

# Using the experiential approach in marketing and management: A systematic literature review

Fabio Forlani\*, Tonino Pencarelli\*\*

## Abstract

The experiential perspective has become the primary lens adopted in the current economic and managerial literature. In recent years, the marketing literature has recognized the importance of the contributions of consultancy work on the Experience Economy, Experiential Marketing, and Customer Experience Management.

This work defines the experiential approach as the managerial tool that puts the customer experience (CE) at the center of a company's decision-making processes. It also recognizes that experiential management studies constitute a rich and important research field, but one that has not yet been clearly defined or characterized. Moreover, this paper describes the evolution of the state of the art of the experiential approach and outlines possible future developments.

To this end, a systematic review of the literature is offered in order to make the review process both transparent and reproducible. It is built on the articles published in the SciVerse Scopus database up until December 2018. To answer the research questions, a bibliometric analysis of the citations in the database itself is conducted and an inductive content analysis undertaken, by studying the database in the keywords sections through T-Lab software. Using keywords to identify the subject of published articles, a content analysis (co-word analysis) serves to determine the main experiential approach adopted as well as the principal sectors (e.g. food, tourism, events, etc.) in which the various experiential approaches have been applied.

This study is a first attempt at quantitative measurement of the diffusion of experiential marketing and management concepts in academic literature. While acknowledging the need for further qualitative studies, the analysis provides insight on the main experiential approaches adopted and points to the need for a theoretical framework able to coherently synthesize them.

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## **Introduction**

Nearly forty years after the first conceptualization of customer experience (CE) by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), it has acquired increasing importance in the academic debate on marketing and management (Bueno et al., 2019; Kranzbühler et al., 2018; Chaney et al., 2018; Jain et al., 2017; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Adhikari and Bhattacharya, 2016; Homburg et al., 2015; Helkkula, 2011; Palmer, 2010; Tynan and McKechnie, 2009; Gentile et al., 2007). Moreover, the experiential approach has become a topical issue in the managerial literature, as evidenced by recent reviews (Kranzbühler et al. 2018; Chaney et al., 2018; Forlani et al., 2018; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Adhikari and Bhattacharya, 2016; Du Plessis and De Vries 2016; Homburg et al. 2015). Over the last two decades the marketing literature has also acknowledged the important contribution of works published by consultants and practitioners: Experience Economy (Pine and Gilmore, 1998, 1999), Experiential Marketing (Schmitt, 1999a; 1999b), Customer Experience Management (Schmitt, 2003).

This work frames the experience approach as a managerial methodology that places the customer experience (CE) at the center of a company's decision-making processes (Pencarelli and Forlani, 2018). The authors recognize that customer experience management (CEM) constitutes a rich and important research field, but one that has not yet been clearly defined (Homburg et al., 2015, Du Plessis and De Vries, 2016, Palmer, 2010, Tynan and McKechnie, 2009) and characterized (Kranzbühler et al., 2018). In addition, this work provides a quantitative measure of the state of the art in experiential perspective (Exp) and experiential approach (ExA) studies in the marketing and managerial literature.

Starting from the best-known experiential concepts (Pencarelli and Forlani, 2018) such as “customer experience”, “customer experience management”, “customer journey”, “experience economy”, “experiential marketing”, “experience marketing”, “co-creation experience”, “brand experience”, “customer experience quality”, “customer experience design”, “customer experience innovation”, “measuring customer experience”, and “online customer experience”, the authors of this paper provide a structured overview

of the research lines, the authors of reference, and the fields of the application of studies that use the experiential approach.

To this end, we aim to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: *Is the literature on Experiential Studies in marketing and management (ExP and ExA) growing from a quantitative and qualitative point of view?*

RQ2: *What are the reference articles, authors and journals for ExP and ExA?*

RQ3: *What are the main ExP and ExA research lines?*

RQ4: *What is the field of application (zones of interest or sectors) in which the concept has been most often applied?*

To achieve this goal we use a systematic literature review (Galvagno, 2017; Galvagno and Dalli, 2014; Briner and Denyer, 2012; Transfield et al., 2003) to make the review process both transparent and reproducible.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: Section 1 discusses the meaning of customer experience and experiential approach; Section 2 presents the methodology, the core set selection, and the analysis; Section 3 presents the findings, while Section 4 (conclusions) discusses the study's main contributions and points out the implications for the field, proposing further applications and extensions.

## **1. Definition and domain**

In managerial literature the first work to use the experiential perspective of consumption analysis is that of Holbrook and Hirschman (1982): "The Experiential Aspects of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings, and Fun". In the marketing literature, in particular, the "new experiential approach offered an original view of consumer behavior" (Gentile et al., 2007, p. 396). This approach claims that "Customers are rational and emotional animals" (Schmitt, 1999, p. 29) and consumption experiences are often "directed toward the pursuit of fantasies, feeling, and fun" (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982, p. 132).

From the literature (Forlani et al., 2018) it has also emerged that the association of the term "experience" with "management" and "marketing" began in the late 1990s with publications by "Marketing practitioners and consulting gurus" (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009, p. 503), such as: Carbone and Haeckel (1994); Pine and Gilmore (1998, 1999); Schmitt (1999a, 1999b). In this way, the experiential approach began to be utilized not only in the customer perspective, but also in the supply side perspective.

Carbone and Haeckel (1994) had already introduced the concept of “engineering customer experiences”:

Engineering an experience begins with the deliberate setting of a targeted customer perception and results in the successful registration of that perception in the customer’s mind. Systematically designing and orchestrating the signals generated by products, services, and the environment is the means to that end.

Creating customer experiences is not new. Occasional purposeful design of these experiences by intuitive individuals also is not new. But rendering the design and execution of experiences as a management discipline with principles, tools, and techniques is new.

This first concept was then further developed by Schmitt (1999, p. 53), who defined “experiential marketing” as follows:

I contrast traditional marketing with a new approach to marketing called Experiential Marketing and provide a strategic framework for Experiential Marketing. Traditional marketing views consumers as rational decision makers who care about functional features and benefits. In contrast, experiential marketers view consumers as rational and emotional human beings who are concerned with achieving pleasurable experiences.

Pine and Gilmore (1998) also coined the concept of “experience economy”, considering the experiences of the clients as real products per se, as different from services as services are from goods (p. 97):

Economists have typically lumped experiences in with services, but experiences are a distinct economic offering, as different from services as services are from goods. Today we can identify and describe this fourth economic offering because consumers unquestionably desire experiences, and more and more businesses are responding by explicitly designing and promoting them. As services, like goods before them, increasingly become commoditized – think of long-distance telephone services sold solely on price – experiences have emerged as the next step in what we call the progression of economic value.

From these early contributions, the evolution of the literature has brought forth other facets of experiential concepts, linked with different types of analyses and sectors of study: customer experience management (Schmitt, 1999a, 1999b, 2003, 2010; Gentile et al., 2007), brand experience (Brakus et al., 2009), service experience (Berry et al., 2006; Klaus and Maklan, 2012), experience marketing (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009; Same and Larino, 2012), customer experience quality (Lemke et al., 2011), online customer experience (Novak et al., 2000), tourism experience (Binkhort and Dekker, 2009; Walls

et al., 2011), retail customer experience (Grewal et al., 2009), measuring customer experience (Maklan and Klaus, 2011), customer experience creation (Verhoef et al., 2009), and customer journey (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

Tynan and McKechnie (2009) also speak of the experience as “the result of a scripted interaction between customer and employee (Grove and Fisk, 1997)”, and think of these notions as “new ideas of Service-Dominant logic” (Vargo and Lusch, 2004), highlighting the contribution of the co-creation experiences to the management discussion: “Co-creation experiences as the basis for value creation”.

