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**Measuring consumer experience at the retail context: development of ConEx scale**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** *The purpose of this study is to conceptualize and develop a scale to measure consumer experience at the retail context.*

**Design/methodology/approach:** *A questionnaire survey was conducted with a sample of 164 undergraduates of one of the state universities in Sri Lanka. Five dimensions of the consumer experience were identified by the exploratory factor analysis conducted with 21 measurement indicators. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted with the five-factor measurement model and resulted in a five-dimensional structure for consumer experience with 14 measurement indicators.*

**Findings:** *The study concluded that the consumer experience was a multidimensional construct, comprising the dimensions of virtue, equanimous, amusement, rapture, and strange. The multidimensional nature of consumer experience which was explored will help marketers to focus on the areas in which consumer experience enhancement is required and consumer experience strategies also can be designed according to the multidimensional aspects of consumer experience.*

**Originality:** *The study developed a Consumer Experience scale (ConEx scale) which can be used to examine the consumer experience in the retail context. The multidimensional structure of ConEx also concerns the hedonistic perspective of consumer experience.*

**Implications:** *The customer experience in retail sector can be addressed through customer emotions. The explored dimensions of customer experience provide important implications for practitioners by offering new ways to explore customer emotions in retail setting.*

**Keywords:** *Consumer emotions, consumer experience, experience marketing, retailing, ConEx Scale*

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## INTRODUCTION

The marketing landscape is changing (Homburg, Jozić and Kuehnl, 2017). Since the beginning of the concept of marketing, it has been broadening its perspective on the exchange of 'market offering'. The term 'market offerings' is used in marketing with a wide-ranging meaning of 'products'. Market offers are usually consumed in many ways by groups of users (Holt, 1995). Thus, over the past years, marketing has been a typical issue as it has been postulated to understand consumer behavior (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009). The sub-disciplines of service marketing and experience marketing have emerged to address much of this broadened perspective. Gilmore and Pine (2002) argue that, in an experience economy, business organizations need to create memories and a platform for generating better economic value, instead of just creating goods and delivering services. Much value on customer experience has been given in contemporary businesses as the consumer experience (management) can be used to differentiate their offering from those of competition. Moreover, the service industry can be seen as a sector where consumer experience is at the center of its being (Kim et al., 2011).

'The customer experience' has become one of the key concerns in marketing (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). The experience plays a significant role in determining the quality of a firm's offering (Gentile, Spiller and Noci, 2007). The retail sector is being widely expanded throughout the world and has experienced significant growth over the last decades. Infrastructure development projects in the rural areas of the countries and fast-growing middle and upper-class consumer bases are the keys to the success of retail chains. Retailers have embraced the idea of customer experience management (Verhoef et al., 2009). In the present competitive environment, the success of retailing has become the foundation of effective customer experience management. They are required to be concerned about the concepts like 'customer experience' that converts the company's efforts into customer value (Garg, Rahman and Kumar, 2011). Moreover, the retail sector is adapting the new state-of-art technology in its distribution, warehousing, communication and all other customer services. Despite a few significant attempts made for examining the consumer experience and consumer satisfaction, there is a lack of significant studies conducted on developing a measurement of consumer experience in the retail context. Future researchers can develop the measuring scales of consumer experience and, items related to consumer experience can be generated, purified, and validated (Garg, Rahman and Kumar, 2011). The development and validation of consumer experience measurement will reflect and urge the retail marketing practitioners and academics to better understand the managerial consequences of the expanded theoretical scope of the retail marketing applications.

This study attempts to address the gap of the consumer experience measurement by developing and validating a consumer experience scale. A robust measurement scale of consumer experience will lead to better measurement of consumer experience and thereby monitor and increase consumer satisfaction. Perhaps due to the lack of

development of a sound measurement of customer experience, there is also a dearth of research on how customer experience can be influenced (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). The motivation of this study is to contribute to establishing a conceptualization and a scale of consumer experience which will lead to the development of more advanced approaches and theories in marketing.

No common understanding exists regarding what customer experience entails (Becker and Jaakkola, 2020). As such, the objective of the study is to develop and validate a consumer experience scale from a customer emotion perspective. The study then particularly will facilitate marketing scholars to identify the customer experience to manage the customer emotions. This paper is structured into three sections: first, the expansion of product logic of marketing into experience logic of marketing is reviewed; second, the study design and the methods of the study are detailed; third, the multidimensional nature of consumer experience and development and validation of the consumer experience scale is presented.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

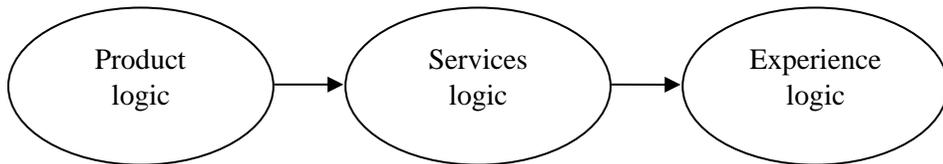
### **From the product logic to the experience logic of marketing**

