TIINA-KAISA KUURU

Embodied Customer Experience in Human Touch Services

A phenomenological perspective

TIINA-KAISA KUURU

Embodied Customer Experience in Human Touch Services

A phenomenological perspective

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION
Tampere University, Faculty of Management and Business
Finland

Responsible supervisor and Custos	Associate Professor Elina Närvänen Tampere University Finland	
Supervisor	Professor Leena Aarikka-Stenroos Tampere University Finland	
Pre-examiners	Professor Elina Jaakkola University of Turku Finland	Professor Per Echeverri University of Karlstadt Sweden
Opponent	Professor Elina Jaakkola University of Tampere Finland	

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

Cover design: Roihu Inc.

HIILINEUTRAALI PAINOTUOTE
ClimateCalc CC-000025/FI
PunaMusta Printing

Carbon dioxide emissions from printing Tampere University dissertations have been compensated.

*To my loved ones
and to all living and sensing bodies*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing my dissertation has been an unbelievable journey. A journey full of emotions from excitement and happiness to despair and exhaustion. It has included countless hours of discussions with clever and fascinating people as well as countless kilometers of early morning runs and deep breaths on my yoga mat. It has transformed the eternal city of Rome into a second home. It has been a lonely yet inspiring adventure filled with sitting, reading, thinking, writing and reflecting - it has become embedded into who I am. Most importantly, this journey has made me realize how my body is the safest and the most frightening, the happiest and cruelest entity. An embodied experience, indeed.

Writing these final lines of my dissertation feels emotional and meaningful. It is not only me in and between the lines of this work, but also all the individuals who have supported me from beginning to end.

First of all, I want to dedicate my greatest gratitude to two incredibly talented, ambitious and kind-hearted women I have been privileged to share my path as a doctoral researcher with. Both of these women joined this adventure in the middle, which may not have been the easiest undertaking. I am grateful to both Associate Professor Elina Närvänen and Professor Leena Aarikka-Stenroos for so graciously taking me under their wings. Elina, I could not imagine a more equipped responsible supervisor. I want to thank you for all the amazingly detailed remarks and sincere advice you have given me throughout. I appreciate how you guided me firmly during this process, and at the same time, gave me the space I needed to find my own ways of doing research. Your unwavering support has meant the world for me. You had faith in me, even in moments where I lost faith in myself, and I thank you for that. Your impact in building my confidence as an academic researcher has been enormous. Leena, my second supervisor, I want to thank her for endless encouragement and gentle but determinant push for the higher peaks especially in the last phases of the dissertation process. Your enthusiasm and curiosity towards (academic) life, bright personality and great wisdom are traits I admire. Elina and Leena, you have challenged my theoretical and conceptual thinking while provided opportunities to grow as a researcher. You have reminded me that even the smallest victories are worth celebration and enjoyment. These two superwomen are an

academic journey and I could not be happier to have you girls still beside me as dear friends. Thank you, Anu, Jalmu and Saara, Siiri A., Rakel, Epsu, Annina, Kenzie and so many other dear ones. Discussions and spending time with you - long breakfasts, celebrations, runs, trips and all other experiences together - have been the sweetest escape from my "research bubble". You all embody friendship. I also want to thank my extended "family-in-law" for their positivity and supportive spirit, showing interest in all of my passions.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to my parents, Marja and Keijo. Thank you for taking me to the athletics field, swimming hall and ski resorts not much after my feet carried me. You sparked the enthusiasm within me to explore life through movement and activity, and always encouraged me in my endeavors. Mum, you are my greatest cheerleader. For my whole life you have supported me in every way. Depending on the situation your home in Järvenpää and your "five-star service" have provided me a place to either foster my research or take a little pause from it and just breathe. Mum, I want to thank you for your wisdom, strength, patience and love. Dad, I know you are somewhere there celebrating this moment. I believe that part of you is living inside me, present in my passions and being - this is another beautiful and comforting aspect of embodiment.

Finally, I want to thank my husband, the love of my life Aapo. You have witnessed it all; all my lows and celebrations during the past five years, and a decade before that, too. It is unbelievable, how you have tirelessly pondered with me all kinds of issues and shared my emotional bursts related to my dissertation. You have given me different perspectives and challenged my thinking. I thank you for that. Most importantly, you have taken care of me and taught me not to worry and reminded me what matters the most. That is, this very moment we have. Life is sweet and exciting with you - and the coffee you make is the best in the world. I love you, to Rome and back.

On a sunny and fresh Sunday morning in Tampere, September 4th 2022
Tiikku

ABSTRACT

Life happens through our body and mind, and the two are closely intertwined as we form meanings and experiences. An active and sensing human body is present when we participate in a yoga class, shop for clothing, spend an evening in a restaurant, or make decisions in banking negotiations. This is the world in which we all live and create our experiences. However, despite the essential role of the body in our doings, the human body is conspicuous in its absence in daily conversations in companies' agendas, as well as in customer experience (CX) studies in service research. Existing studies examine CX mainly through cognitive perceptions, while the role of the body is largely taken for granted. There is an evident need for an alternative perspective that expands on this restricted view.

The purpose of this study is to create an understanding of CX as embodied in human touch service contexts. To achieve this purpose, two research questions are set: 1) How the embodied CX is formed? 2) What kind of a role the body plays in CX in human touch services? To answer these questions, this dissertation comprises four articles with this introduction. The articles explore the central role of the body in experiences from multiple viewpoints. Article I maps the role of emotions in CX and acknowledges how they are embedded in these experiences. Article II creates a new understanding of interaction as a bodily and multilevel phenomenon in the group fitness context. Article III focuses on service encounters as bodily practices. Article IV examines how customer experience emerges in the customer's subjective life-world, illustrating how the life-world is shaped and defined through the body.

This research applies a phenomenological perspective, which enables the study of customer experience from a first-person view and helps us understand experience as a bodily phenomenon. The aim of the research guides the methodology of the articles in the dissertation, which include phenomenological interviews, focus group interviews, autoethnography, and observation. This study critically evaluates the prevailing assumptions of CX in service research, in which the active role of the body has not been examined. The concept of embodiment is introduced by drawing on research streams in which the central role of the body in experience has been identified. A multidisciplinary perspective based on sociology, consumption research, and organizational and management studies enriches the discussion of CX.

This dissertation challenges the assumptions of the traditional, mechanical conceptions of research on CX that have not taken into account the central role of the body in the formation of experience. It offers an alternative view for understanding how customer experience emerges and how it should be managed. The findings build detailed understanding on how embodied CXs are formed through complex combination of bodily linkages and creative acts. The body's role in CX in human touch services is identified as active and holistic: the body is the locus of dimensions of experience, as well as a connection point of previous and becoming, private and social, knowledge and intuition, enabling CX formation. The theoretical contributions of this study are highlighted through four key propositions. The methods and research designs suitable for studying embodiment are discussed.

The key managerial contributions are presented in a model that provides guidelines for service companies on how to harness an embodied approach as a driver of a successful business. The guidelines consist of four components for business managers to recreate their business understanding: takeover of the embodied approach, recreation of business practices, reconsideration of the customer, and reorientation of the service encounter. Altogether, the findings help business managers understand how the active and sensing body is at the center of a successful service business.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Elämä tapahtuu kehossa ja mielessä – nämä kaksi kietoutuvat tiiviisti toisiinsa, kun muodostamme merkityksiä ja kokemuksia. Aktiivinen ja tunteva keho on läsnä, kun osallistumme joogatunnille, olemme vaateostoksilla, vietämme iltaa ravintolassa tai teemme päätöksiä pankkineuvotteluissa. Tällaisessa maailmassa me kaikki elämme ja luomme omia kokemuksiamme. Keho kuitenkin loistaa poissaolollaan niin yritysten päivittäisissä keskusteluissa kuin asiakaskokemusta käsittelevissä tutkimuksissa. Tämänhetkiset tutkimukset käsittelevät kokemusta pääasiassa kognitiivisten käsitysten kautta ja kehon roolia pidetään lähinnä itsestäänselvyytenä. On siis olemassa selkeä tarve vaihtoehtoiselle näkökulmalle, joka laajentaa kirjallisuuden tarjoamaa rajoittunutta näkemystä.

Tämä tutkimus rakentaa uuden, kehollisen näkökulman asiakaskokemuksen tarkasteluun. Tätä tavoitetta lähestytään kahdella tutkimuskysymyksellä: 1) Kuinka kehollinen asiakaskokemus muodostuu? 2) Millainen on kehon rooli asiakaskokemuksessa ihmisläheisissä palveluissa? Vastatakseen näihin kysymyksiin, tämä väitöskirja sisältää neljä tutkimusartikkelia ja tämän johdannon. Artikkelit tarkastelevat kehon keskeistä roolia kokemuksen muodostumisessa moninäkökulmaisesti. Artikkeli I kartoittaa tunteiden roolia asiakaskokemuksessa huomioiden, kuinka tunteet ovat keskeinen osa kokemusta. Artikkeli II luo uutta ymmärrystä vuorovaikutuksesta kehollisena ja monitasoisena ilmiönä ryhmäliikunnan kontekstissa. Artikkeli III keskittyy tarkastelemaan palvelukohtaamisia kehollisina käytäntöinä. Artikkeli IV tarkastelee sitä, kuinka asiakaskokemus muodostuu asiakkaan subjektiivisessa kokemusmaailmassa. Tämä osatutkimus kuvaa, kuinka kokemusmaailma muovautuu ja määrittyy kehon kautta.

Tutkimus omaksuu fenomenologisen näkökulman, jonka kautta asiakaskokemusta voidaan tarkastella, ensiksi, kokijan subjektiivisesta näkökulmasta ja toiseksi, ymmärtää kokemus lähtökohtaisesti kehollisena ilmiönä. Tutkimuksen tarkoitus ohjaa artikkeleiden menetelmävalintoja. Menetelminä hyödynnetään fenomenologisia haastatteluja, fokusryhmähaastatteluita, autoetnografiaa sekä havainnointia. Tutkimus arvioi kriittisesti asiakaskokemus- ja palvelututkimuksen käsityksiä, joissa kehon aktiivista roolia ei vielä ole tarkasteltu. Tutkimus tuo kehollisuuden käsitteen keskusteluun ammentamalla tutkimusvirroista, joissa kehon

keskeinen rooli kokemuksessa on jo vahvasti tunnistettu. Sosiologian, organisaatio- ja johtamistutkimuksen sekä kulutustutkimuksen suuntautuksiin nojaava monitieteinen näkökulma rikastaa asiakaskokemusta koskevaa keskustelua.

Väitöskirja haastaa asiakaskokemusta käsittelevän tutkimuksen perinteisiä, mekaanisia käsityksiä, jotka eivät ole huomioineet kehon keskeistä roolia kokemuksen muodostumisessa. Tutkimus tuo esiin uuden, vaihtoehtoisen ajattelutavan käsittää, mistä asiakaskokemus muodostuu ja kuinka sitä tulisi johtaa. Tutkimuksen tulokset rakentavat yksityiskohtaista ymmärrystä siitä, kuinka kehollinen asiakaskokemus muodostuu monimutkaisten kehollisten sidosten ja luovan toiminnan kautta. Kehon keskeinen rooli asiakaskokemuksessa ihmisläheisissä palveluissa tunnistetaan aktiivisena ja kokonaisvaltaisena: keho on kokemuksen ulottuvuuksien keskus sekä yhdyspiste menneen ja tulevan, yksityisen ja sosiaalisen, tiedon ja intuition välillä, mikä mahdollistaa asiakaskokemuksen muodostumisen. Tutkimuksen keskeiset teoreettiset kontribuutiot kirkastetaan neljän avainlöydöksen kautta. Menetelmällisesti väitöskirjani nostaa esiin, minkälaiset metodit ja tutkimusasetelmat soveltuvat kehollisuuden tutkimukseen.

Tutkimuksessa luodaan palveluyrityksille malli, jonka avulla kehollinen lähestymistapa voidaan valjastaa liiketoiminnan ajuriksi. Malli koostuu neljästä osa-alueesta, jotka ohjaavat yritysjohtajia luomaan liiketoimintakäsityksensä uudelleen: kehollisen lähestymistavan haltuunotto, liiketoimintakäytäntöjen uudelleenluominen, asiakkaan uudelleenarviointi sekä palvelukohtaamisen uudelleenorientointi. Tutkimustulokset rohkaisevat yritysjohtajia ymmärtämään, kuinka aktiivinen ja tunteva keho on menestyksekkään palveluliiketoiminnan ytimessä.

AVAINSANAT: Asiakaskokemus, kehollisuus, keho, vuorovaikutus, palvelumarkkinointi, fenomenologia

CONTENTS

List of Figures

List of Tables

ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

Article I   Kuuru, T-K., Litovuo, L., Aarikka-Stenroos, L. & Helander, N. (2020). Emotions in customer experience. In: Lehtimäki, H. Uusikylä, P. & Smedlund, A. (Eds.). Society as an interaction place (pp. 247–274). Translational Systems Sciences, vol 22. Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-0069-5_12

Article II   Kuuru, T.-K. & Närvänen, E. (2019). Embodied interaction in customer experience: a phenomenological study of group fitness. Journal of Marketing Management, vol. 35(13-14), 1241-1266. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2019.1649295

Article III Kuuru, T.-K. & Närvänen, E. (2020). Talking bodies—embodied approach of service employees' work. Journal of Services Marketing, vol. 36(3), 313-325. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-02-2020-0060

Article IV   Kuuru, T-K. (2022). Embodied knowledge in customer experience: reflections in yoga. Consumption Markets and Culture. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10253866.2022.2025783

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

Article I   For Article I, I developed the idea of the study with L.L., L.A.-S., and N.H. The four authors jointly conducted the systematic literature review and wrote the first draft of the article. In the review process, based on feedback from the editors of the book, the article was revised jointly by the thesis author and L.L., with support from L.A.-S. and N.H. I acted as the corresponding author.

Article II   For Article II, the thesis author developed the idea and the research design for the publication. The thesis author carried out the literature review for the article and collected and analyzed the data with E.N. The thesis author wrote the first draft, including the findings, discussion, and conclusions. E.N. provided input and comments on the draft, and the draft was modified primarily by the thesis author. During the review process, the publication was revised with the lead of the thesis author, who developed and implemented the revisions with support from E.N. I acted as the corresponding author.

Article III   For Article III, the thesis author developed the idea and the research design for the study with E.N. The literature review for this article was primarily conducted by the thesis author. The thesis author collected and analyzed the data for the study, and then wrote the first draft with support from E.N. During the review process, the revisions were performed jointly with E.N. with the lead of the thesis author. I acted as the corresponding author.

Article IV   Article IV was written independently by the thesis author.

1   INTRODUCTION

I always found my own spot in the front row. I loved to position myself at "front stage" to have direct access and connection to the instructor, with enough space for the movement and the other participants behind and next to me. And maybe I somehow felt that from this spot, I could share my energy and support others with my doings.

I always felt the tickling in my body when I entered the room—no matter how tired or stressed I was, I knew all of that would be washed away soon as we started to move. I had been participating in this for a long time, so the movements and choreography were familiar to me, and I was able to concentrate on my individual feelings right from the start. I aimed to move big and bold: I stretched my arms up to the sky, jumped as high as I could, and aimed for a good technique.

The atmosphere in the room was magical. Even though I did not gaze at the others or the instructor, I felt it all. I felt myself as energetic and capable; I felt the other bodies pushing forward, enjoying themselves. It was a strange feeling—I was moving for myself, but I felt anything but alone. Even though I felt fatigue, I sensed a weird ease and lightness, a burst of joy. When we passed the most challenging part of the class, with shaking legs and heavy breaths, I felt how we shared the motivation and somehow pushed each other forward. We got this.

When we finished the class, our instructor, Liina, looked at us with sparkling eyes and said, "What just happened was magical! You all honored your own practice and did this for yourself, but at the same time fused together so beautifully. Amazing! What shared energy and ease at the same time. Did you feel it?"

When I walked home, I tried to find words for what had just happened. I have not found them yet, but I've decided that I will solve this mystery.

(Retrospective reflections of my experiences in group fitness in 2009, written on December 18, 2021)

1.1   Setting the human body in the heart of experiences

Customer experience (CX) has been one of my greatest interests over the past five years, perhaps even ten. This may sound like a lot, but I still clearly remember the moments when I realized I had tapped into something special and intriguing that I had to experience and understand better. As the opening vignette illustrates, I was a heavy consumer of group fitness classes, and sometimes when I was walking home from these classes, I started thinking about how something magical happened when I immersed myself in movement with the instructor and other participants. I started to wonder whether I was capable of doing the same: becoming a group fitness instructor and arousing similar feelings in other people. I remember thinking *it would be a dream come true.*

This particular dream did, in fact, come true, and turned into something even more. As I write these lines of my introduction, I have been a group fitness instructor for over ten years, and for nine of those, I have been running my own group fitness studio with my copartner. As time has passed, the passion ignited in me on that day has only become stronger. My curiosity about CXs and how they are formed in services reached such a level that I needed to gain another perspective on the phenomenon. This was the departure point for this particular dissertation.

At first, when I turned to the service marketing literature to see what knowledge existed about CX, I was thrilled. CX was clearly a hot topic among marketing and service scholars. It is considered a key research priority (Jaakkola, Helkkula, & Aarikka-Stenroos, 2015; Tynan, McKechnie, & Hartley, 2014), and growing attention has evoked calls for further research (e.g., Edvardsson, Gustafsson, & Roos, 2005). CX has been identified as key for retaining competitiveness for companies in a rapidly evolving service market (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015; Ostrom et al., 2010). It has been placed at the core of service businesses (Helkkula, 2011; Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010) and regarded as a powerful driver of customer satisfaction, engagement, and financial performance (Klaus & Maklan, 2012).

However, while I was enthusiastic about searching for articles tapping into CX formation, I was also surprised. Despite the enormous interest shown in the research, very little emphasis was given to exploring how CXs are formed in service marketing—the focus was elsewhere, and still is (e.g., Edvardsson et al., 2005; Klaus & Kuppelwieser, 2021; Larivière et al., 2017; Verhoef et al., 2009; Voorhees et al., 2017). Even less attention was given to our bodies in motion, through which we experience and connect to our senses. This element, for me, seemed central to understanding the phenomenon. I felt confused; I was living the phenomenon in

practice, and when I turned to research to find support, answers, and tools to tackle the challenges service providers face every day, I could not find them. Instead, I familiarized myself with models, frameworks, and concepts that researchers had developed (e.g., De Keyser, Schepers, & Konus, 2015). I discovered that CX researchers had focused, for instance, on CX management (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016), CX creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Verhoef et al., 2009), and CX outcomes (e.g., loyalty, and satisfaction; Pullman & Gross, 2004).

The literature also provided various insightful conceptualizations reflecting experiences as a multidimensional construct, containing cognitive, affective, emotional, social, and physical dimensions (Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007; Schmitt, 1999; Verhoef et al., 2009). The existing studies have provided invaluable understanding of this complex phenomenon; however, the dimensions were mostly explained as a result of processes of the mind and no attention was paid to bodies, which is undeniably important for understanding successful service businesses in practice. As the opening vignette from my research diary illustrates the active role of my body in CX: I position my body in relation to others in a certain way, aim to move my body in a specific way, and feel and sense myself and others through my body. Thus, my body becomes a meeting place of the physical and emotional, private, and social (Engelsrud, 2005; Turner, 1994). This active role of the body in experiences has gained little attention in marketing and service research. Most studies view CX as a customer's response to some company-related stimuli (e.g., Jain, Aagja, & Bagdare, 2017; Verhoef et al, 2009), which reflects a cognitive and rational way of thinking (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). The positioning of customers as information processors treats them as though they are machines. Such machines "act but do not emote; they make decisions but do not feel the consequences. When the machine metaphor is used to characterize human beings, we risk losing sight of the other significant aspects of being human" (Hirschman, 1993, p. 544).

In addition to the machine metaphor, the body is also described as a container for the mind, and the mind is regarded as the locus of experience (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989). Both metaphors highlight problematic distinctions between the mind and the body. This view, which considers CX to be formed between thinking minds rather than sensing and active bodies, restricts the understanding of CX as a holistic construct. We need to consider embodiment: how we engage with and perceive the world via our bodies. Hence, *more studies exploring the active role of the body in CX are required.*

Researchers widely agree that CX is formed in diverse modes of interaction (Gentile et al., 2007; Verhoef et al., 2009). As illustrated in the opening vignette, human interaction is especially relevant in human touch service contexts, where CX is formed in the complex interactive, reciprocal processes between all actors involved (Jaakkola et al., 2015; Helkkula, Kelleher, & Pihlström, 2012). The literature indicates that CXs are formed in direct and indirect interactions in and beyond the service consumption (Kranzbühler et al., 2018; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Hence, CX is a process of ongoing sets of interactions in individual and relational, internal and social levels (Helkkula, 2011). This complex nature of experiences combined with the embeddedness of emotions in these interactions (Klaus & Kuppelwieser, 2021; Mattila & Enz, 2002) constitutes a fascinating research topic. However, despite the evident connection between CX, interaction and emotions, we still know only a little about these relations.

The opening vignette only increases the interest towards the role and influence of emotions in and on experiences: the key ingredient of my CX is my interaction with the instructor and other participants. It illustrates how I continuously interpret my surroundings through my moving and sensing body, resulting in embodied feelings. The bodily sensations caused by the exercise are only one part of my bodily experience; other people also affect me, for instance, by helping me overcome my fatigue. Existing research considers embodied interaction mostly as nonverbal interaction, identifying these bodily actions as building elements of CX (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Mattila, Hanks, & Wang, 2014; Stein & Ramaseshan, 2016). What remains largely unexplored is the affective abilities of human actors in the experience, which are critical for the CX illustrated in the vignette.

These abilities have not been extensively researched, even though it is the body that facilitates connection between humans and creates the social reality of CX. Limited studies tapping into how individuals interact with the material environment exist, building important insight into the active interaction between the body and the space (e.g., Stevens, Maclaran, & Brown, 2019; Yakhlef, 2015), but do not touch on embodied human interaction. Thus, *a more in-depth understanding of the types of embodied interaction and how CX is formed in these interactions is needed.*

When I turn to my most memorable experiences in group fitness, they involve emotional bursts of happiness and joy, as well as disappointment and frustration. I can still easily recall numerous moments and relive the feelings in my body. When I think about my most memorable experiences as a group fitness instructor, I turn moments similar to the one described in the opening vignette—the dynamic flow of emotions between and within the bodies that forms the experience. Similar

descriptions arose in the in-depth interviews with service professionals and customers during the research process: emotions were described as real and powerful in a tacit, bodily domain. Even though emotions are regarded as important for CX (Jaakkola et al., 2015; Kranzbühler et al., 2018) and emotional relations are identified as key for competitive advantage (Klaus & Kuppelwieser, 2021; Solnet et al., 2019), current marketing and service research does not explore holistically how emotions influence CX. The study of emotions in CX is neglected in the dominant mechanical view, and emotions are regarded as a process of the human brain (Jain et al., 2017). The role of the body is acknowledged in terms of sensorial capabilities and physiological reactions, but the active, dynamic role of the body in relation to emotions in CX has not been explored. Hence, to understand how emotions influence CX, it is not sufficient for researchers and practitioners to simply accept that emotions play a role in CX as a cognitive process. *More studies tapping into how emotions build CX are needed.*

It is important to note that this is not a story of embodied experiences solely in a group fitness context. This is a story of the active involvement of the human body in CX in services, for which my background and close engagement in an active lifestyle have given a natural departure point. I was four years old when my parents first took me to an athletics field. Two years later, I became a member of a local swimming club. Since then, I have been snowboarding, playing basketball, riding, attending group fitness classes, and recently, undertaking yoga and running. In addition to being a consumer, I am now a producer of embodied experiences in a group fitness studio, so for me, group fitness and physical movement are important arenas of examination for understanding myself and others as embodied agents, constantly making sense of the world through embodied experiences, and examining a complex set of emotions.

Furthermore, I believe the personal reflections in this introduction provide access for the reader to immerse themselves in the fascinating world of embodied experiences, which remains abstract and difficult to articulate (e.g., Valtonen, Markuksela, & Moisander, 2010). I hope that this study serves as an awakening, since the embodied absence frames urban life in most Western countries (Leder, 1990; Scott, Kayla, & Cova, 2017): we easily forget that we are thinking, moving, and sensing agents. As this story develops, the dissertation guides the reader to understand how embodiment is both in and all around us. This was the revolutionary step in my personal research journey, when I realized how embodiment was a determining factor for CX in all experiences. In some service contexts, embodiment plays a more significant role than in others, but it is evident that we experience the

world through our bodies and thus, the body is an inseparable part of CX (Merleau-Ponty, 1964).

To explore the particularities of the human body in CX in detail, I used human touch services as a research context. In this dissertation, I understand human touch as the unique ability of humans to interact with each other in an embodied way that enhances emotional connection (Bolton et al., 2014; Larivière et al., 2017; Solnet et al., 2019). This definition goes beyond mere human-to-human interaction and physical touch, as it embraces the fundamental, basic needs of humans to be seen, heard, and touched, a need that is only fulfilled by authentic and genuine human interaction (Maslow, 1954; Schneider & Bowen, 1999). Although human touch is usually motivated by humanity and elicits positive feelings and sensations in individuals (Solnet et al., 2019), human bodies can also affect and be affected negatively. Moreover, human touch is not restricted to physical interactions between humans in the same space; rather, it is relevant in all forms of services.

Human touch is a determining factor for CX in all service contexts where human interaction is important, for instance, in banks, insurance companies, restaurants, wellness centers, consulting meetings, music festivals, and group fitness classes. I believe that human touch service contexts provide a theoretically interesting and empirically intriguing context for examining particularities that lie within the human body and are essential for creating CX. I aim to turn something we neglect and ignore into something we, as consumers, researchers, and managers, cherish, and respect—that is, our active and sensing body. In line with this, this dissertation focuses on embodied interactions as catalysts for CX.

The purpose of this study is to create an understanding of CX as embodied in human touch service contexts. This dissertation is positioned within the marketing discipline and, more specifically, within customer experience in service research. Thus far, the writings on embodiment in marketing and service research are scarce, so this study has been inspired by research fields that already acknowledge the fundamental role of the human body in experience (e.g., sociology, consumption studies, and management and organizational studies).
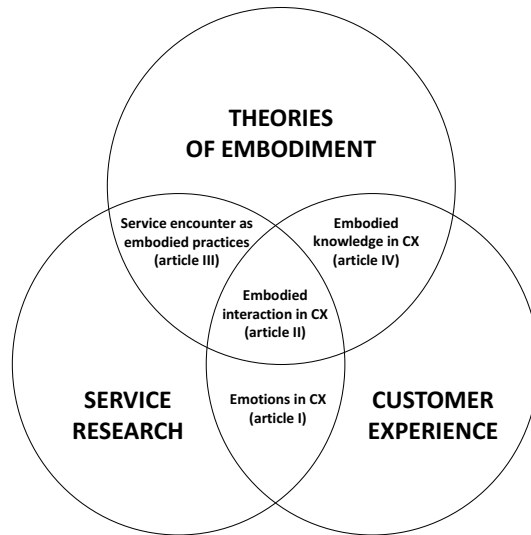
Figure 1. Embodied approach to CX

By drawing on the strengths of marketing and service thinking with the theories of embodiment, the needs of the service markets, and the needs of living and breathing consumers, I aim to provide an alternative approach to examining CX—that is, the embodied approach to CX (Figure 1).

1.2 Key concepts of the study

The key concepts of this study *are customer experience* and *embodiment.* In this study, CX is considered an embodied, interactive process between and within the different actors and environments: people affect and are affected by each other, not as thinking minds, but as living and sensing bodies (e.g., Helkkula, 2011; Valtonen & Närvänen, 2015; Yakhlef, 2015).[1] Thus, this study does not explore CX from a company's (Homburg, Jozić, & Kuehnl, 2017; Patrício et al., 2011; Verhoef et al., 2009) or customer's perspective (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Heinonen et al., 2010), or consider CX as static or dynamic (Kranzbühler et al., 2018); rather, it dedicates all its effort to unpacking CXs as embodied from first-person perspectives, considering all

---

[1] In this dissertation, I understand affect as embodied forces and flow of intensities between the people that shape the individual's experience (see Wetherall, 2012).

human beings involved in the CX process (Helkkula, 2011; Jaakkola et al., 2015). The concept of CX is discussed further in Chapter 2.

The concept of *embodiment* lies at the heart of this dissertation, and is defined as a way of engaging with and perceiving the world (Merleau-Ponty 1962; 1964). The body (including the mind) is a link between us, others, and the environment—the foundation of interaction that occurs via the body's capabilities to see, feel, hear, touch, and relate. As Gallagher states (2005, p. 247), "Nothing about human experience remains untouched by human embodiment." I do not strive for replace the mind for the body, but to emphasize how these two entities are intertwined as one unit, and aim to provide avenues to develop understanding of how CX is tied to the human body, which connects individual and social, human and material, body and world. In this way, the human body is not only a physical object, but also a locus of human experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1989). In other words, there is no such thing as a disembodied experience.

To clarify the distinction between the body as an object and as a subject, I turn to Parviainen (2014), who explained the distinction between the physical and lived body with the concept of *double bodies*. In this dissertation, I understand the body as active, conscious, and reflexive. In contrast, the physical body refers to the material and physiological part of a human being (e.g., bones, muscular fibers and muscles) that acts despite a person's willingness. This distinction is important for understanding CX as embodied. For instance, in human touch services, there are occasions in which the observations of the physical body (e.g., looks, eye contact, posture, and movement) of the service employee may not cohere with the lived body. A waitress in a restaurant might look calm and happy to the customer, but have internal feelings of insecurity and stress about her work. Similarly, just by looking at and interpreting the physical body of a customer, the waitress cannot understand all of their inner feelings. Other ways to create a holistic understanding of the customer are needed.

Embodiment captures the performative aspects of CX, referring to how CX formation is not a matter of thinking, but of active being and doing. It also enables us to understand how bodily movement is only one representation of the corporeal relation between humans. In practice, this kind of separation between the physical and lived body cannot be made, but the example clarifies how it is the lived body that enables us to view these two sides of the body, lived and physical, as intertwined in unity.

Epistemologically, the concept of embodiment enables us to create a perspective that emphasizes the experiential nature of human-world connectedness (Roald,

Levin, & Køppe, 2018). By understanding humans as lived bodies, we can understand how we are continually engaged with the world by simply being as well as physically acting. In other words, the lived body is always a sensing and active entity; it is not dependent on bodily movement (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). We are experiencing, lived bodies engaged with the world, whether we are lying still in our beds or dancing enthusiastically in a salsa class. The notion of being-in-the-world highlights how our way of being enables us to create understanding not only of others, but also of ourselves as subjects and objects; we are constantly affecting and affected by each other (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). Within the marketing literature, this kind of embodied, first-person perspective on CX has not been dominant in traditional service research. However, consumption studies have begun to explore how people's bodily being-in-the-world is fundamental to their experiences (e.g., Joy & Sherry, 2003; Stevens et al., 2019; Valtonen & Närvänen, 2015; vom Lehn, 2006). I believe that a holistic approach to embodiment is key to developing an understanding of this phenomenon.

In this dissertation, the body is viewed as a site of subjective and social, moving and being, physical and lived, emotional and rational; as a locus of human experience. Hence, throughout this study, I apply the word *body* to indicate understandings of the *lived body*. By building on the ideas of embodiment in this chapter, I focus on discovering how people's CX is formed through bodily *being* and *acting* in the world (Crossley, 2001).

1.3   Purpose of the research and research questions

The main purpose of this study is *to create an understanding of CX as embodied in human touch service contexts* and, by doing so, to extend the disembodied and cognitive perspectives prevailing in customer experience studies (Jain et al., 2017; Verhoef et al., 2009). This dissertation not only aims to fulfil a gap in CX literature but rather seeks to develop the understanding how the human body is inseparable in experiences in human touch services, thus providing scholars, practitioners, and consumers with possibilities to adapt an embodied approach in their thinking and actions (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). To tap into the bodily nature of CX in detail, this dissertation builds on a phenomenological understanding of CX (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 1964; Thompson et al., 1989). The phenomenological perspective enables us to take an embodied view of CX that creates a new understanding by making sense of its characteristics in bodily terms. To achieve the purpose of this

study, I have divided the main purpose of this study into two research questions (RQs).

First, even though CX has been a hot topic during the last decade among marketing and service researchers (Jain et al., 2017; Kranzbühler et al. 2018; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) and extensive number of articles have been published (see De Keyser et al., 2020), CX deserves further exploration (Edvardsson et al., 2005; Verhoef et al., 2009). In particular, we still have only a little understanding on how CX comes to be in practice, referring to the ways in which CX is formed through interaction between individual, others, and context. Some studies have addressed CX formation by exploring its interactive aspects (Jaakkola et al., 2015), components (Verhoef et al., 2009), and theoretical underpinnings (Lipkin, 2016). All these studies are conceptual by nature and thus, incorporate a relatively abstract viewpoint on the phenomenon. Hence, what is lacking is the empirical approach to CX formation that would provide a possibility, first, to tap into how CXs are constituted in diverse modes of interactions (Jaakkola et al., 2015), and second, to identify the embodied ways of being and doing through which CXs are realized. Previous research also points to the importance of understanding the interpersonal processes in which emotions influence CX (Klaus & Kuppelwieser, 2021; Mattila & Enz, 2012; Solnet et al., 2019), and thus, by examining how CX comes to be, new understanding on the role of emotions in CX could be gained. Hence, to move from current, relatively abstract understanding on CX formation to more nuanced and holistic view on the phenomenon, it is imperative to ask:

RQ1 How is embodied CX formed?

Second, as individuals form their unique experiences by interacting with each other and service consumption in human touch services usually involves at least some kind of bodily activity, it is clear that the human body is important for CX. By taking as a departure point the notion that what we do, feel and know is enabled by our bodies (Echeverri & Salomonson, 2017; Merleau-Ponty, 1964; Yakhlef, 2015), in-depth understanding on the body's holistic role becomes essential. Currently, however, the attention in the studies on CX in marketing and service research has mostly been centered on its management, which is why the body has been mostly treated as an object rather than as an active, sensing subject in CX. The examination of how the body shapes CX is largely focused a on nonverbal interaction visible for an eye (Echeverri & Salomonson, 2017; Sundaram & Webster, 2000), which provides only a limited understanding on the role of the body in CX as, from the phenomenological

perspective, the body is identified as a locus of the individual's life-world, in which CXs are created. Therefore, it is relevant to ask:

RQ2 What kind of a role the body plays in CX in human touch services?

Table 1 summarizes the RQs, and the purpose of the articles and their role to answering the RQs.

Table 1. The role of the articles answering the research questions

Article	Perspective	Purpose	Role of the articles to answering the research questions	Timeline
Introduction	Framing the research	To create understanding of the CX as embodied (in human touch services)	-	-
Article I: Emotions in customer experience	Emotions	To identify how emotions relate to customer experience	The article develops understanding on emotions' role in CX formation by clarifying the concepts (RQ1) The article identifies how emotions build CX in various forms if interaction (RQ1)	Writing process in 2017-2018 Published in 2020
Article II: Embodied interaction in customer experience: a phenomenological study in group fitness	Interaction	To analyze the layers of embodied interaction in customer experience	The article maps how CX is formed in embodied interaction (RQ1) The article develops an embodied conceptualization of the interaction in CX that focuses on the active role of the body in experiences (RQ1 & RQ 2) The article highlights how the body connects the private and social realms of life-world (RQ2)	Writing process in 2017-2019 Published in 2019
Article III: Talking bodies—an embodied approach to service employees' work	Service encounter	To explore and analyze the embodied dimension of service employees' work	The article highlights how embodied CX is formed through both conscious and creative, reciprocal bodily practices (RQ1)	Writing process 2018-2019

			The article improves understanding on how CX encompasses through time and space (RQ1 & RQ 2)	Published in 2020
Article IV: Embodied knowledge in customer experience: reflections in yoga	Customer's life-world	To examine embodied knowledge in customer experience	The article develops understanding on how embodied CX emerges in individual's subjective life-world (RQ1) The article highlights the body's central role as a locus for knowledge, emotions and previous and future experiences	Research process 2020-2021 Published in 2022

This dissertation responds to the need for more holistic and in-depth exploration of CX (e.g., Edvardsson et al., 2005; Verhoef et al., 2009) by proposing an embodied approach that turns attention to the lived human body as a locus of experiences. For practitioners, this study provides practical guidelines for embracing an embodied approach to CX and its management.

The lack of attention given to CX as embodied resonates with the difficulties of finding ways to examine human–world connectedness (Yakhlef, 2015) and articulate the affective aspects of experiences (e.g., Parviainen, 2014; Valtonen et al., 2010). Scott et al. (2017, p. 26) argued that the dualistic mindset was too overpowering in Western society, and thus, we remain without "the words, concepts, and theoretical frameworks to conform to Merleau-Ponty's (1962) phenomenological project." These challenges do not mean that bodily aspects of experience are not worth studying, but rather, the opposite—they clarify the need to distinguish appropriate ways to study these important aspects of CX.

1.4   Outline of the research

This introductory part is dedicated for providing an overview on the research phenomenon, theoretical underpinnings and methodological choices of this dissertation, as well as disclosing the broader relevance of this study. The outline of this dissertation is illustrated in Figure 2.

	CHAPTER 1: Introduction
	Introduces the research phenomenon and research setting.

	CHAPTER 2: Theoretical underpinnings
	Overview of the theoretical background of the study.

	CHAPTER 3: Phenomenological perspective
	Introduces the phenomenological perspective on CX.

	CHAPTER 4: Methodological moves
	Describes the research strategy, design and methods used.

	CHAPTER 5: Summary of the original articles
	Represents summaries of the four articles of this dissertation.

	CHAPTER 6: Discussions and conclusions
	Discusses the contributions of the research.

Figure 2. Outline of the dissertation

The dissertation consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 describes the research phenomenon and positioning, defines the key concepts, identifies the purpose of the research, and provides the outline of the thesis. Chapter 2 grounds the research in customer experience and service research by providing an overview of the concept of CX and integrating and critically reviewing prior literature on similar phenomena. At the end of this chapter, the theoretical underpinnings of the research are summarized. Chapter 3 introduces the phenomenological perspective, which provides an interpretive lens for the whole study. In Chapter 4, I discuss the methodological choices and methods utilized in the articles. Chapter 5 summarizes the four substudies that, together with this compilation, contribute to the holistic description of CX as embodied in human touch services. Finally, in Chapter 6, I conclude my dissertation with a holistic and detailed analysis of the theoretical and practical contributions of the study to the understanding of bodily aspects of CX within services. The last chapter summarizes the key points and contributions, enabling reflection on the wider potential and impact of the study.

2 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

This chapter introduces the theoretical underpinnings of this dissertation. Section 2.1 provides an overview of prevailing definitions of CX, illustrates the development of the concept, and sets the departure point for further development of CX as an embodied phenomenon. Section 2.2 discusses CX formation at the individual level and focuses on the interactive aspects of the phenomenon. Section 2.3 combines insights from diverse research disciplines and streams that already understand the relevant role of the human body in experiences and thus provides support and guidance for this dissertation in building an understanding of CX in bodily terms. Section 2.4 provides a summary of extant understandings on CX formation.

2.1 Overview of prevailing literature on CX

The seminal work of Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), which identifies experiential dimensions as a fundamental part of CX, is often credited as the origin of the term *customer experience*. The authors expanded upon the prevailing perspective of human behavior by describing the hedonic aspects of experiences and, more importantly, the central role of the body. This view was novel in consumer research, which tended to focus only on the customer as a rational decision maker (Alderson & Cox, 1958). Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) opened the way for a number of publications exploring experiential aspects of CX, focusing first on hedonic and extraordinary experiences (e.g., Arnould & Price, 1993), followed by exploration of emotional and affective aspects of experiences (e.g., Addis & Holbrook, 2001; Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

Later, this view of experiential aspects began to gain attention, and researchers agreed that all experiences, from extraordinary to ordinary, involved an experiential domain (e.g., Carú & Cova, 2003; Schmitt, 1999). It is somewhat surprising that since the experiential domain of experience emerged (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982), embodiment has gained little further attention in marketing research. In the wake of this work, the body remained in the shadows of marketing research discourse, and

the prevailing assumptions of CX as a cognitive construct continued to hold their position (e.g., Stevens et al., 2019; Yakhlef, 2015).

After the establishment of the experiential aspects of consumption, the service research brought out the concept of service experience. At first, the concept was related to explaining service delivery and was used as a synonym for service quality (e.g., Grove & Fisk, 1997). The studies did not focus on the definition of experience, but rather, used the concept to illustrate the perception of the service encounter and its outcomes (e.g., Grove & Fisk, 1997).

In the past 10 years, researchers have begun to treat the concept of service experience as distinct from service quality. Helkkula (2011) identified three typical approaches to service experience that are regarded as complementary to each other: as the phenomena experienced uniquely by customers, as operational processes, and as the outcomes and effects of service. This categorization illustrates the prevailing assumptions in service research; studies often focus on managing service elements (Grönroos, 1994) and treat CX as a dyadic process controlled by the company (Meyer & Schwager, 2006; Verhoef et al., 2009). The phenomenological stance has not become a dominant research approach, despite its ability to study an individual's experience and capture how human interaction forms CX in services (Helkkula, 2011), which could facilitate the development of CX as embodied. In summary, the development of the concept has led to a situation in which customer experience and service experience are often used as synonyms in discussions in diverse disciplines (Klaus & Maklan, 2012; Jaakkola et al., 2015). In this dissertation, I apply the term "customer experience", as it facilitates a holistic examination of experience.

In the late 1990s, marketing researchers incorporated a managerial perspective on CX. Within this view, CX was conceived as a distinctive offer to customers, separate from products and services (Pine & Gilmore, 1998), and was identified as key for any company's financial performance and competitive advantage (Schmitt, 1999; Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010). Originally, the managerial perspective on CX suggested that companies could design and determine customers' experiences (Verhoef et al., 2009). More recently, researchers have adopted a more dynamic approach to CX and highlighted how CX goes far beyond the company's control; thus, customers are considered active creators of experiences (Kranzbühler et al., 2018). In recent years, a research stream adapting a customer-oriented view to study CX has started to establish itself and centered its focus on uncovering how CX emerges in the customer's life-world, instead of regarding it as formed in interaction with a single company.

Table 2. Characterizations of customer experience in the existing CX literature

The study	Characterization of customer experience	What kind of elements in the characterizations underline the cognitive focus?
Schmitt (1999)	Customer experience includes five dimensions: sense, feel, think, act and relate.	Embodiment is integrated within the dimensions but not explicitly articulated. The dimensions of CX are regarded as distinct and separately manageable.
Meyer & Schwager (2006)	Customer experience encompasses "every aspect of a company's offering — the quality of customer care, of course, but also advertising, packaging, product and service features, ease of use, and reliability. It is the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company" (p. 2).	The subjective and internal nature of CX is emphasized; however, CX is understood as a result of the customer's reaction to company-related stimuli. The view does not recognize cues outside the company's control as determining factors of CX.
Verhoef et al. (2009)	"Customer experience is a multidimensional construct that is holistic in nature and involves the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses to the retailer" (p. 32).	CX is conceptualized as a customer's responses to the company – no other cues outside the company's control are identified to shape CX. Dimensions are considered separate individual responses.
Lemon & Verhoef (2016)	"Customer experience is a multidimensional construct focusing on a customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial, and social responses to a firm's offerings during the customer's entire purchase journey" (p. 71).	It is assumed that customers simply respond to company-related stimuli. Customer experience is divided into diverse dimensions that are considered separate entities. Diverse customer experience touchpoints are regarded as interactive processes determined by specific actors, not identified as dynamic, joint action.

To summarize, it can be concluded that the major part of the current CX literature adapts a managerial approach, which views CX as an interactive stimuli-response process between the customer and the company. This dominance can, at least partly, explain why no special attention has been paid to the bodily aspects of CX. The next section discusses the prevailing definitions of CX in more detail.

2.1.1 Defining the multidimensional customer experience

Today, marketing and service research includes many definitions and characterizations of customer experience (Table 2; Helkkula, 2011; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Kranzbühler et al., 2018).[2] Studies often agree that CX is multidimensional in nature, consisting of cognitive, affective, sensorial, physical, and social responses and reactions (Gentile et al., 2007; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Schmitt, 1999; Verhoef et al., 2009). These dimensions represent a wide range of subjective reactions that occur in CX formation. Typically, researchers, as well as managers, tend to focus on the individual dimensions instead of considering them, or their relations, together (Bolton et al., 2016; Schmitt, 1999).

Cognitive dimension relates CX as thinking and mental processes (Jain et al., 2017; Schmitt, 1999). In human touch services, cognitive dimension appeals to problem solving, decision making and making sense of the complex sets of interactions in which CXs are formed (Kranzbühler et al., 2018). Even though the cognitive dimension itself has received only limited attention in the current marketing and service literature, it can be argued that the general discussions and definitions are strongly influenced by the traditional stimuli-response model popular in the field, which guides us to consider CX and its' dimensions fundamentally as a cognitive process between minds (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Verhoef et al., 2009; Yakhlef, 2015). The use of cognitive terms colors the CX literature: CX is defined as rational and functional (Berry et al., 2002), the process of stimuli and response (Verhoef et al., 2009), and cognitive and emotional processing inside within brain (Jain et al., 2017).

Sensorial dimension relates to how customers interact with the five senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch) to form CXs (Jain et al., 2017; Schmitt, 1999). Turkington (1996) explained how it is the brain that reflects sensory stimuli received from the physical body (e.g., eyes, nose, skin) that lead to sensations (sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch), followed by feelings and thoughts that guide the behavior. Even though sensorial experience builds connections between the dimensions, the customer's role is described as a passive receiver rather than active, embodied agent. Furthermore, the studies on sensorial dimension often concern the stimuli in customer's interactions with physical service environment, hence, we yet know only

---

[2] Experience is a multidisciplinary discourse and I acknowledge the diverse traditions related to the concept (e.g., consumer experience, tourism experience, user experience, and brand experience). However, due the positioning of this dissertation, with a focus on CX studies in service research and on experience as a holistic and human construct, I have excluded these concepts from this dissertation.

a little how human interaction, that is in the heart of CX in human touch services, influences and is influenced by sensorial experience.

Affective dimension connects to emotions, moods and feelings that arise in response to some stimuli in service (Schmitt, 1999). Emotions are not solely conceptualized as cognitive nor embodied, but rather taken as they are; it is widely acknowledged that individuals experience emotional experiences (Jain et al., 2017; Klaus & Maklan, 2011; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015 Verhoef et al., 2009) but researchers have not yet delved deeper into how and through what kind of interactive mechanisms emotions build CX. Researchers have not yet incorporated embodied perspective to explore emotional experiences, which could enhance our understanding of this important topic. In human touch services affective dimension becomes especially central, as emotional connections between the individuals are identified as a key for successful and memorable CX (Echeverri & Salomonson, 2017; Jaakkola et al., 2015).

Social dimension connects the experience to subjective, internal responses to, and interactions with, the others (Jaakkola et al., 2015; Schmitt, 1999; Verhoef et al., 2009). In human touch services, social experience is a key determining factor as CX is always formed with other people, and therefore, it is important to holistically understand the interactive aspects of CX. Typically, in the marketing and service literature, the interactive activities are regarded as cognitive processes in which all individuals are identified as active contributors of each other's' experience (Helkkula, 2011; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Lipkin, 2016). Even though these studies provide invaluable understandings on the topic, the embodied aspects of interaction deserve further investigation. In the current literature, embodiment is mostly conceptualized as nonverbal communication (e.g., Echeverri 1999; Palmer & Simmons, 1995; Sundaram & Webster, 2000); e.g., gestures, position, bodily movement) and the tacit modes of bodily interaction have not yet been explored. From embodied perspective, the body is a connection point between humans and the world, which is why I argue embodiment is important in understanding interactive aspects of CX in more detail (Stevens et al., 2019; Yakhlef, 2015). By bringing the living and sensing bodies to the center, it is possible to create new, different perspective to look at the social dimension of CX.

Physical dimension (or behavioral) involves all physical actions and behaviors an individual adapts based on the stimuli related to a service (Verhoef et al., 2009). Physical experience relates both to physical actions during the service consumption as well as to broader transformations that extend into everyday life (e.g., adopting a new habit or a lifestyle) (Becker & Jaakkola 2020; Gentile et al., 2007). These

prevailing understandings on physical experience largely lean on the assumption that we have a body (the machine metaphor), and thus it can be argued, that current notions might not solely be appropriate explore all the relevant aspects of physical dimension of CX in human touch services. If individuals are characterized only as passive bodies moving and acting under control of others during service consumption, something essential remains untouched. By taking an embodied perspective, we can turn our interest to consider that we are our bodies, referring to our physical body as an active agent of being and doing. As a result, we can expand our understanding of physical experience.

To summarize, this short review underlines the tendency of marketing discipline to define CX as a cognitive process. Furthermore, the interest is in cognitive, sensorial, affective, social and physical dimensions of experience, hence, the emphasis is on the multi-dimensionality rather than on the holistic nature of experiences. It can be argued that the mental framing and overfocus on the individual dimensions can hinder our understanding on CX as a holistic construct. At the moment, the current definitions do not provide tools to discover the embodied, immediate, and sensuous aspects of our engagement with the world and hence, explore the connections between the dimensions in an adequate way. Therefore, by setting the body in the heart of experiences, this dissertation extends the current understanding of CX by articulating and highlighting CX as an embodied phenomenon.

2.2   CX formation at the individual level

To examine how CX is initiated, this dissertation uses the term *formation*. To date, researchers have employed terms like *creation* (Meyer & Schwager, 2007) and *co-creation* (Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2009; Vargo & Lusch, 2008) to describe the phenomenon. I decided to retain formation because of its neutral tone in comparison to other terms that represent specific research streams, such as service-dominant logic (SDL; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). In this dissertation, the term formation does not refer to any specific theoretical perspective or research stream, but is regarded as an overarching term.

Researchers generally define CX formation as a complex phenomenon (Jain et al., 2017; Lipkin, 2016; Sandström et al., 2008; Schmitt, 1999; Verhoef et al., 2009) that is subjective, socially constructed, and context-specific (Helkkula, 2011; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Verhoef et al., 2009). CX formation is characterized as taking place

through intermediating mechanisms that build connections between the individual and context (Lipkin, 2016). These mechanisms include an individual's perceptions, interpretations, and reflections resulting from the interaction with the external context, defined in mental terms (Jain et al., 2017; Pareigis et al., 2012). In other words, CX formation is understood as being the result of active processes of the human mind, and the body is merely considered a physical boundary between the inner and outer.

The present dissertation aims to examine CX formation at the individual level. Existing research has focused mostly on exploring the phenomenon either from a customer perspective (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Heinonen et al., 2010) or a company's perspective (Homburg et al., 2017; Patrício et al., 2011; Verhoef et al., 2009). These studies often view CX as a process in which the customer interacts with company-controlled service elements to form their individual CX (Kranzbühler et al., 2018). In contrast, customer-oriented research defines CX formation as a customer's subjective practices and activities in which a company's service becomes embedded (Helkkula et al., 2010). Both perspectives emphasize one actor (the company or the customer) as active and having control over the other. In human touch service contexts, the situation often includes two or more people consuming the service at the same time with the same service provider, for instance, diverse groups of people dining in a restaurant, a group of people practicing white water rafting in nature, or a number of individuals learning painting skills in a studio, all sharing the same time and place for CX formation. Hence, addressing CX formation solely as a customer service provider dyad is inadequate, and a more holistic perspective is required (Helkkula, 2011; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Lipkin, 2016).

People do not exist in isolation, and thus, experiences are not created in static, dyadic relationships, but in dynamic networks of actors, with every human actor considered an active, sensing agent, in control of their own CX (Jaakkola et al., 2015). This view emphasizes how CXs are created in diverse modes of interaction (Jaakkola et al., 2015). Recently, researchers have begun to apply the sense-making-based perspective in service studies to capture the holistic nature of the phenomenon (Helkkula, 2011; Lipkin, 2016). Within this view, CX formation is considered both subjective and active, as well as collective and dynamic (Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen, Strandvik, & Voima, 2013). Like this dissertation, these studies are mostly based on theories of phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 1964), which guide the focus on exploring how individuals' subjective experiences are formed in the life-world that involves both private and social realities (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015). CX is defined as a circular interpretation of individuals' visible and invisible

interactions (Lipkin, 2016; Yakhlef, 2015). The next section discusses the boundaries of CX from a life-world perspective.

2.2.1   Life-world as a locus of CX

Context of service is a key element of service research (Akaka & Vargo, 2015) as it sets the boundaries that frame individual's CX formation (Lipkin, 2016). For researchers, different kind of contextual lenses provide diverse ways to explore CX formation from the first-person perspective.

In her review of research on CX formation, Lipkin (2016) identified three contextual lenses to frame CX formation at the individual level: dyadic, service ecosystem, and customer ecosystem. The dyadic lens represents the most used and well-known contextual frame in studies on CX formation; the focus is on the company-customer interaction and CX viewed as determined by the company. Dyadic lens is traditionally used in studies of service encounters (Bitner, 1990; Voorhees et al., 2017), as well as in service marketing and management research (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015). After the introduction of SDL (Vargo & Lusch 2004, 2008) to service research, researchers moved from the dyadic lens to a more broad, systemic level of framing, that is, the service ecosystem lens. Within this view the focus is on systemic, collaborative resource integration as a determining force of CX formation (Tax, McCutcheon, & Wilkinson, 2013). The ecosystem can be viewed whether from the perspective of the customer, the company or neither of them, when all actors are viewed as equal contributors of CX (Akaka & Vargo, 2015). The customer-ecosystem lens originates from the rise of the customer-dominant logic (CDL) research stream and its' strong argument for customer-centric approach to CX (Heinonen et al., 2010). The view extends the contextual and temporal boundaries of CX outside the service context by focusing on how customers experience service in their everyday activities and practices, to which the company becomes embedded (Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015).

Rather than directly applying any specific view, this dissertation builds on understandings on individual's life-world as a locus of experience – CX is understood to be formed in reciprocal and circular interactions between and within individual actors' life-worlds, in and beyond service settings (Helkkula, 2011; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Lipkin, 2016). Within this view, the context of CX is constructed in two dimensions; firstly, CX is formed as a result of interactions and reflections between the inner and outer realities of actors (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015) and secondly,

the temporal context contains individual's all previous and future imaginary experiences (Dube & Helkkula, 2015; Jaakkola et al., 2015). Therefore, exploration of CX formation from the individual's life-world perspective is highly dynamic.

According to CDL stream, customer's life-world is a primary locus of experience (Heinonen et al. 2010; Tynan et al., 2014; Heinonen & Strandvik 2015). Given that the focal point of experience in CDL studies is on the customer and value in experience, Heinonen et al. (2010, p. 537) provide a clarifying explanation of the life-world concept: "…within this experience, the customer uses all input, current and remembered, to form an impression of value influenced by both cognitive and emotional perceptions." Taken to the context of this dissertation, it can be argued that CX formation is always based on individual's capabilities, assumptions, skills, and previous as well as imaginary experiences (Heinonen et al., 2010; Helkkula, 2011; Jaakkola et al., 2015). In other words, CX is formed by movement through space and across time. In practice, elements like health, energy level and mood, just to name a few, are always influencing CX. Together, the elements form the private, inner reality of the life-world.

Researchers note that life-world includes also the social reality (e.g., Helkkula, 2011; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015). Individual's social world is not given but rather it is built on interactions that are embedded in a social context. Today, researchers widely agree that social reality involves the interactions among human actors (e.g., customers, employees, friends, family) in different spaces (physical or virtual) (Jaakkola et al., 2015; Bolton et al., 2018). Hence, the traditional managerial view on service encounter is extended (Voorhees et al., 2017); rather than considering the phenomenon solely as a result of company-customer interaction, it becomes important to understand that we do not live in a social vacuum separated from of our everyday life. The everydayness of the individual's reality is emphasized; the social interactions before, during and after the moments of service consumption are continuously shaping the life-world (Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen et al., 2013). Altogether, discussions on the social reality of the life-world shift the focus from the subjectivity to the network of different actors. CX formation takes place in interconnected realities of individuals. Thus, what we need is not only an individual actor's view but a relational view that emphasizes how CXs are formed in dynamic and joint realities.

Researchers addressing the life-world perspective on CX formation consider that individual's physical body works as a separating boundary between the private and social worlds and locate the individual's internal world within the human mind (Helkkula et al., 2012; Lipkin, 2016). To move forward from the prevailing

disembodied approach on CX formation, the role of the human body needs to be re-considered but the development cannot proceed without alternative approach. That is, the embodied approach that enables to theorize life-world in bodily terms; it can be realized that the body is not a passive separator but rather an active connection point between the inner and outer, private and social. The next section moves forward to discuss the interactive aspects of CX formation in more detail.

2.2.2   Interaction as a premise for CX formation

Given that CXs are formed in diverse modes of interactions (Echeverri & Salomonson, 2017; Echeverri & Skålen, 2011; Jaakkola et al., 2015), an individual's life-world can be defined as an interactive space involving and connecting private and social realities. The interactive approach to CX formation identifies the phenomenon as subjective and internal interpretations of and interactions with diverse actors involved in or beyond the service setting (Jaakkola et al., 2015). Interaction is considered to include cognitive (thinking) and emotional (feeling) processes through which individuals make sense of private and social realities (Heinonen et al., 2010; Jain et al., 2017; Lipkin, 2016). In this dissertation, CX formation is approached as a dynamic and embodied process; thus, rather than focusing on cognitive and emotional processes as distinct, they are understood as coming together in the body. This dissertation extends the view of interaction by exploring how interaction in human touch services takes an embodied form.

