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NEW PRODUCT LAUNCHES IN DEMAND CREATION THROUGH BETTER EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT

Master of Science Thesis

ABSTRACT

Competitive advantage can be gained and sustained by different factors. Since customers always have an experience when they acquire a product and use it, the role of experiences is nowadays becoming more important in the B2B context. Considering experience and its value, three different categories of experience can be distinguished: user experience (UX), customer experience (CX) and brand experience (BX). The objective of the thesis is to analyze experience as a source of competitive advantage. For this purpose, the viewpoint of increasing the demand outcome by emphasizing these aforementioned experiences in B2B new product launches is considered.

The main objective was approached with theoretical and empirical analysis. Regarding the theoretical analysis, a literature review was conducted in order to analyze experience as a source of competitive advantage in demand creation. As for the empirical analysis a case study approach was adopted and thus, four different representative product launch case studies in Finnish metal and engineering industry companies were studied. Four qualitative interviews were performed in order to obtain different views regarding the design and implementation of product launch strategies, launch tactics and the role experience (UX, CX and BX) played in them.

The results suggests that a proper management of the experiences a customer has when interacting with a firm can have a positive effect in enhancing the firm´s competitive advantage and therefore, in increasing the demand outcome when a product is released to the market. In addition, findings showed that launch strategies and tactics that took into account the experience factor turned out to be more successful. Within the B2B context, publicity and educational campaigns, shows and demonstrations, branding and pre-announcement were identified as most successful launch tactics in increasing the demand outcome.

PREFACE

Studying and living in Finland was a decision I made several years ago even before finishing my Bachelor's degree. During these two years I have learnt valuable knowledge and skills and thus, I am now completely sure it was the best choice I could make.

Writing this thesis was an enriching process through which I have been able to expand my knowledge. This process could not have been achieved without the help and advice of many people and therefore, I would like to express my gratitude within this preface to those that have given me the chance to work on this thesis and have supported me throughout the process. First, I would like to thank my supervisors Marko Seppänen and Hanna-Riikka Sundberg for their guidance, support, advice and for sharing their knowledge with me. Second, I would like to thank all case companies' representatives for their time and cooperation in this research.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their endless support and encouragement. A big thank you goes to my sister; life in Finland would not be as great as it is without you!

Tampere, 22nd of September 2015

Jennifer Catalina Vaquero

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ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTATION

BX   Brand experience

CX   Customer Experience

NPD   New Product Development

RBV   Resource-based View

UX   User Experience

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Strategy is a set of decisions and actions that managers make in order to attain superior company performance in comparison with competitors (Parthasarthy 2007). According to Chevalier-Roignant et al. (2012), the performance of a firm is determined by the strategy the firm formulates and implements and thus, a well-formulated and well-implemented strategy determines good firm performance.

Porter (1980) proposes that the essence of strategy formulation is dealing with competition. Therefore, it is crucial to define and analyze the industry in which a firm operates in order to formulate a competitive strategy. Porter (1997, 1980) developed a framework that takes into account five competitive forces (potential entrants, suppliers, buyers and substitutes) that shape the industry structure and determine the profit potential of an industry. The goal of competitive strategy formulation is to enable a firm operating within an industry to find a position in the industry where the firm can best cope with these competitive forces or influence them in its favor (Porter 1980). Competitive advantage is in general related to firms achieving superior performance. Therefore, firms aim at formulating a competitive strategy that enables them to get competitive advantage. Porter (1997) identified three generic strategies that firms may adopt in order to position themselves with respect to its competitors: cost leadership, differentiation and focus.

It is said that a firm has competitive advantage if it is able to create more economic value than its competitors (Peteraf & Barney 2003). Firms with superior competitive advantage will provide better value to its customers and will achieve superior performance. Therefore, those firms will be able to gain more market share.

Research in the field of strategic management has been mainly focused in understanding what are the sources for competitive advantage (Porter 1996; Hoskisson et al. 1999; Furrer 2008). Research has been done based on two perspectives (Grant 1991; Peteraf 1993; Barnet et al. 2001; Stieglitz & Heine 2007); On the one hand, sources of competitive advantage have been analyzed based on Porter´s five competitive forces perspective (Porter 1980, 1985) and on the other hand, the resource-based view (RBV) model (Barney 1991) has been used in order to analyze the firm´s tangible and intangible resources.

