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# A model for understanding the customer experience landscape from business-to-business context: theorisation from the journey of Indian service technology firms

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**Abstract:** Customer experience (CX) refers to the overall holistic perception of the brand in the mind of the customers. According to reputed research firm IDC, the spending in CX grew approximately from \$550 billion in 2019 to \$640 billion by 2022 (Ross, 2019). Even in 2023, majority of the companies are expected to spend higher amount in CX related spent by an average of 24% compared to last year (Gareiss, 2022). However, the recent hype cycle report from Gartner has highlighted the fact that the priorities for CX landscape are changing drastically (Davis, 2022). This paper adopts a focus group methodology and studies the concept, barriers and opportunities of CX in the B2B context of Indian service technology firms. The findings of this paper reveal that usage of right form of data clubbed with technology enablers can aid towards the positive CX experience.

**Keywords:** customer experience; CX; B2B customer experience; CX process; B2B marketing; CX in B2B context; case study; qualitative research; Gioia methodology; focus group discussion.

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## 1 Introduction

Customer experience (CX) has been regarded and considered as one of the most important aspect and lever for organisations to attain success (Sharma, 2014). It is one of the most sought-after management approaches and helps to positively affect the financial performance of organisations (Klink and Zhang, 2021). The concept has been appreciated and welcomed in terms of helping organisations achieve competitive differentiation across industries. According to Brakus (2009), CX is the overall experience of the buyer starting from information search to post purchase experience. Organisations should try to achieve and make the experience memorable and unique for the customers so that they can stand out among the competitors (Schmitt, 1999). It further helps to build and strengthen the relationship between the brand and customers and leads to customer loyalty in the long run (Frow, 2007). The recent few years have shown that offering only price and product related value proposition is not enough for customer satisfaction. Organisations must ensure that to remain competitive and stay ahead of the competition, it is important that new ways and methods are required to be developed. Hence a lot of organisations have started to focus on CX initiatives so that customers holistic experience can be enhanced (Pullman, 1999).

Although there have been few earlier studies on how CX management can impact performance of organisation, the dimensions considered for CX were limited (Grønholdt, 2015). A number of earlier studies and academicians have attributed the concern that CX measurement has been a challenge (Brakus, 2009). The situation is very challenging when it comes to the B2B industries as academic research in the domain is very limited and has been termed to be at a nascent stage (Pandey et al., 2019). Numerous studies have highlighted the fact that although there has been detailed study with respect to investigation of CX in the B2C context; the same has not been carried out in the B2B context (McLean, 2017). Considering the growing competition among organisations in post COVID landscape and with increase in digital adoption, it is very important that

organisations provide best experience to prospects and customers to gain competitive advantage. The understanding of the CX landscape can then add value in terms of designing and conceptualising strategies and meet customer requirements better. The present study is initiated to address the gaps in the CX for B2B industries and to get a contextual understanding of the overall landscape. The structure of the paper is as follows.

The next section contains a deep dive of existing gamut of literature in the CX context, followed by section of research methodology. The fourth section describes the findings from the study, which is followed by conclusion, managerial and academic implications.

## **2 Theoretical motivation**

### *2.1 Importance and significance of CX*

According to American developer and marketer of software products HubSpot, CX refers to the holistic image and perception of the brand in the mind of the consumers (Bordeaux, 2021). CX is a top priority for most business to enhance the financial performance (Klink and Zhang, 2021). A recent study from one of the top global IT majors has highlighted that providing a better CX can prompt customers to pay significantly more. The scope of CX has broadened from sensory, emotional to overall social response throughout the buyer journey (Homburg et al., 2017; Lemon, 2016; Witell, 2020). Managing the customer relationship at all points of interaction can lead to increase in customer satisfaction and loyalty (Burton, 2020). Better understanding of CX strategies can help organisations and business leaders to design the service experience in an effective manner (Zolkiewski, 2017). It has also been mentioned in the same study that big data and analytics is an important enabler when it comes to understanding the CX landscape.

### *2.2 Role of digital technology in CX*

Digital technology allows companies to customise offerings and also translate the experiences in both real and virtual environment. The increase in adoption of social media, use of website, virtual events such as webinars, webcasts have enhanced the ability of how brands interact with customers. The digital platforms facilitate customers to communicate, collaborate and share information (Kaplan, 2010). Studies have shown that customers and buyers interpret the various information and format such as audio, video, text, infographics holistically which form the holistic perception about brands (McLean, 2017). These ultimately impact customer satisfaction (Klink and Zhang, 2021). To deliver a good CX experience, it is important that there should be a customer centric focus and coordination across all stakeholders of the organisation (Lemon, 2016).