Marketing has evolved through a series of transformations from products to services and customer experiences (Maklan and Klaus, 2011). According to the product logic, products have been viewed as bundles of attributes that yield particular benefits. The term ‘traditional marketing’ is used in the marketing literature to the conception of the use of marketing principles and tools, from the commodity perspective (Schmit,t 1999). The domain of this perspective is that the customers buy products with the highest overall utility of the products. The services logic does not concern products in terms of their functional features and benefits. Services marketing is a sub-discipline of marketing has contributed to the development of positive and normative theory to address market offerings that did not fit the traditional goods-based, manufacturing model (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). According to the perspective of Service-Dominant (S-D) logic, the consumers are not identified as objects (i.e. operand resources), but as possessors of operant resources (i.e. skills, capabilities, knowledge, initiative, imagination) where they are utilized to establish both experiences and value (Baron et al. 2010). Scholars in the area of service marketing recently started to think customer satisfaction from customer experience perspective (Nasution, Sembada, Miliani, Resti, and Prawono, 2014).

The Experience- Dominant logic tends to see consumption as a psychological phenomenon from a phenomenological viewpoint, stressing the emotional conditions throughout the consumption process (Holt, 1995). Experience delivers a motivation for the user. The value is not included to products, or generated by services, but is embedded in the actual personalized experiences created through active participation (Pralhad and Ramaswamy, 2004). The secret to a good experience is not the multiplicity of features of the offer (Meyer and Schwager,

2007), but the way the consumer emotionally reacts to the multiplicity of features of the offering.

The logics of Product, Services and Experience marketing are conceptualized as in Figure 1, to delineate the broadening of the marketing offering perspective. Product marketing was not “dead”; it was still necessary, but no longer sufficient to remain competitive (Maklan and Klaus, 2011). The same is applied to services marketing as well. “This changing context, where marketing practitioners need an innovative solution to obtain a competitive advantage, customers increasingly seek pleasure over functional benefits, and a relatively cheap, enabling technology has become widely available, that has promoted the widespread practitioner interest in the experience marketing approach” (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009 p. 503). Products are no longer bundles of functional characteristics, but rather are means to provide and enhance the customer experiences (Schmitt, 1999). Thus, the paradigm regarding the primary tool to provide value in marketing has undergone major shifts in the last few decades shifting from creating brands (i.e., product) to building excellent services to creating compelling customer experiences (Nasution et al., 2014).



**Figure 1. The evolution of experience dominant logic**

Source- Author Conceptualization

This paper concerns two basic underpinnings of the revised S-D logic of Vargo and Lusch (2008) that are directly linked to customer experience; first, the customer is always a co-creator of value (value creation is interactional); and second, value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary (value is experiential). The service consumption experience per se can be regarded as the major output of service organizations (Bitner, 1990). Some scholars have identified the experiential nature of services and therefore the affective state of consumers during consumption is important (Wirtz and Bateson, 1999). The consumer experience encompasses every aspect of an offering (Meyer and Schwager, 2007). Lemon and Verhoef (2016), address what customer experience is sufficient, through definitions and roots of customer experience, and emphasize that it is useful to differentiate customer experience construct from other customer-focused constructs, for further understanding of the customer experience construct. The field is vast and still, there is a lack of a generalized framework to measure the consumer experience (Garg, Rahman and Kumar, 2011). S-D logic can continue to advance over the next

decade by moving towards further development of a general theory of value co-creation i.e., consumer experience management (Vargo and Lusch, 2017).

### **Customer experience marketing**

Nord and Peter (1980) elaborate how behaviour modification perspective can be used to facilitate the development of a comprehensive set of strategies and tactics which encompass those environmental and situational factors which directly influence customer behaviour. It has been advanced that services are experiential (Wirtz and Bateson, 1999). In today's competitive environment, it is no longer enough to satisfy customers. Though offering high quality products and services is expected in today's competitive world, it is no longer sufficient to establish a competitive advantage (Kim et al., 2011). The trend is to create engaging and lasting experiences for customers (Mascarenhas, Kesavan and Bernacchi, 2006). Figure 1 illustrates how strategic differentiation attempts have changed over time. It proposes that in the contemporary experience-based economy, the Experience-Dominant logic is more powerful than the previous product and service dominant logic. Marketing practitioners have realized that understanding how consumers experience brands and, in turn, how to provide appealing brand experiences for them, is critical for differentiating their offerings in a competitive marketplace (Schmitt, 2011). In addition, a number of organizations have recognized customer experience management as a successor to customer relationship management (Palmer, 2010).