In the last few years, this academic interest has been bolstered by attempts to scientifically define the notion of customer experience (Bueno et al., 2019; Kranzbühler et al., 2018; Chaney et al., 2018; Jain et al., 2017; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Du Plessis and De Vries, 2016; Homburg et al., 2015; Walls et al., 2011; Palmer, 2010; Verhoef et al., 2009; Gentile et al., 2007). The objective of these scholars was to overcome the methodological and conceptual limitations of the experiential approach proposed by consultants and professionals (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009; Carù and Cova, 2007).

In just ten years we have moved from this picture painted by Tynan and McKechnie (2009, p. 503):

There is a fairly extensive but fragmented literature on experience marketing. However, much of the work published by consultants, practitioners and self-help gurus is of limited worth. [...] It could be argued that the books are published to support the credibility of the author in the tough marketplace of the consultant and to sell consultancy services rather than to promote dissemination of any deeper understanding of experiential approaches.

To this one by Kranzbühler et al., 2018:

In seeking to explain emerging sources of competitive advantage, customer experience (CE) has been identified as a compelling antecedent. Increasingly, scholars argue that firms’ differential advantage is derived from CE (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Verhoef et al., 2009). Both practitioners and scholars agree that a favorable CE positively affects marketing-relevant outcomes such as customer satisfaction, loyalty and word-of-mouth behavior (e.g. Mascarenhas et al., 2006; Pullman and Gross, 2004). Despite this consensus, the CE phenomenon is limited by a lack of conceptual clarity, explained by a diverse set of theories, and founded upon divergent empirical conclusions.

In other words, while the importance of the field of study has been recognized in many studies, there is still no convergence of opinion on the basic

definitions and boundaries of experiential studies. In recent years, as highlighted by Jain et al. (2017), Adhikari and Bhattacharya (2016) and Lemon and Verhoef (2016), several definitions of customer experience and customer experience management have been proposed. These definitions are free of the constraints of the consultancy approach and offer a better understanding and a better framing of the research field associated with the experiential view.

Among these definitions, that of Gentile et al. (2007, p. 397) is to be noted for its thoroughness and accuracy:

The Customer Experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction (LaSalle and Britton, 2003; Shaw and Ivens, 2005). This experience is strictly personal and implies the customer's involvement at different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial, physical, and spiritual) (LaSalle and Britton, 2003; Schmitt, 1999b). Its evaluation depends on the comparison between a customer's expectations and the stimuli coming from the interaction with the company and its offering in correspondence of the different moments of contact or touch point (LaSalle and Britton, 2003; Shaw and Ivens, 2005).

While emphasizing the advances of the sectorial literature, Kranzbühler et al. (2018, p. 14) underline that this is only the beginning:

Building on a systematic in-depth analysis of the literature, we identify a high level of heterogeneity in the scope and conceptualization of the CE construct. Specifically, we argue that CE has developed into a broad umbrella construct (Hirsch and Levin, 1999). While some studies call for an even broader conceptualization of CE (Verhoef et al., 2009), research on CE has become fragmented and often takes place in isolation.

In a purely managerial context, these studies have resulted in the creation of a subsector, customer experience management (CEM), defined as follows by Schmitt (2003, pp. 17-18):

Customer experience management (CEM) is the process of strategically managing a customer's entire experience with a product or a company ... CEM is a truly customer-focused management concept (not a "marketing" concept). It is a process-oriented satisfaction idea (not an outcome-oriented one). In addition, CEM goes far beyond CRM by moving from recording transactions to building rich relations with customers.

Indubitably, CEM has had great success among professionals, as highlighted by Homburg et al. (2015, p. 377), who, fifteen years after its conceptualization, collected the opinions of 52 managers from different sectors. They summarized it thusly:

We introduced CEM as a higher-order resource that entails cultural mindsets toward CEs, strategic directions for designing CEs, and firm capabilities for continually renewing CEs, with the goals of achieving and sustaining long-term customer loyalty.

At the same time, they also reminded us that:

In research, however, the notion of CEM is not well understood, is fragmented across a variety of contexts, and is insufficiently demarcated from other marketing management concepts.

In addition to Schmitt's writing, the pioneer work "Welcome to the Experience Economy" (Pine and Gilmore, 1998), has doubtlessly given a fundamental impulse to the discussion of the very concept of experience in management (Ferreira and Teixeira, 2013). More recently, Pine and Gilmore (2017, p. 61) expound:

To see how the Experience Economy is playing out in the world of business, we examined the state of experiences in popular business literature and across myriad enterprises to see how businesses are incorporating experiences into their operations. We determined that there are five arenas in which enterprises were using the term and concept of experiences.

Table 1 – Experience Arenas

EXPERIENCE ARENA	DESCRIPTION
In-Name-Only Experiences	Establishments named "Experience" that are anything but
User Experience	Experience of using human-computer interfaces, and increasingly, any physical offering
Experiential Marketing	Marketing messages, positionings, materials, and events designed to engage potential customers experientially
Customer Experience	Sum total of customer interactions with a brand or offering, generally designed to be nice, easy, and convenient
Experiences as Distinct Economic Offerings	Memorable events that engage each individual in an inherently personal way; the fourth level in the Progression of Economic Value after commodities, goods, and services

Source: Pine and Gilmore, 2017, p. 61

Ultimately, as underscored by Homburg et al. (2015, p. 398):

Practitioners have begun appraising CEM as one of the most promising marketing approaches to address the challenges of today's and tomorrow's consumer markets. However, research lacks a clear understanding, generalization, and demarcation of this concept.

In sum, researchers have traditionally addressed CE and utilized the experiential approach from different points of view. In particular, Kranzbühler et al. (2018, p. 2) highlight two main perspectives: the organization's and the consumer's.

Research within the organizational view focuses on the creation of customer experiences ("Customer Experience Management", Schmitt, 2003), in order to plan, create, communicate, and deliver the customer value proposition. In contrast, research from the perspective of consumers addresses their perceptions of those experiences ("Experiential Aspects of Consumption", Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; "Customer Experience Research", Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

With reference to the first orientation, Adhikari and Bhattacharya (2016) and Pencarelli and Forlani (2018) point out that the management approaches can be divided into two sub-categories: experience as either a product attribute (experiential marketing) or a complete product (experience economy and experience marketing).

With reference to the second orientation Kranzbühler et al. (2018, p. 14) "recommend that the literature conceive CE on differing levels and analyze two sub-concepts: static and dynamic CE". For Lemon and Verhoef (2016, p. 71) CE is a dynamic process which:

[...] consists of individual contacts between the firm and the customer at distinct points in the experience, called touch points (Homburg et al., 2015; Schmitt, 2003). An experience is also built up through a collection of these touch points in multiple phases of a customer's decision process or purchase journey (Pucinnelli et al., 2009; Verhoef et al., 2009). Overall, we thus conclude that customer experience is a multidimensional construct focusing on a customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial, and social responses to a firm's offerings during the customer's entire purchase journey.