### *2.3 CX in B2B context*

The B2B customers are having access to lot of information and hence there is need for continuous innovation through their buying journey (Pine, 2015). Organisations such as General Electric emphasise on innovation as an area to understand customer's needs. The ability to mass customise offerings in the B2B context has been appreciated and

considered as an important differentiator. It not only makes the experience personal but also makes it memorable. McLean (2017) highlighted that digital channel such as website along with the information quality leads to positive effect on CX specifically in the B2B context. The study has further shown that credibility of the information, ease of information search as well as availability of customer support options further impacts the CX. However, it is to be noted that unlike extensive study available in the CX domain for the B2C context, the academic literature available to support understanding of CX in the B2B domain is limited. Subject matter experts from both Industry and academics have shown their interest towards the need for exploring the CX domain from B2B perspective (Shobeiri, 2015). CX in the B2B has also been highlighted as challenging as the traditional methods in terms of capturing the input-out parameters only like the B2C context is not sufficient to understand the holistic CX landscape (Zolkiewski, 2017).

## *2.4 Recent developments*

Recently the conversational AI created by OpenAi termed as ChatGPT has created a lot of buzz. Launched in Nov 2022, it crossed over a million users within the first few days of its launch. Based on generative AI and natural language processing (NLP) technology and trained knowledge, ChatGPT can give perspective on wide range of topics (Liferay, 2023). The output would be in the form of text and would also be resembling to that of a knowledgeable human being. Various sources have claimed that ChatGPT can aid businesses to accelerate product development and streamlining processes. This is more useful in scenarios involving repetitive question such as customer ticketing/customer service departments. Despite its popularity, there are still questions and uncertainties related to reliability/accuracy of the responses, lack of empathy in the responses, issues in case of error, data privacy and security. Microsoft also created a similar concept for web browser based using Conversational AI for their search engine Bing on Feb. 2023. Google also are doing some group testing for its inhouse ChatGPT termed Bard (Vincent, 2023).

## **3 Research context**

### *3.1 Indian service technology industry and key challenges*

CX has been a key priority for a majority of Indian service technology organisations since the last few years and the recent COVID-19 pandemic has further amplified the trend. This topic has also been appreciated and a great deal of interest has been shown by both the Academic and Industry community. The National Association of Software and Services Company (NASSCOM) has attributed this decade as the decade of technology.

Indian IT services sector contributes significantly to the development of nation and towards GDP. As per a study from leading business magazine, Business standard, the contribution rose from 1% in 1998 to over 10% in 2019. It has also attracted global clients and has established itself among global leaders with 6 IT services company featuring among the top 25 services company global list in 2022. TCS, Infosys, Wipro, Tech Mahindra and HCL are the leading Indian IT services company. As per NASSCOM, the growth rate of the Indian IT services company has doubled post the

pandemic. According to analyst research firm Gartner, the spending related to IT in India is expected to grow to over \$98 billion by 2022.

India has the one of the highest numbers of technology startups in the whole world. As per a report by Analytics India Magazine, India is ranked third in the list of highest tech incubators, with China and USA being the leading other two countries. In 2021 alone, India registered over 2,000 technology-based startups. Factors such as educational institutes, proximity to talent pool, policies, infrastructure, availability of funding play an instrumental role in determining the success of the start-ups.

The recent hype cycle report from Gartner 2020 has highlighted the fact that the priorities and focus areas for customer experience landscape are changing drastically. A recent study from PwC on Indian banking industry has highlighted the role of technology and AI related applications to give competitive advantage to businesses (Chatterjee, 2022). There is a pressing need for organisations to re-look at the CX priorities and existing processes in the post pandemic era (Omale, 2020). Academic literature and understanding of CX in the B2B context are very limited and not much has been studied on areas related to CX theory development. Numerous studies have highlighted the fact that although there has been detailed study with respect to investigation of CX in the B2C context; the same has not been carried out in the B2B context (McLean, 2017; Bhattacharyya and Debata, 2021). In a volatile and fast evolving domain like IT, it is important that Indian companies impart and learn the best practices so that they can compete with the global leading giants.

### *3.2 Service technology industry landscape of the Bangalore region*

Bangalore is regarded as the Silicon Valley of the country. Apart from being one of the major metropolitan cities in the country, it has become one of the global technology hubs. It has all the key ingredients that are needed for any company to flourish and rise namely availability of skilled workforce, funding opportunity, support from government and associated bodies, availability of co-working space.

A recent study by NASSCOM (2022) suggests that Bangalore has grown and emerged as the world's fastest growing hub of technology-based startups, surpassing London. Despite pandemic and challenging situations, Bangalore has shown promising growth with financial tech and education tech startups showing the highest growth rate. Some of the pioneer organisations that have now become giants in the IT Industry include names such as Wipro, Infosys, IBM, Flipkart among others. HSR, Koramangala are some popular places which have been instrumental in providing initial support to several successful start-ups. Bangalore was also named as most dynamic city by The World Economic Forum twice – once in 2015 and again in 2019. Out of 60 odd unicorns in the country, Bangalore is the home to 30 odd unicorns of them. Bangalore has over 1,000 + startups and is way ahead of other leading cities such as Mumbai, Delhi.

## **4 Methodology**

This study uses a qualitative methodology using a combination of focus group discussion and Gioia methodology. No prior exhaustive study has been done with respect to the understanding of B2B marketing and CX in the Indian context (Pandey et al., 2019). Hence, to understand the landscape better, qualitative methodology in terms of a focus

group discussion is adopted. This has also been validated and recommended by Holliman (2014) on his study related to B2B content marketing best practices.