Holt (1995) derives three distinct metaphors for consuming, each attending to a particular dimension of how people consume: consuming as experience, consuming as integration, and consuming as classification. According to Holt (1995), consuming as an experience metaphor underlies research examining consumers' subjective, emotional reactions to the consumption of objects. Experience marketing has been widely discussed by marketing academicians and practitioners with S-D logic of services marketing (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). However, this approach requires working with customers and members of an extended value creation network as partners, over a long time to co-create complex value sources and not merely to deliver an offer to them (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009).

Service-dominant logic (S-D) is a paradigmatic lens to see services in complex context (Ostrom, Parasuraman, Bowen, Patrício, and Voss, 2015) and it re-examines the nature of a service in the process of value creation and exchange (Wilden et al., 2017) which was based on traditional Good Dominant (G-D) logic. The main orientation of S-D logic is the "identification of service—the application of resources for the benefit of others—as the common denominator of economic (and non-economic) exchange (Vargo and Lusch, 2017, p 48). This perspective further explains that service has a more influencing role in society than what is generally accepted (Vargo, Koskela-Huotari and Vink, 2020). To put it simply S-D identifies the significance of service as the foundation of all exchange and value creation (Wilden, Akaka, Karpen and Hohberger, 2017). The evaluation of the concept can be categorized into three periods as formative (2004- 2007), refinement (2008-

2011) and, advancement (2012 onwards) (Brodie, Löbler, & Fehrer, 2019). In the formative period, traditional Good Dominant (G-D) logic was confronted. S-D logic was enhanced, and more academic orientation was given in the refinement period. Now, it is further broadening, and empirical justifications are immersing to support the experience dominant logic.

“Experience-Dominant Logic is a totally different approach in terms of working with the customer as a partner to configure the offer including an extended range of value from sensory, emotional, functional/utilitarian, relational, social, informational, novelty and utopian sources; communicating and developing that offer, co-creating the negotiated experience, and understanding and evaluating the experience post-purchase” (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009, p. 512). In marketing, it is identified that customer satisfaction is the key to customer loyalty and repurchase behavior. Thus, the focus on competitive differentiation between companies has evolved (Palmer 2010). Businesses must focus on the customer’s shopping experience to compete effectively (Grewal, Levy and Kumar, 2009). Offering products or services alone is not enough these days (Berry, Carbone and Haeckel, 2002).

An integrated view of co-creating value with the customer will shift the customer value creating processes of contemporary businesses. According to Grewal, Levy and Kumar (2009), customer experience management represents a business strategy designed to manage the customer experience including several ways (i.e., promotion, price, merchandise, supply chain and location) for delivering a superior customer experience which results in higher customer satisfaction.

In a recent survey of marketing professionals by Bigham in 2008, 70% of the respondents indicated their intention to employ experience marketing more widely in the future (as cited in Tynan and McKechnie, 2009). 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 (Berry, Carbone, and Haeckel, 2002). The Customer Experience Management (CEM) framework suggested by Schmitt in 2003 (as cited by Schmitt 2011) enhanced the adaptation of this new genre of marketing.

### **Role of customer emotions in customer experience**

The customers’ emotional bonding with the service provider is strongly attached to their purchase intentions (Mattila, 2001). Consumer emotions play a significant role in the selection of a service provider, evaluation of service (or product); return intent, loyalty enhancement, word-of-mouth generation, and overall assessment of the service organization (Han, Back, and Barrett, 2010). Thus, this paper posits that the customer experience logic of marketing is the result of more customer emotional experience orientations of the marketing practitioners and researchers. Schmitt (1999) discussed emotional experience as “the moods and emotions generating during the shopping trip. Emotions provide the motivational force for what is best and worst in human behaviour and exert a powerful influence

on reason (Dolan, 2002). Emotions act as a source of information, which is used to evaluate a stimulus and lead to the formation of an attitude (Palmer, 2010). As such, the emotional logic of experience marketing seems vital. An offering can generate an emotional experience in order to create an effective relationship with the company (Gentile, Spiller and Noci, 2007). Customer emotions experience plays a major role in customer purchasing, evaluation, and decision-making processes (Mattila and Ro, 2008; Mattila and Enz, 2002). Consumer emotional experiences affect consumer satisfaction and loyalty (Yu and Dean, 2001; Mattila and Ro, 2008; Wu and Tseng, 2015).

Customer experience is complex, dynamic, and difficult to capture (Zolkiewski, et al., 2017). Palmer (2010) noticeably underpins how the experience marketing construct has been coined differently by scholars with its long history. Customer experience is a multi-dimensional construct (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016) as capturing customer touchpoints is complex and difficult. Experience has several different meanings, and thus, has been defined in many different ways (Godovykh and Tasci, 2020).

