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Customer experience management in hospitality: a literature synthesis, new understanding, and research agenda

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**Customer Experience Management in Hospitality:
A Literature Synthesis, New Understanding, and Research Agenda**

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Abstract

Purpose—In the contemporary hospitality industry, superior customer experiences are essential to gaining customer loyalty and achieving a competitive advantage. However, limited research addresses this subject. The aim of this study is to advance scholarly research on customer experience management (CEM) in the hospitality field by providing a comprehensive overview of the key elements of CEM, a framework for managing customer experience, and a rich agenda for research.

Design/methodology/approach—An extensive literature review produces a comprehensive overview of existing knowledge of CEM. A synthesis of prior literature reveals a need for additional, contemporary information sources. The study is therefore supplemented by invited commentaries on CEM from senior scholars and hospitality managers.

Findings—The proposed model takes a holistic perspective on managing a positive customer experience, through collaboration among marketing, operations, design, human resources, and strategy, in association with technology and social media.

Research implications—The literature review and commentaries from leading experts reveal six areas for further research on CEM in the hospitality industry.

Originality/value—This study provides a comprehensive, systematic review of CEM literature and detailed understanding of the mechanisms for managing customer experiences in the hospitality industry. It integrates state-of-the-art CEM knowledge in the generic business context, along with principles of hospitality management, and advances CEM research by emphasizing the need for collaboration among marketing, operations, and human resources.

Keywords: Customer experience management, hospitality, customer-to-customer relationships, social media and technology.

Paper type: Conceptual research paper

Introduction

Firms are recognizing the critical roles played by positive customer experiences—and subsequent word of mouth—across all industry sectors (Teixeira *et al.*, 2012). Today's technology-driven, digitally advanced customers expect personalized experiences at every point of interaction. A survey by Gartner (2014) shows that 89% of firms expect to compete primarily on the basis of customer experience, and it is now one of the key strategies adopted by hospitality firms: leading firms such as Marriott, Hilton, Starbucks, Disney, and Starwood excel by creating a distinctive customer experience both offline and online. Although it is a nascent field, customer experience management has become a key interest also in academia (Grewal *et al.*, 2009; Puccinelli *et al.*, 2009; Jaakkola *et al.*, 2015), highlighted by the Marketing Science Institute as a “tier 1 research priority” for theory and practice for 2014–2016 (MSI, 2016).

From a marketing perspective, customers are the reason for the firm's existence, and "to satisfy the customer is the mission and purpose of every business" (Drucker, 1973, p. 79). Yet satisfying the customer ultimately has limited effects on the firm's competitive advantage in the market. Instead, positive customer experiences offer a more powerful concept for explaining firms' market performance (Verleye, 2015). Providing compelling CE can set a firm apart from its competitors (Schmitt, 2010), and superior CE has been acknowledged as key to gaining customer loyalty (Klaus and Maklan, 2011). Practitioners hail customer experience management (CEM) as one of the most promising approaches for consumer industries (Homburg *et al.*, 2015).

Customer experience (CE) reflects the customer's journey through all interactions with the firm—pre-consumption, consumption, and post-consumption (Kandampully and Solnet, 2015). CE is therefore more than the result of a single encounter: it is affected by every episode of the customer's interaction process with a firm (Verhoef *et al.*, 2009) and often is co-created through interactional activities among actors (Ponsignon *et al.*, 2015). The CE in hospitality settings is not derived solely from food, beverage, accommodation, and entertainment but also from a myriad of supporting features and processes, such as websites, technology, online and offline interactions, in-room entertainment, facility designs, and interactions with service personnel and other customers. Management of CE thus is a complicated task for hospitality firms. Indeed, Forrester Research (2014) reveals that most customer experience initiatives fail; very few companies reach the stage of customer experience management maturity. The topic therefore warrants further academic attention.

Despite its importance, academic research on CEM in hospitality fields is limited, with little integration of the CEM research with principles of hospitality management. The current article seeks to advance scholarly research on CEM through an extensive review and synthesis of

fragmented CEM research in hospitality management and business management. We provide a comprehensive overview of state-of-the-art knowledge on CEM and identify its emerging directions in both research and practice, complementing the review with commentaries from senior academics and hotel general managers. In this manner, we extend understanding on customer experience management in the hospitality industry.

This analysis highlights the diversity of disciplinary approaches to CEM in the hospitality context and demonstrates the importance of bringing together marketing, operations, human resources, and technology to manage customer experiences. Ultimately, this study broadens current perspectives by providing a detailed understanding of the mechanisms for managing customer experience in the hospitality industry.

Methodology

To map existing research knowledge and emerging CEM topics, we undertook an extensive review of literature and combined it with invited commentaries from a selection of leading hospitality scholars and hotel general managers. We identified research relevant to our study purposes, analysed and synthesized the research findings, and developed conceptualizations and conclusions on the basis of this evidence (Denyer and Tranfield, 2009).

To identify relevant research, we performed an article search in October 2014, using the Business Source Complete (EBSCO) and ProQuest databases. We supplemented the initial search with a new search in February 2016 in the Scopus and Web of Science databases. Together, these databases offered a comprehensive range of business-related, peer-reviewed journals. Focusing on CEM research, we searched for titles, abstracts, and keywords that featured some combination of the search words “customer experience” and “management.” Because CEM is a relatively new topic, most relevant articles have been published in the past 25

years. Therefore, we narrowed our search to literature published between January 1990 and December 2015. The searches returned a total of 571 hits (see Table 1).

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Next, we screened the 571 articles to select papers for detailed analysis. Following Guillet and Mohammed (2015), we limited the evidence base to international peer-reviewed journal articles, for two reasons. First, we assumed that scholarly works such as research notes, commentaries, book reviews, and reprinted articles do not make original or significant contributions to knowledge development (Tsang and Hsu, 2011). Second, we assumed that in comparison with books and edited monographs, academic journals represent the most advanced source of knowledge in any field (Mustak *et al.* 2013). Our next step was to remove duplicate entries. We then reviewed titles, abstracts, introductions, and conclusions of the articles to determine their relevance, that is, whether customer experience management was among their key topics (Denyer and Tranfield, 2009). This screening produced 59 articles for further analysis (see Appendix A).

Torraco (2005) calls for reviews that examine literature according to a particular lens, defined by the objectives, to focus on specific aspects of previous research for critical evaluation. Accordingly, our analysis involved three stages. First, we sought an overview of published CEM research, by examining the study context, the definition of CEM, and the literature base or theoretical approach of the papers in the sample. Second, we separately assessed studies in the hospitality context (9) and other contexts (49), to identify specific features or determinants of CEM, as well as which CEM topics were examined in the hospitality context relative to broader CEM literature. From this effort, we developed a comprehensive overview of the key aspects of CEM in hospitality and formulated questions for continued research into CEM. Because we

aimed not merely to summarize what is already known in the hospitality field but also to explore potential new avenues for CEM research, we expanded our literature review beyond studies in hospitality. By incorporating research outside the hospitality context, we were able to gain insights from other sectors.

The study obviously has some limitations arising from the chosen research approach. Conducting a literature review by using selected keywords inevitably means that some relevant papers that used different terminologies may have been missed. We used four databases to achieve as wide cover of relevant literature as possible, but research published for example in book chapters or conference proceedings, or written in other languages was excluded from this study. Nevertheless, the review method allowed us to achieve a good cover of relevant peer-reviewed research on the topic, and focus on a manageable number of papers to analyse.

To complement and enrich the literature review, we invited established scholars and practitioners in the field to submit short commentaries on the topic of CEM. From a methodological standpoint, this “reflections of experts” procedure is fairly new for the hospitality discipline. The infusion of expert opinions, knowledge, and descriptions of managerial practices increased the external validity of our findings and allowed us to gain insight into timely, emerging topics not yet observable in existing journal publications.

From academia, we chose eight professors who represent four key approaches to hospitality research: marketing, operations and design, human resources and strategy, and technology and social media. Each invited scholar is a distinguished expert in the selected area, as demonstrated by, for example, numerous widely cited articles and influence in key hospitality journals, education, or industry affiliations (see Appendix B). Our list is naturally not exhaustive but also

other scholars could have been invited; our aim was to approach a broad set of scholars who could provide complementary perspectives. The invited scholars (listed alphabetically) were:

- Srikanth Beldona, University of Delaware, United States (technology)
- Byron Keating, Australian National University, Australia (operations and design)
- Bonnie Knutson, Michigan State University, United States (marketing)
- Anna Mattila, Pennsylvania State University, United States (marketing)
- Khaldoon Nusair, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman (social media)
- Chris Roberts, DePaul University, United States (strategy)
- David Solnet, University of Queensland, Australia (human resources)
- Beverley Sparks, Griffith University, Australia (marketing)

We contacted these scholars by e-mail in August 2015. Each scholar agreed to provide a short, written commentary that summarized his or her views on the meaning and influence of CEM in the field, as well as predictions about future CEM developments that likely will be important for research, practice, or society.