There are many sources of competitive advantage and thus, it can be gained and sustained by different factors. Since customers always have an experience when they acquire a product and use it, customer experience (CX), user experience (UX), and brand experience (BX) are nowadays becoming more important in the B2B context and many authors acknowledge it as a potential source of competitive advantage (Lindgreen et al. 2011; Väätäjä et al. 2014). UX is generally related to the user's perceptions when interacting and using a product (Sward 2007) whereas CX is related to the overall experience the customer has with a firm including all the interactions between the customer and the firm and its products (Csikszentmihalyi 2000; Pullman & Gross 2004; Ding et al. 2010). BX is concerned with the perception customers have of a firm (Brakus et al. 2009). By delivering superior experiences, firms can build a brand so that customers turn into advocates. Berry et. al (2002), highlights the importance of managing properly the customer's experiences so that they create value for customers.

When a new product is introduced to the market its success is highly dependent on the launch strategy and launch tactics applied. Launch strategy is defined as the decisions that need to be made in order to present a product to its target market (Choffray & Lilien 1984; Green et al. 1995; Green & Ryans 1990) and launch tactics refer to the actual actions performed to enhance compatibility to the target market (Guiltinan 1999). A proper launch execution can affect positively the firm's value (Bowersox 1995; Bowersox et al. 1999). Therefore, it is crucial to take into account the customers and the way they experience the product as well as their relationship with the firm when developing the launch strategy so that the demand is higher.

The present thesis analyzes experience as a source of competitive advantage that can help firms in B2B environments to increase demand when introducing new products to the market. A selection of representative product launch cases of metal and engineering industry companies are analyzed in order to extract and analyze the practices done in the product launch design and implementation and what can be learnt from these.

1.2. Research objectives

When launching a new product, both the marketing strategy and launch tactics defined for that certain product play a key role in determining the potential existing demand and hence the success of the product in the market. Hultink et al. (2000) studied different launch strategies and tactical launch decisions for successful consumer and industrial products pointing out the existing differences between B2C and B2B new product launches. The results of the study conducted by Hultink et al. (2000) suggest that launch decisions most regularly made by firms are not well aligned with factors that are usually

associated with higher success and higher demand outcome and thus, firms may need to improve its new product launch decisions.

As the role of experiences is becoming nowadays more important within the B2B environment, this thesis studies experience (UX, CX and BX) as a source of competitive advantage that can be utilized in developing the marketing strategy for a new product launch in B2B environment so that more market share can be gained. Hence, the main research question is:

> *What kinds of actions used in a new product launch can enhance the creation of demand in B2B environments?*

A sub-question to the above relates to the role of experiences:

> *What is the role of experience management in enhancing competitive advantage and increasing demand in B2B environments?*

In order to address the research question, four different representative product launch case studies on metal and engineering industry companies in Finland are studied. The design and implementation of the product launch strategy is analyzed in each case.

1.3.   Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter of the study introduces the topic and presents the research objectives and research questions as well as the structure of the thesis.

Chapter two contains the literature review which is divided into four subsections. First, competitive strategy and sources for competitive advantage are discussed. Second, literature regarding new product launch strategies and tactics is presented. Third, the value of experiences (user experience, customer experience and brand experience) within the B2B environment is described. Finally, a framework for utilizing experience as a source of competitive advantage in demand creation based on the previous literature is built.

Chapter three contains a description of the utilized research methods, research design, data collection methods as well as analysis procedures.

Chapter four presents the cases used in this study. Since four different new product launches have been analyzed, for each case a description of the company and selected product is provided.

After introducing the cases, the results of the research are described in Chapter five. In the discussion section within this chapter the empirical findings of each case are compared to each other and linked to the previous literature so that the research questions can be answered and conclusions can be made.

Finally, Chapter six presents the conclusions of the study. Figure 1 presents the structure of the thesis.

