a panel study and was conducted to validate the newly developed scales and to test the research hypotheses (*H1–H7*). In this part, a description of the demographics of the panel was presented. The panel study comprised three waves from the same sample: 447 participants from UK took part in Wave 1, 260 in Wave 2, and 202 in Wave 3 using an online questionnaire to reflect on their experiences gained during business exchange with a service provider.

In Wave 1, experience data were collected. CFA were conducted with the 187-strong sub-sample to assess the psychometric qualities of the measures of experience. The results showed convergent and discriminant validity for experience measures (factual, sagacious, emotional and social). Thus, the first hypothesis *H1* was accepted. The conceptual framework was revised by incorporating the valid items for measuring experience constructs.

In Wave 2, data for experience, drivers and satisfaction were collected. Nonresponse bias (attrition) analysis was performed to ensure there was no nonresponse bias as a result of the drop out of respondents; the findings confirmed that there was non-occurrence of nonresponse bias between responders and nonresponders, which means that the study was free from attrition bias. In addition, invariance analysis

was conducted for the experience constructs collected in Wave 1 and Wave 2 and the findings showed the constructs do not vary over time.

Reliability, convergence and discriminant validity were established for every construct used in the measurement model prior to proceeding with longitudinal structural equation modelling. Convergent validity was achieved because the factor loadings of the measurement items were significant and above 0.50, AVE was greater than 0.50, and CR was greater than 0.70. Discriminant validity was established because the AVE for any two constructs was greater than the square of the correlation between them. After establishing construct validity through CFA, composite variables based on regression weights were sought.

Furthermore, an SEM model comparison was conducted using nested model analysis to assess which model explained the data well. The results showed that the model with more paths (with past experience paths) explained the data better than the model when the paths of experience were constrained to zero. Afterwards, longitudinal structural equation modelling was used to test the relationships in the hypothesised model of the study (*H2–H5*). The findings showed that two hypotheses were rejected.

In Wave 3, the reported behaviour data (repeated purchase and WOM) were collected. Mediation with logistic regression was sought due to the dichotomous dependent variables (repeated purchase and WOM) to test the final hypotheses (*H6–H7*) using PROCESS macro with Sobel test.

The subsequent chapter provides a detailed discussion of the results obtained from the analysis in the two studies (the mixed-method study and the panel study), as well as a connection with the literature review.

CHAPTER 6:

DISCUSSION

6.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to display the findings from Study 1 (mixed methods) and Study 2 (panel study) in connection with prior studies from the relevant literature. This chapter discusses the findings of the research with regard to the research objectives: (1) Identify the dimensions of the CE concept in the B2B context; (2) Identify the drivers of CE in the B2B context and their relative significance; (3) Examine the influence of time in the formation of present customer experience; (4) Examine the consequences of receiving positive customer experience in terms of customer satisfaction and subsequent reported behaviour.

In this respect, recent studies have scarcely focused on customer experience in a B2B context due to the complexity of this environment. This investigation intends to bridge this research gap and explore what customer experience in B2B consists of, what the dimensions of B2B customer experience are and what variables impact them during business exchange with professional service providers. This also advances our comprehension of the role of past experience on current experience and furthermore on reported behaviour. This investigation has revealed new variables and relationships that have not been looked at before, while building up a comprehensive customer experience model in B2B.

6.2. Defining customer experience and its dimensions in B2B

The outcomes of the two studies explained in Chapter 5 identified the dimensions of the customer experience in B2B and validated them with decision makers. Prior studies with respect to the customer experience have concentrated on the B2C environment and more problematically, have highlighted the dimensions of the experience concept in general without further investigation of each dimension item, in addition to the inability to employ that in a B2B context. This research has provided a valid measure of the four dimensions of experience in B2B: factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses.

As noted in the literature chapters, an early definition of customer experience was provided by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), who describe it as an emotional state resulting from a personal reaction to the product. Then many studies which were conducted on the customer experience concept sought to define its dimensions: impressions (Carbone and Haeckel, 1994); subjective mental state (Otto and Ritchie, 1996); memorable event (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998); sensory, affective, cognitive, physical and social (Schmitt, 1999); sensation, learning, social (Gupta and Vajic, 2000); functional and emotional (Berry et al., 2002); physical and emotional (Shaw and Ivens, 2002); feelings (Haeckel et al., 2003); functional, mechanical and human (Berry et al., 2006); subjective (Meyer and Schwager, 2007); rational, emotional, sensorial, physical, and spiritual (Gentile et al., 2007); high satisfaction (Frow and Payne, 2007); cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses (Verhoef et al., 2009); sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioural (Brakus et al., 2009); cognitive, emotional and behavioural (Walter et al., 2010); subjective response (Lemke et al., 2011); product experience, outcome focus, moments of truth and peace

of mind (Klaus and Maklan, 2012); cognitive, emotional and behavioural (Pareigis et al., 2012); cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensorial, and social responses (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016); feelings, perceptions and attitudes (Jain et al., 2017); cognitive and emotional responses (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2019).

Extending prior findings, we define customer experience in B2B as follows:

Customer experience is a multi-dimensional construct consisting of factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses that reflect a customer's assessment and evaluation of the service provider's core and augmenting offerings, as well as the exchange climate and bonding developed during the business interaction. This evaluation is processed concurrently with the past experience gained from this service provider. Customer experience has consequences in terms of the customer's repeated purchase and word-of-mouth.

This research found that during customer exchanges with a professional service provider, the customer has four responses: factual, sagacious, emotional and social. These responses represent the customer experience.

6.2.1. Factual response

In accordance with organisational buying behaviour theory (Woodside and Ferris-Costa, 2006), the factual response is in line with the rational paradigm and related to observable facts as the two studies revealed. The customer factual responses are fact-based responses such as meeting deadlines, meeting budget, achieving objectives and producing high-level reports.

The factual response has appeared in B2C as a physical response (Berry et al., 2002, 2006; Gentile et al., 2007; Schmitt, 1999; Shaw and Ivens, 2002; Verhoef et al., 2009) and refers to the responses that are caused through the tangible characteristics of the service/products; these responses are mainly driven by functional clues (Berry et al., 2002, 2006). In the B2B context, the situation is different as the physical responses are about factual judgments and are usually held to be objective, provable and not involve further interpretations such as meeting the due date of delivery, meeting budget requirements and achieving certain objectives (Gounaris, 2005; La et al., 2009). Thus, we named it a *factual* response. The dimension of factual response that has emerged and is confirmed by Study 2 is also consistent with the pertinent literature about the evaluation of service providers in B2B (Day and Barksdale, 1992), and perceived performance (La et al., 2009; Patterson and Spreng, 1997), as well as the cognitive response for the CE in B2B suggested by McColl-Kennedy et al. (2019).

6.2.2. Sagacious response

In line with the rational paradigm for organisational buying behaviour (Woodside and Ferris-Costa, 2006), the other dimension of customer experience we found is called *sagacious* response, which we referred to as subjective response as confirmed by Study 2.

Sagacious response has appeared in B2C as a mental response (Gentile et al., 2007; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Otto and Richie, 1996; Schmitt, 1999; Schmitt, 1999; Verhoef et al., 2009) and refers to the responses as a reflection of internal, subjective and unique mental processing by a customer. In the B2B context, sagacious response stands for the customer's responses to events that require the customer to get

cognitively involved in assessing the event. Such events may include, for instance, how promptly the supplier responds, the ability of the service provider to ‘understand’ the needs of the customer or the supplier’s ‘openness’ and ‘creativity’ in exploring and finding solutions for the customer (e.g. Gounaris, 2005; La et al., 2009). These responses need more subjective measures and are different from the factual dimension where the response in the latter is facts-based. Here is the distinction between factual response and sagacious response: in the factual response, the customer uses certain facts as outlined before, such as meeting deadlines, meeting budget and objectives, whilst the sagacious items need more subjective judgment. The findings of this study are also in line with Wall et al. (2004) and Song et al. (2005), where more thinking to judge the experience is required. Moreover, the dimensions for sagacious response are in line with the findings on service in B2B perceived by Patterson and Spreng (1997) and La et al. (2009), as well as the cognitive response for CE in B2B suggested by McColl-Kennedy et al. (2019).

6.2.3. Emotional response

The findings outlined that customers experience feelings and moods during a business exchange with their service providers. This experience is named emotional response, which is related to the customer’s feelings towards the professional service provider such as feelings of warmth, honesty, respect, pleasantness and peace of mind.

The emotional response confirmed by Study 2 is in accordance with the behavioural paradigm in the organisational behaviour that requires affective responses (Woodside and Ferris-Costa, 2006), and feelings are an important component in the

decision-making process (Korhonen et al., 2008; Wenstøp, 2005), as well as the emotional response for CE in B2B suggested by McColl-Kennedy et al. (2019).

6.2.4. Social response

Along with the emotional response mentioned above, there is also a *social* response confirmed by Study 2, in line with the behavioural paradigm in the organisational behaviour that requires affective responses (Woodside and Ferris-Costa, 2006). The social response is referred to as the experience that exists as a part of a social network with the service provider such as welcoming business friendships, attending social events and enjoying each other's company as part of the business relationship. Usually, the business environment helps in developing a kind of social life and perhaps establish personal relationships among individuals through attending social events, for example, and this social dimension is the outcome of the relationship that emerges as two enterprises come together to do business (Chang et al., 2012; Paulssen and Roulet, 2017).

6.3. Customer experience drivers

Before discussing the findings of the experience drivers in B2B, I will briefly highlight what it looks like in B2C, then a detailed discussion will be provided for every driver in connection with our developed model. Berry et al. (2002, 2006) suggested that customer experience is created by three main drivers: functional, mechanic and humanic, but their studies focused on B2C. Whilst functional and mechanic clues are associated with the core service offering and performance, humanic clues are related to emotional feelings gained throughout the interaction

process. Consistent with these clues identified, Jain et al. (2017) suggested that the customer interaction during the buying process with these clues forms customer experience. Similarly, many studies on customer experience in B2C highlighted that the experience is created through interaction (Berry et al., 2006; Gentile et al., 2007; Gupta and Vajic, 2000; Homburg et al., 2017; Mascarenhas et al., 2006; Meyer and Schwager, 2007; Patricio et al., 2011; Shaw, 2007; Verhoef et al., 2009; Walter et al., 2010;), but B2C experience is different from B2B experience (Lemke et al., 2011; Palmer, 2010; Zolkiewski et al., 2017), thus the drivers are different as confirmed by our Study 2 due to the different interaction process and the service offering provided by the supplier.