In this perspective, the customer experience process (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016, p. 76):

[...] flows from pre-purchase (including search) to purchase, to post-purchase; it is iterative and dynamic. This process incorporates past experiences (including previous purchases) as well as external factors. In each stage, customers experience touch points, only some of which are under the firm's control.

Adhikari and Bhattacharya (2016, p. 6) classify the perception of experiences according to the type of touch points with which the customer interacts (store environment, online environment, company personnel) and the type of perspective – prospective or reflective – taken.

Thus, two different streams of research emerge from our analysis of the extent experiential literature. The first recognizes the importance of the experiential and emotional dimensions of the consumer in the processes of purchasing and consuming (humans are rational and emotional decision makers). For this reason, the scholars who adopt this view delve deeply into the notion of customer experience and, based on an understanding of what the consumer absorbs (i.e., the 'experience'), they assess the efficaciousness and effectiveness of the various company policies that refer to it. In other words, scholars who subscribe to this stream start from an analysis of the customer experience and the experience of consuming to then suggest an Experiential Perspective (ExP) for management.

The second assumes that the customer experience is either a fundamental component of the product or is the product itself. Scholars who adopt this second viewpoint recommend not only a change in observation perspective, but a revision of company policies and techniques for managing and offering experiences. These authors, by adopting the firm's perspective in different facets, recommend going from a managerial goods/services-driven logic to experience logic. In other words, not only does the observation perspective change, but also and above all, the managerial approach changes to become Experiential Approach (ExA).

Considering that CE is a rich and important research field, albeit not yet clearly defined (Jain et al., 2017; Homburg et al., 2015, Du Plessis and De Vries, 2016; Palmer, 2010; Tynan and McKechnie, 2009) and characterized (Kranzbühler et al., 2018; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016), this work defines the field in its extended acceptance of the experiential approach and experiential perspective (experiential studies).

## **2. Literature review method**

To achieve the research goals, a systematic literature review (Galvagno, 2017; Briner and Denyer, 2012; Denyer and Tranfield, 2009; Tranfield et al., 2003) method was adopted so as to make the review process transparent, inclusive, explanatory, and heuristic (Denyer and Tranfield, 2009). Systematic reviews use an explicit algorithm to perform a search and make a critical appraisal of the literature, thus improving the quality of both the review process and the outcome by employing a transparent and reproducible procedure (Tranfield et al., 2003). Furthermore, a systematic review allows scholars to build a database of publications that can be used for various types of meta-analysis or “analysis of analyses” (Silchenko, 2018). In other words, once the database has been created, different analysis techniques can be applied to answer specific research questions. An analytical review scheme is required for the systematic evaluation of the contributions of a given body of literature (Crossan and Apaydin, 2010). Systematic reviews are conventionally understood to have specific characteristics which entail an explicit study protocol to address one or more pre-specified, highly focused questions; explicit search methods; an appraisal of studies to determine their scientific quality; explicit methods, including (Silchenko, 2018) a descriptive summary, statistical meta-analysis or non-statistical meta-analysis (when appropriate), to combine the findings across a range of studies.

Although this methodology is not without challenges, e.g. the synthetization of data from various disciplines, insufficient representation of books, and large amounts of material to review (Pittaway et al., 2004), the authors of the present paper felt it was important to have a methodology that would allow the review to be solidly conducted. We integrated the methods adopted by Denyer and Tranfield (2009) with those of Galvagno (2017) to create the following five-step procedure:

- 1) research design;
- 2) extraction of required data, study selection and evaluation;
- 3) data analysis;
- 4) data synthesis and visualization;
- 5) interpretation, conclusion and reporting.

During the first stage (research design), we: a) discerned the objectives of the research; b) defined the research question(s); c) chose the method for data analysis for each research question; and d) identified the key data source (research terms).

Our research objectives are to provide a structured overview of the main studies that use the experiential approach. To this end, we have aimed to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1: *Is the literature on Experiential Studies in marketing and management (ExP and ExA) growing from a quantitative and qualitative point of view?*
- RQ2: *What are the reference articles, authors and journals for ExP and ExA?*
- RQ3: *What are the main ExP and ExA research lines?*
- RQ4: *What is the field of application (zones of interest or sectors) in which the concept has been most often applied?*

Different techniques of data analysis have been used to answer the four research questions.

Our first two research questions call for a bibliometric analysis (Galvagno, 2017) of citations in the database itself. The hypothesis being that the number of citations indicates the level of recognition and the quality of the paper (Kraus et al., 2012; Bornmann and Daniel, 2008; Baumgartner and Pieters, 2003; Garfield, 1979). Citation analyses are based on the theory that citations represent a valid and reliable indication of the quality and scientific value of the publication and its authors (Garfield, 1979). Although important limitations are recognized (Bornmann and Daniel, 2008), citation measures appear less prone to systemic prejudice than subjective measures and are more readily available. Hence, they are becoming a measure of the influence held by journals and authors in many disciplines, including marketing and management (Baumgartner and Pieters, 2003). We have used citation analysis to help determine which cited sources are the most influential among those publications used in the analysis. As Kraus et al. (2012: 8) state:

This is an influence that is based on the fact that the most-cited sources provide essential findings, which are in turn influential for the scientific works of other authors. A citation is literature mentioned in the bibliography of a publication and/or used as a source for another written work. It is an acknowledgement of a published statement's level of significance, regardless of whether the citing author is in agreement or disagreement with it.

To answer the third and fourth research questions, an inductive content analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2013) was undertaken by studying the database in the keywords sections through T-Lab software. By identifying the subject of

the article via keywords, content analysis (co-word analysis) helped to determine the principal experiential themes and the sectors (e.g. food, tourism, events, etc.) in which various experiential approaches have been applied.

In order to identify and define the reference universe of this research, a preliminary analysis of the literature was carried out (see §1), on the basis of the terminology used in the classic literature on experiential management. After discarding sectoral keywords (e.g. service, tourism, retail, etc.), this preliminary research identified the following keywords: “customer experience”, “customer journey”, “co-creation experience”, “online customer experience” for ExP; “customer experience management”; “experience economy”; “experiential marketing”; “experience marketing”; “brand experience”; “customer experience quality”; “customer experience design”; “customer experience innovation”; “measur\* customer experience” or “customer experience measur\*” for ExA. Although the authors are aware that the classification proposed by the keywords ExP and ExA is not without some degree of ambiguity, it is believed to be an acceptable proxy, for the purposes of this study.

During the second stage, we selected the database and exported the data. While fully cognizant of its limitations (Mingers and Leydesdorff, 2015; Bakkalbasi et al., 2006), we chose to use SciVerse Scopus because it contains a wide and acknowledged database of business and management journals (Tuan et al., 2019; Mingers, and Yang, 2017; Mingers, and Leydesdorff, 2015; Dalli and Galvagno, 2014).

In the selection and evaluation phase of the study, in order to increase the relevance and quality of the findings, we limited our selection to peer-reviewed, academic journals in English, with no limitations whatsoever regarding research areas. The analysis did not have a specific start date, but the end date was 31 December 2018.