In February 2016, we contacted (by e-mail) general managers in high profile full-service hotel companies in the hospitality industry. We chose senior managers from full-service hotels, because such hotels offer multiple hospitality services such as accommodation, restaurants, bars, café, events, and conferences. Therefore, their managers represent perspectives from multiple hospitality sectors.

The commentary request began with explaining the goal of the study. Managers were asked to briefly describe what aspects they find most essential in their company's CEM efforts and what they regard as important issues or problems related to CEM that academic research should tackle in the future. We contacted a total of 12 managers, of whom eight provided commentaries.

The commentaries primarily reflected their company policies and priorities. To protect the informants' anonymity, the managers' names and company names are not included; we refer to them as hotels a, b, c, d, e, f, g, and h.

We analysed a total of 16 commentaries, from eight academics and eight practitioners, to identify important themes and aspects of CEM in a hospitality context. In particular, we relied on the commentaries to identify emerging research topics. We read the commentaries and used thematic content analysis (Kolbe and Burnett, 1991) to identify and categorize themes; we then compared and revised the themes until we found common perceptions. The commentaries are not empirical research data, and we do not claim that the views of our informants are generalizable to the industry as a whole. The role of the commentaries is to broaden the study's perspective and identify issues related to the phenomenon. Excerpts from these commentaries are incorporated throughout this text.

Defining customer experience management

"Customer experience is an elusive and indistinct notion. It's a difficult construct to define, let alone measure, because of its multiple elements and individualized, personal nature. Think about the last time you went to a movie with someone. You both sat in the same theatre, ate the same popcorn, and saw the same film, yet you each walked out with a totally different experience. This is because each consumer is unique. Each person brings a different background, values, attitudes, and beliefs to the situation; everyone experiences it through individualized 'rose-colored glasses.'" (Bonnie J. Knutson)

Professor Knutson captures the elusive nature of customer experience. A multitude of CE definitions appear in literature; Gentile *et al.* (2007), for example, propose that customer experience consists of interactions between customers and companies. Through their various interactions with firms, customers develop sentiments that reflect their involvement from rational, emotional, sensorial, physical, or spiritual angles. Meyer and Schwager (2007) stated that customer experience refers to internal feelings of customers when facing various interactions with firms, whether direct (e.g., usage, service consumption, purchase) or indirect (e.g., online reviews, word-of-mouth, advertising). According to this definition, companies that compete to achieve a satisfactory customer experience must orchestrate all customer contacts, direct or indirect, during the service process. Therefore, the customer experience construct should be holistic and involve customers' cognitive, affective, emotional, social, and physical (behavioural) responses. Managing customer experiences might not be completely under firms' control; it might involve elements that companies have difficulty influencing, such as other customers in the service setting (Harris and Daunt, 2013) or online reviews (Sparks and Browning, 2011).

Verhoef *et al.* (2009) note that customer experience encompasses activities in different stages, such as search, purchase, consumption, disposition, and other related activities. Puccinelli *et al.* (2009) examine customer experience from a consumer behaviour perspective and connect specific aspects of those behaviours— “goals, schema, information processing, memory, involvement, attitudes, atmospherics, consumer attributions, and choices” (p.15)—with CEM strategies. According to Grewal *et al.* (2009), because customer experience encompasses every moment of truth in which customers interact with a firm, product, or service, CEM must entail a business strategy that results in a mutually beneficial relationship between the firm and its

customers. Palmer (2010) suggests three key constructs—involvement, emotions, and interpersonal relationships—that either parallel or contribute to customer experience.

Recent research suggests that customer experience is derived not only from interactions in employee–customer dyads but also from broader networks of actors, stakeholders, customers, suppliers, managers, frontline employees, and brands (Jaakkola *et al.*, 2015; Verleye, 2015). This interactive, co-created perspective reflects the rise of customer collectives organized around shared interests and complicated service delivery networks that encourage various suppliers and providers to contribute to the creation of customer experiences (Akaka *et al.*, 2015; Verleye, 2015). Customer experience is the result of co-creation during interactions among customers, employees, and a range of other stakeholders (Carù and Cova, 2015). Therefore, customer experience management in contemporary markets must go beyond the customer–provider dyad and service encounters.

Disciplinary Perspectives on Customer Experience Management

Our review of extant research reveals that CEM studies reflect three disciplinary perspectives: *marketing* (including technology and social media), *operations* (including service design), and *human resources* (including organizational behaviour and strategy) (see Table 1). Marketing scholars study the positive implications of creating superior customer experiences and advocate for the importance of this concept (Grewal *et al.*, 2009; Klaus and Maklan, 2013). Several studies connect customer experience to the management of customer relationships in multichannel environments, noting the importance of insights into the experiences customers have through various encounters with firms or brands (Chan, 2005; Frow and Payne, 2007). Retailing research with a marketing focus also addresses constructs that affect customer

experiences, with a strong emphasis on characteristics and stimuli in the servicescape (Baskaran, 2011; Verhoef *et al.*, 2009).

The operations management perspective directs attention to service delivery and the role of service design in facilitating superior customer experiences (Teixeira *et al.*, 2012). In this view, customer experiences are created during the navigation of the service process; the smoothness and efficiency of the process is a key concern for managers, especially when the service involves multiple channels and service providers (Patrício *et al.*, 2008).

Studies that draw their theoretical foundation from human resource management (HRM) research highlight the importance of the people factor, that is, of employees within the organization who help shape customer experiences. The HRM perspective also emphasizes the importance of selecting service-minded employees and providing them with service-focused training; in addition to an empowered environment and the overall service climate, such factors are critical for managing customer experiences (Gazzoli *et al.*, 2013; Zhang, Bai, and Lu, 2014).

Table 2 illustrates the various disciplines that inform effective CEM. It also shows that extant research has focused mainly on a single perspective; studies that integrate multiple perspectives are rare.

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

Key Aspects of CEM in the Hospitality Context

Although hoteliers and restaurant managers embrace CEM as a key goal (Bharwani and Jauhari, 2013), only a limited number of hospitality studies focus on CEM (Johnson *et al.*, 2009; So and King, 2010). The following section provides a summary of the few studies that explicitly address CEM in the hospitality sector.

Johnson *et al.* (2009) examine the management of *service quality* and *emotions* across customer relationships. They find that it is important to balance service quality and price to enhance joyful experiences. Ryu and Jang's (2008) study reveals six *service facility* factors— aesthetics, ambience, lighting, service product, layout and social—that have positive influence on customers' perception of upscale restaurant experiences. Morgan *et al.* (2008) examine the role of *employees*, *processes*, and *physical evidence* and how they can be used to manage customer's meal experiences in dining rooms.

Using a case study of Ritz Carlton Hotels, Nixon and Rieple (2010) highlight the importance of *service design and systems* that help create employee customer engagement and manage customer experiences. Johansson and Naslund (2009) show how cruise ship experiences are created by the effective management of *spaces*, *passengers*, and *emotions* (emotional labour of the service providers). So and King (2010) develop a measure to evaluate hotel brand equity as an outcome of brand strategies. Their findings suggest that customer experience can be influenced by three service dimensions: *core*, *servicescape*, and *employee*. Nicholls (2011) examines the role of culture and the value it brings to *customer-to-customer interaction* and its subsequent influence on CE in the hospitality industry.

With a conceptual model to test customer experiences in a coffee outlet, Sathish and Venkatesakumar (2011) find that a customer's coffee experience—and resulting level of satisfaction and loyalty—is influenced by *employee interaction* and *product quality*. Miao *et al.* (2014) examine hedonic aspects of hospitality consumption experience at pre-consumption, during, and post-consumption phases and find a hedonic value dynamic over the course of the experience. These findings are summarized in Table 3.

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

As Table 3 highlights, research on CEM in the hospitality field is limited. However, researchers and managers have pointed out that CEM is particularly important for the hospitality industry (Bharwani and Jauhari, 2013; Kandampully *et al.*, 2015), because it entails extensive *customer–employee relationships* (Bujisic *et al.*, 2014) and *service aspects* that are integral to the hospitality experience (Kandampully *et al.*, 2014). Hospitality services involve relatively longer interactions between customers and employees, which provides unique opportunities to create relationships. Thus, customer–employee relationships often contribute to customers’ positive experience (Hur *et al.*, 2015). In service contexts, shared experiences between customers and employees result in the co-creation of memorable experiences (McColl-Kennedy *et al.*, 2015). Thus *employees* help create unique, memorable experiences (Bharwani and Jauhari, 2013). In most hospitality services, experiences are created not just by firm and their employees but also by other customers; *customer-to-customer interaction* is critical to the hospitality experience (McMillan *et al.*, 2011). We therefore expand this understanding by drawing on insights from CEM literature as well as commentaries from scholars and practitioners. Four themes emerge from this synthesis that have implications on CEM in the hospitality context:

- 1) Service aspects are integral to the hospitality experience.
- 2) Employees’ role is imperative in creating unique and memorable experiences in the hospitality industry.
- 3) Hospitality service involves extensive customer–employee relationships.
- 4) Customer-to-customer interaction is a critical part of hospitality experience.