The following discusses the different drivers of experience in B2B as confirmed by the findings of Study 2.

In terms of the role of time, the panel study revealed an unexpected finding whereby past factual response **negatively** influences both the present factual and sagacious responses. This is indeed a surprising and counterintuitive finding. The disconfirmation paradigm (DP) can potentially explain this finding though (Oliver, 1977). According to the DP, over a yet unspecified period of time, the underlying beliefs which give rise to expected formation are internalised to the extent that the summary expressions of attitude or, perhaps, intention persist over time (Oliver, 1980). Hence, it is entirely possible that it is the very same phenomenon that the analysis of our data reveals. The negative impact of the past factual response indicates that customers are storing their previous factual responses and hence demanding more

in the future, and this leads to discounting the offerings of the supplier accordingly. This also puts the suppliers under pressure as they need to generate more positive fact-based responses every time. Similarly to the influence on sagacious response, the study revealed that the past factual response has a negative influence on the present sagacious response, which means there is also a link and interaction between past factual and present sagacious response; in this case customers are also internalising their previous factual response and becoming more demanding in terms of the subjectively based responses too that were generated by augmenting offerings. To illustrate the mechanism of these two situations, let's provide an example of meeting deadlines as a factual based response. If meeting the deadline was positive in the past and took two hours, in the future, the customer will internalise this and require much faster delivery, even if the previous response was positive, so if the delivery was again two hours, that would not result in the same positive present experience but rather a less positive experience as their expectations are higher now, and at the same time, they may require more adaptive delivery to meet the deadline.

While the past factual response has a negative impact, the past sagacious response has a **positive** impact on both the present factual and sagacious responses. Although the impact is weak, this finding indicates that the more positive the sagacious response in the past, the more positive the factual and sagacious responses in the present. Again this surprising finding shows how customers are responding differently to past experiences (positively to past sagacious and negatively to past factual).

Further, Study 2 also revealed that past emotional response has **no effect** on present emotional response, but it does **negatively** affect the present social response. This is, again, a surprising finding. The non-significant effect of the past emotional

response on the present emotional response is explained by the fact that emotions do not transfer from the past but rather every event has its own emotion. For instance, if customers had a warm feeling in the past, it doesn't mean that they have a warm feeling now because of their past feeling. This is probably because, in general and unless really prominent, emotions are usually rather transient and do not generate very long-lasting impressions (Ben-Ze'ev, 1996; Cabanac, 2002; Labroo and Mukhopadhyay, 2009). Hence, an emotional episode is less likely to be the outcome of a past memory; such episodes will more likely take place as a result of the individual's direct exposure to concurrent stimulation (Schmitt, 1999; Shaw and Ivens, 2002). This may be particularly the case in the context of B2B, given the buyers' inclination to see themselves as 'business-oriented', making more rational and better informed decisions (Verbeke et al., 2011). This interesting finding has to be considered by professional service providers so that they can sustain what generates emotional response.

On the other hand, past emotional response has a **negative** impact on the present social response. This again involves a similar interpretation to the impact of the past factual response. It means that customers are internalising and recalling their past emotions when considering the social response with the supplier, and this process raises customer expectations in terms of the social settings needed, hence the negative impact exists and so customers are more demanding in terms of the social aspects.

We can also notice that the negative impact of the past emotional response is smaller than the negative impact of the past factual response. This is an interesting finding as the supplier, for instance, may develop a relational strategy so that they will continuously improve the causes of the factual response while at the same time

keeping the cause of the emotional response at a minimum every time they interact with the customer, so they may consider outperforming (investing) on core offerings that generate factual response and at the same time, they save resources in terms of what causes emotional response. This will be addressed in more detail when moving to the implications in the next chapter.

In addition, we also found that past social response has a strong **positive** impact on the present social response and **no effect** on the present emotional response. This means social response develops over time; the greater the social response gained by the customers in the past, the greater the social response is likely to be in the future.

These new findings help to understand how different experiences from the past interact with the present ones either positively or negatively. Gupta and Vajic (2000) suggested that experience accumulates over time, but they have not provided any empirical evidence. In addition, these findings respond to the call from Verhoef et al. (2009) and Lemon and Verhoef (2016), where past experiences are conceptualised in their model of the customer experience, and a further investigation was suggested. Similarly, the extant literature has suggested that past customer experience is an important driver of customer experience (Bitran et al., 2008; Mascarenhas et al., 2006; Meyer and Schwager, 2007; Neslin et al., 2006; Palmer, 2010; Poulsson and Kale, 2004), but again, no empirical evidence was provided to validate this claim. This was the reason for conducting a panel study to investigate this area.

Surprisingly, the panel study revealed that supplier core offerings have a **positive** influence on the factual response, while augmenting offerings have **no** influence. This indicates that the positive core offerings of the suppliers (delivery performance, technical quality and price) are responsible for the positive factual

responses such as meeting deadlines, meeting budget, specifications and effective solutions. On the other hand, a supplier's augmenting offerings have a **positive** influence on the sagacious response, whereas the core offerings have **no** influence. This indicates that positive augmenting offerings of the suppliers (adaptation, service support, innovation and reputation) are responsible for positive sagacious response relating to, for example, quick response, innovative solutions and being adaptive to needs.

The situation is different when discussing the emotional and social responses as the findings revealed that **both** exchange climate (atmosphere, information and technology sharing), and bonding (trust, commitment, personal relationship) have a **positive** influence on **both** emotional and social responses. Bonding has a stronger influence on emotional response than exchange climate does, whereas the influence of bonding and exchange climate on the social response are alike.

These interesting findings guide us in terms of how customers are responding to different drivers in B2B and how experience is formed. The drivers of experience are confirmed during in-depth interviews as the key variables. These findings are in line with both the technical and functional dimensions of Gronroos (1984), which explain how service is perceived in B2B. Our study classified the technical dimension into core and augmenting offerings, while exchange climate and bonding referred to the functional dimension. Core offerings are the essential offerings that the customer expects (Keller 2000), found to be responsible for forming factual response. Consistently, delivery performance (Olsen and Ellram, 1997; Ulaga and Eggert, 2006), technical quality (Ellis and Watterson, 2001; Gronroos, 1984; La et al., 2009), and price (Monroe et al., 2015; Zeithaml, 1988) are considered to be the most important

drivers comprising the supplier core offerings. Meanwhile, augmenting offerings are those accompanying the service and distinguishing between competitors (Keller 2000) found to cause sagacious response. Linked to the literature review, adaptation (Brennan et al., 2014; Hakansson, 1982), service support (Anderson and Narus, 1999; Day and Barksdale, 1992; Ulaga and Eggert, 2006), innovation (La et al., 2009; Ulaga, 2003; Walter et al., 2001), and reputation (Dawes et al., 1992; La et al., 2009; Sonmez and Moorhouse 2010) are considered the most important augmenting offerings.

On the other hand, functional items (exchange climate and bonding) impact both emotional and social responses. Our findings are in line with the literature where the exchange climate, atmosphere (Hakansson, 1982; Su et al., 2008; Woo and Ennew, 2004), technology sharing (Carr and Smeltzer, 2002; Hüttinger et al., 2012) and information sharing (Hüttinger et al., 2012; Whipple et al., 2002) are important in B2B relationships and are found to cause both emotional and social responses. Similarly, the key variables of bonding, i.e. trust (Gounaris, 2005; Kang et al., 2013), commitment (Gounaris, 2005; Hüttinger et al., 2012) and personal relationship (Hüttinger et al., 2012; Lian and Laing, 2007) are key drivers for both emotional and social responses.

6.4. Customer experience consequences

The outcomes from the analysis of Study 2 outlined the fact that customer satisfaction is **greatly** affected by both factual response and emotional response, while the sagacious response has a **slight** effect and the social response has a **non-effect**. This indicates that customers are looking for facts-based experiences from the supplier offerings to be satisfied and also their feelings during interactions are very important.

This doesn't neglect the importance of the augmenting offering that is responsible for causing the sagacious response, but we have to highlight the fact that the impact of the sagacious response is less than the impact of factual and emotional responses. More importantly, we found that social response has no effect on satisfaction, which indicates that regardless of the friendship that the customer and supplier have developed or how many times they go out in a social setting, no matter how much they spend on social events, when it comes to business satisfaction the customer has with the supplier, a professional judgement is in place. The customer will ask, "Am I satisfied with doing business with this supplier?" so that the customer can have the same level of satisfaction without the social response, and that makes sense in the business world. The findings revealed that satisfied customers are those who have positive factual, sagacious and emotional responses. This is consistent with the literature where companies have to aim to deliver an experience that leads to satisfaction (Berry et al., 2002; Frow and Payne, 2007). Also, this is in line with the idea that the total customer experience influences customer satisfaction (Mascarenhas et al., 2006). Further, recent studies (Chen and Chen, 2010; Klaus and Maklan, 2013; Kranzbühler et al., 2018) have highlighted the importance of experience on customer satisfaction.

Interestingly, unlike previous studies, this study has measured the reported behaviour of the customers by tracking them after the completion of the project to examine whether they repurchased or recommended the suppliers through WOM. The study found that there is a **direct** impact of factual and sagacious responses on the repeated purchase which is **greater** than the indirect impact through satisfaction. This indicates that the positive factual and sagacious responses greatly affect the repeated

purchase of the customers. On the other hand, the **direct** influence of the emotional response on repeated repurchase is **weaker** than the indirect influence through satisfaction. These findings indicate that factual and sagacious responses are able to produce repurchases directly, while emotional response should be mediated with satisfaction. Surprisingly, social response has a **direct** influence on repeated purchase; however, it has **no** influence on satisfaction at all. But the influence of the social response is **weaker** than the factual, sagacious and emotional responses.