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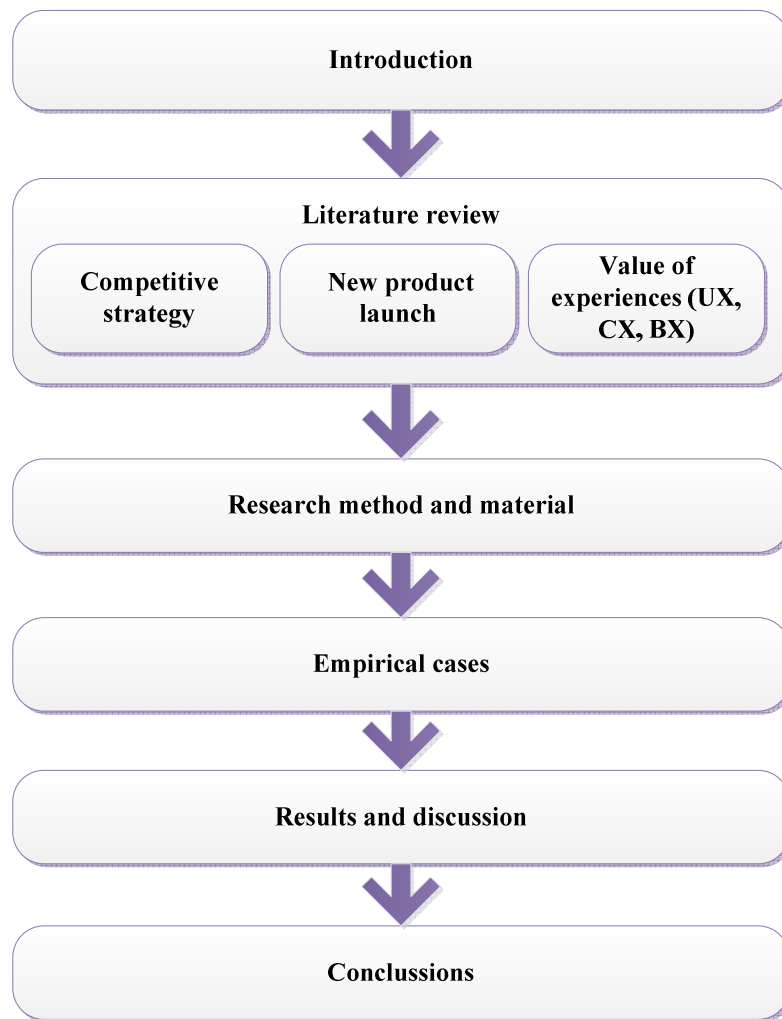
Figure 1. Structure of the thesis.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Competitive strategy

2.1.1. What is competitive strategy?

Strategy has been defined as the designation of the basic long-term goals and objectives of a firm, the adoption of actions, and the allocation of the necessary resources needed in order to carry out these goals (Chandler 1962). Andrews (1971) describes strategy as the pattern of objectives or goals and the plans or policies for achieving them. Hofer & Schendel (1978) view strategy as a means for an organization to achieve its objective. Mintzberg (1979) defines strategy as a plan containing a set of intended actions to be made in order to achieve a purpose. For Hax (1990) strategy is the attempt to achieve long-term sustainable advantage by responding appropriately to the environmental opportunities and threats as well as to the strengths and weaknesses of the firm. In addition, he considers strategy as a decision-making tool since he also defines strategy as a set of decisions made by a firm in order to select the businesses the organization operates in or it is considering entering. Rumelt (2012) defines strategy as a "*coherent set of analyses, concepts, policies, arguments, and actions that respond to a high-stakes challenge*".

According to Andrews (1971), there is a difference between formulating a strategy and implementing it since formulating requires analytic skills in order to diagnose the current status of the firm and the environment whereas administrative skills are required in order to implement the strategy. Therefore, Andrews states that formulating a strategy does not end when implementation begins and thus, formulation and implementation are processes that complement each other.

The strategy a firm formulates and its implementation will determine whether the firm will survive and will be successful in the marketplace or on the contrary it will become extinct (Chevalier-Roignant et al. 2012). It is crucial then for firms to formulate good strategies that clearly identify the strategic objectives as well as the existing challenges so that they are able to define the specific actions that are required in order to achieve the objectives and overcome the challenges.

Rumelt (2012) considers a good strategy is an action plan backed up by a clear and logical argument he calls 'the kernel'. The kernel is the center of the strategy. A strategy may contain different elements apart from the kernel; however, a good strategy must always contain the kernel. The kernel is formed by three elements: a diagnosis, a

guiding policy and a set of coherent actions. First, a diagnosis is needed in order to explain the nature of the challenge and identify the aspects of the existing situation that are critical as well as the possible obstacles. Second, the guiding policy consists of an overall approach to cope with the obstacles that were identified in the diagnosis. Finally, a set of coherent actions are required to carry out the guiding policy. The actions adopted should be consistent and coordinated. Grant (2005) identifies four requisites for a strategy to be successful: 1) the objective must be simple, agreed-upon and long-term- 2) a deep understanding of the competitive environment is needed, 3) the firm´s internal resources and capabilities must be objectively assessed, and 4) the strategy must be effectively implemented.