#### *4.1 Procedure of focus group discussion*

Focus group discussion is a research method where participants are invited to discuss on a topic to generate data, information and insights (Wong, 2008). The discussion will be governed and driven by a person who is called as the moderator or interviewer; while the other people present in the discussion are termed as participants or respondents. This type of discuss helps the researcher to get understanding and perspective of a topic based on the lens of the participants. The moderator based on the theme of the discussion asks the relevant research questions to the participants of the discussion. The group members also interact among themselves to share their agreement or disagreement regarding the views presented by other group members/participants in a structured manner. The participants are informed in advance about the theme of the discussion and are invited to the discussion based on their consent and subject matter expertise. In case of academic research, the findings of the focus group discussion are used for contribution towards academic literature development/theory development and not for any other short-term commercial benefit/activity.

#### *4.2 Profile of respondents and mode of discussion*

For the context of this study, the informants for the discussion were selected from professional connects using platforms such as LinkedIn. The people having background and prior experience either in terms of B2B marketing or CX were shortlisted and invited for the discussion. The discussion was led and moderated by senior professor and research scholar belonging to CMS Business School, Jain University-Bangalore. The discussion was held using digital platform Zoom and the duration of the meeting was roughly two hours. Table 1 shows a representative view of the key respondents who took part in the discussion as:

**Table 1** Profile and details of key informants

<i>Participant no.</i>	<i>Industry (I) or academia (A)</i>	<i>Job title</i>	<i>Organisation name</i>
M1	A	Professor	CMS Business School
M2	A	Professor	CMS Business School
P3	A	Research scholar	CMS Business School
P4	A	Research scholar	CMS Business School
P5	A	Management student	CMS Business School
P6	A	Management student	CMS Business School
P7	I	SVP and global digital practice leader	Cigniti Technologies
P8	I	CEO and co-founder	Race2 cloud technologies
P9	I	Digital strategy	Mindtree
P10	I	Head – products and platforms	Altimetrik
P11	I	Vice president	Citibank

### *4.3 Details of companies taking part in the discussion*

- 1 Cigniti technologies – founded in 1998, it is a software testing cum services company headquartered in Hyderabad, India. Srikanth Chakkilam is the current CEO of the company.
- 2 Race2cloud – founded in 2016 by GK Raju, it is an IT and services-based startup headquartered in Bangalore working in the domain of cloud solutions. It aims at providing digital transformation for businesses using cloud-based technology.
- 3 Mindtree – founded in 1999, it is tech-based consulting and services-based company headquartered in Bangalore. It operates in more than 20 countries and has over 30,000 employees.
- 4 Altimetric – founded in 2012, it is a software company that offers its services to organisations for scaling its journey in digitisation. It has over 4,000 employees across the globe.
- 5 Citibank – founded in 1902, it is a financial services company, headquartered in Mumbai. It has over 20,000 employees across various countries.

### *4.4 Discussion guide*

In order to have a productive, structured and effective discussion based on the research agenda; a discussion guide is formulated. This acts as a guide for the moderator and helps in probing the relevant questions as part of the discussion. The guide is created in such a way that it begins with introduction of the topic for the participants; making everyone aware of the topic and then gradually moves into a deeper and contextualised conversation mode. The discussion guide formulated has been pre-tested before the actual session in consultation with a mock group of respondents and modified based on recommendations received. Table 2 shows the final discussion guide used in the final focus group discussion as:

### *4.5 Transcribing, coding, analysing and reporting*

Based on the recording and handwritten notes taken during the session, a verbatim transcript is created for the entire session. At the initial level a descriptive approach is taken where the information conveyed is only captured.

All the people taking part in the discussion were allocated codes and not their actual names as per the privacy consent agreement of the process. The moderators were allocated codes namely M1 and M2, while the other participants/respondents were allocated codes starting with P3 and continues till P11.

Post that the information is grouped into relevant buckets/themes contextual to the research questions and discussion guide. This stage is the interpretive stage.



**Table 2** Outline of discussion questions

<i>Research objectives</i>	<i>Discussion questions</i>
Enhance the understanding and knowledge of CX	What is your definition of CX? How do you think the CX landscape is changing? What is the CX process? How CX is different across B2B and B2C?
To understand and get insights on how CX effectiveness	What are some of the CX challenges? What is the role of technology in CX? What is the expectation from CX in the Indian context? What is the role of data and analytics in CX? Why persona understanding is critical from CX point of view? What are some of the key dimensions/variables of CX measurement?

Based on the inputs gathered as part of the focus group discussion, to get more theoretical insights and meaningful contribution, Gioia et al. (2012) methodology for grounded theory was adopted in this study. Here the theory has been established based on the data collected from the subject matter experts as an outcome of the focused group discussion. This method uses an interpretive lens based on people interpretation of the event. Based on the Gioia methodology, first order, second order and aggregate dimensions are formulated. Finally, we theorised our learning's, and a conceptual model is formulated.

