



**Experience-Dominant Logic: Laying the Groundwork for an
Experience-Dominant View of Firm Practices in the
Marketplace**

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Abstract

Purpose: This paper aims to introduce the experience-dominant (Ex-D) logic model, that synthesizes the creation, perceptions, and outcomes of Ex-D logic. It is designed to offer valuable insights for strategic managerial applications and future research directions.

Design: Employing a qualitative approach by using 8 selected product launch events from reviewed 100 event videos and 55 in-depth interviews with industrial managers to develop an Ex-D logic model, and data were coded and analysed via NVivo.

Findings: Results show that the firm’s Ex-D logic is operationalized as the mentalizing of the three types of customer needs (service competence, hedonic excitations, and meaning making), the materializing of three types of customer experiences and customer journeys (service experience, hedonic experience, and brand experience), and the moderating of three types of customer values (service values, hedonic values, and brand values).

Research implication: This study has implications for adding new insights into existing theory on dominant logic and customer experience management, and also offers actionable recommendations for managerial applications.

Originality/Value: This study sheds light on the importance of Ex-D logic from a strategic point of view and provides an organic view of the firm. It distinguishes firm perspective from customer perspective, firm experience from customer experience, and firm journey from consumer journey.

Keywords: *Dominant logic, experiential marketing, customer journey, customer experience, experience-dominant logic*

Introduction

Getting the logic underpinning an offering right is crucial, as it makes or breaks a product offering in the marketplace (Keyhani 2023), delving into the logic behind the offerings takes us to the fundamentals of the *dominant logic* conversation. The search for underlying logic or mental models has been an active research enterprise in strategic management studies (Chang 2023; Hall et al., 2022) and customer experience management studies (Zha et al., 2023a, b). The major dominant logic models offered so far in the marketing literature, are represented by service-dominant (S-D) logic (Vargo et al., 2023) and customer-dominant (C-D) logic (Heinonen 2022). An excessive focus on the lived experience of the consumer in C-D logic has diminished the importance of the lived experiences of a firm (Roy et al., 2019). S-D logic, on the other hand, offers a *provider-dominant* or firm perspective. Both approaches have a great impact on marketing and strategy research.

However, they have not accorded sufficient sensitivity to the experiential character of a firm (Brodie et al., 2019) and the experiential dynamics, which govern the interactivity between the firm and the consumer in the marketplace. For instance, C-D logic studies (Heinonen and Lipkin 2023; Kim et al., 2023; Lipkin and Heinonen 2022) have claimed legitimacy for a firm-side approach, yet the current conceptualization within the C-D logic model portrays firms as passive actors. This traditional perspective shifts the focus away from the dynamics of exchange and service, instead concentrating on how a firm's services are integrated into the customer experience, aligning with consumer needs and desires. For this reason, many of the unique qualities associated with the firm-side narrative, such as agency, intentionality, innovation, and creativity, are not fully accounted for. However, telling the customer side of the consumption narrative offers only half the story. To construct a plausible dominant logic theory, we argue that researchers must *re-grow* the firm-side narrative from the ground up, to differentiate a firm's customer experience perspective from the customers' customer experience perspective, firm experience from customer experience, and the firm journey from the customer journey.

S-D logic, on the other hand, was initially conceived as an oppositional reading to goods-dominant (G-D) logic, S-D logic has since evolved beyond a strategic management category into a general perspective of the market (Vargo et al., 2023). This elevated or zoom-out view of marketing activities sees values as being conceived within systems of service exchange and not simply between a firm and a customer from a service perspective (Vargo and Lusch 2017). One unintentional consequence of this elevated view is the exclusion of the firm's more organic properties, which at the ground level represent the "socio-psycho-cultural" aspect of human behavior (Gordon 2011). While S-D logic has contributed immensely to the understanding of marketing behavior at a macro level, it is less adept at describing the firm narrative at the micro, day-to-day, lived experience level.

Based on the above discussion, the purpose of this study is to introduce the experience-dominant (Ex-D) logic model, that synthesizes the creation, perceptions, and outcomes of Ex-D logic. Three research questions that guide us to achieve this goal are: (i) *How does the Ex-D logic differ from traditional dominant logic in understanding and interpreting the role of the firm within the experiential cycle?* (ii) *How do the interactions between the two distinct types of logic practitioners influence the outcomes of the marketing exchange?* (iii) *How can the conceptual framework derived from the Ex-D logic be effectively integrated into strategic managerial applications?* These questions, if explored thoroughly, can provide valuable insights into the nature of the Ex-D logic, its implications for marketing exchange, and its potential for strategic managerial application.

As such, this study contributes to the marketing literature in three ways. First, this paper adds new insights into traditional dominant logic. Since the concept of experience was introduced into academia in the early 1980s through the contributions of hedonic consumption experience (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982), experience has permeated all levels of the marketing discourse (Holbrook 2018). Indeed, experience has emerged as the new currency of exchange through the contribution of experiential marketing (Pine and Gilmore 1999; Schmitt 1999a), the new metric of consumption value

(Payne, Storbacka and Frow 2008; Ranaswamy and Ozcan 2014), and the new index for measuring subjective well-being and happiness (Bastos and Brucks 2017; Gilovich, Kumar, and Jampol 2015). The prevalent use of the concept at both the practitioner and academic level suggests that a dominant logic model based on experience is timely and judicious.

Second, this paper adds new insights to service marketing literature by offering an embodied perspective of the firm's offerings. In recent years, the agitation for greater psychological realism has morphed into behavioral economics, introducing a more humanized psychological model of behaviour into economics (Thaler and Sunstein 2008). Since the service marketing literature has inherited much of its basic economic assumptions from mainstream strategy research, the same "curious absence of human actors and their actions in most strategy theories is also reflected in marketing theories in general" (Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009, p. 69). If understanding the life experience of the consumer is a starting place for consumption experience research, understanding the life experience of the firm is equally critical.

Third, this paper contributes to the customer experience management literature by introducing a new theoretical approach to customer experience management studies. Most studies (Kuehni, Jozic and Homburg 2019; Lemon and Verhoef 2016; Siebert et al. 2020) so far have focused on the development of the apparatus of customer experience management and on improving and fine-tuning customer-oriented instruments, such as customer journey designs, touchpoints, repertory grids, or loyalty loops. Ex-D logic has the potential to supply a sufficiently broad experience framework, one encompassing firm-side and consumer-side perspectives, to further consolidate the content of customer experience management research. Finally, the Ex-D logic perspective complements the existing conceptualization of experience (Table 1) that tends to focus on a single logic (Abid et al., 2022), and does not integrate dominant logic in the marketing literature (Engelmann et al. 2020) and focus on review the existing literature (Becker and Jaakkola, 2020). The theoretical framework

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3 proposed in this study supports more new insights and results will have more actional implications
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5 for firms.
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7 Table 1: Summarise the recent relevant conceptual articles and key contributions of this study.
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Study	Goal	Supporting theory	Method	Key contributions	Differences form this study
Becker and Jaakkola (2020) <i>Journal of the Academic Marketing Science</i>	To develop a set of fundamental propositions for customer experience	Service marketing Retailing Branding	Systematic literature review – 136 articles and metatheoretical analysis	Proposed a conceptual framework for customer experience with 4 fundamental premises	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on service-dominant logic.• Do not include the insight form exploratory studies
Engelmann et al. (2020)	To improve conceptual clarity by investigating, comparing and evaluating the extant understandings	Dominant logic	Systematic literature review - examination of dominant logic in 94 studies	Proposed an integrative model and theorize about how shared mental models, values and premises, organizational practices and organizing structures operate in concert to produce a firm's dominant logic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on traditional dominant logic.• Do not include the dominant logic from marketing literature such as service-dominant logic or customer dominant logic or brand logic
Abid et al., (2022) <i>Journal of Consumer Behaviour</i>	To conceptualize the experiential nature of value-in-use	Service dominant logic	A qualitative study (26 semi-structured interviews with 13 customers and 13 E-beauty managers).	Proposed experience-dominant logic (EDL) as an important paradigm for value creation in the customer journey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limits to value in use perspective• Focus on service perspective and service industry.
Zha et al., (2023b) <i>Journal of Business Research</i>	To review and examine the customer experience literature by employing a modularity approach	Modularity theory	A bibliometric approach with co-citation analysis examined 561 articles in business and management literature	Proposes a modularity framework for customer experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limits to new insights from existing literature• Focus on the modularity approach
This study	To introduce the experience-dominant (Ex-D) logic model, that synthesizes the creation, perceptions, and outcomes of Ex-D logic. It is designed to offer valuable insights for strategic managerial applications and future research directions	Firm experience Customer experience Service dominant logic Brand logic Experiential marketing logic	Employing a qualitative approach by using 8 selected product launch events from reviewed 100 event videos and 55 in-depth interviews with industrial managers	Proposed an Ex-D logic framework that shows the firm's Ex-D logic is operationalized as the mentalizing of the three types of customer needs (service competence, hedonic excitations, and meaning making), the materializing of three types of customer experiences and customer journeys (service experience, hedonic experience, and brand experience), and the moderating of three types of customer values (service values, hedonic values, and brand values)	N/A

58 This study is structured in three parts based on a structure adapted from strategic management studies
59 (Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009). In Part 1, we review the relevant literature that contributes to
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conceptualizing Ex-D logic. In Part 2, Practices of Ex-D Logic, we apply a multi-strand research method to identify key Ex-D logic practices including mentalizing the customer experience, materializing the customer journey, moderating experiential values, and modelling practice-theoretics. In Part 3, The Praxis of Ex-D Logic, using a multi-logics framework, we look at the logic praxis to examine the flow of Ex-D logic praxis and hence the flow of Ex-D logic activities through the workings of three contextual logics: service logic, experiential marketing logic, and branding logic. At the end of the discourse, we put together a future research agenda for Ex-D logic development including reflections on the implications of Ex-D logic for both practice and academia.