In terms of the influence of the experience on the WOM, we found that the factual, sagacious and emotional responses have **direct and indirect** influence on WOM. More interestingly, the sagacious response is **stronger** in producing WOM than factual and emotional responses do, and factual response has a **less** direct influence on WOM. Also, social response again appears to have a **direct** effect on WOM, but this effect is the **weakest** among the others.

These findings clearly demonstrate how the different dimensions of the customer experience reflect in different ways on producing repurchases and WOM, and this variation broadens the supplier's understanding of the importance of the customer experiences in maintaining a long-term business and real WOM. These findings extend the previous studies that suggested the importance of customers' experience in respect of behavioural intentions (Chen and Chen, 2010; Klaus and Maklan 2013; Kranzbühler et al., 2018; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Mascarenhas et al., 2006; Meyer and Schwager, 2007; Verhoef et al., 2009), and go beyond them by empirically testing the influence on the reported behaviour rather than intentions that are subject to change (Sutton, 1998).

6.5. Conclusion

To sum up, the current study has validated the newly developed four dimensions for customer experience, namely factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses, and confirms the distinction between the different dimensions of experience with their relative drivers. This study illustrates that past factual, sagacious and social responses are also important drivers of the present experience in accordance with the supplier's offerings, exchange climate and bonding. Further, this study finds that the customer experience is greatly responsible for the reported customer's repurchase and WOM behaviours. The research empirically tested the developed customer experience model in B2B professional services. The subsequent chapter will present the conclusion of this thesis, discuss how objectives have been met and provide contributions, implications and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 7:

CONCLUSIONS

7.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a conclusion for this thesis in a succinct way. For the purpose of illustrating how every research objective was met, the conclusion chapter presents the following. Firstly, each research objective is concluded based on the findings. Secondly, the methodology conclusion, theoretical contribution and managerial implications are provided. Finally, limitations and future research suggestions are outlined.

This study defines customer experience in B2B as follows:

Customer experience is a multi-dimensional construct consisting of factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses that reflect a customer's assessment and evaluation of the service provider's core and augmenting offerings, as well as the exchange climate and bonding developed during the business interaction. This evaluation is processed concurrently with the past experience gained from this service provider. Customer experience has consequences in terms of the customer's repeated purchase and word-of-mouth.

7.2. Meeting the study objectives

7.2.1. Conclusion for the first objective: Identify the dimensions of the CE concept in the B2B context

This study revealed four dimensions of the customer experience in B2B during a business exchange with a professional service provider. These dimensions are:

factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses. The factual and sagacious responses are in line with the rational paradigm of organisational buying behaviour which is concerned with cognitive evaluation of the supplier performance, whereas the emotional and social responses are consistent with the behavioural paradigm that is concerned with affective responses towards the supplier (Woodside and Ferris-Costa, 2006).

Lemke et al. (2011) have attempted to investigate the customer experience using data from both B2C and B2B contexts, but their study has not provided a definition of the concept of the customer experience in B2B, and also their study lacks quantitative empirical evidence. As mentioned before in the literature and in the discussion, previous studies have attempted to identify the dimensions of experience in B2C as impressions (Carbone and Haeckel, 1994), subjective mental state (Otto and Ritchie, 1996), memorable event (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998), sensory, affective, cognitive, physical and social (Schmitt, 1999), sensation, learning, social (Gupta and Vajic, 2000), functional and emotional (Berry et al., 2002), physical and emotional (Shaw and Ivens, 2002), feelings (Haeckel et al., 2003), functional, mechanical and human (Berry et al., 2006), subjective response (Meyer and Schwager, 2007), rational, emotional, sensorial, physical, and spiritual dimensions (Gentile et al., 2007), high satisfaction (Frow and Payne, 2007), cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses (Verhoef et al., 2009), sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioural (Brakus et al., 2009), cognitive, emotional and behavioural (Walter et al., 2010), product experience, outcome focus, moments of truth and peace of mind (Klaus and Maklan, 2012), cognitive, emotional and behavioural (Pareigis et al., 2012), cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensorial, and social responses (Lemon and

Verhoef, 2016), and feelings, perceptions and attitudes (Jain et al., 2017). These studies mainly lack quantitative evidence as well as focusing on B2C.

To date, there is only a single empirical effort that has attempted to look specifically at CE in the B2B context from the customer's perspective (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2019). However, in the light of pertinent foundational work on CE (e.g. Lemon and Verhoef 2016; Verhoef et al. 2009) the lack of necessary theoretical foundations to ground the choice to conceptualise CE merely on two dimensions (cognitive and emotional) raises serious concerns regarding the diligence with which this work represents the CE in the B2B context, which apparently remains insufficiently charted.

This study advances our knowledge by investigating customer experience in B2B and responds to the call from Verhoef et al. (2009) and Lemon and Verhoef (2016) who suggested a further investigation of the customer experience incorporating past experiences. The following explains each dimension with their relative measures as confirmed in this study.

7.2.1.1. Factual response

This study concludes that the factual response involves fact-based responses that the customer has as a result of the business exchange with the service provider. This experience relies on factual responses such as meeting certain deadlines, meeting the budget, meeting the specification and achieving objectives. Based on the findings from the mixed-methods study, factual response has six valid measures. The following Table 58 presents the six valid items for measuring factual response in B2B.

Table 58: Valid items for measuring factual response

Factual Response	Met the delivery deadlines
	Met our budget
	Met our specifications
	Achieved our objectives
	Produced solutions that led to an increase our company's effectiveness
	Provided high-level reports and presentations

7.2.1.2. Sagacious response

This study concludes that customer sagacious response is another dimension of experience resulting from business exchange with the service provider. Sagacious response is not factually based like factual response but rather relies on subjective responses such as responding promptly, being adaptive to suitable needs and being innovative. Based on the findings from this study, sagacious response has seven valid measures. The following Table 59 presents the seven valid items for measuring sagacious response in B2B.

Table 59: Valid items for measuring sagacious response

Sagacious Response	Were adaptive to our needs and requests
	Responded quickly when needed
	Completed the work in an innovative way
	Produced innovative solutions and ideas
	Used most recent techniques to complete the task
	Demonstrated a good understanding of the challenges we face
	Helped improve our performance

7.2.1.3. Emotional response

The study found that the customers have emotional responses resulting from their business exchange with the service provider. During the business exchange the customer experiences feelings and moods such as warmth, pleasantness, and peace of mind. Based on the findings from this study, emotional response has seven valid measures. The following Table 60 presents the seven valid items for measuring emotional response in B2B.

Table 60: Valid items for measuring emotional response

Emotional Response	Doing business with this supplier is always in a warm and friendly climate
	I feel our supplier is honest
	I feel our supplier is transparent
	I really respect the work of our supplier
	It is pleasant to do business with our supplier
	We have nothing to worry about when doing business with our supplier
	This supplier puts all our fears at ease

7.2.1.4. Social response

This study concludes that as the supplier and customer work together, they develop a social network experience. This social response is developed into the form of a business friendship, attending social events and enjoying each other's company. Based on the findings from this study, social response has three valid measures. The following Table 61 presents the three valid items for measuring emotional response in B2B.

Table 61: Valid items for measuring social response

Social Response	Friendship with the supplier's management is welcome
	Because of our business, the supplier invites us to attend social events
	We enjoy each other's company in a social setting

7.2.2. Conclusion for the second objective: Identify the drivers of customer experience in the B2B context and their relative significance

With regard to the second objective of the study, this research concluded a number of drivers responsible for influencing the customer experience during a business exchange with the professional service provider. The study has helped to confirm the most important variables capable of influencing customer experience. The constructs of core supplier offerings, augmenting supplier offerings, exchange climate and bonding were found to drive customer experience. Supplier offerings (core and augmenting) are consistent with Gronroos' (1984) technical dimension, which is concerned with what is being offered, whereas exchange climate and bonding are in line with the functional dimension, which is concerned with how the service is being offered. Each of these constructs includes a number of variables as discussed below.

This study has expanded upon previous studies by finding that the suppliers' offerings in terms of delivery performance (Olsen and Ellram, 1997; Ulaga and Eggert, 2006), technical quality (Ellis and Watterson, 2001; Gronroos, 1984; La et al., 2009) and price (Monroe et al., 2015; Zeithaml, 1988) are responsible for driving factual responses. These variables have been classified into core offerings as the in-depth interviews confirmed. Delivery performance, technical quality and price are judged by

customers based on facts, hence they lead to a factual response. This study introduces the idea that there is a positive causal relationship between core offerings and factual response. If the supplier's core offerings are positively delivered to the customers, they will have a positive factually based experience.

The second driver of the customer experience is the augmenting supplier offerings. The in-depth interviews confirmed that the augmenting offerings consist of four variables, namely: adaptation, service support, innovation and reputation. Previous studies have suggested the importance of adaptation in supplier customer relationships, but they have not considered empirical evidence regarding the influence of the adaptation on the customer experience (Brennan et al., 2014; Hakansson, 1982). Another supplier augmenting offering is service support. Service support has been mentioned in previous studies (Anderson and Narus, 1999; Day and Barksdale, 1992) and a more recent study by Lemon and Verhoef (2016) where service support is included in the third phase of the purchase. None of these has provided empirical evidence of the influence on the customer experience. The third variable of the augmenting offerings is innovation. Innovation is mentioned in previous studies (La et al., 2009; Ulaga, 2003; Walter et al., 2001) but no investigation has been undertaken in relation to the customer experience. The fourth variable is reputation (Dawes et al., 1992; La et al., 2009; Sonmez and Moorhouse, 2010). The study revealed that when positive augmenting offerings are provided by the supplier, the customers will have a positive sagacious response.