## 5 Findings

Table 3 shows the first order, second order and aggregate dimensions relevant to the B2B CX landscape. These have been identified as an outcome of the discussions with the subject matter experts. This section explains the various concepts in detail as:

**Table 3** Data coding

<i>Aggregate dimensions</i>	<i>Second order concepts</i>	<i>First order concepts</i>
CX transformation	CX expectations	People do not buy products, but they buy experience. Only product differentiation or low price point not valued by customer. The new CX goal is how same CX experience can be same across both online and offline channels.
	CX adoption	90% of CX initiatives fail due to adoption issues. CX is strategic in nature; it is no longer marketing in nature. All employees need to be customer centric. If it remains only top-down initiatives and no buy-in from bottom, the initiative is not going to succeed.
	Buyer persona evolution	Persona is how I am at a point in time and tailoring a message at that point in time makes the most impact. Persona involves psychographic elements such as moods, emotions and preferences.

**Table 3** Data coding

<i>Aggregate dimensions</i>	<i>Second order concepts</i>	<i>First order concepts</i>
CX powered growth	Buying journey progression	<p>What matters most is how satisfied or happy are customers throughout the journey and across all the touchpoints.</p> <p>The ecosystem consists of large number of members. Factors such as price discounts, post service makes a significantly bigger impact.</p>
	Credibility	<p>A happy and positive experience will translate into customer engagement and lead to positive reviews ultimately influencing sales.</p> <p>Delivering a positive CX is vital as it increase customer loyalty, customer satisfaction and finally word of mouth (WOM). In B2B context it is very important to project yourself as a trusted advisor to your customer.</p>
CX ROI measurement	Data driven actionable insights	<p>Organisations should also give importance on integration of data, social media initiatives, omnichannel services and ensure a process and robust mechanism around measuring ROI from CX and other digital initiatives.</p> <p>Automation helps remove monotonous activities with effecting emotions. It complements human beings.</p>
	Digital technology amplification	<p>Being able to understand consumer related and insights data is critical.</p> <p>Technology breaks down silos and provides single unified view to reduce friction points. It brings all internal elements together.</p>

### 5.1 CX transformation

Digital channels are critical in the buyer journey. Digital marketing initiatives have proven to be useful in the purchase decision and have accelerated the consumption rate in the automobile sector. The digital marketing initiatives help to ensure a consistent and seamless communication to target audience (Lezmy, 2022). According to that study, providing quality CX helps in over 89% customer retention rate, while in its absence only 33% retention rate is observed. However, it has been critically cited that very limited number of studies are available to know in detail and investigate the reasons behind the usage of digital media and its linkage to purchase decision (Dahiya and Sachar, 2021). This section tries to examine and capture the transformation happening in the CX Industry from the context of B2B service technology-based firms based on the focus group discussion.

#### 5.1.1 CX expectations

The discussion started with instances shared by various participants from their perspective on how they think and have observed the customer expectation landscape to be changing and evolving. Participant P5 and P6 offered a consolidated view, which summarised the perspectives of various participants.

“Customer no longer values only product differentiation or low price point. What matters most is how satisfied or happy are customers throughout the journey and across all the touchpoints. A happy and positive experience will translate into customer engagement and lead to positive reviews ultimately influencing sales. Hence, CX is the need of the hour.”

This was further amplified by the moderator M2 who consolidated the need to what is called CX. The concise definition is given below:

“Customer experience or CX is the customer’s holistic perception of customers with any business or brand. It is the result of each and every interaction starting from website interaction, talking to a customer service and finally receiving a product/service. Delivering a positive CX is vital as it increase customer loyalty, customer satisfaction and finally WOM.”

P9 shared views and inputs based on experience of managing customers across geographies and how customers across geographies are different. He elaborated that customer in India look for value for money and sales cycle is comparatively longer. They try to identify the real value of money. Hence it is important that throughout the customer journey they are able to see, experience and feel value. Only once they feel that the investment will be able to give them ROI and value, a deal is closed. Examples of Indian companies such as Zomato were quoted. However, he pointed that although Indian customers are slow in adoption but the acceleration post adoption is at a high pace. They continuously innovate with the technology. Here are some reflected similar views and commented from some of the people:

“[...] We did not use pagers, directly went to mobile phones. We did not use much fax machines, directly went to printers (M1).”

“[...] Yes there will be resistance to change in the initial part. It is very difficult to sell CX and CRM solutions to companies if they are already established. We need to convince and make them realize the value from digital transformation (P10).”

“[...] In cases where organizational structure is complex, driving down changes from top to bottom is difficult. It is also dependent on economies of competition (P8).”

“[...] Once organizations see threat from a competitor, initiatives such as CX gains importance and momentum (P8).”