Conceptualizing Experience Dominant Logic

Product offerings, however simple or sophisticated, are wrapped around a set of *logics*. Whether it is a can of Heinz baked beans or a new Taylor Swift album, all offerings arriving at the marketplace are governed by a set of internal logics that affect our experience of a product or brand (Schneider and Julie 2011; **Zha et al., 2023b**). Researchers (**Mahajan et al., 2023**; **Mero and Haapio 2022**) suggested that people do not buy objects but instead buy experiences or the logics that evoke these experiences. Thus, when you embrace a firm's offering, you are embracing a set of logics, and when you consume a product offering, you are internalizing a set of logics. So, what is Ex-D logic?

In this paper, we propose Ex-D logic as *a firm's experience-driven practice-theoretic governing a firm's conception and offering of customer experiences in the marketplace based on a firm's subjective approximation of the intended customer experience consumers need, desire, and aspire to.* Experience-driven practice-theoretic is a way of thinking and acting in a company that focuses on creating and managing the customer experience. It goes beyond just providing products or services; it's about shaping the entire experience a customer has with the company. This approach is based on the firm's subjective understanding of customer needs and desires, meaning it's how the company interprets what customers want rather than relying on universal standards. Combined with a customer-

centric approach that aims to cater to a wide range of customer needs and aspirations, the company tries to create experiences that match what customers truly need, want, and aspire to in their interactions with the company. Figure 1 visualizes the operation of the two cycles of logics operative in the marketplace. Figure 1 visualizes the operation of the two cycles of logics operative in the marketplace.

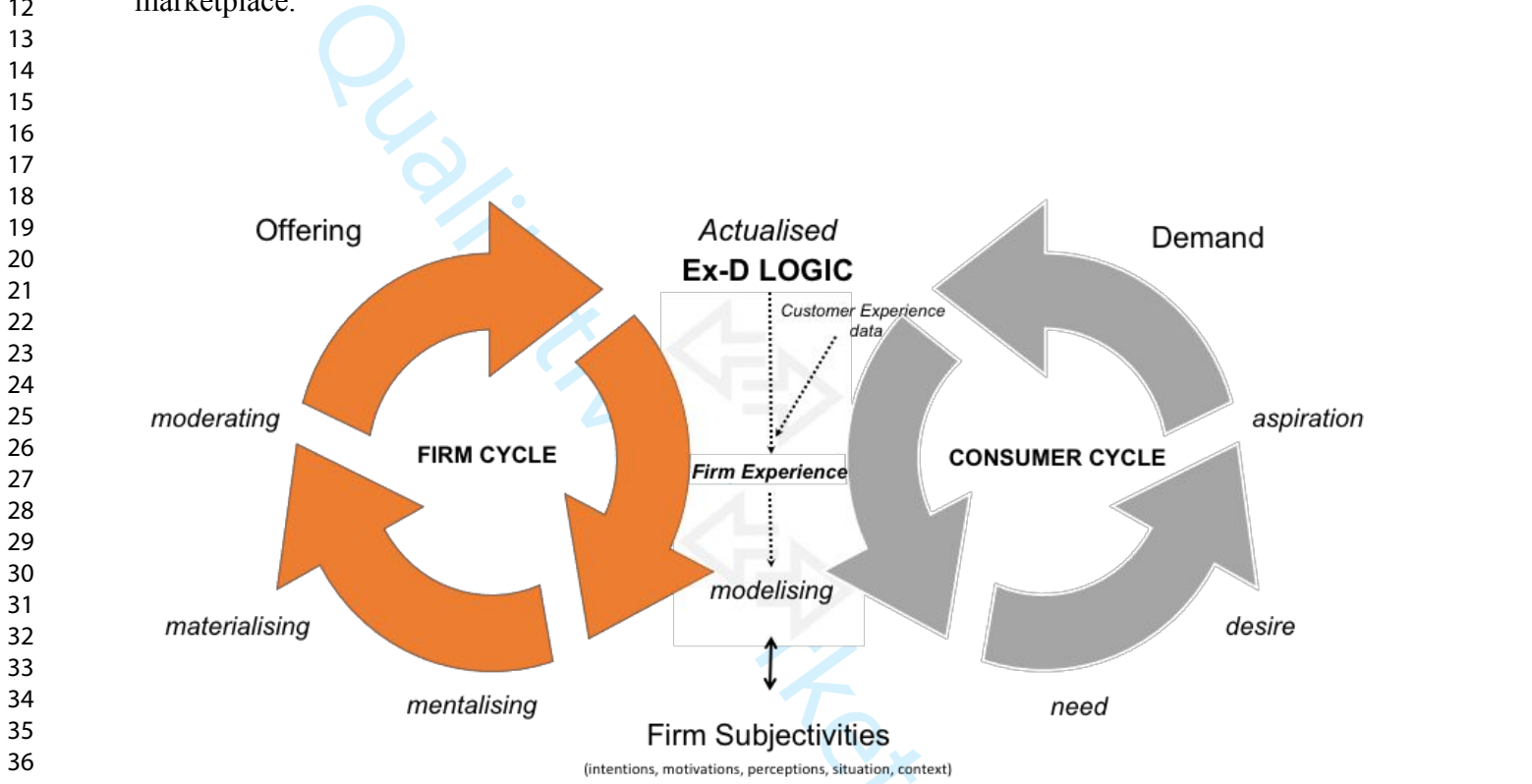


Figure 1: The narrative and process of Ex-D Logic

Logic Practitioners

The cycle on the left represents the firm cycle, where firms are conceptualized as logic practitioners (firm-side) actively engaged in the conception of logics to fashion offerings for the marketplace. The cycle on the right is the consumer cycle, where consumers are conceptualized as logic practitioners (consumer-side), canvassing the marketplace for logics to fit their consumption needs, desires, and aspirations (Vargo et al., 2023). Becker and Jaakkola (2020) alluded to these two cycles by suggesting that consumption motivated by managerial stimuli (firm cycle) should be differentiated from

consumption motivated by consumption stimuli (consumer cycle). In the same way, service logic, Grönroos and Gummerus (2014) have enclosed spheres of activities where processes of value creation take place independently.

In the S-D logic model, the marketplace is conceived as a system of interlocking activities based on the exchange of services (Helkkula and Arnould 2022). In the service logic model, Grönroos (2020) suggest that value creation, rather than service is more representative of the motivation of economic activities, for which service is only a facilitator. In Ex-D logic, we would suggest logic development and consumption form the basis of the economic activities, with the marketplace viewed as a multivariate universe of logic practitioners where all actants (firm-side or consumer-side) are engaged in a continual and lively development and exchange of logics.

Firm Perspective

What is the relationship between the two cycles in the marketplace? Although the two cycles operate independently, they are nevertheless interdependent. A firm's logic is shaped by the firm's perception of the consumer cycle. To determine what to offer, firms look longingly across the firm/consumer divide to get an approximate appraisal of the logic governing the consumer cycle (Babu et al., 2020).

Dominant logics are dyads, a dyad is something that can only be conceived and understood in pairs (e.g., marriage or twins). Dominant logics always involve the relationship between two conceptual entities, and the relationship may be causal or correlational. Crucially, Ratneshwar, Mick and Huffman (2000) saw a causal relationship between perception and action; the authors asserted that how a firm perceives the customer in regard to needs, motivation, and goals informs the logic of a firm's marketing strategy and activities. This link between perception and action underscores the enactive nature of dominant logics. Dominant logics are not mere concepts, mental maps or schemas, conceived in abstraction; they are inextricably connected to a firm's practices and therefore to be

deduced and theorized from actions already taken (Chia and Holt 2023). Table 2 provides an overview of logic models conceptualized in existing marketing literature segregated into two general categories. Dominant logics are defined as general mind-sets or world views regarding the consumption environment by which firms strategize and structure their business objectives. Contextual logic models, on the other hand, describe a firm’s marketing concerns and strategic considerations tied to a particular context or a particular facet of consumer behavior.