The following sections provide detailed discussions of these themes (see Table 4).

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 4 HERE

Service aspects are integral to the hospitality experience

As we noted previously, service is integral to a hospitality experience. Within hospitality contexts, many typical service research topics such as service quality (Johnson *et al.* 2009), servicescape factors (Ryu and Jang, 2008; Morgan *et al.*, 2008), and service design (Nixon and Rieple, 2010) emerge as pivotal determinants of customer experience. A service orientation is an organization-wide embrace of policies, practices, systems, people, and behaviours focused on service, to ensure customer satisfaction (Carraher *et al.*, 1998; Fearon *et al.*, 2013; Homburg *et al.*, 2002; Kim *et al.*, 2012; Lytle *et al.*, 1998). As a core component of hospitality, service is essential to ensure that customers perceive value and also is critical for long-term business sustainability (Ariffin *et al.*, 2013; Salem-Mhamdia and Ghadhab, 2012):

“The only proven way to manage best customer experience is through legendary service which is also known as operations excellence” (Hotel-d)

Because of the importance of service to hospitality experiences, a service climate is also pivotal. A service climate is defined as the subjective perception of organizational support that employees receive from the firm, in the form of policies, practices, and procedures (He *et al.*, 2011; Schneider *et al.*, 1998) that create unique environments in which employees become customer-focused or service-minded after receiving organizational resources, such as empowerment or managerial assistance. Therefore, a service climate is not an organizational attribute, instead, it is an individual attribute; its measurement is the perceptions of individual's psychology rather than organizational features. The creation of an appropriate service climate is a key aspect of CEM in the hospitality industry.

Employees' role in creating unique and memorable experiences in the hospitality industry

Both theory and practice have recognized the growing importance of employees not only from an operational perspective but also from the perspective of value that leads to business success (Karatepe, 2013). Hospitality employees engage in frequent, intimate interactions with customers (Satish and Venkatesakumar (2011) and are therefore in key position to ensure customer satisfaction (Tsai, 2013) and prompt repeat business and customer loyalty (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010).

Employees act as an interface that provides positive customer experiences and gains customer commitment (Bharwani and Jauhari, 2013). During service delivery, employees guarantee service quality and live up to customer expectations (He *et al.*, 2011; Jung and Yoon, 2015; Namasivayam *et al.*, 2014). They also act as brand ambassadors (Veleva *et al.*, 2012) who deliver value and maintain the corporate or brand image (De Roeck *et al.*, 2013; Harris, 2007). Employees are thereby primary drivers of competitive advantage, accentuating the importance of attracting the right employees (He *et al.*, 2011). This notion is reaffirmed by Professor Solnet:

“Having spent many years working in the service sector I have always known that what is in the mind of the service employee undoubtedly ‘leaks out’ to the customer. The importance of the connection between worker attitude and customer experience was well argued by Ben Schneider and David Bowen in the mid 1990s. Their contention was that in service organization, there are ‘flimsy and permeable boundaries’ [1993: 40] between the organization and its customers, so that having the right people in the right jobs who are motivated to try hard and are committed to the firm is critical.” (David Solnet)

Scholars have sought to identify factors that influence indicators of employee commitment and engagement, such as reduction of employee turnover (Jung and Yoon, 2015; Karatepe, 2013), retention (Deery and Jago, 2015; Milman and Dickson, 2014) and citizenship behaviour (Hui *et*

al., 2014; Liu and Tsaur, 2014; Wang, 2014). In particular, fun at work appears essential for enhancing employee motivation and productivity while reducing their stress. A fun working environment is a frequently cited employee need, and according to employees, the boundaries between work and play are melting away (So and King, 2010). In many cases, fun at work creates an environment that promotes an organizational culture, leading to positive experiences in the workplace. As a hotel manager notes: “Nurturing our culture is our first priority among our associates by engaging their hearts and minds” (Hotel-d).

Employees share their experiences, both with co-workers and during the co-creation of value to create memorable experiences with customers (Akaka *et al.*, 2015). Because employees’ experiences at work are key success factors for service firms (e.g., Zappos.com; Perschel, 2010), managing human resources within the service organization is critical to managing customer experiences in the hospitality industry.

Hospitality service involve extensive customer–employee relationships

In highly interactive services, such as hospitality, the service quality that customers perceive depends greatly on their interactions and subsequent relationships with employees. Customer–employee interactions serve as unique moments of truth, as a hotel manager notes, “Regardless of our technological advancements, human interaction will continue to be the most crucial aspect of providing a unique customer experience” (Hotel-a).

More interpersonal interactions over time influence customers’ emotional consideration of the service firm (Powell and Greenhaus, 2012; Shemwell *et al.*, 1999; Johnson *et al.*, 2009), because consumers often lack the skills, expertise, or education needed to evaluate the service immediately (Powell and Greenhaus, 2012). Only through on-going interaction and mutual dependence can service providers and customers form strong emotional bonds and trust

(Kandampully *et al.*, 2015; Shemwell *et al.*, 1999). Both Professors Roberts and Solnet note the role of emotions in customer–employee interactions:

“Central to service-based firms is the role of the employee with the guest. However, current understanding about this guest/employee interaction suggests that there is more going on than just what these independent domains may explain. There is human emotion and memory at play, too, creating an experience based upon the interaction of these business domains. Both customer and worker share this emotional and memorable experience. Thus, as a memory, it can carry over to future interactions with other customers or workers—for good or for bad.” (Chris Roberts)

“Researchers have become more sophisticated and scientific in relation to the human resource connection to service and customer experience and have introduced a psychological perspective. For example, it is understood that authentic emotional displays by service employees are critical to the way the customer experience is developed and evaluated (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2006). In addition, emotions are known to be contagious, which means that service organizations must proactively ensure that positive emotions, not negative ones, are the ones being spread around. Interest in the importance of employee emotions can be traced back to the concept of ‘emotional labor,’ coined by Hochschild *et al.* (1983). For example, serving a customer at the front desk involves ‘intellectual’ labor but also ‘emotional’ labor in that the employee is expected to do their job correctly and accurately, but also to convey happiness, welcoming, hospitality even if they don’t feel those emotions.” (David Solnet)

In the hospitality industry, customers interact with a service provider over longer periods than occurs in many other service sectors (e.g., retailing, banking). Hotel customers often stay

for more than one night, and during the course of that stay, they may have multiple interactions with hotel employees. Relationship studies suggest that customer–employee relationships are key influences on customer experiences during hotel stays that affect both customer satisfaction and loyalty (Bujisic *et al.*, 2014; Kandampully *et al.*, 2015; Prentice, 2013).

Previous studies also examine factors that influence customer–employee relationships. For example, employee commitment affects employee performance and contributes to customer–employee relationships (Hur *et al.*, 2015; Kandampully *et al.*, 2015; Karatepe, 2012). According to the Marriott hotel chain’s philosophy, employees should receive good care, because they take care of guests (Namasivayam *et al.*, 2014). The importance of customer–employee relationships accentuates the relevance of fostering a service climate (Bowen and Schneider, 2014; He *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, facilitating favourable interactions between employees and customers is another key aspect of CEM in the hospitality context.