The present study considers the way Lemon and Verhoef's (2016), has defined customer experience as a multidimensional construct focusing on a customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial, and social responses to a firm's offerings during the customer's entire purchase journey (p. 71). As such, it attempted to separate and derive a measurement for customers' emotional response in retail context. Addressing the measurement of customer experience, from different perspectives is important as it represents a shift in our understanding from the managerial control of some 'thing' (e.g., retailing strategy) (Zolkiewski, et al., 2017).

The consumer experience scale is constructed to cover the domain of consumer experience in a retail setting. For this study, the emotional domain of experience is considered as a component that involves one's affective system with the generation of moods, feelings, and emotions as identified by Gentile, Spiller and Noci (2007). The experiential perspective explores the symbolic meanings of more subjective characteristics i.e., cheerfulness (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Moreover, consumption refers to the set of emotional responses elicited during product usage or consumption experience (Westbrook, and Oliver, 1991). As such, to examine the dimensionality of consumption emotions, the structural dimension approach (Oh, 2005) is used.

Consumer experience has interactive touchpoints to provide multiple opportunities for the consumers to be engaged in the buying process. Therefore, the consumer touchpoints are considered in the development of consumer experience scale. Customer engagement is a component of customer experience that involves interactional touchpoints, such as social communities and interactions with service employees or other customers (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

However, the extent of the contribution of emotions to the total experience marketing approach is not well established yet in marketing literature. This study endeavors to fill the gap by examining the contribution of the emotional logic of experience marketing to the co-creation of value in a service system. The challenge faced by the researchers is to determine how the richness of the customer experience construct can be measured succinctly and accurately across multiple touchpoints (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). This facilitates the understanding of the need for differentiation of offerings which drives much of experience marketing.

### **Experience marketing and customer satisfaction in the retail context**

In today's competitive retail environment customer experience has been identified as one of the key sources of competitive advantage (Gerea, Gonzalez-Lopez & Herskovic, 2021). Significant growth of e-commerce sector where total revenue exceeding \$4.28 trillion in 2020 (Mao, 2021), has also made the context even more challenging to traditional retailers and at the same time has further elevated the importance of experience management. Sri Lankan retailing sector also has grown significantly over the last decade where modern trade has been able to position itself as the mainstream player in the industry mostly thanks to rapid urbanization and other related factors (Ekanayake & Karunaratne, 2021). Sri Lankan retailing industry is dominated by three main industry players; Cargills plc., Kelles & Arpico, and together they maintain more than 500 outlets island wide (DailyMirror, 2018; Keells shelves plan to double number of stores, 2020). More importantly, Sri Lankan spending patterns resemble more towards what is seen in developed economies where consumer preference for lifestyle products and luxury goods (Oxford Business Group, 2019), in high demand, making consumer shopping experience vital in Sri Lankan retailing context (Keells shelves plan to double number of stores, 2020,2020). Accordingly, a multitude of factors influences Sri Lankan consumers' shopping experience including, convenience, variety and assortment, product quality, price, store image, store atmosphere, and service quality (Karunaratna, 2021).

Retailers are supposed to manage all the activities in the process of selling products and providing all the services to meet individual consumer needs. The retail environment is being transformed with multichannel operations designed to offer a spectrum of retail experiences for the consumers to choose (De Farias, Aguiar and Melo, 2014). Companies stage an experience whenever they engage the customers in a personal, and memorable way (Pine, and Gilmore, 1998). As such, this applies to the retail sector as well. Negative emotions are expected to lead to increased dissatisfaction, whereas positive emotions are expected to result in high satisfaction levels (Mattila and Ro, 2008). Customer satisfaction is regarded as a primary determining factor of repeat shopping and purchasing behavior (Burns and Neisner, 2006).

The retailers have institutionalized the concept of customer satisfaction in operations primarily through customer service departments. Over the years, retail stores have grown larger, and their one-stop convenience has been expanded to include service outlets and entertainment providers (Bloch, Ridgway and Dawson, 1994). The experiences provided by the retailers are inherently service-centric (Burns and Neisner, 2006). The satisfaction judgment is originated in comparison of the level of product performance or other outcomes (i.e., experience) perceived by the consumer with an evaluative standard (Westbrook and Oliver, 1991). The store experience significantly influences consumer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction may best be understood as an evaluation of the surprise inherent in a consumption experience (Oliver, 1981). In the modern context, the components of the store environment include music, display designs, lighting and smell etc. These elements are also called 'atmospherics' (Burns and Neisner, 2006).

## **METHODOLOGY**

Procedure for developing a measurement suggested by Churchill (1979) is followed in developing the consumer experience scale: first, the domain of consumer experience is specified; second, generated a sample of measurement indicators of consumer emotions; third, purified the measurement of consumer experience; and finally assessed the reliability and validity of the proposed scale. Exploratory Factor Analysis was used to purify the measurement of consumer experience measurement while Confirmatory Factor Analysis was used to assess the reliability and validity of the factor structure of the proposed measurement model.