When focusing on interaction as an important trigger for CX formation, the human senses become central. In the marketing literature, studies on sensory experience seek to understand how individuals form CX in complex sets of interactions by using their five senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch (Jain et al., 2017; Kranzbühler, 2018; Krishna, 2012; Schmitt, 1999). In other words, sensory experiences relate to how individuals perceive, interpret, and affect to and are affected through the senses to connect with the environment. Existing studies in mainstream marketing and service research consider the human brain to be a primary locus of sensory processes (Jain et al., 2017). This presumes a disembodied sender–receiver relationship between two minds, with the body treated as a transmission device (Fuchs & De Jaegher, 2009), ignoring its central role as a locus of tacit, creative interactive processes between the individual and their environment. The literature has mostly focused on studying sensory experiences with the physical environment or products (Krishna, 2012), so we have a limited understanding of the

role senses play in human touch services, which are based on human-to-human interactions. The focus in the existing literature can also explain why the potential of the body has not yet been within the scope of these studies. The scarce literature addressing the moving body as a connection point to the life-world has identified how it is the body through which we sense the environment and, equally, it is the environment that enables us to experience our body (Yakhlef, 2015). However, these studies mostly focus on the customer's embodied relationship with the physical environment, not on human-to-human relations.

When relating through senses, individuals also shape each other's emotions in interactions (Klaus & Kuppelwieser, 2021). Understanding this is especially important in human touch services, in which the emotional connection between the company and the customer is at the heart of CX (Bolton et al., 2014; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Larivière et al., 2017; Solnet et al., 2019). The literature has recognized how authentic service, empathy toward customers, and feelings of trust elicit customers' emotional experiences (Bolton et al., 2014; Wieseke, Geigenmüller, & Kraus, 2012). Studies emphasize the creativity of service employees (Bowen, 2016) over company-controlled cues (Jain et al., 2017) to achieve heartfelt CX. Furthermore, emotional affect is not limited to company–customer relations, as studies show how customers also shape fellow customers' emotions, even when there is no direct, visible contact (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2010). Given that emotions are socially created and interpreted uniquely by the customer (Heinonen et al., 2010; Schmitt, 1999), it is suggested that seeking ways to understand customers' needs, wants, and feelings is central for building emotional connections (Bolton et al., 2014).

To summarize, existing studies on interactions in CX formation identify both private and social elements as fundamental to the phenomenon, providing an important understanding of how CX is formed in reciprocal interactions between individuals. However, how CX is formed within various modes of interaction remains unexplored. The next section introduces the theories that already distinguish the fundamental role of the human body in CX formation and provide support for understanding CX as embodied.

2.3   Embodied theories of experience

As the embodied approach on CX has not been discussed extensively in CX literature, I draw inspiration from the research fields that already incorporate and identify the human body as fundamental in experiences (Table 3). These fields

include sociology, consumption studies, and organization and management studies.[3] Together, these research fields provide important understanding and terminology for addressing embodiment in CX.

Table 3. Terms advancing the conceptualization of CX as embodied

Discipline	Characterization of embodiment	Example studies	Takes on this study?
Sociology	Individuals are agents knowing-in-action and experience the world through their lived bodies.	Mauss (1979); Bourdieu (1987); Leder (1990); Crossley (1995, 2001, 2005, 2007); Shilling (2001); Hockey & Allen-Collison (2009)	Enable focus on performative aspects of experience (Article II) Highlight the moving body as a locus for experiences (Articles II & IV) Provide insight into the private realm of an individual's life-world—all our experiences, values, emotions, and capabilities are physically embodied (Article IV)
Organization and management studies	The human body is characterized as a source of knowledge and experiences.	Strati (2007); Yakhlef (2010); Gärtner (2013); Gherardi et al. (2013); Valtonen et al. (2017)	Enable recognition of how the body experiences through senses (Article IV) Provide understanding of how individuals become skillful and capable first and foremost through their bodies (Article III) Help examine embodied interaction (Article II)
Consumption studies	The lived body, considered both a subject and an object, as well as a means of emotional expression, is a locus of experiences.	Joy & Sherry (2003); vom Lehn (2006); Valtonen et al. (2010); Hewer & Hamilton (2010); Canniford & Shankar (2013); Valtonen & Närvänen (2015); Scott et al. (2017); Stevens et al. (2019); Murphy et al. (2019); Viotto et al. (2020)	Provide support for exploring embodied aspects of CX (Articles II, III, & IV) Help identify the dual role of individuals in CX (Articles I, II, III, & IV) Help identify individuals in CX as moving, affective agents in time and space (Articles III & IV)

In sociology, human embodiment has been explored by various scholars. Sociologists have taken a great interest in sensory capacities and how people become

---

[3] I acknowledge that there are also several other research streams outside service and marketing research that could provide insights for developing understanding of embodiment in CX (e.g., ethnomethodology, conversation analysis and multimodal studies). Due the position and scope of this study, these research streams are not included.

skillful and capable of active and behaving due to embodied capacities (e.g., Crossley, 1995, 2001, 2007; Polanyi, 1966; Shilling, 2012; Strati, 2007). I find the concept of sensible knowledge introduced by Strati (2007) useful for exploring the relationship between the senses and the body. Strati (2007, p. 62) defined sensible knowledge as "what is perceived through the senses, judged through the senses, and produced through the senses". In other words, he situated all senses in the body and noted how visual, auditory, gustatory, olfactory, touchable, and sensitive-aesthetic judgment became real through the human body in continual interaction with others and the environment. For instance, in the context of services, a waiter in a restaurant knows whether to go and talk to a dining couple or keep their distance due to their ability to know through the senses. Waiters evaluate and interpret the positions, gestures, and bodily signals of customers, and modify their actions and behavior accordingly.

As noted in the previous section, in CX studies, sensory experience is often discussed in terms of how companies can create certain kinds of sensory stimuli to gain a specific cognitive reaction from customers (Verhoef et al., 2009). Sensible knowing goes beyond this rather static conceptualization of manageable dimensions and grounds senses in the human body. Senses are not distinct, but are intertwined and working tightly together, enabling the body-subject to first become skillful, and second, create experiences. The concepts of sociology help theorize senses as an integral part of the human experience.

The essence of the human body in experiences has also been noted in organizational and management studies. There are a variety of studies analyzing how people make sense, behave, know, understand, and interact with each other through their bodies at work (Gärtner 2013; Küpers, 2010; Parviainen, 2001; Parviainen, 2014; Ropo, Sandberg & Dall'Alba, 2009). Gärtner (2013) categorized these bodily attributes and capabilities that orchestrate an agent's capability to do their work under the concept of embodied knowing. Embodied knowing enables us to locate the individual agent's capabilities in the body and to identify how the knowledge accumulates through the agent's embodied engagement in the world. Further, Gärtner (2013) elaborated by identifying six views of embodied knowing, from which the view on enactive lived embodiment holds particularly useful implications for this dissertation. Enactive lived embodiment clarifies how tacit pre-knowledge makes individuals skillful here-and-now. Gärtner (2013) underlined how bodies are sensing and moving agents that constantly gather, interpret, and store information that makes them skillful in their work. This view highlights how all individuals are their unique bodies, with unique sets of knowledge.

A similar idea can be applied to other contexts: it is our body that makes us capable and skillful enough to consume services. Sometimes, a lack of embodied knowledge may also have a negative effect on CX. A newcomer's first attempts at stand-up paddleboarding may feel like quite a struggle, as they need to use all their effort to improve their cognitive and technical understanding, find balance, and make the paddleboard move. At first, these experiences may feel negative, as embodied knowledge develops only through practice and repetition (Mauss, 1973; Murphy, Patterson, & O'Malley, 2019). Accumulation of experiences enables other forms of embodied knowledge to occur, and in this case, paddleboarding become enjoyable and fun. The affective aspects of CX can only become drivers of experience when an individual holds a certain amount of knowledge (Mauss, 1973).

The crucial role of embodied knowledge in CX is not restricted to physically demanding experience services. Similar rules apply, for instance, in the previously discussed restaurant context. If the individual visits a new restaurant that differs significantly from the type of restaurant they usually visit, the experience may turn negative if the individual does not yet have adequate knowledge in their bodies of how to act and behave in this specific context. For instance, if a customer orders a risotto with seafood and the waiter brings the crab scissors without further explanation, the customer may feel uncertain about how the dish should be eaten and the scissors used. Here, feelings of uncertainty and unfamiliarity may shape CX negatively, highlighting how embodied knowledge is always context-specific (Crossley, 2005).

Within consumption studies, a remarkable turn has occurred in which the embodied aspects of consumption experiences and behavior are examined (e.g., Hewer & Hamilton, 2010; Murphy et al., 2019; Scott et al., 2017; Stevens et al., 2019; Valtonen & Närvänen, 2015). Consumer researchers have conducted valuable work regarding embodiment as part of consumption experiences and consumers' interactions with the material (Canniford & Shankar, 2013; Murphy et al., 2019; Stevens et al., 2019; Valtonen & Närvänen, 2015) and social world (Hewer & Hamilton, 2010; vom Lehn, 2006). Instead of considering the body's interaction with material objects and social agents in rational and cognitive terms, studies highlight how experiences are always formed in corporeal, affective relations in which all parties are considered both subjects and objects (Valtonen & Närvänen, 2015). These studies contribute understanding of how the body becomes central in CX formation in various ways, including performative, emotional, and sensing aspects of embodiment (Canniford & Shankar, 2013; Hewer & Hamilton, 2010; Scott et al., 2017). Much existing consumption research is focused primarily on investigating

how individuals use their active and sensing bodies to learn how to be in the world; how to carry out specific functions, skills, practices, and movements in a certain context, with little attention on the affective and tacit aspects of experiences; and the embodied experience itself. For instance, studies show how the body is the departure point from which they attend to the world of art (Joy & Sherry, 2003) or retail brandscapes (Stevens et al., 2019). This dissertation is concerned with elucidating how CX is formed through the body.

2.4   Summary of the theoretical understandings of CX formation

The summary of extant understandings of CX formation that this dissertation builds on is illustrated in Figure 3.
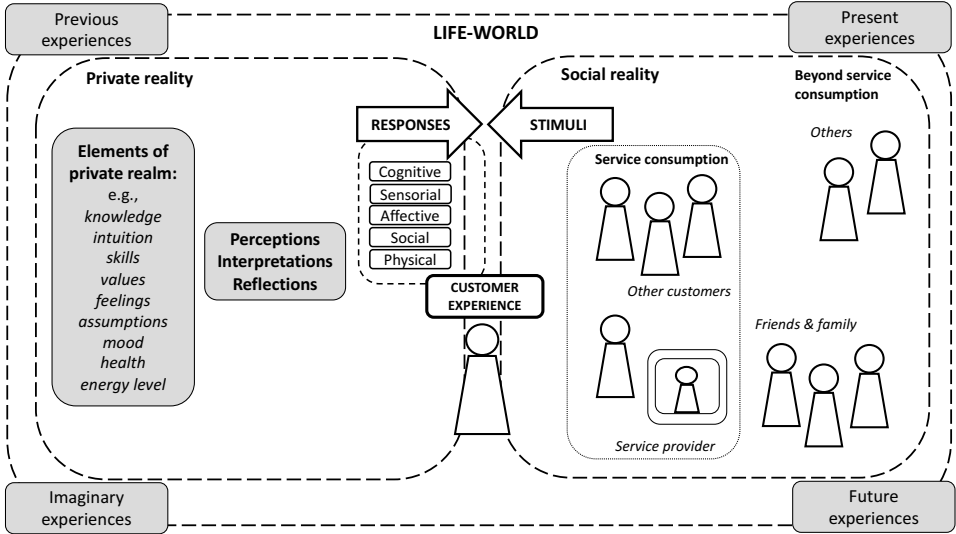
Figure 3.   Summary of the theoretical understandings of CX formation

Figure 3 presents current understandings of CX formation in marketing and service literature. First, two arrows pointing towards into each other illustrate the prevailing understanding of CX as customer's cognitive, sensorial, affective, social, and physical responses to company- or actor-related stimuli. Second, CX is understood as formed in interactions within the customer's life-world, including private and social realities. Private reality consists of elements unique to each individual, as well as subjective perceptions, interpretations, and reflections resulting in interaction between the

private and social reality. Social reality relates to customers' social connections in and beyond service consumption. The experiences embedded in diverse temporalities illustrated in the four corners of the figure present how the boundaries of the lifeworld extend over time and space.

3 PHENOMENOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Often, discussions on the paradigms and other choices guiding the research forward are located in the methodology section; however, as this dissertation follows a phenomenological orientation that provides impactful guidance for exploring CX formation in bodily terms, I have dedicated this section to explaining the perspective. The phenomenological perspective works as an interpretive lens for considering research phenomena and focuses on exploring CX at the individual level in bodily terms. This section clarifies this further.

3.1 Phenomenology as an interpretive perspective

All scientific research is based on a specific worldview that forms the perspective through which research interprets and acts in the world. This scientific worldview, guiding all research-related choices from the purpose and theoretical underpinnings to design, data gathering, and analyzing the findings, is called a paradigm (Kuhn, 1962).

This dissertation adopts interpretivism as its paradigm (see Arndt, 1985; Carson et al., 2001), and more specifically, the phenomenological perspective within this paradigm (Husserl, 1960). Interpretivism views reality as socially constructed, constantly changing, and always subjectively interpreted. Phenomenology adds to this view by focusing on the individual's lived experiences. Embodiment is regarded as a fundamental premise of all experiences. Ontologically, in phenomenology, social reality is understood as grounded in people's lived experiences, which are socially constructed within a specific context (Sokolowski, 2000). Epistemologically, knowledge is subjective, formed by interpretations of social reality, as a result of moving through space and across time (Sokolowski, 2000; Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Thus, I consider the researcher and the research phenomenon to be reciprocally linked, and meanings are created interactively.

In the present dissertation, the philosophical assumptions of phenomenology provide a perspective through which to explore CX formation in human touch services as embodied, subjective, relational, and specific to a situation (Helkkula,

2011). The customer is intersubjective, meaning that one's own body and other bodies constitute a basic reciprocity—the base for all experiences. To explain this standpoint in more detail, it is important to provide a short overview of the phenomenological foundations framing this dissertation.

3.2 Phenomenological foundations

"Regardless of whether it is a question of the body of another or my own body, I can only get to know the human body by living it, in other words, by undertaking the drama that permeates it, and by merging with this." Merleau-Ponty (1994, p. 169)

The origins of phenomenology can be traced back to Kant and Hegel, but German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) is regarded as the grandfather of phenomenology in the 20th century (Groenewald, 2004). Husserl's investigations and arguments built the foundations of phenomenology, and his work has been elaborated further by his followers.[4] One of these famous followers was French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961), who was particularly interested in rearticulating the relationship between subject and object, self and the world (1962, 1964). As illustrated in the quote above, for Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1964), *the body* was the center of experiences. This orientation is also the primary focus of this dissertation.

Experiences are based on *intersubjectivity*, which refers to how one's own body and the bodies of others create reciprocity (Yakhlef, 2015); bodies are continually affecting and affected by each other's experiences.[5] In other words, the body is both sentient and sensible (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). We are both objects and subjects; we see and are seen, hear and are heard, touch and are touched. For instance, participating in a dance class is not merely a subjective matter established only on personal premises. Rather, the dance class is a shared experience, consisting of moving and sensing bodies that simultaneously shape their own as well as others' experiences. Dancers may support each other's experience by spreading positive emotions, providing examples, or boosting each other's performance through body movement (Hewer & Hamilton, 2010). Bodies may also disturb each other's

---

[4] In phenomenology, diverse orientations developed by great minds, such as Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, exist (e.g., transcendental phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology, and existential phenomenology).

[5] In phenomenology, emotions and affect are considered basic features of the lived body and a fundamental constituent of social formation (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 1964).

experiences, for example, if somebody does not follow the given choreography or there is not enough space to dance. Thus, intersubjectivity is always a determining factor for CX in service encounters that include multiple customers at the same time.

Merleau-Ponty argued for understanding the body as a sensing, active agent as a very basis of human subjectivity. He introduced the term *body-subject* to underline the embodied subjectivity of experiences. The body-subject refers to a human body as a lived, experiential unity open to the world in an affective relationship ((Roald, Levin, & Køppe, 2018). For instance, in a museum, we do not just passively look at pieces of art. More likely, we actively react to them, as well as to the other visitors with our body movements, and the sensations and emotions aroused in our bodies, reflecting the subjectivity of the experience. Thus, we perceive ourselves, others, and the environment through our bodies (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Merleau-Ponty (1962) famously argued that human beings not only *have* bodies, but also *are* their lived bodies. We are bodily engaged with the world, and experiencing subjects should not simply be considered passive actors awaiting some stimuli, but active, affective, and sensing agents who are continually reflecting, interpreting, and interacting with the world.

For Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1964, 1968, 1971), the human body was not only the site of all experiences, but also a locus of all knowledge. He argued (1962, p. 44) that the "other is knowable through a person's gaze, gestures, and looking, that is through their body." We see, smell, taste, hear, and touch through our bodies. Sensations can be defined as the capacity to understand others by experiencing them within ourselves. For example, a physiotherapist not only uses their hands to feel, know, and act in their work, they also continuously perceive the customer through their senses, resulting in new knowledge that guides their behavior and actions. Hence, phenomenological understandings of the senses allow us to go beyond the traditional understanding of senses as separate, cognitive processes, to consider them fundamental characteristics of the human body.

3.3   Phenomenology in marketing research

Thompson et al. (1989) introduced the phenomenological perspective to marketing research. The existential-phenomenological view challenged the well-known tenets of positivism (Arndt, 1985; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982), which posited a separation of mind and body and the assumption that reality was objectively observed and mathematically measurable. Rather than seeking to explain human

experiences by focusing on regularities and causalities in an objective way (Burrell & Morgan, 1979), existential phenomenology "seeks to describe experience as it emerges in some context(s), or, to use phenomenological terms, as it is lived" (Thompson et al., 1989, p. 135). Thompson et al.'s (1989) alternative approach allowed scholars to apply a phenomenological perspective to experience, enabling them to capture phenomena from an insider's perspective. Today, the phenomenological perspective is advocated by marketing scholars in different fields (Table 4).

Table 4. Selected studies in marketing research applying a phenomenological perspective to study experience

The study	Position / context	Purpose	Main contributions	Differences from this dissertation
Venkatesh et al. (1994)	Consumer culture theory	To study the subcultures of consumption within the context of American consumer culture	The study developed a framework that introduces how subcultures are created within social and private spheres of consumption.	Focus on consumption experiences in CX formation
Schrembi (2006)	Service-dominant logic	To elaborate SDL toward a more holistic service orientation	The study defines customer experience as subjective and context-specific, taking place in complex interactions between all embodied individuals.	Focus on SDL rather than embodied aspects of CX Conceptual paper
Vargo & Lusch (2008)	Service-dominant logic	To elaborate and develop service-dominant logic	The study integrates a phenomenological approach to value co-creation of customer experiences.	Consideration of value co-creation as a linear, dyadic process
Heinonen et al. (2010)	Customer-dominant logic	To introduce a customer-oriented approach to service	The study introduces the concept of CDL and emphasizes a customer's subjective worldview as a locus of experience.	Consideration of the customer as a determinant of experience No consideration of embodiment
Helkkula & Kelleher (2010)	Service research	To examine customer service experience and customer perceived value	This study notes that a customer's perceived value process is a complex phenomenon emerging through their lived experiences.	Focus on value, not on CX formation Recognition that the value process is not only a cognitive process, but no conceptualization of lived experiences as embodied

Helkkula (2011)	Service research	To examine the characterization of the concept of service experience in service marketing research	This study presents three characterizations of service experience: phenomenological, process-based, and outcome-based. The phenomenological approach is suggested as most suitable for analyzing the experience from the first-person perspective.	No incorporation of the concept of embodiment Literature review
Helkkula, Kelleher & Pihström (2012)	Customer-dominant logic	To characterize value as an experience	The study characterizes value in experience as a dynamic, circular process within the customer's individual life-world.	Focus on value in experience Conceptual paper
Tynan et al. (2014)	Customer-dominant logic	To generate understandings of phenomenological value in service from the customer's perspective	By utilizing the phenomenological approach to understand the lived experience, this study presents the complex nature of value in experience.	Focus only on customer's perspective No incorporation of the concept of embodiment
Yakhlef (2015)	Customer experience	To propose an embodied, spatial approach to customer experience	The study suggests that customer experience in the retail context is a result of the interplay between the customer's moving body and space.	Focus on the customer's embodiment in relation to material and spatial elements rather than other humans Focus on the retail context
Akaka, Vargo & Schau (2015)	Service-dominant logic	To combine consumer culture theory and SDL to advance understanding of the context of experience	The study broadens the context of experience to include: sign systems and service ecosystems, multiplicity of structure and institutions, value-in-cultural-context, and coconstruction of context.	Focus on value co-creation rather than the CX formation process No incorporation of the concept of embodiment Conceptual paper

Despite the phenomenological approach being regarded as the most suitable for studying CX from a life-world perspective (Helkkula, 2011), it is not yet a dominant approach in service research. Within SDL studies, the phenomenological perspective is used to embrace the experiential nature of value, always determined by the beneficiary (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Although the view of experience is essentially individual, studies on SDL emphasize value co-creation as a result of the interactive process of resource integration and exchange between all social actors (Akaka & Chandler, 2011; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Hence, the phenomenological perspective in SDL focuses on the interactive process in which value is realized (Jaakkola et al.,

2015; Schrembi, 2006). This view of value co-creation helps explain the social complexities of markets and understand the dynamic contexts in which experiences are formed.

The CDL stream has applied a phenomenological perspective to examine how experiences and value are created within the customer's life-world (Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015; Tynan et al., 2014). The phenomenological perspective enables the identification of how a customer's life-world encompasses all previous, current, and imaginary experiences, and thus leads to an understanding of how experiences are created in a holistic context of time and space (Heinonen et al. 2010; Helkkula & Kelleher, 2010). The experience is understood first and foremost as lived, as in this dissertation. However, the focus of the phenomenological stance applied in CDL is on customer value rather than on theorizing the experience itself.

Phenomenology has been a driving force in consumer culture theory (CCT) and its focus on the examination of human consumption in its natural setting (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Askegaard & Linnet, 2011). CCT research focuses on cultural meanings, sociohistorical influences, and social dynamics that affect consumer experiences in the messy, complex contexts of everyday life (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). The phenomenological approach has been utilized in CCT research to expand understanding of how symbolic (e.g., signs, brand symbols, values, and mythologies; Holt, 2004; Venkatesh, Penaloza, & Firat, 2006) and relational (e.g., social connections, roles, and norms; Holbrook, 1999; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995) resources influence consumption experiences. Similar to SDL research, CCT studies have also focused on the socialized nature of consumption (e.g., Canniford & Shankar, 2007; Schau, Muniz, & Arnould, 2009) and explored how practices shape lived consumer experiences (e.g., Warde, 2005). Overall, the phenomenological perspective applied in CCT research goes beyond company–customer encounters and provides an in-depth understanding of subjective CXs.

In conclusion, the phenomenological perspective in marketing takes a detailed, close look at experiences as lived, but does not yet provide an in-depth understanding of how experiences are formed through the body. To advance existing understanding, this dissertation takes a slightly different approach to the ways in which phenomenology has traditionally been incorporated in marketing studies. Ontologically, this view is in line with existential phenomenology, and reality is understood as subjective, constructed in a dynamic interaction between the lived subject and the world (Thompson et al., 1989). Epistemologically, the embodied approach directs attention to the socially and contextually embedded individual. An

individual's experience is understood as a social act and specific to a context, moving the focus closer to real-life experiences.

Whereas existential phenomenology seeks to describe human experience from the first-person perspective (Thompson et al., 1989), the embodied approach complements this view by grounding the lived experience in the human body. By framing my perspective based on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body (1962, 1964), I create an opportunity to expand current understanding in marketing by focusing on the exploration of lived experience as an embodied experience. The aim of this research is to relate and expand, not distinct and reduce, and by doing so, to create a rich and holistic outlook of the research phenomenon. Finally, the embodied approach is not restricted to making sense of an individual's subjective experience, but rather, encompasses how the world becomes real for individuals, containing subjective, social, and cultural realms. This means that experience is always the sum of an individual's perceptions and interpretations of their subjective life-world, social relations, and culture.

4   METHODOLOGICAL MOVES

The research purpose should be the foundation of all choices made during the research process, including how to frame the research questions, how the researcher seeks to answer these questions, how to find the relevant theoretical stance, and what research methods and approaches are used. As the phenomenological perspective as a philosophical frame was introduced in the previous section, this section focuses on explaining the research process and justifying the motivations behind the article-specific methodological choices.

4.1   The qualitative research strategy

This dissertation adopts a qualitative research strategy, which is acknowledged as a suitable fit for studies aiming to generate a holistic and structured understanding of complex and elusive phenomena (Gummesson, 2005). The study utilizes the existing embodied theories and phenomenological perspective as a roadmap, which helps shed light on performative and bodily aspects of CX and generate new theories on CX as embodied (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Yadav, 2010). As the study introduces a novel perspective on CX, discovery is emphasized rather than justification (Yadav, 2010). Discovery makes space for exploring the world as it unfolds, allowing reality "to tell it story on its own terms and not on the terms of extant theory" (Gummesson, 2005, p. 322).

The research process of this dissertation can be described by reflecting on Gummesson's (2005) hermeneutic helix (Figure 4). The hermeneutic helix introduces the research process as a continuous interaction, as an asymmetric, dynamic process of improvement, movement, and reflection. My research journey can be described as a movement back and forth between the theory and empirical data, specific and general, pre-understandings and new information, substantive and abstract. I put the research phenomenon into context by moving from parts to whole and back to parts, resulting in a new, novel theory on CX as an embodied construct. This kind of interactive method (Gummesson, 2005) enabled me to use all my senses and rooted me in the theoretical commitments of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006),

but at the same time, allowed my inductive interpretations and practical background to shape the study. Interactive research embraces research as a holistic, embodied process; interactions take place between myself and others, inner and outer, previous and becoming, tacit and language, visible and invisible; all elements striving to build a "helix of continued development of knowledge" (Gummesson, 2001, p. 40).
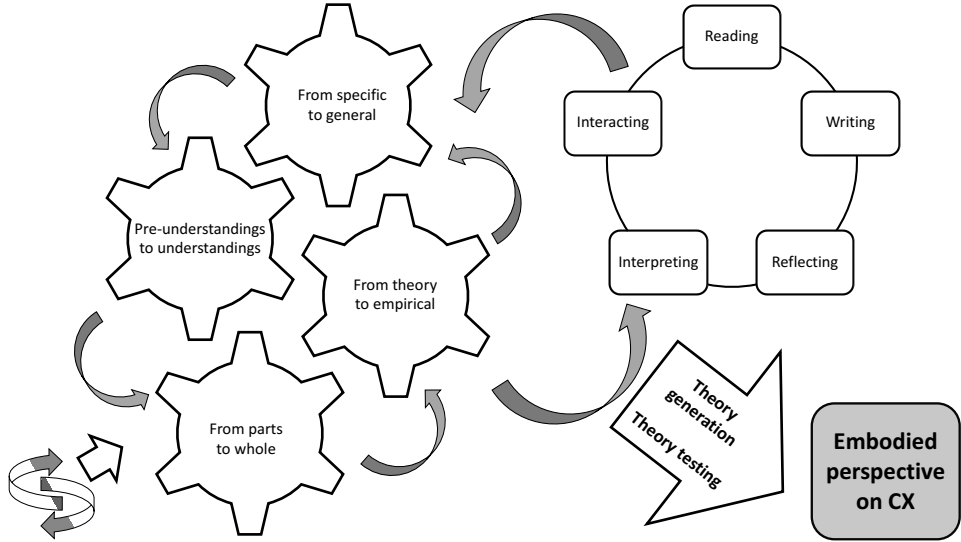
Figure 4. Research process as a hermeneutic helix

Gummesson's (2005) metaphor of research edifice provides a clarifying tool to visualize and unite the choices that guide the empirical research process. Figure 5 illustrates the research edifice of this dissertation.

In the research edifice of the present dissertation, the phenomenological perspective within interpretivism, as a paradigm, constructs the foundation of the whole research. Simply put, phenomenology looks at the world as lived, emphasizing how something is experienced (Thanem & Knights, 2019). Next, the interpretive research strategy captures the diverse methodological choices adapted to the study and constitutes the middle floors of the research edifice. Finally, on the top floor, the penthouse represents the outcomes of the study: the four key propositions of the embodied approach to CX for researchers and guidelines to adapt the embodied approach to service businesses and practitioners.
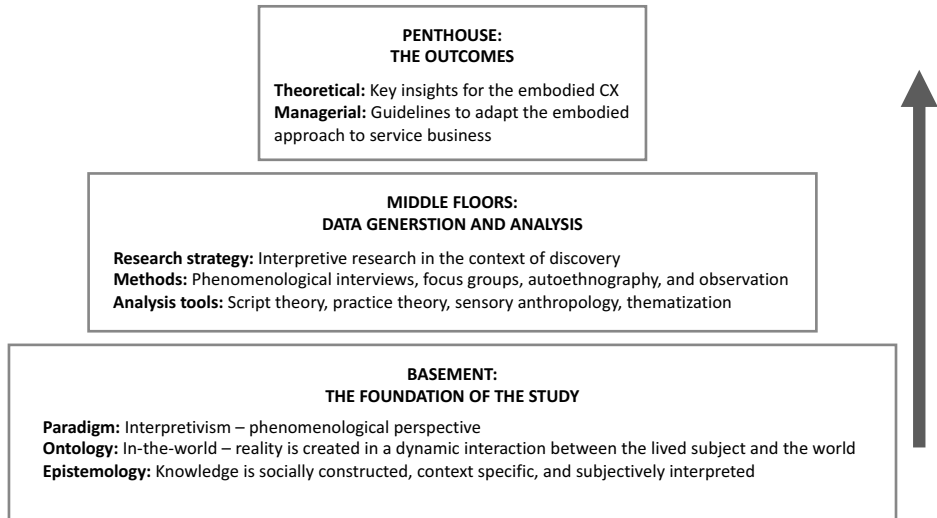
Figure 5. Research edifice of the dissertation (Modified from Gummesson, 2005)

To summarize, the research process of this dissertation can be portrayed as a continuous, interactive, and embodied reflection between practice and theory, myself and others, highlighting reciprocal interaction as a driving force to move the process forward and improve understanding. Next, I discuss the methods used in studying individual CX and reflect on their application to examining CX as embodied.

4.2   Methods currently used in studies on individual CX

Overall, quantitative methods remain the most commonly applied method for studying CX in the marketing literature (Becker, 2018). This reflects the general, predominant view that characterizes CX in terms of a response to the company and company-related elements. However, as previously seen, this perspective favoring cognitive characterizations of CX does not provide an up-to-date view of CX in today's service market, as CX is understood and formed as an internal, subjective, socially constructed, and context-specific phenomenon (Helkkula, 2011). Within service research on CX, diverse streams (SDL and CDL) have begun to adopt qualitative and interpretive methods (e.g., phenomenological interviews and diaries) to study CX as it unfolds for an individual customer (e.g., Heinonen et al., 2010; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). The quantitative approach still remains dominant in the service management literature (e.g., Voorhees et al., 2017).

Inductive and interpretive methods are often proposed for studying the subjective life-world (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). Interpretive methods consider CX to be embedded in the individual's life-world (Thompson et al., 1989) and are, therefore, more powerful for revealing the elements and actions that form individual CX. Tynan et al.'s (2014) study on value in service experience provides a delightful exception while taking a phenomenological perspective to exploring the lived experience of test drivers of luxury cars. In their study, the researchers used in-depth interviews due to their potential to capture the subjective opinions, emotions, and sense-making processes of individuals. Despite the focus of the study not being on the bodily aspects of experience, the research identifies how individuals' value-creating actions go beyond mere sensory stimulation, involving their entire body in the experience. The study illustrates the suitable nature of interpretive studies for exploring CX in bodily terms.

Within marketing literature, a phenomenological stance has guided researchers to apply ethnography as a suitable method for exploring the role the body plays in experiences (Becker, 2018; Yakhlef, 2015), especially within consumption studies (e.g., Scott et al., 2017; Stevens et al., 2019; Valtonen & Närvänen, 2015; vom Lehn, 2006). Studies have incorporated ethnography to study embodied practices of sleep (Valtonen & Närvänen, 2015), how pain shapes experiences (Scott et al., 2017), and the relationship between the body and space (Stevens et al., 2019). These studies often use a wide range of ethnographic methods (e.g., participant observation, in-depth interviews, and visual materials) to capture the internal, social, and context-specific realms of embodied experiences. Researchers agree that ethnographic methods provide a holistic approach to problematize the body beyond the dualistic dichotomy (Scott et al., 2017); however, they often provide a retrospective account of CX and thus may not be "adept at capturing the tacit (Polanyi, 1966), unreflective dimension of customer experience" (Yakhlef, 2015, p. 560). Methods that provide more real-time data are also needed (Becker, 2018). Ideally, the combination of these two data collection methods could offer the possibility of a fuller understanding of the phenomenon (Given, 2008).

Despite the great interest in understanding how CXs are formed in an individual's life-world, most studies remain largely conceptual (Becker, 2018; Heinonen et al., 2010; Helkkula, 2011). Given that CX takes place in individual's activities and practices in their everyday life, this is surprising. The conceptual studies provide invaluable understanding for theorizing the phenomenon, but fall short in providing guidance on data collection and choices of methods for researchers. It can be argued that empirical studies are needed for at least two reasons. First, as embodied

experience is formed first and foremost through the body, it is impossible for conceptual papers to generate a comprehensive theoretical understanding of how individuals' experiences are created in the connection between humans and the world. Second, as the phenomenological perspective focuses on creating insight into lived experience from the first-person perspective, this is possible only through empirical studies in which living and sensing human bodies are in the spotlight.

Researchers could utilize the so-called embodied perspective (in this study, the phenomenological perspective; Seaman, 2000; Yakhlef, 2015) as a guide for all methodological choices to fully investigate and understand lived experiences. This requires careful consideration of the appropriate set of methods to capture lived experiences, as well as acknowledgment of the researcher's central role in the study. As this dissertation is based on the assumption of embodiment denoting the sensorial, perceptual, emotional, experiential, and active nature of the body, which is embedded and incorporated in the world, it can be argued that to allow the phenomenon to expose itself in its fullness, my body becomes the medium of understanding other bodies (Engelsrud, 2005; Thanem & Knights, 2019). My embedded role as researcher is considered an important ingredient in analytical reflections during the research. I discuss my reflexive role as a researcher further in Section 4.4. To explain how the phenomenological perspective guided the methodological choices of this dissertation, I next introduce the methods used in the individual articles in more detail.

4.3 Article-specific methodological choices

Article-based dissertations provide the researcher with a unique opportunity to (re)consider their methodological choices for each individual article, and build the most suitable combination that serves the ultimate research purpose. Triangulation—the use of complementary methods, theory, and data—is employed to achieve thicker and richer data and gain a broader and deeper understanding of the research phenomenon (Denzin, 1978; Given, 2008; Thompson et al., 1989). In this dissertation, theory triangulation was employed because diverse theories were used to analyze the same phenomenon. The theoretical approaches to CX formation (e.g., Jaakkola et al., 2015; Jain et al., 2017; Lipkin 2016; Verhoef et al., 2009) and embodiment (e.g., Sandberg & Dall'Alba, 2010; Stevens et al., 2019; Strati, 2007) were combined. Data triangulation was utilized, as the study used multiple types of data. Within-methods triangulation was employed, as multiple qualitative approaches

were used to study CX as embodied (Denzin, 1978). Triangulation helps researchers keep a distance between their and others' worldviews, ensures alternative insights into the phenomenon, and pursues creative ways of working with the data (Crick, 2021; Denzin, 1978). Enhancing the quality and transferability of the research through triangulation ensures that one's research makes relevant and impactful contributions to the existing body of knowledge (Denzin, 1978).

The chosen methods support each other by enabling the exploration of CX formation as an embodied construct from diverse perspectives. The methods were not set strictly beforehand; rather, my decision-making process can be described as a series of consecutive insights gained while writing the individual articles. Table 5 provides a summary of the methodological choices applied in the individual articles.

Table 5. Methodological approaches of the articles

Article	Methodological underpinnings	Justification for the choice
Article I: Emotions in customer experience	**Method** Systematic literature review **Empirical material** None **Analysis tool** Content analysis	Provides a general outlook of how emotions relate to CX Reveals the inconsistent and confusing use of emotion-related terms in various disciplines and fields
Article II: Embodied interaction in customer experience	**Method** Phenomenological interviews **Empirical material** 20 phenomenological interviews with group fitness instructors **Analysis tool** Script theory	Enables rich descriptions of experiences and how they are formed from the first-person perspective Opens up the customer's subjective life-world for in-depth exploration Distinguishes key themes illustrating embodied interaction
Article III: Talking bodies— an embodied approach to service employees' work	**Method** Focus groups **Empirical material** Four focus groups with service professionals (8, 5, 4, 4) **Analysis tool** Practice theory	Provides important insight into employees' essential, embodied roles in CX processes Enables analysis of whether synergy and similarities exist in employees' embodied practices across diverse service contexts Enables theorizing of service employees' work as embodied with the identification of four practice bundles

Article IV: Embodied knowledge in customer experience: reflections on yoga	**Method** Autoethnography **Empirical material** Research diary and personal, lived memories **Analysis tool** Sensory anthropology	Captures customer's life-world purely from the first-person perspective

In this dissertation, my approach was primarily inductively oriented, guided by the phenomenological approach applied, which "seeks to describe experience as it emerges in some context(s) or… as it is lived" (Thompson et al., 1989, p. 135). Here, inductive logic means that the development of theory is strongly linked to data; the focus is on discovering something new rather than testing old theories (MacInnis, 2011). The researcher's subjective interpretation is considered an important part of the research process; however, this does not mean that the researcher can free themselves of their theoretical commitments, referring to the use of deductive reasoning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As research, like this dissertation, is often conducted over a long period of time under circumstances that are less than stable and static, pure inductive or deductive logic seldom exists. Rather, justification often takes a third form of reasoning called abduction (Reichertz, 2014). Abduction neither examines how the data fit into existing theory nor tries to create new theory solely by looking at what emerges from the data. Instead, it represents an iterative process of moving back and forth between the material and theory, and emic and etic perspectives (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Reichertz, 2014; Thanem & Knights, 2019). Thanem and Knight (2019, p. 114) argued that only this kind of reasoning enables us to embody the research work "to express the vibrant, untidy, and fleshed relations through which we live in the social world while searching for the prevailing patterns and aberrant practices which shape our lives."

4.3.1 Systematic literature review

In Article I, a systematic literature review was employed to map out how emotions relate to CX (see Booth et al., 2012). A systematic literature review uses explicit criteria and processes for selecting articles, meaning there is less possibility of bias compared to traditional reviews (Barczak, 2017). The systematic review provides a conceptual outlook on how emotions relate to CX and enables us to recognize how

the human body works as locus, medium, intermediate, and target of emotions in CX.

The systematic review consisted of different phases. The first phase was a literature search of two databases that covered a wide range of good-quality journals (Web of Science [WoS] and EBSCO). We used a two-phase search. First, we identified and collected all relevant articles published prior to 2018 on CX in which the title, keywords, or abstract mentioned the words "customer experience". Second, we focused on articles examining emotions by selecting those that included at least one of the following terms or a variation in their titles, keywords, or abstracts: emotion, feeling, affection, or sentiment. After removing duplicates, 129 articles were selected for the final content analysis.

In the analysis phase, we focused on qualitative content and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis method allowed us to map out how emotions in CX are widely discussed across disciplines and contexts, and distinguish the major theoretical models and approaches. Content analysis enabled us to identify key conceptualizations of "emotion" in CX. Researcher triangulation facilitated the analysis process: all four researchers represented different disciplines and thus incorporated individual knowledge into the research. We ensured consistency of categorization by utilizing Excel and Word tables and discussing the findings together, which strengthened the quality of the findings. The analysis process is described in more detail in the original article.

The systematic review advanced the research process in at least two ways. First, the systematic review increased our understanding of the important role of emotions in CX. Second, it provided guidance and clarification for future research on the phenomenon. As I realized how critical the role of human interaction in CX is, I decided to focus on how embodied interaction shapes CX.

4.3.2   Empirical data and data collection methods

This dissertation applied a multimethod qualitative approach (Helkkula et al., 2012) to address the research purpose. The chosen qualitative data collection methods opened a window to the lives and worlds of the participants by revealing sensitive details about their experiences. More importantly, the methods enabled me to build an understanding of how CX formation occurs in the private (e.g., autoethnography) and social realms (phenomenological and focus group interviews) of the individual's life-world.

Table 6 provides a closer look at the empirical materials and contexts of the individual articles. Even though the group fitness context was a natural departure point for exploring CX as embodied (Article II), it soon became clear that it would be important to extend the scope and clarify how embodiment builds CX in other kinds of service contexts. Therefore, for Article III, I sought service professionals from various fields of business for focus group interviews. Article III plays a significant role in this dissertation by extending the relevance of CX as embodied in overall human touch service contexts. When studying a complex phenomenon from a novel perspective, a context must be chosen that fits the study's purpose. The group fitness and yoga contexts (Articles II & IV, partly III), representing services in which experience is first and foremost formed by bodily movement, provided an appropriate platform for the theorization of CX in bodily terms.

Table 6.   Qualitative research methods used in Articles II, III, & IV

Article	Method	Empirical material	Context
II	Phenomenological interviews and autoethnographic observations (Interviews were conducted between May and August 2017)	20 group fitness instructors	Group fitness
III	Focus groups (Interviews were conducted between December 2018 and February 2019)	21 service professionals	Group fitness, photography, physiotherapy, restaurants, fashion, beauty, health care, and banking and insurance
IV	Autoethnography (Research diary was kept from January 1 to July 31, 2020)	Research diary and personal, lived memories	Yoga

Article II adopted phenomenological interviews and autoethnographic observations as a research method (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011; Thompson et al., 1989) to investigate the role of the embodied interaction in CX from the perspective of group fitness customers. Phenomenological interviews were chosen as the primary method of data collection because the focus was on each individual's lived experiences and how they were formed in a specific context (Helkkula, 2011; Thompson et al., 1989). Interviews allowed participants to describe their experiences as they naturally unfolded, and the researcher became immersed in their world (Conroy, 2003). The use of my autoethnographic observations, based on my background and experiences in group fitness, as part of generating the research data (Ellis et al., 2011), is in line with the dissertation's paradigm of interpretivism, in which the researcher's pre-

understandings and lived experiences are considered a strength rather than a weakness (Carson et al., 2001; Gummesson, 2005).

Bevan's (2014) method for phenomenological interviews was applied, which divides the interview into three phases: contextualization, apprehending the phenomenon, and clarifying the phenomenon. Contextualization involves the identification of the context in which the experience gains meaning (Bevan, 2014); that is, the group fitness customers' lived experiences. Apprehending the phenomenon pays special attention to the experience of interest (Bevan, 2014). At this stage, the focus was on attaining holistic and detailed descriptions of the participants' lived experiences. Emphasis was given to participants' "own voice," leaving me with the role of listener (Thompson et al., 1989). Only a few open, descriptive questions were asked if needed (e.g., Do you remember your first time in a group fitness class? What is your most memorable experience in a group fitness class?).

Clarifying the phenomenon (Bevan, 2014) uses follow-up questions to deepen the understanding of something specific or to guide the narrative in a purposeful direction. As the participants immersed themselves in their stories and described their experiences in a lively and colorful matter, including their past, current, and imaginary future experiences, there was not much need for more detailed questions. This allowed descriptions of lived experiences to emerge as naturally as possible.

As CX formation is a strongly reciprocal, interactive process, so looking at the phenomenon from only the customer's perspective limits the full understanding of how embodiment shapes CX; the service employee's side remains completely missing. Hence, Article III applied focus group interviews as a data collection method to capture the employee-oriented view of CX formation. Focus groups were chosen because they allow for an examination of the research topic as a collective, shared phenomenon (Tadajewski, 2016). Four focus group interviews in groups of 8, 4, 4, and 5 professionals were held. The participants came from diverse service fields, including fitness, photography, physiotherapy, restaurants, fashion, beauty care, health care, and banking and insurance. Multiple realities emerged in the focus groups as participants represented different fields of business (Threlfall, 1999). However, during the discussions, similarities were evident in the practices, regardless of the type of service, emphasizing the bodily nature of service work across business fields. Focus groups "transcend individualism" (Johnson, 1996, p. 534) as they enable "valuable access to collective meanings and social contexts as issues are shared through group interaction" (Warr, 2005, p. 221). The focus groups permitted

theorizing about how service employees incorporate their bodies in their work, regardless of the type of service.

In Articles II and III, which involve human participants, the common ethical principles were followed and participants were asked the informed consent. Informed consent affirmed that the participants were aware of the research and what their agreement to participate means. Particular attention was posed in respect of protecting the anonymity and privacy of the participants.

Article IV is an autoethnographic study of embodied knowledge in CX, which utilizes my personal experiences in yoga as empirical material. Autoethnography is a method that strives to explore and systemically analyze personal experiences to understand wider cultural phenomena (Ellis, 2004). Despite of the criticism for being too subjective but not scientific enough (Denzin, 2014; Ellis et al., 2011), for me, autoethnography provided with a missing piece of the puzzle, and enabled me to holistically examine how CX is actually formed within the individual's life-world by incorporating both private and social aspects of it. Furthermore, as the other methods used in this dissertation captured CX retrospectively, autoethnography provided direct access to experiences unfolding in real time. The justification for utilizing autoethnography is supported by the purpose of this paper as well as this dissertation—to create understanding of CX as embodied at the individual level. Autoethnography acknowledges and honors embodied subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding these issues as though they do not exist (Ellis et al., 2011).

In using personal experience, researchers conducting autoethnography do not only implicate themselves with the work, but also others (Ellis et al., 2011). In Article IV, the privacy and safety of others was ensured by altering identifying information (e.g., gender, appearance).

4.3.3   The analysis of the empirical data

The data analysis of the empirical materials followed either abductive or inductive research processes. This chapter discusses the different data analysis methods and tools applied in different studies.

In Article II, the analysis followed abductive logic (Belk & Sobh, 2018; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012) as we iteratively moved back and forth between the parts and whole throughout the process (Bleicher, 1980; Thompson et al., 1989). First, the individual understanding of each interview was built by looking at each

interview as a unique whole. Next, a new part-to-whole process began, relationships between the interviews started to emerge, and common patterns were identified, resulting in global themes (Thompson et al., 1989). The themes were analyzed through the *script theoretical framework* (explicated further in the original article), which provided a structural approach to theorizing the data at a conceptual level and created a new understanding of how diverse modes of embodied interaction form CX in an individual's life-world, both in private and social realms. The abductive reasoning stimulated the authors to focus on the "surprises" and "puzzles" emerging from the empirical data, which resulted in novel theory (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). Researcher triangulation strengthened the analysis process, as the first author initially conducted analysis, while the second author supported the themes as they began to emerge from the data by reflecting upon the categories. Eight themes were developed through the close interplay between the data and theory.

The analysis in Article III was guided by inductive logic, as the thematic analysis was data driven rather than theory led (Patton, 1995). *Practice theory* was used as an analytical framework to enhance the identification of the embodied practices of service employees' work from the data. The practice theory approach is explained in detail in the original article. As a whole, the analysis process can be described as interactive (Gummesson, 2005); we traveled back and forth between the general and specific, theory and data, and with this kind of iterative process, we were able to move from units of individual service employees to the practices shared among employees of different fields (Goulding, 2005).

The analysis was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, the first author began by analyzing the dataset generated in three focus groups through thematic analysis (Bailey, 1994). The iterative analysis process of reading, assessment, and identification was guided by the conventional content analysis procedure (Patton, 1995). After the first author identified the practice bundles, the second author joined the process by reflecting on and commenting on the findings. Thus, the researcher triangulation strengthened the analysis process, as the authors took turns analyzing the material both independently and together. The second round began with a presentation of the findings in a fourth focus group session to verify the findings and enrich the data. The analysis of the post-review session followed a procedure similar to the first phase, but the focus was on validating the existing findings and seeking new valuable insights.

The analysis process of Article IV was conducted using inductive thematic analysis (see Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This analysis was supported by *concepts from sensory anthropology* (explicated further in the original article), which

provided guidance for capturing the embodied aspects of knowledge in CX (Scott & Uncles, 2018). The analysis included three phases. In the first phase, a general understanding of empirical data was built by reading the material several times. In the second phase, the themes were developed by identifying elements that repeatedly emerged in the material and were relevant for how embodied knowledge shapes CX. The third phase focused on establishing more nuanced descriptions of the themes. During the whole analysis process, I aimed to stay reflexive and develop bridges between my experiences and existing research (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). In addition to reflexivity, the structure of the analysis process and sensory anthropology as an analysis tool provided important support and kept me tied to my theoretical commitments (Braun & Clarke, 2006), as well as enabling me to tackle tensions that typically arise when representing self in research (Haynes, 2011).

4.3.4   Critical reflections on the study

To discuss the overall quality of this study, I reflect on the evaluative criteria developed by Spiggle (1994). Critical evaluation leads to the most important question regarding any research: *Why should people care about it?* It is necessary to consider whether the findings question current assumptions and produce new ones, whether the findings are sound and significant, and whether they are inspirational for researchers and beneficial for those outside academia (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011; Spiggle, 1994). It is important to note that analytical generalization in qualitative research is by no means the desired end result; however, I argue that the critical evaluation of the applicability of the research is important and desirable (Spiggle, 1994; Tracy, 2010).

The *usefulness of the research* refers to the study's relevance and impact for inventing new ideas, concepts, and frameworks that enhance our understanding (Spiggle, 1994). Spiggle (1994) suggested that usefulness should be evaluated based on two domains. First, does the research create impactful contributions to the central issues and problems in the field? This dissertation advances the current understanding of CX by investigating the phenomenon in bodily terms and building a novel perspective for looking at CX. By doing so, it responds to the need for more holistic and in-depth exploration of CX (e.g., Edvardsson et al., 2015) and builds new theory by conceptualizing CX as embodied (Yadav, 2011). Second, researchers should reflect carefully on the transferability of the findings and implications of the study. In terms of analytical generalization in relation to the contexts and research settings

(Wallendorf & Belk, 1989), this dissertation demonstrates the applicability and relevance of an embodied approach for a wide variety of service contexts. I began to investigate CX as embodied in the group fitness context, in which bodily aspects were clearly recognizable, enabling me to study the phenomenon deeply. After gaining insight into this particular context, it was evident that further investigations in other service contexts would be necessary to validate and strengthen the findings. Thus, I moved forward with my examination of service contexts, in which the impact of bodily aspects of CX was not so obvious, and verified and strengthened the existing findings.

By conceptualizing CX as embodied, this dissertation provides new vocabulary for explaining and understanding the phenomenon. This was achieved by expanding the theoretical boundaries and involving diverse disciplines (e.g., marketing, service, sociology, and management) in the study; thus, it can be argued that this dissertation increases both the need and opportunity to conduct examinations across disciplines. Understanding the ways in which we form our experiences through our bodies is not only a matter of specific disciplines, settings, and contexts, but also a matter of understanding ourselves and others.

It is important to assess whether the research provides new and creative ways of looking at a phenomenon (Spiggle, 1994). In this dissertation, the *innovation* derives from the fruitful theoretical setting and is manifested through the whole research process with the phenomenological perspective. It results in a new and novel view of CX; that is, the embodied approach. Reaching beyond traditional assumptions and mainstream research boundaries is what often facilitates the development of more interesting and impactful theories (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). This dissertation provides novel implications through underlying assumptions of CX as a mindful construct, and by developing the embodied approach to CX, develops new assumptions that advance current theory and can inform researchers in future studies. It creates an interesting perspective on CX by investigating the phenomenon in bodily terms and revealing how experiences are formed between and within active, sensing bodies. Innovation is a necessity for success and renewal in science, and I hope that by explaining the choices and justifications that determined my research process and served its purpose in the best possible way, I can encourage other marketing and service researchers to create settings and designs that facilitate their intentions and aims.

In interpretive studies, there is always a danger of remaining too fragmented and descriptive, and lacking integration. *Integration* refers to a researcher's ability to take what is known and transform it into something new (MacInnis, 2011). In an article-

based dissertation, integration takes place in two domains: in individual articles and in the compilation. In line with the phenomenological perspective applied in this study, the focus was on turning individuals' emic perspectives into etic understandings, which was facilitated with careful consideration and the use of diverse analytical tools that enabled the creation of a whole from different parts (MacInnis, 2011). However, the essence of the dissertation lies in its compilation, which should draw the findings of individual articles together to form a coherent unity. I asked myself: *What kind of story do these elements together tell?* In my opinion, this might be the trickiest but most rewarding part of the research. The ability to develop bridges between diverse viewpoints on the same phenomenon, resulting in a novel, simplified, and higher-order perspective on these relationships, is what elevates the research and its wider relevance (Spiggle, 1994). In my research, I assembled and scattered the puzzle numerous times as I tried to understand how the pieces fit together as a coherent whole, expressing the simplicity of the complex (Gummesson, 2005; MacInnis, 2011).

Resonance refers to the research's ability to affect an audience (Spiggle, 1994). Even though it is impossible to provide direct access to the lived experiences of others (Schultz, 1967), in this dissertation, I aimed to draw the reader in by paying attention to my style and spirit of writing, and by cultivating practical examples. I aimed to balance critical clarity and vivid reflexivity, leaving space for the reader's serendipity (Stake & Trumbull, 1982). Resonance also relates to the transferability of research to other contexts and occasions (Spiggle, 1994; Tracy, 2010). Transferability is obtained when readers feel that they can identify themselves in the story of the research. I hope my research at least slightly moves the hearts and tickles the bodies of readers like it does for me, and evokes reflections and ideas that transfer to daily lives, service companies' operations, and researchers' activities.

Adequacy questions the trustworthiness of the research in terms of a researcher's success in presenting how grounded the representation is in the data (Spiggle, 1994). All research should be honest and transparent (Tracy, 2010), and researchers should provide "a methodologically self-critical account of how the research was done" (Seale, 1999, p. 468). I have aimed for honesty by describing all the decisions and actions related to this research as clearly as possible, including my personal involvement, data-gathering practices, and trails that led to interpretations and justifications. In the next section, I discuss in detail my personal involvement in this research and the strengths and shortcomings of my reflexivity.

Before moving forward, I want to address one more important reflection. Analytical generalization of qualitative studies remains a controversial subject of

debate in marketing research. During this multiyear research process, I have realized that this study represents only one story, that is, my interpretations of CX as embodied in human touch service contexts. It is an important, impactful, personal, and generalizable story, but only one story among many. There is no universal truth or "one and only way" to conduct qualitative research or apply the phenomenological perspective.

4.4   Unpacking the reflexive role of the researcher

In this dissertation, my body constitutes a basis *for*, provides access *to,* and selects *what* will be said and told (Engelsrud, 2005). I acknowledge my reflexive role as a researcher as a fundamental part of this study in making sense and overcoming the challenges of capturing CX as an embodied phenomenon. On the whole, I consider this dissertation to be an embodied project in which I stand as an active, sensing agent. Küpers (2013) discussed how research itself can be interpreted as an embodied practice in which researchers are bodily involved throughout the process. The researcher's involvement is mediated through diverse corporeal modalities, such as sensing, thinking, and feeling, guiding their actions and behavior.

In the research process, my diverse roles become intertwined and boundaries blurred: my interest in the research phenomenon arose from my personal interests, and one article is an autoethnographic study in which I open up my personal experiences to understand wider cultural phenomena (Ellis et al., 2011). In another article, I interviewed participants who came to a group fitness studio that I run. Simply put, I am all over this dissertation, in the lines and in between them. It is important to realize that every subject exists in an intersubjective relationship with the world, including a researcher (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). In practice, I took care of my reflexivity by continuously staying alert and conscious of my observations of the research knowledge (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Cunliffe, 2013). I aimed to stay conscious of my diverse roles during the research process and to distinguish moments of shift between the roles. These actions were my best efforts to remain analytical and avoid "getting too close" to the situations to which I was attached through my body. Article IV is an autoethnographic study in which I reflect more on my involvement in the research process and the reflexivity of my actions and thoughts.

To remain reflexive and accept my role as embodied researcher, I had to manage a spectrum of emotions aroused in my body during the research process. For

example, when conducting the phenomenological interviews with the participants, some of whom I personally knew beforehand (as they attended group fitness classes in my studio), I felt a little insecure and uncomfortable in the beginning, and it required much internal reflection and emotional labor to position myself in the role. After the first few interviews, I relaxed somewhat, and the interviews began to feel natural. Participants seemed to feel comfortable sharing their experiences. For me, being reflexive also meant accepting all the sensations and emotions that arose through the research process as a result of being fully open to and immersed in a research process, which placed me in a vulnerable position (Haynes, 2011). Schibbye (2001, p. 377) described how "being in the experience" requires courage. Even though it is difficult for me to describe myself as brave, I feel that from the moment I understood that immersing myself fully in the research process was a strength rather than a weakness of the study, I was able to go beyond the boundaries that restricted my input.

As a practical indication of the change that occurred, I offer my decision to conduct an autoethnographic study as part of this dissertation. I had been eager and curious to conduct an autoethnographic study since I had learned about the method many years ago. It says something about my level of interest in the method that I remember clearly when I heard about autoethnography for the first time. It was at a conference in beautiful Bodø, Norway, in August 2017. I remained timid about proceeding with my idea for some time, as autoethnographic studies are relatively rare in marketing research and have gained some criticism for being "too artful… not scientific… for having no theory, no concepts, no hypotheses… for not being sufficiently rigorous, theoretical or analytical" (Denzin, 2014, p. 70). However, when I considered the purpose of my study, I could not imagine a better method for exploring CX formation in the customer's life-world than autoethnography, which provides direct access for examining experience as it unfolds for the experiencer themselves. Thus, with encouragement and inspiration drawn from scholars harnessing autoethnography to take a different perspective on subjective experiences, I took a leap and let my autoethnographic journey begin. This illustrates how a dissertation is a journey of growth.

I found my personal and emotional connection with the research topic to be a helpful analytical tool during the research process. It guided me generate insight into different situations and build a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. For instance, when group fitness instructors shared their experiences in their work (Article II), at some points, it was easy for me to relate to their stories, as I had experienced similar situations in my own work. Personal connections also cause

other kinds of sensations. For example, at some points in my research, my research notes, observations, and reflections became so personal and private for me that while the writings presented a precious and invaluable asset for my study, I also felt somewhat embarrassed and insecure, unwilling to share my writings and ideas with anyone. Sometimes I wondered whether I was doing everything wrong, or whether my observations made any sense at all.