Table 2: Overview of Main Dominant Logics in the Marketing Literature.

General Logics				
A dominant logic is a general mind-set or a world view regarding the consumption environment and the consumer by which firms conceptualize the business and where structures and the frames of reference derived from the worldview form the key aspects of a dominant logic.				
Dominant Logic	Definition	Scope	Limitations	Exemplar (Chronological Order)
<i>Good–dominant logic (G-D) logic</i>	A strategic mindset that defines the firm as a producer of a tangible goods and services for commercial exchange in the marketplace	Main focus is on the producer or firm as the creator of value and the consumer as a user of value, and on conceptualizing value as something physical and tangible	A logic limited in seeing service as something tangible and less focus on value co-creation by both consumer and provider	Grönroos 2020
<i>Service-dominant logic (S-D) logic</i>	A strategic mindset that sees value as co-created within a system of service exchange where all stakeholders participate through differing inputs of knowledge and competence.	Main focus is on the co-creation of value by customers and service providers through participation in a value creation network	A logic limited in the amount of material derived from the history of a marketing account and less adept at describing the firm narrative at the micro, day-to-day, and lived experience levels	Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2016, 2017; Vargo et al., 2023
<i>Customer-dominant logic (C-D logic)</i>	A process which aims to understand how offerings become embedded in customers’ experience, journey, and lifeworld	Main focus is customers and how customers embedded with service in their consumption processes	A logic limited in addressing human actants embodied as a social entity called the firm, whose emotions, motivations, actions, and experiences shape strategy	Heinonen and Strandvik 2020 Heinonen et al. 2015
Contextual Logics				
Contextual logics describes a firm’s marketing concerns and strategic consideration tied to a particular context or a particular facet of consumer behavior				
Logic	Definition	Scope	Limitations	Key authors
<i>Brand logic</i>	A process which aims to provide brand value by co-creating value between a firm and its stakeholders	Main focus is on brand value and the meaning which is co-created between the firm and its stakeholders; views all stakeholders as endogenous to the brand value-creation process	A logic limited in branding and brand meaning	Merz et al. 2009; Zha et al., 2023b
<i>Service logic</i>	The firm facilitates processes that support customers to realize value at the point of consumption	Main focus is on the dyadic process of value co-creation and the interaction between the provider and the customer	A logic limited in service-centric interaction between the provider and the customer, but less focus on customer experiences	Grönroos, 2020 Grönroos and Gummerus 2014 Grönroos and Ravalld 2011
<i>Experiential marketing logic</i>	A mindset which aims to affect the creation of a memorable customer experience	Main focus is on symbolic resources, engaging transactions, and internalized value	A logic limited in the hedonic consumption experience process	Schmitt 2011 Lanier and Hampton 2009 Zha et al., 2023a

Firm Offering

So, how do firms go about bridging the firm cycle/customer cycle divide? It does so via an offering. According to Kotler (2003), an offering is a firm's proposition to the customer that consisting of "products, services, information, and experiences" (p. 11). While most traditional definitions capture only the value and price dimensions of an offering (Anderson, Narus and Narayandas 2009), Ex-D logic sees the pivotal role of an offering as a firm's *experiential proposition*: "*If you become my customer, this is potentially the customer experience we can co-create together through the customer journey prescribed*". Offerings contain potential experience-in-use, that is, the potential experiential value for customers "embedded in the resources offered by a service provider" (Grönroos and Gummerus 2014, p. 209). Since the potential "value-in-use" is only actualized at the point of usage (Abid et al., 2022), in Ex-D logic all offerings by nature are only approximations. However well-crafted, well made, and well thought through, all offerings are only an estimate of what the firm anticipates is the experience the customer needs and an estimate of the experience the offering potentially can provide (Thai and Yuksel 2023; Zha et al., 2023). For example, BlackBerry, the producer of the world's first widely adopted smartphone, reached out to customers with the logic that a physical keyboard experience is superior to a digital one and that users would still prefer the sensory experience of typing with a physical keyboard (The Guardian 2022). On both counts, the firm was wrong. It was a logic proposition that would eventually lead to the demise of the firm.

Since offerings are only approximations, firms go through an iterative cycle of offerings involving constant appraisal and reappraisal of the consumer cycle, conception, and re-conception of the intended customer experience, as well as tweaking (e.g., discounts, summer sales, early bird savings) and making all kinds of adjustments to the parameters of the offering mix to maximize sales. In Ex-D logic, these practices are called mentalizing, materializing, moderating, and modelling.

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Firm Experience

Since offerings are only approximations, firms operate in the marketplace through an iterative process of learning, improving, and tweaking with short periods of trial and error, or in short, via experience (Kushwaha et al., 2021). Firms are driven by a set of practice-theoretics that are experience-driven, and they learn from the experience of delivering an offering to the marketplace. As the members of the firm engage with customers at different touchpoints, the firm mines data derived from direct contact with customers - experiencing first-hand the customers’ responses, reactions, sensory cues, and social cues. Data retrieved via data-gathering devices (interviews, surveys etc.) also feed into the firm experience. Stonig’s (2020) study shows that firms update their strategic policies progressively as new information emerge to re-shape overall perception. Thus, a firm’s experience is a rich source of customer experience data that has a palpable influence on a determining the trajectory of the firm’s logic (Kuuru and Närvänen, 2019).

Firm Journey

Since every offering is only an approximation of the intended customer experience, the Ex-D logic cycle is a progression of experience, conceptualized in this paper as a firm journey (Mittal and Sridhar, 2020). While the consumer journey is already well documented in existing customer experience studies (Hamilton and Price 2019), the firm journey remains largely under the radar and theoretically unexplored. Marketing models reflect the assumptions undergirding standard economic theories which are heavily skewed towards a rational model of economic behaviour. Ex-D logic challenges the limits of rationality by presenting a model of exchange based on approximations, trial and error, moderation, adaptation, and the accrual of learning and experience.

Ex-D logic is a practice-theoretic, which is defined as the subjective theorizing of one’s own experience or a firm’s practices. At root, dominant logics are beliefs and assertions about phenomena in the social world that are “sanctioned by experience” as self-evidently true (Leung

and Bond 2008) and are grounded inextricably in the firm's context, subjectivities, and experiences. If firms are driven by experience-based practice-theoretics, understanding a firm's journey becomes an integral part of understanding the consumption patterns and behavior in the marketplace.

Method

The goal in this section is to answer the question 'What are some of the key experience-based practices driving the firm's marketing behavior that are demonstrative of Ex-D logic?' To answer this question, this study used a *multi-strand* or *bricolage* approach comprising an event analysis of product launch events (PLEs) and in-depth interviews with practitioners (Gordon 2011, p. 179). PLEs are the voluntary firm announcements of new product introductions to convince their core constituents of stakeholders, designers, and fans (Sorescu et al., 2017), firms set out to persuade them of the logic behind the products, for example, why they are launching another new product and what so unique about this version compared to the version launched last year. PLEs are, in a sense, a firm's viva voce, a verbal defence of the logic underlying the products on offer.

To enhance the study's credibility, reliability, and reduce bias, we employed the triangulation method as suggested by Creswell and Miller (2000). They defined triangulation as a process where researchers seek alignment among various information sources to derive themes or categories in research (p. 126). This approach bolsters the study's reliability and validity and strengthens the interpretation of its results. Therefore, concepts like reliability, validity, and triangulation are crucial, especially in qualitative research, to represent diverse avenues of ascertaining truth. Apart from enhancing reliability, the advantage of a multi-strand approach offers the researchers vantage points from varying perspectives of the same problem.

Study 1: Event analysis

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Research context. To achieve a greater understanding of the phenomenal characteristics of Ex-D logic, we gathered data through the virtual experiencing of PLEs available on youtube.com. At the heart of PLEs is the keynote speech that can be the extraction of the “mental models” embedded in individuals that then guide a firm’s marketing behavior, PLEs represent the most opportune occasion to examine the content of these mental models. In contrast with other formats available on YouTube, such as CEO interviews, corporate documentaries, or product audio-visuals, the use of an inductive approach to gain insights into a firm’s practice shields the research self-report mental models articulated by the firm.

Adopting a phenomenological approach by examining a firm’s *lived experience* is key to examining the firm’s experiential fabric. PLEs are prime research contexts because “live” keynote presentations afford the observer the opportunity to experience in situ a firm’s affective dimensions. A live presentation provides researchers with not only the cognitive-based data but also the passion, the story-telling, and the narratives that emerge from the analysis of these talks. This can be contrasted with studies that have been conducted on CEO letters and annual reports, but these instruments tend to be skewed towards shareholders, investors, and business-to-business stakeholders, and less towards the customers. As a result, they tend to be financially driven and include financial highlights, audit reports, and analyses of business segments, and are less about customer experience.