Subsequently, papers were extracted for each of the 13 strings of research (keywords), allowing the works to be divided into groups relative to each single theme. The extraction results are shown in Table 2, below.

Table 2 – The identified papers

Keywords	Acronym	Extracted	Discarded	Selected	%	Multi Extracted	%
"customer experience"	CE	1467	173	1294	57%	210	16%
"customer experience management"	CEM	72	0	72	3%	72	100%
"customer journey"	CJ	93	15	78	3%	31	40%
"experience economy"	EE	263	19	244	11%	27	11%
"experiential marketing"	EIM	186	8	178	8%	54	30%
"experience marketing"	EM	62	12	50	2%	21	42%
"co-creation experience"	C-CE	40	2	38	2%	7	18%
"brand experience"	BE	292	22	270	12%	35	13%
"customer experience quality"	CEQ	17	1	16	1%	16	100%
"customer experience design"	CED	5	3	2	0%	2	100%
"customer experience innovation"	CEI	3	1	2	0%	2	100%
"measur* customer experience" or "customer experience measur*"	MCE	20	4	16	1%	16	100%
"online customer experience"	OCE	23	0	23	1%	23	100%
Total selected articles		2543	260	2283	100%	516	22%
Duplicate items deleted				273			
Total final database				2010			

Source: our processing

As seen in Table 2, 2,543 papers were extracted through the research software supplied by Scopus. The abstracts of all the papers were read by all of the authors of this study, so as to verify their pertinence for this research. In this process, 260 publications were rejected either because they did not exhibit the search strings (they were extracted by mistake by the software because of a misreading of the markings) or because they use the terms and search strings in a sense that is not coherent with the concept being studied.

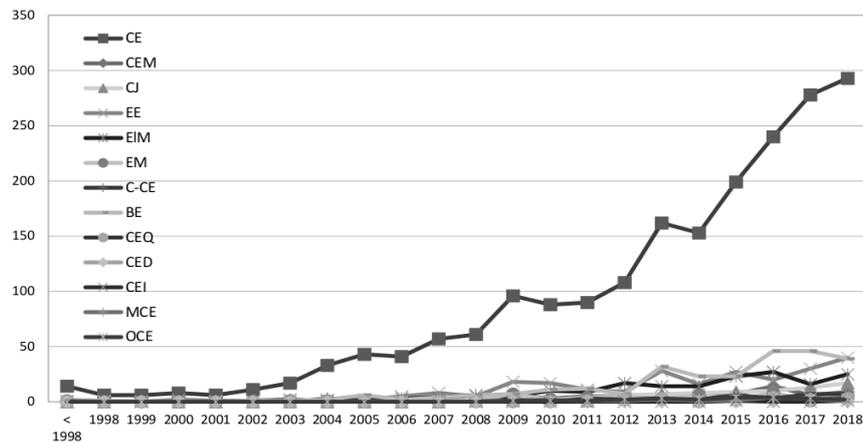
Subsequently, 2,283 papers selected were cross-referenced to detect any overlapping areas between the issues and 273 duplications were eliminated; the final database consisted of 2,010 publications. This initial set was then fixed as the basis for all future analyses.

### 3. Data analysis and results

The 2,010-article database was analyzed (third stage) following the different techniques illustrated above to answer the four research questions. In this section, to allow a concise visualization (fourth stage) of the main evidence found, the data is already presented in the display mode provided by the software used (Excel and T-Lab) and commented briefly.

First of all, we analyzed the literature from a quantitative point of view to evaluate its trends. The result, easily readable in Figure 1, highlights a significant growth in the number of studies on “customer experience” or studies that use experiential concepts to manage the consumer experience.

Figure 1 – Papers extracted by keywords and years of publication

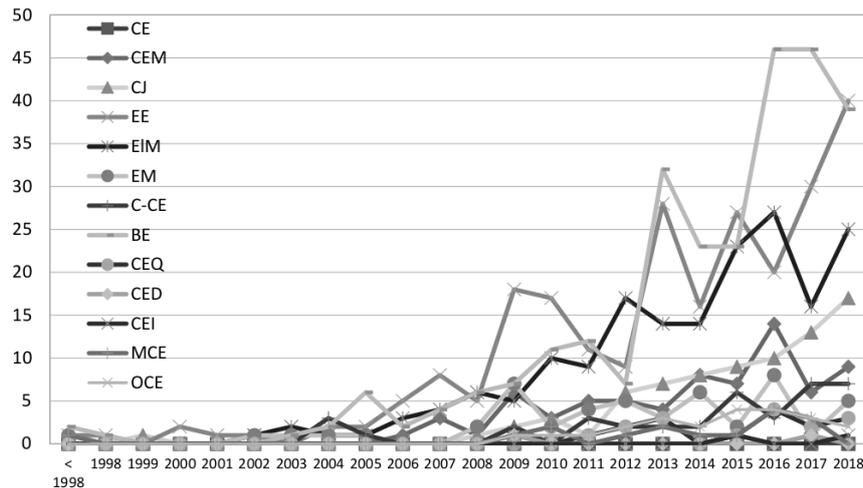


Source: our processing

Up until 2003, the attractiveness of this topic remained relatively low, as the subject of fewer than twenty publications per year. Between 2004 and 2009 interest grew and the number of annual contributions rose from ‘a few’ to around 100. In the three years that followed there was both a consolidation of the number of publications and a qualitative improvement. Fourteen of the thirty most-cited publications were in fact written between 2009 and 2012 (see Table 4). The success of the works of those years probably accounts, at least in part, for the noticeable increase in the level of interest in the experiential approach in the years that followed. In fact, the number of publications

on the subject rose to 162 (in 2013) to arrive at the current level of 293 (in 2018).

Figure 2 – Focus on other keywords by years of publication



Source: our processing

As shown in Table 2, there are several overlapping areas between the sets of articles created from the different extractions. Focusing on keywords other than Customer Experience we note that the most used ones are Brand Experience, Experience Economy, Experiential Marketing. Figure 2 also shows that the use of these three keywords has grown the most in the last five years. Finally, Figure 2 shows a recent interest in the keyword Customer Journey.

Table 3 shows the research fields in which the topic of customer experience has expanded and developed. The result indicates clearly how pertinent CE is to researchers in the fields of business and management. More than 73% of the papers studied (1,481 out of 2,010) were indeed published in business, management and accounting journals. The field of social science follows, with 21% (425/2,010), and then computer science (300/2,010), engineering (241/2,010) and economics, econometrics, and finance (199/2,010).

Table 3 – The subject area of the journals

N°	Subject area	n°	%
1	Business Management and Accounting	1,481	73.68%
2	Social Sciences	425	21.14%
3	Computer Science	300	14.92%
4	Engineering	241	11.99%
5	Economics, Econometrics, and Finance	199	9.90%
6	Decision Sciences	132	6.57%
7	Arts and Humanities	88	4.38%
8	Environmental Science	79	3.93%
9	Psychology	70	3.48%
10	Medicine	60	2.98%
	Total articles	2,010	

Source: our processing

From Table 4 it can be noted that the quality of the journals that have published the most articles are in the areas of business, management, and accounting. Moreover, through Scopus' bibliometric percentile evaluation, it is possible to estimate their (good) quality for which the average percentile ranking is 77.45%.