Customer-to-customer interaction is part of the hospitality experience

The hospitality context provides customers with a unique opportunity to share services with fellow customers. It is these collective experiences that enhance the individual’s perception of a personal experience, such as a crowded music concert or nightclub experience. Therefore, customer-to-customer interaction is a critical factor in many hospitality services. Nicholls (2011) highlights the role of culture, the value it brings to customer-to-customer interaction, and its subsequent influence on customer experience in hospitality contexts. Businesses pay close attention to building relationships with their customers, but another important interaction that can exert a profound impact on the service experience is with the social environment (Verhoef *et al.*, 2009). The social environment refers to interactions among customers in a service setting (Garg *et al.*, 2012); it is an important focus of investigations in hotel and restaurant settings. For

example, in their investigation of customers' dining experiences, Andersson and Mossberg (2004) uncover evidence that other customers are one of six key drivers of customer satisfaction. As Professor Nusair suggests, the interaction that determines service experiences is not a customer-provider dialogue but rather a "trialogue" involving other users too:

"Social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, TripAdvisor, and blogs represent platforms that facilitate a triologue-based communications between the users with one another and the hospitality/tourism enterprise. Through social media, users not only share their positive/negative experiences within their community but also share that same message with thousands of people around the world. The creation of positive customer experiences is associated with successful performance outcomes (Rose *et al.*, 2012); therefore social media is redefining the way hospitality/tourism researchers examine the customer experience construct." (Khaldoon Nusair)

Commentaries from hospitality managers further highlight the relevance of customer-to-customer interaction and experience sharing:

"Social media has become so much part of everyone's life that one can post just about anything either positive or negative about their experience. So we have to articulate and manage the experience which at least will not result in any negative listing. As you know most millennials make buying decisions based on what these social media sites are reporting about your hotel." (Hotel - d)

"...a hotel's ability to manage its online ecosystem (social media, travel review sites, e-commerce sites) is becoming increasingly important to a hotel's success. Customers are now able to provide instant feedback which the rest of the world is privy to and therefore the hotel's ability to manage these channels are critical to their reputation." (Hotel-a)

The increasing focus on co-creation leads many hotels and restaurants to encourage customers to employ their knowledge, resources, and passions to co-innovate products and services. Starbucks established MyStarbucksIdea.com to engage fans to share, vote, discuss and consider ideas in themed product and service categories (Sigala, 2012). This practice makes good use of customer-to-customer interactions to improve customer experiences and relationships sustainably. Facilitating and tapping into customer interactions is a key aspect of CEM in the hospitality context.

Future research agenda

Our analysis of extant research, coupled with the commentaries of leading experts in the field, enables us to provide a rich agenda for further studies of CEM in the hospitality industry. Specifically, we propose six research avenues.

1. Multidisciplinary view on CEM

The expert commentaries confirm that extant CEM research has been constrained by disciplinary silos. Future research should adapt a multidisciplinary approach, as Professors Mattila, Nusair, and Keating argue:

“In the future, I believe that it is important to examine service experiences from a multidisciplinary perspective, and to that end, I would like to see more collaboration among marketing, human resources and operations management scholars.” (Anna Mattila)

“In my opinion, the customer experience construct is an eclectic area of study that builds upon multidisciplinary contributions. The customer experience concept is relatively complex and there is no prior holistic theoretical model in hospitality/tourism research that has examined all the elements that form the customer experience. For the

advancement of hospitality/tourism research, integrating the marketing perspective with other multidisciplinary teams can help in building a model-based framework that captures the holistic nature of the customer experience.” (Khaldoon Nusair)

“... rapid advances in information and communications technology, and ever-decreasing geographic boundaries. And yet, theoretically, our approach to the study of services is still far too constrained by disciplinary silos. Service design provides a way to address this problem. The design process necessitates and facilitates collaboration across disciplinary and epistemological boundaries, providing the context for developing a lingua franca to aid communication and understanding among the different service sub-disciplines. A more multidisciplinary approach to services is critical to the identification of new theories and approaches in response to this complexity, which in turn, will lead to better service experiences.” (Byron W. Keating)

2. Capturing all aspects of customer interactions with the firm

Customer experience in most cases extends far beyond service delivery, to include the phases prior to and following service delivery (Nicholls, 2011; Nixon and Rieple, 2010; Gopalan and Narayan, 2010). Firms seek ways to create relationships with customers during the pre- and during-consumption stages, then continue to engage in active participatory relationships with customers in post-consumption stages (Kandampully and Solnet, 2015). They attempt to entice customers to serve as contributors and promoters of the brand through positive word of mouth. Therefore, research should address the emergence of customer experiences throughout the customer journey (MacGillavry and Wilson, 2014), within and beyond direct interactions in the service setting:

“Because the [customer experience] concept is complex, it must be viewed as holistic in nature. Therefore, research requires a holistic model: 1) Pre-Experience—everything involved prior to the actual consumer experience, 2) Participation—the actual involvement of the consumer in the event, and 3) Post-experience—the aftermath (banked memories) of the participation.” (Bonnie J. Knutson)

“One of the challenges for marketing researchers is to be able to fully understand the service experience at different phases of the consumer purchase cycle. For products such as accommodation or flights, the service experience starts in the pre-consumption phase and flows through the consumption and post-consumption phases. People often search and book online and the experiences at that point are likely to influence the brand perceptions, as well as experiences in the main delivery phases.” (Beverly Sparks)

3. Role of people in shaping customer experiences

Many well-admired service firms recognize the important role of people, both within and outside the organization, to maintain their success. According to former Starbucks executive Howard Behar, “We’re not in the coffee business serving people; we are in the people business serving coffee.” However, this domain remains relatively poorly understood from a CEM perspective. Therefore, researchers could focus on understanding CEM by considering people as a driving force (O’Reilly and Paper, 2012; Pandey *et al.*, 2009). In addition, managing employee wellness comes into play because employees may experience strain both emotionally and physically in the work environment. Given that it is employees, especially frontline employees in the hospitality industry, who directly serve customers, their status strongly determines customers’ service experience. According to Tracey (2014), human resources affect—both positively and negatively—many organizational performance outcomes, which ultimately define the customer

experience. Professor Solnet and a hotel manager elaborate on how research might further understanding of customer experience from a human resource perspective:

“The inclusion of employee-related issues in a recent review of service research (Ostrom *et al.*, 2015) further endorses the need to more deeply consider employees and human resource management in service research and the absolute truth in the interconnectivity between employees and customer experience. We will continue to see growth in the human resource management/customer experience nexus, with emerging insights from many academic disciplines. For example, psychological researchers will be paying more attention to the impacts that organizational practices have on customer service behaviors and customer experiences. [...] Even with the rise of technology in service organizations, employees and the way they are managed has always and will always matter.” (David Solnet)

“For me, hotels are only as successful as the people who value and care for the property, its guests and each other. I am curious if there would be a way to track high performing hotels and the impact major staffing reductions have on future hotel performance for key metrics such as ADR, RevPar, customer service ranking in the brand, team member turnover and longevity, etc. It seems as though there is a trend where hotel companies are hiring asset managers who recommend staffing changes who justify immediate financial benefit without regard to its long-term impact on service and these other key metrics. Once these staffing changes are made are we able to correlate any impact on the business outside the bottom line financial? If so how many years does it take to see the staffing changes impact these other areas ultimately impacting bottom line financial performance in loss of ADR, RevPar, Reputation, Trained team members etc.” (Hotel-g)

4. *Changing role of customers*

The need for researchers to explore how the social environment affects CEM in hospitality contexts persists. For example, types of patronage at a hotel or restaurant (e.g., business versus leisure) could influence expectations related to customer-to-customer interactions during a service experience (Nicholls, 2011). Today's increasingly diverse demographic setting may create new challenges for managing customers and employees alike:

“We have for the first time in American history four different generations either working side by side or having our customers from all four generations. As you know, each generation has very distinct attitudes, expectations, habits, life styles, exposure to life experiences and service levels, motivational levels, risk takers willing to try new food and beverage, etc. So what this means to us is that as a brand we should be able to completely satisfy from veterans to baby boomers, to Gen X and Gen Y! We have to ensure that we offer our product, service, and people which can cater to all four generations.” (Hotel-d).

The frequency and depth of exchanges among customers also might influence customer experiences to different degrees. The types of interactions (e.g., intellectual vs. humorous, family gatherings vs. business meetings, online vs. offline) might determine a customer's experience; for example, a delightful dining partner would enrich a pleasant meal. For different types of customers, who might be more comfortable with human contacts or addicted to virtual communities, online and offline interactions are likely to make a significant difference to their experiences (Garg *et al.*, 2012).