M1 tried to connect localisation with CX sentiment. He mentioned that according to consistent reports from Forrester and other research agencies, Flipkart is ranked higher than Amazon, Indian bank better than Global Bank. P9 added further saying that Flipkart was a pioneered the cash on delivery. They also created their own delivery network which is now adopted by almost all companies, conceptualised a coin-based award system. Hence ability to create differentiated CX helped them to do better in Indian market compared to Amazon which has a website same across countries; has deep pockets of money and use the most sophisticated algorithms. However, Flipkart is still preferred by Indian customers. He concluded with the perspective that:

“Being able to evolve and innovate is critical.”

### *5.1.2 CX adoption*

P7 shared the experience that people do not buy products, but they buy experience. The new CX goal is how same CX experience can be same across both online and offline channels. As P7 summarised:

“As a customer, the experience is going to be the key.”

He gave examples how brands compete by giving experience in terms of providing content. Content is one of the key ingredients of providing a good CX which is ventilated across television ads, social media, and website. The example of Mercedes Benz was used as an example to show how the concept of retail of the future was adopted by the company to give consistent buying experience to the customers. This is further amplified by P10's comment that CX is no longer a project unlike it was a decade back, it is part and parcel of every initiative.

### *5.1.3 Buyer persona evolution*

The discussion was started by M1 to trigger conversation and understand how the traditional form and way of segmentation is different from current concept of buyer person. Participants expressed their views that the traditional way of segmentation was demographic in nature revolving around age, gender, income level, family structure, location. This was a static group and each homogeneous group were shared similar content. Persona involves psychographic elements such as moods, emotions and preferences. Here are some of the statements given by the members related to persona:

“[...] Human beings take about 8 personas in a day. Persona is how I am at a point in time and tailoring a message at that point in time makes the most impact (P10).”

## *5.2 CX powered growth*

Shirer (2021) study has shown that there has been continuous growth and increase in spending towards digital transformation initiatives for organisations. As part of that study, the global spending on digital transformation is expected to exceed over \$10 trillion with CX being an important critical factor of that spent. Unlike the traditional times, where customers used to complete their buying journey in one channel; there is expectation from customers to provide them with better buying experience across the channels (Wolny, 2014). Despite this understanding and information available, a recent study has shown that customers in the UK were not happy with their overall buying experience and wanted drastic improvement (Temkin Group, 2017).

This section tries to investigate how CX process can aid in the buyer journey and helps in credibility for the brand. Here listed are the details based on the focus group discussion:

### *5.2.1 Buying journey progression*

There was reasonable level of consensus on what is the typical CX process. However, the most scientific approach was taken and adopted by P7 who narrated the whole cycle in a series of steps. The CX process involves the following steps as mentioned below:

- 1 understanding of brand strategy
- 2 understanding of the end user journey
- 3 identify opportunities to build and enhance the experience of end user
- 4 conceptualise and test a pilot by taking a part of the journey
- 5 communicate the change to all the stakeholders
- 6 measure and optimise the whole cycle.

Participants acknowledged the growing importance of digital technologies and marketing initiatives to enhance and give a better CX. An example was cited by P7 on how using digital mobile app and technology the passenger experience of Heathrow airport was transformed. To provoke further reflection, M1 proposed a classification of motives affecting CX and invited views. According to M1, there are two types of factors affecting CX which are external motives (such as changing needs, arrival of technology) and internal motives (such as change in way rethinking about philosophy of business). M1 further added that:

“Being able to understand consumer related and insights data is critical.”

### 5.2.2 *Credibility*

Almost all participants agreed that the foundational aspects of CX remain same across both B2B and B2C. As P10 said:

“CX is strategic in nature, it is no longer marketing in nature. All employees need to be customer centric.”

However, P7 offered a contrasting perspective which gave insights on what are some of the differentiating factors:

“Sometimes, customers are not educated in B2C and hence may not be tech-savvy while B2B consist of sophisticated set of buyers. The ecosystem consists of large number of members and hence factors such as price discounts, post service makes a significantly bigger impact.”

P9 further commented highlighting that in B2B context it is very important to project yourself as a trusted advisor to your customer. Hence, customer needs to realise that vendor is not looking for short-term gains but looking to be your transformational partner. Commitment in terms of delivery, innovation, being proactive in terms of understanding customer requirements, ability to deliver commitments on time are some of the other key critical aspects.

P10 added few more perspectives which highlighted the role of dynamic persona and how it is related towards providing a good CX.

“[...] at 7 in the morning, my persona is a fitness enthusiast. If I receive a promotional email at that time to buy a product, I probably won't be looking at it (P10).”

## 5.3 *CX ROI measurement*

There is constant change and development in the service technology industry. There is need for marketers to constantly be aware of the changing technology landscape to ensure

best experience for customers and to meet their evolving needs (Lund, 2022). Inconsistent communication across channels leads to frustration from the customers and can hamper the overall buying experience (Stattin, 2023). Interactivity and customisation delights customers throughout the buyer journey (Saura, 2020). Enablers such as artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented reality (AR) provide seamless omni-channel experience and enhanced CX (Hilken, 2018).