These kinds of thoughts can be regarded as "part of the process," as researchers often do not share any guidelines on how research notes should be written (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). I enjoyed conducting research on a theme that was so close to my heart. My passionate relationship with the topic has steered the research and strengthened my commitment, but the process has also felt exhausting and painful at times. From the beginning, I have described my research process as an adventure, and in this way, I acknowledge that the diversity of emotions and affect only enabled more shades and shapes for this exploration.

This research process not only represents a process of learning about and exploring the phenomenon, but also a process of learning about and exploring myself. Writing is a way of knowing, and personal commitment to research can be a way to make sense of ourselves and our experiences (Kiesinger, 2002). For me, the research process has been a continuous path of observing, questioning, realizing, accepting, learning, and discovering. Even though I thought I understood what embodiment was when I started to work on this dissertation, both theoretically and practically, now, writing these sentences four or five years later, I remain humbled and amazed at all I have learned. In addition to the steps of development I have taken research-wise, I have learned a lot about myself as a researcher, consumer, friend, daughter, wife, and human being. The presence of reflexivity in my daily life for the past few years has taught me to face and accept my uncertainties and fears, and helped me realize and appreciate my strengths and capabilities. Sometimes when I have immersed myself too deeply in the process, thanks to my improved understanding of our dual roles as subject and object (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), I have been able to take a step or two back, and take the necessary distance to retain my reflexivity as a researcher.

To conclude, I acknowledge that my discussions on reflexivity and my subjective relationship to research may not appear to be strengths of this dissertation. However, by sharing my views, I hope to enrich current concepts of embodied involvement in research. The hermeneutical circle (Gummesson, 2005) and continuous reflection between the theory, empirical analytic guidelines, and interpretation supported my reflexivity and grounded me in my scientific responsibilities. Nevertheless, as existing

marketing discussions have given minimal emphasis to the subjective, sensible, and affective aspects of the researcher's role, it is important to express my view to this extent. Scholars applying autoethnography and other descriptive methods have done important work in raising awareness of these aspects of the researcher's role. Ellis et al. (2011, p. 2) stated that "autoethnography is one of the approaches that acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don't exist." By taking inspiration from these ideas, I have had the courage to provide a different point of view on the subject matter.

5   SUMMARY OF ORIGINAL ARTICLES

This chapter presents summaries of the four articles in this dissertation. As the methods of the articles are discussed in Chapter 4, this chapter focuses on clarifying the justifications and findings. Each article is an independent study with a unique tone, research strategy, and questions. Together, the articles contribute to the general aim of this dissertation, which is to create an understanding of CX as embodied in human touch service contexts.

5.1   Article I: Emotions in customer experience

Article I is a systematic literature review (see Torraco, 2005) that develops a comprehensive view of how emotions relate to CX in the extant literature. The important role of emotions in CX is acknowledged in contemporary marketing research (Lastner et al., 2016; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015; Zomerdijk and Voss, 2011), but the understanding is scattered, and we lack a comprehensive picture of how emotions build CX. Therefore, this study maps the full diversity of emotions in CX and examines different conceptualizations of these emotions.

The study identifies eight major conceptual types of emotions building CX: 1) emotional links or bonds, 2) the emotional dimension of customer experience, 3) emotional responses, 4) emotional drivers, 5) emotional aspects of customers' decision-making and buying processes, 6) emotional stimuli or cues triggered by firms, 7) emotions managed by a firm's personnel in service encounters and interactions, and 8) experienced emotion per se. The study develops a framework for emotions in CX, providing a deeper understanding of the diverse roles of emotions in CX and the relationships between emotions and CX from customer and service provider perspectives.

The key contribution of the study lies in the framework, which clarifies the complexity of emotions by identifying how emotions build CX at the individual, relational, and ecosystem levels. The study emphasizes the relevance of diverse modes of interaction as a medium for emotions to shape and be shaped by the experience. Thus, the study encourages scholars and practitioners to focus on

interaction, because by doing so, our understanding of emotions in CX can be further developed. This study facilitates future research by encouraging researchers to investigate the different types in more detail and generate pragmatic implications. The framework also advises managers to improve the emotional dimensions of customer experience by utilizing different strategies in their management.

5.2 Article II: Embodied interaction in customer experience: a phenomenological study in group fitness

Article II takes a customer's perspective on CX and analyzes the role of embodied interaction in CX. The interactive aspects of CX have a strong presence in contemporary marketing research and practice (Jain et al., 2017; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Klaus & Maklan, 2011); however, the interacting participants' bodies are missing from the picture. The body creates a connection between humans and the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), which is why this study introduces an embodied approach to CX and service research by bringing the living and breathing body to center stage (Stevens et al., 2019; Yakhlef, 2015).

The study identified eight themes of embodied interaction. Four themes are related to the interpersonal script regarding the body's role in building social relations: affecting body, empowering body, body as an example, and admired body. Another four themes relate to intrapsychic script, illustrating the individual's internal, ongoing reflection of the experience: honored body, learning body, performing body, and life-balancing body. Together, the themes reveal how the affective, active body is the focal point of CX formation.

Article II contributes to theories on the interactive aspects of CX by identifying relationships between living and sensing bodies, rather than just minds, and the multilayered nature of interaction. This study expands the view of interpersonal interaction by highlighting the role of indirect interaction as a determining factor for CX, as well as introducing a novel, deeper layer of interaction to CX—that is, reflexive embodiment. Reflexive embodiment identifies how a customer's internal dialogue and the interplay between an individual's goals, expectations, and emotions shapes CX, and extends experience beyond service consumption into daily life. The findings not only broaden the theoretical understanding of CX and emphasize the multilayered nature of interaction, but also benefit businesses for which embodiment is particularly salient. Furthermore, as many types of services are currently being digitized, understanding how customers experience embodied interactions in human

touch contexts may be crucial for developing services in a digital environment that continues to enable value creation in the absence of face-to-face interactions.

5.3 Article III: Talking bodies – an embodied approach to service employees' work

Article III takes a service employee's perspective on CX and studies the embodied dimension of service employees' work in human touch contexts. In this study, service employees are perceived as sensing and reflecting agents who employ their bodies to learn and develop their competences (Willems, 2018), which in turn guides their perceptions and actions toward customers. This approach makes the invisible – "the work itself" – visible by focusing on embodiment in (real-time) practical action during the service encounter (Palmer & Simmons, 1995; Sundaram & Webster, 2000).

Four practice bundles were identified: 1) orienting, 2) attuning, 3) connecting, and 4) wrapping up. The findings illustrate how employees are agents of knowing-in-action—they become capable and skillful in their work via their bodies. Employees use bodily actions to prepare themselves for their work and make sense (orienting), and relate to and understand other bodies via their sensing and moving bodies during the encounter (attuning and connecting). This study shows how post-service practices are an integral part of employee's experience (wrapping up). It contributes to the service encounter literature by introducing an embodied approach to service employees' work. The results highlight the importance of the human touch in service encounters both in physical and digital realms. For practitioners, the study provides timely guidance to address human touch orientation in the services by paying special attention to tacit, embodied practices and interactions.

5.4 Article IV: Embodied knowledge in customer experience: reflections in yoga

The fourth article takes a customer's life-world perspective on CX as embodied by using autoethnography as a method to analyze embodied knowledge in CX in yoga context. Despite knowledge being defined as an integral part of the customer experience (CX) (e.g., Palmer, 2010; Becker & Jaakkola, 2020), researchers tend to consider knowledge in a disembodied way (Yakhlef, 2015). Therefore, this article

draws inspiration from organizational and management studies, in which it is characterized as a fundamental source of knowledge—people become skillful and capable through their bodies (e.g., Strati, 2007; Gärtner, 2013; Gherardi et al., 2015).

The article identifies five layers of the knowing body that illustrate the relationship between embodied knowledge and CX as an evolving process by a human body in action. The layers are 1) knowing body as situational, 2) knowing body as physical, 3) knowing body as social, 4) knowing body as affective, and 5) knowing body as transformative. Article IV contributes to the embodied turn in experience research by identifying how the involvement of the human body allows the customer to engage in the experience. The embodied knowledge enables CX to emerge and evolve.

6   DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this dissertation was to create a new understanding of CX as embodied. I have harnessed my cumulative knowledge of the research phenomenon and continuously reflected on my reflexive role as a researcher to build a holistic, in-depth understanding of CX. The four articles are tightly intertwined, each with a special focus on the research phenomenon, and together with this compilation, they contribute to the overall understanding of embodied CX. A detailed discussion of the dissertation's contributions is presented in the next section.

6.1   Synthesis of embodied approach on CX

This dissertation makes important contributions to theory development within CX studies in service research. By drawing on theories of embodiment, this research sheds light on the particularities of the human body in experiences and creates an opportunity to reconsider CX in an alternative, novel way. By doing so, it extends the disembodied and cognitive perspective prevailing in CX studies (Jain et al., 2017; Verhoef et al., 2009). By challenging underlying assumptions, this dissertation develops understanding of the inseparable role of the body in experiences in services and thus argues for adaptation of the embodied approach for scholars, practitioners, and consumers as a guide for their thinking and actions (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). Table 7 summarizes the key findings and contributions of this dissertation.

Table 7.   Key findings and contributions of articles answering the research questions

	Article I	Article II	Article III	Article IV
Key findings	A framework of eight major types how emotions build CX, helping scholars and practitioners make sense of this complex phenomenon	Eight themes of embodied interaction in CX: four related to the interpersonal script (affecting body, empowering body, body as an example, and admired body) and four to the	Four practice bundles (orienting, attuning, connecting, and wrapping up) that indicate how service employees' work is strongly embodied before, during, and after	Five dimensions of knowing body (knowing body as physical, knowing body as social, knowing body as affective, knowing body as situational, knowing body as transformative), which disclose how

		intrapsychic script (honored body, learning body, performing body, and life-balancing body)	the service encounter	embodied knowledge enables customers to engage in CX
RQ1: How is the embodied CX formed?	Article I developed detailed understanding of the emotions' role in CX formation	Article II identified how CX is formed in embodied interactions taking place between and within the bodies Article II introduces a new, deeper layer of interaction to CX, that is, reflexive embodiment	Article III mapped how CX is formed through bodily, reciprocal practices before, during and after service consumption	Article IV clarified how embodied CX becomes formed in individual's life-world
RQ2: What kind of a role the body plays in CX in human touch services?		Article II highlighted the body's role both as a subject and an object in CX Article II developed understanding on the body as a connecting point between the private and social realms of the life-world	Article III created insight how the past and becoming experiences fuse together in the body, enabling CX here-and-now	Article IV identified the body as a locus of emotions, knowledge and memories, which together build CX
		Articles II, III and IV build holistic understanding how the dimensions of CX become fused and work upon each other in the body		

Given the lack of the studies providing insight of how CXs are formed in practice (Edvardsson et al., 2015; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Lipkin, 2016), the first research question of this dissertation asked was, *"How is the embodied CX formed?".* All the articles (I-IV) of this dissertation answer to this question by providing insight of embodied CX formation from diverse perspectives. Articles I, II, and III provided understanding on embodied, interactive aspects of CX formation, whereas Article IV provided detailed insight on how CX is formed in a bodily manner in individual's subjective life-world.

Given that CXs are understood to be formed in diverse modes of interactions (Echeverri & Salomonson, 2017; Echeverri & Skålen, 2011; Jaakkola et al., 2015),

the findings of this dissertation conceptualize these interactions as embodied and thus create new understanding on how CXs come to be in practice. Article II provided nuanced understanding about how embodied CXs are formed in reciprocal, dynamic interaction between and within the bodies by labeling eight types of embodied interaction: four related to the interpersonal script (affecting body, empowering body, body as an example, and admired body) and four to the intrapsychic script (honored body, learning body, performing body, and life-balancing body), whereas Article III mapped the embodied practices of service employees taking place before, during and after service consumption. The findings of these multiperspective examinations provided a holistic view on how experience formation appears through both conscious and unconscious, as well as visible and tacit, bodily acts, through which individuals affect and are affected by each other via embodied interaction. Article I highlighted the affective nature of interaction by clarifying concepts around emotions, and Articles II-IV clarified how emotions shape and are shaped by CX through bodily movement and being. The findings of this dissertation highlight the role of indirect interaction as a key factor for CX and expand the notions of the body in CX by how embodiment covers much more than visible actions. CX formation actualizes through bodily linkages and flows of emotions, information and sensations absorbed through the body. Articles II and IV provided detailed, practical understanding about these forms of embodied interaction. The findings imply how individuals constantly interpret and reflect the cognitive, social, physical, affective, and sensorial input (Schmitt, 1999) based on their subjective, embodied knowledge through reflexive embodiment. As a result, individuals modify their bodily actions and behavior spontaneously by aligning their embodied knowledge to information gained through embodied interaction here-and-now, and reciprocally (re)form their CX.

Considering that it is the body that connects us to the world and enables to form experiences (Merleau-Ponty, 1964; Yakhlef, 2015), it is critical to holistically understand the role of the body in CX to fulfill the purpose of his dissertation. Hence, the second research question asked the following: *"What kind of a role the body plays in CX in human touch services?"*. Articles II, III, and IV of this dissertation answered to this specific research question by providing empirical understanding on the body's holistic, active role as an enabler of CX in human touch services. The results contribute to marketing and service research by providing understanding of CX as a whole rather than focusing on one dimension at the time (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Schmitt, 1999; Verhoef et al., 2009). The results show how the dimensions of CX (cognitive, sensorial, affective, social, and physical) become fused and work upon

each other in the human body. Article II provided an empirical understanding on the body as a unifying force between the interaction loops of the private and social realms of individual's life-world. The realms of the life-worlds intersect and work upon each other through bodily actions and being. The affective and sensing body is defined as a centre of CX.
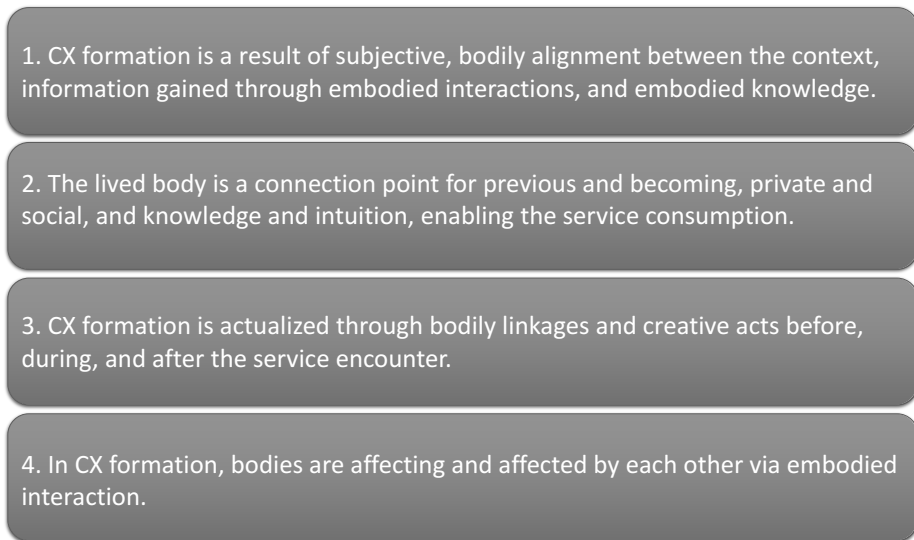
Article III and IV further mapped how the embodied knowledge defines individual's readiness to form CX. Article IV generated holistic understanding how customers sense, feel think, act, and relate through their bodies when engaging in experiences (Schmitt, 1999). This differs from the typical understandings on CX that tend to treat the dimensions as separate, possible to manage individually (Schmitt, 1999; Verhoef et al., 2009; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The articles also provided insightful understanding on the body as agent knowing-in-action, reflecting the continuous, intuitive interplays between past, current and future experiences taking place in the body.

To be able to answer the research questions set in this particular dissertation, careful consideration and open-minded approach towards methodological choices was required. The most-used methods to study CX in marketing and service research (e.g., surveys) are acknowledged as useful to examine company-related elements in CX (Jaakkola et al., 2015), but when the focus is on capturing CX from subjective, embodied perspective, the same methods are no longer adequate. Articles II, III, and IV mapped the research methods suitable for exploring the embodied aspects of CX and enabling to look beyond cognition, and thus important guidance for further investigation of CX from embodied perspective is provided. For instance, the methods currently used to study emotions in CX favor quantitative methods (Klaus & Kuppelwieser, 2021; Manthiou, Hickman, & Klaus, 2020), which are not solely appropriate to map the holistic, subjective and relational nature of emotions in embodied CX. By approaching emotions as embodied, the current dissertation developed understanding of qualitative data collection methods and analysis tools that improve harnessing the holistic perspective on emotions in CX.

6.2   Propositions for embodied approach on CX

To clarify the results of this dissertation, the key contributions are summarized into four key propositions (Figure 6) (Belk et al., 2013). Together, these propositions embrace the embodied approach to CX. Sometimes acknowledging the diverse perspectives of a certain phenomenon may lead to the danger of seeing them as

competing and opposing, which should not be the case. It is important to stress that the aim of this dissertation was not to downplay the value of the cognitive and rational side of human behavior, or to claim that the body is more important in human experience than the mind. Rather, I wish to provide a novel, supplementary perspective to the dominant viewpoints in studying CX (MacInnis, 2011).

1. CX formation is a result of subjective, bodily alignment between the context, information gained through embodied interactions, and embodied knowledge.

2. The lived body is a connection point for previous and becoming, private and social, and knowledge and intuition, enabling the service consumption.

3. CX formation is actualized through bodily linkages and creative acts before, during, and after the service encounter.

4. In CX formation, bodies are affecting and affected by each other via embodied interaction.

Figure 6. Propositions for an embodied approach to CX

The key propositions provide a novel outlook on CX formation compared to prevailing theories that have viewed the body as a passive container for the sensing and active mind. Based on these propositions, it can be argued that CX formation in human touch services is a complex combination of bodily linkages and creative acts. It is the body, including the mind, that is a unifying force of the determinants of CX. Rather than being static and linear, CX formation actualizes before, during, and after the service encounter through the active and sensing body. Senses and bodily movement are so naturally embedded in experiences that it is hard for individuals to distinguish how they affect their subjective capabilities. Individuals' life-worlds are constantly (re)formed in embodied interactions in a relatively unconscious way. Therefore, an individual's CX formation is updated through the body's active and sensing being and acting in the world. Figure 7 builds a novel framework for embodied CX formation in human touch services.
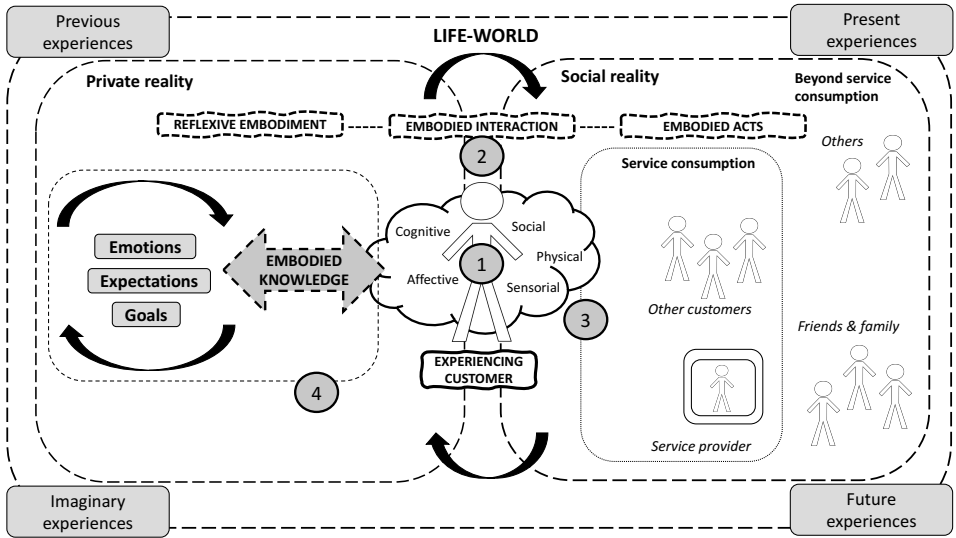
Figure 7. Framework for embodied CX formation

Overall, this dissertation theorizes CX formation as embodied. Figure 8 illustrates the elements of embodied CX formation: *embodied knowledge, embodied interaction, embodied acts, and context*. Individuals form their experiences by aligning these elements together in a meaningful and intentional way in their subjective, embodied life-world; that is, the body.
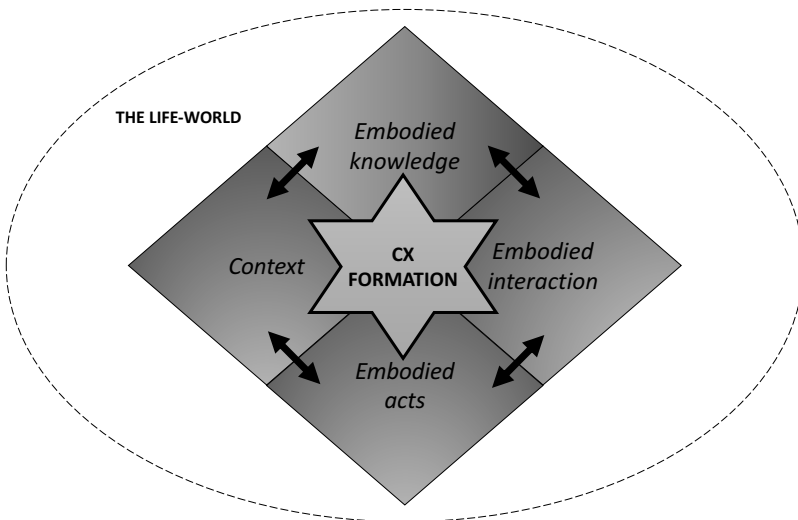
Figure 8. Embodied CX formation

In the next section, I discuss the theoretical contributions of this dissertation and illustrate how the embodied approach elevates existing CX studies in service research.

6.3 Theoretical contributions

This dissertation emphasized discovery rather than justification (MacInnis, 2011; Yadav, 2010). Discovery is related to inventing new ideas or the creative synthesis of existing ideas (Yadav, 2010). This dissertation not only aimed to fill a gap, it focused on challenging underlying assumptions and, by doing so, developing interesting and influential new theory (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013; Astley, 1985).

MacInnis (2011) suggested diverse types of conceptual contributions. The theoretical contribution of this dissertation can be labeled as revision: seeing what has been identified in a different way. The metaphor for a researcher contributing by revision is an artist who uses a paintbrush to depict a landscape as a series of colored dots or shapes. Revision involves taking a novel perspective on something that is already known by revealing "the prevailing metaphor used to guide thinking and illustrate its limitations in understanding the entity" (MacInnis, 2011, p. 144). This dissertation recognizes the complexity and reciprocity of CX formation in human touch services and introduces an alternative perspective for examining this phenomenon. Next, I discuss the theoretical contributions to specific academic discussions.

Contribution to the discussions on CX formation at the individual level. Existing studies characterize CXs as formed in an individual's life-world (Heinonen et al., 2010; Helkkula, 2011; Helkkula et al., 2012); however, research has given minimal attention to how the subjective life-world naturally unfolds. This dissertation and its articles contribute to the existing literature by conceptualizing the life-world as embodied.

Based on the findings from Article IV, five dimensions representing how the knowing body enables CXs to evolve are introduced: knowing body as situational, physical, social, affective, and transformative. These dimensions illustrate how embodied knowledge enables customers to move, act, and attune to consume services, thus expanding existing understanding of the anatomy of the life-world (Propositions 1, 2, & 4).

Knowing the body as situational underlines how the customer's ability to utilize their embodied capacity is always context-specific. For instance, a tennis player used to play outside may find it difficult to play on an inside court, but after practice and

repetition, they may be able to align their knowledge to fit into new circumstances. The knowing body is physical, illustrating how embodied knowledge is accumulated through embodied interaction (see Article II) by moving and sensing bodies. However, as the existing studies on CX mostly provide only a perspective of the physical body based on how it is seen from the outside, the first-person perspective used in this study also enables us to perceive the emotionally perceived body from the inside. Individuals do not become skillful only through body movement (Murphy et al., 2019; Scott et al., 2017); rather, embodied knowledge accumulates and updates from being in the body. The dimensions of knowing body as social and affective highlight how moving and sensing bodies affect and are affected by other bodies, resulting in emotional experiences. By regarding the body as a medium to connect to the life-world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), knowing body as transformative describes how embodied knowledge may allow the experience to go beyond service consumption, affecting the customer's daily life.

Together, these dimensions expand the current understanding of CX as a subjective, socially constructed, and context-specific entity (Helkkula, 2011; Jaakkola et al., 2015) in three important ways (Proposition 1). First, the research underlines how embodied knowledge always accumulates continuously through embodied forms of social interaction. In this dissertation, bodily experiences are seen as formed in affective relationships between individuals' life-worlds. Second, this study highlights how CX formation is dependent on customer's ability to adjust their embodied knowledge in a specific context. Practical knowledge of how to act and behave in an appropriate way is not enough—the embodied knowledge of how to be in and move one's body in an intentional and meaningful way is required to form CX. Intuition, knowledge of the body and senses, is essential. Third, the final interpretation of CX is always made subjectively by the individual, and thus, no two identical experiences ever exist.

Contribution to discussions on the interactive aspects of CX. This dissertation contributes to theories on interaction in CX by exploring the reciprocity of service as it emerges in a pure way, not only as vague concepts such as "interaction" or "co-creation," which usually remain abstract and mysterious in terms of what people are practically doing when forming CXs. By doing so, this research provides conceptual tools for explaining and analyzing how CXs are formed in interactions. Above all, the present study expands current understanding (Echeverri & Salomonson, 2017; Sundaram & Webster, 2000) by identifying how interaction in human touch services is anchored in the human body.

This dissertation advances our understanding of the interactive domain of CX by embracing the active involvement of the body in interaction (Jaakkola et al., 2015; Scott et al., 2017; Stevens et al., 2019; Yakhlef, 2015). Articles II and III illustrate how embodied interaction is essential for individuals to gather and interpret information that makes them capable of forming CXs (Propositions 2 & 4). The body becomes the locus of the senses as the human capabilities to see, hear, taste, touch, and relate become alive only in reciprocal interaction with others and the environment (Strati, 2007; Valtonen & Närvänen, 2015). Thus, individuals—both customers and employees—are agents of knowing-in-action. As Merleau-Ponty (1962) noted, we are our bodies. This study indicates how the body is always attuned and connected to the world, even when it is still. For instance, in yoga class, poses are held for a long time: even though the body remains still, its ability to engage in CX and affect others continues. This dissertation identifies embodied interaction as a way to connect not only with other human actors, but with the service itself.

Article II extends our understanding by revealing that what happens under the surface, beyond bodily movement, gazes, and gestures, is fundamental for CX. Bodies are continuously interconnected in a tacit way. Thus, interpersonal scripts go beyond verbal and visible bodily actions; they also include the flow of sensations and emotions intersecting between the bodies, revealing another type of interpersonal interaction (Proposition 4). The major part of the interaction is indirect, and individuals shape each other's experiences unintentionally. For instance, at a music festival enjoying your favorite band's gig, you are at the heart of things as the people around you celebrate the music by dancing, cheering, and singing. In that moment, you become lost in an ecstatic moment, and the movements of the people around you become yours. Likewise, your body's immersion in that moment also affects others. This study identifies how interaction takes place in complex networks of entities in which all parties are continually affecting and being affected by each other in terms of knowledge, readiness, and emotions. This dissertation suggests that instead of linear and distinct processes, actors' intersubjective perception–action loops are coupled and intertwined with each other. It can be concluded that none of the actors are able to steer the process deliberately (Vargo & Lusch, 2008); rather, it is orchestrated by dynamic, mutual interaction (Propositions 3 & 4). In other words, the interaction process has a "life of its own" and constitutes a kind of autonomy within both the private and social realms of the life-world (De Jaegher & Di Paolo, 2007).

Moreover, these findings hold special importance for how embodied interactions shape and influence emotions in CX (Proposition 4). As illustrated by the music

festival example, this study highlights how bodies influence each other's emotional experiences through tacit, embodied interaction. Emotions are not only subjective and individually experienced (Helkkula, 2011), they are also expressed bodily through movements and atmosphere, and thus available for others' evaluation and adoption (Fuchs & De Jaegher, 2009). Even though this dissertation focuses on human touch services, the evolving understanding of different types of emotions in CX can be regarded as contributing to service businesses in general. As highlighted in Article I, emotions are uncontrollable and difficult to understand, but have an undeniably strong effect on CX; thus, it is necessary to emphasize clarity and consistency in conceptualizations of emotions. The service industry needs to manage both positive and negative emotions. Even though positive emotions have received much more attention in the literature, it is crucial to understand that negative emotions also affect an individual's CX; therefore, the entire spectrum of emotions needs to be addressed.

Finally, Article II contributes by introducing a new layer of embodied interaction: reflexive embodiment. Reflexive embodiment refers to an individual's ongoing reflection of sensations felt in the body-subject and the subjective interpretation of the experience. This underlines concepts of CX as subjective and personal (Helkkula, 2011; Jaakkola et al., 2015) and advances understanding of the private realm of the life-world (Heinonen et al., 2010; Helkkula, 2011; Tynan et al., 2014). All actors carry their expectations, backgrounds, and goals within their bodies to a mutual encounter, and these individual resources define CX (Proposition 2). For instance, a customer may enter a clothing store as confident, with no need for guidance, or as insecure, needing encouragement, support, and assistance. These are things that may not be externally perceptible, but are embedded in the intrapsychic script of the individual. These hidden expectations challenge the employee to find appropriate ways to make sense of the customer's expectations so that they can modify their actions and behavior to support the customer's experience in the best possible way.

Contributions to discussions on service management and service encounters. By incorporating the service employee's perspective in CX formation and grounding employees' capacity in their individual life-world in Article III, this study develops a fine-grained and practical classification of the embodied nature of service employees' work (Voorhees et al., 2017; Wirtz & Jerger, 2017). This study demonstrates that the service employees' perspective is highly relevant for understanding how human touch is created and delivered in practice in service encounters (e.g., Echeverri & Salomonson, 2017). Article III highlights the elements of service practices that contain procedures, understandings, and engagements and how these elements are interrelated to different practice bundles that together illustrate how service

employees become skillful in their work via their bodies before, during, and after the actual service encounter. Like customers, service employees' abilities and skills to create experiences accumulate over time and become grounded in their individual life-world (Proposition 3).

The present study also responds to the call for more detailed empirical studies of micro-level service interactions (e.g., Bolton et al., 2014; Echeverri & Salomonson, 2017; Echeverri & Skålen, 2011; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015). The practice bundle of *attunement* captures the essence of service work; employees sense and feel customers through their bodies by being continuously immersed in situations and oriented toward responding to signs given by the customers. By doing so, employees gain important, turn-taking insight into the appropriate ways to harness their embodied knowledge to *connect* with customers via visible, corporeal action. As prior studies have focused mostly on verbal interactions and visible bodily actions (e.g., Bolton et al., 2014), this dissertation illustrates how they are tacit, sensing acts that make a difference in service encounters. Taking into account the customer's perspective, the findings of this study showcase how employees' embodied attunement and capabilities to utilize bodily skills to enhance and facilitate customers' perceptions of the service affect CX. This dissertation contributes to existing conceptualizations of the service encounter (Bitner, 1990; Voorhees et al., 2017) by showcasing that rather than being a process controlled by an impersonal company, it is an interactive process of sense-making between and within several realities: the individuals' life-worlds (Heinonen et al., 2010; Propositions 3 & 4).

The present study expands current knowledge on the time span of service encounters, which has focused mainly on interactions during the core encounter (Vorhees et al., 2017; Wirtz et al., 2018). CX is a sum of bodily actions and practices taking place before, during, and after the encounter (Proposition 3). For instance, a waiter may tune himself into the proper mood for work with the practice of a morning run or a cup of coffee (*orienting*), which may help him shine in his work. Then, he may carry the emotional load resulting from his activities outside of work (*wrapping up*). These findings are important for service management literature for at least two reasons. First, by extending the temporal frame of service work, this study highlights the need to expand the lens to a more holistic understanding of service employees' management. Second, even though the magic factor of successful service work seems to lie in small things, the work itself is emotionally demanding and stressful—it is imperative to take these elements seriously in the development of service employee management.

The findings of this study underline the importance of the human factor as a fundamental part of digital services. I argue that the cost of downplaying the human factor by focusing on attributes like efficiency and lower costs may cause serious damage to service companies, as it may lead to losing an emotional connection with the customer (Bowen, 2016; Solnet et al., 2019). As Larivière (2017, p. 241) reminds us, "Technology is not loyal… Service employees and their skills, however, are less replicable." By developing service employees' unique, embodied skills to modify and shape their acts in the here-and-now to respond to customers' expectations, this study holds important implications for understanding how employees add a unique, human dimension to technology that can be a significant differentiator in a highly competitive marketplace. For these reasons, an embodied approach to service encounters is recommended.

6.4   Methodological implications

Given the relevant ontological assumption that the body and world are continuously connected (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 1964), this dissertation has significant methodological implications. The use of the phenomenological perspective contributes to a more in-depth understanding of lived experiences by revealing assumptions that are often taken for granted about these ways of knowing (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Hence, the appropriate methods do not necessarily tell us anything that we do not yet know, but rather, provide a new, important, and illuminating perspective on the phenomenon, a possibility of distinguishing new realities in interesting ways (Hill, Canniford & Mol, 2014; MacInnis, 2011). This dissertation has shown how phenomenology provides a possibility to go beyond the prevailing, disembodied subject–object dichotomy in CX research to look at CX formation from an alternative angle, embracing the active and affective human body and developing an understanding of how experiences are formed in intimate human–world connections.

The phenomenological perspective embraces the researcher's direct involvement and understanding by using their own body as a medium of understanding the research phenomenon (Engelsrud, 2005). In this study, I have demonstrated how the researcher's bodily experience functions as a condition for both receiving and interpreting the empirical material, as well as being a critical determinant of the direction and turns the material takes. Thus, I hope this study acts as an encouraging example for researchers by showcasing how the openness and sensitivity of the

researcher to the phenomenon allows the phenomenon to reveal itself in its complexity and fullness. The researcher's involvement in the research could be considered an avenue for creating new knowledge.

This dissertation demonstrates that capturing the embodied nature of lived experience requires careful consideration of data collection methods and analysis tools. Researchers should choose data collection methods that provide rich and thick first-hand descriptions of individuals' experiences in their natural contexts. This is relevant because the contextual boundaries of the life-world are subjectively determined by the customers themselves (Lipkin, 2016). Prevailing cognitive perspectives embracing the subject–object dichotomy in prior CX studies guides researchers to choose methods that are not appropriate for capturing the dynamic and holistic nature of CX (Helkkula, 2011; Thompson et al., 1989; Yakhlef, 2015). Furthermore, there is a scarcity of empirical studies on how CXs are formed. The individual's life-world reflects researchers' overall challenge to identify and apply appropriate methods to capture the phenomenon (Yakhlef, 2015). Thus, this dissertation provides encouraging guidance to utilize qualitative research methods to study lived experiences in their wholeness.

All data collection methods used generate a rich amount of data in terms of both quantity and quality. This dissertation emphasizes the importance of careful consideration of the analysis tools and procedures for two reasons: first, to obtain the relevant data from the thick descriptions, and second, to ensure that researchers stay connected to their theoretical commitments (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Given that all the analysis tools originate from disciplines other than marketing, this dissertation encourages researchers to be curious and open-minded when seeking appropriate and accurate tools to enhance the analysis of the empirical data. Expanding our explorations beyond our own discipline's traditions and tendencies might be the key to discovering something new and unexpected.

6.5   Avenues for future research

Based on this study, many inspiring avenues for future research on embodied CX have been revealed. The ideas are divided into three domains: theoretical, empirical, and methodological.

As this dissertation was one of the first attempts to conceptualize CX as embodied, further investigations are required to enrich the gained insights and develop the *theoretical* understanding further. More research is needed on CX

formation and its attachment to bodily senses and affect. For instance, the tacit and unconscious layers of interaction deserve to be studied in more detail, as it appears that these invisible modes of interaction profoundly affect CX formation. It would also be interesting to investigate the interactions taking place in the private realm of the life-world (reflexive embodiment) more deeply, as this layer of embodiment has only now been discovered and conceptualized. In-depth understanding is needed to inform how companies could facilitate this internal dialogue, which is crucial for an individual's experience formation.

As this study focused on mapping out the emergence of embodied knowledge in a relatively short period of time, longitudinal research designs would be useful for generating new insight into how embodied knowledge evolves and changes over time and affects CX formation. Researchers should pursue studies tapping into the intersection of the private and social realms of the life-world, as it appears that the reciprocal interactions encompassing both realms profoundly shape an individual's CX formation. Furthermore, even though human touch is easily related to interaction as a way to generate positive and pleasurable feelings in an individual, researchers should not turn a blind eye to the negative and challenging aspects of CX, which are certainly part of this complex phenomenon.

Another unexplored conceptual area related to embodied CX lies in the interaction between humans and nonhuman agents, such as machines, robots, and self-service solutions. As many types of services are being digitized, an understanding of the embodied interactions between humans and machines is needed. It would be exciting to conduct studies integrating service employees and robots, as well as other technologies, and to explore the human touch in automated services.

Future studies should look at the body as both object and subject, as a service encounter is not a process controlled by a company, but an affective and reciprocal arena for CX formation. Researchers are encouraged to expand their view beyond core experience and zoom in on the different phases of service encounters. In particular, the temporality of practices, emotions, and their relationship to spatiality provides interesting topics for future studies. As it appears that the pre- and post-core moments have a great impact not only on customers' but also service employees' experiences, it is important to utilize a holistic approach to studying service employees' work. More research is needed to better understand service employees' embodied work. In my view, the relationship between the service employee's creative practices and company-controlled tasks is compelling, although it was not within the scope of this study.

Embodiment in CX was explored separately from the perspectives of diverse actors, customers, and employees participating in CX formation in human touch services. Future research could integrate both perspectives into one study to develop another viewpoint on the dynamics between actors. As became evident in the articles, even though embodied interaction plays an important role in CX formation, both customers and employees may find it difficult to make sense of each other's embodied messages and actions, causing uncertainty in the service encounter. Studies applying both perspectives could provide clarifying insight on this important issue. This study did not incorporate the manager's perspective on embodied CX, but understanding this perspective is important, as service work is strenuous and requires special attention at the managerial level.

Empirically, this study focused on CX as embodied in human touch services and provided useful findings for service businesses in general. To develop an understanding of how embodiment relates to CX across service industries, additional studies are needed. It would be exciting to study embodiment in contexts that may not look fundamentally embodied at first sight. Interesting examples of other contexts might include consultant services, cultural and sporting events. The embodied nature of CX is shaped differently in diverse service contexts, so utilizing a range of contexts would produce richer insights in discussions of embodiment in CX.

Further investigations are also needed with diverse types of people consuming services. This study focused primarily on studying CX among people with relatively active lifestyles, and future studies should broaden the scope. For instance, as today's busy lifestyles and static working positions distance people from their bodies, it is important to investigate how this growing "absence from the bodies" affects CX formation in services.

Studies comparing online and offline service contexts, as well as different cultural settings, would add interesting layers regarding how embodiment shapes CX in diverse settings. As the customer's capacity to use their individual set of embodied knowledge is always context-specific, variations in the customer's readiness across contexts and time could be explored.

Methodologically, there is a need for curiosity and creativity in using diverse materials and analysis tools to capture the embodied nature of participants and researchers in marketing and service studies. In addition to autoethnographic notes, narratives, and diaries, different kinds of visual methods (e.g., videos and photographs) could provide interesting insights. There is a tendency in research to adopt a rather narrow view (e.g., the service encounter) when exploring CX (e.g.,

Becker, 2018; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Voorhees et al., 2017). Future research should favor methods that enable access to CX in a broader sense (e.g., phenomenological interviews and narratives) to appreciate the dynamic and reciprocal nature of embodied CX.

Defining embodied CX as dynamic and spontaneous, researchers must pay attention to the timing of the data collection. When studying lived experiences, researchers could aim to find participants currently living the experience under investigation. As previous experiences also shape customers' experiences, the ideal would be a combination of real-time and retrospective data collection methods, as Becker (2018) suggests. Becker and Jaakkola (2020) noted that some technology-related methods capturing customers' reactions in real time have been used; however, it could be argued that to study bodily experiences, measurements of, for example, physical reactions, are not sufficient on their own to capture CX in its wholeness. Hence, to examine the physical, sensorial, and affective aspects of CX, researchers are encouraged to use methods that enable them to capture lived experiences in real time. Participants could be asked to make notes (verbal or written) or take a video when consuming the services under investigation. Further, researchers are encouraged to utilize their personal experiences as a relevant source of the research data, as it is the only way to capture embodied CX in a direct and pure form, without filters or second-hand interpretations.

Regarding the analysis of the data, researchers should carefully consider and choose the most suitable analysis tools for investigating embodied CX. For instance, the potential of the practice theory should be utilized as it serves as a suitable tool for discovering the embodied actions that constitute CX and enables to increase understanding of the body as agent of knowing-in-action.

Overall, the researcher's relationship to the research phenomenon and materials always anchors the research in a certain position (Engelsrud, 2015). In this dissertation, due to my personal background and professional attachment to the field of human touch services, my relationship with the research topic is close. I was familiar, even friends, with some participants, which naturally shaped my personal involvement in the study. Therefore, it would be intriguing to explore CX as embodied from a totally distinct position. As a researcher, I could enter into a service context for which I have no prior knowledge or personal attachment. What if I, a person who has never owned a car and has barely driven one, researched the service context of car sales? I am thrilled at the prospect of what kinds of insights these different positions on the research phenomenon could provide.

In addition, application of embodied approach to explore CX phenomenon from diverse perspectives, with different methods and in various contexts, creates possibilities for future studies to reveal and identify elements and aspects of CX that would otherwise remain hidden, or would not even be possible to distinguish from other approaches (MacInnis, 2011).

Finally, the three main themes for future research resonate with the still-uncovered potential embedded in the world of embodied experiences. It is evident that this field deserves to be explored more explicitly and become easier to articulate (Valtonen et al., 2010). For this embodied academic dream to come true, researchers' courage to immerse themselves in embodied experiences, to be honest and attuned to their sensations and emotions and truly connected to the world, is required.

6.6 Managerial implications

This dissertation provides important contributions for practitioners. By highlighting embodiment as an integral part of CX in human touch services and beyond, this study encourages managers and other actors at the societal level to reconsider what their motivations, actions, and decisions are based on. Decision making at the managerial level is often framed as rational and a result of "hard thinking." This does not actually tell the whole truth, since people are embodied, irrational agents. The intuitive, emotional, and embodied nature of CX should be noted both at the strategic and operational levels in all kinds of service companies. It is not enough to focus solely on the outcomes of successful CX for the company; we must think about and focus on what actually leads to success. Therefore, understanding CX formation should be a key focus for the service market. This leads to a redefinition of how success in today's service business is defined.

This dissertation embraces a key implication for managers: to provide practical guidance on how companies can adapt an embodied approach to their business. By applying the guidelines, managers can recognize new ways to operate, generate experiences, and gain a competitive advantage, constituting a new way of doing business. This dissertation highlights human elements as a key asset for companies. When managers accept that experiences are always specific to the subject but socially constructed within and between human bodies, a phenomenon that nobody can control in its entirety, a whole new world opens. This dissertation encourages managers to consider all humans as active and sensing bodies, rather than just thinking minds. The guidelines consist of four components to guide business

managers of service companies to recreate their business understanding: *takeover of the embodied approach, reconsideration of the management of service employees, redefinition of the customer,* and *reorientation of the service encounter.* The guidelines are illustrated in Figure 9.
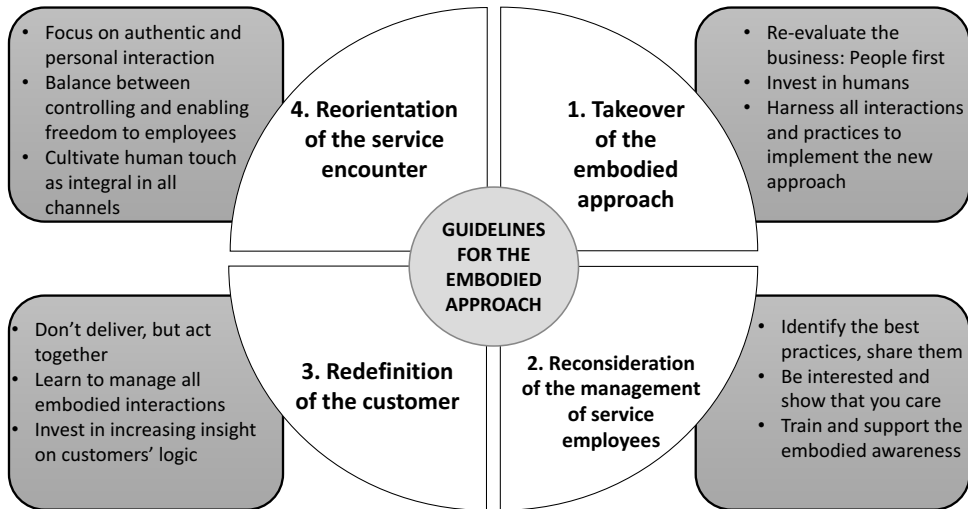
Figure 9. Guidelines for service companies applying an embodied approach

Takeover of the embodied approach relates to a holistic process for harnessing human orientation as the primary focus of business. This is something that needs to be taken to heart, starting from the management level and strategic decision making, demonstrating the way for the rest of the staff. Managers need to consider investments in humans as their most fundamental key to market success and financial performance. This dissertation embraces priceless behaviors and actions that cannot be replaced with any kind of digital device or intelligence, or compensated for with pleasant interior design, the newest equipment, or the latest technology. Practical staff activities like workshops should be used to cultivate new ways of being and doing across the company. Managers should not communicate only through written or verbal interactions; emphasis should be placed on tacit and affective modes of interaction to embed the new approach across the company. The human touch needs to be embraced in everything the company thinks, says, and does. This is a precursor for the successful adaptation of the embodied approach. The other guidelines provide more practical assistance in taking the embodied approach in a service company.

Reconsideration of the management of service employees turns attention to the company's most valuable asset: its employees. As these professionals have the unique ability to

add human touch to service, and these capabilities are more difficult for competitors to copy than any other business-related resource (Wirtz et al., 2017), managers should be interested in redefining their management practices to reflect this. They should be curious about the tacit, embodied practices that make the service encounter shine, and actively observe employees in action, discussing and identifying best practices with them. In addition to individual support, sharing insights would make practices explicit and strengthen staff performance.

As service work is intense and requires concentration and attunement, as well as extends outside the limits of the actual service encounter, companies should focus on how they can support employees' readiness and well-being before and after the core encounter. Companies could track what kinds of practices are important for individual employees to prepare for or recover from work, then provide support for these practices in a concrete way. If an employee is a coffee lover and high-quality coffee helps them become bright and joyful, the company could buy a coffee machine. This kind of practical, supportive act would not only be an investment in high-performance service, it could also increase employees' engagement with the employer. It needs to be emphasized that these kinds of activities require sensitivity; employees need to feel they are individually noticed, so employee-related information should be collected in such a way that the supporting activity becomes a delightful surprise for the employee. Naturally, modes of support vary in terms of resources available, but service companies of all sizes should not only invest in obtaining insights about their customers, but also about their employees. In-depth understanding of employees is required for a successful service business.

Redefinition of the customer guides companies to understand that customers are active and sensing agents-in-action and should be treated as such. The primary task of service employees is to help customers achieve their desired CX, and this requires genuine interest in them, so special attention should be paid to the recruitment and training of employees. The findings highlight the tacit interaction between and within customers' bodies as important determinants of CX. Resources should be invested in learning, identifying, and managing these interactions, as well as focusing on collecting in-depth customer insights and improving understanding of the customer's life-world and logic (Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015).

Rather than using only well-known methods to collect new information, managers are encouraged to utilize innovative, human-oriented methods to gain understanding of customers as they act, feel, think, and relate to form their CX. For instance, customer diaries and workshops could serve to gather knowledge on how CXs are formed in a customer's life-world. Service employees could act as participant

observers, and companies could create systematic procedures to harness their immersion in the service encounter to identify and distinguish special signals from customers in all their mutual, everyday interactions.

Reorientation of the service encounter challenges companies' traditional views on service encounters. Rather than considering the encounter as a company-orchestrated funnel through which a customer walks, reorientation helps managers understand it as a dynamic, unique arena full of intersecting interactions between and within embodied actors. Employees should be trained to be actively aware of their bodies and work-related bodily activities, and improve their skills in facilitating a customer's embodied, emotional experience. During service encounters, employees should establish a pleasant and safe atmosphere that encourages customers to express and share their feelings. Companies should invest in supporting employees' capabilities to modify their actions and behavior here-and-now according to cues from the customer. There must be a focus on seeking a balance between controlling employees and giving them the freedom to implement service work as required.

Companies must realize that it is not enough to focus on the core-service encounter, as CX goes beyond the moments of actual service consumption, and shift attention to facilitating customers' pre- and post-encounter activities, such as by focusing on the creation of emotional connections with customers. Human touch should be underlined in all communications before and after service consumption. Marketing content should include human touch and arouse positive feelings and emotions, as should contact with a customer after the service. A personal human touch should be prioritized whenever contacting a customer by e-mail or phone call, beginning the message or discussion by greeting them by name, and including content that relates specifically to them.

The embodied approach fosters humanness as a healthy and impactful premise for all the internal and external actions of service companies. This can profoundly change the way we do business, as well as the way we experience others and ourselves, as sensitive, capable, and affective human beings.

Taken together, we, as researchers, consumers, practitioners, and humans, should celebrate the unique skills and capabilities our embodiment gives us and what it enables: the ability to learn and retain skills, the capacity to relate and connect with others and ourselves, creative and novel ways to handle different situations, and instincts to act, behave, and make decisions. Above all, our embodiment is at the heart of all experiences and how we make sense and create meaning in this world. Our bodies are our superpowers, and we should praise them.

7 REFERENCES

Addis, M., & Holbrook, M. B. (2001). On the Conceptual Link between Mass Customisation and Experiential Consumption: An Explosion of Subjectivity. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, *1*, 250-266.

Ahmed, S. (2004). *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York: Routledge.

Akaka, M. A., & Chandler, J. D. (2011). Roles as resources: a social roles perspective of change in value networks. *Marketing Theory*, *11*(3), 243-260.

Akaka, M. A., & Vargo, S. L. (2015). Extending the context of service: from encounters to ecosystems. *Journal of Services Marketing, 29*(6/7), 453-462.

Alvesson, M., & Sandberg, J. (2011). Generating research questions through problematization. *Academy of Management Review, 36*(2), 247-271.

Alvesson, M., & Sköldberg, K. (2000). Reflexive methodology: New vistas for qualitative research. London: SAGE.

Arnould, E. J., & Price, L. L. (1993). River magic: Extraordinary experience and the extended service encounter. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *20*(1), 24-45. doi:10.1086/209331

Arnould, E. J., & Thompson, C. J. (2005). Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *31*(4), 868-882.

Askegaard, S., & Linnet, J. T. (2011). Towards an epistemology of consumer culture theory: Phenomenology and the context of context. *Marketing Theory*, *11*(4), 381-404.

Bailey, K. D. (1994). *Typologies and taxonomies: an introduction to classification techniques*. Sage Publications.

Barbour, K. (2004). Embodied Ways of Knowing. *Waikato Journal of Education*, *10*, 227-238.

Barczak, G. (2017). Writing a review article: From the editor. *Journal of Product Innovation management*, *34*(2), 120-121.

Becker, L. (2018). Methodological proposals for the study of consumer experience. *Qualitative Market Research*, *21*(4), 465-490.

Becker, L., & Jaakkola, E. (2020). Customer experience: fundamental premises and implications for research. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *48*, 630-648.

Belk, R. W., Fischer, E., & Kozinets, R.V. (2013). *Qualitative Consumer & Marketing Research*. Sage, London.

Berry, L. L., Carbon, L. P., & Haeckel, S. H. (2002). Managing the total customer experience. *MIT Sloan Management Review, 43*(3), 85-89.

Bevan, M. T. (2014). A method of phenomenological interviewing. *Qualitative Health Research*, *24*(1), 136-144.

Bitner, M. J. (1990). Evaluating service encounters: The effects of physical surroundings and employee responses. *The Journal of Marketing*, *54*(2), 69-82.

Bolton, R. N., Gustafsson, A., McColl-Kennedy, J., Sirianni, N. J., & Tse, D. K. (2014). "Small details that make big differences: a radical approach to consumption experience as a firm's differentiating strategy. *Journal of Service Management*, *25*(2), 253-274.

Bolton, R. N., McColl-Kennedy, J. R., Cheung, L., Gallan, A., Orsingher, C., Witell, L., & Zaki, M. (2018). Customer experience challenges: bringing together digital, physical and social realms. *Journal of Service Management*, *29*(5), 776-808.

Booth, A., Papaioannou, D., & Sutton, A. (2012). *Systematic Approaches to a Successful Literature Review*. London: Sage.

Bowen, D. E. (2016). The changing role of employees in service theory and practice: an interdisciplinary view. *Human Resource Management Review*, *26*(1), 4-13.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101.

Brocato, E. D., Voorhees, C. M., & Baker, J. (2012). Understanding the influence of cues from other customers in the service experience: A scale development and validation. *Journal of Retailing*, *88*(3), 384-398.

Bowen, D. E. (2016). The changing role of employees in service theory and practice: an interdisciplinary view. *Human Resource Management Review*, *26*(1), 4-13.

Burrell, G., & Morgan, G. (1979). *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis: Elements of the Sociology of Corporate Life*. Portsmouth, UK: Heinemann Educational Books.

Carson, D., Gilmore, A., Perry, C., & Groghaug, K. (2001). *Qualitative marketing research*. London: Sage.

Carù, A., & Cova, B. (2003). Revisiting Consumption Experience: A More Humble but Complete View of the Concept. *Marketing Theory*, *3*(2), 267-286.

Cova, B., Kozinets, R., & Shankar, A. (2012). *Consumer tribes*. Routledge.

Crick. J. M. (2021) Qualitative research in marketing: what can academics do better? *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, *29*(5), 390-429

Crossley, Nick. (1995). Merleau Ponty, the Elusive Body and Carnal Sociology. *Body and Society*, *1*(1), 43-63.

Crossley, Nick. (2001). *The Social Body: Habit, Identity and Desire*. London: SAGE.

Crossley, Nick. (2004). The Circuit Trainer's Habitus: Reflexive Body Techniques and the Sociality of the Workout. *Body & Society*, *10*(1), 37-69.

Crossley, N. (2005). Maintenance Mapping Reflexive Body Techniques: On body Modification and Maintenance. *Body & Society*, *11*(1), 1-35.

Crossley, Nick. (2007). Researching Embodiment by Way of Body Techniques. *The Sociological Review, 55*(1), 80-94.

Cunliffe, A. (2010). Retelling tales of the field: in search of organizational ethnography 20 years on. *Organizational Research Methods*, *13*(2), 224-239.

Darwin, C. (1998). *The expression of the emotions in man and animals.* London, United Kingdom: Harper Collins Publishers. (Original work published 1872).

De Jaegher, H., & Di Paolo, E. (2007). Participatory sense-making: An enactive approach to social cognition. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, *6*(4), 485-507.

De Keyser, A., Schepers, J., & Konuş, U. (2015). Multichannel customer segmentation: Does the after-sales channel matter? A replication and extension. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *32*(4), 453-456.

De Keyser, A., Verleye, K., Lemon, K. N., Keiningham, T. L., Klaus, P. (2020) Moving the Customer Experience Field Forward: Introducing the Touchpoints, Context, Qualities (TCQ) Nomenclature. *Journal of Service Research*, *23*(4), 433-455.

Denzin, N. K. (1978). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods* (2nd ed). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Denzin, N. K. (2014). *Interpretive autoethnography* (2nd Ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dube, A., & Helkkula, A. (2015). Service experiences beyond the direct use: Indirect customer use experiences of smartphone apps. *Journal of Service Management*, *26*(2), 224-248.

Echeverri, P., & Skålen, P. (2011). Co-creation and co-destruction: a practice-theory based study of interactive value formation. *Marketing Theory*, *11*(3), 351-373.

Echeverri, P., & Salomonson, N. (2017). Embodied value co-creation: a turn-taking perspective on service encounter interactions. *Journal of Creating Value*, *3*(1), 33-49.

Edvardsson, B., Gustafsson, A., & Roos, I. (2005). Service portraits in service research: a critical review. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, *16*(1), 107-121.

Ellis, C. (2004). *The Ethnographic I: A methodological Novel About Autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2011). *Autoethnography: An Overview. Historical Social Research*, *36*(4), 273-290.

Elpidorou, A., & Freeman, L (2014). The Phenomenology and Science of Emotions: An Introduction. *Phenomenology and the cognitive sciences, 13*, 507-511.

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. 2nd Edition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Engelsrud, G. (2005). The Lived Body as Experience and Perspective: Methodological Challenges. *Qualitative Research*, *5*(3), 267-284.

Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). The role of performance feedback in the self-assessment of competence: A research study with nursing clinicians. *Collegian*, *13*(1), 10-15.

Fuchs, T., & De Jaegher, H. (2009). Enactive intersubjectivity: Participatory sense-making and mutual incorporation. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, *8*(4), 465-486.

Gallagher, S. (2005). *How the Body Shapes the Mind.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Gentile, C., Spiller, N., & Noci, G. (2007). How to sustain the customer experience: an overview of experience components that co-create value with the customer. *European Management Journal*, *25*(5), 395-410.

Gherardi, S., Meriläinen, S., Strati, A., & Valtonen, A. (2013). Editors' introduction: a practice-based view on the body, senses and knowing in organization. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, *29*(4), 333-337.