PLEs represent a window into the firm’s *lived experience*. As an integral part of the firm’s cycle of marketing activities, PLEs afford the observer an opportunity to experience the more organic aspects of a firm, as the researcher not only analyses the text but is deeply affected by the atmospherics, the passion, the narratives, the applause, the interaction between the firm and the live audience, and the flow of energy that emerge in these highly charged events. Contrast this with studies based on CEO speeches at annual general meetings and CEO letters, where the information gleaned from these texts

is usually highly redacted, filtered to meet disclosure requirements, and skewed towards the placating the queries from shareholders and investors.

Examining. Using keyword searches “*product launch events CEO speech*”, a selection is based on the following criteria: (1) they must be events where actual products are launched highlighting the naturalness of the particular setting enhancing the realism as with field experiments (List 2011); (2) the video footage must be “live” and un-redacted, that is, not edited versions of the PLEs; and, to add to the reliability of the analysis, (3) the videos are available for public scrutiny. In total, 100 videos were reviewed, out of which 8 were selected for this paper. They are (1) Google, (2) Microsoft Surface, (3) Tesla, (4) Adobe, (5) Dyson, (6) AirBnB, (7) Apple, and (8) Xiaomi.

Study 2 In-Depth Interviews

In the first stage, data was gathered via semi-structured in-depth interviews with fifty-five practitioners identified through social networking. The data were collected face-to-face and online in Asia and Europe. Majority were female, aged between 28 to 69 years old. The profile of the interviewees and their industry background correspondent with our goal to ensure the sample is sufficiently diverse to test the generalisability of Ex-D logic practices. The duration of each interview lasted one hour on average.

Interview guide - At the start of the interview, interviewees were invited to reflect on four Ex-D logic practices: mentalizing, materializing, moderating, and modelling. In the second stage, respondents were asked to supply examples of specific experiences relating to the application and relevance of Ex-D logic practices in the contexts of the industry they belong. Throughout this process researchers have been careful to ensure that their role is facilitative, allowing the practitioners to verbalise their understanding of Ex-D logic in their own words. **Table 3 shows the selected sample responses provided by the respondents.**

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Table 3: Selected Qualitative Study Sample

Informant	Occupation	Age	Gender	Industry	Location (country)	Company description	Company size	Offerings	Interview minutes
Zhao	Founder	38	F	Education	UK	A family-owned language learning provider, started in 2002, today it is one of the most recognized brands in children's language learning in London	Family-owned enterprise Employees: 78	Weekend class Holiday camp Private tuition Afternoon club	90
Jake	Chief executive	48	M	fintech	Switzerland	A leading fintech company offering a complete one-stop platform for securities trading and compliance technology	Small-medium enterprise Employees: 35	fintech software service ^a	90
Max	Chief executive	68	M	Automotive	France	A leading security-tech company offering security-grade vehicles to government agencies, heads-of-states, military and para-military requirements	Multinational corporation Employees: 900	Luxury security-grade vehicles ^a	50
Tony	Founder	54	M	Agri-tech	South Korea	The largest enoki mushroom producer in South Korea	Small- medium enterprise Employees: 500	Production and sale of enoki mushroom ^a	65
Sam	Chief executive	35	M	Construction	Singapore	A company providing turnkey project solutions that encompasses design, build and management	Small- medium enterprise Employees: 50	Design and construction service	40
He	Marketing manager	45	F	Retailing and Property	China	An established mall owner and manager with mall operations in 23 cities in China	China state-owned enterprise Employees: 34,900	Retail Leisure Property	90
Xu	Founder	42	F	Hospitality	China	An Italian café shop was started in 2015 to serve a growing customer base among young professionals in the business district in China	Partnership Employees: 50	Beverage and food Private room renting	50

Interview guide - At the start of the interview, interviewees were invited to reflect on four Ex-D logic practices: mentalizing, materializing, moderating, and modelling. In the second stage, respondents were asked to supply examples of specific experiences relating to the application and relevance of Ex-D logic practices in the contexts of the industry they belong. Throughout this process researchers have been careful to ensure that their role is facilitative, allowing the practitioners to verbalise their understanding of Ex-D logic in their own words.

Data Interpretation

First, members of the research team were assigned a list of eight selected PLEs, and they then engaged in the process of viewing the PLEs on YouTube. Each team member was provided with a primer to

look for early indicators that would signal the articulation of aspects of dominant logics in the presentations.

Next, a technical team was assigned to transcribe the keynote speeches into text using Sonix, an online software transcribed the audio signals in the video clips into timestamped verbatim text. With the verbatim texts, team members began the process of theory construction. We drew on different types of data, that is, both PLEs videos and in-depth interviews. We started analysing all of the data by independently undertaking open coding, which involved reviewing the data paragraph by paragraph, to identify the critical themes mentioned in these speeches in the verbatim transcripts. All the time, we kept in mind the research question ‘What aspects of the firm’s Ex-D logics have persuaded me as a viewer?’ We compared our findings, and based on extensive discussion, identified four initial concepts: (1) mentalizing, (2) materializing, (3) moderating, and (4) modelling.

After reaching a consensus, we initiated the encoding process. During this phase, verbatim texts were processed using NVivo 12 software, segmenting sections based on identified themes. NVivo was chosen for its effectiveness in data management and its ability to produce results. The software excelled in visually mapping data, allowing researchers to comprehensively view the text and quickly discern the relationships between codes. It was also efficient for data storage and retrieval. The data underwent verification, focusing on the content within nodes, which might influence the interplay between thematic ideas. We regularly reviewed the nodes (themes) for consistency as we progressed through the qualitative data analysis. This initial framework served as a tentative guide for subsequent analysis cycles. As data was continually added, the theory-building process was refined iteratively, leading to a consensus on the emerging theoretical structure. In the third step, cross-referencing was employed to verify the prevalence of these constructs throughout the dataset.

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The Practice of Experience-Dominant Logic

Mentalizing

Analysis across PLEs first showed conclusively that the fashioning of Ex-D logics involves the capacity to mentalize the consumer experience. Mentalizing is a psychology term referring to the capacity to go beneath observations of overt behaviour to identify underlying mental states (Fonagy et al. 2002; Freeman 2016). Mentalizing has also been characterized as the ability to re-imagine the internal world of a subject, sometimes described as *thinking about thinking*.

Analysis of the PLEs showed that across the board, firms share a poignant ability to articulate with great sensitivity the customer’s context, including the situations, frustrations, inconveniences, anger, perplexities, values, and dreams and whatever they find simply unacceptable. This is how Sundar Pichai of Microsoft mentalized the personal computing experience using a piano-playing allegory (Microsoft Surface 10.02 Live Stream, 2 Oct 2019):

And in order for Sophia to play her best, that piano, it has to be ready for her. It has to be tuned perfect, the bench the right height, her sheet music at eye level, everything stable. Balance. And the instrument she's playing, that's the technology. Now Sophia, she needs the right instrument. She needs the right instrument to be creative. Just like each of us need the right instrument. Each of us, we need the right device.

Shou Zi Chew, the president of Xiaomi International, mentalized the potential hedonic experience customers can enjoy when they plug into the firm’s cutting edge Internet-of-Things (IoT) ecosystem (Xiaomi Ecosystem Product Launch Mar 2020):

You can easily program different scents for different moods. You can easily control on your phone a relaxing setting or a setting to help you focus again, a different customized setting perhaps a different lighting mode for different needs. All these are easily customized on an IOT platform.

The capacity to mentalize is moderated through empathy, “experiencing” what the customer is experiencing. Empathy has been characterized as the capacity to walk in someone else’s shoes. This is how Sundar Pichai mentalized the customer experience of a Google-assisted lifestyle (Google Keynote; Google I/O’19):

For example, helping you write your emails faster with automatic solutions from smart reply. And giving you the chance to take them back if you didn’t get it right the first time. Helping you find the faster route home at the end of a long day. And when you get there, removing distractions so that you can spend time with the people most important to you. And when you capture those perfect moments, backing them up automatically, so you never lose them.

Firms mentalized via self-explorations of the customer experience. Self-explorations are occasions when the firm delves into its own experiences as a consumer to re-imagine what excites, what is really important to a customer. This is how Brian Chesky of Airbnb mentalized the magic of travel by reliving his first flight on a plane as a child (Airbnb Open 2016):

I remember the first big trip I ever took, you see, I’m from Niskayuna, New York. I’ve never heard of it, I haven’t either, don’t worry, but Niskayuna is a small town outside of Albany New York, and so the first trip we ever took was to St. Louis. Now to get from this scooter st. Louis. You’ve got a fly and so it’s the first time that I was on an airplane and it was totally magical.