Table 4 – The journals that published the most articles (subject area and bibliometric quality)

	Journal	Pap.	Subject Area	Perc.
1	Journal of Business Research	46	Marketing	88%
2	Int. Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	42	Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality Management	89%
3	Journal of Services Marketing	36	Marketing	80%
4	International Journal of Hospitality Management	27	Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality Management	97%
5	Journal of Marketing Management	26	Strategy and Management	82%
6	Journal of Brand Management	26	Strategy and Management	73%
7	Journal of Service Management	26	Business, Management and Accounting	99%
8	Int. Journal of Retail and Distribution Management	25	Business and International Management	86%
9	Journal of Service Research	25	Organizational Behavior and HR Management	99%

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10	Journal of Product and Brand Management	23	Marketing	80%	
11	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	23	Marketing	91%	
12	Strategy & Leadership	23	Strategy and Management	40%	
13	Journal of Retailing	22	Marketing	97%	
14	Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing	21	Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality Management	75%	
15	International Journal of Bank Marketing	18	Marketing	79%	
16	Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice	18	Business and International Management	33%	
17	European Journal of Marketing	16	Marketing	69%	
18	Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management	16	Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality Management	79%	
19	Marketing Intelligence and Planning	15	Marketing	64%	
20	Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes	15	Development	45%	
				Average percentile	77%

*Source:* our processing

*Table 5 – Authors and number of articles published*

N°	Author	Articles	N°	Author	Articles
1	Edvardsson B.	13	16	Carlson J.	6
2	Klaus P.	13	17	Fisk R.P.	6
3	Rahman Z.	13	18	Gilmore J.H.	6
4	McColl-Kennedy J.R.	11	19	Gustafsson A.	6
5	Schmitt B.H.	11	20	Brakus J.J.	6
6	Fiore A.M.	9	21	Maklan S.	6
7	Khan I.	9	22	Rahman M.S.	6
8	Rowley J.	9	23	Ramaswamy V.	6
9	Gupta S.	8	24	Sundbo J.	6
10	Bilgihan A.	7	25	20 authors	5
11	Lee S.	7	26	35 authors	4
12	Patricio L.	7	27	92 authors	3
13	Pine B.J.	7	28	369 authors	2
14	Stone M.	7	30	3547 authors	1
15	Zarantonello L.	7	Tot	4087 authors	

*Source:* our processing

Table 6 shows the papers that have been cited at least 200 times in contributions found in the Scopus database by the end of December 2018. They are ordered by decreasing number of citations.

Table 6 – The most cited papers (200 or more citations) up to 2018.

N°	Year	Document Title	Authors	Journal	Cit.	Key-words extracted
1	2004	Co-creation experiences: The next practice in value creation	Prahalad C.K., Ramaswamy V.	Journal of Interactive Marketing	1761	C-CE
2	1998	Welcome to the Experience Economy	Pine B.J., Gilmore J.H.	Harvard business review	1462	EE
3	2000	Measuring the customer experience in online environments: A structural modeling approach	Novak T.P., Hoffman D.L., Yung Y.-F.	Marketing Science	1395	CE
4	2002	Building brand community	McAlexander J.H., Schouten J.W., Koenig H.F.	Journal of Marketing	1130	CE
5	2000	E-satisfaction: An initial examination	Szymanski D.M., Hise R.T.	Journal of Retailing	913	CE
6	2009	Brand Experience: What Is It? How Is It Measured? Does It Affect Loyalty?	Brakus J.J., Schmitt B.H., Zarantonello L.	Journal of Marketing	868	CE; CEM; EM; BE
7	2009	Customer Experience Creation: Determinants, Dynamics and Management Strategies	Verhoef P.C., Lemon K.N., Parasuraman A., Roggeveen A., Tsiros M., Schlesinger L.A.	Journal of Retailing	681	CE; CEM
8	2011	Customer engagement: Conceptual domain, fundamental propositions, and implications for research	Brodie R.J., Hollebeek L.D., Juric B., Ilic A.	Journal of Service Research	633	CE
9	2004	Co-creating unique value with customers	Prahalad C.K., Ramaswamy V.	Strategy & Leadership	599	C-CE
10	2002	Managing the total customer experience	Berry L.L., Carbone L.P., Haeckel S.H.	MIT Sloan Management Review	423	CE
11	2007	How to Sustain the Customer Experience: An Overview of Experience Components that Co-create Value With the Customer	Gentile C., Spiller N., Noci G.	European Management Journal	420	CE
12	2007	Understanding customer experience	Meyer C., Schwager A.	Harvard Business Review	384	CE; CEM
13	2008	Service blueprinting: A practical technique for service innovation	Bitner M.J., Ostrom A.L., Morgan F.N.	California Management Review	381	CE
14	2007	Measuring experience economy concepts: Tourism applications	Oh H., Fiore A.M., Jeoung M.	Journal of Travel Research	347	EE
15	2009	Creative cities, creative spaces and urban policy	Evans G.	Urban Studies	333	EE

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16	2009	Customer Experience Management in Retailing: Understanding the Buying Process	Puccinelli N.M., Goodstein R.C., Grewal D., Price R., Raghurir P., Stewart D.	Journal of Retailing	304	CE; CEM
17	2004	Revisiting consumption experience: A more humble but complete view of the concept	Carù A., Cova B.	Marketing Theory	296	EIM
18	2009	Customer Experience Management in Retailing: An Organizing Framework	Grewal D., Levy M., Kumar V.	Journal of Retailing	295	CE;CEM
19	2010	Service design for experience-centric services	Zomerdijk L.G., Voss C.A.	Journal of Service Research	293	CE;CJ
20	2004	Ability of experience design elements to elicit emotions and loyalty behaviors	Pullman M.E., Gross M.A.	Decision Sciences	279	CE
21	2009	Co-creating brands: Diagnosing and designing the relationship experience	Payne A., Storbacka K., Frow P., Knox S.	Journal of Business Research	255	CE
22	2010	A customer-dominant logic of service	Heinonen K., Strandvik T., Mickelsson K.-J., Edvardsson B., Sundström E., Andersson P.	Journal of Service Management	244	CE
23	1996	The role of personalization in service encounters	Mittal B., Lassar W.M.	Journal of Retailing	232	CE
24	2011	Customer experience quality: An exploration in business and consumer contexts using repertory grid technique	Lemke F., Clark M., Wilson H.	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	228	CE;CEQ
25	2011	From social media to social customer relationship management	Baird C.H., Parasnis G.	Strategy and Leadership	222	CE
26	2012	Online Customer Experience in e-Retailing: An empirical model of Antecedents and Outcomes	Rose S., Clark M., Samouel P., Hair N.	Journal of Retailing	217	CE; OCE
27	2009	A model of customer-based brand equity and its application to multiple destinations	Boo S., Busser J., Baloglu S.	Tourism Management	214	CE
28	2009	Consumer empowerment through internet-based co-creation	Fuller J., Muhlbacher H., Matzler K., Jaweck G.	Journal of Management Information Systems	210	BE
29	2016	Understanding customer experience throughout the customer journey	Lemon K.N., Verhoef P.C.	Journal of Marketing	208	CE; CJ; CEM
30	2002	Themed flagship brand stores in the new millennium: Theory, practice, prospects	Kozinets R.V., Sherry J.F., DeBerry-Spence B., Duhachek A., Nuttavuthisit K., Storm D.	Journal of Retailing	205	EE

*Source:* our processing

The table above also shows that “Co-creation experiences: The next practice in value creation” by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), with 1,761 citations, is the article that has most attracted the attention of the scientific world, followed by “Welcome to the experience economy” by Pine and Gilmore (1998) with 1,462 citations and “Measuring the customer experience in online environments: A structural modeling approach” by Novak, Hoffman, and Yung (2000), with 1,395 citations.