Given, L. M. (Ed.) (2008). *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods.* Sage Publications.

Goldie, P. (2002). Emotions, feelings, and intentionality. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, *1*, 235-254.

Groenewald, T. (2004). A phenomenological research design illustrated. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *3*(1), 42-55.

Grönroos, C., & Voima, P. (2013). Critical service logic: Making sense of value creation and co-creation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *41*(2), 133-150.

Gummesson, E., (2001). Are current research approaches in marketing leading us astray? *Marketing Theory*, *1*(1), 27-48.

Gummesson, E. (2005). Qualitative research in marketing: road-map for a wilderness of complexity and unpredictability. *European Journal of Marketing*, *39*(3/4), 309-327.

Gummesson, E. (2017). *Case Theory in business and management: Reinventing case study research.* Sage Publications, London. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473920811

Gärtner, C. (2013). Cognition, Knowing and Learning in the Flesh: Six Views on Embodied Knowing in Organization Studies. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, *29*(4), 338-352.

Haynes, K. (2011). Tensions in (re)presenting the self in reflexive autoethnographical research. *Qualitative Research in Orgnizations and Management: An International Journal*, *6*(2), 134-149.

Heinonen, K., & Strandvik, T. (2015). Customer-Dominant Logic: Foundations and Implications. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *29*(6/7), 472-484.

Heinonen, K., Strandvik, T., Mickelsson, J., & Edvarsson, B. (2010). A Customer-Dominant Logic of Service. *Journal of Service Marketing*, *21*(4), 531-548.

Helkkula, A., & Kelleher, C. (2010). Circularity of customer service experience and customer perceived value. *Journal of Customer Behavior*, *9*(1), 37-53.

Helkkula, A. (2011). Characterising the concept of service experience. *Journal of Service Management, 22*(3), 367-389.

Helkkula, A., Kelleher, C., & Pihlström, M. (2012). Characterizing value as an experience: implications for service researchers and managers. *Journal of Service Research*, *15*(1), 59-75.

Hewer, P., & Hamilton, K. (2010). On emotions and salsa: Some thoughts on dancing to rethink consumers. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, *9*(2), 113-125.

Holbrook, M. B., & Hirschman, E. C. (1982). The experiential aspects of consumption: consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *9*(2), 132-140.

Holbrook, M. (1999). Introduction to consumer value. In Holbrook, M. (Ed.), *Consumer Value: A Framework for Analysis and Research* (pp. 1-28). Routledge, London.

Holt, D. (2004). *How Brands Become Icons*. Harvard Business Press, Boston, MA.

Homburg, C., Jozić, D., & Kuehnl, C. (2017). Customer experience management: toward implementing an evolving marketing concept. *Journal of the Academic Marketing Science*, 45, 377-401.

Høffding, S., & Martiny, K. (2016). Framing a phenomenological interview: what, why and how, *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, *15*, 539-564.

Huang, J., & Hsu C. H. C. (2010). The Impact of Customer-to-Customer Interaction on Cruise Experience and Vacation Satisfaction. *Journal of Travel Research*, *49*(1), 79-92.

Husserl, E. (1989). *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy, second book: Studies in the phenomenology of constitution* (R. Rojcewicz & A. Schuwer, Trans.). Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Kluwer. (Original work published 1952).

Husserl, E. (1980). *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy*, First Book (F. Kersten, Trans.). The Hague, the Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff. (Original work published 1913) http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-94- 009-8779-1

Jaakkola, E., & Hakanen, T. (2012). Value co-creation in solution networks. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *42*(1), 47-58.

Jaakkola, E., Helkkula, A., & Aarikka-Stenroos, L. (2015). Service experience co-creation: Conceptualization, implications and future research directions. *Journal of Service Management*, *26*(2), 283-305.

Jain, R., Aagja, J., & Bagdare, S. (2017). Customer experience – A review and research agenda. *Journal of Service Theory and Practice*, *27*(3), 642-662.

James, W. (1884). What is an emotion? *Mind*, *9*(34), 188-205. http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/mind/os-IX.34 .188.

Johnson A. (1996). It's Good to Talk': The Focus Group and the Sociological Imagination. *The Sociological Review*, *44*(3), 517-538.

Joy, A., & Sherry, J. F., Jr. (2003). Speaking of art as embodied imagination: A multisensory approach to understanding aesthetic experience. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *30*(2), 259-282.

Kiesinger, C. E. (2002). My father's shoes: The therapeutic value of narrative reframing. In Arthur P. Bochner & Carolyn Ellis (Eds.), *Ethnographically speaking: Autoethnography, literature, and aesthetics* (pp. 95-114). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.

Kim, H. S., & Choi, B. (2016). The effects of three customer-to-customer interaction quality types on customer experience quality and citizenship behavior in mass service settings. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *30*(4), 384-397.

Kjosavik, F., Beyer, C., & Fricke, C. (2019). *Husserl's phenomenology of intersubjectivity: historical interpretations and contemporary applications*. New York NY, Routledge.

Klaus, P., & Kuppelwieser, V. (2021). Guiding directions and propositions: Placing dynamics at the heart of customer experience (CX) research. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *59*, 1-3.

Klaus, P., & Maklan, S. (2011). Bridging the gap for destination extreme sports: A model of sports tourism customer experience. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *27*(13-14), 1341-1365.

Kranzbühler, A.-M., Kleijnen, M. H. P., Morgan, R. E., & Teerling, M. (2017). The multilevel nature of customer experience research: An integrative review and research agenda. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, *00*, 1-24.

Krishna, A. (2012). An integrative review of sensory marketing: engaging the senses to affect perception, judgment, and behavior. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *22*, 332-351.

Kuuru, T.-K., & Närvänen, E. (2019). Embodied interaction in customer experience: a phenomenological study of group fitness. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *35*(13/14), 1241-1266.

Kuuru, T.-K., Litovuo, L., Aarikka-Stenroos, L., & Helander, N. (2020). Emotions in customer experience. In Lehtimäki, H., Uusikylä, P. & Smedlund, A. (Eds), *Society as an Interaction Space: A Systemic Approach* (pp. 247-274). Springer, Singapore.

Küpers, W. (2010). Perspectives on integral 'pheno-pragma-practice' in organisations'. *International Journal of Management Practice*, *4*(1), 27-50.

Küpers, W. (2013). Phenomenology of Aesthetic Organising -- Ways Towards Aesthetically Responsive Organizations. *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, *5*(1), 21-46.

Larivière, B., Bowen, D., Andreassen, T. W., Kunz, W., Sirianni, N. J., Voss, C., Wünderlich, N. V., & De Keyser, A. (2017). "Service Encounter 2.0": An investigation into the roles of technology, employees and customers. *Journal of Business Research*, *79*, 238-246.

Lastner, M. M., Folse, J. A. G., Mangus, S. M., & Fennell, P. (2016). The road to recovery: Overcoming service failures through positive emotions. *Journal of Business Research*, *69*(10), 4278-4286.

Leder, D. (1990). *The absent body*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lemon, K. N., & Verhoef, P. C. (2016). Understanding customer experience throughout the customer journey. *Journal of Marketing*, *80*, 69-96.

Lipkin, M. (2016). Customer experience formation in today's service landscape. *Journal of Service Management*, *27*(5), 678-703.

Lloyd, A. E., Sherriff, T. & Luk, K. (2011). Interaction behaviors leading to comfort in the service encounter. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *25*(3), 176-189.

Maiese, M. (2014). How can emotions be both cognitive and bodily? *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, *13*, 513-531.

Manthiou, A., Hickman, E., Klaus, P. (2020). Beyond good and bad: challenging the suggested role of emotions in customer experience (CX) research. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *57*(2), 102218.

Mattila, A. S., & Enz, C. A. (2002). The role of emotions in service encounters. *Journal of Service Research*, *4*(4), 268-277.

Mattila, A., Hanks, L., & Wang, C. (2014). Others service experiences: Emotions, perceived justice, and behavior. *European Journal of Marketing*, *48*(3–4), 552-571.

Mascarenhas, O. A., Kesavan, R., & Bernacchi, M. (2006). Lasting customer loyalty: a total customer experience approach. *Journal of consumer marketing*, *23*(7), 397-405.

Maslow, A. H. (1954). *Motivation and Personality*. Harper & Row, New York, NY.

McColl-Kennedy, J. R., Gustafsson, A., Jaakkola, E., Klaus, P., Radnor, Z. J., Perks, H., & Friman, M. (2015). Fresh perspectives on customer experience. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *29*(6/7), 430-435.

McDowell, L. (2009). *Working bodies: Interactive service employment and workplace identities*. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.

Mehrabian, A., & Russell, J. A. (1974). *An Approach to Environmental Psychology*. Cambridge, MA: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *The Phenomenology of Perception* (Phénoménologie de la Perception, 1945), in Smith, C. (Ed.), Routledge, London.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964). *Sense and nonsense*. (H. L. Dreufys & P. A. Dreufys, Trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1989). *The Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Colin Smith. London: Routledge.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968). *The Visible and the Invisible*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Meyer, C., & Schwager, A. (2007). Understanding Customer Experience. *Harvard Business Review, 85*(2), 117-126.

Morgan, D. L. (2002). Focus group interviewing. *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method*, 141-159.

Murphy, S., Patterson, M. & O'Malley, L. (2019). Learning how: body techniques, skill acquisition and the consumption of experience. *Marketing Theory*, *19*(4), 425-445.

Novak, T. P., Hoffman, D. L., & Yiu-Fai, Y. (2000). Measuring the customer experience in online environments: a structural modeling approach. *Marketing Science*, *19*(1), 22-42.

Ostrom, A., Bitner, M. J., Brown, S. W., Burkhard, K. A., Goul, M., Smith-Daniels, V. & Rabinovich, E. (2010), Moving forward and making a difference: research priorities for the science of service. *Journal of Service Research*, *13*(1), 4-36.

Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1998). Welcome to the experience economy. *Harvard Business Review*, *76*, 97-105.

Palmer, A. (2010). Customer experience management: a critical review of an emerging idea. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *24*, 196-208.

Palmer, M. T., & Simmons, K. B. (1995). Communicating intentions through nonverbal behaviors conscious and unconscious encoding of liking. *Human Communication Research*, *22*(1), 128-160.

Pareigis, J., Echeverri, P., & Edvardsson, B. (2012). Exploring internal mechanisms forming customer servicescape experiences. *Journal of Service Management*, *23*(5), 677-695.

Parviainen, J. (2014). The performativity of 'double bodies': exploring the phenomenological conception of Leib/Körper distinction in interactive bodywork. *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion*, *6*(4), 311-326.

Patrício, L., Fisk, R. P., Falcão e Cunha, J., & Constantine, L. (2011). Multilevel service design: from customer value constellation to service experience blueprinting. *Journal of Service Research*, *14*(2), 180-200.

Payne, A. F., Storbacka, K., & Frow, P. (2008). Managing the co-creation of value. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *36*, 83-96.

Polanyi, M. (1966). *The tacit dimension*. New York: Doubleday & Company Inc.

Pullman, M. E., & Gross, M. A. (2004). Ability of experience design elements to elicit emotions and loyalty behaviors. *Decision Sciences*, *35*(3), 555-578.

Reichertz, J. (2014). Induction, deduction, abduction. In Flick U. (Ed.) *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis* (pp. 123-135). SAGE Publications Ltd.

Roald, T., Levin, K. & Køppe, S. (2018). Affective Incarnations. Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology, *38*(4), 205-218.

Rokka, J. (2021). Consumer Culture Theory's future in marketing. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, *29*(1), 114-124.

Ropo, A., & Parviainen, J. (2001). Leadership and bodily knowledge in expert organizations: epistemological rethinking. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, *17*(1), 1-18.

Sandberg, J., & Dall'Alba, G. (2009). Returning to practice anew: a life-world perspective. *Organization Studies*, *30*(12), 1349-1368.

Sandström, S., Edvardsson, B., Kristensson, P., & Magnusson, P. (2008). Value in use through service experience. *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*, *18*(2), 112-126.

Schibbye, A. L. (2002). Dialektisk relasjonsforståelse i Psykoterapi med individ, par og familie [Dialectic Relations-Thought in Psychotherapy with Individuals, Couples and the Family]. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Schmitt, B. H. (1999). *Experiential Marketing: How to Get Customers to Sense, Feel, Think, Act, Relate to Your Company and Brands*. New York: The Free Press.

Scott, R., Cayla, J., & Cova, B. (2017). Selling pain to the saturated self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *44*, 22-43.

Scott, R., & Uncles. M. (2018). Bringing Sensory Anthropology to Consumer Research. *European Journal of Marketing, 52*(½), 302-327.

Schau, H. J., Muniz, A. M. Jr & Arnould, E. J. (2009). How brand community practices create value. *Journal of Marketing, 73*(9), 30-51.

Schneider, B., & Bowen, D.E. (1999). Understanding customer delight and outrage. *Sloan Management Review, 41*(Fall), 35-45.

Schouten, J. W., & McAlexander, J. H. (1995). Subcultures of consumption: an ethnography of the new bikers. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *22*(1), 43-61.

Schrembi, S. (2006). Rationalizing service logic or understanding services as experience. *Marketing Theory, 6*(3), 381-392.

Seaman, D. (2000). A Way of Seeing People and Place: Phenomenology in Environment-Behavior Research. In: S. Wapner, J. Demick, T. Yamamoto and H. Minami (eds), *Theoretical Perspectives in Environment-Behavior Research. Kluwer Academic Publishers* (pp. 157-178). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4615-4701-3_13.

Seregina, A., & Weijo, H. A. (2017). Play at Any Cost: How Cosplayers Produce and Sustain Their Ludic Communal Consumption Experiences. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *44*(1), 139-159.

Shilling, C. (2012). *The body and social theory*. London: Sage Publications.

Sokolowski, R. (2000). *Introduction to phenomenology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Solnet, D., Subramony, M., Ford, R., Golubovskaya, M., Kang, H., & Hancer, M. (2019). Leveraging human touch in service interactions: lessons from hospitality. *Journal of Service Management*, *30*(3), 392-409.

Sparkes, A. C. (2009). Ethnography and the senses: challenges and possibilities. *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise, 1*(1), 21-235.

Spiggle, S. (1994). Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data in Consumer Research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *21*(3), 491-503.

Stein, A., & Ramaseshan, B. (2016). Towards the identification of customer experience touch point elements. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *30*, 8-19.

Stern, B. B., Thompson, C. J., & Arnould, E. J. (1998). Narrative analysis of a marketing relationship: the consumer's perspective. *Psychology and Marketing, 15*(3), 195-214.

Stevens, L., Maclaran, P., & Brown, S. (2019). An embodied approach to consumer experiences: The Hollister brandscape. *European Journal of Marketing, 53*(4), 806-828.

Strati, A. (2007). Sensible knowledge and practice-based learning. *Management Learning, 38*(1), 61-77.

Sundaram, D. S., & Webster, C., (2000). The role of nonverbal communication in service encounters. *Journal of Services Marketing, 14*(5), 378-391.

Tadajewski, M. (2016). Focus groups: History, epistemology and non-individualistic consumer research. *Consumption Markets and Culture*, *19*(4), 319-345.

Tax, S. S., McCutcheon, D., & Wilkinson, I. F. (2013). The service de- livery network (SDN): a customer-centric perspective of the customer journey. *Journal of Service Research*, *16*(4), 454-470.

Thanem, T., & Knights, D. (2019). Embodied Research Methods. London: SAGE.

Thompson, G. J., Locander, W. B., & Pollio, H. R. (1989). Research: The philosophy and method of existential-phenomenology. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *16*(2), 133-146.

Thompson, C.J. (1997). Interpreting consumers: a hermeneutic framework for deriving marketing insights from the texts of consumers' consumption stories. Journal of Marketing Research, *34*(4). November, 438-455.

Thompson, C. J. (1998). Living the texts of everyday life: a hermeneutic perspective on the relationships between consumer stories and life-world structures. In Stern, B. (Ed.), *Representing Consumers: Voices, Views and Vision*, Routledge, London.

Threlfall, K. D. (1999). Using focus groups as a consumer research tool. *Journal of Marketing Practice: Applied Marketing Science*, *5*(4), 102-105.

Tombs, A., & McColl-Kennedy, J. R. (2010). Social and spatial influence of customers on other customers in the social-servicescape. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, *18*(3), 120-131.

Torraco, R. J. (2005). Writing integrative literature reviews: guidelines and examples. *Human Resource Development Review*, *4*(3), 356-367.

Turkington, C. (1996). The Brain Encyclopaedia. Checkmark Books, New York, NY.

Turner, T. (1994). Bodies and anti-bodies: Flesh and fetish in contemporary social theory. In T. Csordad (Ed.), *Embodiment and experience: The existential ground of culture and self* (pp. 27-47). Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Tynan, C., McKechnie, C., & Hartley, S. (2014). Interpreting Value in the Customer Service Experience Using Customer-Dominant Logic. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *30*(9-10), 1058-1081.

Valtonen, A., Markuksela, V., & Moisander, J. (2010). Doing sensory ethnography in consumer research. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, *34*(4), 375-380.

Valtonen, A., & Närvänen, E. (2015). Gendered reading body in the bed. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *31*(15-16), 1583-1601.

Warde, A. (2005). Consumption and theories of practice. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, *5*(2), 131-153.

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. (2004). Evolving to a new dominant logic. *Journal of Marketing*, *68*(1), 1-17.

Vargo, S. L., , & Lusch, R. (2008). Service-dominant logic: continuing the evolution. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *36*(1), 1–10.

Venkatesh, A., Penaloza, L., & Firat, A. F. (2006). The market as a sign system and the logic of the market. In Lusch, R.F. & Vargoeds, S.L. (Eds.), *The Service-Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate, and Directions* (pp. 251-265). M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, NY.

Verhoef, P. C., Lemon, N., Parasuraman, A., Roggeveen, A., Tsiros, M., & Schlesinger, L. A. (2009). Customer experience creation: determinants, dynamics, and management strategies. *Journal of Retailing*, *85*(1), 31-41.

Voorhees, C. M., Fombelle, P. W., Gregoire, Y., Bone, S., Gustafsson, A., Sousa, R., & Walkowiak, T. (2017). Service encounters, experiences and the customer journey: defining the field and a call to expand our lens. *Journal of Business Research*, 79, 269-280.

Warr D. J. (2005). It was fun... but we don't usually talk about these things: Analyzing Sociable Interaction in Focus Groups. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *112*, 200-225.

Wetherall, M. (2012) *Affect and Emotion. A New Social Science Understanding.* London, UK: Sage.

Wiederman, M. W. (2015). Sexual script theory: Past, present and future. In J. DeLamater & R. F. Plante (Eds.), *Handbook of the sociology of sexualities* (pp. 7-22). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Wieseke, J., Geigenmüller, A., & Kraus, F. (2012). On the role of empathy in customer-employee interactions. *Journal of Service Research*, *15*(3), 316-331.

Willems, T. (2018). Seeing and sensing the railways: a phenomenological view on practice-based learning. *Management Learning*, *49*(1), 23-39.

Wirtz, J. & Jerger, C. (2017). Managing service employees: literature review, expert opinions, and research directions. *The Service Industries Journal*, *36*(15/16), 757-788.

Wirtz, J., Patterson, P. G., Kunz, W. H., Gruber, T., Lu, V. N., Paluch, S., & Martins, A. (2018). Brave new world: service robots in the frontline. *Journal of Service Management*, *29*(5), 907-931.

vom Lehn, D. (2006). Embodying experience: A video-based examination of visitors' conduct and interaction in museums. *European Journal of Marketing*, *40*(11/12), 1340-1359.

Yadav, M. S. (2010). The decline of conceptual articles and implications for knowledge development. *Journal of Marketing*, *74*(1), 1-19.

Yakhlef, A. (2015). Customer experience within retail environments: An embodied, spatial approach. *Marketing Theory*, *15*, 545-564.

Zomerdijk, L. G. & Voss, C. A. (2009). Service design for experience-centric services. *Journal of Service Research*, *13*(1), 67-82.

PUBLICATION
I

Emotions in Customer Experience

Kuuru, T-K., Litovuo, L., Aarikka-Stenroos, L. & Helander, N.

Emotions in Customer Experience

Abstract

The aim of this chapter is to display how emotions build experiences in interactive society. To map out the emotions' essential role in experiences, the chapter focuses to look over the literature on emotions in customer experience (CX), which is defined as an umbrella term for diverse experiences. The chapter introduces four key insights to underline the integral relation between emotions in CX in interactive society: 1) We identify eight different types and suggest a framework that captures these key types on how emotions build experiences, 2) emotions in CX are essential both in offline and online environments, 3) the diversity of emotions in interactive society is broad from positive and negative ones, and especially the role of the negative emotions should be acknowledged and further explored, and 4) we propose a set of definitions to clarify different terms used around emotions. The framework serves as a tool that guides practitioners and researchers and other professionals to acknowledge different facets of emotions when aiming to co-create experiences and manage them in the interactive society.

Keywords
Customer experience, emotions, feelings, affection, interaction

Introduction

Experiences are a fundamental part of everyday life in all levels of society, being created in various forms of interaction between individuals, organizations and social system. Thus, we as individuals, professionals and citizens in interactive society are all continuously creating experiences - building our own and shaping others'. This complex foundation makes experiences a fascinating research topic and furthermore experiences offer organizations a way to gain a competitive advantage by creating memorable experiences for their customers (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). To create these memorable experiences, scholars have highlighted the importance of emotions in experience (Bastiaansen *et al.*, 2018). Still, we know only a little about the connection between emotions and customers' experience. Hence, in this chapter, we are concentrating on building a comprehensive understanding of emotions in customer experience (CX) based on the CX literature.

CX is relevant for multiple industries from retail to wellness and travel to banking. We concentrate on CX as it is often applied as an umbrella term for different experiences including service experiences, user experiences, and patient experiences. CX emerges through the digital and face-to-face interactions customers have during the provision of different services (Bolton *et al.*, 2018). Thus, increasing the understanding how emotions build CX in diverse forms of interaction is a matter of numerous professionals in all levels of society. The interactions occur in different relations both directly and indirectly throughout the society: between customers and an organization, a brand, a product, a technology, other customers and networks of actors (Meyer & Schwager, 2007; Teixeira *et al.*, 2012; Jaakkola *et al.*, 2015). Hence, CX is a constantly ongoing part of interaction in individual, relational as well as system levels (Helkkula, 2011; Vargo & Lusch, 2016).

Despite the notions that emotionally fueled experiences are tightly related to interaction, the understanding how emotions relate to experiences in the interactive society is still missing. Thus far, only a few studies have explicitly linked CX and emotions. Some of these studies focused on the

emotional dimension of CX and developed scales for measuring it (e.g. Jüttner *et al.*, 2013; Novak *et al.*, 2000), whereas others examined particular emotions in CX in specific contexts, such as luxury brands (Kim *et al.*, 2016), healthcare (McColl-Kennedy *et al.*, 2017), service failures (Balaji *et al.*, 2017) and service recovery (Mattila *et al.*, 2013). Although these studies among others emphasize the relevance of emotions embedded in various forms of interaction, the studies do not provide a comprehensive understanding on how emotions build CX. Therefore, in brief, more systematic, detailed, and structured analysis is needed to capture and present the diversity of emotions in CX. That is where we contribute.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the role of emotions in CX in individual, relational and society levels. We systematically reviewed 129 articles (see Torraco, 2005), from which we structurally mapped the diversity of research fields where emotions in CX are present so far, identified the theoretical approaches and terms applied to examine emotions in CX, and illustrated how emotions are present in CX research. As a conclusion, we build a structured, clarifying framework, which identifies eight conceptualization types for emotions in CX. By doing so, our study enables researchers and practitioners to use concepts and terms more systematically and to study, develop, and manage emotions in CX in a more advanced way.

We acknowledge that emotions can be studied from many disciplinary and theoretical perspectives, including, business, psychological, and sociological perspectives. In this chapter, we apply business, and particularly marketing and management perspective. The chapter is structured as follows: First, we start by discussing the theoretical background of the two key concepts, CX and emotions. We then explain the methods for data collection and analysis. We introduce key findings regarding emotions in CX from which we develop an integrative framework for emotions in CX. We conclude by suggesting the theoretical and managerial implications and suggest directions for future research.

Customer experience and emotions: feelers co-creating experiences in interactive society

Customer experience

CX research crosscuts many disciplines including economics, psychology, marketing and management. However, the importance of CX really started to develop in the early 1980s, when consumer research scholars began to consider customers as feelers, thinkers, and doers rather than as rational decision-makers (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Shortly after, ignorance of the role of experience in the consumer research was widely noted (Belk, 1984; Fennell, 1985). Years after, we have seen a dramatic increase in CX research and the shift from a traditional product-based economy to an experience-based economy, where CX is seen as a competitive advantage that is difficult for competitors to duplicate (Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Grewal *et al.*, 2009). The shift is noted also in experience research throughout the disciplines, and several types of experiences are distinguished: user experience, service experience (Jaakkola *et al.*, 2015), consumer experience (Howard, 1965), product experience (Hoch, 2012) and customer experience (Verhoef *et al.*, 2009). In this chapter we focus on customer experience.

The emergence and interest towards experiences are fueled by the pivotal work of Vargo and Lusch (2004, 2008) on service-dominant logic that emphasizes the experiential nature of value. CX and customer's perceived value interrelate with each other. Value is at the same time an individual and contextual function in interaction between subjects which resides in the CX (Echeverri & Skålen, 2011). CX incorporates customer's cognitive, emotional, sensory, social and spiritual responses to all interactions with an organization or other actors (Jain *et al.*, 2017). This definition highlights CX as being strongly individual, while also recognizing the importance of social aspects, as experiences are

always co-created (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Therefore, CX is strongly connected to interactions as co-creation is defined as a function of interaction. Thus, CX is always co-created in interaction between customer and the organization and/ or other actors (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Jain *et al.*, 2017).

The various interactions are taking place in the search, purchase, consumption, and after-sale phases a customer has with an organization through which CX emerges and evolves (Varma, 2012; Verhoef *et al.*, 2009). However, CX is more complex to manage compared to interactions, as CX is subjective, dynamic and unique interpretations of events and dependent on many personal and contextual factors (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2011). Moreover, in today's networked business environment multiple actors are participating to CX co-creation within a system of different actors (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Customers are therefore increasingly encountering multiple providers during service delivery forming a social system, which are all affecting the dynamic evaluation of their experience.

Because of the reciprocal nature of the interaction, researchers and practitioners can examine CX from the perspective of either the provider or the individual customer (Helkkula, 2011). The provider perspective highlights a firm's ability to understand every facet of the CX throughout all direct and indirect encounters (Frow & Payne, 2007) whereas the customer perspective highlights the subjective responses of the individual throughout the customer journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Theoretical roots of emotions

Emotions play a major role in CX. Emotions are produced by an individual's unique appraisal of experience, which is created from an evaluation and interpretation of actions and the prevailing environment. In other words, emotions are always experienced subjectively, and different people can have different emotional reactions to the same action under the same circumstances. Emotions play a significant role in determining behaviors and actions (Carlson *et al.*, 2007), and are therefore critical when investigating for example consumer behavior. Emotions are often accompanied by physiological processes and expressed physically (e.g., in gestures, posture, facial features). Just as emotions are perceived individually, they also vary and manifest in different ways. Similar to CX, emotions are also social in nature as, emotions are socially contagious meaning that people are attracted to the emotions displayed by someone with whom they interact (Huang, 2001).

Emotion research has roots in psychology (see Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). Emotions are usually studied by emphasizing their biological, cognitive, or social aspects, opening up this research area to not only psychologists but also neuroscientists, philosophers, educators, and even economists. This multidisciplinarity of emotions research may have led to nonsystematic use of emotion terminology (e.g., emotions, affects, and feelings) in business-oriented literature, with a few notable exceptions. According to Gentile *et al.* (2007), affective experience is generated at the system level based on the spectrum of *emotions, feelings, and moods*. These, in turn, can be further described according to their features, like intensity, duration, cause, awareness, and control (Scherer, 2005). Generally, moods are characterized by the enduring predominance of certain types of subjective feelings that affect a person's experience and behavior and may last from hours to days (Scherer, 2005) or even months (Jalonen *et al.*, 2016). Although feelings are subjective experiences of individual persons, emotions are projected feelings and are typically manifested in social interaction (Jalonen *et al.*, 2016).

To sum up, experiences are created in various forms of interactions, in which value is resided and emotions embedded. Experiences are subjective in nature, while also socially and contextually constructed, mirroring the relevance of experience in the individual, relational and system level in the society. In other words, the interactive society is full of complex bundles of relations resulting in

experiences shaped by emotions. To clarify, how emotions actually build experiences in different levels we next analyze and discuss how emotions are present in current CX literature.

Methodology

Research design of systematic literature review: gathering and identifying relevant articles

To analyze emotions in CX research, we followed an established research procedure for systematic literature reviews. It provides explicit methods for identifying and selecting relevant publications and questioning and analyzing them (see Booth *et al.*, 2012). To gather research on CX examining the emotional aspects, we used a two-phase search: We began by identifying and collecting all relevant research articles on CX and then, in the second phase, focused on those that examined emotions. We selected two databases, Web of Science (WoS) and EBSCO, as they cover a wide range of good-quality journals in marketing and management, and related fields such as technology and innovation management, as well as recent research from all geographic locations. In the first phase, we conducted a systematic search for all articles published before May 2018 in which the title, keywords, or abstract mentioned the words "customer experience." The search yielded a total of 399 articles from EBSCO and 570 articles from WoS. Duplicates were checked and removed. As we focused on scholarly peer-reviewed articles, we excluded book reviews and editorials. This analytical round reduced the number of hits to 336 articles. In the second phase, from these identified CX articles we zoomed in on those that examined or were related to emotional aspects and included—in their title, keywords, or abstract—at least one of the following search terms or its variation: emotion, feeling, affection or sentiment. These delimitations and searches resulted in the selection of 129 research articles for final, detailed content analysis. The full citations of these articles are listed in Appendix 1.

Content analysis of selected articles

In the analysis phase, we conducted a content analysis of the 129 articles. Content analysis employs quantitative and qualitative textual analysis, requires minimal interference by the researcher in the phenomenon studied, and can handle large volumes (Krippendorff, 1980; Weber, 1985). We emphasized qualitative content and thematic analysis. We first read through all the articles to acquire a general view of the studies and then compared, categorized, and coded the contents. We focused on analyzing the classification of the forum and identifying the key conceptualizations on "emotion" as well as the major theoretical models and approaches. In addition, we classified the major research themes and empirical research contexts.

Researcher triangulation strengthened the analysis throughout the process: Four researchers representing different disciplines (marketing, management, service, and engineering) participated in interpreting and categorizing the data. Knowledge of diverse, interlinked research streams was needed in making decisions about categorization, and all the researchers collectively defined the coding procedures and limitations. The researchers assessed and jointly compared the key content of the articles, for example, by employing Excel and Word tabling to ensure consistency of categorization, and the researchers discussed their interpretations of the research findings to improve the quality of the findings, which are presented next.

Findings: how emotions in CX are co-created in interactive society

Overview to roles of emotions in CX

Emotions are, indeed, created in complex sets of interaction with other actors in online and offline environments but are always subjectively interpreted and experienced by an individual. In this

chapter, we expand the current understanding of how emotions build CX in interactive society and provide an overview of our key findings followed by a more detailed discussion on each of them.

The discussion on emotions and CX is taking place mostly in individual and relational level even though it is acknowledged that emotions in CX are actually becoming real in complex systems. To clarify our findings we introduce an integrative framework (Figure 1) that illustrates how emotions build CX and highlights the diversity of emotions in CX in interactive society. The framework consists of eight different emotion types. Type 1 concerns emotions emerging in direct person-to-person and online encounters between a customer and an organization or its representative. The type 2 is emotional stimuli or cue (e.g. music or design) the service provider uses to affect customers' emotions. Type 3 addresses customers' emotional responses to providers' different cues. Type 4 focuses on how customers' evaluations of their experience are affected and processed in the emotional dimension (part of the cylinder in Figure 1), which is present in all interactions customer has with the organization or its' elements. The type 5 represents the emotional aspects in different phases of decision-making and buying process, including information seeking, evaluation, purchase, and post-purchase phases (represented as cylinder segments in Figure 1). In type 6, emotions are drivers of experience outcomes (represented as an arrow above cylinder in Figure 1). Type 7 focuses on emotional links and bonds, for example, towards an organization's brand or technology. Type 8 addresses the diversity of emotions in CX and their emergence in all levels in interactive society.
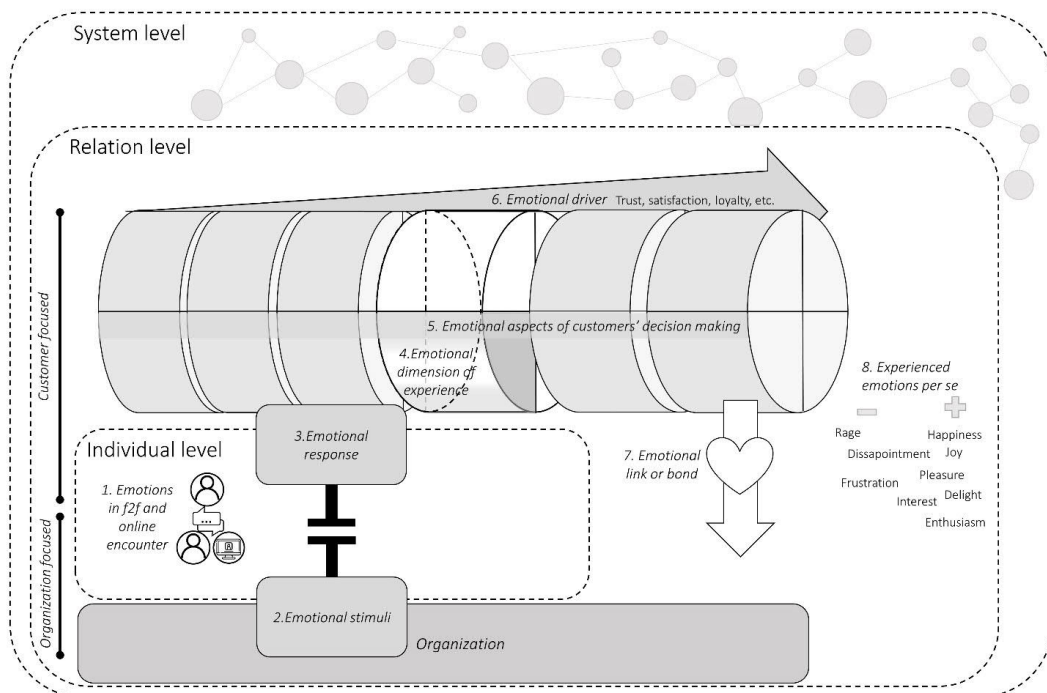
Figure 1. Framework for emotions in CX.

As said, emotions are building CX in both digital, online and offline environments. Driven by the digitalization, the recent literature emphasize building an understanding on how emotions in CX are created through various forms of interaction, particularly in online environments. That is, organizations also should focus on creating emotional attachment with the customers by, for example, improving the interactive components on their website. Operating only with the static attributes in

online, like visual components, is not enough in the era of experiences and thus more emphasis should be given to improve the sociality on the online environments. Based on our study, it seems necessary also to highlight that the emotions emerging in interactive society are both positive and negative. Presently, positive emotions have gained a lot more attention in research than negative emotions, even though the diversity of emotions is extensive. Therefore, it is important to understand that also negative emotions define individuals' experiences and they should not be downplayed in research and practice.

In addition, we find it crucial to generate the consensus about the definitions related to emotions as the experience is present in various disciplines and the centrality of it is underlined in the experience era. However, the research on emotions and CX is still fragmented, and we noticed that this may have also caused some inconsistency in the terminology among scholars. That is, researchers addressing emotions in CX used a lot of different terms to describe emotions, for example feeling, mood and affection. The term "emotion" seem to be used as an umbrella term, which conceals the multidimensionality of the relationship between CX and various emotions. If these different terms are used interchangeably and without justification, the research field will remain fragmented and hinders the interdisciplinary research and fruitful discussion between the different businesses. Based on our study, we propose the following definitions for different terms: 1) "Mood" depicts a long-lasting subjective emotion that affects a person's behavior and experience, 2) "feelings" are subjective experiences that are shorter (from minutes to hours; e.g., joy, irritation), 3) "emotions" are also short-term feelings but are characterized by projected feelings, usually manifested in social interaction (e.g., love, hate), and 4) "affective experience" is based on the spectrum of all previous terms (emotions, feeling, and mood) and can be described by features like intensity, duration, and cause.

How emotions build CX in interactive society: major types and framework

We identified eight major types that capture how emotions are applied and conceptualized in CX research (see Table 1 and Figure 1). The framework uncovers relevant dimensions that distinguish the types, which all are the result of both direct and indirect interaction between the customer and organization or it's elements. Furthermore, emotions in CX can be conceptualized and studied from *the organization* or *customer* perspective. Based on our analysis, typically emotions in CX are studied from the latter, customer perspective, and thus, our categorization types emphasize this more.

The first type concerned providers' attempts to manage emotions but focused on *competencies, personnel, procedures, or online processes that manage emotions* in customer interactions. For example, the importance of employees' skills in managing customers' feelings during the customer experience was identified (Johnson *et al.* 2009), while Gabbott *et al.* (2011) emphasized emotional intelligence (EI) during service failures. The psychological phenomenon of EI was identified by Goleman (1995) and is considered a tool for leaders and employees to manage customer experiences. The articles suggested that positive emotions (Chahal & Dutta, 2014) and negative emotions, such as customer rage (Surachartkumtonkun *et al.*, 2015), should be managed by employees. Varma (2012), however, highlights that human emotions are not entirely predictable, and most customers' emotions remain unclear or even totally hidden. The article links CRM to management of customers' emotional states, noting that nothing can deliver a memorable customer experience better than motivated and engaged employees.

The second type focused on *service providers' attempts to manage emotions*. Because providers cannot manage emotions directly, they aim to manage emotions through indirect interaction, which includes stimuli and cues. The main goal for service providers seemed to be creating *positive* emotions among customers as positive emotions favorably affect, for example, customer experience,

brand image, purchase intention, satisfaction, and loyalty. Although emotions were positive in principle, the importance of identifying and handling negative emotions should not be underestimated, as removing all cues from service provider performance that could create negative emotions is impossible.

The third type focused on *emotional responses* to different cues or elements of customer experiences. Emotional responses are embedded in customer's interaction with the organization or servicescape, capturing the customer's side in this reciprocal relation. For example, Madzharov *et al.* (2015) examined how scents elicit emotions and thus, affect customer experience, while Bagdare and Jain (2013) developed a scale for the experiential responses of retail customers. In this category linking emotions to customer experiences, the aspect is behavioral and customer-focused as these studies examined how customers respond to physical cues and service process elements, such as service failures.

The fourth type analyzed *emotional dimensions* of the whole customer experience, thus conceptualizing emotion as one facet. The other facets were cognitive and behavioral dimensions (Cruz *et al.*, 2010). Again, the customer perspective is emphasized. Customers are involved at different dimensions in all interactions between the organization and its' offerings.

The fifth type linked *emotions and decision making*, often in the retail context. Positive and negative emotions are usually related to price, information, assortment, process or interaction, which triggers purchase or repurchase intention. In a study in retail context, Puccinelli *et al.* (2009) state that for example confusing content in a website can induce frustration, which can affect to consumer's decision making negatively. Authors state that retailers should focus on identifying triggers and focus on interactive attributes, which would pace up consumer's favorable decision making.

The sixth type studied *emotions as a driver of experience outcomes* (e.g. loyalty, trust and satisfaction). In other words, different forms of interaction create emotions, which influence of experience outcomes. These studies link emotions to long-term relationships and dynamics between the customer and organization. Mascarenhas et al. (2006), for example, examined emotions as a driver of customer loyalty in several contexts.

The seventh type addressed *emotional links* and *emotional bonds* to, for example, a brand (Mollen and Wilson, 2010; Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou, 2013), or technology and design (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2011). Emotional links and bonds are a result of customer's interaction with these objects (e.g. brand or technology) (Teixeira et al., 2012). These emotional bonds develop during the customer's interaction with the organization. The role of customer in interaction is active and thus customer perspective is dominant. Both Johnson *et al.* (2009) and Zomerdijk and Voss (2011) argue that an emotional connection strengthens the relationship with an organization and can be seen as a competitive advantage (Gabbott *et al.*, 2011) because emotional bonds usually are hard to break.

The eighth type focused on *various specific emotions per se*. Customers are usually interacting with various forms (e.g. with personel, brand or technology) during their customer journey and thus these relations evoke different emotions. Carreira *et al.* (2013) researched travel experiences and distinguished three categories of emotions: excitement and joy, annoyance and discontentment, and anxiety and fear. Chahal and Dutta (2014) and Arnold et al. (2005) highlighted the importance of identifying the range of emotions customers feel during terrible experiences. Surachartkumtonkun *et al.* (2015) highlighted the various emotions that customer rage arouses (e.g., disgust, hate, and fury).

Table 1. Types of emotions in CX in interactive society.

Category and its focus	How emotion is conceptualized	Example articles
1. Emotions in service encounters and interactions, managed by the firm's personnel *Provider-* *focused*	As part of front-line interaction, which requires management in online and offline contexts. Firms need to develop the EI of personnel and online practices to successfully manage service encounters characterized by diverse emotions.	Rose et al. (2012) and Martin et al. (2015) examined emotions in online services from the management perspective. Johnson et al. (2009) studied emotions in face-to-face service interactions.
2. Emotional stimuli or cues triggered by the firm *Provider-* *focused*	As a product of emotional stimuli and cues (three types: functional, mechanical, and humane) provided by the firm to shape and manage customers' emotions.	Wang et al. (2007) examined avatars as emotional stimuli (see also type 3).
3. Emotional response *Customer-* *focused*	As a response to an element of customer experience, a service process element or event, or other actors, e.g., personnel or other customers	Madzharov et al. (2015) examined how customers respond emotionally to scents in a retail environment. Wang et al. (2007) examined emotional responses to avatars that were considered social cues.
4. Emotional dimension of experience *Customer-* *focused*	As part of the multidimensional customer experience; others are cognitive and behavioral	Cruz et al. (2010) examined multiple dimensions of internet banking experiences.
5. Emotional aspects of customers' decision making *Customer-* *focused*	As influencing the decision-making, and particularly the purchasing, process.	Puccinelli et al. (2009) and Sachdeva and Goel (2015) studied how to manage customer experience and emotions in retailing, focused on the buying process.
6. Emotional driver *Customer-* *focused*	As a driver of long-term customer relationship dynamics because it shapes/affects trust, satisfaction, and commitment	Mascarenhas et al. (2006) examined loyalty and emotions in several contexts (e.g., Disney World, Blyth Industries, and Apple's iMac).
7. Emotional link or bond *Customer-* *focused*	As a link or bond to a brand, technology, etc.	Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou (2013) included "emotional aspects" of brand relationships in their model of online brand experiences to

		supplement the dimension technology acceptance dimension.
8. Experienced emotion *Emotion-* *focused*	As diverse; different emotions are acknowledged as part of the customer experience.	Surachartkumtonkun et al. (2015) compared customer rage across countries.

CX with emotions co-created in digital environment

Many organizations in different fields have shifted to multichannel strategies by providing added value both in digital and offline interaction environments (Rajaobelina, 2018). The digitalization has also pushed researchers to address this shift and 19 of reviewed articles addressed online or virtual environments. These studies were fragmented under several industries including retail, banking, traveling, virtual, e-learning and online search engine mirroring the crucial presence of experiences throughout the interactive society in different contexts and levels.

In online environment, experience is formed in interaction between the individual, ie. customer, and attributes managed by the organization. Interaction in online takes naturally different shapes compared to face-to-face contexts, but still plays a crucial role in CX. Indeed, interaction shapes customer's aroused emotions and emotional attachment in online contexts, which influence customers' decision making (Bilgihan *et al.*, 2015; Lee, 2018), experience outcomes (e.g., loyalty or satisfaction) (Cruz *et al.*, 2010), and future purchase intentions (Bilgihan *et al.*, 2015). At best, the online environment can create a flow experience (Bilgihan *et al.*, 2015) if interactive features generate highly positive emotions like fun, enjoyment and pleasure.

Emotions are strongly present in online context being embedded in customer's interaction with both static and social cues as well as the e-environment itself. Organizations may interact with their customers by providing a variety of static stimuli including text-based information, visual imagery, video or audio through their website or other e-environment (see eg. Rose *et al.*, 2012). Customer's interaction with the brand (Meyer & Schwager, 2007) occurs also in online context. Morgan-Thomas and Velautsou (2013) concentrated on online brand experiences that include an emotional affective state in the context of search engines. Their findings show that customer's interaction with brand should evoke emotions in order to build trust and loyalty. This is similar with offline retail context. In addition, organizations can influence to their customers and their emotions through social cues and sociality of their websites. This is highlighted by Bilgihan *et al.* (2015) who stress the importance for organizations operating online to note that to be able to create emotional attachment with the customers, they should shift the focus from static attributes even more to interactive components (Bilgihan *et al.*, 2015). These social components can be provided either as human or machine operated as Wang *et al.* (2007) note that 'customers treat computers as social actors even though they are fully aware that they are interaction with machines'. For example, Wang *et al.* (2007) study on sociality of websites showed that customers' interaction between the avatars influence positively on affect and shopping value of the customers. On the other hand, Gefen and Straub (2003) study in online travel agency context showed that social presence of organization has also an influence on consumer trust. However, the social interaction in online goes also beyond the organization - interaction with other actors may also influence on customer's emotions (Jaakkola *et al.*, 2015). For example, Tu and Zhang (2013) studied experience in a non-trading virtual community where, according to their findings, experience co-creation has two dimensions; emotional and relationship experience. Interaction with others including emotion sharing is an important building block of co-creation value in non-trading virtual community.

Multidisciplinary nature of CX with emotional aspects

The multidisciplinary nature of emotions in CX highlight that emotions in CX is a real matter of professionals and researchers in diverse disciplines and businesses. Our analysis uncovered the multidisciplinary nature, illustrating the presence of emotions in experiences through disciplines. Table 2 presents the main disciplines ranging from marketing to other related disciplines and the focuses regarding emotions in CX. For example, marketing highlights the role of emotions in CX in digitalization and engagement, whereas innovation and technology research emphasizes technological management of CX and its emotional dimension via customer relationship management (CRM) systems, thus also contributing to the emotional aspects of CX. Table 2 also presents the main forums in which research on emotional aspects in CX appeared.

Table 2. Multidisciplinary emotions in CX: disciplines and forums of articles on CX and emotions.

Discipline	Emphasis on customer experience and emotions	Main forums, i.e., journal examples	Number of articles linking customer experience and emotions
Marketing	Digitalization, co-creation, engagement, loyalty, branding, strategic marketing, satisfaction	*Journal of Marketing, Marketing Theory, The Marketing Review*	28 (22%)
Service	Co-creation, customer relationship, e-services, emotional engagement, quality, emotional labor, intangibility, competitive advantage	*Journal of Service Management, Journal of Service Research, Journal of Services Marketing*	21 (17%)
Management	Customer value, emotional bonding, service quality, corporate brand experience, experiential marketing	*Journal of General Management, Strategy and Leadership*	32 (25%)
Retail	Online customer experience, experiential consumption, dimensions of retail customer experience, satisfaction, loyalty	*Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, Journal of Retailing*	16 (12%)

Innovation and technology	Customer relationship management (CRM), customer experience management, telecommunication, value creation, social presence, new service development	*International Journal of Innovation and Technology Management, Journal of Product Innovation Management*	14 (11%)
Others	E.g., travel experience context, virtual atmosphere	*Entrepreneurial Executive, Tourism and Hospitality Research*	18 (9%)
Total			129 (100%)

Researchers and professionals should be aware of how they talk and name emotions in CX, as we identified a wide range of terms used to describe emotions in CX. Many authors did not clearly justify why they had chosen to use, e.g., "emotion" instead of "feeling" or "affective experience," or used terms interchangeably, although many of the reviewed articles use psychology as a theoretical background. For example, several studies referred to Lazarus's (1991) work in psychology on the relationship between emotion and stress, as well as the role of cognition and motivation in emotions. In addition, scholars often applied Pine and Gilmore's (1998) seminal work on the experience economy. Two other key theoretical models that were identified was Schmitt's (1999) 15-item general scale of experience and Mehrabian's and Russell's (1974) PAD-model (pleasure, arousal, and dominance). Schmitt's model was utilized more on quantitative studies whereas the latter was more utilized in qualitative studies.

A rollercoaster between negative and positive emotions

It is valuable to understand, that interactive society is full of diverse emotions, which all need to be examined and managed, in all levels of society. Like our study reveals, a wide range of emotions is linked to CX varying from positive to negative (Table 3). Many articles we analysed concentrated on positive emotions like joy, enjoyment, or pleasure (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2011) or observed emotions based on their valence without specific identification (Carreira *et al.*, 2013; Gabbott *et al.*, 2011). Strongly *positive emotions* like fun, inspiration, and enjoyment were mostly studied regarding hedonic experiences (Liu *et al.*, 2017) whereas studies linked to utilitarian experiences emphasized other types of emotions, like trust and reliability (Banerjee, 2014; Bilgihan *et al.*, 2015). *Negative emotions* were examined in less detail except in a few papers (see Hudson *et al.*, 2017; Surachartkumtonkun *et al.*, 2015). In general, providers were encouraged to focus on avoiding negative emotions (Lucia-Palacios *et al.*, 2016), and the negative effect on experience outcome was outlined (Hudson *et al.*, 2017).

Table 3. Diverse emotions in CX research.

Positive emotions	Negative emotions	Example article

Joy, elation, enthusiasm	Disappointment, frustration, irritation, dislike	Johnson et al., 2009
Delight	Opposite of delight	Chahal and Dutta, 2014
	Rage, disgust, hate, fury, outrage, aggression	Surachartkumtonkun et al., 2015
Excitement, joy, happiness, pleasure, cheerfulness	Discontentment, annoyance, nervousness, fear	Carreira et al., 2013
Positive (not specified in more detailed level in the article)	Negative (not specified in more detail in the article)	Gabbott et al., 2011
Joy, awe, interest, affection, trust		Zomerdijk and Voss, 2011
Good, soft, endearing, friendly	Bad, unpleasantness	Varma, 2012
Peacefulness, excitement	Frustration, stress	Lucia-Palacios et al., 2016

Conclusions and implications

At this point we believe it is fair to say that in the very heart of experiences are emotions. Emotions are embedded to experiences in various ways being simultaneously influencing and being influenced by the experiences. In other words, emotions build experiences via interaction in individual, relational and ecosystem level in society. Thus, we are facing a fascinating research topic, which concerns academicians and practitioners in all disciplines in interactive society. The key contribution for both academicians and practitioners lays in our framework, which opens up our eyes to the embedded complexity of emotions in CX by identifying the types how emotions build CX in diverse relations in society.

We believe our study and framework guides researchers in their quest to investigate emotional aspects in experience. After all, emotions are uncontrollable, difficult to understand and complex to manage. Emotions in experiences are taking place in several relations between the actors, and thus requiring more emphasis on interaction when studying emotional aspects of experience. As we recognize emotions central in experiences in individual, relational and ecosystem level in the interactive society, we are facing a complex set which is hard to manage and control in systems, as well as in the continuously changing society. The framework help researchers to zoom to this complex phenomenon and illustrate the different forms of interactions, where emotions in experience are taking place and building experiences. The types guide researchers to focus their future studies on emotions in experience by providing guidance to position the studies in different contexts to micro, relational and system levels. By revealing the close connection between experiences, emotions and interaction, we highlight that the importance of emotions in interactive society should be taken under serious consideration.

For practitioners, who are aiming to enhance and develop experiences, the managerial usefulness of the framework lays in understanding the contrast between the two main perspectives – organization-focused and customer-focused perspectives – and the different types of emotions in CX. Importantly, the framework clarifies how focus on emotions in experiences actually requires practitioners' concentration on interaction. Framed in a provider-focused way, emotions may be seen as a managerial instrument controlled by an organization. Through this managerial lens practitioners can identify different types of encounters and emotional stimuli that create experiences for customers.

Thus, one important starting point in CX management development is proper recruitment and continuous training and support of employees' emotional intelligence, skills and behavior to successfully manage encounters that include ranging emotions. However, taking this one-sided perspective organizations may be facing a situation where service design, and operations and CX management monitoring may become blurred by the belief that emotions of customers are largely or solely managed by the organization. Indeed, some emotional types of CX are beyond the view and may be even beyond the control of the organization. The customer-focused perspective in framework helps organizations to open their eyes and to avoid such pitfalls. For example, even though organization designs carefully different kind of cues to arouse specific emotions and feelings in a customer (Type 2), it can never be defined, how the customer will respond to organization's cues (Type 3) – emotions are unpredictable and difficult to control. Therefore, practitioners should concentrate not only on creating and increasing positive emotions in encounters but also on understanding customers' emotions in-depth and systematically identifying different types of emotions, like emotions in decision-making, emotional drivers and emotional responses. By doing so, companies and other entities in society will be more informed on what they should and can manage in order to better design and implement cues for more appropriate service to fit customers' emotional types and stages.

We hope that our review provides managers and researchers with a deeper understanding of a growing field, yet encourages them. Given the fragmented current state of research and the complex nature of emotions in experience, several future research topics emerged from this study. We want to encourage researchers to carry out multidisciplinary research combining different methodologies as the importance of emotions in CX is widely noted in various disciplines. These further studies could test and validate our suggested types of emotions in CX. In addition, as our study concentrated mainly on emotions in experiences in individual and relational level, more studies in online and offline environments should be conducted concentrating on the ecosystem level. Moreover, we encourage researchers to pay more attention to the role and dynamics of positive and negative emotions in CX as review revealed clearly that researchers have focused on creating positive emotional experiences and considered negative emotions mainly to be avoided or ignored, although it may be an emotional rollercoaster for customers to go through services.

References

Arnold, M.J., Reynolds, K.E., Ponder, N. & Lueg J.E. (2005), "Customer delight in a retail context: investigating delightful and terrible shopping experiences", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 58 No. 8, pp. 1132-1145.

Bagdare, S. & Jain, R. (2013), "Measuring retail customer experience", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management,* Vol. 41 No. 10, pp. 790-804.

Balaji, M.S., Roy, S.K. & Quazi, A. (2017), "Customers' emotion regulation strategies in service failure encounters", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 51 No. 5/6, pp. 960-982.

Banerjee, M. (2014), "Misalignment and its influence on integration quality in multichannel services", *Journal of Service Research*, Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 313-327.

Bastiaansen, M., Lub, X. D., Mitas, O., Jung, T. H., Ascenção, M. P., Han, D. I. & Strijbosch, W. (2019), "Emotions as core building blocks of an experience", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 31 No. 2, pp. 651-668.

Belk, R. (1984), "A Manifesto for a Consumer Behavior of Consumer Behavior" in *1984 AMA Winter Educators Conference: Scientific Method in Marketing*, eds. Paul F. Anderson and Michael J. Ryan Chicago: American Marketing Association, pp. 163-167.

Bilgihan, A., Khaldoon, N., Okumus, F. &Cabanoglu, C. (2015), "Applying flow theory to booking experiences: an integrated model in an online service context", *Information & Management*, Vol. 15 pp. 668-678.

Bolton, R.N., McColl-Kennedy, J.R., Cheung, L., Gallan, A., Orsinger, C., Witell, L. & Zaki, M. (2018), "Customer experience challenges: bringing together digital, physical and social realms", Journal of Service Marketing, Vol. 29 No. 5, pp. 776-808.

Booth, A., Papaioannou, D. & Sutton, A. (2012), *Systematic Approaches to a Successful Literature Review*, London: Sage.

Carlson, N.R., Heth, D.C., Miller, H., Donahoe, J.W., Buskist, W. & Martin, N.G. (2007), *Psychology: The Science of Behavior*, 6th ed. Boston: Pearson.

Carreira, R., Patricio, L., Jorge, R.N., Magee, C. & Hommes, Q.V.E. (2013), "Towards a holistic approach to the travel experience: a qualitative study of bus transportation" *Transport Policy*, Vol. 25, pp. 233-243.

Chahal, H. and Dutta, K. (2015), "Measurement and impact of customer experience in banking sector", *Decision (0304-0941)*, Vol. 42 No. 1, pp. 57-70.

Cruz, P., Salo, J., Munoz-Gallego, P. and Laukkanen, T. (2010), "Heavy users of e-banking and customer experience management: evidences on intrinsic motivation" *International Journal of Electronic Business*, Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 187-209

Echeverri, P. and Skålen, P. (2011), "Co-creation and co-destruction: A practice theory based study of interactive value formation, Marketing Theory, Vol. 11 No. 3, pp. 351-373.

Fennell, G. (1985). Things of heaven and earth: Phenomenology, marketing, and consumer research. *ACR North American Advances*.

Frow, P. and Payne, A. (2007), "Towards the 'perfect' customer experience", *Journal of Brand Management*, Vol. 15 No. 2, pp. 89-101.

Gabbott, M., Tsarenko, Y. and Mok, W.H. (2011), "Emotional intelligence as a moderator of coping strategies and service outcomes in circumstances of service failure",*Journal of Service Research*, Vol. 14 No. 2, pp. 234-248.

Gefen D. and Straub, D. (2003), "Managing user trust in B2C e-services", *e-Service Journal*, Vol. 2 No. 2, pp. 7-24.

Gentile, C., Spiller, N. and Noci, G. (2007), "How to sustain the customer experience: an overview of experience components that co-create value with the customer", *European Management Journal*, Vol. 25 No. 5, pp. 395-410.

Goleman, D. (1995), *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, New York: Bantam Books.

Grewal, D., Levy, M. and Kumar, V. (2009), "Customer experience management in retailing: an organizing framework", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 85 No. 1, pp. 1-14.

Helkkula, A. (2011), "Characterising the concept of service experience", *Journal of Service Management*, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 367-389.

Hoch, S.J. (2002), "Product experience is seductive", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 29 No. 3, pp. 448-454.