In particular, by noting customers' extensive use of mobile devices and social media, firms are increasingly realizing customers' roles as brand ambassadors. Engaging and enticing customers to offer positive online reviews and electronic word of mouth (eWoM) is thus a

strategy discussion point in many boardrooms (Novak *et al.*, 2000). We foresee the need for research to explicate this new, active role of the customer, as well as the challenges associated with extending customers' access to broader service systems, beyond firm–customer dyads:

“Future challenges include the growth of eWoM and how to better manage this by taking a proactive approach and intervening more at the point of contact, where possible. Another challenge is to better design the servicescape for enhancing customer experiences, taking into consideration the complexity of the service ecosystem.” (Beverly Sparks)

5. *Role and influence of information technology and social media*

The connected marketplace, created through the adoption and extensive use of the Internet and mobile devices, forces firms to adopt new customer mind-sets, regarding them not only as individuals but also as social customers within communities, both offline and online. As customers in the connected business world take on extended roles, even beyond the co-creation of value (Frow and Payne, 2007; Payne *et al.*, 2009), they embrace co-ownership of the brand and its success or failure (Kandampully *et al.*, 2015). Further research therefore might address a broader range of CEM issues in the hospitality industry, reflecting individual customer perspectives and customer communities in both offline and online worlds. In such increasingly connected marketplaces, it is important to study the role of human interaction in the hospitality industry. Both academic experts and managers highlight the importance of this topic:

“Technology, Internet and mobile social media are of critical importance to the hospitality industry today as it appeal to the younger customers...” (Hotel-f)

“Expanding the servicescape research to the area of sensory marketing is important as today's digital world is able convey personalized advertising messages via multiple

sensory channels. Finding the right balance between technology and human touch is also critical for many segments of the hospitality industry. Given the power of today's social media, I think that it is also important to investigate ethics violations in social media and to understand customer engagement in social media from a holistic perspective across various channels.” (Anna Mattila)

“The future of the service experience and how customers evaluate its efficacy will depend on a firm's ability to seamlessly converse with the customer in both physical and virtual worlds simultaneously. Firms should be prepared to adapt quickly and re-engineer the delivery of service experiences based on what lifestyle technologies customers acquire and use. This is all the more important in the lodging industry, whose product is to a large extent, a ‘home away from home’ experience. At a macro level, lodging firms need to match, if not exceed, guests' technology-enabled lifestyles. For example, some hotels now offer guests the ability to stream content onto guest room TVs from their own tablets and smartphones, and through their own subscriptions at select providers. Put differently, the proliferation of consumer-owned high-tech equipment is forcing hospitality providers to play catch-up and deliver superior technology-enabled experiences. The provision of technology-enabled experiences should captivate guests and also maximize their potential to communicate about their experiences effectively. Academic research should pave the way towards the development of a service experience management framework that effectively articulates the role of technology in the customer co-creation of value.” (Srikanth Beldona)

6. *Creating better measures and tools for CEM*

Technological advancements and the Internet have contributed to the growing importance of interaction and the relationship between the firm and its customers (Nambisan and Baron, 2007). This has compelled marketers to view customers not as a single entity but as “social customers,” with a concomitant shift from marketing *to* customers to marketing *with* customers. Understanding the customer experience and ensuring that it is managed effectively at every point of the customer’s interaction with the firm has become a key target for firms that aim to be at the leading edge in the market. The question then arises as to whether and how well firms deliver the experience that customers expect. Creating a mechanism to measure how well firms are meeting customer’s expectations is critical. According to Maklan and Klaus (2011) and Klaus and Maklan (2013), CEM should include product experience, outcome focus, moments of truth, and peace of mind (emotional factors). We therefore suggest the need for appropriate CEM measures and methods that can address the contemporary challenges of increasingly complex, fragmented markets. Our expert informants share this view:

“There is an old business axiom that says, ‘You cannot manage what you cannot measure.’ Assuming this to be true, and accepting the belief that [CEM] is the future of an increasingly fragmented, complex, and global hospitality industry, researchers have to develop a valid model for identifying and measuring what is meant by the customer experience. While several [customer experience] elements have been the subject of extensive research (i.e. service quality, customer value, and customer satisfaction), to date, the dimensions of the total integrated [customer experience] have not been extracted, only assumed. To do so will be an exciting challenge.” (Bonnie J. Knutson)

“Managing the service experience entails developing an in depth understanding of the complex nature of what consumers do, think and feel when they interact with a business.

By knowing more about the lived experience (in situ) at all phases of the buying cycle, a manager can better enhance customer experience. This has resulted in a renewed interest in multi-method approaches in my research. I have applied methods like scenario experiments, eye tracking, photo elicitation, experienced based sampling and cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys to delve deeper into service experiences” (Beverly Sparks)

Conclusions and implications

Theoretical contributions

This study provides a synthesis of literature and expert commentary that fills a void in customer experience management in the hospitality field. It combines business and hospitality knowledge and provides a multidisciplinary perspective of marketing, operations, and human resources. Prior reviews have not integrated CEM knowledge with the principles of hospitality literature; this review therefore advances understanding of CEM in hospitality contexts.

Our analysis reveals that customer experience management entails collective functions and various activities within the organization, including strategy (providing a clear customer focus), marketing (directing firms’ efforts toward building long-term relationships, both inside and outside the organization), operations (building customers’ trust in the firm’s efficiency and

uniqueness), service design (orchestrating front-office and back-office operations to support both internal and external customers), human resources (providing a source of creativity, innovations, and energy that support the firm in all situations), technology (enabling and contributing to the firm's innovativeness across all aspects of the organization), and social media (nurturing channels of communication to engage individual and communities of customers). Thus, CEM is not confined to one organizational aspect but entails an organization-wide endeavour, co-created through the contributions of customers and employees. Figure 1 illustrates a framework of the essential factors for creating an organization-wide collective focus on CEM.

PLEASE INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

The proposed model (Figure 1) takes a holistic perspective and provides a broad illustration of some of the factors that are essential for a hospitality firm to manage the customer experience effectively. It provides a new, organizational perspective to interconnect various internal factors of a hospitality organization (strategy, human resources, marketing, social media, technology, design, and operations). The importance of integrating firms' internal functions has been suggested previously (Berry, 1980; Greene *et al.*, 1994; Grönroos, 1983; Rafiq and Ahmed, 2000;

Zhang, Kandampully, and Choi, 2014). In this study, we contend that the alignment of functional factors is essential to managing the customer experience. Although most previous research on customer experience management has been grounded in marketing, we find only a limited number of studies that have roots in human resource management and operations management, or that combine various perspectives. None of the commentaries from managers connect marketing with CEM, indicating that also CEM practice is restricted by organizational silos.

Managerial implications

This study highlights the need for a holistic understanding of all aspects of the firm to effectively manage customer experiences. In the early 1980s, both theory and practice focused on measuring service quality to improve services and gain success in the competitive market. Today, service quality is a core foundation for building the firm's image and a core strategy for the most successful service companies (e.g., Singapore Airlines, Southwest Airlines, Ritz Carlton Hotels, Four Seasons Hotels, Disney). These firms transform ideas of service quality from a measurement to a vision on which to base the image of their firm.

Similarly, customer experience cannot be created in isolation, through marketing strategies alone. To create and manage customer experiences that pertain to a firm's unique brand identity, they must be part of the firm's strategic vision and unify the efforts of the entire organization. We argue that hospitality firms that consider customers' positive experiences part of their vision also must understand that experiences are not created; they are co-experienced by customers and

employees during service delivery. Management of customer experiences therefore can be achieved through an orientation that places employees at centre stage. Highly successful hospitality firms create a service environment that encourages employees to adjust their service provisions to cater to customers' unexpected needs. We propose the term "people innovations" to describe the ability of service employees on the front line to innovate as they creatively modify their services. At this critical moment in the service delivery process, co-experience takes place, providing a unique opportunity to develop the all-important employee–customer relationship. While technology leads to innovation among globally connected customers, service employees continue to hold the key that transforms simple hospitality interactions into memorable customer experiences. Recognizing the importance of its people, Ritz Carlton uses the term "select" rather than "recruit" as an important distinction in how it competes for the talent that is critical to creating the unique Ritz Carlton experience.

Our study clarifies that a positive customer experience is the outcome of a cleverly orchestrated, multifunctional approach that employs marketing, operations, human resources, strategy, technology, social media, and design. Neglecting certain perspectives might be detrimental to success, as illustrated by a comment from a manager of a major hotel chain: "Designing the hotel with operations in mind is not common, which has an adverse effect on the guest experience..." (Hotel-e). We suggest that for hospitality firms, it is imperative to have a collective focus on creating the all-important customer relationship, as confirmed by a hotel manager: "Customer experience is an outcome of total team effort" (Hotel-f).

Comments by Professor Roberts further illustrate the importance of combining HRM, marketing, and operations elements to provide an individualized, memorable experience, seamlessly supported by cues in the service setting:

“Hospitality firms have adopted different strategies where the delivery of a service plays a significant role in the product design, reputation and brand identity. In such instances, deep, repeating relationships are desired with guests. Individualized records are often kept of customer preferences and business transactions. Guests are encouraged to strengthen their relationships by building recognition through frequent guest programs. Employees are coached to treat guests as known and regular customers. For these firms, the employee role in service delivery is a key aspect of the product design. Starbucks is an example of this strategy. The comfortable seating, the free Internet service, and the pleasant ambiance are combined with the friendly and attentive staff member to create a memorable experience. Starbucks’ intention is that the memory is one that the guest will want to consciously repeat.” (Chris Roberts)

Our study also highlights the crucial role of technology, the Internet, and mobile social media in fundamentally changing how people live and providing powerful dissemination capabilities to connect with others. These changes provide new opportunities for firms to engage and co-create with customers for mutual benefit (McColl-Kennedy *et al.*, 2015); they result in the personalization of services and enhancement of customers’ perceived value and relationships with firms (Füller, 2010). Customers are no longer passive recipients of a firm’s value proposition; they now participate actively in brand co-creation and co-ownership (Verleye, 2015).