Firms mentalize the customer experience through keen observations of changes in consumption behavior, changes in expectations, shifts in consumption moods, and variations in the consumption landscape. This is how Satya Nadella mentalized the future of personal computing (Microsoft Surface 10.02 Live Stream, 2019)

If the last decade of personal computing was focused on consumption - more browsing, more shopping, more binge watching, which all have a place under the sun. That's fantastic. but we believe that the next decade will be about creation and amplifying what we can do as humans.

Materializing

Analysis of PLEs also shows that the design of offerings involves materializing clear and intuitive pathways to realize the intended customer experience (Homburg, Jozić and Kuehnl 2017; Kuehnl, Jozić and Homburg 2019). In all PLEs, firms not only demonstrate the capacity to mentalize customer experiences; they are also able to articulate unique customer journeys for customers to realize the desired experiences.

For Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft, materialization is realized in a product offering like “Surface HUB”, where the design of a unique computing journey potentially transforms the ability to facilitate “team work” in personal computing and amplify the interactivity experience. Materializing of the firm’s unique computing journey is realized in “Surface Studio”, a desktop program that aims to “transform personal computing into a canvass for creativity”. Hololens, “the first mixed reality headset bridging the digital and physical worlds”, materializes for the customer the technology of a sensory experience by ensuring that “all the senses that we want to use to interact with computers ... whether it is ink, touch, speech, gestures, gaze” is available across the entire user experience (Microsoft Surface 10.02 Live Stream, 2 Oct 2019).

To transform the vacuum cleaning experience from one that is cumbersome and clumsy, Sir James Dyson re-engineered the vacuum cleaning journey by creating a “motor” so light and handy you can "hold it in your hand” (Dyson Cyclone V10 PLE New York City, 6 Mar 2018):

We thought we would change the dynamic of a vacuum cleaner. So instead of being a big heavy thing with the weight down at the bottom on the floor.... we decided to put the weight in your hand... but if you can make it light enough and hold it in your hand you then transform it from just being something that can clean carpets and floors to something that can clean the car and the cobwebs and everything in those things blinds and everything.

Some technologies introduce changes that are adaptive, that is, they add incremental improvements on previous customer journeys (Homburg, Schwemmler and Kuehn 2015) where innovation can be as simple as locating a new café within a local community to reduce the physical distance to a café experience. Firms can also choose to adopt tested customer journeys by participating in a franchise network.

On the other hand, there are firms that introduce technologies that are transformative as they redefine the consumption paradigm (Desmet and Hekkert 2007). At the 2007 Macworld PLE, Steve Job introduced a “revolutionary” product that would re-define the digitization of everyday life: the iPhone. However, the mobile phone is not the revolution; it is the interface that completely transforms the way a user interacts with the phone:

And a pointing device ... we don't want to carry around a mouse, right? ...no, who wants a stylus you have to get them and put them away and you lose them yuck... We're going to use the best pointing device in the world. We're gonna use a pointing device that we're all born with we're born with 10 of them. We can use our fingers. We're going to touch us with our fingers and we have invented a new technology called multi-touch, which is phenomenal it works like magic.

Moderating

The third component of Ex-D logic identified in the PLEs is the capacity to moderate a value proposition. To moderate a value proposition is to arrive at a value of exchange on which both the firm and the customer can agree (Anderson, Narus and Van Rossum 2006). One can invent the latest technology and find the most innovative means to transform the consumption experience, but unless firms also moderate a value proposition all stakeholders can co-share and cohere around, the product will remain on the drawing board as a prototype. This view corresponds with Moran and Ghoshal's (1999) observation that "it is not resources per se, but the ability to access, deploy, exchange, and combine them that lies at the heart of value creation" (p. 409). This is how Elon Musk articulated a value proposition for the Tesla offering, one that is fast (functional values), looks good (hedonic values), and is sexy (brand meanings):

We wanna to make a car, we wanna to break the mold about how people think about electric car. When people think about electric car, they think about slow, ugly and poor performance, so we wanna to make a sports car, a car that's fast, looks good, sexy, that's right.

Ex-D logic transforms how we view value propositions. In the traditional service marketing literature, a value proposition has always been conceived as a compromise between quality and price, a trade-off between benefits and sacrifices (Frow and Payne 2011; Payne, Frow and Eggert 2017). In Ex-D logic, firms arrive at a value proposition based on the moderation of experiential values, understanding that choice-making for most part is aggregate rather than absolute, instinctive rather than objective.

When we think of mobile phones, we usually think only of technology, gadgetry, and innovations. But in the PLE, Steve Jobs made a point of highlighting the sensorial and aesthetic values of the iPhone with terms like "just wonderful", "really big", and "gorgeous" (Apple MacWorld, 2007):

Third thing I want to talk about a little as design. We've designed something wonderful for your hand. Just wonderful. And this is what it looks like. It's got a three and a half inch screen on it, it's really big and it's the highest resolution screen we've ever shipped. It's a hundred and sixty pixels per inch - highest we've ever shipped. It's gorgeous and on the front, there's only one button down there. We call it the home button. It takes you home from wherever you are. That's it!

Shantanu Narayen, CEO of Adobe Systems, moderated Adobe's value proposition by articulating how the Adobe brand contributes to digital literacy to "help students see things in a whole new light" (Adobe MAX Nov 4, 2019 Opening Keynote) :

Educators in the US realized that students were struggling to connect to Shakespeare. So, the Royal Shakespeare Company and five artists including Octavia, one of our Adobe Creative residents set out to change that they're reimagining Shakespeare for the 21st century by transposing iconic scenes from Romeo and Juliet and Macbeth into the modern-day using photos, animation, and drawings ensuring that the profound works of literature remain relevant and cherished by the Next Generation.

By embracing the offering, and thus internalizing Adobe's Ex-D logic, a customer becomes a member of the Adobe brand community, co-sharing its brand values of serving a greater good.

Modelling

One salient feature that comes through a detailed examination of PLEs is the firm's capacity for modelling. Modelling involves making or constructing a descriptive or representational model of something (lexico.com). In the eight PLEs, modelling refers to giving a form to the firm's Ex-D logic. For Satya Nadella, Microsoft's CEO, the mission is "to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more". This model of Microsoft's Ex-D logic underlies everything Microsoft

undertakes to do in the marketplace (Microsoft Surface 10.02 Live Stream, 2 October 2019). For Shantanu Narayen, CEO of Adobe Systems, the firm's purpose, which has guided the firm "for over three decades", is to "change the world through digital experiences" (Adobe MAX 2019 Opening Keynote - Accelerating Your Creativity). Meanwhile, this is how Sundar Pichai modelled Google's Ex-D logic (Google Keynote; Google I/O'19) :

Tackling these kinds of computer science problems has been what kept us going for the past 21 years and it all begins with our mission: Organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful. And today our mission feels as relevant as ever. But the way we approach it is constantly evolving.

So, why is modelling Ex-D logic so important? Modelling can be perceived as a mentalizing of a firm's unique set of experiences and the firm journey. Since every offering is only an approximation of the intended customer experience, firms learn from firm experiences at each cycle. A model is therefore an accrual of what the firm has learned through each cycle of product offerings. Since the firm learns and grows via a cycle of experience, an honest assessment of one's own experience, cataloguing of one's own journey, enables a firm to strategize and chart its course based its own Ex-D logic model. This introspection aspect of Ex-D logic differentiates it from other dominant logic models in the marketing literature. For Satya Nadella, Microsoft's CEO, the cycle of firm experiences characterized as a firm journey is part and parcel of what defines the firm (Microsoft Surface 10.02 Live Stream): "Today's event is about continuing the journey in some sense. Seven years ago, we started with the launch of Surface and today we'll share the next chapter of this journey".

Firms learn by direct experience - through interactions with customers and by experiencing what they like and what they do not like, what sells and what clogs up the warehouse, what works and what does not, successes and failures, ups and downs, trial and error. A firm's model

is a work-in-progress. Indeed, that is how Elon Musk characterized Tesla's history (2021 Tesla Model Y - Full Presentation with Elon Musk 15th Mar 2019):

So, let's take a look at the first car we ever made, that's Tesla Roadster, it's a bit small. The crazy thing is, if you go back 11 years today, Tesla had made one car, that's serial no 1 of Tesla, that's my car actually, on Feb 2008, we literally only made one car, that car, and it didn't work very well, it broke down a lot, and it took us another three months just to make the second car, and now we have made about 550,000 cars.

Modelling allows a co-sharing of firm experiences and firm journeys. In addition, Ex-D logic has a social dimension. A firm's Ex-D logic is its intersubjective meaning, around which stakeholders co-own and cohere. Thus, McArthur and Baron (1983) argued that perception has a social dimension. Since perception is social in nature, perceptual socialization results in the "education of attention". This education is directed towards stakeholders of a firm to provide "adaptively relevant information" (p. 219). For Shantanu Narayen, CEO of Adobe Systems, the firm's Ex-D logic is the one thing that stakeholders cohere around: "All of Adobe's 22,000 employees have a singular focus on empowering everyone to create experiences that inspire, transform industries, and move the world forward".