Holbrook, M.B. and Hirschman, E.C. (1982), "The experiential aspects of consumption: consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun",*Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 9 No. 2, pp. 132-140.

Howard, J.A. (1965), *Marketing Theory*, Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Hudson, S., González-Gómez, H.V. and Rychalski, A. (2017), "Call centers: is there an upside to the dissatisfied customer experience?", *Journal of Business Strategy*, Vol. 38 No. 1, pp. 39-46. Hull, C.L., (1943), *Principles of Behavior*, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Huang, M-H. (2001), "The theory of emotions in marketing", *Journal of Business and Psychology*, Vol. 26 No. 2, pp. 239-247.

Jaakkola, E., Helkkula, A. & Aarikka-Stenroos, L. (2015). "Service experience co-creation: conceptualization, implications and future research directions", *Journal of Service Management*,
Vol. 26 No. 2, pp. 283-305.

Jain, R., Aagja, J. and Bagdare, S. (2017), "Customer experience – a review and research agenda", *Journal of Service Theory and Practice*, Vol. 27 No. 3, pp. 642-662.

Jalonen, H., Vuolle, M. and Heinonen, L. (2016), *Negatiiviset Tunteet – Positiivinen Bisnes [Negative emotions - positive business]*, Helsinki: Talentum.

Johnson, M.D., Olsen, L.L. and Wallin, A.T. (2009), "Joy and disappointment in the hotel experience: managing relationship segments", *Managing Service Quality*, Vol. 19 No. 1, pp. 4-33.

Jüttner, U., Schaffner, D, Windler, K. and Maklan, S. (2013) "Customer service experiences: Developing and applying a sequential incident laddering technique", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 47 No. 5/6, pp. 738-769.

Kim, S., Park, G., Lee, Y. and Choi, S. (2016), "Customer emotions and their triggers in luxury retail: understanding the effects of customer emotions before and after entering a luxury shop", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 69, pp. 5809-5818.K

Krippendorff, K. (1980), Validity in Content Analysis, 2nded. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Lazarus, R.S. (1991), "Progress on a cognitive-motivational-relational theory of emotion", *American Psychologist*, Vol. 46 No. 8, pp. 819-834.

Lee, S. (2018), "Investigating antecedents and outcome of telepresence on a hotel's website", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 30 No. 2, pp. 757-775.

Lemon, K.N. and Verhoef, P.C. (2016), "Understanding customer experience throughout the customer journey", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 80 (November), pp. 69-96.

Liu, W., Sparks, B. and Cighlan, A. (2017), "Fun, inspiration and discovery: from momentary experiences to overall evaluations", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Organizations*, Vol. 29 No. 7, pp. 1937-1955.

Lucia-Palacios, L., Pérez-López, R. and Polo-Redondo, Y. (2016), "Cognitive, affective and behavioural responses in mall experience: a qualitative approach", *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, Vol. 44 No. 1, pp. 4-21.

Madzharov, A. V., Block, L. G., & Morrin, M. (2015). The cool scent of power: Effects of ambient scent on consumer preferences and choice behavior. *Journal of Marketing*, *79*(1), 83-96.

Martin, J., Mortimer, G. and Andrews, L. (2015), "Re-examining online customer experience to include purchase frequency and perceived risk", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 25, pp. 81-95.

Mascarenhas, O. A., Kesavan, R., & Bernacchi, M. (2006). Lasting customer loyalty: a total customer experience approach. *Journal of consumer marketing*, *23*(7), 397-405.

Mattila, A., Hanks, L. and Wang, C. (2014), "Others service experiences: emotions, perceived justice, and behavior",*European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 48 No. 3/4, pp. 552-571.

McColl-Kennedy J.R., Danaher, T.S., Gallan, A.S., Orsingher, C., Lervik-Olsen, L. and Verma, R. (2017), "How do you feel today? Managing patient emotions during health care experience to enhance well-being", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 79, pp. 247-259.

Mehrabian, A. and Russell, J.A. (1974), *An Approach to Environmental Psychology*, Cambridge, MA: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Meyer, C. and Schwager, A. (2007) "Understanding customer experience", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 85 No. 2, pp. 116-126.

Mollen, A. and Wilson, H. (2010), "Engagement, telepresence and interactivity in online consumer experience: Reconciling scholastic and managerial perspectives", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 63 No. 9, pp. 919-925.

Morgan-Thomas, A. and Veloutsou, C. (2013), "Engagement, telepresence and interactivity in online consumer experience: reconciling scholastic and managerial perspectives", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 63 No. 9–10, pp. 919-925.

Novak, T.P., Hoffman, D.L. and Yung, Y. (2000), "Measuring the customer experience in online environments: a structural modeling approach", *Marketing Science*, Vol. 19 No. 1, pp. 22-42.

Pine, B.J. and Gilmore, J.H. (1998), The experience economy, *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 76 No. 6, pp. 18-23.

Puccinelli, N.M., Goodstein, R.C., Grewail, D., Price, R., Raghubir, P. and Stewart, D. (2009), "Customer experience management in retailing: understanding the buying process", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 85 No. 1, pp. 15-30.

Rajaobelina, L. (2018), "The impact of customer experience on relationship quality with travel agencies in a multichannel environment", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 57 No. 2, pp. 206-217.

Rose, S., Clark, M., Samouel, P. and Hair, N. (2012), "Online customer experience in e-retailing: an empirical model of antecedents and outcomes", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 88 No. 2, pp. 308-322.

Sachdeva, I. and Goel, S. (2015), "Retail store environment and customer experience: a paradigm", *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, Vol. 19 No. 3, pp. 290-298.

Scherer, K.R. (2005), "What are emotions? And how they can be measured?", *Social Science Information*, Vol. 44 No. 4, pp. 695-729.

Schmitt, B.H. (1999), *Experiential Marketing: How to Get Customers to Sense, Feel, Think, Act, Relate to Your Company and Brands*, New York: The Free Press.

Surachartkumtonkun, J., McColl-Kennedy, J.R. and Patterson, P.G. (2015), "Unpacking customer rage elicitation:a dynamic model", *Journal of Service Research*, Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 177-192.

Teixeira, J., Patrício, L., Nunes, N.J., Nóbrega, L., Fisk, R.P. & Constantine, L. (2012), "Customer experience modeling: from customer experience to service design.", *Journal of Service Management*, Vol. 23 No. 3, pp. 362-376.

Torraco, R.J. (2005), "Writing integrative literature reviews: guidelines and examples", *Human Resource Development Review*, Vol. 4 No. 3, pp. 356-367.

Tu, J. and Zhang, M. (2013), "Research on The Effect of Co-creation Customer Experience on Customer Co-created Value in Non-trading Virtual Community", Paper presented at IEEE International conference on service operations and logistics and informatics (SOLI).

Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R. (2004), "Evolving to a new dominant logic", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 68 No. 1, pp. 1-17.

Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R. (2008), "Service-dominant logic: continuing the evolution", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 36 No. 1, pp. 1-10.

Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F. (2016), "Institutions and axioms: an extension and update of service-dominant logic", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 44, pp. 5-12.

Varma, R.T.R. (2012), "Enhancing and empowering: customer experience", *SCMS Journal of Indian Management*, Vol. 9 No. 3, pp. 71-78.

Verhoef, P.C., Lemon, N., Parasuraman, A., Roggeveen, A., Tsiros, M. and Schlesinger, L.A. (2009), "Customer experience creation: determinants, dynamics, and management strategies", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 85 No. 1, pp. 31-41.

Wang, L.C., Baker, J., Wagner, J.A. and Wakefield, K. (2007), "Can a retail website be social?", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 71 No. 3, pp. 143-157.

Weber, R.P. (1985), *Basic Content Analysis*, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Zomerdijk, L.G. and Voss, C.A. (2011), "NSD processes and practices in experiential services", *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, Vol. 28 No. 1, pp. 63-80.

Appendix 1. Reviewed articles

Author	Title	Publication
Ali, F;., Kim, W.G., Li, J. and Jeon, H.M., 2018	Make it delightful: Customers' experience, satisfaction and loyalty in Malaysian theme parks	*Journal of Destination Marketing and Management*
Bagdare, S., 2015	Emotional Determinants of Retail Customer Experience	*International Journal of Marketing and Business Communication*
Bagdare, S., and Jain, R., 2013	Measuring retail customer experience	*International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*
Bagdare, S., 2017	Retail customer experience: A research agenda	*International Journal of Research in Commerce and Management*
Balaji, M.S. Roy, S.K. and Quazi, A., 2017	Customers' emotion regulation strategies in service failure encounters	*European Journal of Marketing*
Başaran, A.S., and Nezahat, E., 2014	Experiential Marketing and Vacation Experience: The Sample of Turkish Airlines	*Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*
Banerjee, M., 2014	Misalignment and Its Influence on Integration Quality in Multichannel Services	*Journal of Service Research*
Beltagui, A. and Gandi, M., 2018	Revisiting service quality through the lens of experience-centric services	*International Journal of Operations and Production Management*
Berry, L.L., and Carbone, L.P., 2007	Build Loyalty Through Experience Management	*Quality Progress*
Bhandari, S., 2016	Understanding the models of customer experience	*International Journal of Research in Commerce and Management*

Bolton, R.N., Gustafsson, A., McColl-Kennedy, J., Sirianni, N.J., and Tse, D.K., 2014	Small details that make big differences: A radical approach to consumption experience as a firm's differentiating strategy	*Journal of Service Management*
Brakus, J.J., Schmitt, B.H., and Zarantonello, L. 2009	Brand Experience: What Is It? How Is It Measured? Does It Affect Loyalty?	*Journal of Marketing*
Bramley, S., Dibben, N. and Rowe, R., 2016	The Utilisation of Music by Casino Managers: An Interview Study	*Journal of Gambling Studies*
Brun, I., Rajaobelina, L., Ricard, L. and Berthiaume, B., 2017	Impact of customer experience on loyalty: a multichannel examination	*Service Industries Journal*
Bustamante, J.C. and Rubio, N-, 2017	Measuring customer experience in physical retail environments	*Journal of Service Management*
Butcher, K., 2013	Differential impact of social influence in the hospitality encounter	*International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*
Cachero-Martinez, S. and Vazquez-Casielles, R., 2017	Living positive experiences in store: how it influences shopping experience value and satisfaction?	*Journal of Business Economics and Management*
Calheiros, A.C., Moro, S. and Rita, P., 2017	Sentiment Classification of Consumer-Generated Online Reviews Using Topic Modeling	*Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management*
Carreira, R., Patricio, L., Jorge, R.N., Magee, C., and Hommes, Q.V.E., 2013	Towards a holistic approach to the travel experience: A qualitative study of bus transportation	*Transport Policy*
Cayaba,Ma, C., Yuting, C., Jurgens, M., Mathews, P.J. and Sefton, A., 2016	Redesigning emergency rooms into experience rooms	*Marketing Health Services*
Cetin, G., Akova, O., and Kaya, F., 2012	Components of experiential value: Case of hospitality industry	10th International strategic management conference 2014
Cetin, G. and Walls, A., 2016	Understanding the Customer Experiences from the Perspective of Guests and Hotel Managers: Empirical Findings from Luxury Hotels in Istanbul, Turkey	*Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management*

Chahal, H., and Dutta, K., 2014	Conceptualising customer experiences: Significant research propositions	*Marketing Review*
Chahal, H., and Dutta, K., 2015	Measurement and impact of customer experience in banking sector	*Decision*
Chang, T-Y., and Horng, S-C., 2010	Conceptualizing and measuring experience quality: The customer's perspective	*Service Industries Journal*
Chan, S.J., 2015	A Model Linking Store Attributes, Service Quality and Customer Experience: A Study Among Community Pharmacies	*International Journal of Economics and Management*
Choraria, S., 2015	Managing Emotional Connect between Front-Line Employee and Customers	*Pacific Business Review International*
Choudhury, M., Singh, R. and Saikia, H., 2016	Measuring customer experience in bankassurance: An empirical study	*Market-Trziste*
Cruz, P., Salo, J., Munoz-Gallego, P., and Laukkanen, T., 2010	Heavy Users of e-banking and Customer Experience Management: evidences on intrinsic motivation	*International Journal of Electronic Business*
de Villiers, R. and Po-Ju, C., 2017	Feeling Loyal? The Impacts of Affective Customer Experiences on Business.,"de Villiers, Rouxelle	*International Journal of Business and Economics*
de Villiers, R. and Po-Ju, C., 2017	Achieving Requisite Variety in Customer Experience Research for Improving Marketing Relationship Performances	*International Journal of Business and Economics*
Delcourt, C., Gremler, D.D., De Zanet, F. and van Riel, A.C.R., 2017	An analysis of the interaction effect between employee technical and emotional competencies in emotionally charged service encounters	*Journal of Service Management*
Delcourt, C., Gremler, D.D., van Riel, A.C.R. and van Birgelen, M.J.H., 2016	Employee Emotional Competence: Construct Conceptualization and Validation of a Customer-Based Measure	*Journal of Service Research*

Dennis, C., Brakus, J.J., and Alamanos, E., 2013	The wallpaper matters: Digital signage as customer-experience provider at the Harrods (London, UK) department store	*Journal of Marketing Management*
Deshwal, P. and Phuyan, P., 2018	Cancer patient service experience and satisfaction	*International Journal of Healthcare Management*
Dutta, N.S., 2015	Innovative Product Management Driving Enhanced Customer Experience Management (CEM)	*Telecom Business Review*
Ebrahim, R., Ghoneim, A., Irani, Z. and Fan, Y., 2016	A brand preference and repurchase intention model: the role of consumer experience	*Journal of Makreting Manageent*
Esmark, C.L., Noble, S.M. and Breazeale, M.J., 2017	I'll Be Watching You: Shoppers' Reactions to Perceptions of Being Watched by Employees	*Journal of Retailing*
Faria, S., Ferreira, P. and Carvalho, V., 2016	Are assortment variety and stock-failures management in Hypermarkets and Supermarkets an important factor for consumers to develop a store-type preference, willing to come back and continue to buy?	*Portuguese Journal of Marketing*
Gabbott, M., Tsarenko, Y., and Mok, W.H., 2011	Emotional Intelligence as a Moderator of Coping Strategies and Service Outcomes in Circumstances of Service Failure	*Journal of Service Research*
Gefen, D., and Straub, D., 2003	Managing User Trust in B2C e-Services	*e-Service Journal*
Gierlinger, S., 2017	Every Moment Matters: Cultivating a Culture of C.A.R.E.	*Journal of Healthcare Management*
Gilbert, D., and Gao, Y.F., 2005	A failure of UK travel agencies to strengthen zones of tolerance	*Tourism and Hospitality Research*
Gilboa, S., Vilnai-Yavetz, I. and Chebat, J.C., 2016	Capturing the multiple facets of mall experience: Developing and validating a scale	*Journal of Consumer Behaviour*

Gooding, N., 2008	An alternative player's approach against incumbent strategies to make the most of market share	*Journal of Telecommunications Management*
Grewal, D., Roggeveen, A.L., Sisodia, R. and Nordfalt, J., 2016	Enhancing Customer Engagement Through Consciousness	*Journal of Retailing*
Gudem, M., Steinert, M., and Welo, T., 2014	From LEAN product development to LEAN innovation: Searching for a more valid approach for promoting utilitarian and emotional value	*International Journal of Innovation and Technology Management*
Hakanen, T., and Jaakkola, E., 2012	Co-creating customer-focused solutions within business networks: A service perspective	*Journal of Service Management*
Hamzah, Z.L., Alwi, S.F.S., and Othman, M.N., 2014	Designing corporate brand experience in an online context: A qualitative insight	*Journal of Business Research*
Hong-Youl, H., and Perks, H., 2005	Effects of consumer perceptions of brand experience on the web: Brand familiarity, satisfaction and brand trust	*Journal of Consumer Behaviour*
Hsieh, Y.H. and Yuan, S.T., 2016	An application of technology-based design for exhibition services	*International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*
Huang, R., Lee, S.H., Kim, H;. and Evans, L., 2015	The impact of brand experiences on brand resonance in multi-channel fashion retailing	*Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*
Hudson, S., González-Gómez, H.V. and Rychalski, A., 2017	Call centers: is there an upside to the dissatisfied customer experience?	*Journal of Business Strategy*
Hung, Y.C., Zheng, X., Carlson, J. and Giurge, L.M., 2017	The weight of the saddened soul: the bidirectionality between physical heaviness and sadness and its implications for sensory marketing	*Journal of Marketing Management*
Jain, R., and Jain, S., 2008	Towards relational exchange in services marketing: Insights from hospitality industry	*Journal of Services Research*

Jain, R., and Bagdare, S., 2009	Determinants of Customer Experience in New Format Retail Stores	*Journal of Marketing and Communication*
Jain, R., Aagja, J. and Bagdare, S., 2017	Customer experience - a review and research agenda	*Journal of Service Theory and Practice*
Johnson, M.D., Lervik Olsen, L. and Wallin Andreassen, T., 2009	Joy and disappointment in the hotel experience: Managing relationship segments	*Managing Service Quality*
Juettner, U., Schaffner, D., Windler, K., and Maklan, S., 2013	Customer service experiences: Developing and applying a sequential incident laddering technique	*European Journal of Marketing*
Kandampully, J., Zhang, T.T. and Jaakkola, E., 2018	Customer experience management in hospitality A literature synthesis, new understanding and research agenda	*International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*
Keiningham, T., Ball, J., Benoit, .,; Bruce, H.L., Buoye, A., Dzenkovska, J., Nasr, L. Ou, Y.C. and Zaki, M., 2017	The interplay of customer experience and commitment	*Journal of Services Marketing*
Kim, D. and Park, B.J., 2017	The moderating role of context in the effects of choice attributes on hotel choice: A discrete choice experiment	*Tourism Management*
Klaus, P., and Maklan, S., 2011	Bridging the gap for destination extreme sports: A model of sports tourism customer experience	*Journal of Marketing Management*
Klaus, P., and Maklan, S., 2013	Towards a better measure of customer experience	*International Journal of Market Research*
Klaus, P., 2017	Luxury patient experience (LPX): review, conceptualization, and future research directions	*Service Industries Journal*
Kranzbühler, A.M. Kleijnen, M.H.P., Morgan, R.E. and Teerling, M., 2018	The Multilevel Nature of Customer Experience Research: An Integrative Review and Research Agenda	*International Journal of Management Reviews*
Kumar, A.. and Anjaly, B., 2017	How to measure post-purchase customer experience in online	*International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*

	retailing? A scale development study	
Lee, S., 2018	Investigating antecedents and outcome of telepresence on a hotel's website	*International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*
Lee, C.Y. Chou, C., and Sun, T.L., 2012	An evaluation from presence perspective of customer experiences in virtual environments	*Ergonomics in Asia. Development, opportunities and challenges*
Li, J., Canziani, B.F. and Barbieri, C., 2018	Emotional labor in hospitality: Positive affective displays in service encounters	*Tourism and Hospitality Research*
Liang, C.C., 2016	Queueing management and improving customer experience: empirical evidence regarding enjoyable queues	*Journal of Consumer Marketing*
Lin, Z., and Bennett, D., 2014	Examining retail customer experience and the moderation effect of loyalty programmes	*International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*
Liu, J.T., 2016	Research on Taiwan theme parks' experience marketing strategy and revisit willingness, purchase willingness and recommendation willingness	*International Journal of Organizational Innovation*
Liu, W., Sparks, B. and Coghlan, A., 2017	Fun, inspiration and discovery: from momentary experiences to overall evaluations	*International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*
Lu, C. and Liu, S.J., 2016	Cultural Tourism O2O Business Model Innovation-A Case Study of CTrip	*Journal of Electronic Commerce in Organizations*
Lucia-Palacios, L., Perez-Lopez, R. and Polo-Redondo, Y., 2016	Cognitive, affective and behavioural responses in mall experience A qualitative approach	*International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*
Madzharov, A. V., Block, L.G., andMorrin, M., 2015	The Cool Scent of Power: Effects of Ambient Scent on Consumer Preferences and Choice Behavior	*Journal of Marketing*
Malthouse, E.C., Calder, B.J., Kim, S.J. and Vandenbosch, M., 2016	Evidence that user-generated content that produces engagement	*Journal of Marketing Management*

	increases purchase behaviours	
Mann, B., Jit S. and Rawat, J., 2016	The Role of Consumer Personality Trait and Brand Personality Trait in Creating Customer Experience	*The UIP Journal of Brand Management*
Martin, J., Mortimer, G., and Andrews, L., 2015	Re-examining online customer experience to include purchase frequency and perceived risk	*Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*
Mascarenhas, O.A., Kesavan, R., Bernacchi, M., 2006	Lasting customer loyalty: A total customer experience approach	*Journal of Consumer Marketing*
McColl-Kennedy, J.R., Danaher, T.S., Gallan, A.S., Orsingher, C., Lervik-Olsen, L, Verma, R., 2018	How do you feel today? Managing patient emotions during health care experiences to enhance well-being	*Journal of Business Research*
Moeller, J., and Herrn, S., 2013	Shaping Retail Brand Personality Perceptions by Bodily Experiences	*Journal of Retailing*
Mollen, A., and Wilson, H., 2010	Engagement, telepresence and interactivity in online consumer experience: Reconciling scholastic and managerial perspectives	*Journal of Business Research*
Morgan-Thomas, A., and Veloutsou, C., 2013	Beyond technology acceptance: Brand relationships and online brand experience	*Journal of Business Research*
Nunes, P.F., Bellin, J. Lee, I., and Schunck, O., 2013	Converting the nonstop customer into a loyal customer	*Strategy and Leadership*
Palmer, A., 2010	Customer experience management: A critical review of an emerging idea	*Journal of Services Marketing*
Palmer, A. and Bejou, D., 2016	Retrospective: service failure and loyalty: an exploratory empirical study of airline customers	*Journal of Services Marketing*
Park, G.W., Kim, Y., Park, K. and Agarwal, A., 2016	Patient-centric quality assessment framework for healthcare services	*Technological Forecasting and Social Change*
Peeroo, S., Samy, M. and Jones, B., 2017	Facebook: a blessing or a curse for grocery stores?	*International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*

Permutter, K. and Bradshaw, N., 2016	Addressing today's top brand challenges with sonic identity	*Journal of Brand Strategy*
Poncin, I., Garnier, M.B., Mimoun, M.S. and Leclercq, T., 2017	Smart technologies and shopping experience: Are gamification interfaces effective? The case of the Smartstore	*Technological Forecasting and Social Change*
Puccinelli, N.M., Goodstein, R.C., Grewal, D., Price, R., Raghubir, P., and Stewart, D., 2009	Customer Experience Management in Retailing: Understanding the Buying Process	*Journal of Retailing*
Rahman, Z., 2006	Customer experience management: A case study of an Indian bank	*Journal of Database Marketing and Customer Strategy Management*
Rajaobelina, L., 2018	The Impact of Customer Experience on Relationship Quality with Travel Agencies in a Multichannel Environment	*Journal of Travel Research*
Reydet, S. and Carsana, L., 2017	The effect of digital design in retail banking on customers' commitment and loyalty: The mediating role of positive affect	*Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*
Rose, S., Clark, M., Samouel, P., and Hair, N., 2012	Online Customer Experience in e-Retailing: An empirical model of Antecedents and Outcomes	*Journal of Retailing*
Sachdeva, I., and Goel, S., 2015	Retail store environment and customer experience: A paradigm	*Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*
Sato, Y. and Parry, M.E., 2015	The influence of the Japanese tea ceremony on Japanese restaurant hospitality	*Journal of Consumer Marketing*
Schanz, J. and De Lille, C., 2017	Customer Experience Strategy Turned into Hands-On Actions Through a Design Approach	*Design Management Journal*
Sharma, M., and Chaubey, D.S., 2014	An Empirical Study of Customer Experience and its Relationship with Customer Satisfaction towards the Services of Banking Sector	*Journal of Marketing and Communication*

Shim, S.I., Forsythe, S. and Kwon, W.S., 2015	Impact of online flow on brand experience and loyalty	*Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*
Shin, H. and Parker, J.	Exploring the elements of consumer nostalgia in retailing: Evidence from a content analysis of retailer collages	*Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*
Shobeiri, S., Rajaobelina, L.,, Durif, F. and Boivin, C., 2016	Experiential motivations of socially responsible consumption	*International Journal of Market Research*
Sit, J.K., Hoang, A. and Inversini, A., 2018	Showrooming and retail opportunities: A qualitative investigation via a consumer-experience lens	*Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*
Sangyeon, S., 2015	Identifying on-line shopping experiences from the perspective of shopping motives	*Academy of Marketing Studies Journal*
Stachow, G., and Hart, C., 2010	Exploring place image: Formation and measurement	*Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*
Steiner, F., and Harmon, R., 2009	The Impact of Intangible Value on the Design and Marketing of New Products and Services: An Exploratory Approach	Proceedings of PICMET 09: Technology Management in the Age of Fundamental Change, Vol. 1-5
Surachartkumtonkun, J., McColl-Kennedy, J.R., and Patterson, P.G., 2015	Unpacking Customer Rage Elicitation: A Dynamic Model	*Journal of Service Management*
Tehone, A.B., Zo, H.J. and Ciganek, A.P., 2015	Why do people use social computing? An experiential perspective	*Internet Research*
Terblanche, N.S., 2009	Customer experiences, interactions, relationships and corporate reputation: A conceptual approach	*Journal of General Management*
Terblanche, N.S., 2018	Revisiting the supermarket in-store customer shopping experience	*Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*

Tosti, D.T., 2009	Customer experience and value: A performance view	*Performance Improvement*
Trudeau, H.S. and Shobeiri, S., 2016	Does social currency matter in creation of enhanced brand experience?	*Journal of Product and Brand Management*
Tu, J., and Zhang, M., 2013	Research on The Effect of Co-creation Customer Experience on Customer Co-created Value in Non-trading Virtual Community	2013 IEEE International conference on service operations and logistics, and informatics (SOLI)
Wall-Mullen, E. and Envick, B.R., 2015	Get a clue: How entrepreneurs can manage the service experience to differentiate themselves and provide value propositions that maximize customer satisfaction	*Entrepreneurial Executive*
van Tonder, C., 2017	More than Just a Stamp in My Passport	*International Journal of Business and Economics*
Varca, Philip E.	Emotional empathy and frontline employees: Does it make sense to care about the customer?	*Journal of Services Marketing*
Varma, R. T. R., 2012	Enhancing and Empowering: Customer Experience	*SCMS Journal of Indian Management*
Vinodhini, G. and Chandrasekaran, R.M., 2017	A sampling based sentiment mining approach for e-commerce applications	*Information Processing and Management*
Wang, L.C., Baker, J., Wagner, J.A., and Wakefield, K., 2007	Can a retail website be social?	*Journal of Marketing*
Wang, S., 2009	Emotional Design Based on Customer Experience Requirement	2009 IEEE 10th International conference on computer-Aided Industrial Design and Conceptual Design. CAID and CD 2009
Wattanacharoensil, W., Schuckert, M., Graham, A. and Dean, A., 2017	An analysis of the airport experience from an air traveler perspective	*Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*
Wijaya, A. P., 2017	Role of Experience in Customer Self-Congruity	*Entrepreneurial Business and Economics Review*

	to Maintaining Loyalty: A Study on Fashion Store	
Yang, Z-Y., and He, L-Y., 2011	Goal, customer experience and purchase intention in a retail context in China: An empirical study	*African Journal of Business Management*
Yakhlef, A., 2015	Customer experience within retail environments: An embodied, spatial approach	*Marketing Theory*
Yoon, S.J. and Lee, H.J., 2017	Does Customer Experience Management Pay Off? Evidence from Local versus Global Hotel Brands in South Korea	*Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management*
Zaltman, G., Olson, J. and Forr, J., 2015	Toward a New Marketing Science for Hospitality Managers	*Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*
Zomerdijk, L.G., Voss, C.A., 2011	NSD Processes and Practices in Experiential Services	*Journal of Product Innovation Management*
129 in total		

PUBLICATION
II

Embodied interaction in customer experience:
a phenomenological study of group fitness

Kuuru, T-K. & Närvänen, E.

Publication reprinted with the permission of the copyright holders.

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Embodied interaction in customer experience: a phenomenological study of group fitness

Tiina-Kaisa Kuuru and Elina Närvänen

Faculty of Management and Business, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyse the role of embodied interaction in customer experience (CX) in the group fitness context. CX is defined as (i) an actor's subjective response to or interpretation of a firm's offerings during the entire customer journey (ii) through the experience of all senses (iii) when involved in interactions with other actors and the environment (iv) that result in cognitive, emotional, sensorial and behavioural responses. This study extends the existing understanding on CX by bringing the living and breathing body to its core. The study's interpretive analysis uses 20 interviews, as well as autoethnographic understandings. By adopting script theory as an analytical framework, the paper identifies eight themes within the categories of interpersonal and intrapsychic scripts. As a result, this study extends the conceptualisation of CX by addressing embodied interaction and brings script theory as an analytical framework to marketing and CX research.

Introduction

The interactive aspects of customer experience (CX) have a strong presence in contemporary marketing research and practice (Jain, Aagja, & Bagdare, 2017; Klaus & Maklan, 2011). Grönroos (2011, p. 289) defines *interaction* as 'mutual or reciprocal action where two or more parties have an effect upon one another'. Scholars have identified various forms of interaction that affect customer experiences. These include direct and indirect interactions between: customers and the firm, brand or product (Meyer & Schwager, 2007); customers and other customers and networks of actors (Jaakkola, Helkkula, & Aarikka-Stenroos, 2015; Verhoef et al., 2009); customers and technology (Teixeira et al., 2012); and customers and the servicescape (Kranzbühler, Kleijnen, Morgan, & Teerling, 2017). The importance of interaction for CX is clearly recognised, but the focus has been more on the effects and outcomes related to experience than on the nature of interaction and its various forms.

CX is defined as (i) an actor's subjective response to or interpretation of a firm's offerings during the entire customer journey (ii) through the experience of all senses (iii) when involved in interactions with other actors and the environment (iv) that result in cognitive, emotional, sensorial and behavioural responses (Jain et al., 2017; Lemon &

Verhoef, 2016). Although there has been extensive research on the co-creation of customer experiences (e.g., Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Vargo & Lusch, 2008), the firm is still often commonly seen as the initiator of superior CX through improvements to its various elements (Kranzbühler et al., 2017). We argue that the active, involved role of the customer and the customer's lifeworld (Tynan, McKechnie, & Hartley, 2014) has not been fully conceptualised. Therefore, this paper builds on a phenomenological understanding (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989) of CX that emphasises embodied interaction (Crossley, 1995, 2005; Helkkula, 2011). Furthermore, because of the cognitive framing employed in the literature of how people experience the world (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), the interacting participants' bodies are missing from the picture. The body creates a connection between humans and the world, which is why we argue that embodiment is important in understanding CX (Stevens, Maclaran, & Brown, 2019; Yakhelf, 2015). The study is in line with the customer-dominant logic (CDL) approach, which makes understanding the customer's subjective world a priority for service theory and practice (Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015; Heinonen, Strandvik, Mickelsson, & Edvarsson, 2010; Tynan et al., 2014). In the CDL view, customers embed service providers in *their* processes rather than the other way around. To expand the current understanding of the interactive aspects of CX, we ask the following research questions: *How does reflexive embodiment and intercorporeality characterise CX? What forms of embodied interaction can be distinguished in CX?*

To address our research questions, we draw from the concept of embodiment as it has been used within the field of sociology (e.g., Crossley, 1995, 2005; Wacquant, 2004), as well as within consumer research (Belk & Sobh, 2018; Joy & Venkatesh, 1994; Stevens et al., 2019; Valtonen & Närvänen, 2015). Body modification, including tattooing (Patterson & Schroeder, 2010; Roux & Belk, 2019), Crossfit training (Pekkanen, Närvanen, & Tuominen, 2017), Tough Mudder (Scott, Cayla, & Cova, 2017), plastic surgery (Schouten, 1991) and grooming (Liu, 2019) have previously been studied in marketing and consumer research. What is common to these consumption activities is that they involve shaping or modifying the body, either through purchasing services that are applied to the body or involve bodily movement. Group fitness represents another fruitful and theoretically rewarding context to study interactive and embodied aspects of CX. Physical exercise is experienced first and foremost within the individual's body, but the physical environment, which is controlled by the service provider, and other customers also influence the total experience. Thus, CX is the sum of the customer's interpretations through the lived body. In addition, there is a lack of research in the context of fitness services in the field of marketing, even though fitness activities are popular among physically active populations (Sassatelli, 2016). In 2017, EuropeActive (2018) estimated the total revenue for the European industry to be EUR 26.6 billion, with 60 million practitioners and 650,000 industry employees in 25 European countries. Furthermore, we attempt to provide theoretically generalisable concepts and implications for the management of experiences that can be applied in various other service contexts, such as extreme sports and sports-related services, wellness businesses, restaurants and events, such as music festivals, concerts and sporting events.

This study introduces an embodied perspective to CX and service research by bringing the living and breathing body to the centre. The findings hold important implications for developing CX theory in terms of customer-to-customer interaction by

highlighting relations between living, breathing and sensing bodies, rather than just minds, and in terms of exploring reflexive embodiment, which refers to the customer's internal interaction between the body as object and subject (Crossley, 2004). The findings not only broaden the theoretical understanding of CX and emphasise the multi-layered nature of interaction but also benefit businesses for which embodiment is particularly salient. Furthermore, as many types of service are currently being digitised, understanding how customers experience embodied interactions in high-touch contexts may be crucial for developing services in the digital environment that continues to enable value creation in the absence of even face-to-face interactions.

The paper begins by introducing the interactional aspects of CX and explicating the concept of embodiment. Second, we introduce the methodology, which includes interview and autoethnographic data, as well as script theory as a tool for analysis. Third, we analyse the findings and discuss their implications for theory and practice. As a result, we also introduce a new definition of interaction in CX. Finally, we discuss the study's implications.

Background

Interactional aspects of customer experience

Although the interactive and social aspects on CX are highly recognised in the literature (Brocato, Voorhees, & Baker, 2012; Helkkula, 2011; Jain et al., 2017; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016), interaction is often understood in quite a straightforward way, and only a few attempts to directly define interaction or its forms have been made. Interaction has been analysed as dialogue (Grönroos & Voima, 2013), co-creation (Jaakkola et al., 2015), a driver of outcomes (Helkkula, 2011) and resource integration (Vargo & Lusch, 2008).

Stein and Ramaseshan (2016) define employee–customer and customer–customer interactions as important triggers for experience in the retail context. The influence of other customers on an individual's CX is particularly relevant for services wherein consumption occurs at or immediately after purchase (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Some studies have claimed that interactions with other customers are mostly based on demographic or physical attributes, such as age, gender or physical appearance (e.g., Brocato et al., 2012), which are easily observable. Recent studies have also identified the influence of customer-to-customer interactions on an individual's attitudes and behavioural intentions (Mattila, Hanks, & Wang, 2014), as well as the effect of neighbouring customer interactions on experience quality (Kim & Choi, 2016). Mattila et al. (2014) note that customers in a retail context may react in many ways to service failures that happen to other people – in other words, customers are actively aware of and interpreting surrounding bodies, and this affects their CX. In addition, customers also always evaluate other customers' behaviours based on their own background and values, as well as social norms (Brocato et al., 2012).

While extant literature has recognised the embodied performances of service employees (e.g., McDowell, 2009), embodied interaction in experiences remains unexplored. It has been established that customers can feel a strong sense of belonging with strangers by simply sharing the same place, and this can even work as a driver for visiting a specific place (e.g., a café) (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2010). In their paper on value in service experience, Tynan et al. (2014) argue that *sensory value* and *behavioural value*

are created for customers in interactions with the service providers. The latter relates to the role of physical actions and resulting in bodily experiences, which 'immerses the informant's whole mind and body in the experience' (ibid., p. 1066). However, since Tynan et al.'s (2014) focus is on customer value rather than theorising the experience itself, the authors do not conceptualise forms of embodied interaction further. Stevens et al. (2019) were the first to analyse consumer experience in the retail brandscape from an embodied perspective. Their study highlights how individuals interact with the brandscape in a strongly embodied manner and makes important contributions regarding the active relation between the body and space. However, their paper does not focus on intercorporeal interaction.

To focus on embodied aspects of CX further, we adopt a phenomenological perspective. A phenomenological approach to CX emphasises experience as being strongly individual (Helkkula, 2011), while also recognising the importance of social aspects, as experiences always are co-created (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). CX is seen as a customer-driven phenomenon, and the need for providers to understand customer logic is highlighted (Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015). Current research examining the role of interaction tends to focus strongly on the outcomes (e.g., loyalty, satisfaction and word of mouth) of interactions (Brocato et al., 2012; Moore, Moore, & Capella, 2005). Helkkula (2011) recommends that researchers focusing on an individual's experience should instead adopt a phenomenological approach to gain an understanding of CX from the customer's perspective. In-depth customer understanding is gained only by using methods that open the customer's internal, subjective world to the researcher (Helkkula, 2011). In this paper, we recognise that various external factors and social relations shape experiences (Kranzbühler et al., 2017) but focus on embodied interactions between actors from an individual customer's perspective, concentrating on reflexive embodiment and intercorporeality, which are discussed in the next section.

Essence of embodiment

The general absence of the body from conceptualisations of CX is a significant gap, as it is the body through which we actually sense the world around us (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Indeed, as Connell (1995, p. 51) notes: 'There is an irreducible bodily dimension in experience and practice; the sweat cannot be excluded'. Hence, exploring reflexive embodiment and intercorporeal interaction expands the view to consider CX as strongly internal and subjective (Verhoef et al., 2009).

To bring the body into the CX discussion, we must turn to sociology and anthropology, where the body has been central for a long time. To reflect the body's fundamental role for humans, we draw on Merleau-Ponty's (1962) phenomenological approach, which considers the relation between the mind and body as a continuum of life – described as 'flesh' in his conceptualisation. Instead of there being a separate mind and body, it is through the body that the world becomes real for us. The lived body is considered to be the experiencing body itself, and carnal sociology (Crossley, 1995; Wacquant, 2015) emphasises that the human being is always an active agent, a being of flesh and blood. According to Merleau-Ponty (1962) the body has two intertwining sides: the object side (sensible side) and the subjective side (sentient). These two sides become one in the flesh of the body as sensible-sentience (Crossley,

1995). In other words, the body is always acting towards and acted upon by others. In our study, we attempt to go beyond the duality of mind and body to consider these two as strongly relational and intertwined, affecting and being affected by each other (Crossley, 1995; Valtonen & Närvänen, 2015).

In the field of consumer research, the embodied approach has been relatively rich in recent years. Joy and Sherry (2003) studied the embodied imagination in an art gallery, and Vom Lehn 2006) utilised a similar context while studying consumers in museums via video-based methods. Concentrating on bodily actions, Vom Lehn's (2006) study revealed how people form and share their experience of exhibitions with others. Murphy, Patterson, and O'Malley (2018) investigated embodied competences among high-speed motorcyclists and identified the body as a source of knowledge (Crossley, 2001, 2004, 2005; Mauss, 1979). Stevens et al. (2019, p. 807) analysed consumer experiences in the retail brandscape, taking an embodied approach and underlining the body as the 'lived centre of the experience'. They make important contributions regarding the relation between the individual body and the physical environment, emphasising a sensorial perspective. Roux and Belk (2019) studied tattooed bodies and considered the body as the place where people are forced to live (Wacquant, 2015). Their study revealed how, by reworking their bodies, people make their bodies a better place to live. In other words, body modification (Crossley, 2005) allows individuals to feel better and helps them to reconnect with their embodied self. Patterson and Schroeder (2010) in turn viewed the body as an event in their work on tattooing and skin. Scott et al. (2017) studied consumers paying to experience pain in the adventure challenge Tough Mudder in the United States. Here the body is considered as an object, as feeling pain brings the body to the centre of everything. Valtonen and Närvänen (2015) focused on materialising the body and the object in their study on object–person relations in the context of sleeping. By focusing on lived experience, these studies challenge mind/body dualism and consider the body as a doer. We contribute to this emerging stream, particularly by focusing on embodied interaction.

To avoid mind/body dualism, several phenomenological theories of embodiment have stressed the mental impact of bodily activities using different terms, including *body consciousness, body awareness, embodied self* and *embodied mind* (e.g., Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991). Merleau-Ponty (1962) famously argues that bodily existence creates a third category (beyond physiological and psychological) called the *lived body*, which is neither spirit nor nature, neither soul nor body, neither inner nor outer (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). This view does not deny the cognitive aspects of CX that happen '*within and because of*, rather than in opposition to, our organic being' (Shilling, 2012, p. 10; Joy & Sherry, 2003).

In our study, the notion of embodied interaction is central. We focus on both the internal reflection of body-subjects (Crossley, 1995), i.e. the individual participant at the group fitness class, as well as the embodied interaction between lived bodies during a class. To avoid upholding the mind/body separation, we avoid describing internal reflection in CX as something 'between' the mind and body of the individual. Instead, following Merleau-Ponty, we describe it as the body-subject turning back upon itself to experience itself (Crossley, 1995, p. 49). We utilise the term *reflexive embodiment* to describe this interaction within the body – this refers to the body's ability and habit to 'perceive, emote about, reflect and act upon one's own body'

(Crossley, 2004, p. 1). The body is both, the object and subject of a perception, thought, feeling, desire or action. Further, the interaction between bodies is central to the phenomenological approach of Merleau-Ponty – bodies belong to a common world, and there is also a 'carnal intersubjectivity' (Crossley, 1995, p. 57; Merleau-Ponty, 1964). We define this interaction between bodies as 'intercorporeal interaction', denoting the carnal relation between human beings, which allows them to interact with each other (Crossley, 1995).

Phenomenological approach

Phenomenological interviews and data collection

This study aims at an in-depth understanding of the embodied dimension of interaction as a part of CX, and, as such, a qualitative approach rooted in the interpretive paradigm was adopted. Interviews and autoethnographic observations were used to generate data (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). The first author works as an entrepreneur at the firm where the interviewees were contacted. She has also been an instructor of group fitness classes for several years and, thus, has experience in the study context. The second author has frequently participated in group fitness classes. Both authors' experiences, knowledge and observations shaped the study's interpretations. This is in line with the chosen research paradigm of interpretivism, in which the researcher's pre-understandings and previous experiences are viewed as a strength rather than a weakness (Carson, Gilmore, Perry, & Groghaug, 2001; Gummesson, 2005).

Phenomenological interviews were chosen as the main method of data collection, as the focus is on each individual's personal experiences and how they are formed (Helkkula, 2011) (Appendix 1). The data consist of 20 such interviews with customers of a Finnish firm offering group fitness services, with a particular focus on dance, strength and body–mind classes (e.g., pilates and yoga). The interviewees were not selected based on which classes they took, but there was variety among the interviewees regarding background and class preference (Table 1). This variety was observed and linked to the identified themes by recognising special characteristics that were dominant for particular types of class or customers with a similar background. In qualitative research, the main focus should not be on the quantity of data but rather on its quality and value for analysis and interpretation (Gummesson, 2017). The objective of qualitative inquiry is not to generalise findings statistically but rather to build theories and concepts that can be transferred to other contexts. All interviewees were female, which reflects the overall setting of the group fitness business, in which most who attend classes are female. Since extant research has not focused on embodied interaction in group fitness, we wanted to concentrate on this representative group of typical customers in a group fitness class. In addition, a key selection criteria for phenomenological research are that those participating in the study should have first-hand-lived experience of the studied phenomena (Thompson et al., 1989).

The call for participation in this study was announced on the studio's web page and Facebook site. In addition, a message concerning the research was sent out via the studio's e-mail list. Interviews were held in the studio where the interviewees attend group fitness classes, which helped them recall their experiences and tell personal

Table 1. Profiles of the participants.

Pseudonyms	Age	Background in group fitness (years)	Favourite classes
Anna	42	25	High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT), strength, Bodypump
Liisa	33	13	Bodypump, strength, dance
Ida	39	26	dance, pilates, body & mind
Olivia	28	8	body & mind, pilates, yoga
Seela	34	14	Bodypump, strength
Riikka	29	15	HIIT, Bodypump, strength
Kaisa	34	10	dance, yoga, pilates, strength
Jenny	38	16	dance, Zumba, bodystep, Bodycombat
Eeva	35	15	Bodycombat, yoga, HIIT, pilates
Venla	26	2	core, pilates
Maria	48	35	Bodypump, dance, pilates, Bodycombat
Lotta	33	5	dance, pilates
Erika	28	3	Bodypump, strength, yoga
Tiina	39	5	dance, yoga, pilates
Hanna	43	23	strength, Bodypump, pilates
Mia	36	10	strength, HIIT, dance, pilates
Emmi	29	5	dance, pilates, Bodypump, strength
Riina	31	8	pilates, yoga, core
Sanna	37	10	zumba, dance, strength, yoga
Laura	32	5	dance, core, yoga

stories. Interviewees were aged between 26 and 48 years, and the interviews averaged 49 min each. All interviews were held in Finnish, and citations have been translated into English and follow the original tone of the interviewees' comments as closely as possible.

Script framework as an analysis tool

The analysis was conducted using the script theoretical framework (Wiederman, 2015). We explicate this framework in detail because it is rarely used in marketing and service research and because, in interpretive research, frameworks that are used in analysis contain theoretically informed ideas and assumptions that open the data to particular interpretations – hence, it is important to describe these explicitly (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Script theory, which has its roots in psychology and psychiatry, as well as sociology (Wiederman, 2015), has been used previously in a few marketing studies from a psychological perspective (e.g., Manthiou, Kang, Chiang, & Tang, 2016; Manthiou, Kang, & Hyun, 2017). However, this study utilises the sociological perspective, as we want to avoid defining CX in purely cognitive terms. We utilise script theory to explore the interactive and behavioural aspects of CX, for which it is particularly suitable (Manthiou et al., 2017; Wiederman, 2015).

Script theory relies strongly on social constructionism, which holds that the interpretation of reality, including human behaviour, is derived from shared beliefs within a particular social group (Wiederman, 2015). In this paper, the human behaviours in question are embodied, and the meanings attached to those behaviours, including what makes them 'embodied' behaviours, are derived from metaphorical scripts that the interviewees have earned and incorporated as a function of their involvement in a social group (Simon & Gagnon, 2003, 1984). In this way, script theory's view is close to what Goffman (1971) has conceptualised as the rules of the social situation affecting how bodies relate to each other (Crossley, 1995, p. 146). Three levels of scripts are distinguished: cultural scenarios,

interpersonal scripts and intrapsychic scripts (Wiederman, 2015). *Cultural scenarios* are the most abstract level of scripting but are crucial for setting the context of roles and including necessary institutional arrangements and symbols (Vargo & Lusch, 2016) that relate to collective, social life. Cultural scenarios are tied to social influences, which shape customers' interpretations of the cultural and symbolic meanings of their bodies (Thompson & Hirschman, 1995). As our research is not focused on this perspective on the socialised body, we have left this level in the background and concentrated on the next two. Although *Interpersonal scripts* are based on cultural scenarios, they are adapted to certain circumstances of each situation and context. The individual's prior knowledge and experiences, assumptions and meanings shape their experiences and create a frame for each social encounter (Simon & Gagnon, 2003, 1984). *Intrapsychic scripts* can be viewed as an internal and individual script experience. The customer's private world of expectations, thoughts and desires is created in the deepest recesses of the self and is bound to social life. It covers all experiences, from successes to difficulties, that are interpreted within the general context of cultural scenarios (Wiederman, 2015).

The process of analysis followed the logic of hermeneutics (Bleicher, 1980) (Figure 1). The analysis followed a part-to-whole mode of interpretation (Bleicher, 1980). First, an individual understanding of each interview was gained by viewing each interview as a whole. Next, a new part-to-whole phase began, in which individual interviews were related to each other and common patterns were identified, referred to as *global themes* (Thompson et al., 1989). These themes were reflected against the script theoretical framework (intrapsychic and interpersonal scripts) to offer guidance on how to abstract the data to a more conceptual level. The analysis can be described as a circular, iterative process, in which the author moved back and forth between the parts and whole throughout the entire process (Thompson et al., 1989). The theoretical framework and research questions were refined during the analysis, which is
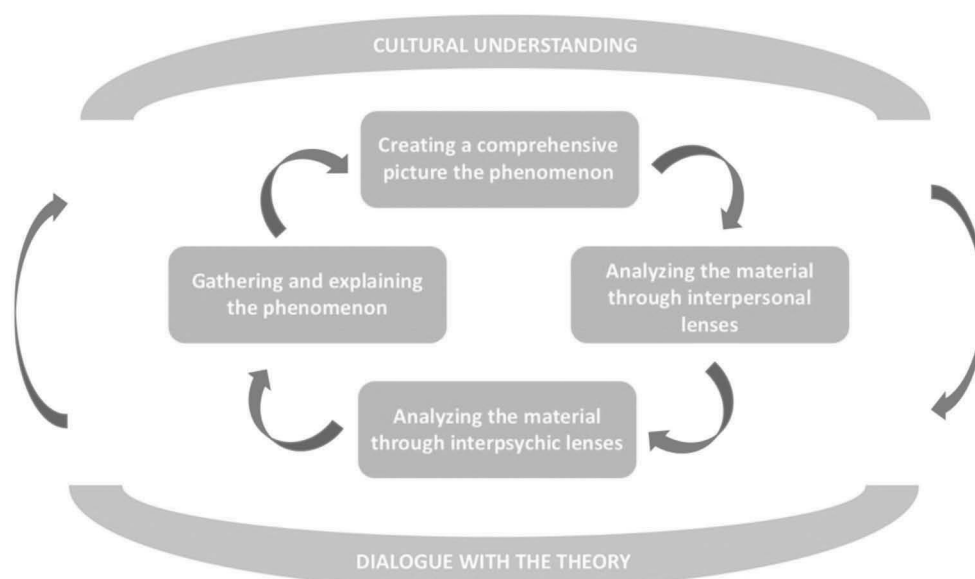
Figure 1. Process of analysis and utilisation of script theory.

a common characteristic of qualitative inquiry (Gummesson, 2017). The first author initially conducted the analysis, while the second author supported the themes as they started to emerge from the data by commenting and reflecting upon the categories. An abductive approach (Belk & Sobh, 2018; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012) guided the coding of themes by encouraging the first researcher to focus on 'surprising findings' and 'puzzles' that emerged from the empirical data. Identification of 'puzzles' was followed up by fitting the pieces together, which resulted in themes. Eight themes were developed through a close interplay between the data and theory. The themes of affecting body, learning body, performing body and life-balancing body were expected findings for the authors based on their autoethnographic views. The themes of empowering body, honoured body and admired body, as well as the active side of theme body as an example, were more surprising. In addition, the high volume of distractions related to reflexive embodiment in CX was also surprising and interesting.

Findings

> The others give me energy and strength, but in the end it's just all about me and my body.
> (Riikka, 29)

Riikka encapsulates how she and many other interviewees perceive CX. The quotation exemplifies that even though consumers are their bodies (being a body), they can also sometimes perceive and experience their body as a possessions (having a body) (Crossley, 2004, p. 2). This lived sense of separation between the self and body is created as part of reflexive embodiment. Specifically, it is part of the intrapsychic script that allows the consumer to interpret their embodied CX.

This supports previous findings that all actors are co-creators of experience, both individually and as a part of the social group (Vargo & Lusch, 2008), but adds to current knowledge on co-creation by underlining CX as unique to every individual (Helkkula, 2011). Although individuals are sharing the same space and positive perception of group fitness, the perception and understanding of the experience varies greatly; as one interviewee put it: 'I always get confused in Zumba when there is somebody doing her moves, like putting everything into it, and I can see that for her this is the thing, and I'm just there, totally lost. Like really, she is immersing herself like 100%'. This quote highlights the customer's lifeworld as dominant for embodied CX – it is something that is hard for others to understand or to get into. Individuals are shaping their experiences in intense ways via reflexive embodiment while simultaneously affecting and being affected by other bodies (Crossley, 1995; Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

Interpersonal scripts

> I feel like we all unite, spread energy and good feeling around us. We are in this together.
> (Jenny, 38)

Four themes regarding intercorporeal interaction emerge from the empirical materials related to the interpersonal script: *affecting body, empowering body, body as an example and admired body* (Table 2). These findings highlight the role of the body in building

social relations, offering important cues and creating relational harmony (Brocato et al., 2012; Wiederman, 2015).

The social environment provides the moving body with a place to affect and be affected (Valtonen & Närvänen, 2015). *Affecting body* refers to how intercorporeal inter-action allows bodies to relate with other bodies *in an emotionally-charged way*, resulting in an emotional atmosphere (Crossley, 2005, p. 52; Merleau-Ponty, 1962). The intervie-wees, affective body-subjects, mentioned a spectrum of emotions, varying from joy and happiness to fatigue and annoyance, which they sense through dynamic interchange between the body and world. It can be argued that a situation in which the moving body is central for all actions allows all kinds of sentiments and thoughts to emerge in a body-subject. However, these individually experienced emotions and feelings, both positive and negative (Hui & Bateson, 1991), are also expressed bodily through expres-sions, movements and gestures; thus, they are spread to other customers for evaluation and possibly adoption (Fuchs & De Jaegher, 2009). Indeed, for Merleau-Ponty, emotions are not 'inner realities' expressed externally, but instead, they are 'forms of conduct visible from the outside' (1971, p. 52; see also Crossley, 1995, p. 52).

A*ffecting body* also was described as a strong, positive effect through which bodies spread joy and energy to others. Hence, affective bodies can be productive in constitut-ing relations and magnifying emotions between customers (see Crossley, 1995, p. 53; Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2010). It may even be easier for the customer to display emotions to a stranger than, say, to a friend (López-López, Ruiz-de-Maya, & Warlop, 2014). As in the study by Caprariello and Reis (2013), sharing an experience with

Table 2. Summary of themes of embodied CX in interpersonal script.

Interpersonal script	Description	Example
Affecting body	Body as creator of different emotions and feelings	'Even though I had a bad day, entering the studio and seeing others made me sense the special energy there. I immediately think that it was good that I came, and my face turns to a smile'.
		'I'm disappointed in myself, and it annoys me so much [if there is a break from the classes]. I feel it in my body, mind, look and everything, I don't feel good in my body at all'.
Empowering body	Body as facilitator of better performance for others	'When I saw her doing so great and not giving up, I just decided that I could do it, even though I didn't have any energy left. But I did it and felt damn good!'
		'It is the best thing about the group when I see others jumping and doing things, and I think that I can't be the only one who dies here, and I get myself to continue'.
Body as an example	Body as an example for others and an object of mirroring	'The task is for me and every other participant to show an example to others of how fun and jazzy it [exercising] is, and many times, I go to the front row, primarily because I want to see, but also to be there creating the spirit. I don't want to stay in the back row and do it half way. I think my and everyone else's example inspires the others'.
		'Sometimes I just look for an example. If I see someone who has got the hang of it, I start to follow her'.
Admired body	Body as an object of admiration	'When I see a woman, older than me, doing great and being unbelievably strong and in such good shape, I just wish I could be like that at the same age'.
		'I'm not always doing so great in dance classes, but I never have felt that I would not belong there, but rather I admire how well someone dances, and I feel the joy of it'.

unknown people was viewed as more enjoyable than exercising alone at home or on a jogging track. In contrast, if the general atmosphere during the class is sometimes experienced as lazy and tired, the individual's experience remains somehow pale, as the group does not provide the positive boost to one's exercise. The moving bodies are creators of a shared atmosphere, which transforms and affects the space (Crossley, 2005; Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

Conversely, *affecting body* also can distract and impact other bodies negatively (Wiederman, 2015). In many group fitness classes, relational harmony is tied to choreography, as all participants are moving at the same pace with the same timing. If somebody falls out of step, it can distract someone else's movements and evoke feelings of irritation or frustration. Another distraction caused by *affecting body* relates to customers' ideas of their 'own space' in the studio. Many customers have their own favourite spot in the room, where they are accustomed to exercising and to which they return in each class. This leads to territorial behaviour, as customers may draw invisible boundaries between themselves and others (Griffiths & Gilly, 2012) and create their own self-territories (Roux, 2010). If the boundaries of an individual's self-territory are violated, they become irritated. However, this is usually only a momentary feeling, and after the customer chooses a new spot and the class starts, she usually forgets about it. In addition to physical space, self-territory may also refer to an individual's idea of 'being in her own bubble' while exercising, and violating these invisible boundaries may distract one from this experience. For example, another person's attempt to chat or sweat drops flying onto one's skin from the next person may violate an individual's territory. The ownership dimension implied by territoriality can impact other customers' experiences (Griffiths & Gilly, 2012) by arousing tension or avoidance. The first author's autoethnographical insight related to this issue is that it would be useful for customers to change their spots in the studio occasionally to experience different stimuli and new angles for following the practice. Hui and Bateson (1991) also have shown that *consumer density* influences customers' emotional responses and subsequent behaviours. Similarly, in this study, the interviewees said they felt annoyed if there was not enough space in which to move or execute movements properly. Consequently, the presence of too many customers in one class can elicit negative experiences; however, the power of the group also was mentioned as an important positive factor. One interviewee, reflecting on her dance class, cheerfully said, 'more people, better party'. It was also noted that the customer's mood, as well as cultural factors (e.g. values, traditions and rules of behaviour) (Yakhlef, 2015), affect how the proximity (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) of other bodies were experienced.

Empowering body views the body as a facilitator of better performance for others. When one customer is sweating, pushing and pulling next to another, the active body is delivering signals of encouragement to the other. This signal could be referred to as *social pressure*, a term that many interviewees used to describe how others affect their experience. Despite the negative tone of the word *pressure*, the interviewees generally interpreted *social pressure* as positive. *Empowering body* enables something that the bodies would not be capable of doing without each other. With the help of other bodies, it becomes possible for the customer to 'do the last reps', accelerate the pace or keep on moving in spite of fatigue. Although *social pressure* was mostly viewed as positive, the interviews also showed that *empowering body* could elicit feelings of

uncertainty. Social pressure relates to a customer's image of themself and through which them mirror themself to others (De Jaegher & Di Paolo, 2007). Moreover, the fear or uncertainty of being evaluated was present. For example, some interviewees described how they may easily choose a more advanced version of the activity because of others: 'If everyone else is running I easily start running too, even though I had previously decided to choose the easier options'. Although they acknowledged the tacit norm that the purpose of the class is not to judge or observe others' moving bodies, many still felt insecure and driven to succeed in the presence of others.