Porter (1997) argues that the key objective of strategy formulation is coping with competition and thus, the first step towards formulating a competitive strategy is to define and analyze the industry where a firm operates. For this purpose he proposes five forces on which the state of competition in an industry is dependent on. The strength of these forces altogether will determine the profit potential of an industry and thus, knowledge of these potential sources of competitive pressure will provide the basis for competitive strategy definition. (Porter 1997) Porter´s five forces model (Porter 1980) is shown in Figure 2.
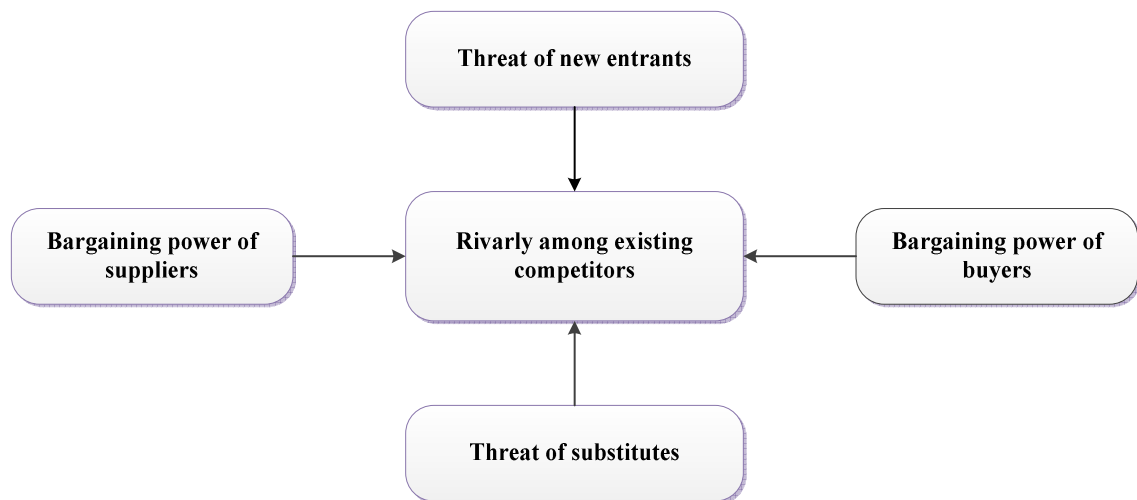

Figure 2. The forces that shape competition (adapted from Porter 2008, p.3).

First, threat of entry into an industry is highly dependent on the existing barriers to entry as well as the reaction of the existing competitors. The threat of entry is low if the barriers are high and/or if the existing competitors in the industry react rapidly to prevent the newcomer from entering the market.

Second, rivalry among existing competitors occurs because one or more competitors have the opportunity to improve its position and thus, that competitor may influence the intensity of competition within an industry. Different tactics such as price competition, advertising, product introductions, increased customer service or warranties are usually used within an industry by the existing competitors. It is important to point out that in most industries, any competitive move will be noticeable for the rest of competitors and thus, competitors will try to counter the move.

Third, threat of substitutes limits the potential returns of an industry since all firms in an industry are competing with other industries that offer substitute products. Therefore, the more appealing the price-performance alternative offered by competitors is the higher the threat of substitutes is.

Fourth, bargaining power of buyers determines the profit that a firm can extract from a product while meeting price and quality demand since buyers can have a direct impact on prices, quality of products and/or services offered if they are powerful enough to compete with the industry.

Finally, bargaining power of suppliers takes place because suppliers are able to bargain power over firms by raising prices or reducing quality. Therefore, suppliers can get profits from industries that are not able to recover cost increases.