The Praxis of Experience-Dominant Logic

If mentalizing the customer's experiences, materializing the customer's journey to the experience, and moderating the values the customer derives from these experiences are the processes underpinning a firm's Ex-D logic, in this section we look at the praxis of Ex-D logic. By praxis, we refer to the flow of activity in which Ex-D logic strategy is accomplished. The praxis is based on a typology of three types of customer experiences outlined in the existing customer experience management literature, namely, the service experiences, hedonic experiences, and brand experiences

conceptualized in customer experience management as service logic (Grönroos 2006, Grönroos and Gummerus 2014), experiential marketing logic (Lanier, Clinton and Saini 2008), and branding logic (Merz, He and Vargo 2009). In contrast with generalized logics (e.g., S-D logic and C-D logic), contextual logics describes a firm's marketing concerns tied to a particular context or a particular facet of consumer behavior (Homburg, Schwemmler and Kuehnl 2015).

In Figure 2, we present the Ex-D Logic Framework. In this framework, the firm's Ex-D logic is operationalized as the mentalizing of the three types of customer needs (service competence, hedonic excitations, and meaning making), the materializing of three types of customer experiences and customer journeys (service experience, hedonic experience, and brand experience), and the moderating of three types of customer values (service values, hedonic values, and brand values). To provide greater realism to the framework, this discourse is re-enforced by a selection of materials derived from the in-depth interviews. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), any theorizing of market practices must meet the litmus test, that must be "understandable by laymen concerned with this area" (p. 237). Such understanding is essential to the usefulness of the theory because practitioners bring a layer of market "sensitivity" (p. 240) to the analysis by relating the concepts identified from the event analysis with actual problems and lived experiences of the firm.

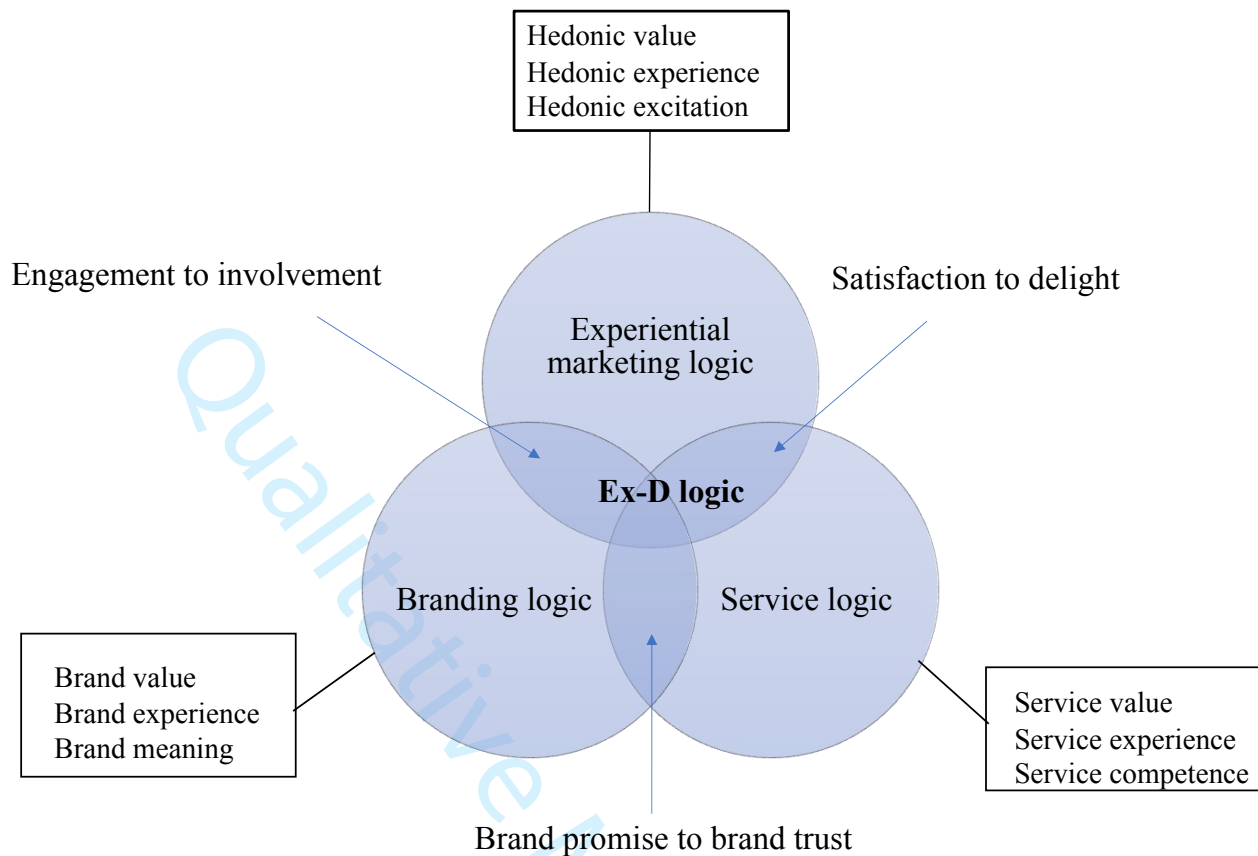


Figure 2: Ex-D Logic Framework

Service Logic

Customers come to the marketplace canvassing for providers with the service competence to deliver the service/s they need at an economic value that matches what they are willing to forego in exchange (price). In the Ex-D logic framework, the need for service competence lies at the core of the service logic (see Figure 2). Basically, irrespective of what you are selling or marketing, a firm is a service provider (Grönroos, 2006; Grönroos and Gummerus, 2014). Gentile Spiller and Noci (2007) concluded that, whatever new overlays are added to the firm-consumer relationship, utilitarian and economic value remains one of the prime drivers of value perception.

Zhao started a language school in 2002, based in a rented premise with only five students. It has now become one of London's most popular and trusted brands for language learning programs. Zhao explained why mentalizing the *right* customer experience is so important:

When people think about children's programs, they think "The Sound of Music" ... Yea, at the instructor level, their job is to mentalize and materialize learning experiences children will enjoy and find meaningful, but at my level, the owner level, it is a totally different experience. My clients are not children, at least not directly; my customers are parents. For me, mentalizing means understanding what the parents need - the parent's customer experience.

To consummate a service experience, both the firm and the customer have many pathways to negotiate, barriers to overcome, and steps to take to eventuate fulfilment. In an exchange, corollary issues like payment methods, delivery, logistics, after sales service, return policies, guarantees, and tax, add to the complexities of the customer journey. A customer may find an offering attractive and the brand interesting, but the customer also knows that to consummate the exchange, the role of the firm as a service provider is critical. The measure of this capacity to conceive a "smooth" customer journey (Siebert et al 2020) is at the heart of the service quality concept, one that transforms a mere act of procurement into a service experience. Sam is a seasoned practitioner in the turbocharged tech industry having been involved in several high profile projects all over the world. He shared his memorable *encounter* with service experience pitching an internet telephony or Voice over IP (VoIP) product:

I remember walking into a room with a two-inch thick presentation ready to flash all the sexy features of the new VoIP, to my surprise, the potential investor said, "let's skip fancy presentation, this is my mobile number, call me on your VoIP app, if it works, we talk

For Zhao, materializing the service journey for the parents means dealing with very mundane and practical issues:

A big part of my workday is handling complaints! And I mean it in a positive way. My job is to be sensitive to the needs of the young parents; many of them are struggling with bread-

and-butter issues, time management issues ... My job is to make sure sending their kids to our school is a smooth experience. That means clear enrolment systems, swift response to requests, clear payment systems.

For Zhao, accruing service values such as consistency, safety, punctuality, and responsiveness is paramount: "Every time we finish a camp, we make good a brand promise, and we add one more layer of brand trust". Brand-building for her is "one camp at a time". At the core of service marketing logic is the notion that the firm is a service provider with service competence to deliver on the service promised to the customer (Vargo and Lusch 2004). Every time the firm delivers on its promise, it evokes some kind of service experience. Over time, repeated satisfaction with a product or a brand becomes a precipitant to a brand relationship leading to consumer-brand relationship qualities such as brand trust, brand attachment, brand love, and brand loyalty. In the Ex-D logic framework, this accrual of brand value is represented by the interface between service logic and brand logic.

Experiential Marketing Logic

Experiential marketing logic views the need for hedonic excitation as an essential facet of consumer behavior. In experiential marketing logic, the firm is conceptualized as an experience provider or an experience provider (Schmitt 1999b, Pine and Gilmore 1998), that is, a moderator of hedonic feelings, sensations, and pleasurable psychological states in the cycle of exchange.