Body as an example is a twofold theme. First, the interviewees described mirroring the movements of others, instructor's body naturally providing the primary example. Customers trust the embodied capital of instructors, and this derives from the instructors' cultural skills and knowledge, which the body utilises (Bourdieu, 1986; Crossley, 2001). Other surrounding bodies also provided guidance – usually someone more skilful or expert (Crossley, 2005; Kim & Choi, 2016; Murphy et al., 2018) – to better follow the choreography or understand the technique for a specific movement. In other words, customers are imitating others' body techniques (Crossley, 2005; Mauss, 1979) and mirroring the customers with more embodied capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Crossley, 2001). Interviewees described how they follow somebody 'who just nails it' or feel that 'the others just help so much'. Here, the role of the body being followed is passive; these customers move their bodies to exercise, not for somebody next to them. *Body as an example* was viewed as helping, enabling and encouraging movements. In addition, the body was also intentionally held as an example for others. Mia states that 'it is my and others' duty to give an example for others of how much fun and joy it is. Many times, I position myself in the front row, of course to follow up but also to just be there creating the atmosphere. I don't want to be in the back row giving only 50% of me. I'm sure this has an effect, and I can show my effort to others so they can make the most of the class'. This was a surprising finding, as the interviewees generally described their experiences as strongly individual. Even so, some said it was their responsibility to be *examples* for others. Here, the body, which was mostly considered to be a passive example, became active. *Showing the example* was not related to technical issues or choreography but rather to how individual bodies positively affect others and the common atmosphere through movement, gestures, gazes and presence in the class (Fuchs & De Jaegher, 2009).

Admired body refers to the body as an object of admiration. More specifically, individuals' movements, fitness, techniques or even how they immersed themselves into dancing without hesitation was deemed admirable. Admiration can enhance performance and the desire to develop skills, or it can arouse emotions of admiration and amazement; as Hanna expresses: 'I feel like wow, sometimes, when I see a small girl pulling up such a great amount of weights'. Conversely, admiration may be related to seeking status within the class. Based on the authors' autoethnographic insights, a visible social hierarchy is often apparent in a group fitness class, which relates to how customers position themselves. Customers who are experienced with choreography, i.e. have more embodied capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Crossley, 2001), tend to select spots in the front rows, whereas beginners stay at the back to avoid being evaluated, as well as to learn from the more experienced participants.

Although admiration was mostly viewed as a positive phenomenon, some negative comparisons or sensations (e.g., envy, shame and uncertainty) also occurred. Olivia states: 'It just felt so bad, and I realised that my body can't handle it, and the anger to myself just increased, like why can't I do this even though the others can?' We find this really interesting – even though Olivia has been inspired by other bodies that she admires and then feels envy, as she cannot follow the others, the underlying affective state is anger towards herself. Intercorporeality (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) is shaping Olivia's experience, but it is turning the focus onto her internal reflection on her body (Crossley, 1995). With some interviewees, admiration had a tone of envy or uncertainty, as individuals may start to compare themselves to others, even though they simultaneously admire the performance of the other bodies.

Both themes, *body as an example* and *admired body*, highlight how interaction with others allows individuals an outside perspective of themselves (Crossley, 1995; Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 434) – individuals objectify themselves and can experience themselves as, for example, weaker, fatter, stronger or less skilful. Based on an individual's experience of themselves, they modify their body techniques by mirroring other bodies' movement to improve their own capabilities.

Contrary to previous studies (e.g., Moore et al., 2005; Stein & Ramaseshan, 2016; Stevens et al., 2019), contextual factors, such as music, lighting and temperature, were not very prominent in our data. The interviewees revealed that these factors are commonly noted only when something goes wrong – for example, when the temperature in the studio is too high or the music is too loud. Music was also described as having a significant effect on class spirit and atmosphere, particularly in dance classes. If the customer really likes or is connected to the music, then their experience is positively affected. A certain song or combination of songs heard during the class may also form embodied memories – i.e. they may help customers return to the same affective state that they felt in the past when exercising, thereby contributing to consistently positive experiences in class. In other words, music represents a magical domain for forming CX, which can 'captivate audiences, provide cathartic and embodied experiences' (Bradshaw & Shankar, 2008, p. 225) and transform customers from passive to active producers of their experiences and meanings. The space itself was described as important for the experience. For example, the interviewees said it is difficult to do the same kind of exercises at home in rooms that are not designed for such exercise. Entering the studio or changing clothes in the changing room can be viewed as a transitioning ritual (Pekkanen et al., 2017) that 'puts your mind and body into a sporty mood'. However, although the relation of bodies to space and place is an important dimension for embodied CX, our data did not have adequate scope and depth for us to analyse this dimension further. In this respect, our findings complement the recent study by Stevens et al. (2019), where the focus is more on these aspects rather than interaction.

Intrapsychic scripts

> It's only me and my body in the moment. I feel I'm just doing and moving and don't care at all of the others or even be aware what's happening around me. (Ida, 39)

Four themes from the empirical material are identified as relating to the intrapsychic script: *honoured body, learning body, performing body* and *life-balancing body* (Table 3).

These themes illustrate reflexive embodiment and refer to the ongoing reflection of sensations felt in the body-subject, as well as the individual's own interpretation of the experience (De Jaegher & Di Paolo, 2007).

Honoured body refers to the customer's caring and nurturing relationship with their body. The interviewees indicated that they want to honour their bodies and enhance their health (De Jaegher & Di Paolo, 2007). People are very self-conscious about their bodies and their movements and sensations. If customers feel good about their bodies, they experience satisfaction and happiness, creating a positive experience. The worst-case scenario would involve exercise that damages the body. Many interviewees said they like to attend familiar classes because uncertainty about what is coming next or having to learn new moves can irritate or even scare them. Laura states: 'I really like to know what I'm doing. I hate surprises, and, for example, in a yoga class that I don't attend so often, I think a lot whether I'm doing it right, am I hurting my body?'. These negative emotions can significantly affect their overall experience.

Honoured body also refers to interviewees' will to maintain vitality. They want to stay in shape and remain active. Many interviewees said they had jobs in which that sat at a desk, so exercise provided a needed balance to enhance their wellbeing (Scott et al., 2017). *Honoured body* is mainly tied to bodily sensations: if a customer's body feels well, so will their mind.

Learning body highlights learning and developing as core factors of a customer's experience. The body, first and foremost, is viewed as a learning and embracing agent (Crossley, 2005; Murphy et al., 2018). Like *honoured body, learning body* refers to exercise as strongly embodied. Continuously monitoring their bodies during class is a priority for customers, and they evaluate their experiences based on improvements and learning

Table 3. Summary of themes of embodied CX in intrapsychic script.

Intrapsychic script	Description	Example
Honoured body	Body as an agent to be taken care of and honoured.	'I don't care what is happening around me. It is just me and my body. If something makes me feel bad, I stop. The best prize is when I feel great and vital in my body'.
		'I don't take the class analytically, but I feel really analytical of myself like how does my body react, how I feel, where do I feel the movement? I observe it a lot'.
Learning body	Body as a learning and developing agent	'I have learned about myself, that I'm actually good at something. I had never thought that I would have the ability to jump, but the instructor mentioned it to me several times, and when I compared myself to others, I realised that actually it might be true. That improvement was so amazing, and that's what I got my body to do'.
		'Sometimes, I feel euphoria during the class when I realise that I can, that I am able and capable'.
Performing body	Body as a performing agent	'When I realise that today I can't jump as high as I usually can, and I know how much better I could do, it irritates me so much that my body just can't do what I would so badly want'.
		'I love the feeling when endorphins kick in when I have given all, but that requires the maximum performance from me'.
Life-balancing body	The sensations in the body help the customer balance their life	'I feel peace, as if I were in a forest. Like I am far away from the studio, even though I'm actually still in there'.
		'I remember one time, when I had a hard time in my life, and I came to dance class, and when I danced and heard the music, I just noticed the tears flowing on my cheeks'.

achievements related to movements, technique and choreography. Other customers, as well as the instructor, play a crucial role in a customer's progress (Klaus & Maklan, 2011). Some interviewees said instructors challenge them in ways that would not occur elsewhere – this was a crucial factor in their experiences. When development occurs, the customer has a sense of accomplishment.

More specifically, the nature of *learning body* is twofold. First, for some interviewees, improving is the main goal. Thus, improvement defines their whole experience, and the body is viewed more as an 'object' (Crossley, 2004) of discipline through exercise. In this case, customers continuously monitor and observe their body's performance. If customers learn and develop, they feel satisfied and happy, but if the pace of learning is slower than expected, they may become frustrated or disappointed. Fatigue, stress or other factors can also weaken concentration and hinder comprehension. All these negative feelings are projected through the body; customers feel disappointed in their own bodies. Second, some interviewees are not goal-oriented but may enjoy the feelings and sensations that arise from learning and development. For example, for some customers, learning and development are strongly related to improving self-confidence and self-knowledge (Thompson & Hirschman, 1995). When people realise that they can perform a movement better than before, or master a new step, they feel happy. In this way, the body can be interpreted more as a trusted partner than an object in need of discipline. More precisely, the *joy of success* and *exceeding oneself* were the dominant feelings that interviewees mentioned when describing their best moments in group fitness.

The same feelings are strongly related to the third theme, *performing body*. The body is perceived as a performing agent, and its capabilities and resources define the experience. Performance is related to how much, how fast and how well customers function in class, both physically and mentally. Customers will tolerate fatigue and even pain to gain the best possible results from exercise (Pekkanen et al., 2017; Scott et al., 2017). Similar to Scott et al. (2017), *performing body* puts the body strongly in focus, and everything else fades away. Exercise itself is not expected to be a pleasant experience; only the feelings and sensations afterward matter. A positive experience is strongly tied to the body's capacity to perform, whereas the experience is threatened if the customer's mind and body are not synchronised. Customers feel disappointed if they expected 'more' in their minds and were not happy with how their bodies performed, i.e. the mindset expectations that the body could not deliver. Conversely, the interviewees also indicated that they sometimes felt frustrated when they were full of physical energy, but their minds were distracted due to external factors, thereby making total concentration on exercise impossible. In other words, potential imbalances or discord felt between the mind and body can impact CX significantly.

The last theme is described as *life-balancing body* and illustrates the importance of the group fitness experience as a balancing and joyful element in customers' lives. The interviewees described how they surrender to movement and take a break from everyday life, making it possible to forget work, family, stress, worries, deadlines and plans (Stevens et al., 2019). The experience can even elicit strong sensations that make customers feel as if they are travelling to another world. Music mediating between the mind and body is one element that enhances such extraordinary sensations (Kerrigan, Larsen, Hanratty, & Korta, 2014), offering the experience of escape or evoking strong

emotional states. From another perspective, *life-balancing body* refers to how moving and even challenging one's body provides individuals with the possibility to become aware of their corporeality and connect with their body, as they *feel so alive* while exercising. Many interviewees are white-collar workers, spending their days in front of a desk, which causes a corporeal absence (Scott et al., 2017) to which sweat, fatigue and the joy of moving to provide a balance.

In addition, *life-balancing body* strongly refers to positive emotions lived in one's body while moving one's body. Hewer and Hamilton (2010) identify emotions as being important in their study of experiences in salsa dance classes. The interviewees in the present study indicated that group fitness plays a clear role in generating happiness. Indeed, the interviewees viewed the group fitness studio as a place where one can experience feelings of joy, happiness and relaxation, regardless of what is happening in their lives outside the studio. Perfect technique, number of repetitions or any other element related to performance only help make enjoyment and the feeling of fun possible for them (Murphy et al., 2018). The interviewees said that regardless of how tired, annoyed or stressed they are before class, when they surrender to the exercise, all negative sensations and feelings fade. This kind of direct and subjective emotional state can be viewed as hedonic enjoyment (Klaus & Maklan, 2011). Many of the interviewees said that the 'good vibes' gained during the class are carried with them even after the class and help them to handle everyday hurry and stress. Group fitness was considered as an opportunity to recharge and gain adequate energy and vitality for everyday life. The instructor, other customers, music and the spirit of the class all enhance these sensations, but the interviewees said that the most significant factor for happiness was movement, which increases sensation in their bodies.

Discussion

Summary of findings

We identified eight themes, four of which can be related to the interpersonal script and four to the intrapsychic script. Themes in the interpersonal script refer to intercorporeal interaction, whereas themes in the intrapsychic script demonstrate reflexive embodiment. It is important to note that these themes rarely exist in isolation, but each represents a unique form of embodied interaction.

First, the interpersonal script consists of the themes of *affecting body, empowering body, body as an example* and *admired body*. These themes illustrate the forms of intercorporeal interaction with other customers, the instructor and the surrounding environmental. Moore et al. (2005) argued that atmospherics influence customer-to-customer interaction (Verhoef et al., 2009), but our findings reveal that it is actually social interaction that affects perceptions of the atmosphere. Although the impact of other customers has been identified, it has barely been explored, particularly from a bodily perspective. However, the body influences others' experiences not only through movement and action (Crossley, 1995; Vom Lehn, 2006) but also through utterances, gestures, gazes and appearance (Fuchs & De Jaegher, 2009). Interaction is mostly indirect. Bodies help make other bodies stronger, better and more capable, thereby enhancing others' CX. On some occasions, a moving body can arouse feelings of uncertainty, envy or anxiety in others, and, as

a result, the other person's CX may become negative. Moreover, a moving body can also disturb others' practice and even ruin their experience.

Second, the intrapsychic script comprises the *honoured body, learning body, performing body* and *life-balancing body*. These themes expand the concept of interaction in CX to cover customers' reflexive embodiment. Our findings support the notion of CX as being strongly personal (Helkkula, 2011; Jaakkola et al., 2015). The identified themes indicate the various forms of interaction that may occur, depending on the customer's expectations, background, goals and ideas about the ultimate experience. Through the *learning body*, for example, CX is presented as a possibility to develop and learn. It includes active thinking, reflection and cognitive insight (Schmitt, 1999) alongside different kinds of bodily sensations. Although the cognitive dimension of CX is present (Schmitt, 1999), it cannot be separated from the body. Indeed, the body makes learning possible. Furthermore, the theme of *life-balancing body* extends CX beyond the service environment (Helkkula, 2011), as the main purpose of the experience is to provide balance to and escape from daily life (Stevens et al., 2019). The extension of embodied CX into the realm of everyday life reminds us of the concept of 'extraordinary experience', which is well described in consumer behaviour literature (e.g., Celsi, Rundall & Leigh, 1993; Kerrigan et al., 2014).

Our perspective emphasises how our body shapes everything we think and do and highlights that an in-depth customer approach to CX research is a way to generate new understanding. Additionally, we believe that the embodied dimension is also relevant in many other contexts, albeit with different emphases. For example, studies in the healthcare sector have noted that patients can feel powerless and frustrated if their treatment or rehabilitation does not progress the way they expected (e.g., McColl-Kennedy et al., 2017). In these circumstances, customers may feel that they do not have control over their bodies or the process (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2017). Despite these findings, little is known about managing these kinds of experiences. Our findings show that regardless of which aspect we use when considering CX, the body is present and interacting with other actors. In other words, the body links the self to the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1964).

Theoretical contributions

The study's findings extend research related to the interactive aspects of CX, which has previously been dominated by a disembodied perspective (Kranzbühler et al., 2017; Yakhlef, 2015). First, although studies have recognised the emotional and sensuous aspects of CX (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Schmitt, 1999; Verhoef et al., 2009), these aspects have been mostly framed in cognitive terms (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), which neglects the fact that emotions are created through bodily actions and are part of these actions rather than being distinct from them. Our analysis reveals how the body, conceived as sensing and affective (Valtonen & Närvänen, 2015), is at the centre of experience formation.

While the literature has recognised interpersonal interaction as a crucial trigger for CX (Helkkula, 2011; Jaakkola et al., 2015), our paper expands this view by highlighting the role of indirect interaction in particular as a factor affecting CX. Therefore, we provide a new definition for interaction in CX as *holistic, embodied action and interpretation between entities with a focus on lived experience*. In addition, our findings bring forward

the multi-layered nature of interaction by introducing the individual's reflexive embodiment as an important factor for CX. Hence, we introduce a new, deeper layer of interaction to CX. Moreover, our findings contribute to the discussion on CDL (Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015) by emphasising that an embodied approach to the study of CX is suitable for generating new understandings of customers' logics. This type of conceptual contribution could be characterised as 'identifying', i.e. theorising, the aspects of embodied interaction in CX that have not been recognised previously (MacInnis, 2011). Thus, the study emphasises discovery rather than justification, as a new embodied perspective on CX is highlighted and a creative synthesis is outlined (Yadav, 2010). In addition, our findings complement existing research on the body in consumer research by further opening up the lived body through the concepts of reflexive embodiment (intrapsychic script) and intercorporeal interaction (interpersonal script), which enable a deeper and more detailed understanding of embodied experience.

Recently, the focus of research has increasingly shifted towards CX in digital environments (Teixeira et al., 2012; Jaakkola et al., 2015). It could be argued that digital CX, such as online shopping, provides a negative case for our study, as it often involves no intercorporeal interaction, and reflexive embodiment may play a minor role. However, many of our digital devices, including smartphones, wearable technology and tablets, are operated through touchscreens and thus involve an embodied, sensory relation. Furthermore, the digital self can be embodied in the form of avatars, for example (Belk, 2015). The digital self also allows individuals to view themselves from an outside perspective, i.e. as a body-object (Belk, 2015; Crossley, 1995), in a similar way to group fitness in our paper's context. Many applications of virtual reality in marketing are also based on imitating 'real' embodied experiences. We encourage further research to explore embodied CX in digital and virtual environments.

The so-called 'high-touch' services are still prevalent in several industries and contexts. Our findings highlight the fact that the body is an irreducible part of human experience – sweat, fatigue and other embodied elements cannot be excluded. The findings imply that body and mind should not be perceived as dualistic, i.e. as two separate agencies (Velmans, 2007), but rather should be recognised as being tightly intertwined. CX is formed through the continuous negotiation and interpretation of sensations, thoughts and feelings arising in the body-subject. Furthermore, our findings contribute to the understanding of customer experiences as co-created by a network that includes customers and service providers (Jaakkola et al., 2015). In addition, our study moves the focus onto how customer experiences are actually co-created through reflexive embodiment and intercorporeal interaction, while the existing literature has mainly concentrated on the outcomes of the co-creation process.

The study also provides a methodological contribution to CX research by utilising a new analytical framework. The script framework facilitated analysis of the complexity of CX in group fitness, and the authors believe that this kind of multidisciplinary method can provide new possibilities for examining CX. For example, the script theory could be utilised in studies examining CX from an ecosystem perspective to gain a deeper understanding of the various actors and their roles and relations. Script theory could also be used to examine CX in an online environment or virtual reality by breaking down the experience through different scripts.

Managerial implications

This article provides practical insights into designing, improving and facilitating CX. We argue that embodied aspects of CX are particularly significant in service contexts in which the customer's body and embodied emotions are part of the production of the service – i.e. in high-touch contexts. In addition, our findings hold special relevance for service providers that usually have multiple customers in the service encounter at the same time.

According to the findings, more emphasis should be placed on gaining a deeper understanding of the customers to better support their CX. In a group fitness class, it may be impossible to know each customer individually, but our eight identified themes could help service providers to identify and divide customers into groups based on the customer logic (see Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015). Hence, the instructor should actively explore the participants attending a class and aim to provide different kinds of cue based on her interpretation. For those customers with a more performance-oriented logic (e.g., themes of *performing body* or *learning body*), who have a desire to develop their body and mind in a more serious manner, the instructor could offer performance-focused cues and encourage customers to push their limits with powerful guidance. For customers whose logic is more relaxed – i.e. those who have a desire to have fun and enjoy the experience (e.g., themes of *balancing body* or *honoured body*) – the instructor could offer softer and more gentle support by emphasising enjoyment and pleasure during the class. In addition, as different logics can be dominant in different types of classes (e.g., a dance class versus high intensity interval training), it is important for the instructor to orientate themselves separately for each class to be able to facilitate customers with a specific logic towards the best possible CX.

The identified themes also could be utilised in different service industries (Tables 4 and 5). These suggestions are illustrative and although based on our theoretical concepts have not yet been empirically tested. Hence, more research is needed to validate the themes in different contexts.

This study also has a number of relevant contributions for the service industry in general. These important practical implications are presented below:

(1) Service organisations of all types and sizes must understand the relevance of CX as a tool for achieving long-term competitive advantage. In addition to understanding the verbal interactions between service personnel and customers, as well as among customers, *managers should take into account embodied interactive aspects* of CX. This more holistic understanding should be *integrated into the strategic process* for improving the CX.

(2) More emphasis should be placed on learning how to manage interactions among customers and between a single customer's mind and body. Therefore, *managers should continuously generate in-depth customer insight and map the customer's lifeworld and logic* (Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015). Managers are encouraged to utilise new methods, such as customer diaries and participant observation, to gain access to the embodied interactive aspects of CX.

(3) In aiming to facilitate and support positive experiences, *service employees should position themselves as assistants*, helping customers to gain the best possible

Table 4. Practical applications of interpersonal themes in various service contexts.

Theme	Applicable context	Example	Service provider suggestions
Affecting body	Music festival	Being surrounded by people magnifies the individual's feelings in both positive and negative ways. It may create a trance-like state or a claustrophobic state.	Service providers should design the servicescape so that it facilitates positive experiences of crowding but ensures that there are adequate exits.
Empowering body	Extreme sports (e.g., mountain climbing)	Teamwork in extreme conditions often takes place through nonverbal, embodied interaction. Customers rely on each other for energy, willpower and personal safety.	Paying attention to the procedures through which customers are grouped together and form a sense of community characterised by trust and effortless communication is important.
Body as an example	Personal training services	Embodied interaction with the trainer guides the customer forward to implement the exercises properly. The customer may view the trainer's appearance and lifestyle as exemplary.	For remote services, having training videos about the exercises is important. Service providers should also pay attention to the personal brand of the trainers holistically in terms of appearance and lifestyle.
Admired body	Online shopping (fashion)	The customer admires the model in the photos, where the clothes are represented. The customer may hope that a particular outfit would look as good on their as it does on the model.	Service providers should pay attention to photos on a website and design the layouts to serve target customers in the best possible way. Utilising advanced technology to allow customers to virtually try on the clothes would also enhance the experience.

Table 5. Practical applications of intrapsychic themes in various service contexts.

Theme	Applicable context	Example	Service provider suggestions
Honoured body	Nutritional coaching	The customer follows a particular diet to ensure they eat only food that is healthy for their body.	Service providers benefit from technologies that measure aspects of bodily performance and, e.g., gene profiles to create customised diets for customers, focusing on embodied experience.
Learning body	Snowboarding course	When attending a snowboarding course in a ski resort, the customer wants to learn how to snowboard before hitting the slopes independently.	Having experienced instructors or guidance videos that give the customer feedback on the correct technique in terms of body posture, movement and coordination is important.
Performing body	Photography services	Customers want to look their best. For example, in the wedding photoshoot, the couple wants to get the best photo of themselves on the most important day of their lives.	Service providers benefit from advising customers on which body postures and expressions look the best in photos. Rehearsal photo shoots may improve the quality of the final service.
Life-balancing body	Video games (e.g., Wii sports club)	People play video games to escape from daily life into another world. Video games give people a feeling of 'being in the game' and arouse different sensations in one's mind and body (excitement, joy, etc.).	Designing embodied service elements for video games (e.g., functionality when playing tennis with remote control as a racket) helps to create an embodied experience that is simultaneously felt in the mind and body.

experience based on their perceptions. Hence, *organisations should pay attention to the recruitment process and focus on training their employees to be able to support the customer's embodied interaction* in service situations.

(4) Managers should train their employees to focus on helping *customers to pay attention to interpersonal embodied cues by establishing a safe and encouraging atmosphere* in which it is easy for customers to share their feelings. This could be done by verbally noting that one's experience can be enhanced and the shared atmosphere improved if participants encourage and support each other during the class through words, gazes and 'high fives'.

(5) Managers should *enhance customers' awareness of the role of embodied interaction when designing marketing communications programmes*. This requires a focus on creating and distributing content, which drives customers' attention to their body and its sensations. As today's busy lifestyles and static working positions are weakening people's relation to and awareness of their bodies, the right kind of content may help individuals to turn back to their bodies and its sensations.

Limitations and directions for future research

The first limitation is that the interviewees were customers of one group fitness studio in Finland, although they also described their experiences with other service providers. Second, all the customers who were interviewed were women. The absence of men from the interviews shapes the study's findings. Women's bodies are socialised differently than men's, which also affects how they interpret their embodied CX. Hence, more research is needed to explore men's embodied CX as well as how customers of different genders interact intercorporeally. However, this study focused more on building theory related to the embodied aspects of CX than on testing those aspects. This study's empirical data offered only one perspective to consider embodied interaction, and further research should be conducted to validate the findings in different service contexts with a variety of customers and methods. Further studies would be needed to elaborate more specifically on how embodied interactions may vary between different types of class, as our empirical data did not provide a possibility for this. In addition, we acknowledge that the inclusion of an outsider – a researcher not so familiar with the fitness context – would have given us objectivity and helped to further develop the emergent theory.

As our study focused on reflexive embodiment and intercorporeal interaction, further research on the interaction between the body and space would be recommended. Drawing theoretical insights from a multidisciplinary perspective is one way to enrich extant literature; however, further inductive research in various contexts that consider embodied aspects is required. Moreover, as it was impossible to review all literature and perspectives on embodiment in this paper, we argue that a paper that maps out embodiment holistically would enrich the marketing literature. The analysis indicated that the customer's reflexive embodiment is characterised by various potentially conflicting and distracting aspects that can influence their perception of CX. Hence, research should focus on both positive and negative aspects of embodied interaction and how these can be managed by service providers, as the complex nature of CX leads to several challenges for managers (Jain et al., 2017). The rise of digital services has reshaped the

servicescape (Ballantyne & Nilsson, 2017), and this challenges scholars to consider embodiment in various digital servicescapes.

Finally, given its crucial ontological assumption that the body and world are intimately connected, an embodied perspective will have significant methodological implications for researchers. We encourage researchers to adopt qualitative, innovative methods in future CX research.

Acknowledgments

Disclosure statement

References

Ballantyne, D., & Nilsson, E. (2017). Re-examining the place of servicescape in marketing: A service dominant logic perspective. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *28*(5), 374–379.

Belk, R. W. (2015). Extended self in a digital world. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *40*(3), 477–500.

Belk, R. W., & Sobh, R. (2018). No assemblage required: On pursuing, original consumer culture theory. *Marketing Theory*, *30*(3), 1–19.

Bleicher, J. (1980). *Contemporary hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as method, philosophy, and critique*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Bradshaw, A., & Shankar, A. (2008). The production and consumption of music. *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, *11*(4), 225–227.

Brocato, E. D., Voorhees, C. M., & Baker, J. (2012). Understanding the influence of cues from other customers in the service experience: A scale development and validation. *Journal of Retailing*, *88*(3), 384–398.

Caprariello, P. A., & Reis, H. T. (2013). To do, to have, or to share: Valuing of experiences over material possessions depends on the involvement of others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *104*(2), 199–215.

Carson, D., Gilmore, A., Perry, C., & Groghaug, K. (2001). *Qualitative marketing research*. London: Sage.

Celsi, R. L., Randall, R. L., & Leigh, T. W. (1993). An exploration of high-risk leisure consumption through sky-diving. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *20*(1), 1–23.

Connell, R. W. (1995). *Masculinities*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Crossley, N. (1995). Merleau-Ponty, the elusive body and carnal sociology. *Body & Society*, *1*, 43–63.

Crossley, N. (2001). *The social body: Habit, identity and desire*. London: Sage.

Crossley, N. (2004). *Reflexive embodiment in contemporary society: The body in late modern society*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Crossley, N. (2005). Maintenance mapping reflexive body techniques: On body modification and maintenance. *Body & Society*, *11*(1), 1–35.

De Jaegher, H., & Di Paolo, E. (2007). Participatory sense-making: An enactive approach to social cognition. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, *6*(4), 485–507.

Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2011). Autoethnography: An overview. *Historical Social Research*, *36*(4), 273–290.

EuropeActive. (2018). *More people, more active, more often*. Brussels: Mission Document.

Fuchs, T., & De Jaegher, H. (2009). Enactive intersubjectivity: Participatory sense-making and mutual incorporation. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, *8*(4), 465–486.

Goffman, E. (1971). *Relations in public. Microstudies of the social order*. New York, NY: BasicBooks.

Griffiths, M. A., & Gilly, M. C. (2012). Dibs! Customer territorial behaviors. *Journal of Service Research*, *15*(2), 131–149.

Grönroos, C. (2011). Value co-creation in service logic: A critical analysis. *Marketing Theory*, *9*(3), 279–301.

Grönroos, C., & Voima, P. (2013). Critical service logic: Making sense of value creation and co-creation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *41*(2), 133–150.

Gummesson, E. (2005). Qualitative research in marketing: Road-map for a wilderness of complexity and unpredictability. *European Journal of Marketing*, *39*(3/4), 309–327.

Gummesson, E. (2017). *Case theory in business and management: Reinventing case study research*. London: Sage.

Heinonen, K., & Strandvik, T. (2015). Customer-dominant logic: Foundations and implications. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *29*(6/7), 472–484.

Heinonen, K., Strandvik, T., Mickelsson, J., & Edvarsson, B. (2010). A customer-dominant logic of service. *Journal of Service Marketing*, *21*(4), 531–548.

Helkkula, A. (2011). Characterising the concept of service experience. *Journal of Service Management*, *22*(3), 367–389.

Hewer, P., & Hamilton, K. (2010). On emotions and salsa: Some thoughts on dancing to rethink consumers. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, *9*(2), 113–125.

Holbrook, M. B., & Hirschman, E. C. (1982). The experiential aspect of consumption: Consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *9*(2), 132–140.

Hui, M. K., & Bateson, E. G. (1991). Perceived control and the effects of crowding and consumer choice on the service experience. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *18*(2), 174–184.

Jaakkola, E., Helkkula, A., & Aarikka-Stenroos, L. (2015). Service experience co-creation: Conceptualization, implications and future research directions. *Journal of Service Management*, *26*(2), 283–305.

Jain, R., Aagja, J., & Bagdare, S. (2017). Customer experience – A review and research agenda. *Journal of Service Theory and Practice*, *27*(3), 642–662.

Joy, A., & Sherry, J. F., Jr. (2003). Speaking of art as embodied imagination: A multisensory approach to understanding aesthetic experience. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *30*(2), 259–282.

Joy, A., & Venkatesh, A. (1994). Postmodernism, feminism, and the body: The visible and the invisible in consumer research. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *11*(4), 333–357.

Kerrigan, F., Larsen, G., Hanratty, S., & Korta, K. (2014). 'Gimme shelter': Experiencing pleasurable escape through the musicalisation of running. *Marketing Theory*, *14*(2), 147–166.

Kim, H. S., & Choi, B. (2016). The effects of three customer-to-customer interaction quality types on customer experience quality and citizenship behavior in mass service settings. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *30*(4), 384–397.

Klaus, P., & Maklan, S. (2011). Bridging the gap for destination extreme sports: A model of sports tourism customer experience. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *27*(13–14), 1341–1365.

Kranzbühler, A.-M., Kleijnen, M. H. P., Morgan, R. E., & Teerling, M. (2017). The multilevel nature of customer experience research: An integrative review and research agenda. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, *00*, 1–24.

Lemon, K. N., & Verhoef, P. C. (2016). Understanding customer experience throughout the customer journey. *Journal of Marketing*, *80*, 69–96.

Liu, C. (2019). Men and their groomed body: Understanding personal grooming as both a discursive and embodied practice. *European Journal of Marketing*, *53*, 1015–1034.

López-López, S., Ruiz-de-Maya, S., & Warlop, L. (2014). When sharing consumption emotions with strangers is more satisfying than sharing them with friends. *Journal of Service Research*, *17*(4), 1–14.

MacInnis, D. J. (2011). A framework for conceptual contributions in marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, *75*(4), 136–154.

Manthiou, A., Kang, J., Chiang, L., & Tang, L. (2016). Investigating the effects of memorable experiences: An extended model of script theory. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, *33*(3), 362–379.

Manthiou, A., Kang, J., & Hyun, S. S. (2017). An integration of cognitive appraisal theory and script theory in the luxury cruise sector: The bridging role of recollection and storytelling. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, *34*(8), 1071–1088.

Mattila, A., Hanks, L., & Wang, C. (2014). Others service experiences: Emotions, perceived justice, and behavior. *European Journal of Marketing*, *48*(3–4), 552–571.

Mauss, M. (1979). Body techniques. In *Sociology and psychology* (pp. 95–123). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

McColl-Kennedy, J. R., Danaher, T. S., Gallan, A. S., Orsingher, C., Olsen-Lervik, L., & Verma, R. (2017). "How do you feel today?" Managing patient emotions during health care experiences to enhance well-being. *Journal of Business Research*, *79*, 247–259.

McDowell, L. (2009). *Working bodies: Interactive service employment and workplace identities*. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.

Mehrabian, A., & Russell, J. A. (1974). *An approach to environmental psychology*. Cambridge, MA: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *The phenomenology of perception (Phénoménologie de la perception, 1945)*. (C. Smith, Trans.). London: Routledge.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964). *Sense and nonsense*. (H. L. Dreufys & P. A. Dreufys, Trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1971). *Sense and non-sense*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Meyer, C., & Schwager, A. (2007). Understanding customer experience. *Harvard Business Review*, *85*(2), 116–126.

Moisander, J., & Valtonen, A. (2006). *Qualitative marketing research: A cultural approach*. London: Sage.

Moore, R., Moore, M. L., & Capella, M. (2005). The impact of customer-to-customer interactions in a high personal contact service. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *19*(7), 482–491.

Murphy, S., Patterson, M., & O'Malley, L. (2018). Learning how: Reflexive body techniques, skill acquisition, and the consumption of experience. *Marketing Theory*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1177/1470593118809792

Patterson, M., & Schroeder, J. (2010). Borderlines: Skin, tattoos and consumer culture theory. *Marketing Theory*, *10*(3), 253–267.

Pekkanen, A., Närvänen, E., & Tuominen, P. (2017). Elements of rituality in consumer tribes: The case of crossfit. *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, *16*(4), 353–370.

Roux, D. (2010). Identity and self-territory in second hand clothing transfers. *Advances in Consumer Research*, *37*, 65–68.

Roux, D., & Belk, R. (2019). The body as (another) place: Producing embodied heterotopias through tattooing. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *00*, 1–25.

Sassatelli, R. (2016). You can all succeed!: The reconciliatory logic of therapeutic active leisure. *European Journal for Sport and Society*, *13*(3), 230–245.

Schmitt, B. H. (1999). *Experiential marketing: How to get customers to sense, feel, think, act, relate to your company and brands*. New York, NY: The Free Press.

Schouten, J. W. (1991). Selves in transition: Symbolic consumption in personal rites of passage and identity reconstruction. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *17*(4), 412–425.

Scott, R., Cayla, J., & Cova, B. (2017). Selling pain to the saturated self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *44*, 22–43.

Shilling, C. (2012). *The body and social theory*. London: Sage Publications.

Simon, W., & Gagnon, J. H. (1984). Sexual scripts. *Society*, *22*(1), 53–60.

Simon, W., & Gagnon, J. H. (2003). Sexual scripts: Origins, influences and changes. *Qualitative Sociology*, *26*, 491–497.

Stein, A., & Ramaseshan, B. (2016). Towards the identification of customer experience touch point elements. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *30*, 8–19.

Stevens, L., Maclaran, P., & Brown, S. (2019). An embodied approach to consumer experiences: The Hollister brandscape. *European Journal of Marketing*, *53*(4), 806–828.

Teixeira, J., Patrício, L., Nunes, N. J., Nóbrega, L., Fisk, R. P., & Constantine, L. (2012). Customer experience modeling: From customer experience to service design. *Journal of Service Management*, *23*(3), 362–376.

Thompson, C. J., & Hirschman, E. C. (1995). Understanding the socialized body: A poststructuralist analysis of consumers' self-conception, body images and self-care practices. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *22*(2), 139–153.

Thompson, G. J., Locander, W. B., & Pollio, H. R. (1989). Research: The philosophy and method of existential-phenomenology. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *16*(2), 133–146.

Timmermans, S., & Tavory, I. (2012). Theory construction in qualitative research: From grounded theory to abductive analysis. *Sociological Theory*, *30*(3), 167–186.

Tombs, A., & McColl-Kennedy, J. R. (2010). Social and spatial influence of customers on other customers in the social-servicescape. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, *18*(3), 120–131.

Tynan, C., McKechnie, S., & Hartley, S. (2014). Interpreting value in the customer service experience using customer-dominant logic. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *30*(9–10), 1058–1081.

Valtonen, A., & Närvänen, E. (2015). Gendered reading body in the bed. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *31*(15–16), 1583–1601.

Varela, F., Thompson, E., & Rosch, E. (1991). *The embodied mind: Cognitive science and human experience*. Cambridge MA: The MIT Press.

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. (2008). Service-dominant logic: Continuing the evolution. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *36*(1), 1–10.

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. (2016). Institutions and axioms: An extension and update of service-dominant logic. *Journal of the Academic Marketing Science*, *44*(1), 5–23.

Velmans, M. (2007). Where experiences are: Dualist, phycialist, enactive and reflective accounts of phenomenal consciousness. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, *6*(4), 547–563.

Verhoef, P. C., Lemon, K. N., Parasuraman, A., Roggeveen, A., Tsiros, M., & Schlesinger, L. A. (2009). Customer experience creation: Determinants, dynamics and management strategies. *Journal of Retailing*, *85*(1), 31–41.

Vom Lehn, D. (2006). Embodying experience: A video-based examination of visitors' conduct and interaction in museums. *European Journal of Marketing*, *40*(11), 1340–1359.

Wacquant, L. (2004). *Body and soul: Notebooks of an apprentice boxer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wacquant, L. (2015). For a sociology of flesh and blood. *Qualitative Sociology*, *38*, 1–11.

Wiederman, M. W. (2015). Sexual script theory: Past, present and future. In J. DeLamater & R. F. Plante (Eds.), *Handbook of the sociology of sexualities* (pp. 7–22). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Yadav, M. S. (2010). The decline of conceptual articles and implications for knowledge development. *Journal of Marketing*, *74*(1), 1–19.

Yakhelf, A. (2015). Customer experience within retail environments: An embodied, spatial approach. *Marketing Theory*, *15*, 545–564.

Appendix 1. Frame of the interview

First, interviewees were asked to share their stories about their experiences in group fitness. The following questions are only illustrative to give an idea of what kind of questions the interviewer asked.

1) Background, reasons and most important situations

- *What kind of background do you have with group fitness?*
- *Tell me about the first time you decided to attend a class?*
- *What are your most memorable experiences?*

2) Embodiment and emotions
- *Tell me about your experience of exercising?*
- *What is group fitness at its best?*

3) Environment
- *In what kind of space do you like to exercise?*

4) Interaction
- *Can you share some of your experiences concerning the class instructor?*
- *What kind of experiences did you have with fellow exercisers?*

PUBLICATION
III

Talking bodies — an embodied approach of service employee's work

Kuuru, T-K. & Närvänen E.

Talking bodies: an embodied approach to service employees' work

Purpose – This paper aims to study the embodied nature of service employees' work in human touch contexts.

Methodology – The paper adopts the practice theory as its interpretive approach, using focus group interviews with service employees from different industries.

Findings – The study identifies four practice bundles related to the embodied dimension of service employees' work: orienting, attuning, connecting and wrapping up. The findings illustrate how employees' knowledge, skills and capabilities are employed via the body.

Practical implications – The study provides guidance for managers to use an embodied perspective in the management of service employees.

Originality/value – This study contributes to the discussion on embodiment in service encounters by highlighting the embodied nature of service employees' work.

Keywords: Emotion, customer service, service encounter, focus groups, front line service employees

1 Introduction

Service research has devoted a considerable amount of attention to understanding what makes up service experiences; however, this has mostly been done from the customer's or management's perspective (Ostrom *et al.*, 2015). The employees' side has remained understudied, even though employees' influence on the customer experience and a company's financial performance is widely recognised (e.g., Jasmand *et al.*, 2012; Wirtz and Jerger, 2017). Because enhancing service experiences has been listed as a research priority in the literature (Ostrom *et al.,* 2015), we argue that employees' experiences require more attention. Specifically, we are interested in the embodied nature of service employees' work; thus, in this view, service employees are perceived as sensing and reflecting agents. This means that they employ their bodies to learn and develop their competences (Willems, 2018), which in turn guides their perceptions and actions towards customers. This approach allows us to make the invisible 'work itself' seen by focusing on embodiment in (real-time) practical action during the service encounter (Palmer and Simmons, 1995; Sundaram and Webster, 2010).

The interaction and emotional connections between the customer and employee are considered key factors for successful service encounters and a source of competitive advantage (Zomerdijk and Voss, 2009; Lloyd *et al.*, 2011; Solnet *et al.*, 2019; Kuuru *et al.*, 2020). We know, for example, that customers have a tendency to mirror employees' emotions during an encounter and that emotions affect service outcomes (Söderlund and Rosengren, 2004; Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2006; Echeverri and Salomonson, 2017; Wirtz and Jerger, 2017). Still, we do not know how employees build these emotional connections in practice, and we suggest that the embodied approach can help us explore this further (Pugh, 2004; McColl-Kennedy *et al.* 2015b; Echeverri and Salomonson, 2017).

In the literature on service encounters, embodiment has mostly been studied as nonverbal behaviour (Lloyd *et al.*, 2011; Wirtz and Jerger, 2017). By contrast, the organisational and management literatures hold a more holistic perspective, showing how employees become skilled through their bodies (e.g., Sandberg and Dall'Alba, 2010; Willems, 2018). Moreover, consumer studies have conducted important work that regards embodiment as part of consumption experiences and practices and of the way consumers interact with the material world (e.g., Valtonen and Närvänen, 2015; Murphy *et al.*, 2019). This more holistic outlook of embodiment in service work is missing from service research, even though it could provide important insights for enhancing service experiences for both customers and employees.

Increased interest is being shown in the role of digitalisation and artificial intelligence (AI) for various service encounters (Bowen, 2016; Larivière *et al.*, 2017; Wirtz and Jerger, 2017; van Pinxteren *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, many service businesses are rapidly adopting self-service technologies (SSTs) to improve their efficiency, which accelerates the movement away from human touch (Giebelhausen *et al.*, 2004; Solnet *et al.*, 2019). The digital world is sometimes seen as a substitute for human touch, but embodiment is something service providers should consider in all of their forms of services—customers are people first and consumers second (Schneider and Bowen, 1999; Solnet *et al.,* 2019). This means that even though interacting with digital devices and interfaces may make the service encounter more efficient, as people, we still have a basic need for human interaction and contact that can only be addressed by employees (Maslow, 1954; Naisbitt, 1982, p. 52). Human touch occurs in interactions when two or more human bodies affect and are affected by each other in a way

that produces positive feelings and sensations in an individual. Thus, service employees can also add 'a unique dimension to technology, regardless of its functionality' (Larivière *et al.*, 2017, p . 241).

At the time of writing this study, in the spring of 2020, we were facing a real-life reminder of the importance of embodiment and human-to-human contact: the COVID-19 virus forced consumers apart and changed how we consume services. This global crisis highlighted people's fundamental need for belonging and connecting with others—people began to miss the human touch. This is a call for service providers to consider the ways to include these human attributes in digital services. Thus, our study has timely implications for developing theory on embodiment in service research and for service providers who face an increasing need to digitalise their face-to-face service encounters. To integrate and deepen our understanding of the embodied nature of service employees' work, we address the following research questions: *What kind of embodied practices can be identified before, during and after the service encounter? What elements of practice (procedures, understandings and engagements) can be identified within these practices?*

Our article is structured as follows: First, we review the literature on embodiment and discuss the practice theory (Reckwitz, 2002; McColl-Kennedy *et al.,* 2015a), which serves as the analytical framework of the study. Second, we describe the methods and data that involve focus groups conducted with service employees. Because of the exploratory and interpretive nature of the current study, we focus on service contexts characterised by a high relevance of human touch, in which two or more bodies participate in the service encounter at the same time and place. However, in our implications, we also discuss the implications for other service contexts. As a result of the analysis, we identify four practice bundles that characterise employees' embodied practices. Furthermore, we build theory on embodiment in service research by developing five theoretical propositions that integrate and expand on our findings. The article concludes with a discussion of the study's theoretical and practical contributions, limitations and research opportunities.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Considerations on embodiment

Embodiment has been discussed in the service literature mostly in terms of nonverbal behaviour while recognising that interpersonal skills are fundamental to service work (Lloyd *et al.*, 2011; Wirtz and Jerger, 2017). Sundaram and Webster (2000) examined nonverbal behaviour during service encounters but highlighted that it is unclear how service employees' embodied actions affect customer experiences. By focusing on visible cues (e.g., gaze, bodily position and touch), Echeverri and Salomonson (2017) studied embodied co-creation in service interactions and discovered that service encounters are mutual—the employees' and customers' nonverbal patterns shape the encounter and move it forward. Thus, both employees' and customers' actions matter, and the encounter is a joint effort. In the view of Palmer and Simmons (1995), embodiment can be identified as a communication vehicle in service employees' work: employees' gestures, position and gaze are not only being evaluated by the customer, but they also serve as employee tools to read the customer and make sense of their needs and wants; this notion highlights the body as an active and relational agent that is affecting and being affected by other bodies (Valtonen and Närvänen, 2015). Kuuru and Närvänen (2019) identified nine themes of embodied interaction in the context of group

fitness services, including the observable interactions between the bodies and within each body. However, their study concentrated more on the customer's perspective.

The interactive nature of service employees' work relates closely to the concept of emotional labour, which was defined originally by Hochshcild (1983) as 'the management of feelings to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display' (p. 7). Still, even though emotional labour originally related closely to embodiment, more recent studies on the customer experience recognise an embodied display of emotions mostly as the regulation of visible actions (e.g., facial expressions, vocalisation and postures), which affect the customer experience (Grandey *et al.*, 2003; Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2006; Du *et al.,* 2011). However, employees' internal, embodied processes of handling emotions are not conceptualised, even though service employees must continuously find a balance between their genuine, personal emotions and the emotional display shown to customers (Wirtz and Jerger, 2017). Moreover, emotional contagion, the flow of emotions from one person to another, occurs both at the conscious (surface acting) and subconscious (deep acting) levels (e.g., Grandey *et al.*, 2003; Hennig-Thurau *et al.,* 2006). Indeed, service employees both consciously manage their emotions during service encounters and act and display emotions automatically.

To enrich the research on embodiment in service encounters, we turn to sociology, management and organisational studies, where researchers have been interested in the topic for longer. Pierre Bourdieu, a renowned sociologist and one of the 'fathers' of the practice theory, argued that our body, language and temporality are inseparable elements of our *habitus,* a term used to refer to the idea that everything we have learned during our life is physically embodied (Bourdieu, 1990). Thus, service employees (and customers) bring their habituses to the service encounter, including their embodied skills, experiences, emotions and thoughts. Nonverbal behaviours are only the surface of embodiment. Employees' embodied knowledge is harnessed to action via *body techniques*, the know-how involved in using our bodies (Mauss, 1973; Crossley, 2005). For instance, a taxi driver's skill to drive a car resides in their body, and thus, the driver does not need to consciously think about driving when serving a customer. Instead, the driver's resources can be focused on interacting and building emotional connections with the customer through verbal and bodily activities (e.g., small talk, gaze, presence) (Echeverri and Salomonson, 2017). Turning their attention to the working body, Hockey and Allen-Collinson (2009) noted that employees' skills are not isolated in their bodies but rather always socially shaped—embodiment at work is simultaneously an individual and collective process. Sharma and Black (2001) showed how embodied sensations play a crucial role in the work of beauty therapists, who were more concerned about what they could do to make their customers *feel* better rather than *look* better. Crossley (2004, p. 49) defined this kind of embodied feeling as 'a practical sense of self and world derived from immersion to practice'. Strati (2007, p. 62) introduced the term 'sensible knowing' to describe 'what is perceived through the senses, judged through the senses, and produced and reproduced through the senses'. For example, in the taxi driver example from earlier, sensible knowing occurs when drivers usually know if the customer wants to talk or not by reading and interpreting the customer's body language (Echeverri and Salomonson, 2017). Sensible knowing encourages a critical examination of service employees' work by observing the relations between the body, knowing and practices. Gherardi *et al.* (2013) identified three lenses through which the body within companies can be explored: 'the body that works through the senses', 'the body that experiences through the senses' and 'the body that knows through the senses'. We focus on the body's role in service employees' work and draw inspiration from Willems (2018), who noted in his work on railway workers that it is the

embodied knowledge and learning that makes it possible for workers to conduct any visible actions, that is, use their bodies. From this perspective, there is no distinction between acting, sensing, learning and knowing.

2.2 Practice theory approach

The practice theory (Bourdieu, 1977; Reckwitz, 2002) focuses on routinised types of behaviour that consist of forms of bodily and mental activities, objects and tools, as well as background knowledge that includes emotional and motivational components (Reckwitz, 2002). Practices can be viewed as performances accomplished in real time in a certain unique context but also as identifiable entities that comprise recurring patterns of activity. Hence, for example, each performance of a beauty therapy session is a unique practice in a unique time and place, but we can generally identify the elements of this practice, such as the sequence of actions, the roles of the employee and customer and what is generally expected to happen (e.g., feelings of relaxation) during the practice, even without observing it in real time. We note that the locus of analysis is not the mind but the practice itself, including the roles of emotion, embodiment and volition (Warde, 2005). The practice theory has been applied in service research (e.g., McColl-Kennedy *et al.*, 2015a; McColl-Kennedy *et al.*, 2015b), but its potential to yield practical business insights has not yet been fully explored.

Sandberg and Dall'Alba (2010) have argued that all the components of human action should be understood through their embeddedness in practice rather than through cognitive terms (Schatzki, 1996, p. 13). This means that the social does not reside in the human mind but rather occurs in human interactions between the bodies (McColl-Kennedy *et al.*, 2015b; Chandler and Chen, 2016). Thus, the practice theoretical approach allows us to turn the focus onto the dynamic, embodied nature of service employees' work: all actors influence and are influenced by others (McColl-Kennedy *et al.*, 2015a). Drawing on Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1968), we view practices as the processes of incorporating and absorbing new competences and understandings into our body, in turn transforming our ways of perceiving and acting (Yakhlef, 2010; McColl-Kennedy *et al.*, 2015b). Echeverri and Skålen (2011) contend that the knowledge and capabilities located within a company are actually resident and become alive in employees and their work. Moreover, learning and knowing are embedded in practical, bodily and emotional experiences (Yakhlef, 2010). This intracorporeal turn highlights the way in which the sociality and historicity of learning are incorporated in the body (Yakhlef, 2010; Willems, 2018). This notion supports our argument that not all practices may be visibly observable; they may also take place in one's body or between bodies. In this sense, learning and knowing go beyond what can be thought of and verbally articulated (Yakhlef, 2010). The practice theory provides us with a tool to shed light on these practices, which would remain hidden if concentrating only on what we see or on language and linguistically articulable thoughts (Rouse, 2006).

3 Methodology

3.1 Data collection

The current study is positioned within the interpretive paradigm, and the theories used (embodiment research and the practice theory in sociology) come from an interpretivist background. Because theoretical commitments always carry methodological implications

(Moisander and Valtonen, 2016), we chose an inductive, qualitative approach, which is in line with the general purpose of interpretivism to understand what is happening in a given context (Carson *et al.,* 2001). The current study's purpose is also explorative; hence, qualitative research methods are appropriate. Focus group interviews were used because they permit an exploration of the research topic as a collective, shared phenomenon (Tadajewski, 2016). In addition, our prior experiences and preunderstanding from several service contexts provide complementary material. The selection of participants was purposive in that we recruited only service employees who had worked in the customer interface for at least two years (Goulding, 2012). We did not aim to have any specific business area for the study, instead looking to recruit people who found the research topic relevant and were interested in it, which is one of the preconditions for a fruitful focus group discussion (Morgan, 2002). The first author utilised her personal networks and contacted suitable companies for participants to attend the focus groups. Altogether, 21 service employees participated in the focus groups, which were divided into groups of eight, four, four and five employees. The appropriate size for a focus group is from two to ten participants (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016, p. 175) and four to six groups (Morgan, 1996); therefore, we considered both the total number and distribution of the participants among the focus groups to be adequate. Moreover, there was also evidence that data saturation was reached because the same themes began to emerge and repeat themselves within and between the focus groups (Saunders *et al.*, 2018). The participants represented service fields that included fitness, photography, physiotherapy, restaurants, fashion, banking and insurance, beauty care and health care. Details of the focus group interview data are presented in Table 1. Both of the authors attended the first two focus groups, and the first author attended the last two. All focus groups were audiotaped and transcribed, resulting in 150 pages of data.

The participants were asked to discuss their experiences at work and with customers. Because embodiment is a difficult topic to discuss and verbalise, the researchers helped the participants to orient themselves by beginning the discussion with questions like 'What does the customer experience consist of?'; 'How would you describe your work?'; and 'What do you think is the most important in your work?' In addition, we asked questions during the discussion to guide the participants in the right direction (e.g., What methods do you use to tune yourself into work mode? How do you know if the customer is satisfied or not?). However, the emphasis was on the flow of the discussion among the participants, with the researchers listening and only intervening in the conversation to specify something or to return to the research topic. The interactions in the focus groups reflected several realities because the participants represented very different fields of business (Threlfall, 1999), even though they also found similarities in their practices, regardless of the type of service.

Table I. List of participants in the focus groups

Focus group	Pseudonym (gender)	Business	Background
1	Laura (F)	Group fitness instructor	25 years
1	Nina (F)	Group fitness instructor	15 years

1	Elisa (F)	Group fitness instructor	15 years
1	Jenny (F)	Group fitness instructor	10 years
1	Helena (F)	Group fitness instructor	8 years
1	Liina (F)	Group fitness instructor	5 years
1	Tiina (F)	Group fitness instructor	20 years
1	Erin (F)	Group fitness instructor	2 years
2	Markus (M)	Photographer	20 years
2	Juho (M)	Snowboarding coach	15 years
2	Liisa(F)	Restaurant owner	25 years
2	Eetu (M)	Physiotherapist	5 years
3	Pekka (M)	Photographer	30 years
3	Sanna (F)	Sales person (fashion)	2 years
3	Teemu (M)	Restaurant manager	20 years
3	Mari (F)	Physiotherapist	7 years
4	Onni (M)	Sales manager (finance and banking)	30 years
4	Nea (F)	Group fitness	3 years
4	Petra (F)	Waitress	32 years
4	Jerry (M)	Osteopath	10 years
4	Mia (F)	Cosmetology / dance teacher	3 / 5 years

3.2 Interactive data analysis

The present study takes an inductive approach because the thematic analysis was data driven rather than theory led. The inductive approach implies that the identified themes are not created through previous research but appear by letting the reality tell its story (Patton, 1995; Gummesson, 2005). However, the practice theory was used as the analytical framework to guide our attention to the practices that emerged from the data. The process of analysis was inspired by the hermeneutical helix (Gummesson, 2005)—we moved back and forth between the specific and general level and between data and theory, as well as preunderstandings and new information. This kind of interactive method (Gummesson, 2005) allowed space for inductive interpretations but kept us tied to our theoretical commitments (Braun and Clarke, 2006) while allowing us to create new understandings of the research topic. In addition, the

interactive method is suitable for studies that aim to develop new theories (Yadav, 2010) by moving from the unit of one service employee and business field to the practices shared and commonly used among service employees of different fields (Schau et *al.*, 2009; Goulding, 2012).

Practice bundles were identified through a thematic analysis by coding, categorising and reporting the themes within the data (Bailey, 1994; Braun and Clarke, 2006). After three focus groups, we worked on identifying service employees' practices from the data. The first author read the transcripts independently several times to develop an overall understanding of the material. She then reread the transcripts and listed the practices that emerged from the data. Next, she pooled similar practices into higher order categories to practice bundles. The conventional content analysis procedure (Patton, 1995) guided the iterative process of reading, assessment and theme identification. Thematisation was iterative until the themes became exhaustive (Bailey, 1994). After the first author had generated the practice bundles, the second author joined the process, commenting and reflecting on the identified bundles. Because the second author did not perform any raw data coding independently, we did not calculate intercoder reliability scores, instead relying on discussion and theoretical reflection regarding the themes. Finally, we created the first version of the holistic framework together by identifying four practice bundles.
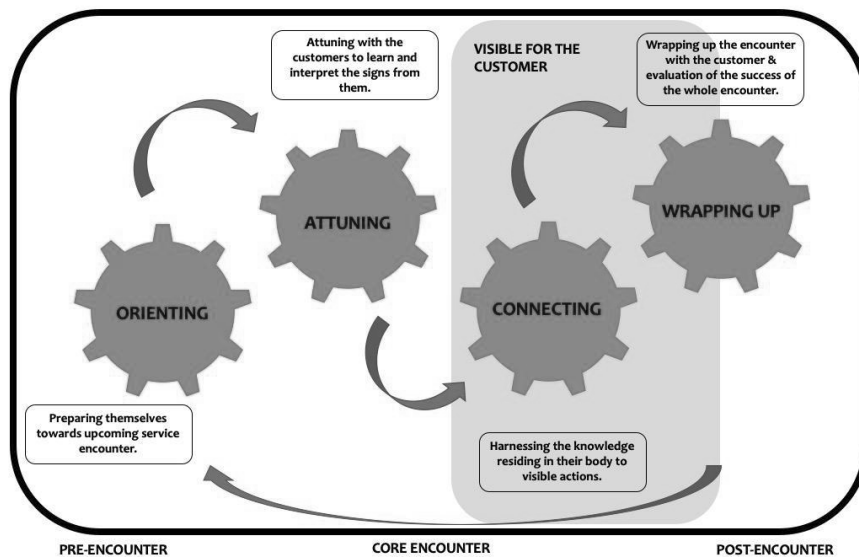
After the first round of analysis, the findings were surveyed further in a fourth focus group session. The aims of the post-review session were to verify our interpretations by presenting the findings to the participants and to enrich the data and ensure saturation. The focus group began with an open discussion of service employees' practices. Next, practice bundles were represented one at a time using a PowerPoint presentation. The participants discussed the bundle freely before moving on to the next one.