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Table 1. Databases used for searching relevant CEM articles.

Data base	Time of search	Number of hits
Business Source Complete (EBSCO)	October 2014	187
ProQuest	October 2014	52
Scopus	February 2016	208
Web of Science	February 2016	124

Table 2. Key research perspectives and foci in extant CEM literature

CEM Perspective	Contributions and Exemplary Studies	Literature Base
Understanding the entire customer journey	Firms should map, manage and measure customer touch points during the customer lifecycle.	Clatworthy, 2012; Frow and Payne, 2007
	Creating positive customer experiences requires integration of information and processes across various touch points.	Chan, 2005
	Successful implementation of CRM requires focusing on decentralized CEM at the touch point level.	Henneberg, 2005
Design of service delivery process	Customer service failures persist from poor service delivery process designs.	Fawcett et al., 2014
	Customer needs should be translated into technical design characteristics of service processes.	Botha and Van Rensburg, 2010
	Efficient service design is important, especially in multichannel environments.	Patricio et al., 2008
Design of marketing mix variables affecting customer experience	CEM entails the development of promotion, price, merchandise, supply chain, service environment, and location of the provider.	Baskaran, 2011; Grewal et al., 2009; Verhoef et al., 2009
	CEM is affected by brand name, price, advertising, employees, servicescape, core service, word of mouth, and service quality.	Ismail et al., 2011
The positive performance outcomes of CEM	Superior customer experiences result in positive outcomes (e.g., higher customer satisfaction, more frequent shopping visits, larger wallet shares, higher profits).	Grewal et al., 2009; Klaus and Maklan, 2013; Sharma and Chaubey, 2014
	Customer experience is an improved service quality measure.	Klaus and Maklan, 2007; Palmer, 2010
Role of organizational factors in implementing CEM	CEM is an overarching approach that requires cultural change and knowledge management. Organizational factors (top management support, employee training and motivation, organizational structure) are key to personalizing customer experiences.	Chakravorti, 2011
Role of frontline employees (FLE) in CEM	FLEs shape the customer experience. Service brands are established by managers but must be transformed into employee personal value.	Padilla-Meléndez and Garrido-Moreno, 2014; Tracy, 2014; Harris, 2007; Zhang, Kandampully, and Choi, 2014
	FLEs job satisfaction and commitment are key for creating positive customer experiences	Gazzoli et al., 2013; Pandey et al., 2009

Notes: CEM = customer experience management; CRM = customer relationship management; HRM = human resource management; OB = organizational behaviour.

Table 3. Previous CEM findings in the hospitality sector

Authors	Method	Constructs	Setting	Key findings
Kisang and Soocheong, 2008	Scale development	IV: facility aesthetics, ambience, lighting, service product, layout, and social factors; DV: DINESCAPE	hospitality	Based on quantitative analyses, a six-factor scale was identified, consisting of facility aesthetics, ambience, lighting, service product, layout, and social factors.
Morgan et al., 2008	Conceptual	theatrical metaphor	restaurant	An analysis of the service encounter as drama can reveal the role the customer plays, the super-objective behind their visit to the restaurant, and the unspoken subtext behind critical incidents.
Johansson et al., 2009	Survey	IV: perceived price/perceived quality; DV: customer satisfaction/emotions	hotel	The weaker the relationship segment, the more quality-based and disappointing the customer experience. The stronger or closer the relationship segment, the more balanced (price and quality) and joyful the experience. One segmentation method seems more efficient than the other.
Zehrer, 2009	Conceptual	service experience/service design/small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)	tourism	Service experience must be appropriately managed by SME operators who collect and evaluate relevant customer experience data. Service design must be holistic, embedded in the organizational culture of the service provider using tools such as “blueprinting.” Synergistic cooperation and learning regions among traditionally fragmented tourism providers are essential for achieving long-term competitiveness.

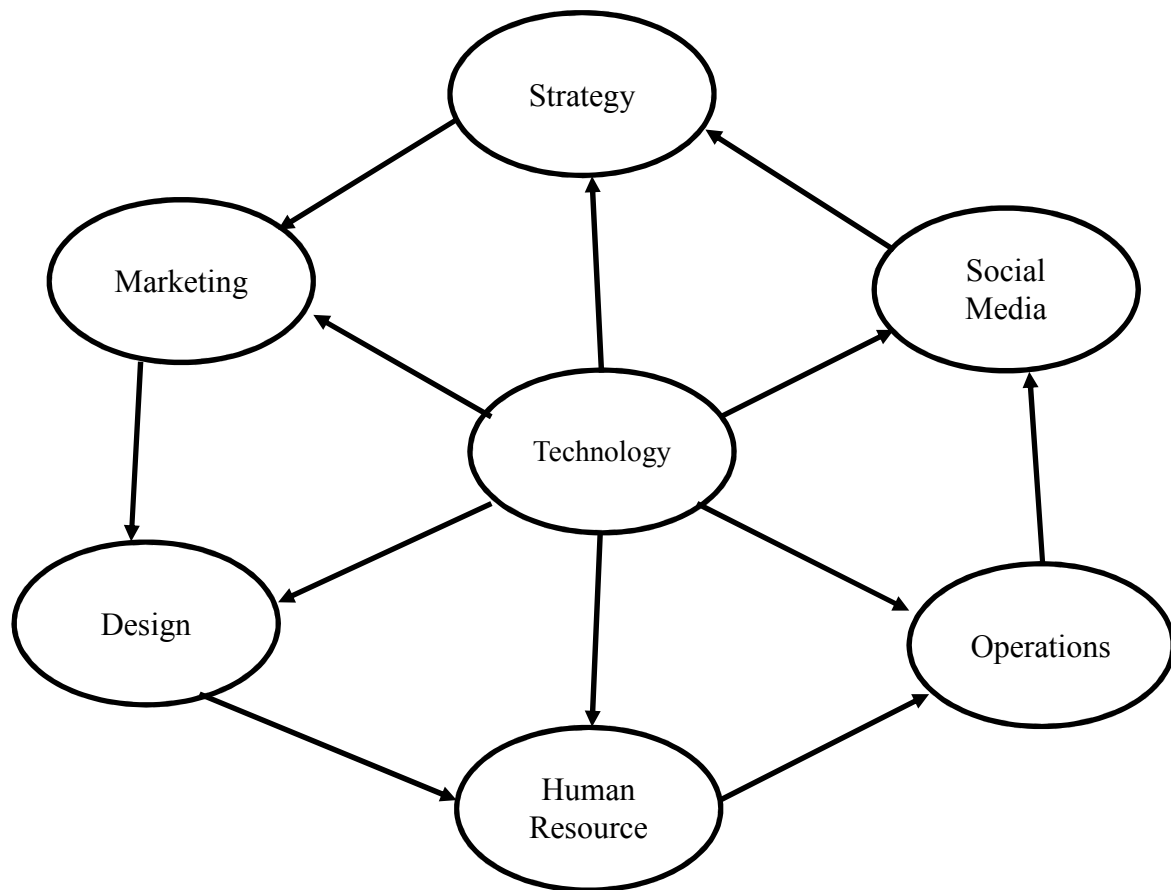
Gopalan and Narayan, 2010	Scale development	IV: stakeholder DV: customer become a promoter/ customer become a detractor Mediator: customer experience	hotel	Effective management of customer satisfaction entails cross-functional collaboration and transparent measurement schemes that clearly delineate the impact of each stakeholder's actions on overall customer experience.
Coghlan and Pearce 2010	Diaries	IV: motivations/activities; DV: emotions/satisfaction/experience	tourism	Emotional variability occurs across time with distinct phases of positivity, annoyance and receptivity. Variability appears linked to daily activities and personal characteristics. Satisfaction levels do not always follow patterns of emotional variability, which are weakly related to expectations and motivations recorded at the start of the trip.
Nixon and Rieple, 2010	Case study	employee engagement/ memory creation/ identity/ scenography	hotel	The Ritz-Carlton no longer sees itself as a hotel company but considers itself an "experience and memory creator."
So and King, 2010	Survey	IV: Company's presented brand/external brand communications/customer experience with company; DV: brand equity; Mediator: brand awareness/brand meaning	hotel	For experienced hotel customers, service experience is most influential in determining brand meaning (i.e., the customer's dominant perceptions and impression of the brand).
Nicholls, 2011	Conceptual	cross-culture/customer-to-customer interaction	hospitality	Customer-to-customer interactions are relevant to hospitality management; opportunities for future investigations are identified.
Klaus and Makla, 2011	Longitudinal study	IV: hedonic pleasure, personal progression, social interaction, efficiency and surreal feeling; DV: customer experience	tourism	Hedonic pleasure and personal progression are two core experiences valued by customers. Core experiences generate surreal feelings and incomparable and memorable evaluations of the overall experience. Social interaction facilitates core experiences; efficiency enables them.