According to Porter (2008), a strategy for enhancing a firm´s long-term profit can be developed if it is understood how each of the forces influence profitability in the industry. Firms need to position themselves and develop a strategy on how to perform and deal with competitors and thus, Porter suggests that a firm may position itself so that its capabilities ensure maximum protection against the competitive forces, in other words, where the competitive forces are weakest. Moreover, a firm may try to exploit changes in the forces in order to improve its position. Furthermore, a firm may aim to reshape the forces in its own favor by anticipating a factor that can change the influence of the competitive forces and responding to them before opponents. (Porter 2008)

According to Faulkner & Johnson (1992), strategy is concerned with the long-term objectives and scope of an organization. Strategy is also concerned with achieving competitive advantage that will be ideally sustainable over time (Faulkner & Johnson 1992). In this study, the definition of competitive strategy is based on Faulkner & Johnson's (1992) definition and thus, competitive strategy is defined as the long-term strategic goals of a firm. It is crucial for firms to formulate and execute strategies that will enable them to properly position themselves so that competitive advantage can be gained and consequently, the firm´s long-term objectives can be fulfilled.

2.1.2. What is competitive advantage?

Competitive advantage has been defined as firms being able to produce more economically and/or better satisfying customer needs through superior and more efficient resources (Peteraf 2003). Porter (1985) states that competitive advantage arises with the value a firm is able to create for its customers that exceeds the firm´s cost of creating it. Value refers to what customers are willing to pay and hence, superior value can be achieved by offering lower prices than competitors for equivalent benefits or by providing unique benefits that will justify a higher price. (Porter 1985)

Peteraf´s (2003) and Porter´s (1985) definition emphasize the importance of creating value for customers so that customer needs can be fulfilled while maintaining the firm´s costs lower. Therefore, both definitions consider competitive advantage as the ability of generating above-normal returns i.e. rents while offering value and satisfying customers' needs.

Peteraf & Barney´s (2003) definition of competitive advantage is also concerned with the creation of value. They consider that *"an enterprise has competitive advantage if it is able to create more economic value than the marginal (breakeven) competitor in its product market"* (Peteraf & Barney 2003). Value is defined as the difference between the perceived benefits customers gain by acquiring a good and the economic cost of producing that good to the enterprise (Peteraf & Barney 2003). According to this definition, it is possible that more than one firm has competitive advantage within a market and thus, the definition illustrates the possible existence of different levels of competitive advantage. It may be possible thus, that there are small or big differences in the economic value that a firm is able to create in comparison with its competitors.

According to Barney (1991), a firm has competitive advantage when it implements a value creating strategy that is not simultaneously implemented by any current or potential competitors. This definition stresses that competitive advantage may not only be achieved by the existing firms competing within a market but also by the possible competitors ready to enter the market.

Competitive advantage is defined in this study following Peteraf & Barney's (2003) definition and thus, a firm has competitive advantage when it is able to provide more value to its customers than of its competitors. Therefore, it is possible that more than one firm has competitive advantage within the same market.

2.1.2.1   Sources for competitive advantage

The major question in the field of strategic management is how firms achieve and sustain competitive advantage. Therefore, research in this field has been focused on understanding the sources of sustained competitive advantage for firms (Porter 1985;

Rumelt 1984; Furrer et al. 2008). Most research on sources of competitive advantage has studied either the firm's environment by isolating the firm´s opportunities and threats (Porter 1980, 1985; Grant 1991), the firm's core competencies (Bowen et al. 1994; Prahalad & Hamel 1990; Stalk et al. 1992) or how both are matched to choose strategies (Barney 1991, 1995; Peteraf & Barney 2003) as potential sources of competitive advantage.

Porter´s (1985) five forces model determines an industry structure and profitability and thus, defines the rules of competition within the industry. A deep understanding of the influence of each of the forces will enable firms to create competitive advantage by identifying or discovering new and better ways to compete in the industry if competitors either fail to perceive the new way of competition or are unable to respond (Porter 1985). This model regards firms can gain competitive advantage through one of the following generic strategies: cost leadership, differentiation or focus (Porter 1985). First, cost leadership involves providing the product or service to the customer at the lowest possible price. This type of strategy allows firms to adopt a defense position in the industry and thus, defend themselves against substitutes or new entrants. However, high initial costs will be incurred since firms may have to re-design or adapt their existing production processes. Second, differentiation involves developing a product or providing a service in a way that is different from what competitors offer. It may involve developing brand image or certain features of the product further so that customers can perceive superior added value. Finally, focus consists in targeting the product or service offered to a defined market segment providing exhaustive service to a certain buyer group. (Porter 1997)

Porter´s model is based on the assumptions that firms within an industry are identical in terms of resources and strategies they pursue (Porter 1981; Rumelt 1984) and that resources are highly mobile and thus, resource heterogeneity would not last long within an industry because strategies are highly mobile and thus, competitors will adopt the strategy that provides competitive advantage (Barney 1986a). Therefore, Porter´s model eliminates resource heterogeneity and immobility as potential sources of competitive advantage (Rumelt 1984).