The participants agreed that the identified practice bundles were accurate and reflected their own experiences. The postreview session enriched the empirical material further: the existing findings were strengthened, and new valuable insights were brought forward. Finally, we defined the final themes by using the whole dataset.

4 Findings: Embodied practices of service employees

We identified four practice bundles (orienting, attuning, connecting and wrapping up) that capture how service employees' work is strongly embodied before, during and after the actual service encounter with the customer. Moreover, we identified the elements of practice, revealing the understandings, procedures and emotional engagements (Reckwitz, 2002) related to each bundle. The practice-based framework on the embodied nature of service employees' work is illustrated in Table 2. Practice bundles work together and foster each other (Schau *et al.*, 2009), thereby forming a process in which the bundles continuously affect each other (Figure 1). The analysis reveals that most of the service employees' work is embodied.

Figure 1. Practice-based framework showing the embodied nature of service employees' work

VISIBLE FOR THE CUSTOMER

Attuning with the customers to learn and interpret the signs from them.

Wrapping up the encounter with the customer & evaluation of the success of the whole encounter.

ATTUNING

WRAPPING UP

ORIENTING

CONNECTING

Preparing themselves towards upcoming service encounter.

Harnessing the knowledge residing in their body to visible actions.

PRE-ENCOUNTER   CORE ENCOUNTER   POST-ENCOUNTER

4.1. Orienting

Orienting shows how participants prepare their bodies for the upcoming work. In a temporal sense, orienting practices may be conducted right before the work shift or may take place hours or even days before the work itself. As Onni (a service manager in the finance sector) put it, *'If you really think about it, you have already started your working day and organised your activities before work in order to orient yourself. You do the things that make you feel good and positive and when you arrive at work, you are ready'.* The practice theory argues that emotions are not entirely subjective; rather, these emotions are felt as a consequence of engaging in practices (Reckwitz, 2002). Thus, by intentionally engaging in pleasant activities before the actual service encounter, the participants start to experience the positive emotions needed in their work (Mattila and Enz, 2002; Wirtz and Jerger, 2017). The participants said that they had precise rituals that they performed just before their work to *'be in the right mode',* both physically and mentally. In organisational studies, workplace rituals have been shown to guide employee actions, helping employees in enhancing superior customer experiences; however, these rituals are typically set in place by the employer (e.g., documentation and repeating) (Erhardt *et al.*, 2016). Orienting actions capture participants' unique actions to prepare themselves for work; they also must take into account the guidelines given by the manager and be aware of what is expected of them. Thus, orienting also refers to a practice theoretical (Reckwitz, 2002; Schau *et al.,* 2009) notion on the general procedures and rules that appear as guiding elements of service work.

Orienting actions relate, for example, to planning, going through upcoming tasks and familiarisation with the environment if the location for the service varies. In addition, clothing and participants' appearance play a part in shaping these practices by constituting the social roles (Sandberg and Dall'Alba, 2010) and building up protection and the participants' self-confidence and trust. Teemu (a restaurant manager) has had his own routines for years: *'I have super accurate routines. I shower and shave my beard. I forget all my thoughts about the day and my actual work. So perhaps it's just like the way you use certain routines in sport to focus on the game. It is exactly like that'.* Like Teemu, all the participants agreed that orienting

actions are fundamental for them to turn their full focus on the customer—personal issues and emotions that do not belong in the encounter are set aside (Wirtz and Jerger, 2017). Tiina (a group fitness instructor) stated that she always needs some time alone before group fitness classes—she puts her earplugs in, listens to the music and goes through the choreography; if she does not do this, then she just spends a few minutes in silence to clear her head. By doing this, she reawakens herself and turns her focus to the upcoming work by forgetting any personal issues.

4.2 Attuning

The practice bundle of *attuning* refers to the way in which participants become skilful by bringing their bodies and senses in tune with the practical situations and environment (Strati, 2007; Yakhlef, 2010; Willems, 2018). The participants described how they continuously read and interpreted embodied signs from the customers by focusing on their bodily movements, utterances, postures and expressions (Crossley, 2004, 2005). Issues related to the cultural context of the service encounter also shape practices, here in the form of important background knowledge (Reckwitz, 2002). For instance, Finnish people can be very sensitive about expressing their opinions, thoughts or emotions verbally in social situations, highlighting the need to focus on the customers' embodied cues. As Teemu stated, *'Many people avoid saying anything because they worry that we (the employees) will think they don't understand, that they will look stupid. They may feel they don't belong in this fancy situation'*.

Attuning captures the essence of service work. Participants' bodies are not passively waiting for sensory stimuli but are actively immersed in the situation and oriented towards responding to signs from the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Participants 'know' what to search for in customers' behaviour, posture or body movement. As Mari (a physiotherapist) said, *'You really need to root yourself in the situation and keep your antennae active, to sound out and feel the customer'*. Participants do not see exercising, snowboarding or eating customers. Rather, they sense and feel individuals through their bodies (Crossley, 2004; Strati, 2007). As Laura (a group fitness instructor) put it, *'You just somehow sense that here is somebody who is not satisfied, happy or completely with you at the moment'.* Indeed, attunement has a strong emotional dimension, as Pekka (a photographer) recognised: *'Personally, I sense and mirror people's emotions somehow and many times, I think, I begin to feel in a similar way, I become part of their emotional world. In some ways, this is a good thing in photography because I sense how they feel and can suggest suitable options'*.

When attuned, participants may be able to *'forget'* what is happening in the present moment (Willems, 2018). In practice, this means that, for instance, photographers do not need to concentrate on how to perform the task of 'taking a photo' because that knowledge inhabits their body. What allows them to forget is the participant's ability to synchronise their body in a temporal sense. Participants bring their past experiences to the present through sensible experiences (Willems, 2018). Juho (a snowboarding coach) highlighted the importance of prior experiences: '*If conditions are bad or something happens, you try to find something that fits that moment. You draw from your own background with snowboarding, from all your experiences and thoughts, to find out what could work, although of course you need to be aware of your trainee's interest'.* Deployment of prior experiences does not refer only to theoretical but also practical knowledge. Of course, employees with more experience have more from which to draw on for the present. This liberates their resources to put more focus on the customers, whereas a new employee usually needs to put all their effort into

implementing the basic tasks, not yet being skilled enough to 'forget'. The fusing of knowledge and action usually becomes embodied and taken for granted over time (Hockey and Allen-Collinson, 2009; Murphy *et al.*, 2019). In addition, having had experiences as a customer in their service context enhances an employee's understanding of the customer and situation (Bourdieu, 1984) because every employee's ability to learn to become an expert is tied to the shared learning that takes place in social networks (Mauss, 1973; Crossley, 2004). For example, many group fitness instructors felt they needed more time to visit other instructors' classes, and interviewees working in the restaurant business reported visiting other restaurants regularly, taking the time afterwards to analyse their experiences.

4.3 Connecting

Connecting describes how participants harness the knowledge residing in their body (Bourdieu, 1990), something that can be gained through attuning (Willems, 2018) to visible, corporeal actions (Mauss, 1973; Crossley, 2005). To succeed, connecting requires an active connection between all practice bundles—participants build up the right mood for the service encounter in their orienting practices and gain important knowledge to manage connecting when attuning. Thus, all practice bundles relate and affect each other. Connecting occurs as an embodied interaction when participants and the customers affect and are affected by each other (Kuuru and Närvänen, 2019), hence leading to the building of emotional connections (Solnet *et al.*, 2019). The participants described their aim of making the customer feel, for example, *relaxed, comfortable, happy, special* or *the focus of the employee's concerns*. Here, the participant's emotional state and mood during the encounter are important. When connecting, a participant's body radiates emotions, and thus, for example, his or her positive and cheerful mood may trigger similar emotions in the customer (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2006).

All the participants agreed that it is fundamental for the employee to be continuously ready to modify their actions according to the situation. Mia (a dance teacher) said, '*...if I have (dance) classes that I have planned … and then I notice that, okay, this doesn't work today at all, then I improvise, pull a new idea out of the hat'.* This recalls the analogy expressed in Murphy *et al.* (2019) regarding skilled, high-speed motorcyclists. Like the motorcyclists while driving, participants have 'no time for reflection' as they need to instantly shape their actions by drawing their understandings together, having no time for reflection (Schau *et al.,* 2009; Chandler and Chen, 2016). This includes the employee's continuous internal process of managing their emotions—discovering which emotions are spread around through visible actions and which ones are stored in one's body, away from customers' eyes (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2006; Wirtz and Jerger, 2017). Thus, connecting involves a great amount of creativity in using the body (Lai *et al.*, 2014).

Connecting includes, for example, paying attention to body posture, gaze and positioning, but it also contains touching and improving body language. Liisa (a restaurant owner) said, '*Especially at the start, when you introduce the menu, you need to be at the same level as the customer. You can go and sit next to him but at the least you must position yourself somehow next to him and just talk'.* Liisa's comment turns our focus to the hierarchical setting that may arise between the employee and customer during the service process. Even though employees want to be considered professionals and create value with their expertise for the customer (Vargo and Lusch, 2008), at the same time, they aim to be seen as peers, hopefully reducing the distance between them. Similarly, Mari (a physiotherapist) described how all employees in the workplace, including nurses and doctors, wear casual clothes instead of the

white clothes usually associated with medical staff. This reduces the hierarchical setting between the staff and customers. In addition, body posture and language may be used to foster the customer's sense of trust in and closeness to the employees. This also requires continuous evaluation of the customer's perception of the distance between bodies: *'You really need to read people. If somebody doesn't want to be touched and just needs their own space and peace. You just sense that now is not a good time to get closer'*. This comment by Helena (a group fitness instructor) highlights the service employee's role as a reader of tacit, embodied signs from the customer about what creates value for the customer (Echeverri and Skålen, 2011).

4.4 Wrapping up

Wrapping up captures the practices that participants implement during the last minutes of a service encounter, revealing how their experiences extend beyond the point when the customer leaves. The participants noted that they may ponder the service encounter and have diverse feelings (e.g., uncertainty, joy, relief, emptiness) even long after the encounter has finished. Many of the participants said that they felt uncertain at the end of an encounter. Elisa said, *'Sometimes I still feel very insecure, like I'm not sure whether it went well or badly. I may feel great during the class but when customers leave the studio at speed with their serious faces on, I feel empty'.* The participants turned to their bodies and their sensations to evaluate their success, but at the same time, they found it difficult to interpret the customers' embodied cues. This may last for a long time after the encounter; the participants said that they might think about events numerous times and carry the sensations with them for some time. In addition, the participants said that it was important to discuss the most challenging moments and encounters with someone afterwards. In some cases where aftercare was an integral part of the company's processes, but many participants said that they shared their experiences with their family and friends. Petra said, '*At the least, I go through a lot of the situations with my co-workers and friends. You do not want to keep piling weight into that backpack so that it becomes so heavy you feel you are falling; you want to keep it so that you feel that your step is light'.*

   Embodied practices play a crucial role in wrapping up. In addition to verbal interactions, the participants aimed to communicate a positive mood through embodied actions such as smiles, gazes, high fives, shaking hands or walking the customer out of the door (Palmer and Simmons, 1995). The participants said the worst thing that could happen was for the customer to not know what to do. Thus, the participants emphasised that it was important to stay close to the customer so that they could guide them smoothly out of the encounter. Mia (a dance teacher) said, '*You need to pay attention to the customer until the end. Even if I was talking to a particular customer, I would keep my eyes open and watch the others. I make sure I'm always the last to leave the studio. It's not like, when we finish a class, I wrap myself in my own bubble and don't care'.* Thus, participants do not 'shut themselves down' immediately but stay with the customers for as long as needed. Many group fitness instructors said that they always made sure they were the last one to leave the studio and that, in doing so, they communicated to the customer that, as Niina (a group fitness instructor) put it, '*I'm here for you'.* Petra (a waiter) said, *'The last minutes of the encounter wrap the whole thing up. It is the moment when the customer usually decides whether to come back'*. Indeed, the last part of the encounter was highlighted by the participants as a highly important element of the

service process. The participants said that a careful wrap-up could even turn a bad experience into a brilliant one.

Table 2. Practice bundles capturing the embodied nature of service employees' work before, during and after an encounter

Practice bundle	Description	Type of action	Temporal and interactive aspect	Quote	Link to the customer's perspective
Orienting	Embodied actions that service employees take before the actual service encounter	Understandings: Knowledge about the service encounter's rules, procedures and customers' special needs Procedures: Orienting rituals (e.g., showering, listening to music, doing pleasant things) Emotional engagements: Getting into a pleasant, open and positive mood	Before the encounter. Internal processes in one's body that are not observable by the customer	'I use my toilet trick often if, for example, I have a very energetic spinning class first or right after a class where I should be calm. If I feel hyperactive, I go to the toilet even though I might not need to and sit there for a few minutes. Then, when I come out, I'm ready'. Erin (a group fitness instructor)	Service provider's mood is an important factor for the customer's service experience (Fowler and Bridges, 2012) The early stage of a service encounter tends to influence customers' loyalty to a greater extent than others; thus, employees' readiness and careful preparation are required (Bitner, 1995)

Attuning	Employees tune themselves into the customers to learn and interpret signs and to be able to modify their own actions	Understandings: Knowledge and skills related to performing the service Procedures: Service performance, sensing activities related to observing the customer Emotional engagements: Mirroring the customer's emotions, relating to the customer	During the encounter. Internal process in one's body that is not observable by the customer	'I sense that she doesn't feel good at all (in front of the camera). Her body language tells me that she is very uncomfortable, even terrified … I need to live with that and gently try to trigger those emotions'. Markus (a photographer)	Customers have their individual logic (e.g., needs, wants and expectations) of their experiences, and this is something they expect the service employee to take into account during the encounter (Kuuru and Närvänen, 2019) Employees' embodied display of emotions affects customer experience (Grandey *et al.*, 2003)
Connecting	Employees harness the knowledge residing in their body for visible actions	Understandings: Knowledge about using and moving their body in a certain way Procedures: Body language, utterances, posture, position, etc. Emotional engagements: Conveying a certain emotion to the customer, evoking the intended emotions in a customer	During the encounter. Interactive process both within and between bodies	'If I see two people, say, turning towards each other or away from me, I sense that, okay, they need their own peace. I'm not then running around the table and asking continuously if the food is good, do they need something or would they like to have more water. Even so, I have one eye on them all the time, in case they need me'. Petra (a waitress)	Customers interpret, sense and evaluate a service employee's actions throughout the service encounter, which affects their emotional state and outcomes of the experience (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2006; Echeverri and Skålen, 2011; Söderlund and Rosengren, 2004) Customer engagement occurs through interactions with service employees (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

Wrapping up	Employees wrap up the encounter with the customer while their own experience continues	Understandings: Knowledge and skills to complete the encounter with the customer, knowledge to evaluate their own performance afterwards Procedures: Closing activities (e.g., shaking hands, gaze, smile, walking to the door). Talking with coworkers, friends or employer Emotional engagements: Ensuring customers leave the encounter satisfied, in a positive mood, unloading their own emotions	During and after the encounter. Interactive process both within and between the bodies	'Of course, I also stand up, shake hands and walk the customer out of the office. We chat and maybe I help him to put his coat on'. Onni (a service manager)	Finalising is a joint, sensitive effort because both the employee and the customer prepare to end the service encounter. Both parties aim to ensure that all actors leave the encounter with positive feelings (Echeverri and Skålen, 2011) The interaction at the end of the core service encounter defines the mood the customer takes with themselves when leaving the encounter, which affects the customer's commitment and trust towards the company (Voorhees *et al.*, 2017).

Table 2 is a summary of our findings and illustrates how the practice bundles relate to the customer perspective. The customer perspective shows how the customer experiences, both positive and negative, depend on the employee's involvement and skills. A service encounter is always a joint effort—the individual's personal actions and emotions affect others and shape their experiences (Vargo and Lusch, 2008; Echeverri and Salomson, 2017).

5 Discussion

5.1 Reflection on the findings

The purpose of the current study was to analyse how service employees incorporate their bodies in service encounters. To clarify the results, we have summarised our reflections on the findings into five key propositions (Belk *et al.*, 2013). The propositions provide a novel perspective on the theories of embodiment in service encounters, here representing service work as bodily, emotional, expressive and socially constructed.

1. The human body is a central asset for service employees' work before, during and after the encounter.

2. Pre-encounter practices allow employees to tune their bodies into the becoming encounter.

3. Service employees become skilful through their bodies by reflecting and sensing the past to the here-and-now.

4. Rather than acting according to pre-planned tasks, service employees create the emotional connection with the customer through creative acts performed here-and-now.

5. Coping with the emotional load caused by the work is strongly embodied.

Figure 2. **Propositions for expanding the view of the embodied nature of service employees' work.**

Proposition 1: The human body is a central asset for service employees' work before, during and after the service encounter.

> It counts so much for both negative and positive service encounters, I mean your presence and gestures. If you smile or not, how you use your body in the situation when the customer is, for example, threatening. Or if the customer says thanks, you don't back off but you rather lean a bit forward and that signals oh thanks... You know, the trust appears between the bodies? ... I think about it a lot and feel that it may be quite natural for many people in the service business that you read the reaction all the time. Like it becomes an internal part of you and improves the longer you have been working in this business. (Liisa, restaurant owner)

Proposition 1 relates to all four practice bundles, underlining the involvement of the human body from pre-work practices to the practices taking place after the actual service encounter. The findings expand on the current notions of the human body in service work by showing how embodiment covers much more than the visible actions during the service encounter. Our findings draw a picture of a body that is continuously interpreting and acting within and between bodies (Valtonen and Närvänen, 2015; Kuuru and Närvänen, 2019). Employees gain knowledge and understanding via their bodies, in turn guiding their speech and actions until the end of the service encounter and even afterwards (Schau *et al.*, 2009). Moreover, we add to the theories on emotional connections (e.g., Zomerdijk and Voss, 2009; Solnet *et al.*, 2019) by highlighting the way in which service employees use the full range of bodily expressiveness to reflect and sense, thereby building an emotional connection with the customer.

Proposition 2: Pre-encounter practices allow employees to tune themselves into the coming encounter.

> When you enter the studio, you have already turned yourself into a 'social animal' and you are so open and all senses alert and ready to serve. (Tiina, group fitness instructor)

The practice bundle of orientation captures the actions that enable the body to tune into 'being towards the thing' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 139). Prior studies have noted the importance of tuning in for enabling the body in action to be capable and skilful (Willems, 2018; Murphy *et al.*, 2019), but our results underline that embodied intentionality is required before an upcoming task. Careful preparation allows service employees to free up their resources to focus on the customer and achieve the correct emotional set-up with which to enter a service encounter. Tuning into an encounter with the appropriate emotional state affects the whole encounter: as a result of orienting practices, the customers sense an employee's emotional state, not only from their nonverbal behaviour, but also from the employee's attuned body, which radiates the appropriate emotions (Södenlund and Rosengren, 2004; Strati, 2007). This is important because customers often unconsciously absorb and mirror their employee's emotions (Pugh, 2004).

Proposition 3: Service employees become skilful through their bodies by reflecting and sensing the past to the here-and-now.

> Experience brings confidence and then you are able to give more of yourself as you don't need to think about every little task and detail and you can be much more sensitive also for the changes happening during the encounter. (Sanna, salesperson, fashion)

The practice bundle of attuning highlights the use of the body as a central asset for understanding other bodies (Palmer and Simmons, 1995; Crossley, 2005; Kuuru and Närvänen, 2019). Employees mirror the signs and cues, both verbal and embodied, received from customers and modify their actions to suit the customers in the best possible way. Thus, not only do customers mirror and copy employees' emotions (Pugh, 2004), but employees also interpret and absorb the emotions of the customers. These notions complement the findings of Echeverri and Salomonson (2017) on the encounter as a joint, mutual effort. Furthermore, the concept of attuning implies that learning, rather than being based on language and verbal interaction, is based on tacit knowledge (Yakhlef, 2010). Thus, learning is a corporeal process of our bodies connecting us to the world and acting as a medium through which our understanding of our world emerges (Yakhlef, 2010; Murphy *et al.,* 2019). Here, employees' ability to engage with the 'presence of the past' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 304) and immerse themselves into the situation here-and-now is crucial.

Proposition 4: Rather than acting according to preplanned tasks, service employees create the emotional connection with the customer through creative acts performed in the here-and-now.

> ...in yoga class you need to continuously read if somebody doesn't want you to come close or touch, like somebody wants their own space and retains the peace without me any closer… Like you sense it that you shouldn't go and

adjust that person but at the same time you feel how another customer craves
for it. (Jenny, group fitness instructor)

This proposition relates to the practice bundle of connecting, highlighting how employees connect with customers through visible bodily movements performed to produce a specific emotion, feeling or reaction in the customer (Mattila and Enz, 2002). The information and knowledge acquired through the body help to guide service employees in using their bodies in a certain way (Mauss, 1973; Crossley, 2005). Whereas current research on service encounters is rather task-oriented, we define service work as something more than predefined actions: service work is the holistic and creative acts performed in the here-and-now (Lai *et al.*, 2014; Chandler and Chen, 2016) and is often based on the embodied 'feel' (Crossley, 2004). These activities show how employees create emotional commitments (Schau *et al.*, 2009; Solnet *et al.*, 2019) by interacting with the customer. In particular, given our paper's focus, the results show that much of the interaction between employees and customers is embodied, with their bodies affecting and being affected by each other (Kuuru and Närvänen, 2019).

Proposition 5: Coping with the emotional load caused by the work is strongly embodied.

I talk through many situations with my colleagues, employer and friends. I don't want to grow my (emotional) backpack too heavy that I would fall but rather I want to take care that my step is light. If I can't unload (things that are on mind) during the same day, at least I try to find time and place for it during the next week. (Petra, waitress)

The often emotionally charged post-service encounter period is also part of the customer's service experience (Maguire and Geiger, 2015; Voorhees *et al.,* 2017), and the practice bundle of wrapping up illustrates that post-service practices are an integral part of an employee's experience. These are the moments when employees can display emotions that have been suppressed during the service encounter (Grandey *et al.*, 2003). Our results add to the existing studies on emotional labour by highlighting that the emotional load caused by the work is experienced as strongly embodied (Wirtz and Jerger, 2017).

5.2 Theoretical contributions

Despite the always accelerating adoption of digitalisation (Bowen, 2016; Wirtz *et al.*, 2018; Solnet *et al.*, 2019), the relevance of the human touch in service encounters should not be underestimated. Our study shines a light on the human factor, which is poorly identified in the current service encounter research and easily missed in digital services. However, because the practices taking place between and within bodies are important in service encounters (Crossley, 2005; Kuuru and Närvänen, 2019), ignoring embodiment leads to findings in which something essential is missing. It will continue to be difficult for any kind of automation system or AI to understand and interpret the ever-changing needs and wants of the living customer and to adapt its behaviour according to the here-and-now, let alone building lasting emotional connections (Schau *et al.*, 2009; Solnet *et al.*, 2019). Indeed, attempts to embody the digital self need further development (Belk *et al.*, 2015). Our results indicate that the encounter is a joint, interactive activity and, thus, that insights into the ways of adding a

human touch to the digital world is needed. Companies that are the first to incorporate the human touch into their digitised service could be pioneers and might gain a significant competitive advantage.

The present study also provides a methodological contribution to service research by utilising practice theory as a sensitising framework. The practice theory allowed us to break down the service encounter from an employee's perspective, showing how an employee's work is a bundle of embodied actions taking place before, during and after the service encounter. It also allowed us to theorise the body as an agent of knowing-in-action—the body is an agent with knowledge, and there are continuous interplays between past, current and future experiences. Thus, we argue that practices can be learned by cognition only to a certain extent; embodiment allows employees to deepen and habitualise the learning.

5.3 Managerial contributions

The embodied nature of service employees' work requires special attention from managers on both the strategic and operational levels. We argue that managers should broaden their perspective to see that employees' capability and readiness to be excellent workers extend to the moments before and after the service performance itself. Because employees' tacit embodied practices make the service encounter flourish, we encourage managers to be curious, observe their employees in action and converse with them to identify the best embodied practices—sharing these experiences and knowledge would make the practices more explicit.

Because our study defines service work as an employee's creative acts in the here-and-now, we recommend that managers seek a balance between the guidelines set by the company and employees' freedom to act in ways they feel is best in the prevailing encounter. Our research provides guidance for managers in identifying employees' embodied practices and suggests ways in which they might foster the accomplishment of such practices (Table 3). Moreover, companies providing digital services, including remote meetings, should train employees to convey a human touch in digital encounters. First, employees should be familiar with any technical issues related to the encounter so that they can fully focus on the customer. Second, employees need to practice being in front of a screen because it does not always feel natural at first and could disrupt the employee's concentration. The employee's personality and genuine interest in the customer should be communicated from screen to screen. This requires the employee to pay special attention to clear and confident communication because gestures and expressions are more difficult to interpret remotely. Differences between less and more experienced employees should also be considered when training employees about embodiment—guidelines are more useful for beginners, while those with more experience should be allowed to utilise their creativity.

Finally, the COVID-19 crisis and the requirements of physical distance have made us realise as individuals, professionals and researchers how important the human touch really is. Moreover, the situation has forced us all to consider new ways to retain and create a sense of proximity and belongingness when the traditional ways of creating them are not available. Thus, we believe that our findings on embodied service encounters expand our lens at just the right time and provide encouragement to consider basic human needs as a fundamental part of life at the personal, business and society levels.

Table 3. Practical guidelines for managers

Practice bundle	Findings	Practical suggestions for managers
Orienting	Employees have various and unique practices before work that help them turn themselves towards the service encounter.	- Ensure adequate facilities for employees to prepare themselves before their work - Show respect for employees' efforts to prepare themselves carefully for work, even before the work shift - Encourage employees to share the best orienting practices with each other
Attuning	Employees are attuning themselves to the customer and in this way can gain crucial information and learn; employees' past experiences are joined to the present via their bodies, and this embodied knowledge guides their behaviour and visible actions with the customer.	- Encourage employees to trust their bodies and their personal gut feelings as the basis of their actions - Offer training for employees to interpret customers' nonverbal cues. - Organise employee sessions to discuss how experiences can be used in their work
Connecting	Employees use their bodies to connect, bond and build trust with customers; body language, movement and utterances are utilised to elicit certain reactions from a customer.	- Organise training that focuses on improving body language and movement - Help employees become aware of embodied interactions - Provide opportunities for employees to take care of their own bodies
Wrapping up	Employees should focus carefully on the final minutes with a customer; they affect the decision to return. Moreover, employees experience their work as emotionally exhaustive and, thus, have a need to unpack work-related emotions and issues afterwards.	- Share the facts and research findings that the most unforgettable experiences tend to be strongly emotionally charged - Share the practices that ensure positive emotions in a customer - Understand that service work is holistically consuming and take care of employees' well-being

Limitations and future research

We acknowledge that our approach towards studying the embodied nature of service employees' work has some limitations. For one thing, the results of the current study are based on limited service contexts and, thus, do not provide widely generalisable findings on the topic. Another limitation is that the study participants all considered the topic to be important and interesting. Hence, the findings may apply more reliably to service employees who are already experienced, have a positive attitude and are enthusiastic about their work. Further research should be conducted on service employees in various industries to broaden the applicability of the findings. Although we utilised focus groups as our method to gather the data, on-site observations could be another way to deepen our understanding of service employees' work. A limitation in the analysis is that inter-rater reliability was not calculated. In addition, the study was conducted in Finland; therefore, the results are culturally bound and cannot be generalised to all countries and cultures. The theory on high-/low-culture contexts of Edward T. Hall is one way to look at the differences between how cultures communicate. It has been argued that Finland has a high-culture context (Nishimura *et al.* 2008), in which people are expected to 'read between the lines' in communication and where social relationships carry greater importance than in low-culture contexts; indeed, nonverbal cues may carry more weight in high-culture contexts. Although some caution should be taken with our findings, we still argue that in human interaction, embodiment is always present and influences any service encounter. More research is needed in other cultural contexts to substantiate our findings. A final limitation of the study is that by concentrating on the employees, we are missing the perspective of customers. Thus, further research should explore the two perspectives of embodiment in service encounters together.

The current study encourages researchers to carry out further work, specifically by looking at how the body is both a subject and object. The different phases of the service encounter need to be studied in more detail, both in offline and online contexts. The temporality of practices and emotions should be further studied, as well as their spatiality. Indeed, because emotions are tightly intertwined with embodiment, emotional labour during service encounters would be worth studying further. In addition, the practice approach to service employees' work should be further utilised because it helps both scholars and practitioners make service employees' work more explicit. We hope to inspire scholars to consider embodiment as a key element of service employees' work.

REFERENCES

Bailey, K.D., 1994. *Typologies and taxonomies: an introduction to classification techniques*. Sage Publications, Publication place.

Belk, R. W. (2015). Extended self in a digital world. *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 40 No. 3, pp. 477-500.

Belk, R.W., Fischer, E. and Kozinets, R.V. (2013). *Qualitative Consumer & Marketing research*. London: Sage.

Bitner, M.J. (1995). Building service relationships: It's all about promises. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 23 No. 4, pp. 246-251.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1987). *Distinction. A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

Bourdieu, P. (1990). *Structures, habitus, practices*. The Logic of Practice. Cambridge: Polity, pp. 52-65.

Bowen, D.E. (2016), "The changing role of employees in service theory and practice: an interdisciplinary view", *Human Resource Management Review*, Vol. 26 No. 1, pp. 4-13.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006), "Using thematic analysis in psychology using thematic analysis in psychology", *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, Vol. 3, pp. 77-101.

Carson, D., Gilmore, A., Perry, C. & Groenhaug, G. (2001). *Qualitative marketing research.* London: Sage.

Chandler, J.D. and Chen, S. (2016), "Practice styles and service systems", *Journal of Service Management*, Vol. 27 No. 5, pp. 798-830.

Crossley, N. (2004), "The circuit trainer's habitus: reflexive body techniques and the sociality of the workout", Body & Society , Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 37-69.

Crossley, N. (2005), "Mapping reflexive body techniques: on body modification and maintenance", *Body & Society,* Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 1-35.

Du, J., Fan, X. and Heng, T. (2009), "Multiple emotional contagions in service encounters", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 39, pp. 449-466.

Echeverri, P., and Salomonson, N. (2017), "Embodied value co-creation: a turn-taking perspective on service encounter interactions", *Journal of Creating Value*, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 33-49.

Echeverri, P. and Skålen, P. (2011), "Co-creation and co-destruction: a practice-theory based study of interactive value formation", *Marketing Theory*, Vol. 11 No. 3, pp. 351-373.

Erhardt, N., Martin-Rios, C. and Heckscher, C. (2016), "Am I doing the right thing? Unpacking workplace rituals as mechanisms for strong organizational culture", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 59, pp. 31-41.

Eriksson, P. and Kovalainen, A. (2016) *Qualitative Methods in Business Research*. 2nd edition. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi and Singapore: Sage.

Fowler, K. and Bridges, E. (2012), "Service environment, provider mood, and provider-customer interaction, Journal of Service Theory and Practice, Vol. 22 No. 2, pp. 165-183.

Gherardi, S., Meriläinen, S., Strati, and Valtonen, A. (2013), "Editors' Introduction: A practice-based view on the body, senses and knowing in organization", *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, Vol. 29 No. 4, pp. 333-337.

Giebelhausen, M., Robinson, S.G., Sirianni, N.J., and Brady, M.K. (2014), "Touch versus Tech: When Technology Functions as a Barrier or a Benefit to Service Encounters", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. *78* No. 4, pp. 113-124.

Goulding, C. (2005), "Grounded theory, ethnography and phenomenology: A comparative analysis of three qualitative strategies for marketing research", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 39 No. ¾, pp. 294-308.

Grandey, A.A. (2003), "When 'the show must go on': Surface acting and deep acting as determinants of emotional exhaustion and peer-rated service delivery", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 46, pp. 86-96.

Gummesson, E. (2005), "Qualitative research in marketing: road-map for a wilderness of complexity and unpredictability, *European Journal of marketing*, Vol. 39, No. ¾, pp. 309-327.

Hennig-Thurau, T., Groth, M., Paul, M. and Gremler, D.D. (2006), "Are all smiles created equal? How emotional contagion and emotional labor affect service relationships", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 70 No. 3, pp. 58-73.

Hochschild A. R (1983). *The managed heart: commercialization of human feeling.* Berkeley (CA): University of California Press.

Hockey, J. and Allen-Collinson, J. (2009), "The sensorium at work: the sensory phenomenology of the working body", *The Sociological* Review, Vol. 57 No. 2, pp. 217-239.

Jasmand, C., Blazevic, V. and de Ruyter, K. (2012), "Generating sales while providing service: a study of customer service representatives' ambidextrous behavior", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 76 No. 1, pp. 20-37.

Kuuru, T-K. and Närvänen, E., (2019), "Embodied interaction in customer experience: a phenomenological study of group fitness", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 35 No. 13-14, pp. 1241-1266.

Kuuru, T-K., Litovuo, L., Aarikka-Stenroos, L. and Helander, N., (2020), "Emotions in customer experience" in Lehtimäki, H., Uusikylä, P. and Smedlund, A. (Ed), *Society as an interaction space: a systemic approach*, Ed. Springer, Singapore, pp. 247-274.

Lai, J.H.W., Lui, S.S. and Hon, A. (2014), "Does standardized service fit all? Novel service encounters in frontline employee-customer interface", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 26 No. 8, pp. 1341-1363.

Larivière, B., Bowen, D., Andreassen, T.W., Kunz, W., Sirianni, N.J., Voss, C., Wünderlich, N.V. and De Keyser, A. (2017), "Service encounter 2.0": an investigation into the roles of technology, employees and customers", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 79, pp. 238-246.

Lemon, K.N. and Verhoef, P.C. (2016), "Understanding customer experience throughout the customer journey", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 80, 69-96.

Lloyd, A.E., Sherriff, T. and Luk, K. (2011), "Interaction behaviors leading to comfort in the service encounter", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 25 No. 3, pp. 176-189.

Maguire, L. and Geiger, S. (2015) "Emotional timescapes: the temporal perspective and consumption emotions in services", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 29 No. 3, pp. 211-223.

Maslow, A.H. (1954). *Motivation and personality*. New York: Harper & Row.

Mattila, A. S., and Enz, C. A. (2002), "The role of emotions in service encounters", *Journal of Service Research*, Vol. 4, pp. 268-277.

Mauss, M. (1973), "Techniques of the body", in *Incorporations*, ed. Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter, New York: Zone Books, pp. 455-477.

McColl-Kennedy, J.R., Cheung, L. and Ferrier, E. (2015a) "Co-creating service experience practices", *Journal of Service Management*, Vol. 26 No. 2, pp. 249-275.

McColl-Kennedy J.R., Gustafsson, A., Jaakkola, E., Klaus, P., Radnor, Z.J., Perks, H. and Friman, M. (2015b) "Fresh perspectives on customer experience", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 29 Issue: 6/7, pp. 430-435.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *The phenomenology of perception* (Phénoménologie de la perception, 1945) (C. Smith, Trans.). London: Routledge.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968). *The Visible and Invisible*. Northwestern University Press.

Moisander, J., & Valtonen, A. (2006). *Qualitative marketing research: A cultural approach.* London: Sage.

Morgan, D. L. (1996). Focus groups. *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 22 No. 1, pp. 129-152.

Morgan, D. L. (2002). Focus group interviewing. *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and method*, pp. 141-159.

Murphy, S., Patterson, M., and O'Malley, L. (2019). Learning how: body techniques, skill acquisition and the consumption of experience. *Marketing Theory*, Vol. 19 No. 4, pp. 425-445.

Naisbitt, J. (1982). *Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives*. New York: Warner Books.

Nishimura, S., Nevgi, A., and Tella, S. (2008). Communication style and cultural features in high/low context communication cultures: a case study of Finland, Japan and India. In A. Kallioniemi (Ed.), *Uudistuva ja kehittyvä ainedidaktiikka: Ainedidaktinen symposiumi 8.2.2008*

Helsingissä. Osa 2 (pp. 783-796). (Tutkimuksia / Helsingin soveltavan kasvatustieteen laitos; No. 299). Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto.

Ostrom, A., Bitner, M. J., Brown, S. W., Burkhard, K. A., Goul, M., Smith-Daniels, V. and Rabinovich, E. (2010.), "Moving forward and making a difference: research priorities for the science of service", *Journal of Service Research,* Vol. 13, pp. 4-36.

Palmer, M.T. and Simmons, K.B. (1995), "Communicating intentions through nonverbal behaviors conscious and unconscious encoding of liking", *Human Communications Research*, Vol. 22 No. 1, pp. 128-160.

Patton, M.Q. (1995). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Method*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Pugh, S. D. (2001), "Service with a smile: emotional contagion in the service encounter", *Academy of management journal*, Vol. 44 No. 5, pp. 1018-1027.

Reckwitz, A. (2002), "Toward a theory of social practices: a development in culturalist theorizing", *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 243-263.

Rouse, J. (2006), "Practice Theories", in *Handbook of Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 15: Philosophy of Anthropology and Sociology. Volume Editors: Turner, S. and Risjord M.; Handbook Editors: Gabbay, D.M., Thagard, P. and Woods, J. pp. 500-540.

Sandberg, J. and Dall'Alba, G. (2009), "Returning to practice anew: a life-world perspective", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 30 No. 12, pp. 1349-1368.

Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H. and Jinks, C. (2018), "Saturation in qualitative research: exploring its conceptualization and operationalization", *Quality & Quantity*, Vol 52. No. 4, pp. 1893-1907.

Schatzki, T. (1996). *Social Practices. A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social*. Cambridge: CUP.

Schau, H.J., Muniz, A.M. Jr and Arnould, E.J. (2009), "How brand community practices create value", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 73 No. 9, pp. 30-51.

Schneider, B., and Bowen, D. E. (1999), "Understanding customer delight and outrage", *Sloan Management Review,* 41 (Fall), pp. 35-45.

Sharma, U. and Black, P. (2001), "Look good, feel better: beauty therapy as emotional labour", *Sociology*, Vol. 35 No. 4, pp. 913-931.

Solnet, D., Subramony, M., Ford, R., Golubovskaya, M., Kang, H. and Hancer, M. (2019), "Leveraging human touch in service interactions: lessons from hospitality", *Journal of Service Management*, Vol. 30 No. 3, pp. 392-409.

Strati, A. (2007), "Sensible knowledge and practice-based learning", *Management learning*, Vol. 38 No. 1, pp. 61-77.

Sundaram, D.S. and Webster, C. (2000), "The role of nonverbal communication in service encounters", *Journal of services marketing,* Vol. 14 No 5, pp. 378-391.

Söderlund, M., and Rosengren, S. (2004), "Dismantling "positive affect" and its effects on customer satisfaction: an empirical examination of customer joy in a service encounter", *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior*, Vol. 17 No 27, pp. 27-41.

Tadajewski, M. (2016), "Focus groups: history, epistemology and non-individualistic consumer research", *Consumption Markets & Culture*, Vol. 19 No. 4, pp. 319-345.

Threlfall, K.D. (1999), "Using focus groups as a consumer research tool", *Journal of Marketing Practice: Applied Marketing Science*, Vol. 5 No. 4, pp. 102-105

Valtonen, A. and Närvänen, E. (2015), "Gendered reading in a bed", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 31 No. 15-16, pp. 1583-1601.

van Pinxteren, M., Wetzels, R., Rüger, J., Pluymaekers, M. and Wetzels, M. (2019), "Trust in humanoid robots: implications for services marketing", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 33 No. 4, pp. 507-518.

Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F. (2008), "Service-dominant logic: continuing the evolution", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 36 No. 1, pp. 1-10.

Voorhees, C.M., Fombelle, P.W., Gregoire, Y., Bone, S., Gustafsson, A., Sousa, R. and Walkowiak, T. (2017), "Service encounters, experiences and the customer journey: defining the field and a call to expand our lens", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 79, pp. 269-280.

Willems, T. (2018), "Seeing and sensing the railways: a phenomenological view on practice-based learning, *Management Learning*, Vol. 49 No. 1, pp. 23-39.

Warde, A. (2005), "Consumption and theories of practice", *Journal of Consumer Culture*, Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 131-152.

Wirtz, J. and Jerger, C. (2017), "Managing service employees: literature review, expert opinions, and research directions", *Service Industries Journal*, Vol. 36 No. 15-16, pp. 757-788.

Wirtz, J., Patterson, P.G., Kunz, W.H., Gruber, T., Lu, V.N., Paluch, S. and Martins, A. (2018), "Brave new world: service robots in the frontline", *Journal of Service Management*, Vol. 29 No. 5, pp. 907-931.

Yadav, M.S. (2010), "The decline of conceptual articles and implications for knowledge development", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 74 No. 1, pp. 1-19.

Yakhlef, A. (2010), "The corporeality of practice-based learning", *Organization Studies*, Vol. 31 No. 4, pp. 409-430.

Zomerdijk, L.G. and Voss, C.A. (2009), "Service design for experience-centric services", *Journal of Service Research*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 67-82.

PUBLICATION
IV

Embodied knowledge in customer experience: reflections in yoga

Kuuru, T-K.

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Embodied knowledge in customer experience: reflections on yoga

Tiina-Kaisa Kuuru

Faculty of Management and Business, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on embodied knowledge in customer experience. The study draws from literature on embodiment within sociology, consumption, organizational, and management studies, where the active and skillful role of the human body is acknowledged. Based on an autoethnographic study of online and offline yoga services, I identify five dimensions representing how the knowing body enables customer experiences to evolve: knowing the body as situational, physical, social, affective, and transformative. The embodied approach advances current customer-dominant logic studies within service research by highlighting how the active, holistic involvement of the human body allows the customer to engage in the experience.

Introduction

> I extend my chest into the dancer's pose, my right hand reaching forward, my left hand uniting with my left leg, and together pursuing power to bend my spine. I breathe. Everything feels so easy and right … As I open my heart toward the front of my mat, I feel all the heavy worries fade away. Instead, I feel ease and serenity. This comfort surrounds me and builds like a shield between me and the rest of the world. At the moment, everything is all right. (Diary note on April 2, 2020 [online])

This is a quote from my research diary, which includes the written flow of my personal yoga experiences. The quote highlights the performative aspects of experience, especially how my knowledge, which allows me to consume yoga, is strongly embodied. To perform a dancer's pose, I first draw on my embodied knowledge of how to move and be in my body to perform the *asana*. Second, mastering the movement allows me to perform without thinking about exactly how; rather, it enables me to focus on the feelings of joy and serenity arising from my lived body.

As in yoga, the human body is central for many customer experiences, particularly in service contexts, as what we know and how we learn is shaped and enabled by our bodies (Merleau-Ponty 1964; Murphy, Patterson, and O'Malley 2019). However, while the subjectivity of customer experience (CX; e.g. Helkkula 2011; Jaakkola, Helkkula, and Aarikka-Stenroos 2015) and the centrality of the customer's life-world for experience (e.g. Tynan, McKechnie, and Hartley 2014; Heinonen and Strandvik 2015) have received growing attention in recent years, the fundamental role and abilities of the human body remain neglected. Hence, this study focuses on expanding our understanding of embodied knowledge in CX. Further, it enhances studies on customer-dominant logic (CDL) by exploring how the customer's life-world, the locus of experience, is situated in the human body. To fully understand how embodied knowledge shapes CX, I explore my personal experiences in the context of yoga by combining the perspectives of the customer, instructor, and researcher.

CONTACT Tiina-Kaisa Kuuru ✉ tiina-kaisa.kuuru@tuni.fi 🏛 Kalevantie 4, 33100 Tampere, Finland

Interest in customers' lives has begun to challenge traditional company-centric perspectives within service research on CX. In particular, the CDL research stream considers the customer's life-world primarily as a locus of experience (Heinonen et al. 2010; Tynan, McKechnie, and Hartley 2014; Heinonen and Strandvik 2015). According to current studies on CDL, value is created within experiences (e.g. Heinonen et al. 2010; Tynan, McKechnie, and Hartley 2014). Heinonen et al. (2010, 537) explain how "within this experience, the customer uses all input, current and remembered, to form an impression of value influenced by both cognitive and emotional perceptions." In other words, the capabilities, skills, and previous experiences residing in the customer's body are determining factors for CX.

In the CDL approach, value co-creation is understood as a process in which customers integrate physical, cultural, and social resources within their subjective life-world (Vargo and Lusch 2008; Helkkula, Kelleher, and Pihlström 2012). Customers draw services to their individual value creation processes, and services become embedded in the customer's contexts, activities, practices, and experiences (Heinonen et al. 2010). Thus, experience emerges as a result of the fit between customers' subjective goals and realities and a specific service (Heinonen et al. 2010). However, the life-world has not been conceptualized as embodied before. Thus, this study highlights the embodied perspective on CDL and opens up the customer's life-world for greater exploration (Helkkula 2011).

In this study, embodied knowledge is defined as personal, temporal, and experiential knowledge, which is rooted in the human body and senses (Strati 2007; Gherardi et al. 2013; Molander 2017; Steadman, Banister, and Medway 2019). Senses (i.e. sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell) are experienced phenomenologically, constructed culturally, and adjusted socially, based on the premise that senses are an integral part of the human body and are always interwoven in experiences (Nichter 2008). Identical sets of embodied knowledge or abilities to utilize this knowledge in action do not exist – embodied knowledge is always tied to an individual's unique lived body (Crossley 2007; Strati 2007). Second, embodied knowledge is shaped and accumulated over time (Molander 2017; Murphy, Patterson, and O'Malley 2019). Third, the lived body is the experiencing body itself, and thus knowledge is always shaped and gained while experiencing the world in relation to ones' self, others, and the environment (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Gherardi et al. 2013).

Embodied knowledge is nonverbal information that helps us know how to act and behave (Merleau-Ponty 1964; Crossley 2005). Learning to ride a bike is not only learning to perform a certain set of movements; it also involves gaining a sense of how to perform (see Mauss 1973; Crossley 2004). However, describing bodily skills verbally is often challenging: it may be hard to describe what you are actually doing when cycling, as the skill is situated in our bodies, and we are able to ride a bike without paying special attention to it. The actions and sensations arise from our bodies – the embodied knowledge guides us. Similarly, in a service context, embodied knowledge enables the customer to consume services without thinking about it explicitly (Murphy, Patterson, and O'Malley 2019).

This paper represents the first attempt to introduce the concept of embodied knowledge in CDL research and focuses on the central role of the human body in service experiences. The embodied approach advances current studies by showcasing how value is co-created in experiences within and between lived bodies (Kuuru and Närvänen 2019). This study draws from theoretical discussions in sociology, consumption, organizational, and management studies in which the active and skillful role of the human body is acknowledged (e.g. Strati 2007; Gherardi et al. 2013; Molander 2017; Murphy, Patterson, and O'Malley 2019). As these streams of research have not previously been applied in studies on CX in service research, this study provides new theoretical tools for considering CX. The present study argues for the wider relevance of this phenomenon by highlighting how embodied knowledge first makes customers capable of acting and consuming services (Murphy, Patterson, and O'Malley 2019), and then enables experience to evolve. The accumulation of knowledge allows customers to immerse themselves in the experience. This study has valuable implications for understanding and examining embodied knowledge in CX.

Theoretical background

The experiencing body

Experience has been defined as rooted in the body and experienced as lived (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Arnould and Price 1993; Celsi, Rose, and Leigh 1993). However, in CDL studies, only a little light has been shed on how our bodies constitute not only active subjects but also objects of thinking, learning, feeling, and interacting socially (see Yakhlef 2015; Kuuru and Närvänen 2019). Even less is known about how embodied knowledge shapes an individual's experience. To approach yoga practice theoretically and build an understanding of the relationship between knowledge and CX, phenomenology represents a useful foundation from which to move forward.

One pioneering advocate of phenomenology, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, defined the human body as the site of human experience (1962, 1964). According to Merleau-Ponty (1964), we connect to the world and engage in experiences primarily through our bodies. Within social science, experience is described as "a subjective episode in the construction/transformation of the individual" (Carù and Cova 2003, 273). This sheds light on the notion that experiences are not only other-oriented, but also strongly internally constructed for the customers themselves (Haanpää 2017). This highlights how experience is always subjective as well as socially constructed and context-specific (Helkkula 2011). Crossley (2007) reminded us that we were our bodies and that all our interactions took an embodied form, whether as visible bodily movement or interconnectedness between or within the bodies. Following these concepts, in this study, the customer is defined as an experiential subject precisely because of their embodiment.

The phenomenological approach has also been utilized in CDL studies (e.g. Tynan, McKechnie, and Hartley 2014; Helkkula, Kelleher, and Pihlström 2012), focusing on exploring experience as a matter of alignment between a customer's subjective life-world and service, involving all past and future experiences (Helkkula, Kelleher, and Pihlström 2012). While this approach places the customer at the center and considers CX as temporal in nature, experience still seems to be considered as co-created between thinking minds rather than living and sensing bodies, even though, according to phenomenological understanding, it is through the body that the world becomes real for us (Merleau-Ponty 1962).

By taking a phenomenological stance, this study understands the human body as a locus of experience. Thus, the customer's body is understood as an origin of experiences, an access point, and a limitation to the acquisition of knowledge, as well as a connection point for co-creation. While the current studies on CDL identify how service is "embedded in the customer's contexts, activities, practices and experiences" (Heinonen et al. 2010, 533), this study understands service as embedded in the lived body, being a union of mind and body. However, in CDL studies, value co-creation is considered merely physical, mental, and emotional activity, through which the customer aims to accomplish their individual goals (Heinonen, Strandvik, and Voima 2013). Heinonen et al. (2010) stated that "value-in-use emerges not only in interactive processes, but also in customers' non-interactive processes," referring to mental, invisible activity related to value creation.

When considering these concepts through an embodied lens, it could be argued that rather than conceptualizing these "non-interactive processes" as mindful activities, they could be understood as the customer's internal, subjective reflections within their body, as reflexive embodiment (Kuuru and Närvänen 2019). Hence, in this study, value co-creation is understood as a strongly embodied process. By introducing an embodied approach to CDL, this study aims to provide a clearer articulation of the locus of value by focusing on the human body as a center of experiences.

The knowing body

For studies in sociology, organization, management, and the emerging streams of consumption research, the relationships between the body, knowledge, and experience are more fully explored.

The human body is characterized as a source of knowledge and experiences (e.g. Gärtner 2013; Gherardi et al. 2013; Murphy, Patterson, and O'Malley 2019). According to Bourdieu (1990), we embody everything we learn through our bodies in our *habitus*. The habitus is a fluid and dynamic concept, as it evolves constantly as a result of our experiences, reflections, and interactions with others and the environment (Bourdieu 1990; Crossley 2004). Moreover, knowing is tied to doing – individuals are agents of knowing-in-action and becoming skillful through repetition (Mauss 1973; Bourdieu 1990; Crossley 2005).

Organizational and management studies have identified how employees become skillful in their work through their lived, sensing body (e.g. Strati 2007; Sandberg and Dall'Alba 2009; Gärtner 2013; Viteritti 2013). Gärtner (2013) has identified six approaches of embodied knowledge: *brute, physiological, intelligible, situated, social,* and *lived*. The first two identify knowledge as a rational outcome, originating from the cognitive mind. Physiological embodiment explains the body as a neurobiological system, while the intelligible body describes how bodily experiences shape abstract knowledge. Situated body stresses the body-environment relationship, whereas social body focuses on social relations as a source of knowledge. Finally, lived embodiment is a phenomenological approach that describes the lived body as experiencing body itself, being a unity of the mind and body. This view is particularly relevant for this study, as it shifts the focus to the moving and sensing body as a locus of knowledge. This view emphasizes knowledge as tacit, pre-knowledge residing in our bodies, making us skillful here and now (Gärtner 2013).

Gherardi et al. (2013) offered another classification of the relationship between the body, senses, and knowing: *body that works through the senses, body that experiences through the senses, and body that knows through the senses*. The first classification emphasizes how employees become skillful in their work through the knowledge residing in their bodies. The second underlines subjective, tacit knowing as rooted in feelings and emotions that guide behaviors, thoughts, and actions, and the third classification emphasizes the importance of sensible knowledge in learning (Strati 2007). This division provides three different perspectives for considering the body as a source of knowledge. In this study, rather than focusing on different perspectives, I treat the human body holistically as an active and continually evolving source of abilities – all the aforementioned elements together make a lived body skillful and capable. Overall, these views identify knowing as a "bodily, emotional and cognitive activity" (Yakhlef 2010, 146), and thus, these classifications work as an inspiration to examine embodied knowledge in CX.

In recent years, researchers have turned their attention to consumption research, including from the consumer's perspective. Murphy, Patterson, and O'Malley (2019), in their study on high-speed motorcyclists, noted that experiences could not only be consumed, and that certain skills and knowledge were minimum requirements for consumption. Similar rules apply to customers when creating experiences in service contexts. The accumulation of experience through repetition and practice allows customers to immerse themselves in the experience (Murphy, Patterson, and O'Malley 2019). Valtonen and Närvänen (2015) studied the sleeping body and described how it learns a range of techniques to ensure that people sleep in culturally appropriate ways. In terms of knowledge in experiences, Thompson and Üstüner (2015) studied transformations in the embodied and gendered *habitus* of women in the context of roller derby. Molander (2017), in her study on mothering, highlighted consumer learning as an embodied experience by illustrating how mothers' knowledge evolved through their bodily practices over time. Common to all of these studies is the approach to the body as lived, considering the body as both a subject and an object (Merleau-Ponty 1962). These studies provide valuable insight into embodied knowledge to introduce the concept to CX in service research, especially in CDL studies.

Reflexive body techniques in yoga

The concept of body techniques was developed by Mauss (1973) and later refined by Crossley (2004, 2005). Crossley (2005, 10) introduced the term reflexive body techniques (RBTs) as

techniques of the body, performed *by* the body and involving a form of knowledge and understanding that consists entirely in embodied competence considering below the threshold of language and consciousness; but they are equally techniques *for* the body, techniques that modify and maintain the body in particular ways.

RBTs enable me to open up the yoga context and clarify the fundamental relationships between knowledge, body, and experience in yoga practice. Thus, a new understanding of the social, physical, and mindful aspects of embodied knowledge and their relationship to culturally and contextually specific modes of bodily movement is generated.

On one level, a yoga class consists of a series of RBTs configured in a specific structure (Crossley 2005). RBTs in yoga constitute bodily practices and specific ways of moving and being in the body through which value emerges for a customer (Heinonen et al. 2010). Yoga practice consists of different body techniques (yoga *asanas*, e.g. *adho mukha shvanasana*, *malasana*, *virabhadrasana II, supta baddha konasana*) and sequences of these techniques (flow). Besides bodily movement, breathing is an important body technique of yoga, referring to RBTs *not only as bodily movement,* but also *as a way of being in a body* in a certain way (Crossley 2004, 2005). Body techniques also involve participants' ability to use props, equipment that assists practitioners in their yoga practice (e.g. yoga blocks, bolsters, straps, and pillows). Body techniques in yoga are socially constituted and performed when the instructor guides the practice with verbal and embodied instruction. Likewise, a customer's interactions with other customers and their environment shape their experience. Thus, other bodies serve as an example and inspiration for individuals (Kuuru and Närvänen 2019).

Mastering diverse body techniques during a yoga class is not sufficient for "successful participation in and doing of it" (Crossley 2005). Knowing, for example, what "*adho mukha shvanasana*" is, is a matter of practical know-how; to understand what *adho mukha shvanasana* is represents the ability to do it. In vinyasa yoga class, participants mutually attune to one another via body movement and breath. Yoga classes are instituted through the activities and interactions of the embodied agents and the practical knowledge and understanding incorporated into those activities. At the same time, a yoga mat constitutes a lived yoga space for every individual, where participants can perform the techniques for themselves within their lived reality (Crossley 2004). Thus, in yoga class, value is created in diverse spheres via RBTs: social and individual, active and passive, conscious and unconscious, specific to every customer's lived reality (Heinonen et al. 2010; Heinonen, Strandvik, and Voima 2013).

The mastery level of techniques naturally varies between newcomers and more skilled participants (Crossley 2004). Engaging in yoga practice requires practical knowledge to become embodied; thus, other levels of experience open up through RBTs. Practical knowledge transforms into embodied knowledge over time through repetition, interaction, and imitation (Mauss 1973). Thus, less experienced participants will begin to incorporate body techniques with practice and time. When the knowledge becomes embodied, customers can perform yoga *asanas* without thinking about them first (Crossley 2004).

Crossley (2001) underlined that body techniques are more than just ways to modify and maintain our physiological bodies; they are also ways to generate a bodily "me." This sheds a light on the transformative power of yoga, as body techniques connect individuals to the world. Normally, yoga studios do not contain mirrors to encourage participants to "turn inside" and feel and sense their bodies better. RBTs are used for different purposes (Crossley 2004), which underlines the subjectivity of experiences. The spectrum of customers' goals is also always present in yoga class and body techniques performed for various reasons: one participant may practice yoga mainly to enhance mobility, whereas another primarily aims to escape daily life on the yoga mat. Yoga can be described as a possibility to explore, referring to the physical, embodied, and mindful aspects of yoga practice.

Research design

Research method

This study focuses on generating a new understanding of embodied knowledge in CX, and thus follows the hermeneutic research tradition by seeking to highlight the shared cultural meanings that underlie the understandings expressed by individual customers (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989; Gummesson 2005). As CX is strongly personal and subjective as well as socially constructed (Helkkula 2011), access to individual experiences and to the customer's life-world is required to effectively explore these often-hidden dimensions of experience.