### **Consumer experience measurement indicators**

A pilot study was conducted with 54 undergraduates of one of the state universities in Sri Lanka in order to explore possible measurement indicators of examining consumer experience. Emotion variables synthesized by Fehr and Russell (1984); Boyle (1986); Allen, Machleit and Marine (1988); Bradley and Lang (1994); Burns and Neisner (2006) were screened in line with the consumer experience in a retail setting and selected 29 measurement indicators for the pilot study and followed the procedure adapted by Han, Back and Barrett (2010) to refine the experience measurement in the present study. In-depth discussions were held with the students in order to identify the most appropriate variables of consumer experience emotions in retail settings resulted with 24 measurement indicators. Next, a formal discussion was held with one of the academic staff in marketing at the same university, to reflect the best suitable measurement indicators of consumer experience, and accordingly, the construct of 'consumer experience' is assumed to be defined by 21 measurement indicators (Table 1).

**Table 1: Measurement Indicators of Consumer Experience**

Source- Synthesis from the literature review

| <b>Consumer experience measurement indicators</b> |
|---|
| 1. Delighted                                      |
| 2. Scared   |
| 3. Charmed  |
| 4. Joyful   |
| 5. Admiring                                       |
| 6. Respectful                                     |
| 7. Sane   |
| 8. Fearful  |
| 9. Surprised                                      |
| 10. Extroverted                                   |
| 11. Amazed  |
| 12. Moral   |
| 13. Calm  |
| 14. Encouraged                                    |
| 15. Enjoyable                                     |
| 16. Excited                                       |
| 17. Curious                                       |
| 18. Passionate                                    |
| 19. Entertained                                   |
| 20. Relaxed                                       |
| 21. Enthusiastic                                  |

### **Sample, questionnaire design and data collection**

Marketing undergraduates from the same university were used as the sample of this study. The sample consisted of a total of 164 undergraduates. The undergraduates are generally involved in consumption activities in retail settings. This young generation i.e., Generation Y, is the emerging generation with powerful aggregate spending (Cui et al., 2003). In addition, this young generation is highly active in the marketplace (Noble, Haytko and Phillips, 2009). Thus, it is possible to use undergraduates as the sample of studies, examining consumer experience at retail settings. The total sample of 164 undergraduates consisted of 82 females and 82 males. The average age of the sample respondents was 22 years.

As given in Table 1, the consumer experience was examined by using 21 emotional experience indicators. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the emotional experience indicators; (1) representing “do not experience at all”, and (5) representing “experience very much”. The questionnaire was administered to the university undergraduates after a general discussion about their very recent shopping

trip. The questionnaire was initially developed in English and then translated into Sinhala (the mother tongue of Sri Lanka). The Sinhala version of the questionnaire was back translated into English by one of the academics, to validate the translation.

## **FINDINGS**

The study endeavors to develop a consumer experience scale to measure consumer experience. The conceptualization of the study hypothesis that the consumer experience is multidimensional. The factor analysis in marketing research has been around since the 1940s (Green and Wind, 1975). Most marketers model the relationship between the observable measures and the underlying latent construct, by using common factor models (Singh, Howell, and Rhoads, 1990). In the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), attributes are rated, and it is assumed that there are a few basic perceptual dimensions (Hauser, and Koppelman, 1979). Thus, factor analysis can be used to examine relationships among sets of many interrelated variables and represent in terms of a few underlying factors (Malhotra, 1999) and to reduce a large number of indicators to a more manageable set (Gerbing, and Anderson, 1988).

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) provides overall goodness-of-fit tests of the match between the theoretical factor structure and the data (Kahn, 2006). Confirmatory analyses must be performed to test the appropriateness of a hypothesized model (Heeler, Whipple, and Hustad, 1977). Accordingly, the EFA was conducted initially to examine the underlying factor dimensions of the variables considered in this study. Next, the CFA was conducted to test the appropriateness of the hypothesized multidimensional structure of the customer experience scale.

### **Exploratory factor analysis**

The original EFA used 21 measurement indicators to identify the multidimensional structure of the consumer experience and resulted in five factor structure for the consumer experience. However, the results of the EFA encapsulated the 'consumer experience' into 14 measurement indicators (Table 2). Subsequently, second EFA was conducted and found that the consumer experience in the retail setting is determined by five factors (Table 2). The adequacy of the sample and the appropriateness of the use of a second EFA for the study were ensured with KMO (.823). A significant Bartlett test value ( $\chi^2 = 1529.5$ ,  $p = .000$ ), indicates that the correlation matrix is significantly different from identity matrix. The principal component analysis with Varimax rotation was used for the EFA. Factors with an eigenvalue of 1 or more are retained.