Sathish and Venkatesakumar, 2011	Survey	IV: offered services/assortments provided/pricing factor/quality of products provided/atmospherics/ staff/value added services provided; DV: satisfaction/loyalty; Mediator: Customer experience	Coffee retail outlets	Services offered by staff and quality of products offered are more important in creating customer's coffee experience than other variables.
Prebensen et al., 2013	Survey	tourist resources/value perception/ personal service/ environment/ other tourists	tourism	Tourist resources, in addition to personal service, environment, and other visitors, enhance the experienced value of a trip significantly.
Miao et al., 2014	Quasi-experiment	hedonic experience value during pre-consumption, consumption, and post-consumption	hospitality	Perceived hedonic value (predicted, experienced and remembered) of hospitality consumption is dynamic over the course of the experience. Predicted hedonic value is largely a function of temporal distance from a hospitality experience, with an upward pattern as the date draws near.
Tracey, 2014	Conceptual	HR management, Context-specific factors	hospitality	A comparison of the findings shows a substantial degree of overlap in the themes and results that have been generated to date. Context-specific factors should be considered in efforts to advance our understanding about the ways in which hospitality HR systems may impact a wide array of individual and organizational outcomes.

Table 4. Key insights into hospitality and CEM

Key insights	Important concepts for further research
Hospitality is about extensive customer–employee relationships.	- Employee emotion management - Time duration of service encounter - Employee engagement - Employee citizenship - Service climate
Service is an integral part of the hospitality experience.	- Service design - Service-oriented leadership
Customer-to-customer interaction is imperative for the hospitality experience.	- Customer misbehaviour - Type of patronage - Frequency and depth of exchanges between customers - Type of customer interactions - Type of customer personalities - Online vs. offline interactions
Employees play a key role in creating unique, memorable, positive experiences in the hospitality industry.	Fun working environment

Figure 1. Essential Factors for Creating an Organization-wide Collective Focus on CEM



Appendix A. Previous CEM findings

Source	Method	Key findings
Angelis et al., 2010	Conceptual	Operations need to be designed with customer perception and experience in mind, with corresponding performance measures and management.
Baskaran, 2011	Conceptual	Several ways (e.g., brand, price, promotion, supply chain management, location, advertising, packaging and labelling, service mix, atmosphere) to deliver a superior customer experience should result in higher customer satisfaction, more frequent shopping visits, larger wallet shares, and higher profits.
Berry et al., 2006	Conceptual	By fundamentally enhancing the ease with which customers can experience a service, companies can attract new customers and even create new markets.
Berry et al., 2002	Conceptual	Offering products or services alone isn't enough these days: Organizations must provide their customers with satisfactory experience. Competing on that dimension means orchestrating all the "clues" that people pick up in the buying process.
Bihari, 2012	Conceptual	CRM enhances the customer experience by account and transaction accuracy and carefulness, efficiency in correcting mistakes, and friendliness and helpfulness of the personnel.
Botha and Van Rensburg, 2010	Conceptual	Defines a step-by-step model for linking the customer experience to business processes and translating the needs of the customer into technical design characteristics for each process.
Carbone and Haeckel, 1994.	Conceptual	Managing experience clues requires judgment, skills, and investments in order to create competitive advantage and customer loyalty.
Carbone, 1998	Conceptual	Businesses should develop a systematic method for managing customer experience to effectively differentiate their products and services from competitors.
Chen et al., 2012	Conceptual	Experience sharing is value creation efforts for the direct benefits of others. Value-in-experience is an effort-based meaning of value creation. Value initiators are actors who perform experience sharing.
Chakravorti, 2011	Literature review	Develops a framework of knowledge and organizational culture enhanced customer experience management.
Clatworthy, 2012	Qualitative	Underlines the importance of aligning the customer experience with the company brand and how. A key element is the development of a service personality and consideration of service touch point behaviours through a combination of analytical work and experience prototyping.
Dawes and Rowley, 1998.	Case studies	As customers become more proficient at taking on an IT role, traditional models of the service experience may need to be revisited.
Donne, 2009	Qualitative	The critical influences on participants' experiences are instructors' behaviours and attitude through intrinsic service values, participants' interactions with one another in their own peer socialscape and their own performance in developing skilled and hedonic consumption.
Fawcett et al., 2014	Critical incident technique CIT)	A holistic view of customer service that emphasizes policy, people, performance measurement and processes.
Frow and Payne, 2007	Case study	Organizations seeking to deliver a perfect customer experience should focus on recognizing the problem and opportunities for improvement and co-creation.

Garg et al., 2012	Conceptual	Research gaps are identified; this paper also offers a generalized framework for customer experience measurement that applies to online and offline experiences.
Gilmore and Pine, 2002	Conceptual	Each company should examine its own situation and determine which levels, among the five physical (flagship location, experience hubs, major venues, derivative presence, and world-wide markets) and five virtual (flagship site, experience portals, major platforms, derivative placement, and world wide web) make marketing sense.
Gopalan and Narayan, 2010	Scale development	Effective management of customer satisfaction entails cross-functional collaboration and a transparent measurement scheme that delineates the impact of each stakeholder's actions on overall customer experience.
Grewal et al., 2009	Conceptual	The role of macro factors in the retail environment and how they shape customer experiences and behaviours.
Henneberg, 2005	Exploratory, qualitative research design	An approach based on CEM, with a decentralized, interaction, and learning skills-based approach, is rare, though successful CRM consists of elements of both dimensions.
Ismail et al., 2011	Literature review	Examines the impact of customer experience on brand loyalty through a comprehensive review of existing literature on customer experience and service brand literature.
Johansson and Naslund, 2009	Survey	The weaker the relationship segment, the more quality-based and disappointing is the customer experience. The stronger or closer the relationship segment, the more balanced with respect to price and quality) and joyful the experience. One segmentation method seems more efficient than the other.
Klaus and Maklan, 2007	Conceptual	The authors offer the concept of experience quality, which incorporates service quality but also extends to aspects of customer experience not related directly to service to predict consumer behaviour with respect to brands.
Klaus and Maklan, 2011	Longitudinal study	Hedonic pleasure and personal progression are two core experiences valued by customers. A core experience generates surreal feelings, incomparable, and memorable evaluations of the overall experience. Social interaction facilitates core experiences; efficiency enables them.
Kisang and Soocheong, 2008	Scale development	Quantitative analyses reveal a six-factor scale: facility aesthetics, ambience, lighting, service product, layout, and social factors.
Kulkarni, 2011	Survey	Retail chains need to compete by extending convenience, assortments, variety, good quality merchandize, after-sales service and an overall wonderful shopping experience to the customers.
MacGillavry and Wilson, 2014	Case study	DHL Freight enhances the customer experience by bringing the voice of the customer into the organization, improving customer interactions, and developing an organization-wide customer-driven vision, common purpose, and value proposition.
Maklan and Klaus, 2011	Conceptual	Market researchers serve their service organizations and customers better if they take an active role in updating CEM, commensurate with advances in the conceptualization of what firms offer.
Miao et al., 2014	Quasi-experiment	Perceived hedonic value (predicted, experienced, and remembered) of a hospitality consumption experience is dynamic over the course of the experience. Predicted hedonic value is largely a function of temporal distance from a hospitality experience, with an upward pattern as the date draws near.