This section tries to investigate how the ROI related to CX process and effectiveness can be measured. Below listed are the details based on the focus group discussion:

### *5.3.1 Data driven actionable insights*

M1 initiated the discussion to understand role of data and how right consumer insights have helped companies to get value. P10 added few perspectives which resonated with the group in terms of why data is the fuel to derive CX. Some of the other inputs added from P10 and other members are summarised below:

“[...] The key to CX is to have customer 360 view and hence real time data is needed (P10).”

“[...] Ability to run actionable insights in micro-seconds to provide superior experience is the need of the hour (P11).”

### *5.3.2 Digital technology amplification*

Participants identified several challenges related to CX. Some of them were buyers waiting endlessly for delivering of order, behaviour of delivery guy, problem with warehouse/inventory, understanding of exact persona at that point in time. There was strong consensus that when it comes to providing a positive CX, technology is an important enabler for CX which removes inefficiencies in the engagement journey. Technology breaks down silos and provides single unified view to reduce friction points. It brings all internal elements together. Automation helps remove monotonous activities with effecting emotions. It complements human beings.

“[...] customer is a human being and has emotions. Hence CX is all about human being experience based on their needs. Empathy plays a large role (P8).”

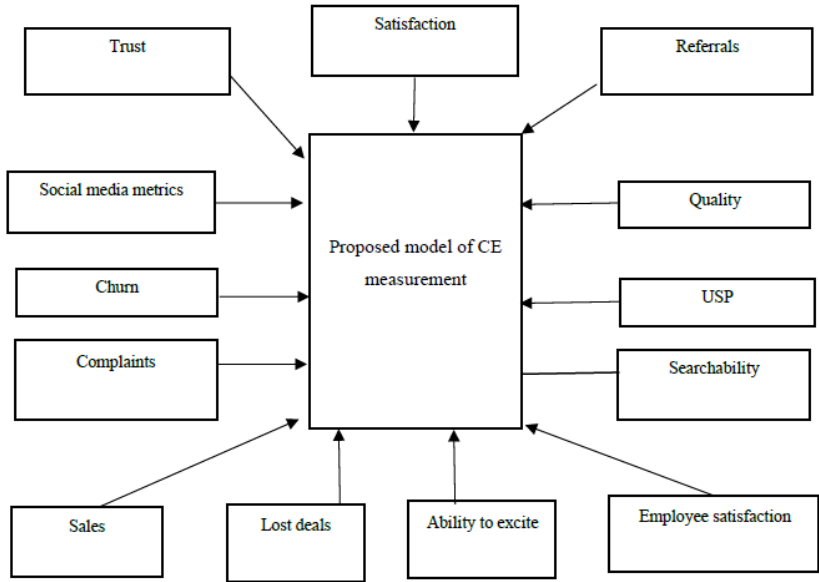
“[...] 90% of CX initiatives fail due to adoption issues. If it remains only top-down initiatives and no buy-in from bottom. Unless people like sales person are involved in the change management and start adopting, the initiative is not going to succeed (P8).”

P10 further added a new aspect of looking at the entire ecosystem and encouraged leaders to also consider the internal stakeholders and specifically the employees while making CX strategies. Some of his key takeaways are mentioned below:

“[...] CX is beyond the end customers. We need to understand friction points and hence empathy is needed (P10).”

“[...] If an employee is not happy, he will not treat customer happily and customer will not have a good experience (P10).”

**Figure 1** Measurement model for CX



### 5.3.3 Measurement metrics of CX

M1 provoked discussion and invited views on how and what are some of the metrics to measure CX. P7 mentioned that there are lot of companies operate in the market who are known to be experts in CX such as Publicis Sapient, ICF Next, etc. and large MNCs have a CX divisions for example, Accenture interactive and TCS interactive, etc. Lot of bigger companies such as the MNCs outsource some of their CX related work to these specialists which is called managed outsourcing. However, the newer companies of today's era prefer to have their own in-house capabilities and hence a lot of emphasis in terms of investment is given to CX. M2 further invited perspective to understand what role 'neuro marketing' is playing in the CX space. P10 shared his point of view which mentioned that concepts of neuro science such as emotions and privacy. These features help to provide targeted marketing campaigns and help to enrich the CX experience.

"[.] If you can analyze how, I feel when I walk to the meeting/store, it is a good insight to have for marketing purpose (P10)."

"[.] these techniques of empathy and emotional are becoming very important. Empathy will become the next important skill of next generation (P7)."

"[.] If I share information and get back in return impacts me. Hence, as a customer, I am not sure such as features like accept all cookies. Hence, there might be a stage in terms of data what is going to be shared (P10)."

"[.] Indian internet users are very sensitive and concerned about privacy. Most of ad blocking is happening from Indian consumers (M1)."

Below listed are consolidated variables and their interpretation which can relevant when it comes to CX measurement.