An analysis of the journals that have published the 30 most-cited articles reveals that seven of them appeared in Journal of Retailing, six in Journal of Service Research, three in Journal of Marketing and Journal of Business Research, followed by two articles in Journal of Interactive Marketing, Harvard Business Review, Journal of Travel Research, International Journal of Hospitality Management, Marketing Science, Industrial Marketing Management.

After the first phase of quantitative analysis, in order to refine the investigation of the experiential approaches (RQ3) and the fields or sectors in which these various approaches have been principally applied (RQ4), it was decided to limit the analysis of the most important works in the sector.

Table 7 shows the number of influential papers for each of the keywords identified throughout the observed period. To determine the relevance of the article we followed the criterion used in previous studies (Galvagno and Dalli, 2014, Di Stefano et al., 2012), by including only articles with a number of citations higher than the average of the reference universe (all the articles that make up the database). Starting from the 2,010 selected articles, we calculated 41,625 total citations received as of 8 January 2018 with an average of 20.71 citations per paper.

Considering that the number of average Scopus citations is 14.5 (Galvagno and Dalli, 2014), our set of articles studied is therefore above average.

Table 7 – Influential papers for each of the keywords

	CE	CEM	CJ	EE	EIM	EM	C-CE	BE	CEQ	CED	CEI	MCE	OCE
Total	1294	72	78	244	178	50	38	270	16	2	2	16	23
Influential papers	249	15	8	45	34	18	12	67	5	0	0	3	9
%	19%	20%	10%	18%	19%	36%	31%	24%	31%	0%	0%	19%	39%

Source: our processing

Table 7 highlights the fact that all the fields of study, except Customer Experience Design (CED) and Customer Experience Innovation (CEI), are

characterized by influential articles (number of citations above the average of the studied whole).

Table 8 – The most influential authors (with 2 or more articles and 200 or more citations) grouped by co-authorship

N°	Authors	Articles	Influential articles	Cit.	Keywords
1	Ramaswamy V.; Prahalad C.K.; Ozcan K.	6	4	2493	C-CE; CE; BE
2	Pine B.J.; Gilmore J.H.	7	3	1586	EE; EIM
3	Schmitt B.H.; Brakus J.J.; Zarantonello L.; Esch F.R. Möll T.; Elger C.E.; Neuhaus C.; Weber B.; Jedidi K.; Dennis C.; Gupta S.; Alamanos E.	11	7	1257	CE; CEM; EM; BE; EIM
4	Verhoef P.C.; Lemon K.N.; Parasuraman A.; Roggeveen A.; Tsiros M.; Schlesinger L.A.	4	2	889	CE; CEM; CJ
5	Grewal D.; Puccinelli N.M.; Goodstein R.C.; Price R.; Raghurir P.; Stewart D.; Roggeveen A.L.; Spence C.; Zhu Z.; Nakata C.; Sivakumar K.; Levy M.; Kumar V.; Bhaskaran V.; Mirchandani R.; Shah M.	5	4	733	CE; CEM
6	Brodie R.J.; Hollebeek L.D.; Jurić B. Ilić A.;	3	2	684	CE
7	Berry L.L., Carbone L.P., Haeckel S.H.; Seltman K.D.	3	3	537	CE
8	Clark M.; Lemke F.; Wilson H.; Rose S.; Samouel P.; Hair N.	3	3	526	CE; CEQ; OCE
9	Edvardsson B.; Heinonen K.; Strandvik T.; Mickelsson K.-J. Sundström E.; Andersson P.; Walter U.; Öström Å.; Ng G.; Min C.Z.; Firth R.; Yi D.; Pareigis J. Echeverri P.; Enquist B.; Tronvoll B.; Höykinpuro R.	13	7	524	CE
10	Voss C.A.; Zomerdijk L.G.; Sousa R.	3	3	506	CE; CJ; BE
11	Fiore A.M.; Oh H.; Jeoung M.; Kim H.; Niehm L.S.; Quadri-Felitti D.L.	9	4	476	EE; EIM
12	Patrício L.; Fisk R.P.; Cunha J.F.; Constantine L.; Falcão E Cunha J.; Teixeira J.; Nunes N.J.; Nóbrega L.; Carreira R.; Jorge R.N.; Magee C.L.	7	4	448	CE
13	Füller J.; Mühlbacher H.; Matzler K.; Jawecki G.; Hutter K.; Faulant R.; Gebauer J.; Pezzei R.; Kohler T.; Fueller J.; Stieger D.	5	3	434	C-CE
14	Klaus P.; Maklan S.; McColl-Kennedy J.R.; Gustafsson A.; Jaakkola E. Radnor; Z.J.; Perks H.; Nguyen B.; Gorgoglione M.; Buonomassa D.; Panniello U.; Bennett R.; Härtel C.E.J.; Barker S.	13	8	425	CE; CEM; EIM; BE; OCE; CEQ; MCE
15	Rowley J.; Hanna S.; Kupiec-Teahan B.; Leeming E.; Slack F.; Dawes J.	9	7	418	CE; BE

16	Payne A.; Storbacka K.; Frow P.; Knox S.	2	2	409	CE
17	Tynan C.; McKechnie S.; Chhuon C.	3	3	338	CE; EM; BE
18	Williams A.; Atwal G.	4	2	329	EIM;
19	Woodside A.G.; Wu P.L.; Yeh S.S.; Huan T.C.; Cruickshank B.F.; Dehuang N.; Walsler M.G.; Megehee C.M.; Rageh A., Melewar T.C.	5	4	298	CE; BE
20	Okumus F.; Walls A.R.; Wang Y.R.; Kwun D.J.W.; Bilgihan A.; Nusair K.; Cobanoglu C.; Bujisic M.	5	4	283	CE; EIM; EM; OCE
21	Stokburger-Sauer N.; Ratneshwar S.; Sen S.	2	2	259	CE; BE
22	Luo X.	3	2	240	CE
23	Palmer A.; Koenig-Lewis N.	3	2	223	CE; CEM

Table 8 shows groups of co-authors (the first name listed has the most citations) who have published at least two articles; it serves to identify the main academics who have worked in a constant manner on the topic we have explored. As can be clearly seen in this table, the groups that have published at least four works and that have also acquired a notable influence (at least two hundred citations) are relatively rare (14 out of 23); of these, only six co-authorships have been cited more than 500 times.