The third driver of the customer experience is the exchange climate. This study has introduced three variables under the exchange climate dimension; the first is the atmosphere which refers to the general climate of the meeting between customer and

suppliers. Atmosphere has been mentioned in previous studies (Su et al., 2008; Wren and Simpson, 1996; Woo and Ennew, 2004) but there is still a gap in the B2B context in terms of the influence on experience. The second variable is information sharing. Previous studies have suggested that information sharing is important in supplier–customer relationships (Brennan et al., 2015; Hüttinger et al., 2012; Whipple et al., 2002), but none has focused on the experience gained during business interactions with the professional service provider. The third variable is technology sharing. Technology sharing was found in previous studies to facilitate the relationships between suppliers and customers (Carr and Smeltzer, 2002; Hüttinger et al., 2012). This study advanced the previous finding by revealing that the more positive the exchange climate with customers, the more positive emotional and social responses the customers will have. This study found that interaction climate variables drive both emotional and social responses. A friendly and nice working business relationship during a business exchange will make customers have positive emotional feelings and encourage further business friendships.

The fourth driver of the experience is bonding. Bonding consists of three variables: trust, commitment and personal relationships. Bonding is the driver of both the social and emotional responses. The first variable of bonding is trust. Trust is well documented in the literature and is one of the most important variables in marketing relationships (Chenet et al., 2010; Das and Teng, 1998; Day and Barksdale, 1992; Kang et al., 2013; Moorman et al., 1993; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Palmatier et al., 2006;). The second variable of bonding is commitment. Commitment is another variable that is well documented in the literature and one of the most important variables in sustaining a business relationship between suppliers and their customers

(Gounaris, 2005; Hüttinger et al., 2012; Morgan and Hunt; 1994; Park et al., 2012). The third variable of bonding is personal relationships. Personal relationship was mentioned in previous studies, but none highlighted the importance with regard to customer experience (Hüttinger et al., 2012; Lian and Laing, 2007). This advanced our knowledge by demonstrating that these variables are key variables in driving both emotional and social responses. The more positive the bonding that occurs between suppliers and customers, the more positive emotional and social responses the customers will have.

7.2.3. Conclusion for the third objective: Examine the influence of time in the formation of the present customer experience

Previous studies have suggested that customer experience is developed over time (Gupta and Vajic, 2000) but no empirical evidence was provided. Other studies have highlighted the fact that past experience is an important driver of present experience (Bitran et al., 2008; Mascarenhas et al., 2006; Meyer and Schwager, 2007; Neslin et al., 2006; Palmer, 2010; Poulsson and Kale, 2004). These studies neither cover B2B nor provide quantitative empirical evidence. This study responds to the call from Lemon and Verhoef, (2016) and Verhoef et al. (2009) in terms of investigating the impact of past experience on present experience and it has concluded that past customer experience must be taken into account when dealing with a supplier. The findings from the panel study revealed that different past experiences have a positive and negative impact on the present experience. Customers record their past experiences whilst dealing with their suppliers.

The study concluded that a customer's present factual response is not only influenced by the supplier core offerings during the project but also by the past factual and sagacious response. The study revealed that there is a negative influence of past factual response and a positive influence of past sagacious response on the present factual response. This indicates that the customers are recording their past factual responses, hence they discount the performance of the supplier every time they interact by demanding more core offerings as the core offerings are the cause of the factual response. Similarly, the study found that sagacious experience is not only affected by the augmenting offerings but also negatively by past factual response and positively by past sagacious response. That means that customers are also recording their past factual response when forming their present sagacious response. Hence, it is better for the service provider to seek improvements continually in the augmenting offerings.

In terms of the emotional response, the study found no influence on the present emotional response from both the past emotional and social responses. This means that a customer's business emotions don't travel from the past but rather they express the instantaneous moment of occurrence.

Surprisingly, present social response was shown to be negatively influenced by past emotional response and greatly positively influenced by past social response. The negative influence again means that customers are internalising their emotional response and demanding more in the future when it comes to the social experience. Not surprisingly though, the past social response greatly positively influences the present social response. This means that the greater the business friendship between suppliers and customers in the past, the more the friendship develops in the present.

7.2.4. Conclusion for the fourth objective: Examine the consequences of a positive customer experience in terms of customers' satisfaction and subsequent reported behaviour

The consequence of satisfaction in our developed model is based on previous studies that have outlined the fact that companies should intend to provide customers with an experience that ends with satisfaction (Berry et al., 2002; Chen and Chen, 2010; Frow and Payne, 2007; Klaus and Maklan, 2013; Kranzbühler et al., 2018; Mascarenhas et al., 2006). However, these studies have failed to provide empirical evidence to test how the experience has an impact on customer satisfaction. Linked to that, the impact of the four mentioned dimensions of CE (factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses) on satisfaction is variable. The panel study concluded that factual and emotional responses have a great influence on customers' satisfaction. Hence, the more positive fact-based experience the customers have, the more satisfied they will be, and also the more positive feelings the customers have, the more satisfied they will be. This means that customers are seeking facts-based experiences by which to judge their satisfaction with their suppliers and also their feelings during each interaction are very important. Meanwhile, the sagacious response has little effect on satisfaction. The study found that the social response has no effect on satisfaction at all. This means that customers judge their business satisfaction separately from the social aspect.

In terms of the reported behaviour, the study has measured the influence of experiences on the customers' repeated purchases and WOM. All the experience dimensions (factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses) have a direct influence on both reported behaviours (repurchase and WOM). More interestingly, when measuring the indirect influence on reported behaviour with the mediator

satisfaction, the results are varied. It can be found that factual response has a less direct effect on WOM but not on repeated purchase. Emotional response, on the other hand, has a less direct effect on repeated purchase but not WOM. Meanwhile, the direct influence of the sagacious response on both reported behaviours is stronger than the indirect influence. There is no indirect test provided for social response because there is no influence on the mediator (satisfaction). More importantly, these findings are necessary to understand how customers reflect differently on a customer's reported behaviour as conditioned by experience.

Loyalty behaviour is represented by positive repurchase and WOM. Previous studies have highlighted loyal behaviours in terms of experience (Chen and Chen, 2010; Klaus and Maklan, 2013; Kranzbühler et al., 2018; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Mascarenhas et al., 2006; Meyer and Schwager, 2007; Triantafillidou and Siomkos, 2014; Verhoef et al., 2009), but there has been no attempt to provide empirical evidence on reported behaviour in a business market.

Our study reveals that the customers who received a positive experience from their professional service providers maintained the business relationship and recommended them, hence a customer's behaviour (repeated purchase and WOM) majorly results from the experience gained from the professional service provider.

7.3. Conclusion of the methodology

This study adopted a critical realism philosophy and in order to answer the research objectives, it employed two studies: Study 1 was a mixed-methods approach (qualitative and quantitative) and Study 2 was a panel study. An intensive literature

review was conducted to understand the pertinent aspects of customer experience and this review revealed that research on customer experience in B2B is scarce.

Study 1 was comprised of two phases: the first phase was qualitative in-depth interviews with 12 business customers in Scotland who are responsible for procurement and liaising with professional service providers. This phase helped to generate items for measuring the dimensions of customer experience in B2B and resulted in 23 items. Further, this phase helped to confirm the conceptual framework in terms of the drivers of customer experience as well as the consequences. Afterwards, a second phase, with a quantitative approach, was employed to collect the first quantitative sample in order to refine and purify the items identified through the in-depth interviews. From 400 potential participants, this phase received responses from 146 fully eligible respondents in Scotland reflecting on their experiences (factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses). Using EFA, the analysis results of this phase revealed four factor-structures and each item loaded highly on its relevant factor.

Study 2 was the panel study and it was undertaken to collect the second quantitative sample to validate the newly developed measures of CE and to examine the research hypotheses (*H1-H7*). The panel consisted of three waves from the same sample, and as revealed from the in-depth interviews in Study 1, the timeframe between each wave was three months. From the 1,000 qualified participants contacted in the UK, 447 respondents in Wave 1 gave a full response followed by 260 in the second wave and finally 202 in the third wave. The first wave focused on collecting the data for experience measures. Using CFA with a sub-sample of 187, the analysis results confirmed that the measures of the experience constructs are convergent, reliable and discriminant, hence validity was established and hypothesis (*H1*) was

tested. The second wave focused on collecting the data for experience measures, drivers and satisfaction to test hypotheses (*H2-H5*), and the third wave focused on collecting the data for reported behaviours to test hypotheses (*H6-H7*).

The first study helped to answer the first research objective with regard to identifying the dimensions of experience and the second research objective in terms of identifying the drivers of experience, while the panel was used to meet the third research objective with regard to investigating the influence of time on experience formation as well as the fourth research objective regarding the consequences of experience for satisfaction and subsequently repeated purchase and WOM.

The adoption of two studies helped all the research objectives to be met, all the research hypotheses to be examined and provided a valid interpretation of the phenomenon of customer experience in B2B.

7.4. Theoretical contributions

Before providing the theoretical contribution, let's briefly recap on the gap in the literature. The study of customer experience is still an evolving stream of research in marketing, and it has been restricted to the consumer context (Brakus et al., 2009; Chang and Horng, 2010; Homburg et al., 2017; Kandampully et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2011; Klaus and Maklan, 2012) despite the profound importance that customer experience also has for suppliers in the B2B context (Lemke et al., 2011; Zolkiewski et al., 2017). The concept of CE remains poorly defined and usually its measurement depends on some sort of approximation (e.g. Bolton et al., 2008; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Surprisingly, despite the limited scope, all the studies use the concept of CE in a vague, undefined and therefore rather unclear manner; none of

them has tried to consider or offer an archetypal and clear definition of CE and its measurement. Although Lemke et al.'s (2011) work relates to the B2B context, it focuses on both B2C and B2B, resulting in a disappointing lack of clarity and significance in the B2B context. Even in the recent study by McColl-Kennedy et al. (2019) which focused on B2B, their work does not clearly capture other important dimensions of the CE such as the social response (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Verhoef et al., 2009) that develops during business exchanges (Paulssen and Roulet, 2017). Therefore, CE remains insufficiently explored in the B2B context.

The recognised absence of research into CE in B2B and how it can help the supplier has driven this study. This gap is significant as the literature relating to B2B marketing has shown that researchers cannot expand on theories or findings that explain or describe the consumer's behaviour as reflecting the B2B customer's behaviour. The aforementioned gap is also significant due to the fact that the B2B literature, as a whole, is accompanied by a narrative about the need to generate acceptable experiences for the customer, which is considerably more helpful for B2B suppliers than for the provider or manufacturer of B2C services or products. I have tried, in this study, to fill this gap by introducing a study that focuses on CE in the B2B context. Therefore, this study extends the existing knowledge of the customer experience in B2B and enhances our understanding with several theoretical contributions.