After carefully considering how to explore the active, sensing, and experiencing human body from a first-person perspective without ignoring the social aspects of experience, I decided to turn to autoethnography. Autoethnography is a research approach that draws on personal experiences to understand greater cultural phenomena (Ellis 2004). In this study, autoethnography allows me to open up the "black box" of a customer's subjective life-world and increase my understanding of how embodiment shapes experiences (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011; Helkkula 2011) by placing me, my living, feeling, and breathing body, in the middle of "the social reality." Observation of my bodily experiences allows me to examine the subjectivity of embodied knowledge in CX and how it is inseparable from emotions and feelings (Heinonen et al. 2010).

Experiences are reported as they unfold in ongoing movements and interactions between bodies, spaces, and objects (see Hill, Canniford, and Mol 2014). Autoethnography also recognizes the broader time span of experience, from the time of service consumption to the consideration of all lived experiences. This encourages a slightly different ontological stance, which expands the understanding of the intertwining of the subjective and social (Hill, Canniford, and Mol 2014); that is, how experiences are created in the customer's life-world in social reality through the affective and sensing human body.

The emic view is a central purpose of autoethnography and is essential for providing accurate findings that are understandable to others (Boyle 1994; Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011). However, the dual role of the researcher presenting both emic and etic perspectives in autoethnographic studies challenges the traditional guidelines of reflexivity in research (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000; Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011), as is the case in this study. The distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred as I present both emic and etic perspectives by simultaneously taking on the roles of the researcher and subject via my lived body.

Indeed, subjectivity is an integral part of autoethnography and raises issues concerning the ethics and reliability of research (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011). It is important to understand that researchers do not exist in isolation. We live in a social reality, and when we conduct research, we not only implicate ourselves with the research, but also with others. They live in our fieldnotes and observations and are part of our experiences as well as our analysis (Ellis 2004). These relational concerns are relevant in autoethnographic studies, and I reminded myself of them throughout the research process. I protected the privacy and safety of others by altering identifying information (e.g. name and appearance), and informed the business owner and the teachers whose yoga classes I took during the data collection about my research.

It is also important to acknowledge the reliability and generalizability of autoethnographic research. The empirical data of this study consist not only of written notes and the research diary, but also of my personal memories in yoga, which complement the documented material. Even though autoethnographic descriptions are always personal and subjective, this does not mean that they are not generalizable (Ellis 2004). The reported experiences are always related to reality and surrounding culture, which embraces the unique strength of autoethnography – its ability to enhance cultural understanding through personal experiences (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011). These kinds of non-presentational ways of conducting research enable us to distinguish "new realities in interesting ways" (Hill, Canniford, and Mol 2014, 383).

The research context

Originating in India, yoga practice focuses on body–mind unity to achieve "oneness" through meditation (Leledaki and Brown 2009). Today, yoga is a growing business and lifestyle, as well as a popular leisure activity, which illustrates how it spreads diverse interests and motivations generated by bridging different Eastern and Western philosophical traditions within Western institutions (e.g. Brown and Leledaki 2010; Caplan, Portillo, and Seely 2013). Yoga practice has grown worldwide over the past 20 years as a way to enhance physical and mental health, reduce stress, and improve emotional and spiritual wellbeing (Mangiarotti 2019). Yoga can be described as a modern practice with ancient roots that is subject to cultural variations and subjective meanings for yoga practitioners in their daily lives (Brown and Leledaki 2010).

There are a variety of yoga forms, ranging from dynamic practices (e.g. flow, vinyasa, and ashtanga) to gentler variations (e.g. hatha and yin). In this paper, I focus on vinyasa flow, a form of yoga that consists of dynamic and holistic sequences targeting physical improvement and the harmonious unity of mind and body. In yoga, the union of mind and body is emphasized, and deep breath is considered a bridge between the two. Yoga is defined as an experience of movement, change, and transformation, both at the individual and social levels (Helkkula 2011; Mangiarotti 2019), experienced first and foremost through the lived body (see Merleau-Ponty 1962). Yoga is regarded as a practice "for all" that is accessible to everybody regardless of gender, age, skills, or social and cultural background. Thus, yoga offers an interesting context for studying the relationship between embodied knowledge and CX.

Introduction to the research data

In this study, my body constituted a basis *for*, provided access *to,* and selected *what* would be relevant for this research (Engelsrud 2005; Valtonen 2013). My observations and reflections are rooted in my personal experiences of yoga in two different domains: as a yoga instructor and as a customer in both offline and online contexts. Yoga has been a part of my life for 10 years, varying in form, quantity, and regularity. I started to practice yoga in yoga studios and have continued ever since, with varying levels of practice. In 2014, I participated in yoga teacher training and began teaching yoga in a group fitness studio where I work as an entrepreneur. Since 2014, I have taught approximately 1,100 h of yoga. In this particular study, in line with its positioning within the CDL perspective, the primary focus is on my personal experiences as a customer of yoga. My background as a yoga instructor works more as a complementary perspective, illustrating how all my embodied knowledge of yoga gained through diverse roles naturally shapes the study.

As research methods, I primarily used participatory observations and self-reflection. I wrote field stories and vignettes (Thanem and Knights 2019) based on my observations and reflections of my experiences between February and June 2020 in a yoga studio in Rome, Italy, and practices conducted via online services (e.g. online classes by Zem yoga studio in Rome and Yoga with Cassandra on YouTube). The empirical material was collected during the COVID-19 crisis, which provided me with novel circumstances to reflect on my experiences.

I wrote field stories and vignettes, often right after yoga practice, which allowed me to capture my thoughts, sensations, and feelings of the practice as "freshly" and authentically as possible. Sometimes, I even wrote notes during the practice, but mostly, I aimed to stay focused on the practice until the end of the class so as not to violate the flow. The notes varied in terms of length, from a few sentences to several pages. As my lived body carries all of the previous experiences shaping my reality here and now (Merleau-Ponty 1962), my personal memories also work as empirical material (Chang 2008). Thus, when something that could be relevant for this study came to mind, even in the middle of the day, I always wrote it down. These memories often reveal "effects that linger: recollections, memories, images, feelings, even long after a crucial incident is supposedly finished" (Bochner 1984, 595). Still, even though the material is well documented, memories and emotions remain that can color the documented material. My living, active body is ever-present in this study, and recognizing this is one of the basic requirements of autoethnography (Chang 2008).

The richness and quality of the data in autoethnography are not evaluated in terms of the amount or its systematicity; rather, the thickness and openness of the material is what matters (Ellis 2004). Autoethnography is all about telling life as it unfolds in all its messiness (e.g. Law and Urry 2011).

Analysis process

Representing the self in research may arouse tensions that derive from issues of sensitivity, validity, theorization, and questions about the ways in which the researcher's identity is presented in the manuscript (Haynes 2011). In this study, the analysis was conducted using inductive thematic analysis (see Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006). To provide some structure for the analysis, the process can be described as involving three phases. The first phase of the analysis aimed to construct a general understanding of the relatively messy and extensive empirical data. I read the notes several times and consciously paid attention to elements that emerged repeatedly in the material and appeared to have relevance for how embodied knowledge shapes CX. This can be viewed as a second phase of the analysis: developing themes. When developing themes, I labeled them and analyzed and created links between them. For example, it seemed that certain practical skills (e.g. how to perform *asanas* and how to line one's body) need to become embodied before resources can be released to enable more holistic affective aspects of experience to emerge. At the same time, I continuously reflected on and compared my personal experiences with existing research (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000; Gummesson 2005). In the third phase of the analysis, I focused on identifying more detailed descriptions and characteristics of the themes.

Throughout the analysis process, I noticed how reading the notes evoked diverse thoughts and feelings, even sensations in my body, by reminding me of autoethnography's reflexive nature in terms of how experiences are mediated and created in connection between our past and current self (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000; Haynes 2011). The analysis assisted in understanding human experience "in flesh" (Merleau-Ponty 1962) by making visible how embodied experience always involves our senses, mind, and body, tightly intertwined and complementing the notion that the "body is the obvious point of departure for any processes of knowing" (Rudberg 1997, 182).

Sensory anthropology as an analysis tool

The analysis was supported by concepts from sensory anthropology, which assisted in capturing the holistic and embodied aspects of knowledge in CX (Scott and Uncles 2018). The framework included four concepts (kinaesthetic schema, bodily mimesis, mindful body, and local biology). The kinaesthetic schema considers how position, movement, force, and balance affect individual experiences. The concept captures how changes in posture, position, and movement in space influence the body's orientation to creating CX (Scott and Uncles 2018). Bodily mimesis focuses on the social and visceral aspects of embodiment: first, how the bodies interact, and second, how they become and behave like something else. Mimesis helps to locate how bodies work upon each other in various ways by interlinking the cognitive, affective, and bodily aspects of experience (Kirmayer 2003).

The mindful body illustrates how the mind, body, and senses unite through embodiment. It captures how we understand and make sense of our bodies through body movement and the attunement that connects us to social and material worlds. For instance, in yoga, I interpret my surroundings and collect new information through my lived body – within embodied perspective, the lines are not drawn between cognitive, emotional, and embodied perceptions, but rather, understood as intertwined, and the body as a locus of all our experiences. Local biology conceptualizes the body as an active agent in the relation between culture and biology (Scott and Uncles 2018) and focuses on the active agent's relationship to the environment and context – how we perceive reality through our bodies (Merleau-Ponty 1962). In the context of yoga, local biology helps us understand how yoga practice may go beyond the practice itself and transform daily routines, habits, and even

the way one perceives the world. Utilizing the guiding analytical support described above, I identified five dimensions of knowing the body relevant for CX.

Empirical insights

Through my analysis, I improved my understanding of the relationship between embodied knowing and CX. The analysis identified embodied knowledge as a precursor and enabler of CX to evolve. The accumulation of knowledge allows CX to take various shapes and meanings. I distinguish five dimensions of the knowing body, which disclose how embodied knowledge allows customers to move, act, and attune to consume the services.

The knowing body is physical

> I feel how my lungs expand as I exhale. I feel how they condense as I inhale. I feel the soles of my feet rooting down to the mat … I'm ready to go. As I inhale, I raise my hands up to the sky and feel my sides lengthening. I feel the thick, warm air playing on my skin. I bow forward, relax my upper body entirely before I breathe in, stretch my back flat, and feel the core muscles turning on. I breathe out and relax my upper body again, position my fingertips on the mat next to my feet, and as I inhale, I jump my feet back to plank position. I feel how my heart's tempo is speeding up, and blood is flowing intensively in my veins, reaching every cell of my body. I feel my body warming up and becoming more alert to my internal sensations, as well as opening to sense the environment and others. (*Diary note on February 14, 2020* [*in studio*])

These diary notes emphasize the lived body; rather than understanding the body solely as a physiological phenomenon, it is considered a sensing and active entity connecting consumers to themselves, others, and the world (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Gärtner 2013; Scott and Uncles 2018). Hence, yoga not only acknowledges the existence of the external world but also utilizes the relationship between the self and the world as a tool for meditation (Morley 2001). The diary notes above illustrate how I experience and sense the world through my body positioning and movement together with my breath: I develop a sense of my muscles, veins, joints, and deep tissues; my "fleshy" elements, as well as my awareness of body alignment, movement, body parts, and the kinaesthetic schema (Scott and Uncles 2018).

The kinaesthetic schema grounds my lived body to a specific time and space by building a foundation for how to be in the world and aware of my body (Scott and Uncles 2018). Thus, the knowing body as physical turns attention to how I continuously perceive and store new knowledge through my body. The lived body is the embodied consciousness, both an active perceiver and an object of perception (Morley 2001). Thus, it cannot be separated into subject and object or self and world, but is an irreducible foundation (Morley 2001) involving the physical, sensorial, emotional, and spatiotemporal dimensions of human experience grounding personal life.

> When I started yoga, a whole new world appeared to me: all the names of the poses and how they were actually done … The names of the poses by themselves, for example, three-legged dog or wild thing, didn't reveal much of what I was expected to do with my body. The instructor played a key role, as well as the others around me. It was more or less about mirroring and copying others' movements until I gained enough skills to not need to observe others all the time. It took quite a lot of time and repetitions, before I could focus on anything else … You are never ready, I'm still improving, but the difference is that at the beginning, the learning wasn't so much fun; now it is. (*Diary note reflecting my old experiences in yoga on February 15, 2020*)

Murphy, Patterson, and O'Malley (2019) noted that experiences could not always simply be consumed. As the diary note above reveals, consuming yoga also requires engagement and knowledge. Knowledge is gained through body mimesis, mirroring and copying the bodily actions of the instructor and other practitioners (Scott and Uncles 2018). Here, body mimesis captures the union between the body, mind, and emotions; synchronization of bodily actions increases the practitioner's embodied knowledge and shapes their bodily state and emotions. The practical knowledge about how the *asanas* and transitions should be done is not enough – the embodied knowledge of

how to both be in and move the human body through the practice is required to establish experience (Crossley 2004). The body techniques are learned, and practical knowledge transforms into embodied knowledge when they are put into action (Mauss 1973; Crossley 2004; 2005; Roberts 2020).

The diary notes above identify how learning a new skill can be demanding, but through practice, learning becomes easier, thanks to the accumulation of knowledge and understanding in a lived body (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Bourdieu 1986; Crossley 2005). Skill acquisition is a fundamental precondition for CX to evolve and to make diverse sensations and emotions accessible to customers. As noted in Murphy and colleagues' study (2019) on high-speed motorcyclists, mastering body techniques allowed me to tune into the action in yoga and enabled my CX to transform and evolve.

> Today, we practiced headstands. I always travel back to the day I was able to do it for the first time. I had been practicing different modifications of the headstand for a long time, but I just didn't get it. How could it be possible to get my legs up to the sky? I felt insecure and even scared. I was just stuck—me upside down, my head and hands on the ground, but my legs as well. But then, on a Tuesday in January 2017, it just happened. I was there, doing exactly the same thing as earlier, but suddenly, my legs just turned up to the ceiling! I still don't know what I did or what happened, but I felt that my legs did it on their own. It felt easy and right; all the struggle I had faced earlier was gone. Just like that. The feeling was unbelievable! I was so excited that I fell down from the pose after a few seconds. I was so happily confused. Then, I tried it again and succeeded. Since that day, I have been able to do headstands, and feel confident when doing them. (*Diary notes on March 1, 2020* [*in studio*])

This embodied description of my yoga practice underlines how the mind and body become one: mindful body (Scott and Uncles 2018). The diary note captures how the accumulation of embodied knowledge allowed me to immerse myself in experience and gain a strong embodied feeling (Crossley 2004). I was able to engage with the "presence of the past" (Bourdieu 1990, 304), and thus did not need to concentrate on how to perform yoga; rather, the knowledge and action fused together and allowed my body to attune to the practice (Scott and Uncles 2018; Murphy, Patterson, and O'Malley 2019).

My notes of my previous trials to master the headstand illustrate how disconnects of mind, body, self, and other may also occur and shape CX (Scott and Uncles 2018). This kind of breakdown of the mindful body is reminiscent of the dualistic representation of body and mind as separate entities, yet they need to operate together so I can make sense of my experience (Leledaki and Brown 2009). All my trials to master the headstand culminated at that very moment, as described above. Here, my kinaesthetic schema and my body orientation shaped my CX: before, I had struggled to shift my stance and position to find the balance to take my legs up and master the headstand, but on that day, everything (my body, mind, emotions, space, and time) came together as a culmination of bodily knowledge as a bodily act. The quote also illustrates how it occurred, yet it remained difficult for me to understand and verbalize how I performed the headstand because I felt like *it just happened.* As embodied knowledge is primarily lived and sensed rather than documented, it is often hard to reflect verbally (Roberts 2020). Hence, kinaesthetic schemas provide an excellent tool to unpack bodily experiences, turning the focus from doing (*What I do when doing a headstand*) to sensing (*How I feel when doing a headstand*).

> When I feel tired and sore, I sometimes wonder if it was a clever idea to come. Still, as I believe yoga nurtures both my mind and body, in these cases, I usually need to step on the mat for reasons other than a physical challenge … Nowadays, I modify my practice and deviate from the instructor's guidance if I feel I don't have energy to do something. I may rest a few minutes in a child's pose and just breathe. Earlier, I was afraid to improvise as I was too worried about what others would think if I didn't follow the practice, and I forced my body to move along with the practice even if it didn't feel good at all. (*Diary notes on March 9, 2020* [*in studio*])

Body techniques transform and improve continuously, and this formulates the habitus (Bourdieu 1973; Crossley 2005). Improvement of my skills shapes my trust in myself and thus expands my CX. Poses I previously thought to be challenging and even scary now seem possible and fascinating. Indeed, habitus is a living and flexible concept, evolving all the time in our interactions with the

world (Bourdieu 1986; Crossley 2004). For example, newcomers to yoga need to invest time in incorporating body techniques, so their experience is linked more to technical performance, whereas practitioners with more experience may improvise their movement by performing their own variations of *asanas* or moving to a more advanced version of the pose, while the instructor guides the class to perform simpler versions (Crossley 2004).

Improvising can also mean choosing a "low" version of RBTs or even having your own break in the middle of yoga practice, as illustrated in the diary note above. Here, the lens of the mindful body allows us to distinguish how the continuous interpretation within one's body allows the modification of CX to respond to individual goals (Celsi, Rose, and Leigh 1993; Heinonen et al. 2010; Scott and Uncles 2018). In these situations, when customers go beyond the shared rules, body techniques transform and evolve. Local biology and interconnection between the body and culture allow customers to sense and shape experiences differently (Scott and Uncles 2018), depending on the level and richness of their embodied knowledge. In this manner, customers customize their experiences and "label them their own" (Csikszentmihalyi 1990; Helkkula 2011; Scott and Uncles 2018), resulting in the emergence of value within the customer's life-world (Heinonen et al. 2010; Tynan, McKechnie, and Hartley 2014).

The knowing body as physical establishes the foundation for CX to occur and evolve by introducing the concept of the lived body as the locus of knowledge and experience. This dimension illustrates how body positioning, movement, and the feeling of "being in the world through my body" influence CX (Scott and Uncles 2018).

The knowing body is social

> Today, Titti guided us through the practice by talking. The practice was challenging, the flow fast, and the transitions demanding. I really had no time to think about anything other than the practice. You just need to know what to do and move. Of course, the first round of the sequence served only to understand the flow, but when we repeated the sequence various times, I just got into it and let my body move. I felt strong and capable. Titti always reminds us to trust our bodies as our guide, and that is just what happened. Only at the end of the practice did I realize how exhausted I was. It was amazing! (*Diary notes on March 3, 2020* [*in studio*])

The diary note above emphasizes how body techniques are related to embodied forms of knowledge and understanding that are first social (Mauss 1973). In yoga practice, an instructor leads the class through talk, movement, or both. The instructor tells the names of various body techniques, and bodily mimesis occurs as participants copy the instructor's bodily actions (Scott and Uncles 2018). They guide the lived bodies to act both at the collective and individual levels: instructions are given for the group, but also for individuals. The instructor may correct my technique or posture, encourage me to push forward, or offer me a specific variation of some *asana* to try. Thus, the dyadic relationship between the customer and the instructor is relevant (Vargo and Lusch 2008) for CX to emerge.

Mimesis constitutes a central activity for the co-creation of value in yoga classes (Heinonen et al. 2010). For customers with less experience with yoga, bodily mimesis plays a more crucial role in their value creation processes than for customers with more experience, as beginners do not yet hold the level of embodied knowledge that allows experience to emerge through their bodies (Gärtner 2013; Scott and Uncles 2018). As a yoga instructor myself, I usually introduce the sequence by talk and movement, staying on my mat for the first round. In this way, I familiarize customers with the sequence and orient their bodies toward the pattern. Then, I leave my mat and walk around to adjust and support customers individually while guiding them verbally. They can either move, follow my talk, or go at their own pace. When customers master the sequence at a certain level and knowledge turns embodied, CX evolves, and experiencing a range of sensations and emotions becomes possible.

> I loved the person who practiced next to me today! We did some challenging stuff related to hips, which is my weak spot, and when she had such a beautiful technique and way of moving, I took advantage of it and

followed her example. I think I understood the hip alignment inside the angle better just by observing her. (*Diary notes on March 1 2020* [*in studio*])

This diary note emphasizes the yoga class as a social structure: customers shape each other's movement (Crossley 2004) and thus co-create the experience (Jaakkola, Helkkula, and Aarikka-Stenroos 2015). The role of other bodies is significant when learning the techniques and aiming to improve them (Crossley 2004; Kuuru and Närvänen 2019; Murphy, Patterson, and O'Malley 2019). Bodily mimesis, mirroring, and absorbing others' bodily actions becomes real through the embodied relationship between customers (Scott and Uncles 2018). In yoga practice, I may copy another person's movement or breathing, or even aim for a similar bodily state (Nichter 2008). This social, embodied interaction forms the basis for value co-creation in experience (Heinonen et al. 2010; Jaakkola, Helkkula, and Aarikka-Stenroos 2015; Kuuru and Närvänen 2019). I feel that sometimes the other bodies help me even more than the instructor when I am struggling with a pose or do not understand the instructor's guidance. Copying others' bodily actions helps me to improve my awareness of my kinaesthetic schema (Scott and Uncles 2018). Indeed, customers are shaping not only their own but also others' techniques, like the person next to me shaped by mine (Valtonen and Närvänen 2015). The mirroring role of the bodies in CX should not be taken for granted. My capacity to mirror is based on my existing knowledge of yoga, and thus, my habitus always shapes the action (Crossley 2004).

> Practicing yoga alone in our living room felt a bit weird. I am used to a living and breathing instructor in front of me, as well as to being surrounded by people when practicing … The practice itself was nice, but I struggled with following the instructor on the screen. I felt it was demanding to match my movement and breath to the instructor's guidance, and I needed to turn my gaze to the screen once in a while. So it could have been better, but at least I felt my body opening and enjoying the practice, even though I couldn't concentrate on how I was doing or how it felt at all. It was more about what to do next. (*Diary note on February 15, 2020* [*online*])

In an online yoga class, the social aspect of learning takes a different form – it is just me and the instructor on the screen. The other bodies are not guiding me with examples or support. At first, I found practicing yoga through online classes rather demanding, as the instructor had her own style and pace to guide the practice as well as her own ways of performing body techniques (e.g. she used transitions that I was not familiar with or called *asanas* by different names) that I was not familiar with at first. I struggled to tune in to the class (Crossley 2004), and I had to reorient myself to the practice (Scott and Uncles 2018). I needed time and repetition to familiarize myself with the instructor's RBTs before I could immerse myself in the experience (Murphy, Patterson, and O'Malley 2019). After practicing more through online services, it became easier to focus on my embodied feelings and sensations, which shaped my experience (Hewer and Hamilton 2010; von Scheve 2018; Murphy, Patterson, and O'Malley 2019). This shows that at first, practicing yoga through digital services without any prior experience can be rather demanding, as the lack of direct interaction affects the customer, especially when the knowledge is not yet embodied, and the customer is still learning the basics of the body techniques.

> The dimension of the knowing body is social and illustrates how embodied knowledge

flows in the shared sphere between the bodies, thus enabling CX to evolve (Helkkula 2011; Jaakkola, Helkkula, and Aarikka-Stenroos 2015; Kuuru and Närvänen 2019).

The knowing body is affective

Besides copying and mirroring others' body techniques (Mauss 1973; Crossley 2005; Scott and Uncles 2018), the roles of the other bodies extend beyond bodies having an emotional effect on others (Crossley 2005; Scott and Uncles 2018; von Scheve 2018; Kuuru and Närvänen 2019). RBTs are implemented not only for individuals, but also for others, emphasizing the co-creative nature of CX (Vargo and Lusch 2008; Jaakkola, Helkkula, and Aarikka-Stenroos 2015).

> We were working on this challenging sequence, including demanding transitions and a lot of balancing. I was concentrating on my breath to get through the final round. I heard the heavy breathing around me and felt how the others were also giving their best. Even though I was enjoying it, it would be wrong to say that it wasn't hard. I tuned myself for the last round and focused on moving as well and as strongly I could. I can do this … I felt my leg shaking when balancing at the end of the flow, and I saw my neighbor-yogi's leg shaking and felt her working so hard. I thought that she would make it for sure. It helped me to continue, as I felt that if she was not going to give up, neither would I … The last vinyasa push up and we were done. Knees down and sit. I lifted my head, smiled—I did it—and saw another smiling face. My eyes met that of a person next to me, and we smiled even more. (*Diary note on March 10, 2020 [in studio]*)

These affects capture the interplay and interaction of bodily sensations and personal emotions in a social environment (Valtonen and Haanpää 2018; von Scheve 2018). The diary note above underlines the co-creative nature of CX: by moving my body during a yoga class, I shape my individual experience while simultaneously affecting and being affected by other bodies (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Crossley 1995; Ahmed 2004). In the diary note, affect occurs in my own body through reflexive embodiment, as I continuously focus on and interpret my bodily sensations (Crossley 2005; Kuuru and Närvänen 2019).

There are a variety of emotions, from determination to despair, that are going on in my body. Through my body movement, I both allow my individual emotions to spread around *(I am strong and capable)* and try to hide them from others, as I do not want to give up and let my negative emotions *(uncertainty, despair)* spread (Ahmed 2004). At the same time, I feel and see the surrounding bodies, and the affective experience becomes shared as other bodies inspire and boost me.

As Merleau-Ponty (1964, 52) stated, emotions are not "inner realities" expressed for others, but rather "forms of conduct visible from the outside." Thus, mimesis not only includes copying another person's bodily movement, but also involves absorbing other people's emotions and feelings, which are spread between bodies (Scott and Uncles 2018; Kuuru and Närvänen 2019). The shaking leg of the woman next to me awakened my feelings of empathy and courage. I knew she was tired, and she must have felt her leg burning like I was, but I knew that she had energy left to finish the sequence. We shared the feelings of ultimate tiredness in our bodies, but kept on moving. At the end of the sequence, we shared feelings of relief and happiness, which we communicated through a bodily expression: a smile (Haanpää 2017). The smile signaled, *Well done, I am proud of you. And thanks, you supported me to keep moving.*

This event illustrates how affective knowing (Valtonen and Haanpää 2018) in action shapes CX. Affective knowing illustrates how our own moving body and other bodies awaken diverse sensations and emotions within and between the bodies (Kuuru and Närvänen 2019) – affective experiences are co-created but always individually reflected (Heinonen et al. 2010). However, it is important to note that the social aspect of affect takes a different form when I practice yoga via digital services.

> Twists are so intense, especially in the morning. I had just woken up, brushed my teeth, and moved onto a mat. At the beginning, my body felt so stiff and sore that I thought how horrible the next 60 min might be … Sometimes, you rush too much and try too-intense poses too early, so the body isn't even ready for them. The mind is hurrying … After some time, I felt how my body warmed up, and it melted into the movement. It felt so good to feel my body active. The spine rotations really nurtured my spine … I felt how my tiredness was fading away … When I finished the practice, I was full of energy, ready for the day! (*Diary notes on February 13, 2020 [online]*)

> Sometimes, yoga practice in the middle of the day is the best solution you can find. Today, I was so stuck with my work, and felt frustrated and annoyed. I'm so happy I got myself away from my desk and did a quick 30-minute practice. It was just the break I needed, and all work-related stuff faded away with the movement … For a moment, I was somewhere else, breathing and moving, just for me. (*Diary note on April 20, 2020 [online]*)

The diary notes above highlight that the affective body is also relevant when practicing yoga through digital services. As the social aspect of affect takes a different form when I practice yoga alone in our living room, the affects occur mostly through my reflexive embodiment (Crossley 2005; Kuuru and

Närvänen 2019). As Hansen (2004a, 13) argued, bodily affect in a digital context is invited to transform "the unframed, disembodied, and formless into concrete embodied information intrinsically imbued with (human) meaning." Hence, the moving image on the screen (the yoga class) works as a flowing source of information that is framed through my lived body and becomes meaningful (Clough 2008). Therefore, what links the customer and technology is the affective human body (Hansen 2004b).

My experience is built on my internal reflection on the sensations and emotions arising from my body. The digital context provides me with an opportunity to deploy my skills and knowledge to frame digital information as something human, emotional, and affective (Hansen 2004a; Clough 2008). The diary notes show how body techniques are used as a form of self-expression or action centered on experience through the senses (Schmitt 1999; Hewer and Hamilton 2009; Gherardi et al. 2013). The affective, moving body becomes central to emotions in various ways. The first note represents how my sensations made me think about whether I was doing the right thing, capturing my feelings of uncertainty and concerns related to the experience. Moreover, my morning practice allowed emotions from frustration to joy to emerge, as well as emotions to transform. Here, my first negative emotions transformed into positive ones through body movement and turned my mood from lazy and tired to bright and energetic (Crossley 2005).

There is a link between affect and temporality, as the digital image on the screen "inserts a technical framing into the present" and expands bodily affectivity, allowing me to experience how my emotions continually (re)shape throughout the practice (Hansen 2004b, 614). The second diary note not only describes body techniques as transforming emotions, but also showcases how they offer a way to escape from daily life and routines (Scott, Cayla, and Cova 2017). The local biology of customers engaged in yoga may act as a response to today's hectic lifestyle in many Western societies (Scott and Uncles 2018). I also remember times when yoga practice made me feel very sentimental, and I have even burst into tears, which shows that body techniques are also opportunities to reveal "the deepest dispositions of the habitus" (Bourdieu 1992, 190). As the diary notes together show, the embodied approach to examining CX focuses attention on how bodies affect each other, as well as on how bodily attunement and action turn the individual toward their reflexive embodiment (Ahmed 2004; Crossley 2005; Kuuru and Närvänen 2019). The knowing body is affective and captures the resonance between embodied knowledge, emotions, and CX.

The knowing body is transformative

> Sometimes, I feel that on the mat, I can let go and just be me. In my daily life, I am known to be efficient, energetic, and the one who is always coping with ten projects at the same time. And getting these things done without ever getting tired. And of course, I am like that, but sometimes I am tired and fragile, and I feel like I can't show it to others. On a yoga mat, I can be tired and vulnerable without being afraid of somebody judging me. Before I escaped to the yoga mat to breathe and stop for a while, but now I have gained courage through experience, and nowadays I dare to also express my sensitive emotions outside the studio, which is a huge thing. I am enough, just the way I am, and I don't always need to be efficient. It is okay to relax and be lazy. (*Diary note on March 2, 2020* [*in studio*])

Crossley (2005, 13) noted that body techniques played a central role in "the construction of the reflexive sense of self." As I noted earlier, it took some time and practice for my yoga experiences to become enjoyable and fun. Change and transformation also require time. The diary note above describes how yoga is much more than an exercise to modify my physical body (which naturally is also one relevant aspect of it; Crossley 2001, 2004). It has taught me much more than technical and physical skills. Today, the holistic, embodied orientation toward yoga is the baseline of my practice. My mind and body unite as one (Scott and Uncles 2018).

As I go over my yoga journey for the last 10 years, I admit that at first, my engagement in yoga practice was rather dualistic, and my mind-rationality dominated over my body-emotion (Leledaki and Brown 2009). It has been only through the accumulation of practice and knowledge that I have

achieved this transformation. My yoga practice has enabled me to experience not only yoga, but also the world more strongly through my body (Merleau-Ponty 1962). I have learned about my personality, identity, and inner self. Yoga has shaped my values and ways of thinking without these being my priority, but with the transformation emerging through bodily experiences. In other words, I have learned "to constitute myself for myself" through body techniques (Crossley 2005, 13). Even my husband says that yoga has changed me. Thus, my value creation processes are not limited to moments of service consumption but also extend beyond, to daily life (Heinonen et al. 2010; Tynan, McKechnie, and Hartley 2014; Bosangit and Demangeot 2016), aiming to improve holistic wellbeing.

Studies in experiential consumption have noted learning as a trigger for change and transformation (Kolb, Boyatzis, and Mainemelis 2001; Bosangit and Demangeot 2016), and include learning as one of the many outcomes of experience (Tynan, McKechnie, and Hartley 2014). However, my observations highlight the reflexive nature of learning and suggest that learning occurs throughout service consumption. Body techniques enable customers to learn through their experiences (Gherardi et al. 2013) and facilitate the lasting and transformational impact of experience to occur (Viotto, Zanette, and Brito 2020).

The knowing body as transformative enables CX to radiate outside the boundaries of individual embodied experiences. I carry everything I have learned in yoga into my daily life, to my actions, behavior, and thinking. This highlights the transformative nature of CX, which extends to both individual and social spheres (Viotto, Zanette, and Brito 2020).

The knowing body is situational

> Today, I was mad at myself! How is it possible that I can't do *kunvinyasa asana* at home, even though I have done it dozens of times in the studio? Anyway, I used a lot of energy following the instructor today to try and familiarize myself with her way of guiding the practice. It felt so mechanical, and I felt I didn't really get into the flow, which is usually the best thing in yoga practice. It was more just doing *asanas* in a row, and my focus was on the screen rather than on myself. (*Diary note on March 16, 2020* [*online*]*)

Only the reflections of my experiences between on- and offline contexts have made me realize that even though I am familiar with the language of yoga and many body techniques, they are always highly context-specific (Helkkula 2011). My embodied knowledge was mostly based on my experiences in yoga classes in a yoga studio, and when I began to practice online, I was surprised at how lost I was. I needed to step back and adjust my knowledge to online contexts. Only through practice and repetition did my experience turn fun again, and the affective aspects of CX became drivers of my experience (Mauss 1973). In other words, even though many body techniques are socially pre-choreographed (Crossley 2004), they are still dependent on the circumstances here and now.

> The yoga practice has offered me the possibility to stop and breathe for the last month and forget all the hustle around. As we are not allowed to move more than a few hundred meters away from our house, my yoga mat represents the possibility of escaping outside the walls of our apartment. Even though I can't really go anywhere, it feels that I can … I feel happy as my body knows the *asanas* so I can just immerse myself in the motion, and my moving body gives me a break from everything else. I don't think or feel anything else. It is me, my body, and my sensations. (*Diary note April 15, 2020* [*online*]*)

Usually, customers are free to choose where and when they wish to consume services, and similarly, companies have the possibility to choose their operating environment. Still, sometimes this choice is forced. We are living a radical example of this truth as I write this article. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced companies all over the world to adjust their businesses and shift to online services. At the same time, consumers are facing a massive change, as familiar ways of consuming services are no longer possible. Customers, who have been used to consuming services offline in direct interaction with service providers, are now forced to shift their consumption to an online environment. These exceptional circumstances challenge customers' abilities to consume experiences, and shifting to consuming services in a new context requires repetition to familiarize oneself with the new

circumstances (Mauss 1973). Thus, a customer's capacity to engage in experience is dependent not only on the level and richness of the embodied knowledge but also on the familiarity of the context.

I have faced this crisis from both perspectives, as a service provider and as a customer. We closed the doors of our fitness studio and now operate online. The digital leap and sudden lack of sociality of service, or the possibility of providing individual coaching, have forced us to think about our business again. The crisis has also changed my yoga experiences. Before, I did not find doing yoga at home very interesting and prioritized going to the studio, but now the moments on my yoga mat in our living room are my lifeline, providing me with an opportunity to escape daily life (Stevens, Maclaran, and Brown 2019), which is literally framed by the boundaries of our apartment. During these uncertain and extraordinary times, yoga has made me feel more alive (Stevens, Maclaran, and Brown 2019) and enabled me to deal with my sensations and emotions (Crossley 2005). It is also interesting how the instructor's face and voice on the screen feel close and comfortable now, whereas before, I felt the instructor was rather distant and impersonal.

The knowing body as situational underlines how the context always creates frames for the customer to reflect upon and utilize their embodied knowledge in experience (Hansen 2004a; Clough 2008).

Reflection of findings

This article enriches the current discussion on CX in CDL studies within service research (e.g. Heinonen et al. 2010; Helkkula 2011; Heinonen and Strandvik 2015; Jaakkola, Helkkula, and Aarikka-Stenroos 2015) by identifying embodied knowledge as a premise for experience to occur and evolve. The findings outline embodied knowledge as a determining factor for value creation and illustrate the customer's life-world as it naturally unfolds and increases the understanding of service value.

This paper introduces the concept of embodied knowledge in the CX stream in service research and opens up a whole new perspective for considering CX. Embodiment provides a conceptual basis for uncovering unexplored bodily aspects of experience by generating a holistic understanding about how customers sense, feel, think, act, and relate when engaging in experiences (Schmitt 1999). As identified in organizational studies and sociology (e.g. Yakhlef 2010; Gärtner 2013; Gherardi et al. 2013), in CX, customers' knowing and learning are incorporated into the body through repetition and are expressed in their engagement and action when consuming services. In other words, an embodied approach helps to conceptualize the customer's life-world, which is considered the locus of CX (Heinonen et al. 2010; Heinonen and Strandvik 2015).

This paper also contributes to consumption studies (e.g. Scott, Cayla, and Cova 2017; Murphy, Patterson, and O'Malley 2019), which mostly consider consumers becoming skillful primarily through body movement. However, the results of this study reveal how the accumulation and (re)shaping of embodied knowledge may derive from *being in the body* without bodily action. The human body is a sensing, active, and skillful agent. In yoga, *asanas* are often held for a long time. Even though the lived body remains still, it transforms its capabilities to engage in CX. Here, the ability to tune the body into the particulars of the situation is required. Being in the body can be characterized as pre-reflective self-awareness, a consumer's bodily orientation toward the world.

This study contributes to the discussion on resource integration in CDL. Current studies on CDL consider that customers integrate services and other external resources (e.g. other customers and surroundings) with their experiences (Heinonen et al. 2010; Heinonen, Strandvik, and Voima 2013; Heinonen and Strandvik 2015). However, this study indicates how the human body and the world are in constant interaction with each other, and clear boundaries between experiences cannot be drawn (e.g. Merleau-Ponty 1964). There are no "*outside*" and "*inside*" of experience; rather, all actors immerse themselves in experiences and each other's value creation processes. Interaction takes place between and within bodies, resulting in the accumulation of knowledge, experiences, and value.

In yoga, I interpret my surroundings and collect new information through my lived body – within an embodied perspective, the lines are not drawn between cognitive, emotional, and embodied perceptions, but understood as intertwined, and the body as a locus of all our experiences. A similar idea of embodied unity also extends to discussion on customers' internal resources (e.g. values, knowledge, and prior experiences). Previous CDL studies have highlighted customer resources as separate, whereas my experiences emphasized that all my knowledge, previous experiences, background, values, and thoughts became real here-and-now experiences in my habitus and shaped my actions (Bourdieu 1990; Crossley 2004; Gärtner 2013). The embodied perspective on resource integration allows us to understand how our living and sensing bodies make us capable of integrating and using resources to create experiences.

As embodied knowledge accumulates over time and allows CX to emerge and evolve, the concept of embodied temporality becomes relevant to expand the awareness of how the embodied dimension relates to CX. The learning process is not linear, and more repetition and practice over time does not always mean a better ability to engage in CX. Rather, time shapes our ability to create experiences in various ways. Sometimes, it can even hinder the process. In addition, embodied practices, time, and context are always interrelated (Woermann and Rokka 2015). Regardless of how long the customer has gained accumulated knowledge in one context, this does not mean that they are able to utilize the knowledge in a new, unfamiliar context. Hence, "optimal" CX is a result of the perfect alignment between embodied actions, context, and affective state during service consumption (Woermann and Rokka 2015).

The temporal aspect of lived experience highlights how the customer's value creation process can extend beyond the actual moments of service consumption as the transformative power of experiences stretches outside the service context to daily life (Heinonen et al. 2010; Viotto, Zanette, and Brito 2020). The value of my accumulated yoga experiences is flourishing in my daily routines and practices. For instance, I am more sensitive to my bodily sensations and treat myself, as well as others, more gently.

Together, the five dimensions of the knowing body enhance the current understanding of the relationship between embodied knowledge and CX as an evolving value creation process by a sensing and active human body. The results underline that the dimensions do not exist in isolation but represent specific aspects of how embodied knowledge shapes CX. The facets of embodiment introduced in sensorial anthropology (i.e. kinaesthetic schema, bodily mimesis, the mindful body, and local biology; Scott and Uncles 2018) work as a gateway to clarify how people feel, sense, think, act, and relate when co-creating their experiences. *The knowing body is physical,* highlighting how the kinaesthetic schema always frames CX by anchoring the lived body to time and place, working as a foundation for CX to occur (Scott and Uncles 2018).

The knowing body is social is twofold. First, other customers provide support for an individual to improve their CX through mimesis, and second, bodies affect and are affected by other bodies, resulting in emotional experiences (Kuuru and Närvänen 2019). *The knowing body is affective* captures how customers sense experiences differently through the mindful body. The affective dimension outlines the interplay and interaction of bodily sensations and personal emotions resulting from a moving and knowing body. The affective dimension works in both individual and social spheres.

The knowing body is transformative describes how local biology, the interconnection between the body and culture within experiences, may allow CX to turn transformative, radiating outside the boundaries of service consumption to daily life. *The knowing body is situational* encompasses the whole process of CX formation and underlines how embodied knowledge is a floating concept, providing a diverse basis for CX to occur depending on context. This study adds to the current literature characterizing CX as a result of how a customer's subjective goals fit into a specific service (Heinonen et al. 2010) by highlighting in more detail how CX emerges from a customer's unique abilities to utilize their embodied knowledge in a specific context (Helkkula 2011).

In this study, I focused on the context of yoga, but from the perspective of managing and planning customer experiences, the five dimensions can also be relevant to many other contexts. During the COVID-19 pandemic, restaurants were forced to close their physical doors and invent new ways of doing business. One invention has been so-called dinner boxes: restaurants deliver ingredients and recipes to customers' front doors, giving them the possibility to cook restaurant-quality meals at home. However, the high-quality ingredients and detailed instructions do not guarantee that the end product matches restaurant-level dinners, so the CX depends on the customer's embodied knowledge (Murphy, Patterson, and O'Malley 2019). If the customer lacks cooking experience, the experience may be framed by mechanical follow-up of the instructions (*the knowing body is physical)*. If the customer is a more experienced cook, the accumulation of knowledge may allow them to immerse themselves in experience, allowing bodily sensations and emotions to occur (*the knowing body is affective)*.

The environment, both physical and social, also shapes the cooking experience (Helkkula 2011). Here, the cooking experience varies if the dinner is cooked alone or with others (*the knowing body is social)* and if the cooking takes place in one's own familiar kitchen or at a friend's place (*the knowing body is situational*). After a certain amount of practice and repetition, the cooking experience may also become a revealing and relaxing moment of escape from daily life (Scott, Cayla, and Cova 2017), or the CX may expand beyond the consumption of service, changing customers' attitudes and habits toward cooking (*the knowing body is transformative*; Viotto, Zanette, and Brito 2020).

The use of the emic approach to address the purpose of this study allowed me to present a detailed narrative of how embodied knowledge shapes CX. In this study, I aimed to stay reflexive throughout the research process by remaining conscious of my ideology, culture, and values, allowing all of my diverse roles to shine in turn (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000). Here, the choices of research design and methodology (e.g. use of vignettes and thematic analysis) assisted in enhancing the transparency of emic and etic perspectives in the text. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that autoethnography enables the examination of research phenomena from a particular subjective perspective. Hence, this study enriches existing research by opening up a new avenue for CX research.

Furthermore, my observations in the context of yoga provide counterweight to the existing studies on embodiment, which have examined it in demanding contexts (e.g. Arnould and Price 1993; Celsi, Rose, and Leigh 1993; Scott, Cayla, and Cova 2017; Murphy, Patterson, and O'Malley 2019). Exploration of yoga also shows that a gentler, softer, more nurturing approach to the human body enables customers to become aware of their embodied sensations and create experiences that shape their individual life-worlds (Merleau-Ponty 1964; Scott, Cayla, and Cova 2017).

Conclusion

By adopting the embodied approach, this study extends the current understanding of how experiences emerge in customers' life-worlds (Heinonen et al. 2010) and facilitates articulation of the locus of value by conceptualizing the human body as a premise for all experiences. This paper advances the current research on co-creation and interaction by defining embodied knowledge as a determining factor for value creation and describing how embodied interaction enables knowledge, experiences, and value to occur.

To provide a holistic, embodied approach to CDL, this study identifies five dimensions of embodied knowledge that highlight how the accumulation and level of knowledge continually shape CX. The studies of Mauss (1973) and Crossley (2001, 2004, 2005, 2007), as well as drawings from sociology, organizational, management, and consumption studies provide opportunities to conceptualize the lived body as a source of knowledge. Furthermore, this article demonstrates the merits of sensory anthropology (Scott and Uncles 2018) to reveal embodied ways of knowing. Scholars can adopt this kind of multidisciplinary, novel method to integrate an embodied approach to their studies and thereby help companies to better understand, orchestrate, and manage CX, and

help customers to consume more fulfilling, optimal, and holistic experiences. Furthermore, the autoethnographic method delves deep into the subjectivity of experiences and enables the conceptualization of the body as a site of experience and knowledge – the human body united.

This study opens up multiple avenues for further research. As one of the first studies discussing embodied knowledge in CX, further studies delving into the customer's life-world are necessary to expand our understanding of the embodied nature of CX. In addition, the five dimensions of embodied knowledge in CX identified in this study deserve more focus and detailed research in the future. As my study offered one approach while examining the embodiment of experiences in the context of yoga, studies in other service contexts, both online and offline, should be undertaken.

I did not thoroughly explore the spatial aspects related to knowing and CX in this paper, which is a relevant topic. Moreover, in-depth studies comparing offline versus online service contexts, as well as different cultural contexts, would add interesting layers regarding how embodied knowledge affects CX in diverse settings. The customer's life-world and the anatomy of CX will remain mysterious and difficult to grasp if we do not find the courage to invent and utilize novel ways to study the phenomenon. It is hoped that this research will serve as an inspiration for future studies.

Disclosure statement

Funding

Notes on contributor

MSc Tiina-Kaisa Kuuru is a Doctoral Candidate in the Faculty of Management and Economics at Tampere University. Her research focus is on embodiment in customer experience, particularly in human touch service businesses. Tiina-Kaisa Kuuru can be contacted at: tiinakaisa.kuuru@tuni.fi.

References

Ahmed, Sara. 2004. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York: Routledge.
Alvesson, Mats, and Kaj Sköldberg. 2000. *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research*. London: SAGE.
Arnould, Eric J., and Linda L. Price. 1993. "River Magic: Extraordinary Experience and the Extended Service Encounter." *Journal of Consumer Research* 20 (1): 24–45.
Bochner, Arthur P. 1984. "The Functions of Human Communication in Interpersonal Bonding." In *Handbook of Rhetorical and Communication Theory*, edited by Carroll C. Arnold, and John W. Bowers, 544–621. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
Bosangit, Carmela, and Catherine Demangeot. 2016. "Exploring Reflective Learning During the Extended Consumption of Life Experiences." *Journal of Business Research* 69 (1): 208–215.
Bourdieu, Pierre. 1973. "The Three Forms of Theoretical Knowledge." *Information (International Social Science Council)* 12 (1): 53–80.
Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "The Forms of Capital." In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by J. G. Richardson, 241–258. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Translated by R. Nice. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
Bourdieu, Pierre. 1992. (orig. 1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Routledge: London.
Boyle, Joyceen S. 1994. "Styles of Ethnography." In *Critical Issues in Qualitative Research Methods*, edited by Janice M. Morse, 159–185. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
Brown, Dan, and Aspasia Leledaki. 2010. "Eastern Movement Forms as Body-Self Transforming Cultural Practices in the West: Towards a Sociological Perspective." *Cultural Sociology* 4 (1): 123–154.
Caplan, Mariana, Adriana Portillo, and Lynsie Seely. 2013. "Yoga Psychotherapy: Theory and Ancient Yogic Wisdom." *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 45 (2): 139–158.
Carù, Antonella, and Bernard Cova. 2003. "Revisiting Consumption Experience: A More Humble but Complete View of the Concept." *Marketing Theory* 3 (2): 267–286.

Celsi, Richard L., Randall L. Rose, and Thomas W. Leigh. 1993. "An Exploration of High-Risk Leisure Consumption Through Skydiving." *Journal of Consumer Research* 20 (1): 1–23.

Chang, Heewong. 2008. *Autoethnography as Method*. New York: Routledge.

Clough, Patricia T. 2008. "The Affective Turn: Political Economy, Biomedia and Bodies." *Theory, Culture & Society* 25 (1): 1–22.

Crossley, Nick. 2001. *The Social Body: Habit, Identity and Desire*. London: SAGE.

Crossley, Nick. 2004. "The Circuit Trainer's Habitus: Reflexive Body Techniques and the Sociality of the Workout." *Body & Society* 10 (1): 37–69.

Crossley, Nick. 2005. "Maintenance Mapping Reflexive Body Techniques: On Body Modification and Maintenance." *Body & Society* 11 (1): 1–35.

Crossley, Nick. 2007. "Researching Embodiment by Way of Body Techniques." *The Sociological Review* 55 (1): 80–94.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. 1990. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York: HarperCollins.

Ellis, Carolyn. 2004. *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel About Autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Ellis, Carolyn, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner. 2011. "Autoethnography: An Overview." *Historical Social Research* 36 (4): 27–290.

Engelsrud, Gunn. 2005. "The Lived Body as Experience and Perspective: Methodological Challenges." *Qualitative Research* 5 (3): 267–284.

Fereday, Jennifer, and Eimear Muir-Cochrane. 2006. "Demonstrating Rigor Using Thematic Analysis: A Hybrid Approach of Inductive and Deductive Coding and Theme Development." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 5: 1–11.

Gärtner, Christian. 2013. "Cognition, Knowing and Learning in the Flesh: Six Views on Embodied Knowing in Organization Studies." *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 29 (4): 338–352.

Gherardi, Silvia, Susan Meriläinen, Antonio Strati, and Anu Valtonen. 2013. "Editors' Introduction: A Practice-Based View on the Body, Senses and Knowing in Organization." *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 29 (4): 333–337.

Gummesson, Evert. 2005. "Qualitative Research in Marketing: Road-map for a Wilderness of Complexity and Unpredictability." *European Journal of Marketing* 39 (3/4): 309–327.

Haanpää, Minni. 2017. *Event Co-Creation as Choreography. Autoethnographic Study on Event Volunteer Knowing.* Rovaniemi: Lapland University Press.

Hansen, Mark. 2004a. *New Philosophy for New Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Hansen, Mark. 2004b. "The Time of Affect, or Bearing Witness to Life." *Critical Inquiry* 30: 584–626.

Haynes, Kathryn. 2011. "Tensions in (Re)Presenting the Self in Reflexive Autoethnographical Research." *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal* 6 (2): 134–149.

Heinonen, Kristina, Tore Strandik, Jacob Mickelsson, and Bo Edvarsson. 2010. "A Customer-Dominant Logic of Service." *Journal of Service Marketing* 21 (4): 531–548.

Heinonen, Kristina, and Tore Strandvik. 2015. "Customer-Dominant Logic: Foundations and Implications." *Journal of Services Marketing* 29 (6/7): 472–484.

Heinonen, Kristina., Tore Strandvik, and Päivi Voima. 2013. "Customer Dominant Value Formation in Service." *European Business Review* 25 (2): 104–123.

Helkkula, Anu. 2011. "Characterizing the Concept of Service Experience." *Journal of Service Management* 22 (3): 367–389.

Helkkula, Anu, Carol Kelleher, and Minna Pihlström. 2012. "Characterizing Value as an Experience: Implications for Service Researchers and Managers." *Journal of Service Research* 15 (1): 59–75.

Hewer, Paul, and Kathy Hamilton. 2010. "On Emotions and Salsa: Some Thoughts on Dancing to Rethink Consumers." *Journal of Consumer Behaviour* 9 (2): 113–125.

Hill, Tim, Robin Canniford, and Joeri Mol. 2014. "Non-Representational Marketing Theory." *Marketing Theory* 14 (4): 377–394.

Holbrook, Morris B., and Elizabeth C. Hirschman. 1982. "The Experiential Aspect of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings, and fun." *Journal of Consumer Research* 9 (2): 132–140.

Jaakkola, Elina, Anu Helkkula, and Leena Aarikka-Stenroos. 2015. "Service Experience Co-Creation: Conceptualization, Implications and Future Research Directions." *Journal of Service Management* 26 (2): 283–305.

Kirmayer, Laurence J. 2003. "Reflections on Embodiment." In *Social and Cultural Lives of Immune Systems*, edited by James M. Wilce Jr., 282–302. London: Routledge.

Kolb, David A., Richard E. Boyatzis, and Charalampos Mainemelis. 2001. "Experiential Learning Theory: Previous Research and New Directions." *Perspectives on Thinking, Learning, and Cognitive Styles* 1: 227–247.

Kuuru, Tiina-Kaisa, and Elina Närvänen. 2019. "Embodied Interaction in Customer Experience: A Phenomenological Study of Group Fitness." *Journal of Marketing Management* 35 (13-14): 1241–1266.

Law, John, and John Urry. 2011. "Enacting the Social." *Economy and Society* 3: 390–410.

Leledaki, Aspasia, and David Brown. 2009. "'Physicalisation': A Pedagogy of Body-Mind Cultivation for Liberation in Modern Yoga and Meditation Methods." *Asian Medicine* 4: 303–337.

Mangiarotti, Emanuele. 2019. "The Body of Yoga: A Feminist Perspective on Corporeal Boundaries in Contemporary Yoga Practice." *Journal of Art and Media Studies* 18: 79–88.

Mauss, Marcel. 1973. "Techniques of the Body." *Economy and Society* 2 (1): 70–88.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1962. *The Phenomenology of Perception*. London, NY: Routledge & K Paul.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1964. *Sense and Nonsense*. Translated by Hubert Dreufys and Patricia Dreufys. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Molander, Susanna. 2017. "Not Just a Mother: Embodied and Positional Aspects of Consumer Learning from a Practice Perspective." *Consumption Markets & Culture* 20 (2): 131–152.

Morley, James. 2001. "Inspiration and Expiration: Yoga Practice Through Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of the Body." *Philosophy East and West* 51 (1): 73–82.

Murphy, Stephen, Maurice Patterson, and Lisa O'Malley. 2019. "Learning How: Body Techniques, Skill Acquisition and the Consumption of Experience." *Marketing Theory* 19 (4): 425–445.

Nichter, Mark. 2008. "Coming to Our Senses: Appreciating the Sensorial in Medical Anthropology." *Transcultural Psychiatry* 45 (2): 163–197.

Roberts, Simon. 2020. *The Power of Not Thinking: How Our Bodies Learn and Why We Should Trust Them*. London: Blink Publishing.

Rudberg, Monica. 1997. "The Researching Body: The Epistemophilic Project." In *Embodied Practices: Feminist Perspectives on the Body*, edited by Kathy Davis, 182–201. London: Sage.

Sandberg, Jörgen, and Gloria Dall'Alba. 2009. "Returning to Practice Anew: A Life-World Perspective." *Organization Studies* 30 (12): 1349–1368.

Schmitt, Bernd. 1999. "Experiential Marketing." *Journal of Marketing Management* 15 (1-3): 53–67.

Scott, Rebecca, Julien Cayla, and Bernard Cova. 2017. "Selling Pain to the Saturated Self." *Journal of Consumer Research* 44: 22–43.

Scott, Rebecca, and Mark Uncles. 2018. "Bringing Sensory Anthropology to Consumer Research." *European Journal of Marketing* 52 (1/2): 302–327.

Steadman, Chloe, Emma Banister, and Dominic Medway. 2019. "Ma(r)King Memories: Exploring Embodied Processes of Remembering and Forgetting Temporal Experiences." *Consumption Markets & Culture* 22 (6): 1–17.

Stevens, Lorna, Pauline Maclaran, and Stephen Brown. 2019. "An Embodied Approach to Consumer Experiences: The Hollister Brandscape." *European Journal of Marketing* 53 (4): 806–828.

Strati, Antonio. 2007. "Sensible Knowledge and Practice-Based Learning." *Management Learning* 38 (1): 61–77.

Thanem, Torkild, and David Knights. 2019. *Embodied Research Methods*. London: SAGE.

Thompson, Craig J., William B. Locander, and Howard R. Pollio. 1989. "Research: The Philosophy and Method of Existential Phenomenology." *Journal of Consumer Research* 16 (2): 133–146.

Thompson, Craig J., and Tuba Üstüner. 2015. "Women Skating on the Edge: Marketplace Performances as Ideological Edgework." *Journal of Consumer Research* 42 (2): 235–265.

Tynan, Caroline, Sally McKechnie, and Stephanie Hartley. 2014. "Interpreting Value in the Customer Service Experience Using Customer-Dominant Logic." *Journal of Marketing Management* 30 (9-10): 1058–1081.

Valtonen, Anu. 2013. "Height Matters: Practicing Consumer Agency, Gender, and Body Politics." *Consumption, Markets & Culture* 16 (2): 196–221.

Valtonen, Anu, and Minni Haanpää. 2018. "The Body in Autoethnography in Multifaceted Autoethnography." In *Multifaceted Autoethnography: Theoretical Advancements, Practical Considerations and Field Illustrations*, edited by Henna Syrjälä, and Anu Norrgrann, 125–145. New York: Nova Science Publishers.

Valtonen, Anu, and Elina Närvänen. 2015. "Gendered Reading Body in the Bed." *Journal of Marketing Management* 31 (15-16): 1583–1601.

Vargo, Stephen L., and Robert F. Lusch. 2008. "Service-Dominant Logic: Continuing the Evolution." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 36 (1): 1–10.

Viotto, Marina H., Maria C. Zanette, and Eliane P. Z. Brito. 2020. "Looking Good or Feeling Good? The Dual Role of the Body in the Taste Transformation Process." *Consumption Markets and Culture* 24 (1): 54–74.

Viteritti, Assunta. 2013. "It's the Body (That Does It)! The Production of Knowledge Through Body in Scientific Learning Practice." *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 29: 367–376.

von Scheve, Christian. 2018. "A Social Relational Account of Affect." *European Journal of Social Theory* 21 (1): 39–59.

Woermann, Niklas, and Joonas Rokka. 2015. "Timeflow: How Consumption Practices Shape Consumers' Temporal Experiences." *Journal of Consumer Research* 41 (6): 1486–1508.

Yakhlef, Ali. 2010. "The Corporeality of Practice-Based Learning." *Organization Studies* 31 (4): 409–430.

Yakhlef, Ali. 2015. "Customer Experience Within Retail Environments: An Embodied, Spatial Approach." *Marketing Theory* 15 (4): 545–564.