Max, CEO of Centigon Security Group, is an icon of the high-end security car vehicle industry. He has personally supervised the creation and production of security vehicles for more than 50 heads of state around the world over a 30-year period. This is what he shared when asked to reflect on the Ex-D logic practices of mentalizing, materializing, moderating, and modelling :

You know, in the high-end luxurious cars market, moderating an experiential value proposition is everything. Honestly, why would anyone pay four times the amount for the same car they can buy at some showroom? Granted, it's bullet-proof and all with all kinds

of bells and whistles. It's all about that unique experience - sitting in one of our cars, mentalizing that unique experience is what our business is all about.

Gentile, Spiller and Noci (2007) suggested that what contributes to the creation of experiential marketing value is not only the focus on the selling of stand-alone experiential offerings but the embedment of hedonic triggers in the offering. Xu, the owner of the High Street Cafe in Hefei agrees. For Li, hedonic experiences and hedonic values make up for a value proposition that allows her to compete in a crowded cafe market:

Even in a small cafe operation like mine, managing the customer experience is everything, I mean, we are small cafe, can't really compete with established brands like Starbucks or Costa, what we really compete on is that serving up a niche cafe experience they cannot offer; personalised service, sensitivity to what special customer needs.

Hedonic episodes add spark, vitality, and engagement to all stages of the consumption process, which contributes to the moderation of a value proposition (Holbrook and Hirshman 1982; Schmitt and Simonson 1997). Max went on to emphasize the crucial link between mentalizing hedonic experience and materializing a hedonic journey:

I spend a lot of time with clients - no sales talk, just socials. I join them on hunting trips, sit in the bar all night, all the time trying to mentalize what kinds of experiences arouse them, excite them and make them feel special. Then I come back to the factory and sit down with the engineers to materialize customer experiences. We would strip a car into its thousands of parts and figure what are the extras we can re-engineer into the makeup of the car to evoke that unique customer experience.

Hedonic values can also emerge as super satisfying service experiences. A marketing manager mentioned that hedonic values go hand-in-hand with service values; in fact, hedonic values complement service values :

In a highly competitive environment, building a security vehicle that is reliable, technological efficient, [and] safe is no longer enough. High net-worth clients are accosted daily by suppliers from all over the world. What is going to draw them to our offerings is that *extra something*, that super experience, they cannot find elsewhere. That's the magic.

Researchers (Cronin and Taylor 1992; Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman 1996) in service quality have been suggesting that there are levels of service experience beyond adequate service quality or mere satisfaction. This transition from brand satisfaction to an enhanced level of service and satisfaction, conceptualized as "brand delight" in the marketing literature (Parasuraman et al. 2020; St-James and Taylor 2004), is represented on the Ex-D logic framework as the interface between service marketing logic and experiential marketing logic. Affects such as joy and surprise evoked by "beyond what is expected" levels of service quality transmute across logics to arouse attention and re-engage the customers, enhancing as a consequence the consumer-brand relationship. This lively inter-pollination between marketing logics leads to the accrual of brand equity (Berthon et al. 2007).

Branding Logic

Consumers canvass the marketplace for meanings (McCracken 1986). Branding logic recognizes the need for meaning as a fundamental facet of consumer behavior. Therefore, in this instance, the firm is a meaning maker creating pathways leading to the brand experiences customers need and desire (Fournier and Alvarez 2019).

An example of this is offered by Tony. Tony is the founder of the Stubborn Bull Mushroom, the largest enoki mushroom producer in South Korea and one of the largest in the world. The firm has its own proprietary agri-tech technology producing high quality oriental mushrooms in a fully automated

and highly efficient cultivation environment. Reflecting on the practice of mentalizing the brand experience, Tony said:

When I started growing enoki mushroom in 1996 on a small plot of land I rented from the local government, in a village called Cheongdo in Central Korea, where we are located, bull-fighting is a long-held tradition. So, when I looked for a brand name for our mushroom, I chose “Stubborn Bull”; I simply thought this would be a name the people in our area can identify with.

Firms serve two meaning-making functions: denotative and connotative. To materialize the brand journey, firms create recognizable brand names, symbols, and product categories (Batra, Lenk, and Wedel 2010) that help consumers to organize their purchasing routine into familiar schemas to optimize their search for the right economic offering in the marketplace. Crucially, brands also possess rich connotative meanings (Oswald and Oswald 2012). In a brand journey, the firm harnesses symbolic resources from the socio-cultural milieu, attaching them to the brands, to establish connectivity with the consumer (McCracken 1989). Xu is the marketing manager of a shopping mall. In the interview she talked about how brand values compensate for :

China is a land of shopping malls, according statistics, a new mall is built everyday life. So, for a traditional mall like how do you compete with all these new state-of-the-art, high-tech, international mall brands? We survive because we stick to what we know best, offering brand meanings and brand values values unique to us. We are a historical landmark; tourists actually come to Hefei and buy souvenirs and memorabilia of Hefei Department Store as symbols of the city. So far, its work well for us.

Brands produce brand images, and brand narratives serve as harbingers of the meanings (Berthon, Holbrook, and Hulbert 2003) that customers pick and choose to create their own identity and self-

projects. This is also how Toney reflected on the materialization of the brand journey as an entrepreneur:

Over the years, customers have always asked us why we chose “Stubborn Bull” as a brand name to market a gastronomic product. Honestly, time and again, we did toy with the idea of switching to another brand name, but we decided to stick with the name because the stubborn bull image defines the Korean culture and the Korean work ethic. Koreans are bulls - tough, resilient and downright persistent.

For this reason, the association with the stubborn image allows Yang’s firm to moderate the brand values into his customer experience mix so that his customers can extract brand meanings to construct their own identities and self-projects. This transition from denotative meaning to connotative meaning exemplifies the transition from brand engagement to brand involvement visualized in the Ex-D logic framework as the interface between experiential marketing logic and branding logic. For Yang, transitioning from an engaging brand experience represented by the surprise and novelty associated with the image of the stubborn bull to a meaning that customers can embrace and internalize provides the basis for Yang’s Ex-D logic model.

Engagement is a well-attested psychological feature of a hedonic experience. In an interpretative study of twenty experiential marketing offerings, Lanier and Hampton (2008) observed that experiential marketing logic is not based the tangible exchange of discrete goods and service but on the experience with the process itself. These transactions are not the result of goal-related motivations or involvement. Instead, they are a function of the degree to which the interaction is immediately engrossing and captivating. Nonetheless, however powerful and engrossing these hedonic experiences are, hedonic excitations are short-lived and transient. Once the experience passes its peak, it descends quickly into oblivion.

Involvement, on the other hand, emphasizes the motivational and the meaning aspect of consumption. Hepola, Karjaluoto and Hintikka (2017) saw the correlation between the level of one's motivation and one's affective involvement (Zaichkowsky 1985, 1986). When a consumer feels or senses the relevance of a brand, they are motivated to know more about that brand (Harrigan et al. 2018). Involvement takes hold when consumers internalise symbolic meanings emerging from advertising communications, brand experiences, brand images and narratives to construct aspects of self-identity and lifestyle goals (Holt 2002; Patsiaouras 2019). As such, the modelling of Ex-D logic involves a transition from brand engagement to brand involvement.

Conclusion

Theoretical contributions and implications

The proposed Ex-D logic framework offers a useful strategic management tool to configure a more humanized model of strategy-in-practice using firm/customer experience as a metric. To our best knowledge, this is the first research to offer theoretical resources to bring together disparate strands of concepts and terms to assemble a unified customer experience and management theory infrastructure, providing fundamental knowledge on which further development of Ex-D logic can be built. Furthermore, this study expanded the current view of the dominant logic by identity the firm's Ex-D logic is operationalized as the mentalizing of the three types of customer needs (service competence, hedonic excitations, and meaning-making), the materializing of three types of customer experiences and customer journeys (service experience, hedonic experience, and brand experience), and the moderating of three types of customer values (service values, hedonic values, and brand values).

Additionally, this study contributes to branding literature by offering a new pathway to build long-term brand equity. For the past three decades, customer-based brand equity has been the primary model for understanding the formation, growth, and accrual of brand equity. The brand values

realized via the inter-logics value creation process offer insights into an alternative pathway to experience-denominated brand equity where customers are loyal not only to products and brand names but also to a firm's brand of Ex-D logic, which transcends products and offerings.