Mohamed and Borhan, 2014	Survey	Customers' emotional experience has positive significant effects on customer attachment behaviour but not commitment. Consumers in general look for the trustworthiness of promotional activities when purchasing local or international products.
Morgan et al., 2008	Conceptual	An analysis of the service encounter as a drama reveals the role the customer is playing, the objective behind their visit to the restaurant, and the unspoken subtext behind critical incidents.
Muskat et al., 2013	Mobile ethnography	Service experience must be appropriately managed by museum operators who collect, evaluate, store and reuse CEM relevant data.
Nambisan and Nambisan, 2008	Multiple cases	Having the right technology-based system can enhance the customer experience and help companies improve both their innovation and customer relationship management capabilities.
Nicholls, 2011	Conceptual	The relevance of customer-to-customer interaction to hospitality management is highlighted and opportunities for future investigations identified.
Nixon and Rieple, 2010	Case study	The Ritz-Carlton no longer sees itself as a hotel company; it now considers itself an "experience and memory creator."
Novak et al., 2000	Survey	The study developed and tested a structural model that embodies the components of what makes for a compelling online experience.
O'Reilly and Paper, 2012	Qualitative	Organizational changes initiated by management create strategically constructed silos that force implementation through people and systems to control and standardize the service interface and resultant customer experiences.
Otnes et al., 2012	Interview and observation	Marketplace rituals can enhance CEM. These rituals are planned, symbolic and repeated performances executed for and with customers.
Palmer, 2010	Conceptual	By incorporating emotions and perceptual distortion over time, customer experience overcomes many problems associated with static, partial measures of service quality.
Patrício et al., 2008	Interview	Service experience blueprint method enabled an efficient service design, in service multichannel delivery.
Paula and Iliuță, 2008	Conceptual	To succeed or survive, companies need a new way of thinking. Success belongs to those that put the customer in the centre of their activity and offer superior value.
Payne et al., 2009	Case study	Examines the co-creation of value in the service dominant logic, proposes a conceptual model of co-creation for managing brand relationship experiences and develops a case study about an innovative service that uses opportunities for co-creation that reflect changing consumer preferences and new mobile technologies.
Pandey et al., 2009	Survey	Positive impact of spiritual climate on customers' experience of employees' service is substantiated empirically.
Prebensen et al., 2013	Survey	Tourist resources, in addition to personal service, environment and other visitors, enhance the experienced value of a trip significantly.
Puccinelli et al., 2009	Conceptual	The key domains are goals, schemas and information processing; memory; involvement; attitudes; affective processing; atmospherics; and consumer attribution and choice. They are not exhaustive but offer a wealth of insights for the retailing arena.
Petre et al., 2006	Conceptual	This research moves customer-centred design and evaluation beyond websites to address value, loyalty and retention in e-commerce, then integrates perspectives and strategies to encompass the total customer experience.

Rhea, 1992	Conceptual	Organizations need to shift their focus from designing products to designing a cycle of customer experiences. The dynamic model of this process-one that is reiterated to varying degrees with each consumer decision-moves from Life Context to Engagement to Experience to Resolution.
Rowley, 1999	Case studies and walk-through audits	This methodology offers an important approach to the evaluation of the total customer experience, which encompasses consideration of the way in which the variety of individual service exchanges come together to provide an integrated experience.
Ryder, 2007	Survey	The recent trend in the marketing practices is to create engaging and long-lasting shopping experiences for customers.
Sharma and Chaubey, 2014	Survey	Strong relationship between customer experience with the overall feeling, trust and satisfaction is helpful in delighting the customer.
Sathish and Venkatesakumar, 2011	Survey	Services offered by staff and product quality are more important for creating customers' coffee experience than other variables.
Stone, 2012	Conceptual	For customer service, suppliers increase their focus on efficiency and margin and seek win-win of self-fulfilled customer experience with minimal human intervention from staff.
Tax et al., 1998	Survey	The results support a quasi "brand equity" perspective whereas satisfaction with complaint handling has a direct impact on trust and commitment prior positive experiences mitigate the effects of poor complaint handling.
Tracey, 2014	Conceptual	A comparison of the findings shows a substantial degree of overlap in the themes and results that have been generated to date. Context-specific factors should be considered in efforts to advance our understanding about the ways in which hospitality HR systems may impact a wide array of individual and organizational outcomes.
Tumbat, 2011	Ethnography	Customer emotion management is essential for understanding customer performance in co-construction of service experiences.
Verhoef et al., 2009	Conceptual	Prior customer experiences influence future customer experiences; social environment, self-service technologies and the store brand are important.
Wall and Envick, 2008	Conceptual	Experiences clues are (1) functional, or the technical performance of the service; (2) mechanic, or tangibles associated with the service; and (3) humanistic, or behaviour and appearance of service providers. These clues are important in creating the customer's service experience, influencing both rational and emotional perceptions of service quality.
Yin et al., 2013	Ethnography, interviews	Senior consumers face difficulties in various areas, including understanding where certain products are placed on shelves and why; access to products (shelf height), poor signage, labelling and inappropriate portion sizes.
Zehrer, 2009	Conceptual	Service experience must be appropriately managed by small firms that collect and evaluate relevant customer experience data. Service designs must be undertaken in a holistic manner embedded in the organizational culture of the service provider using blueprinting. Synergistic cooperation and learning regions among traditionally fragmented tourism providers are essential for achieving long-term competitiveness.

Appendix B. Motivation for inclusion of commentators

We used the following criteria to invite commentators from hospitality management academic leaders:

- 1) Recognize academic leaders in hospitality management,
- 2) Strong knowledge of customer experience management theory and practice,
- 3) Prior publications in service management,
- 4) Expertise in marketing, operations, human resources, or technology/social media.

Commentator, affiliation	Main perspective to represent in this study	Indicators for expert or thought leader status in the field
Srikanth Beldona, University of Delaware, U.S.A.	Technology	Ranked 15th in the world in research among hospitality faculty and selected as one of 2015's Top 25 Most Extraordinary Minds in Hospitality Marketing by Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMIAI). Research interest includes hospitality and digital marketing, with research appearing in the publications such as <i>Cornell Hospitality Quarterly</i> , <i>Journal of Travel Research</i> , <i>Tourism Management</i> and <i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i> .
Byron Keating, Australian National University (ANU), Australia.	Operations and design	Published more than 100 articles on the role and impact of emerging technologies on the design and delivery of complex service operations. Director of Research School of Management at the Australian National University, with a particular interest in the role of emerging technologies in supporting the design and delivery of complex services. Presently Vice President of the Service Science Society of Australia and on the International Advisory Board for the Service Education and Research Initiative.
Bonnie Knutson, Michigan State University, U.S.A.	Marketing	Director of the Hospitality Management program at Michigan State University. Work has been featured in publications such as <i>The Wall Street Journal</i> , <i>USA Today</i> , and on CNN. One of the most highly cited hospitality management authors and distinguished professors; has been honoured with the Hospitality Business Alumni Association Lifetime Academic Achievement Award.
Anna Mattila, Pennsylvania State University, U.S.A. (marketing)	Services Marketing	Marriott Professor of Lodging Management. Associate Editor, <i>Cornell Hospitality Quarterly</i> . Recipient of Founder's Award – Annual Graduate Education & Graduate Students' Research Conference (2010), University of Delaware Olson Lifetime Research Award (2007), and John Wiley & Sons Lifetime Research Award, International Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Educator Convention (2006).

Khaldoon Nusair, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman	Hospitality marketing, technology and social media	Head of Marketing Department in the College of Economics & Political Science at SQU. Prior to joining SQU, author of one book and more than 75 refereed papers in leading academic journals. Recipient of seven international awards for research contributions. Serves on the Editorial Advisory Board of six international journals. Ad hoc reviewer for <i>Cornell Quarterly</i> , <i>Journal of Service Management</i> , <i>Journal of Information and Management</i> , <i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i> , and <i>Tourism Analysis</i> . Served as Vice President of International Hospitality Information Technology Association (IHITA), 2009-2012. Industry experience includes working for multinational companies in the U.S.A. and the Middle East.
Chris Roberts, DePaul University, U.S.A.	Strategic management	Professor of Strategic Management and director of DePaul University's new School of Hospitality Leadership in the Driehaus College of Business. Editor of <i>Hospitality and Tourism Research</i> . Research and teaching efforts focus on leadership, strategy, and operational issues in casinos, resorts, and hotels.
David Solnet, University of Queensland, Australia (human resources)	Human Resources	Head of service management and hospitality at The University of Queensland's Business School in Brisbane, Australia. Managing director of Shift Directions, a management consulting firm specializing in business improvement programs, financial analysis, service quality improvement, and management development programs. Restaurant management background, with 18 years of experience including senior management roles in the U.S.A. and Australia. Research, teaching, and consulting focus on managing and leading service organizations, with particular emphasis on managing the employee-customer interface through various organizational psychology lenses. Widely published in leading academic journals, books, book chapters, and trade publications in the areas of service management, managing and motivating service employees, and organizational service climate.
Beverley Sparks, Griffith University, Australia (marketing)	Marketing	Professor at Griffith University, Australia. Director of the Tourism, Sport and Service Innovation Research Centre. Active researcher, with a strong track record of grants and journal publications. International reputation as a marketing researcher and educator in the hospitality field, with research work published in international journals such as <i>Journal of Service Research</i> , <i>Journal of Business Research</i> , <i>Tourism Management</i> , <i>Journal of Travel Research</i> , and <i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research</i> . On the editorial board of several journals, including <i>Journal of Service Research</i> , <i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research</i> , and <i>Cornell Hospitality Quarterly</i> . Has previously held the management positions of Head of the School of Tourism and Hotel Management, Dean International (a University-wide appointment) and Director of Education for the Sustainable Tourism CRC.