The Resource-Based-View (RBV) emerged as a complement or dual to Porter´s theory of competitive advantage (Barney & Arikan 2001). Proponents of this theory (Treece et al. 1997; Hamel & Prahalad 1994) argue that the five competitive forces framework proposed by Porter is obsolete since the competitive environment has changed intensely over the past years. RBV focused on the firm resources that can be sources of competitive advantage within an industry (Barney 1995). Resources include all assets, capabilities, processes, knowledge, information, etc. that enable a firm to formulate and implement strategies that improve its efficiency, effectives and thus performance (Daft 1983). Therefore, this framework combines both, the internal (resources of the firm) and the external (industry structure and environment) perspectives on strategy.

According to Barney (1991) resources must contain the following attributes in order to have the potential of being a source of sustained competitive advantage. First, it must be valuable in a sense that it exploits opportunities and/or neutralizes threats within the firm´s environment. Second, it must be rare among the firm´s current and potential competitors. Third, it must be imperfectly imitable. Fourth, there cannot be strategically equivalent substitutes for this resource that are valuable but neither rare nor imperfectly imitable (Barney 1991).

Whereas Barney focuses on internal resources as sources of competitive advantage, other scholars (Prahalad & Hamel 1990; Barnes 2001) focus on core competences and argue that competitive advantage can be found in firm´s core capabilities. Barnes (2001) proposes that success depends on the anticipation of market trends and fast response to changes in customers´ needs and thus, it is crucial for firms to develop hard-to-imitate capabilities that enable them to distinguish from its competitors (Barnes 2001).

Prahalad & Hamel (1990) define core capabilities as *"the collective learning in the organization especially how to coordinate diverse production skills and integrate multiple streams of technology"*. Moreover, Prahalad & Hamel (1990) also consider communication, involvement and commitment as a core competence that involve different levels of people and functions. Core capability has also been described as a set of business processes that are strategically understood (Stalk et al. 1992; Barnes 2001) since every firm has different business processes that deliver value to its customers and hence those processes should be considered the primary object of strategy in order to achieve competitive advantage. However, in order to provide competitive advantage capabilities must be nurtured and protected within a firm (Prahalad & Hamel 1990), otherwise core capabilities can become core rigidities if they limit rather than facilitate the firm´s potential progress (Bowen et al. 1994).

2.2. New product launch and demand creation

2.2.1. New product launch

New product development (NPD) is the process of bringing a new product to the market. Therefore, it involves the activities carried out by firms when developing and launching new products (Bhuiyan 2011). NPD consists on different stages, and thus many researchers have tried to develop a model that captures these relevant stages (Scheuing 1974; Crawford 1993; Cooper 2001; Wind 2001; Ulrich & Eppinger 2011).

Booz, Allen and Hamilton (1982) developed a model, also known as the BAH model, which comprises all the basic stages of the different models found in the literature. The BAH model stages are: 1) new product strategy, 2) idea generation, 3) screening, 4) business analysis development, 5) testing and 6) commercialization (Booz et al. 1982).