- 1 Trust: trust is an integral factor in CX measurement. By providing a better process to issue customer issues/queries and providing a better experience during the buying journey helps to get and enhance trust among customers.
- 2 Satisfaction: improving customer satisfaction is one of the important components in CX measurement. Organisations specifically B2B service-based companies have a regular system of circulating surveys to get satisfaction score.
- 3 Referrals: getting referrals/recommendations from customers indicates how satisfied or delighted the existing customer is with the brand. The business queries coming through referrals have a high probability of conversion compared to completely cold prospect enquiries.
- 4 Social media metrics: social media engagement score and metrics indicate a good picture of how the customer/prospect perceives their association with the brand.
- 5 Quality: ensuring product/service meets quality/requirement of customers is an important indicator. People expect and prefer brand that are committed towards unbiased and consistent quality.
- 6 Churn: making customers continue to purchase with the brand/reducing churn is a key indicator of how satisfied and happy the current customers with the brand are and whether their overall experience is satisfactory.
- 7 Customisation: ability to excite prospects/customers through customised/virtual offerings is critical in CX measurement. There is constant change in buyer expectation for which there is need for customisation based on buyer needs and wants.
- 8 USP: ability to differentiate offerings from competitors is an important indicator. It also creates a strong reason for customers to associate with the brand.
- 9 Complaints: reducing resolution time of complaints/issues is an indicator of CX. Customers get satisfied and happy if there is a faster mechanism to address their concerns in an effective manner.
- 10 Searchability: ease of finding the desired search result from the brands website or on the search engine is a major factor for CX measurement. Unless the prospect can quickly arrive at the desired result, it will not drive the prospect towards the end goal of purchase.
- 11 Sales: sales of the organisation indicate how well the brand/company is doing and can indicate whether customers are happy with the brand.
- 12 Lost deals: number of deals lost by the organisation within a stipulated period can give an indication of the CX. If there is continuous data of deals being lost with a different player or competitor, it signifies that the customer is getting the desired product/service elsewhere with a better value proposition.
- 13 Employee satisfaction: employee satisfaction of the organisation of the organisation is a key indicator of CX measurement. It has been found that only when the internal stakeholders/employees are happy, satisfied and motivated they are willing to go the extra mile to translate the same experience with the customers.



## 6 Discussion and conclusions

The paper aims to draw attention towards the emerging and changing landscape of CX and offers a range of insights from industry and academic experts. This section aims to summarise the key perspectives based on the inputs and suggestions from experts to ensure a good and positive CX.

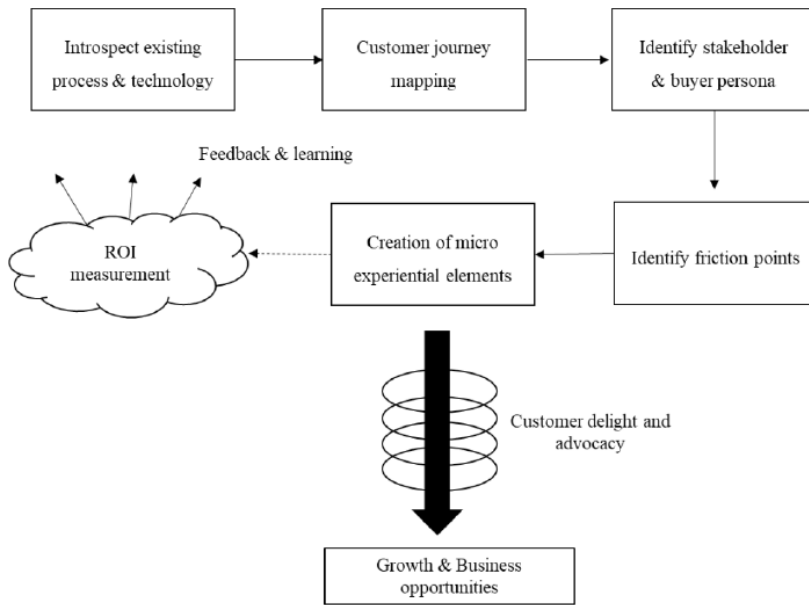
As a customer, the experience derived will be the key. To make the experience memorable, it is important that customers should be given the ability to find products in a seamless manner. It is important that buying and support experience both should be given priority. Organisations should also give importance on Integration of data, social media initiatives, omnichannel services and ensure a process and robust mechanism around measuring ROI from CX and other digital initiatives. In the next five years, CX will be one of the highest priorities for businesses compared to pricing or product differentiation factors. AI is one of the important enablers to drive and enhance CX. Table 4 summarises the key CX challenges, key pointers and steps to make the CX process better.

**Table 4** CX challenges and process

<i>Area</i>	<i>Details</i>
Mitigating CX challenges	Ability to identify friction points, ability to understand persona, and ability to develop the 3,600 views.
Effective CX process	CX should be part and parcel of every initiative. Minimalism is important to ensure customer satisfaction. Micro experiential elements must relevant and centred around time. It should be at point of interaction and point of relevance.
Designing CX process	Complete customer journey mapping. Understand all actors in the journey (digital presence, delivering the product, customer support, etc.). Identify points of friction.

CX like any other enabler is only an enabler. It is very unlikely that procuring the best CX platform only will drive sales by 2X. It is important that organisation should also introspect and identify other potential issues in the whole ecosystem. The process should start with making all processes efficient and also do implement change management to make people in the organisation to be more customer friendly. Figure 2 shows the final proposed conceptual model based on summarising the inputs from this study.