First, this study has established that although CE relies on four particular dimensions of the experience ("factual response", "sagacious response", "emotional response" and "social response"), each one differently responds to different drivers as well as time. This means that employing a blanket-like method to tackle the issue of

managing attempts to provide a better CE or establishing how the company will profit from doing this is not helpful. Researchers in the future will not need to depend on “proxies” to study CE. Indeed, once they have revealed the complexity of the drivers of CE and the outcomes from CE management in terms of the behaviour of the customer, it is wholly fair to ask about the relevance of implications raised in past studies provided they have used a range of proxies to explain CE. Studies carried out in future will not need to rely on said proxies as this research has provided helpful findings for academics that recognise the subjective nature of CE and enables researchers to concentrate on collecting the information required to study and assess CE.

The second contribution to the knowledge is understanding what the concept of CE consists of in a B2B context as well as providing empirical evidence for validating its measures. In addition to identifying the dimensions of the concept of CE, this study provides a distinction of every dimension of the experience the supplier generates. CE in B2B is comprised of cognitive response (factual and sagacious) and affective response (emotional and social). Factual response covers facts-based responses and results from supplier core offerings, whilst the sagacious response is not factually based but rather has more subjective measures and results from the supplier’s augmenting offerings. Previous studies have not provided this distinction of the experience dimensions, mainly due to the absence of experience studies in B2B. The other new knowledge we gain from this study is the distinction between the emotional and social responses. Emotional response is about the feelings and moods of the customers generated during business interactions and resulting from exchange climate and bonding drivers, while the social response refers to the experience gained from the social network between a customer and a service provider and from the same

drivers as the emotional response (exchange climate and bonding). In contrast, previous studies for the experience have mainly focused on B2C because the business market is complex and has multiple contacts and the main motive is commercial, so it is difficult for such studies to capture the exact dimensions of the experience. Thus, this study has provided reliable dimensions for experience (factual, sagacious, emotional and social responses) that have been empirically validated through two different studies with decision makers.

The third contribution to knowledge is in terms of understanding how customer experience is generated in B2B during business exchange with a professional service provider. The findings illustrate that a number of technical and functional dimensions drive customer experience. The technical dimension is classified into two main categories: core and augmenting offerings provided by the supplier. Each one of these offerings is responsible for generating a particular type of experience dimension. The core offerings (delivery performance, technical quality and price) are responsible for generating factual responses. The augmenting offerings (adaptation, service support, innovation and reputation) are responsible for generating sagacious response. These findings provide a significant theoretical contribution by demonstrating how different suppliers' offerings generate customer experience. Moreover, the study contributes to the knowledge by demonstrating that the functional dimension (exchange climate and bonding) generates both emotional and social responses. Exchange climate is comprised of atmosphere, information sharing and technology sharing, while bonding variables are trust, commitment and personal relationships. These findings extend our knowledge of customer experience in B2B where the studies remain scant.

More importantly, this analysis has created thought-provoking insights, although there were also some results I did not expect which were more thought-provoking still. For example, while we expected the functional dimension (exchange climate and bonding efforts) of the supplier's CE management efforts to influence the customer's social and emotional responses, and while the experiential confirmation of these effects is highly significant, it is more fascinating still to observe that the same cannot be said when we look at the technical dimension (core and augmenting offerings). Although the core offering impacts upon the customer's factual response, it has no impact on the sagacious response. The reverse applies to the augmenting offerings: we witnessed a noticeable impact on sagacious response but in relation to the factual response, we did not. While these observations were not what I anticipated, they do still offer us some knowledge of how B2B selectively deals with what the supplier offers and how the supplier develops corresponding responses as a result.

The fourth contribution to the existing knowledge is in relation to the idiosyncratic attributes of the individual dimensions of CE, which were also evident when we considered how time affects the customer experience. This study has established the role of past experience as an important driver of present experience. This study extends our knowledge by responding to the call from Lemon and Verhoef (2016) and Verhoef et al. (2009) and has provided empirical evidence of the role of the influence of each of the past experience dimensions on the present experience; hence, this study sheds lights and advances our knowledge on the important role that time plays in CE in B2B. The study presented how past factual response has a negative influence on both present factual and sagacious responses, whilst past sagacious response has a positive impact. Past emotional response has no influence on present

emotional response, but it does on present social response. Past social response has no influence on the present emotional response, but it does on the present social response. These findings have increased our understanding by showing that the different past experiences have different influences on the present ones, whether positive or negative. Moreover, this indicates that present experience is not only affected by the technical and functional drivers but also by past experience.

Moreover, it was a surprise to us that both past factual response and past emotional response have a negative impact on both present sagacious response and present social response. Having said that, this finding does make sense when taking into account the disconfirmation paradigm (Oliver, 1977; 1980) and the specific drivers that influence CE. For example, factual response relies on facts-based responses (like meeting objectives and budget or effective solutions) which pull from the core offerings of the supplier. Customers will start to internalise these responses and their expectations will become more demanding in terms of the augmenting offerings of the encounter such as service support, innovativeness and adaptation, which all form part of their sagacious response with the supplier, which develops over time. Once more, this is a highly relevant finding of this study because it unveils two things: firstly, that CE is time-dependent, and secondly, and perhaps more importantly, CE's various dimensions respond either positively or negatively to "time".

The fifth knowledge contribution comes from providing empirical evidence of measuring the customers' reported behaviour (repeated purchase and WOM) after project completion at a later time, in order to understand how their real behaviours are affected by the experience gained. The study found that the customers who have gained positive experience during a business exchange are likely to maintain the

business with the supplier by repeating purchases and recommending them to their peers through WOM. This finding reveals that experience is a key motive behind the customer's reported behaviour in B2B, whilst previous research has failed to provide this kind of effect and focused on intentions that may change.

The sixth theoretical contribution has been to develop a customer experience model in B2B focusing on the customers of professional service providers in the UK. This model introduces the variables driving customer experience and the consequences of the experience on customer satisfaction and reported behaviours. Previous studies with regard to experience have mainly focused on the consumer market, whilst this research extends our knowledge by focusing on business customers where this kind of research is ignored. This research has empirically tested and validated the proposed customer experience model in order to extend our understanding and knowledge based on a reliable and real-world interpretation. This model offers a significant contribution to the existing knowledge as the studies of customer experience remain limited in business markets.

The following Figure 18 presents the CE model in B2B.

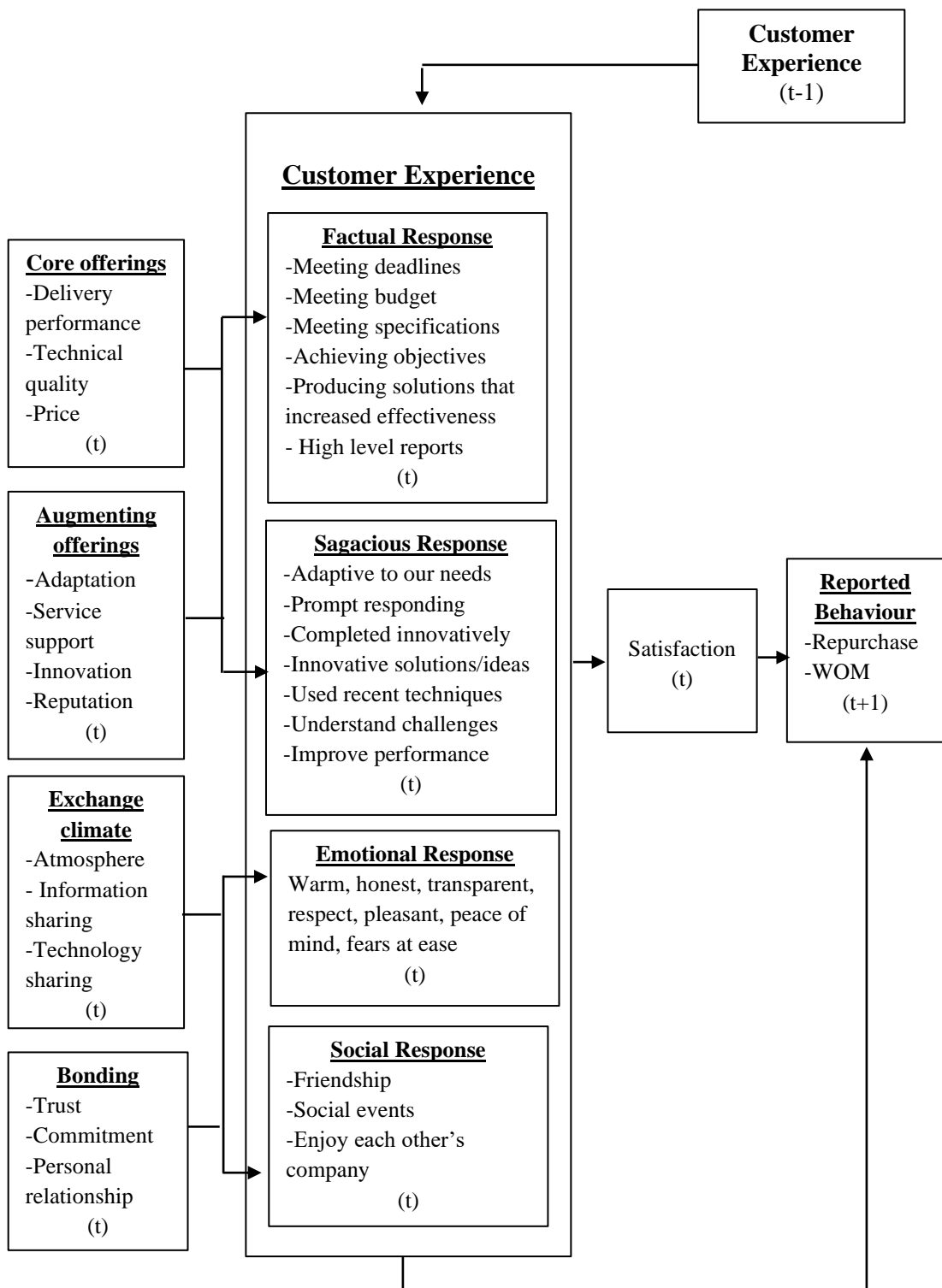


Figure 18: CE model in B2B

7.5. Managerial implications

Although an important contribution for academia, this research provides several managerial implications. It helps B2B professional service provider managers to acquire a deep understanding of the mechanisms of customer experience in order to strengthen decision making and identify the best ways to draw up strategies. This research has practical value by establishing an abundant base for further understanding CE drivers and consequences and likely benefits to marketing managers and practitioners.