Cooper & Kleinschmidt (1990) defined commercialization as trial production and selling, production startup, and market launch. Therefore, the new product launch stage takes place within the commercialization stage of the NPD process as illustrated in Figure 3.
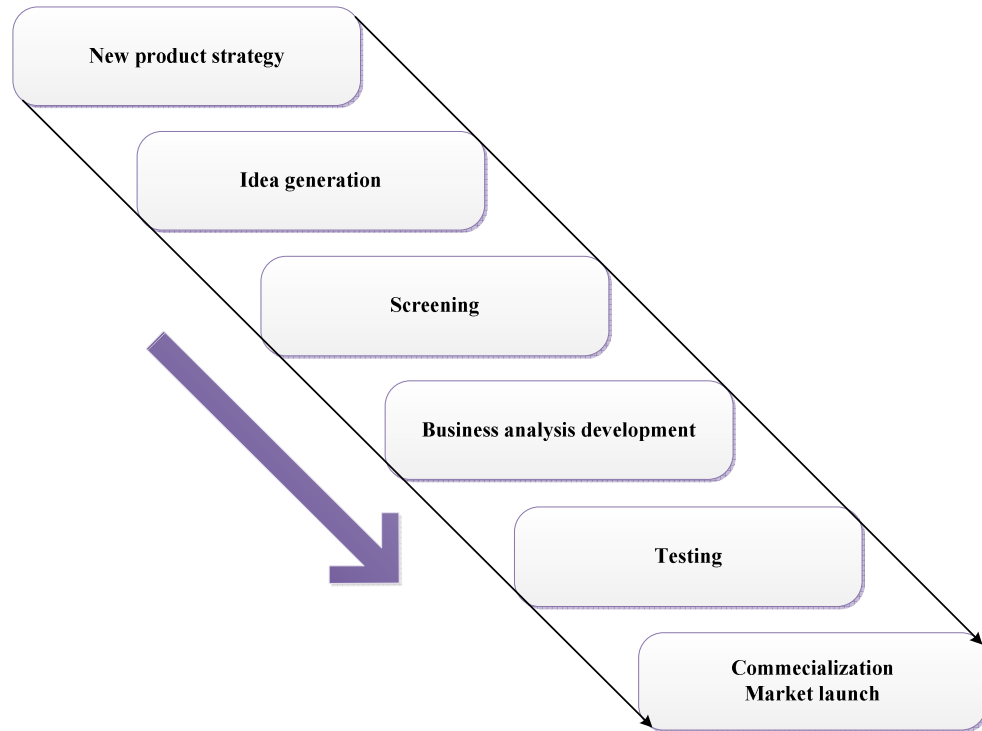
Figure 3. New product development process (adapted from Booz et al. 1982).

In this study, NPD is defined as the process of developing and bringing a new product to the market. The stages considered within the mentioned process are the ones proposed by Booz et al. (1982).

Product launch refers to the physical positioning of a product in the marketplace (Bowersox et al. 1999) and as a result in this stage of the NPD process the market can experience the product for the first time (Beard & Easingwood 1996). However, launching a new product is not a single event but a process that involves several planning and tasks and thus adequate research and strategic planning must be done before offering a new product to customers. Hence, Calantone et al. (2011) considered launch execution as selling, advertising, promoting and offering technical support for the product at the time of launch. Moreover, product availability and distribution as well as price level at launch is included in their definition. According to Cooper (1983) product launch stage is concerned with the startup of commercial production and the implementation of the marketing plan previously designed in the market area.

New product launch is often the most expensive (Calantone et al. 2011), time consuming and risky stage of the overall NPD process (Bowersox et al. 1999; Hultink et al. 1997). It usually requires the largest commitment in managerial resources (Hultink et al. 1997; Urban & Hauser 1993) and the cost incurred during this phase can very often exceed the expenditures in all the previous development stages (Urban & Hauser 1993; Hultink et al. 1997; Guiltinan 1999; Beard & Easingwood 1996).

Since product launch is a costly and highly resource demanding phase it plays a key role within the process of bringing a new product to the market. Mistakes, miscalculations, and oversights during this phase can represent a serious obstacle to the success of the new product (Bowersox et al. 1999). Therefore, the strategy to be followed and the actions that are going to be executed need to be carefully planned and performed in order to ensure the successful launch of the product and eventually the success of the product in the market.

Another important factor that must be taken into account is the evaluation and control of the launch (Earle & Anderson 2001). Following a product launch and analyzing the different decisions made and actions performed is crucial for a firm in other to assess the degree of effectiveness of the launch and well as to assess how well the product has been received by customers.

2.2.1.1   New product launch strategy

The role of the launch stage in a typical NPD process is to maximize the chances of success and thus profitability of a new product by achieving acceptance in the target market (Guiltinan 1999). Therefore, a launch plan including different types of strategic decisions needs to be made prior to the actual launching of the product. Launch strategy is described in the literature as the decisions that need to be made and the actions that need to be performed in order to introduce and present a product to its target market and generate income from sales of that product (Choffray & Lilien 1984; Green et al. 1995; Green & Ryans 1990). Hultink & Schoormans (1995) take a more generic approach and define launch strategy as a combination of launch tactics.