Before embarking on a CX journey, organisations should introspect all their existing processes and ensure all their processes are in sync with modern times, marketing reality and customer expectations. CX is not a one-time activity. Implementation is just the beginning and constant focus be made towards making the process efficient with continuous learning and feedback. The investments in areas such as technology must be done only after identifying the identification of the goals and with the view of integrated ecosystem. With areas such as chatbots, virtual support assistants, investments in analytics gaining momentum, it is important that organisations understand the overall landscape and how different enablers are facilitating the goals of CX.

**Figure 2** Conceptual model for understanding CX

## 7 Managerial implications

In today's time, CX is a strategic initiative. It is not a tactical or operational initiative. It is a top-down initiative. However, it does not happen in isolation. However, it is important to note that CX strategy should be executed in real life. It should not only remain a strategy. It should be further break down into tactics and operations. These will ultimately help to drive ROI. The CX strategy must be defined by getting the inputs bottoms up such as salesperson who interacts, customer support executives, delivery guy who deliver the end products. It helps to understand customer wants and how the overall experience can be enhanced. A CEO of a fortune 500 organisation may not spend time on a daily basis with a small SME customer but is more concerned with the bigger enterprise customers or conceptualising how next big deal can be won. In these types of scenarios, earlier a CEO was completely unaware and did not have understanding of what is the overall perception or satisfaction from the brand. However, in recent years digital platforms have gained momentum and now social media gives all details and shows the perception based on intelligence. Social media listening tools give details of behaviour and helps understand how customers are satisfied with the brand. With tools and platforms such as Adobe Tech Stack, Adobe audience manager, Salesforce marketing cloud, SAP eCommerce Solutions; the whole CX process can be transformed digitally; friction points can be reduced, and additional revenue streams can be generated. With advancements in technology and AI, there is tremendous potential for businesses to derive value and enhance the CX experience for accelerated buyer journey. The chatbots of modern times are based on advanced algorithms that help customers to understand their concerns/challenges and provide the best optimal solution in shortest time frame

without any human interruption and saving costs for business managers (Kaushal and Yadav, 2022). The usage of AI can also help towards fostering innovation and contribute towards capability development that ultimately can aid towards value creation. Adopting AI at scale in the B2B context can also accelerate decision making process and improve the performance as well as image of the company (Dwivedi and Wang, 2022). The information derived from chatbot interaction and analysis of various customer data, will help business managers to introspect, understand buying behaviour and do necessary course correction. The ability to deliver positive and memorable CX will not only provides competitive advantage to brands, but also helps in terms of providing more value for customers and helps in customer loyalty in the long run.

## **8 Academic implications**

There is a pressing need for organisations to re-look at the CX priorities and existing processes in the post pandemic era (Omale, 2020). No prior exhaustive study has been done with respect to the understanding of B2B marketing and CX in the Indian context (Pandey et al., 2019). This paper aims to draw attention towards the emerging and changing landscape of customer experience (CE) and offers a range of insights from industry and academic experts. Hence to understand the landscape better, qualitative methodology in terms of a focus group discussion is adopted in this study.

This paper contributes to the theory development of CX and helps in understanding the CX landscape. It also adds to the knowledge base of B2B digital marketing research where there has been a paucity and gap in terms of academic contributions. This is one of the only studies carried out specifically on the Indian context that aims to understand the concept of CX and B2B digital marketing.

The study throws insights on the changes in the CX landscape and expectation of the buyers. The study also throws light on the CX process and some of the current challenges. The research work proposes a conceptual model on CX that not only contributes towards the theory development of CX; but could also act as a guiding light for future academicians to add value and insights on the aspect. The study acts as a guide for future researchers working in the field of CX effectiveness. The findings from the paper would also help future researchers to investigate more on issues revolving around CX dimensions.

## **9 Limitations and future research directions**

The study is focused on the Indian context and with the lens of B2B subject matter experts. Our theorisation is limited to inputs received from the selected subject matter experts and their knowledge and experience. Study can be further enriched by increasing the scope by facilitating further detailed discussions with different subject matter experts.

Future researchers can use the findings of this study and try to investigate the CX landscape from a different methodology apart from focus group discussion. In focus group discussions, it is observed that there is a small tendency of biasness because of the perspective shared by a dominant/experienced participant which is not overruled by the other participants. Also, finding a common slot for senior subject matter experts in a

single forum is challenging, specifically in voluntary academic contributions. The busy schedule of senior leaders leads to multiple changes in timeline/schedule of the main discussion. It is recommended to have at least minimum of 20% more participants available and agreed to be available to join the discussion as there are instances of last-minute changes/unavailability of participants. This study was carried out during the time period of COVID-19 first wave and second wave. Hence, there was fear, uncertainty and restrictions in travel due to which face-to-face interaction or physical mode was not possible. Future researchers can try to carry out similar investigations using a physical mode of approach that would also generate interesting insights and findings by fostering more productive conversations.

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