Cross-referencing Table 8 with Tables 5 and 6 shows that the core authors of the field are, in first place: Ramaswamy V. and Prahalad C.K.; Füller J. et al.; (CE, C-CE); in second place: Pine B.J. and Gilmore J.H.(EE, EIM); and in third place, in descending order: Schmitt B.H., Brakus J.J., Zarantonello L. et al. (CEM, EIM, EM, BE); Verhoef P.C., Lemon K.N. et al.; (CE, CEM, CJ); Grewal D., Kumar V. et al. (CE, CEM); Edvardsson B., Heinonen K. et al. (CE); Fiore et al. (EE, EIM); Patrício L., Fisk R.P. et al. (CE); Klaus P., Maklan S., McColl-Kennedy J.R. et al. (CE; CEM; EIM; BE; OCE; CEQ); Rowley J. et al. (CE, BE); Woodside A.G. et al. (CE; BE); Okumus F., Walls A.R. et al. (CE; EIM; EM; OCE).

To understand the main research lines and the fields of application and subsequently, to see how this data intersects the aforementioned groups of authors, we proceeded with the word and co-word analysis of the keywords using T-lab software. The keyword frequency was calculated first, followed by the co-occurrence of keywords within the same article.

From the analysis of the keywords and their frequencies, as seen in Table 9, we determined: a proxy of the most popular experiential research lines (E), the most common managerial issues involved (A), and the fields in which these studies have become the most widespread (F).

Table 9 – Keyword frequency in the top 396 most influential articles

Keyword	n°	E	A	F	Keyword	n°	E	A	F
customer/consumer_experience	51	X			e-commerce	6		X	
customer_satisfaction	36		X		emotion	6		X	
experience	25	X			service	6			X
consumer_behavior	23		X		word-of-mouth	6		X	
experiential_marketing	23	X			service_innovation	5		X	
co-creation / value_co-creation	21	X			structural_equation_modeling	5		X	
brand	20		X		service_design	5		X	
experience_economy	20	X			service encounter	5		X	
brand_experience	19	X			hospitality_management	5			X
customer_loyalty	16		X		information_tecnology	5		X	
experience_marketing	14	X			marketing strategy	5		X	
service_quality	14		X		loyalty	5		X	
marketing	12		X		online_customer_experience	5			X
satisfaction	12		X		customer_service_management	5	X		
social_media	12		X		customer_relations	5		X	
customer/consumer	12		X		advertise	5		X	
innovation	11		X		behavioral_intention	4		X	
service-dominant_logic	10	X			brand_management	4		X	
tourism	9			X	consumption	4		X	
quality	9		X		brand_image	4		X	
brand_equity	9		X		electronic_commerce	4			X
customer_service_quality	8		X		e-services	4			X
customer_experience_management	8	X			involvement	4		X	
service_experience	8			X	service_failure	4		X	
internet	8		X		perception	4		X	
services_marketing	8		X		social_networks	4		X	
retail	7			X	service_recovery	4		X	
scale_development	7		X		tourist_experience	4			X
customer_engagement	6		X						

Key: E (Experiential research line); A (Managerial area); F (Field of application)

Source: our processing



In addition to identifying these groups, the map also shows the connections they have with the main managerial topics covered and the fields of application.

The first group (service experience) has the highest frequency of occurrence and is the closest to the concept of Customer Experience. For the authors in this group the analysis of the customer experience focuses primarily on aspects such as satisfaction, loyalty, and quality which relate to the area of company services as the field of application.

The second group (brand experience) consists of papers that explore the experiential dimensions linked to the brand. These dimensions relate to management first of all, followed by design, relationship, engagement, and equity. The main fields of application are those of tourism and hospitality.

The third group (experiential and experience marketing) is mainly focused on aspects of consumer behavior. Hotels are the field of application.

The fourth group (experience economy) includes papers that deal primarily with tourism, with special emphasis on destination management.

Lastly, the fifth group (co-creation experience and service-dominant logic) which centers on all aspects related to the co-creation of the experience. These studies analyze consumer behavior with particular reference to online contexts such as the internet, social media, and virtual communities.

On the basis of the data presented above, the research questions can now be answered.

(RQ1) From the descriptive analysis of the selected papers and the citation analysis, it has emerged that:

- There is growing interest in experiential studies, as the number of publications and citations linked to this topic confirm (Figures 1 and 2). The analysis of the percentages of journals that have dedicated the most space to these articles confirms, moreover, the excellent quality of the papers submitted (Table 4).
- With reference to the two lines of research identified (Experiential Perspective and Experiential Approach), there is a predominance of papers in the literature that generically use the experiential perspective, which would indicate the need to evaluate the customer and the consumer experience (Fig.1). However, these works do not refer specifically to any of the main experiential approaches known in the literature or to a characterizing managerial theme (brand, quality, design, innovation, measure, online).
- With regard to Experiential Approaches, identified by keywords, we can affirm: 1) the consolidation of Brand Experience, Experience Economy,

Experiential Marketing approaches; 2) the modest growth of Customer Experiential Management; 3) the non-relevance of the themes of innovation and design; 4) the relevance of the theme of the quality of the experience and of the modalities of its measurement; 5) the growing importance of experiential use of digital platforms, the online environment, and multi-channel strategies.

(RQ2) Experiential studies indubitably belong to the business, management, and accounting field, given that 73.68% of the papers studied were published in journals listed in this category by Scopus. Inside the business and management macro-area, the sub-areas of marketing, tourism, leisure and hospitality management and strategy and management emerge. Among the rest of the journals that have made space for ExP, we noted that within the social science macro-area the subcategories urban studies and geography, planning and development suggest there is a use of the experiential concepts in city planning and territorial management. Some contributions have been linked to other research areas, but these have not proven to be particularly interesting either from the quantitative point of view (number of publications) or qualitative (number of extracted citations).

The most important works in the experiential field are “Co-creation experiences: the next practice in value creation” by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004). With 1,761 citations, this is the article that has attracted the most attention in the scientific world, followed by “Welcome to the experience economy” by Pine and Gilmore (1998) with 1,462 citations and “Measuring the customer experience in online environments: A structural modeling approach” by Novak, Hoffman, and Yung (2000), with 1,395 citations.

The core authors of the field are: 1) Ramaswamy V. and Prahalad C.K.; Fuller J. et al. (CE, C-CE); 2) Pine B.J. and Gilmore J.H.(EE, EIM); 3) Schmitt B.H., Brakus J.J., Zarantonello L. et al. (CEM, EIM, EM, BE); Verhoef P.C., Lemon K.N. et al.; (CE, CEM, CJ); Grewal D., Kumar V. et al. (CE, CEM); Edvardsson B., Heinonen K. et al. (CE); Fiore et al. (EE, EIM); Patrício L., Fisk R.P. et al. (CE); Klaus P., Maklan S., McColl-Kennedy J.R. et al. (CE; CEM; EIM; BE; OCE; CEQ); Rowley J. et al. (CE, BE); Woodside A.G. et al. (CE; BE); Okumus F., Walls A.R. et al. (CE; EIM; EM; OCE).

The journals that have most consistently published contributions in this field are the following: Journal of Business Research (46); International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management (42); Journal of Services Marketing (36); International Journal of Hospitality Management (27); Journal of Marketing Management (26); Journal of Brand Management (26);

Journal of Service Management (25); International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management (25); Journal of Service Management (25); Journal of Product and Brand Management (23).