Firstly, the data of this research has been collected from real business world managers. The measures of CE have been validated with a number of decision makers among B2B customers, hence professional services provider managers can use our valid scales to manage and monitor a systematic approach for the best delivery of positive experiences to their customers.

Secondly, time is not necessarily an ally to professional service providers. Certain responses that have been associated with past (positive) experiences, may well threaten the CE in the present and possibly in the future. Experience is recorded by customers so that this finding has to be taken into account by the managers when drawing up their strategies. Present factual customer experience is mainly affected by the service provider's core offerings and also by past factual and sagacious responses. Thus, it is better for the service provider to improve the core offerings in a way that lets the customers receive a positive present factual response because experience is recorded by the customers. In addition, in terms of the service provider's augmenting offerings, it would be better for them to be improved constantly as well because they have been found to influence the customer's sagacious response and at the same time,

customers are recording their past sagacious response. Customers will get positive emotional feelings if the service provider has engaged in the interaction process in a warm and kind manner as well as by improving social bonds. Customers will join social events with the service provider if they have a good personal relationship and have trust and confidence in this service provider along with having experienced friendly interaction processes.

Thirdly, another important implication for the service providers when drawing up their strategies is that the findings confirmed that customer satisfaction is influenced by customer factual response and emotional response, and less affected by sagacious response and has no influence in terms of social response. These interesting findings can play a great role in a portfolio for managing a service provider's resources. To clarify that, let's consider the influence from the past. We found that factual response is affected by the past while emotional response isn't, in which case it would be better for the service provider to seek, sustain and keep the drivers for the emotional response (exchange climate, bonding) at the same level while continually improving the drivers for the factual response (core offerings). So it is necessary to invest in the core offerings in order to let the customers develop a positive factual response while saving resources for the drivers of emotional response.

Fourthly, the findings of the study revealed that there is a direct influence of the experience on a customer's reported behaviour, hence a positive experience with the supplier is an important factor behind the customer's repeated purchase and WOM. Therefore, the results of this study can provide a fruitful base for B2B professional service provider managers to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the service provided and which areas they need to develop in order to ensure they deliver the best

experience for their customers. Given the ability to deliver a positive experience, they would be able to retain their existing customers and attract them in such a way that they do not go to rivals, as well as attracting more customers through WOM from the existing customers among their business peers. This would result in more business and profit for the suppliers.

Finally, the valuable findings of this study provide managers and practitioners a great understanding of the dimensions that represent customer experience, and most importantly provide a clear view of how past experience interacts with present experience. The relationships provided in the model between the experience drivers, experience dimensions and outcomes paint a clear picture of the key variables surrounding the experience in B2B and will allow business professional service provider managers to effectively assess and improve their relevant strategies accordingly, and more importantly remain alive in the competitive and intensified business market. The customer experience model developed in this study will help B2B professional service providers to observe and enhance the experience delivered to their customers more effectively and efficiently.

7.6. Limitations and future research

This study, as with any study, is not free from limitations. This study has focused on specific service settings in a single country, so it has constraints in terms of generalisability of its findings, as has any context-specific study. It is restricted to the context of business customers of professional service providers in the UK. Given the subjective nature of CE, it is reasonable to expect that the impact each of the four dimensions of CE has, in explaining the overall experience with a professional service

provider, will be subject to some effect coming from the culture and values or the broader macro-environment in which the business exchange takes place. Thus, I suggest that it would be beneficial to further investigate the study model in other B2B settings (e.g., customers of financial service providers) taking into consideration the characteristics of the context in which the model will be employed for more comprehensive understanding of the CE concept. Also, it would be better to investigate the model in other countries, taking into consideration the cultural differences to see how the different dimensions of CE impact on customer satisfaction and their subsequent behaviour.

Choosing to focus on the decision-maker and, at the same time, exclude other members of the buying centre entails, in itself, a limitation. However, given that the attempt to conceptualise, measure and assess the impact CE (as a holistic notion) has on specific behavioural outcomes for B2B customers, the need for parsimony drives and justifies my decision.

Determining the length of period between each study wave is a challenge that cannot be underestimated within a longitudinal design. As previously mentioned, the length of time between the study waves was three months. The rationale behind choosing this specific period was grounded on evidence from the in-depth interviews. Therefore, if we want to employ this model in other service settings (other than professional service providers), the period between waves should be reconsidered based on the nature of the setting, provided that the relationships tend to be more/less lasting and the repurchase behaviour needs a longer/lesser period in other settings.

A further limitation is the time span covered by this study. Having measures over three different points of time can potentially capture the plausible nature of the

relationship between CE and the customer's reported behaviour. However, intuitively, it can be argued that it is reasonable to assume a level of saturation of the influence CE has on repeated business or WOM, in which any investment towards CE improvement may not increase any further the customer's willingness to continue doing business with the same service provider or recommendations to peers. Our data though do not allow for an examination of a non-linear relationship. Future researchers may wish to take on this challenge, provided they have the required resources.

More importantly, with the increased attention in digital marketing, I would also suggest undertaking further investigation into the model by incorporating online aspects, such as incorporating the influence of the supplier's website design on the customer experience and perhaps customers' reviews. This would increase our confidence in the model and increase our knowledge in this fast-changing world.

In spite of the study limitations, this study has provided valid and reliable findings using a pertinent study approach. As customer experience is an emerging research stream, this study contributes to the existing knowledge and longitudinally provides empirical evidence of the customer experience as well as providing a basis for further research and fruitful findings for practitioners.

7.7. Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to define the concept of customer experience in B2B and identify its dimensions, drivers and relative consequences taking into account the role of past experience. This chapter has concluded four key research objectives and provided how each research objective has been addressed. It has also presented the customer experience model in B2B developed throughout the study stages outlining pertinent experience relationships. This chapter has concluded

the methodology adopted in this study and demonstrated how every stage has helped to meet the research objectives. The theoretical contributions have been highlighted along with the several implications for managerial practice. Further, this chapter has outlined the research limitations along with opportunistic future research suggestions.

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APPENDIX 1: In-depth Interview Discussion Guide

Introduction

- 1- Introduce yourself to the interviewee
- 2- Explain the purpose of the interview
- 3- Background of the interviewee
 - Can you please tell me about your work background?

1- First objective: Define experience

- So let's start this conversation by helping me to clarify what do you understand when I ask you to define the term experience in the context of exchanges you have with your professional service provider?

2- Second objective: Confirm the four CE dimensions

- Based on this description can you help me record the key aspects that underlie the way you just described experience? What makes you say this?

3- Third objective: Produce items for the four CE dimensions

- What are the main items that shaped your experience when working with the supplier? What makes you say this? Can provide more details around that?
- Given this discussion about experience, can you please give an example of an experience that you have had with a professional service provider? How do you describe it (positive, negative)?
- How did it influence your experience? In what way? What makes say that?

Thanks for giving me this example, let's now move on and try to focus on what actually has driven your experience with the supplier

4- Fourth objective: Confirm experience drivers

- The main purpose here is to categorize the technical offerings into core and augmenting offerings, so the question is:

Can you please classify which are core and which are augmenting supplier's offerings from the following list: Delivery performance, Technical quality, Price, Adaptation, Innovation, Service support, Reputation.

Similarly, to confirm the functional encounter with the service provider (exchange climate and bonding), the questions is:

Can you please classify from the following list which are represent the exchange climate and which are represent the bonding: Atmosphere, Information sharing, Technology sharing, Trust, Commitment, personal relationship.

- The second purpose is to confirm all the drivers.

1-Was the delivery performance a key driver in shaping the experience you just described?

2-How about the technical quality, was it a key driver in shaping your experience?

3-How about the price? Was it important?

4-How about adaptation? Was it important in shaping your experience?

5-How about service support? Was it important in shaping your experience?

6-How about innovation? Was it important in shaping your experience?

7-How about reputation of the supplier? Was it important in shaping your experience?

Let's now move on and talk about what drives your experience during interaction/exchanges

8-How about atmosphere (I mean by atmosphere the general climate of the meeting), Was atmosphere important in shaping your experience?

9-How about information sharing? Was it important in shaping your experience?

10-How about technology sharing? Was it important in shaping your experience?

Let's now move on and talk about the other aspects of the relationships with the supplier

11-How about trust, was it important in shaping your experience?

12-How about commitment? Was it important in shaping your experience?

13-How about personal relationship? Was it important in shaping your experience?

5- Fifth objective: Confirm the role of time in shaping experience

How about past experience? Was it important in shaping your experience?

If he say yes ask how did past experience influence your present experience?

In what way?

If he says no ask why do you think past experience was not important?

6- Sixth objective: Consequences of experience

What are the consequences of this experience you talked about? Did you feel satisfied or unsatisfied? Why you say this?

7- Finally, could you please help to identify how often do you need to re-purchase/deal with a professional service provider?

-Is there anything else we have not mentioned or discussed that you would like to add in terms of experience (dimensions/drivers/ consequence)

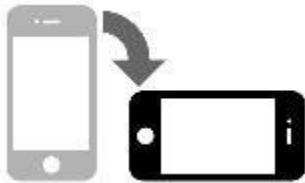
Thank you for your participation

APPENDIX 2: Questionnaire for the Scales Validation

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey on the subject of customer experience. It should take no more than 5 minutes to complete. This survey is being conducted by Ahmed Almoraish, a doctoral researcher at Strathclyde Business School, who will ensure that all of the findings remain completely confidential and cannot be attributed to any one individual.

You will be asked some questions and if you qualify you will be directed to the main body of the survey, if you do not fit the criteria you will be thanked for your time and the survey will close.