The factor loadings generated a five-factor structure of the customer experience. The initial loadings of the items on the factors were further analyzed based on the results of the CFA and accordingly some indicators were removed from the first factor structure. The measurement indicator 'extroverted' was removed from the first factor; two measurement indicators were removed from the factor two i.e.

‘encouraged’ and ‘curious’; one measurement indicator from the factor three i.e. ‘delighted’ and three measurement indicators from the factor five i.e. ‘passionate’, ‘scared’ and ‘fearful’.

Nor can a domain be studied without employing a set of descriptive concepts; deciding how to categorize consumer experience (Fehr and Russell, 1984). Accordingly, the factors were interpreted based on the items loaded on the factors and labeled; accordingly, virtue, amusement, equanimity, rapture and strange. Factor 1 was labeled as ‘virtue’ since this was encapsulated by the extent to which the respondents’ virtue perspective of the consumer experience. Factor 2 was labeled as ‘amusement’ since this reflects the amusement perspective of the consumer experience. Factor 3 uncovers the ‘equanimity’ perspective of the consumer experience. Factor 4 consists of the indicators related to the ‘rapture’ perspective of the consumer experience while factor 5 consists of indicators related to ‘strange’ perspective of the consumer experience.

**Table 2. Rotated component matrix of customer experience <sup>a</sup>**

| Variable     | Factor |           |            |         |         |
|--------------|--------|-----------|------------|---------|---------|
|              | Virtue | Amusement | Equanimity | Rapture | Strange |
| Sane         | .834   |           |            |         |         |
| Respectful   | .761   |           |            |         |         |
| Moral        | .753   |           |            |         |         |
| Calm         | .675   |           |            |         |         |
| Excited      |        | .782      |            |         |         |
| Enjoyable    |        | .675      |            |         |         |
| Entertained  |        |           | .811       |         |         |
| Relaxed      |        |           | .799       |         |         |
| Enthusiastic |        |           | .593       |         |         |
| Joyful       |        |           |            | .723    |         |
| Charmed      |        |           |            | .696    |         |
| Admiring     |        |           |            | .587    |         |
| Surprised    |        |           |            |         | .627    |
| Amazed       |        |           |            |         | .597    |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

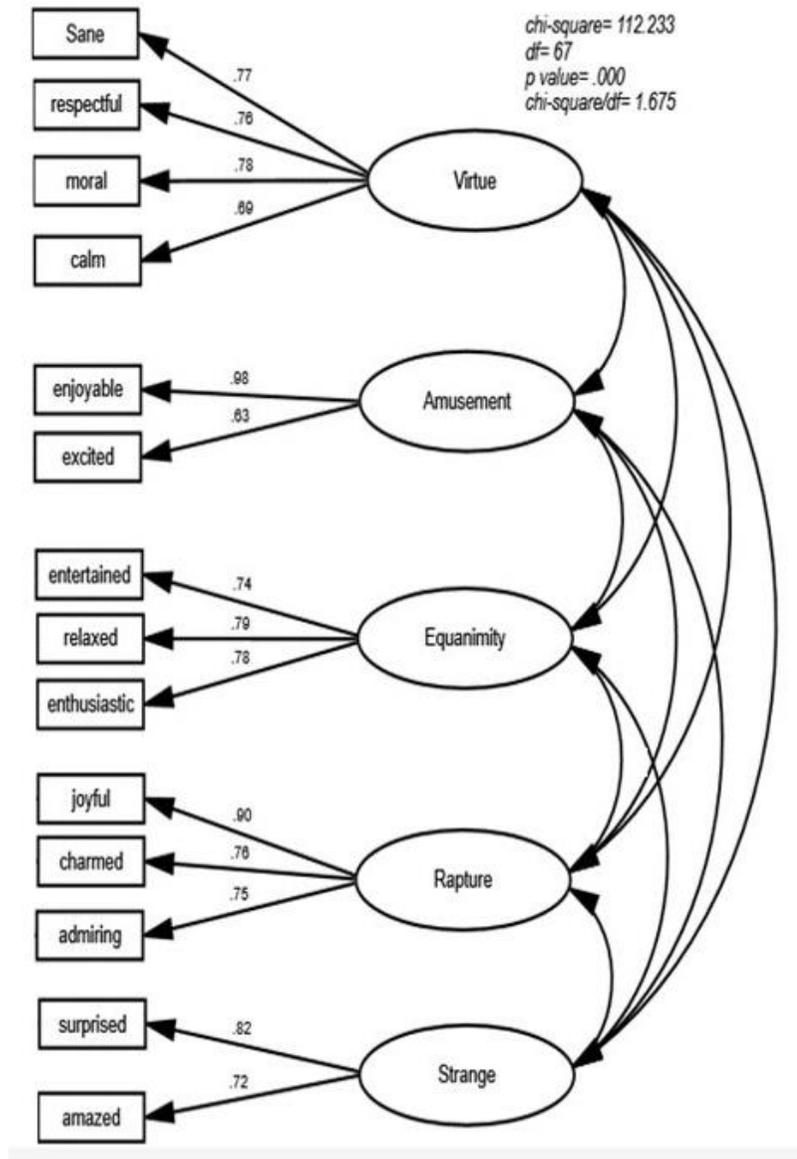
<sup>a</sup>. Rotation converged in 10 iterations.