Managerial implications

The findings of this research offer managerial contributions for decision-makers such as customer experience managers, service providers and brand managers who wish to develop experience-dominant logic strategies. The developed model in this study contributed to new opportunities for managers to re-envision the marketplace from the ground up, as a universe of logic practitioners who are competing, evolving, jostling for economic space and customers' attention, and trying to aggregate sufficient subscriptions to their offerings so that the firm's logic can remain active in the marketplace. Additionally, we provide a new perspective for managers as a firm's brand of Ex-D logic has become a symbol of a belief, an outlook, a lifestyle, and a way of life. For example, Tesla's brand of Ex-D logic takes advantage of customer desire to push the boundaries of human possibilities embodied by the vision of a Tesla vehicle on a trip to Mars, while Airbnb's brand of Ex-D logic takes advantage of our desire for a flatter, more interconnected world where world citizens sympathetic to multiculturalism can belong anywhere. Therefore, every logic practitioner, big or small, should focus on identifying unique customer experiences, unique customer journeys, and unique firm journeys so customers can co-share as logic practitioners in the marketplace. Finally, it is important that managers acknowledge multi-logics to make decisions about marketing strategies, product development and market expansion. Our findings show it is a combination of the three logic, brand logic, experiential marketing logic and brand logic rather than single logic, that has a strong impact on firm performance and meets customer demand and preference.

Limitations and future research agenda

The present study has three key limitations. Firstly, the proposed framework needs further operationalisation and empirical examination in different contexts. Second, we collected data only

from a managerial perspective, so future studies are needed to collect data from multiple perspectives, such as consumers and stakeholders. Third, the findings of this paper via multi-strand analysis are qualitative and only exploratory. To conceptualize Ex-D logic in full, a new set of constructs, terms, and vocabulary has to be minted to provide the theoretical sinew from which a new theoretical infrastructure can be built. To move the research beyond the *proof-of-concept* stage, much work lies ahead to isolate and test Ex-D logic constructs, to fortify basic assumptions, and to work towards an experience-based theoretical architecture. The following are some of the key constructs and key ideas that should form part of any Ex-D logic future research agenda (see Table 3).

Table 3: Ex-D logic future research agenda

Key Constructs	Definitions	Research Areas	Key Reference
EX-Dominant Logic	A firm's internal experience-theoretic shaping the firm's offering of customer experiences, based on the firm's approximations of the experiences the customers need, desire, and are willing to pay for	Dominant logic as a marketing construct needs to be further conceptualized by integrating resources from axiom studies, strategic management studies, and behavioral economic studies	Zha et al., 2023b
<i>CX offering</i>	An offering is a firm's representation of a customer journey that potentially delivers an intended customer experience at a given price	Researchers should examine offerings as a cycle of approximations leading to an intended customer experience	Becker and Jaakkola (2020) Gahler et al., (2023)
Mentalizing	An imagining of the consumer's lived experience and the consumer journey	Researchers should examine the mentalizing process of empathy, self- exploration, observation.	Heinonen. (2022) Kim et al., (2023)
<i>Consumer journey</i>	An approach that recognizes the need to understand consumers as they select, create, integrate, use, adapt, and discard products and services to meet needs and accomplish goals	Researchers should examine the tools by which firms can understand the life experiences of the consumer.	Hamilton and Price (2019) Schweidel et al., (2022)
Materializing	The pathways to realize the intended customer experience customer journey	Researchers should integrate the resources from product design studies and user experience studies into an Ex-D logic model.	Homburg and Tischer (2023) Homburg and Wielgos (2022)
<i>Customer journey</i>	Firm-designated pathways to an intended customer experience	Examine what is so unique about the customer journey the firm can offer from a service, hedonic, and brand value perspective.	Roggeveen and Rosengren (2022)
<i>Customer experience</i>	The intended experience a customer can potentially obtain by embracing the prescribed customer journeys.	Examine what is so unique about the intended customer experience the firm offers vs what others can offer.	De Keyser, Arne et al. (2020)
<i>Experience (EX) Technology</i>	Tools that serve to improve and enhance customer journeys to realize an intended customer experience	Examine the EX technology as tools (software and hardware) firms use to improve the customer experience.	Liu-Thompkins et al., (2022)
Moderating	Moderating between different types of experiences to arrive at a value proposition	Researchers should examine the moderating competence to craft value propositions incorporating experiential values.	Åström et al., (2022)
<i>Experience value proposition</i>	A mixture of experiential values - customers derive values from what is available.	Examine the experience value proposition as a mixture; customers derive values from what is available.	Piepponen et al., (2022)

<i>Service Logic</i>	Addresses the need of customers to find the means to fulfil the service/s they need, at a price they are willing to pay and conceptualizes the firm as a service provider	Researchers should examine how the principles and precepts of service logic can be further integrated into the Ex-D logic model	Grönroos 2020
<i>Experiential Marketing Logic</i>	Addresses customers' wish for sensorially stimulating, aesthetically gratifying, and emotionally satisfying (Schmitt 2011) experiences and conceptualizes the role of the firm as an experience-provider	Researchers should examine how the principles and precepts of experiential logic can be further integrated into the Ex-D logic model.	Zha et al., 2023b
<i>Branding Logic</i>	Addresses the need for meaning as a fundamental facet of consumer behavior and conceptualizes the role of the firm as a meaning maker	Researchers should examine how the principles and precepts of branding logic can be further integrated into the Ex-D logic model.	Zha et al., (2020)
Modelling	Learning, sharing, cohering from firm experience, firm journey, and firm perspective	Researchers should look at how firms learn from firm experiences, the social and psychological diffusion of firm experiences, and the emergence of experience-theoretics.	Zeithaml et al. (2020)
<i>Firm Experience</i>	The firm's response to an actualized customer experience event	Researchers should conceptualize firm experience with greater granularity to examine the key components of the concept.	NA
<i>Firm Journey</i>	The progression of experiences that a firm negotiates in the development of the offerings for the marketplace.	Researchers should examine the unique set of subjectivities (e.g., regulatory, financial, and investment) that predicates the journey and that differs from the nature of the consumer journey.	NA

First, in the Ex-D logic model, a firm's marketing activities are driven by *practice-theoretics*, which is defined as the subjective theorizing of one's own experiences. Dominant logic as a marketing construct needs to be further conceptualized using a cross-domain approach integrating resources in axiom studies, strategic management studies and behavioral economic studies. Second, the four Ex-D logic practices identified in the qualitative study, namely, mentalizing customer experiences, materializing customer journeys, moderating value propositions, and modelling experience-theoretics, needs to undergo further testing and measurement for them to be fully operationalized as independent Ex-D logic constructs. Third, the relationship between firm experience, intended customer experience, firm offering, and actualized customer experience needs to be further examined. In Ex-D logic, offerings are emphasized as the centerpiece of the firm's marketing activities. Offerings provide the only phenomenological evidence since they are the phenomenological and tangible expression of Ex-D logic and grounding logic activities in a cycle of real actual marketing activities in the marketplace. Further research should ask the questions such as to what extent do the four Ex-D logic practices contribute to the successful implementation of Ex-D logic in marketing, and how can these practices be effectively operationalized as independent constructs for empirical measurement?

Fourth, in Ex-D logic, customer journeys are firm-designated pathways to an intended customer experience. Using customer journeys as the criteria to differentiate product offerings provides a platform to integrate many of the familiar constructs in customer experience studies. In Ex-D logic, technology implicates the consumption experience by re-constructing the customer journey. Since the dawn of time, the alliance of technology has fundamentally transformed human existence. By introducing a new technology, we introduce a new customer journey. For example, by discovering fire, a heating technology, early man discovered a new

customer journey to realize a “warmth experience”, while by discovering a well, a geo technology, early man discovered a new customer journey to realize a “thirst-quenching experience”. Therefore, we suggest future research work on how the introduction of new technologies impacts the customer journey in the context of Ex-D logic, and what insights can this offer for firms in re-constructing the customer experience.

Fifth, in Ex-D logic, value proposition is a compromise between three different types of experiential values: service values, hedonic values, and meaning values. Understanding the integration between the different types of values implies we have to understand the interactivity between the three behavioral logics (service logic, experiential marketing logic, and the brand logic) in existing customer experience literature. Thus, future research should investigate what are the key factors influencing the compromise between different types of experiential values (service values, hedonic values, and meaning values) in the development of value propositions in Ex-D logic.

Lastly, the concept of firm journey is an important component of the dominant logic research agenda. In Ex-D logic, firm journey is conceptualized as a progression of experiences that a firm negotiates, learns, and discovers through the cycle of offerings. As an organic entity, the firm is conceived as constantly growing, learning, making mistakes, and re-learning through an iterative cycle of good and bad experiences. Informed by behavioral economics, where perceptions, no matter how well thorough and well-studied, are at best conjectural, rooted in the subjectivities of the human fallacies and human failings, the concept of a firm journey permits researchers to conceptualize marketing activities under a more realistic paradigm of marketing behavior (Gordon 2011). The concept of the customer journey allows research to take into account the learning and experiential dynamics (Lemon and Verhoef 2016; Zhang

and Chang, 2020). Therefore, we suggest future research study how can the concept of firm journey, as an iterative progression of experiences for a firm, inform a more realistic paradigm of marketing behavior in Ex-D logic,

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