If completing on a smart phone or tablet device then please rotate to landscape mode.



Q1 **Which area do you live?**

- Scotland
 - Other
- Please write _____

Q2 **To which of the following age groups do you belong?**

Please select

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

Q3 **Are you...**

- Male
- Female

- Q4 **Which of the following best describe your work situation?**
Please **SELECT ALL** that apply
- Employed Full-time
 - Employed Part-time
 - Business Owner
 - Self Employed
 - Sole Trader
 - None of these – end survey
- Q5 **Which of the following best describes the industry in which you work?**
Please select
- Agency
 - Communication
 - Construction
 - Education
 - Finance/banking
 - Health
 - Manufacturing
 - Public Sector
 - Retail
 - Travel
 - Other
- Please write in other

- Q6 **Still thinking about where you work, which of the following roles are you responsible for within your day to day job?**
Please select
- Procuring professional services (e.g. telecoms, IT, accountancy providers, HR, marketing, media etc)
 - None of the above - end survey
- Q7 **You mentioned that part of your role at work involves procuring business services from professional service providers such as telecoms, IT, accountancy providers, HR, marketing, media etc. Thinking specifically about this role which of the following best describes you...**
- I am the sole Individual in the company who is responsible for and has experience in liaising with the professional services companies
 - I am jointly responsible for and has experience in liaising with the professional services companies

- I have limited contact and or responsibility with this type of exchange – end survey

Q8 Has your company used any professional services from an outside supplier not older than a month?

Please select

- Yes
 No -end survey
 Don't know - end survey

Q9 Which of these best describes your role within your company?

Please select

- Managing Director
 Senior Director
 Senior Manager
 Purchasing Manager
 Head of Department
 Marketing Manager
 Executive Manager

Q10 Please indicate which of the following professional services your company has used during the past 12months?

Please select ALL that apply

- Management consulting firms
 IT consulting
 Advertising agencies
 Marketing research agency
 Legal firms
 Accountancy services
 Site developers
 Other professional service providers (write in)

Please write ONE other

Q11 And of the services your company has used, which ONE would you say YOU have most frequent experience in dealing/liasing with not older than a month

Please select

- Management consulting firms

- IT consulting
- Advertising agencies
- Marketing research agency
- Legal firms
- Accountancy services
- Site developers
- Other professional service providers _____

You have qualified for the survey.

Contact information

This research is carried out by Ahmed Almoraish. Doctoral Researcher at the Department of Marketing, Strathclyde University Business School, under the supervision of Prof.Spiros Gounaris and Dr.Beverly Wagner.
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If you are happy to be involved in this project, please indicate below...

- I am happy to be involved in this research project
- I do not want to be involved in this research project (end survey)

To answer the following questions we kindly ask you to reflect on the experience you have with the company who has provided you with the service not older than a month.

You do not need to name the service provider. Just please try to reflect on your experience with this supplier.

Let's call this supplier "company x" from now on.

Q12 We would like to ask you to assess your experience from doing business with Company x.

Think about the process you went through, the interactions you had when getting your professional service and how that might influence your experiences. Please indicate the level of your agreement / disagreement with each of the following statement capturing different items of your experience. Please rate from 1 to 7, where 1 means strongly disagree and 7 means strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree			Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree
Met the delivery deadlines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Met our budget	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Met our specifications	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Achieved our objectives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Produced solutions that led to increase our company's effectiveness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provided high-level reports and presentations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q13 Think about the process you went through, the interactions you had when getting your professional service and how that might influence your experiences. Please indicate the level of your agreement / disagreement with each of the following statement capturing different items of your experience.

Please rate from 1 to 7, where 1 means strongly disagree and 7 means strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree			Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree
Were adaptive to our needs and requests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responded quickly when needed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Completed the work in an innovative way	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Produced innovative solutions and ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Used most recent techniques to complete the task	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrated a good understanding of the challenges we face	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helped improve our performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q14 Think about the process you went through, the interactions you had when getting your professional service and how that might influence your experiences. Please indicate the level of your agreement / disagreement with each of the following statement capturing different items of your experience.

Please rate from 1 to 7, where 1 means strongly disagree and 7 means strongly agree.

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4 Neither agree or disagree	5	6	7 Strongly agree
Friendship with the supplier's management is welcome	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of our business, the supplier invites us to attend social events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We enjoy each other's company in a social setting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q15 Think about the process you went through, the interactions you had when getting your professional service and how that might influence your experiences. Please indicate the level of your agreement / disagreement with each of the following statement capturing different items of your experience.

Please rate from 1 to 7, where 1 means strongly disagree and 7 means strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree			Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree
Doing business with this supplier is always in a warm and friendly climate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel our supplier is honest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel our supplier is transparent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I really respect the work of our supplier	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is pleasant to do business with our supplier	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have nothing to worry about when doing business with our supplier	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This supplier puts all our fears at ease	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

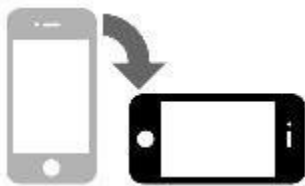
Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey, please now press submit to complete your response

APPENDIX 3: Questionnaire for Wave 1

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey on the subject of customer experience. It should take no more than 5 minutes to complete. This survey is being conducted by Ahmed Almoraiash, a doctoral researcher at Strathclyde Business School, who will ensure that all of the findings remain completely confidential and cannot be attributed to any one individual.

You will be asked some questions and if you qualify you will be directed to the main body of the survey, if you do not fit the criteria you will be thanked for your time and the survey will close.

If completing on a smart phone or tablet device then please rotate to landscape mode.



Q1 **In which of these areas do you live?**

Please take a look at the map below and select the area in which you live

- South West
- South East
- East Anglia
- West Midlands
- East Midlands
- Yorkshire / Humbershire
- North West
- North East
- Scotland
- Wales
- Northern Ireland
- Greater London

- Q2 **To which of the following age groups do you belong?**
Please select
- Under 18
 - 18-24
 - 25-34
 - 35-44
 - 45-54
 - 55-64
 - 65+
- Q3 **Are you...**
- Male
 - Female
- Q4 **Which of the following best describe your work situation?**
Please **SELECT ALL** that apply
- Employed Full-time
 - Employed Part-time
 - Business Owner
 - Self Employed
 - Sole Trader
 - Unemployed
 - Semi-Retired
 - None of these- end survey
- Q5 **What is the approximate total number of employees your company has?**
This is across all UK locations (where applicable)
Please select
- Just me
 - 1 - 4 staff
 - 5 to 9 staff
 - 10 to 49 staff
 - 50 to 99 staff
 - 100 to 249 staff
 - 250 to 999 staff
 - 1000+ staff
- Q6 **Which of the following best describes the industry in which you work?**
Please select
- Agency
 - Communication
 - Construction
 - Education
 - Finance/banking
 - Health

- Manufacturing
- Public Sector
- Retail
- Travel
- Other

Please write in other

Q7 Still thinking about where you work, which of the following roles are you responsible for within your day to day job?

Please select

- Procuring professional services (e.g. telecoms, IT, accountancy providers, HR, marketing, media etc)
- None of the above - end survey

Q8 You mentioned that part of your role at work involves procuring business services from professional service providers such as telecoms, IT, accountancy providers, HR, marketing, media etc. Thinking specifically about this role which of the following best describes you...

- I am the sole Individual in the company who is responsible for and has experience in liaising with the professional services companies
- I am jointly responsible for and has experience in liaising with the professional services companies
- I have limited contact and or responsibility with this type of exchange – end survey

Q9 Has your company used any professional services from an outside supplier not older than a month?

Please select

- Yes
- No -end survey
- Don't know - end survey

Q10 Which of these best describes your role within your company?

Please select

- Managing Director
- Senior Director
- Senior Manager
- Purchasing Manager
- Head of Department

- Marketing Manager
- Executive Manager

Q11 Please indicate which of the following professional services your company has used during the past 12 months?

Please select ALL that apply

- Management consulting firms
- IT consulting
- Advertising agencies
- Marketing research agency
- Legal firms
- Accountancy services
- Site developers
- Other professional service providers (write in)

Please write ONE other

Q12 And of the services your company has used, which ONE would you say YOU have most frequent experience in dealing/liaising with not older than a month.

Please select

- Management consulting firms
- IT consulting
- Advertising agencies
- Marketing research agency
- Legal firms
- Accountancy services
- Site developers
- Other professional service providers_____

You have qualified for the survey

Contact information

This research is carried out by Ahmed Almoraish. Doctoral Researcher at the Department of Marketing, Strathclyde University Business School, under the supervision of Prof.Spiros Gounaris and Dr.Beverly Wagner.

E-mail: ahmed.almoraish@strath.ac.uk

If you are happy to be involved in this project, please indicate below...

- I am happy to be involved in this research project
- I do not want to be involved in this research project (end survey)

To answer the following questions we kindly ask you to reflect on the experience you have with the company who has provided you with the service not older than a month.

You do not need to name the service provider. Just please try to reflect on your experience with this supplier.

Let's call this supplier "company x" from now on.

Q13 We would like to ask you to assess your experience from doing business with Company x.

Think about the process you went through, the interactions you had when getting your professional service and how that might influence your experiences. Please indicate the level of your agreement / disagreement with each of the following statement capturing different items of your experience.

Please rate from 1 to 7, where 1 means strongly disagree and 7 means strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree			Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree
Met the delivery deadlines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Met our budget	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Met our specifications	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Achieved our objectives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Produced solutions that led to increase our company's effectiveness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provided high-level reports and presentations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q14 Think about the process you went through, the interactions you had when getting your professional service and how that might influence your experiences. Please indicate the level of your agreement / disagreement with each of the following statement capturing different items of your experience.

Please rate from 1 to 7, where 1 means strongly disagree and 7 means strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree			Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree
Were adaptive to our needs and requests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responded quickly when needed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Completed the work in an innovative way	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Produced innovative solutions and ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Used most recent techniques to complete the task	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrated a good understanding of the challenges we face	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helped improve our performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q15 Think about the process you went through, the interactions you had when getting your professional service and how that might influence your experiences. Please indicate the level of your agreement / disagreement with each of the following statement capturing different items of your experience.