### Confirmatory factor analysis

The measurement model of the study represents the constructs associated with the consumer experience, indicator variables and the relationships among the variables. Based on the results of the EFA, first-order measurement model of the consumer experience is conceptualized as in Figure 2. Accordingly, the results of the exploratory factor analysis show the multidimensionality aspect of the construct of the consumer experience as it consists of five-factor structure of the consumer experience. The five-factor measurement model was developed to validate the

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consumer experience scale and confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to test the five-factor measurement model.



**Figure 2: First-order factor model of consumer experience**

The model fit was evaluated with Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) and Root Mean-Squared Error of

Approximation (RMSEA). The cutoff values are close to 0.95 for CFI and TLI; the cutoff value close to 0.06 for RMSEA can be used to conclude that there is a relatively good fit between the hypothesized model and the observed data (Hu and Bentler, 1999). Values equal to or greater than 0.9 for AGFI suggest meaningful models (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). A value of lesser than 2.0 is preferred for  $\chi^2/df$  (Mishra 2015).

The  $\chi^2$  statistic of the model is 112.2 with 67 degrees of freedom, which is statistically significant ( $p = .000$ );  $\chi^2/df$  is 1.67. AGFI is .87. Thus, the results show a comparatively better fit for the 14-item consumer experience scale; TLI= 0.94, CFI = 0.96 and RMSEA = 0.06 which are close to the cutoff for a good model fit (See Table 3).

**Table 3. Overall fit indices of 14 items of ConEx scale**

| Model ( $n=164$ )       | $\chi^2$ | $df$ | $\chi^2/df$ | AGFI | TLI   | CFI   | RMSEA |
|-------------------------|----------|------|-------------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| Suggested Cutoff Values | -        | -    | 2-5         | >0.9 | >0.95 | >0.95 | <0.06 |
| 14 item ConEx scale     | 112.23   | 67   | 1.67        | .87  | 0.94  | 0.96  | 0.06  |

### Validity and reliability of the measurement model

Validity and reliability have to be examined before testing the relationship in the hypothesized measurement model (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Standardized factor loadings of 0.7 or above were maintained (except the loading for excitement of 0.63), to ensure initially the convergent validity of the constructs of the measurement model. In addition, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is examined to establish the convergent validity of the constructs: an AVE of each construct is greater than 0.5 establishes the convergent validity of the study constructs (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). In addition, Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha were used to examine the internal consistency reliability of the constructs. CR and Cronbach's of each construct is above 0.7, showing the reliability of the constructs of the measurement model (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). See Table 4 for the reliability statistics of the constructs.

**Table IV. Reliability of the constructs**

| Construct  | AVE | CR  | Cronbach's Alpha |
|------------|-----|-----|------------------|
| Virtue     | .56 | .85 | .84              |
| Equanimity | .60 | .82 | .82              |
| Amusement  | .67 | .82 | .76              |
| Rapture    | .65 | .88 | .84              |
| Strange    | .60 | .73 | .74              |

The discriminant validity of the measurement model is examined with the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Table 5 shows that each construct's AVE is higher than its squared correlation with any other construct (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

**Table 4. Discriminant validity of the constructs**

| <i>Construct</i> | Virtue | Equanimity | Amusement | Rapture | Strange |
|------------------|--------|------------|-----------|---------|---------|
| Virtue           | 0.56   |            |           |         |         |
| Equanimity       | 0.33   | 0.60       |           |         |         |
| Amusement        | 0.13   | 0.36       | 0.67      |         |         |
| Rapture          | 0.52   | 0.46       | 0.24      | 0.65    |         |
| Strange          | 0.04   | 0.05       | 0.13      | 0.04    | 0.60    |

## DISCUSSIONS

The result of the study conducted by Garg, Rahman, and Kumar (2011) have explored that organizations are concentrating more on the experiences of their customer and the researchers require more empirical support for consumer experience management. The consumer experience should be measured while taking into account its rich, multidimensional nature (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). This study endeavored to examine the multidimensional nature of the customer experience in the retail setting and develop a customer experience scale. Accordingly, the study identified five dimensions of customer experience as follows:

- Virtue- this represents the behavior showing high moral standards. This aspect of the consumer experience consists of the extent to which the consumers' concern for sanity, respectfulness, morality and calmness of the experience that consumers receive from a retail setting.
- Equanimous - the extent to which the experience of consumer temper is addressed is explained in this aspect. Entertainment, relaxation and enthusiasm are characteristics of the experience that facilitate consumers to receive equanimous of the experience.
- Amusement- this is the aspect in which the consumers expect excitement and enjoyability. The retail environment has to be amusement generating and pleasant to be excited and enjoyed. This will lead consumers to expect to provide amusement for consumers by singing, acting and performing.
- Rapture- this experience aspect is about the feeling of pleasure and happiness. This aspect of experience is concerned about the joyfulness, charm, and admiring concern of the consumers.
- Strange- this dimension represents the consumers' unusual and unexpected experiences. The strangest things like surprising and amazing experiences cover this experience aspect.

This shows that the cues comprising a retail environment are viewed holistically by consumers rather than individual cues (Babin, Chebat and Michon, 2004). The study revealed that the consumers search for the experiences of virtue, equanimous, amusement, rapture and strange. Retail marketing practitioners may concentrate on these aspects in consumer experience management in retail settings. This will address the need for the development of a customer experience construct, integrating a diverse array of stimuli in order to assess the trade-offs that are entailed in creating value for consumers (Palmer, 2010).

Development of better measures of the marketing-related constructs is critical for the evolution of the marketing knowledge and for improved marketing practice (Churchill, 1979). The present study developed consumer experience scale (ConEx scale) which can be used to examine the consumer experience in the retail context. The multidimensional structure of ConEx also concerns the hedonistic perspective of consumer experience. Future studies on the hedonistic perspective of the consumer experience may address the attitudinal outcomes of the retail experience. The retail sector is one of the prominent concerns of marketers, which need a robust measurement scale to measure and thereby to monitor the quality of consumer experience and customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is the emotional reaction following a disconfirmation experience and is consumption specific (Oliver, 1981). The main consequences of consumer experience are customer satisfaction (Garg, Rahman, and Kumar, 2011). Ensuring consumer satisfaction through the consumer experience will facilitate marketers to gain competitive advantages.

## **THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

The ConEx scale can be used for marketers in their quest for continuous improvement of consumer experience. The multidimensional nature which was explored also helps marketers to focus on the areas in which consumer experience enhancement is required. Priority setting of the consumer experience strategies also can be designed according to the multidimensional aspects of consumer experience. Exploration in potential customer touchpoints and the reduced control of the experience requires firms to integrate multiple business functions (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Focusing on the generation of real-time insights into how customers perceive touchpoints will facilitate the exploratory identification of new market opportunities (Homburg, Jozić and Kuehnl, 2017).

Only a few studies have focused on the measurement issues of consumer experience (Garg, Rahman and Kumar, 2011). Since the present study attempted to address the need for a robust scale to measure consumer experience in the retail setting, an undergraduate sample was used. Marketing scholars can enhance the validity and reliability of the ConEx scale across different cultures and industries as well, with representative samples. The present study focused on examining the multidimensional structure of the consumer experience. Marketers are much better served with multi-item than single-item measures of the marketing constructs

(Churchill, 1979). It is better to have at least three to five indicators per factor, but two indicators per factor is the minimum required for CFA models with multiple factors (Kline, 2004). Two dimensions of the consumer experience consist of only two indicators: amusement and strange. Subsequently, it is suggested to develop studies to include a few more indicators into these two dimensions. It is useful to bring together what we know on customer experience to provide a solid theoretical perspective on this topic (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

### **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The concept of customer experience has received increasing attention for gaining competitive advantage over price, product, or quality (Godovykh and Tasci, 2020). We identified that customer experience can be addressed through customer emotions. Thus, the study findings provide important implications for practitioners by offering new ways to explore customer emotions in a retail setting. Particularly, the dimensions derived by the present study will enable the retailers to approach their retailing environment. The stimuli of ‘*Amusement*’ (e.g., excitement and enjoyability); ‘*Virtue*’ (e.g., sanity, respectfulness, morality, and calmness of the experience); ‘*Equanimous*’ (e.g., entertainment, relaxation and enthusiasm); ‘*Rapture*’ (e.g., joyfulness, charm, and admiring) and ‘*Strange*’ (e.g., surprising, and amazing experiences).

### **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

The study sample is undergraduates of one of the state universities. They are being considered, as the study endeavored to derive a scale to encapsulate consumer experience in a retailing context. Thus, validation of the scale derived is suggested with a representative sampling unit. It is suggested to research further on whether derived customer experience dimensions can be identified in the same way in cross-cultural contexts. This might be facilitated with a replication of the study in another cultural context. In addition, a study on whether interconnections of the derived dimensions affect total customer experience would provide insights on how the identified five customer experience dimensions would be managed.

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### **COMPETING INTERESTS**

The authors declared no competing interests.

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