(RQ3) The citation data makes clear the fact that, to date, the research field lacks cohesion in terms of key reference authors and a common thread.

This points to a significant fragmentation of the literature, along various lines of research, as already noted by Kranzbühler et al. (2018, p. 14) in relation to the customer experience construct and by Homburg et al. (2015) in relation to customer experience management. The analysis of the keywords used by the most influential works highlighted the existence of five clusters (Brand Experience; Experiential and Experience Marketing; Experience Economy; Service Experience and Co-Create Experience. While the first three groups (ExA, numerical minority) tend to see the experiential logic as different from the service logic, the fourth and fifth group (ExP, numerical majority) tends to integrate the experiential perspective into the previous managerial logic of service (Pencarelli and Forlani, 2018).

(RQ4): Finally, the study highlights that even the areas of application have yet to be identified completely. From the analysis of the journals, as well as the keywords, it was found that the articles are mainly concentrated in the areas of services (Service Experience), retail (Brand Experience and Experiential Marketing), tourism and leisure (Experience Economy and Experience Marketing), e-commerce, electronic, and multi-channel commerce (Co-Create Experience).

From the methodology point of view, this work presents the following limitations: a) the research focuses on articles published in journals, excluding the contributions published in books; b) the analysis of the experiential research lines was carried out by associating groups of authors who wrote at least one article together and the experiential concepts obtained by the inductive content analysis of the keywords. However, this type of analysis did not enable the association of these research lines with the related basic literature. A rerun of the research using a co-citation analysis or a bibliographic coupling analysis would thus be beneficial.

## **Conclusion**

This study is a first attempt at quantitative measurement of the diffusion of experiential marketing and management concepts in academic literature.

The results of the study and the data presented above enable us to confirm a rapidly growing trend that sees studies using the experiential perspective within the business and management sector, both in quantitative (number of publications) and qualitative terms (quality of journals of publication). As for the interpretative point of view, it was in the period 1998-2004 that the reference works of various experiential approaches were written: “Welcome to the experience economy” (Pine and Gilmore, 1998); “Measuring the customer experience in online environments: A structural modeling approach” (Novak et al., 2000); “Managing the total customer experience” (Berry et al., 2002); “Co-creation experiences: The next practice in value creation” (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). The next five-year period between 2006 and 2009 was the “breakpoint”, the period of affirmation of the experiential concepts within the managerial literature. Indeed, the phenomenon made a strong entrance within the scientific business and managerial literature. This is clearly illustrated by the quantitative growth of the contributions published, by the number of times these contributions were cited, and by the quality of the journals that published them. Finally, the 2015-2018 years saw significant quantitative growth.

This data shows us that the “customer experience” has become part of business and management scholarship (of marketing, in particular). Having found that the experiential perspective (ExP) of observing consumption phenomena is now widespread does not mean that a new managerial approach has been established. From this point of view, the situation remains, indeed, quite uncertain. While there are, in fact, different managerial and marketing approaches that refer to experiential concepts; these approaches are in competition with one other and the contributions that espouse them represent, in terms of weight, only a minority of the total number of experiential studies in management.

Considering that the results of the present study describe the important quantitative and qualitative growth in research linked to the experiential perspective (ExP) and the experiential approach (ExA), the involvement of authors from all over the world and the concurrence of various working prospects, it is possible to conclude that the field of experiential studies is in the “excitement phase” (Hirsch and Levin, 1999; Kranzbühler et al., 2018) or, in other terms, in its pre-paradigmatic phase (Khun, 1970). Given the typical problems of the pre-paradigmatic research phases (Khun, 1970) which, by definition, are “revolutionary”, it is necessary to find approaches that unite rather than divide. In this way it is possible to grow this economic-managerial approach that focuses on the economic analysis of life experience (whether that of the client or supplier, tourist, or area resident) in its holistic dimension (emotional and rational at the same time).

To this end, having described and measured the phenomenon under study and fully aware that the keywords are only a proxy for the experiential approaches adopted by many authors cited, we argue that it is useful to classify the various contributions in groups and to work on the convergences found in cross-referencing the data from Table 8 (groups of co-authors) and that from Figure 3 (groups of keyword themes).

By using keywords as the links, it is possible to assign each of the five themes groups its reference authors, as follows:

- Brand Experience: Schmitt B.H., Brakus J.J., Zarantonello L. et al.; Klaus P., Maklan S., McColl-Kennedy J.R. et al.; Rowley J. et al.; Woodside A.G. et al.;
- Experiential and Experience Marketing: Pine B.J. and Gilmore J.H.; Schmitt B.H., Brakus J.J., Zarantonello L. et al.; Fiore et al.; Klaus P., Maklan S., McColl-Kennedy J.R. et al.; Okumus F., Walls A.R. et al.;
- Experience Economy: Pine B.J. and Gilmore J.H.; Fiore et al.;
- Service Experience: Verhoef P.C., Lemon K.N. et al.; Grewal D., Kumar V. et al.; Edvardsson B., Heinonen K. et al.; Patrício L., Fisk R.P. et al.; Rowley J. et al.; Woodside A.G. et al.;
- Co-Create Experience: Ramaswamy V. and Prahalad C.K.; Füller J. et al.

Finally, from an interpretative perspective, utilizing the distinction between ExP and ExA, it is also possible to further group the articles by joining together those that, while analyzing the consumption experience (ExP), use a service logic (service logic and service-dominant logic) and those that, recognizing the centrality of the consumption experience, they support the need for a transition from the logic of goods and/or services to that of experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). The theme groups Service Experience and Co-Create Experience can be traced back to the first category. Experiential-Experience Marketing and Experience Economy refer to the second, while Brand Experience straddles the two. In our opinion, the classification cannot be simplified any further.

In conclusion, based on the quantitative framework presented in this study, there remains further qualitative work to be done in order to understand whether it is possible to achieve a conceptual grounding that can integrate the numerous and varied contributions to the body of literature. A unified framework that contains, on the one hand, methodologies for the study of the customer's experience (ExP) and, on the other hand, techniques for the design, creation, management, sale, and measurement of that experience (ExA) would, indeed, be desirable. Nevertheless, from the current review of

the international business and management literature there have emerged no works leaning in that direction.

For additional elements that could add to the debate, we point out a preliminary attempt made by the authors (Pencarelli, 2017), published in this journal, and subsequent work (Pencarelli and Forlani, 2018) which underscores how the transition from ExP to ExA entails not only gaining a deep understanding of the strategic and operational differences in order to qualify the experience as a product per se and to grasp its specific role in the customer's value chain, but also adopting an experiential logic in managerial processes.

In thus-defined experience logic the experience-product is at the core of the processes of imagining, designing, communicating, and delivering the value proposition to the customer and with the customer (in value co-creation processes), which differs from those contributions in which the concept of experience is basically used to differentiate between offers of goods or services. In our opinion, it is from the very awareness of the specificity of the value proposition that stems from experience logic compared to good logic or service logic that new research frontier open up for experiential studies. The managerial implications that derive from them will affect customer segmentation processes, how various materials and service components are put together to create the concept of experiential packages to be offered, how these products are produced, and how the pricing policies are determined. As evidenced in the present review, these last aspects remain, as yet, on the sidelines of academic literature.

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