Please rate from 1 to 7, where 1 means strongly disagree and 7 means strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree			Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree
Friendship with the supplier's management is welcome	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of our business, the supplier invites us to attend social events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We enjoy each other's company in a social setting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q16 Think about the process you went through, the interactions you had when getting your professional service and how that might influence your experiences. Please indicate the level of your agreement / disagreement with each of the following statement capturing different items of your experience.

Please rate from 1 to 7, where 1 means strongly disagree and 7 means strongly agree.

	1 Strongly disagree	2	3	4 Neither agree or disagree	5	6	7 Strongly agree
Doing business with this supplier is always in a warm and friendly climate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel our supplier is honest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel our supplier is transparent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I really respect the work of our supplier	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is pleasant to do business with our supplier	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have nothing to worry about when doing business with our supplier	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This supplier puts all our fears at ease	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey, please now press submit to complete your response

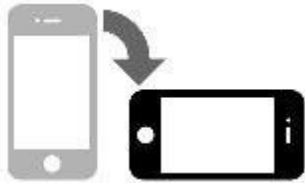
APPENDIX 4: Questionnaire for Wave 2

You have been asked to complete this survey as a follow up to one you kindly completed in March of this year on the subject of customer experience. This follow-up survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

This survey is being conducted by Ahmed Almoraish, a doctoral researcher at Strathclyde Business School, who will ensure that all of the findings remain completely confidential and cannot be attributed to any one individual.

You will be asked some questions and if you qualify you will be directed to the main body of the survey, if you do not fit the criteria you will be thanked for your time and the survey will close.

If completing on a smart phone or tablet device then please rotate to landscape mode.



In the previous survey we asked you to reflect on your experience with the company who provided the following service type...

{Linked to the answer of Q12 from wave 1 survey the selected service will appear here}

Q1 Since the last survey in March do ANY of the following apply to you?

- Change of employer
- Change of career
- One team (either the supplier or the customer) have changed as one or more team members left the team and were replaced
- No longer deal with {linked to answer of Q12 from wave 1 survey will appear here} service provider in my role
- This is a new task

Please select

- No, none of these apply to me
- Yes, one or more of these apply to me - end survey

Q2 Has your company used the same professional service provider for {linked to the answer of Q12 from wave 1 survey will appear here} that you referenced during the past survey?

Please select

- Yes
- No, we have switched provider – end survey
- No, we no longer require this business service – end survey
- Don't know- end survey

You have qualified for the survey

Contact information

This research is carried out by Ahmed Almoraish. Doctoral Researcher at the Department of Marketing, Strathclyde University Business School, under the supervision of Prof.Spiros Gounaris and Dr.Beverly Wagner.

E-mail: ahmed.almoraish@strath.ac.uk

If you are happy to be involved in this project, please indicate below...

- I am happy to be involved in this research project
- I do not want to be involved in this research project-end survey

Q3 To answer the following questions we kindly ask you to reflect on the experience you have with the company who has provided you with the same service since the last survey in March. Just please try to reflect on your experience with this supplier. Let's call this supplier "company x" from now on.

The following section is concerned with your thoughts about the causes of your experiences when doing business with company X. Please indicate the level of your agreement/disagreement with each of the following statements. Please rate from 1 to 7, where 1 means strongly disagree and 7 means strongly agree.

Delivery Performance of company X

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree			Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree
Company X is aware of my needs concerning distribution of service material	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company X always delivers the service on time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Technical quality of company X

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree			Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree
Has knowledge of our markets and products/services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has knowledge of his/her own company's procedures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Has knowledge of his/her firm's competitors' products, services, and sales policies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has knowledge of his/her firm's product features and benefits.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has knowledge of our operations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Price of company X

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree		Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree	
Company X offers a reasonable price	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company X offers better price compared with other firms offering similar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Reputation of company X

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree		Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree	
Company X is a long-established company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The employees of company X are well trained	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company X is a sound company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company X has a strong management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Company X has expertise in this specific area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company X provides sound solutions for client problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Adaptation of company X

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree			Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree
Company X constantly improves technical capabilities to keep abreast with new developments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company X proactively offers us new technical solutions when conditions change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company X makes operational changes when required by our team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company X is able to coordinate the various disciplines when required by our team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Service support of company X

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree			Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree
Company X is available when we need information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Company X provides appropriate information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company X responds quickly when we need	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Innovation of company X

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree			Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree
Company X constantly introduces innovative ideas in addressing and solving problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company X offers new services consistent with existing client operating systems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company X thinks differently from other firms in solving client problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company X frequently introduces new methodologies, approaches or solutions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company X regularly offers new products and services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company X is an innovative firm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Atmosphere

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree			Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree
I consider the general atmosphere surrounding the working relationship with company X as harmonious	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I regard the overall relationship with company X as close	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe mutual expectations for the project have been established with company X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Information sharing

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree			Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree
Company X submits technical documentation that is easily understood by our team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company X submits technical documentation that meets our needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The technical information supplied by the company X is adequate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Technology sharing

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree			Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree
The technology used by company X improves the efficiency of our relationship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The technology used by company X helps us to reduce our cost of doing business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company X has instituted procedures which facilitate our use of the technology	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company X has invested considerable time and effort in developing electronic information exchange with our company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Trust

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree			Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree
Company X can be relied on to keep promises	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company X is trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have confidence in company X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Commitment

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree			Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree
I am very committed to the relationship with company X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I intend to maintain the relationship indefinitely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I should put maximum effort into maintaining my relationship with company X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Personla relationship

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree			Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree
Company X staff like to talk with people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People from company X are friendly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company X tries to establish a personal relationship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

While the previous section was about the causes of experience, the following section is concerned about experience itself

We would like to ask you to assess your experience from doing business with Company x.

Q4 Think about the process you went through, the interactions you had when getting your professional service and how that might influence your experiences. Please indicate the level of your agreement / disagreement with each of the following statement capturing different items of your experience. Please rate from 1 to 7, where 1 means strongly disagree and 7 means strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree			Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree
Met the delivery deadlines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Met our budget	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Met our specifications	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Achieved our objectives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Produced solutions that led to increase our company's effectiveness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provided high-level reports and presentations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q5 Think about the process you went through, the interactions you had when getting your professional service and how that might influence your experiences. Please indicate the level of your agreement/disagreement with each of the following statement capturing different items of your experience. Please rate from 1 to 7, where 1 means strongly disagree and 7 means strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree			Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree
Were adaptive to our needs and requests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responded quickly when needed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Completed the work in an innovative way	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Produced innovative solutions and ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Used most recent techniques to complete the task	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrated a good understanding of the challenges we face	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helped improve our performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q6 Think about the process you went through, the interactions you had when getting your professional service and how that might influence your experiences. Please indicate the level of your agreement/disagreement with each of the following statement capturing different items of your experience. Please rate from 1 to 7, where 1 means strongly disagree and 7 means strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree			Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree
Friendship with the supplier's management is welcome	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of our business, the supplier invites us to attend social events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We enjoy each other's company in a social setting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q7 Think about the process you went through, the interactions you had when getting your professional service and how that might influence your experiences. Please indicate the level of your agreement/disagreement with each of the following statement capturing different items of your experience. Please rate from 1 to 7, where 1 means strongly disagree and 7 means strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree			Neither agree or disagree			Strongly agree
Doing business with this supplier is always in a warm and friendly climate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel our supplier is honest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel our supplier is transparent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I really respect the work of our supplier	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is pleasant to do business with our supplier	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have nothing to worry about when doing business with our supplier	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This supplier puts all our fears at ease	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8 The following assess your level of satisfaction based on the experience you have had with company X. Please rate from 1 to 7, where 1 means totally unsatisfied and 7 means totally satisfied.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Totally unsatisfied			Neither satisfied or unsatisfied			Totally satisfied
Your level of satisfaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey, please now press submit to complete your response

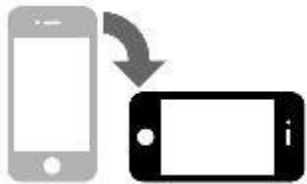
APPENDIX 5: Questionnaire for Wave 3

You have been asked to complete this survey as the final follow up to one you kindly completed in July of this year on the subject of customer experience. This final follow-up questionnaire is part of the same research project, which aims to investigate your reported behaviour. This follow-up survey should take no more than 3 minutes to complete.

This survey is being conducted by Ahmed Almorash, a doctoral researcher at Strathclyde Business School, who will ensure that all of the findings remain completely confidential and cannot be attributed to any one individual.

You will be asked some questions and if you qualify you will be directed to the main body of the survey, if you do not fit the criteria you will be thanked for your time and the survey will close.

If completing on a smart phone or tablet device then please rotate to landscape mode.



In the previous survey we asked you to reflect on your experience with the company who provided the following service type...

{Linked to the answer of Q12 from wave 1 survey the selected service will appear here}

Q1 Since the last survey in July do ANY of the following apply to you?

- Change of employer
- Change of career
- One team (either the supplier or the customer) have changed as one or more team members left the team and were replaced
- No longer deal with {Linked to the answer of Q12 from wave 1 survey will appear here}in my role

Please select

- No, none of these apply to me
- Yes, one or more of these apply to me - end survey

You have qualified for the survey

Contact information

This research is carried out by Ahmed Almoraish. Doctoral Researcher at the Department of Marketing, Strathclyde University Business School, under the supervision of Prof.Spiros Gounaris and Dr.Beverly Wagner.

E-mail: ahmed.almoraish@strath.ac.uk

If you are happy to be involved in this project, please indicate below...

- I am happy to be involved in this research project
- I do not want to be involved in this research project-end survey

Q2 The following section deals with assessing your reported behaviour towards the professional service provider you use. Please indicate whether you have repurchased since the last survey in July.

Did you repurchase from the same service provider since the last survey?

- Yes
- NO

Q3 The following section deals with assessing your reported behaviour towards the professional service provider you use. Please indicate whether you have recommended your service provider since the last survey in July.

Did you recommend your service provider through word-of-mouth since the last survey?

- Yes
- NO

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey, please now press submit to complete your response.