Research on launch strategy has identified four strategic issues that must be addressed when developing a new product launch strategy: *what*, *where*, *when* and *how* to launch (Beard & Easingwood 1996; Song & Parry 1997; Hultink et al. 1997). Management needs to make several decisions regarding the activities that will be performed in order to address the previously mentioned strategic issues. The sum of these decisions is crucial to the new product success (Bowersox et al. 1999; Yoon & Lilien 1985; Choffray & Lilien 1986). In order to address these four strategic issues, two categories of launch decisions have been identified in the literature that examines product launch:

strategic and tactical launch decisions (Hultink et al. 1997; Bowersox et al. 1999; di Benedetto 1999).

Strategic launch decisions are usually made in the early stages of the NPD process (di Benedetto 1999). Even though these decisions are agreed on well in advance before the launch takes place, they set the strategic context into which the product will be launched and thus should be considered as part of the launch strategy of the product (Hultink et al. 1997). Strategic launch decisions define the *what*, *where*, and *when* to launch (Hultink et al. 1997). Therefore, these types of decisions are usually concerned with the product itself, i.e innovativeness or newness of the product, and with the market, i.e. target market characteristics.

Tactical launch decisions can be easily modified in the later stages of the NPD process (di Benedetto 1999) and are generally concerned with marketing decisions and thus involve marketing mix adjustments (Hultink et al. 1997). These decisions govern the *how* of the launch (Hultink et al. 1997) since they determine the specific characteristics of product launch by defining the product, price, promotion and place so that market goals can be achieved (Bowersox et al. 1999). In addition, according to di Benedetto (1999), tactical launch decisions can be strongly influenced by the strategic decisions that have already been made.

Several categories of strategic and tactical launch decisions have been proposed. Hultink et al. (1997) presented a rigorous identification of the launch strategy decisions categories by reviewing the previous launch literature in the topic. In this model product strategy, market strategy, competitive strategy and firm strategy were identified as categories of strategic launch decisions and the marketing mix elements (pricing, product and branding, advertising and promotion and distribution) were identified as categories of tactical launch decisions. Moreover, the timing of the launch as a tactical launch decision was added to the previously described framework. Table1 presents different launch strategy variables included in different studies.

Table 1. *Key decisions in launching a new product.*

Key new product launch decisions	Source
Strategic launch decisions	
Product strategy	(Choffray & Lilien 1984; Green and Ryans 1990; Hultink & Schoormans 1995; Hultink et al. 1997)
Market strategy	(Hultink et al. 1997)
Competitive strategy	(Hultink et al. 1997)
Firm strategy	(Hultink et al. 1997)
Tactical launch decisions	
Pricing	(Choffray & Lilien 1984; Hultink & Schoormans 1995; Hultink et al. 1997)
Product	(Green & Ryans 1990; Hultink & Schoormans 1995; Hultink et al. 1997)
Advertising and promotion	(Green & Ryans 1990; Hultink & Schoormans

	1995; Hultink et al. 1997)
Distribution	(Choffray & Lilien 1984; Hultink et al. 1997)
Timing	(Choffray & Lilien 1984; Green & Ryans 1990; Guiltinan 1999)

Hultink et al. (1997) state that it is necessary to consider categories that capture both strategic and tactical aspects of launch decisions when developing a launch strategy since both influence the outcome of the overall launch and thus are crucial in determining the success or failure of a new product.

2.2.2. New product launch and demand outcomes

A key objective of planning a launch strategy is to achieve a greater demand. Therefore, firms must develop products that add value to its customers and can thus achieve acceptance and adoption within the market. Guiltinan (1999) suggests that since launch planning aims at stimulating demand the selection of launch activities are dependent on the type of buying behavior to be influenced.

Based on the distinctions in terms of the type of demand a launch plan must influence due to the product's newness and innovativeness, Guiltinan (1999) distinguishes three different types of buying behavior: trial and repurchase, customer migration, and innovation adoption and diffusion. Table 1 presents each type of buying behavior as well as the type of demand to be influenced.

Table 2. Demand outcomes based on buying behavior. (Adapted from Guiltinan 1999).

Demand outcome	Type of product	Type of demand
Trial and repurchase	New product or line addition in existing market	Emphasis on selective demand
Customer migration	Product improvement	Emphasis on replacement demand
Innovation adoption and diffusion	New-to-the-world product	Emphasis on primary demand, adoption and diffusion

The choice of demand outcome depends on the relationship between the new product and the customers (Earle & Anderson 2001). Trial and repurchase is related to products that are not very new to the market and thus the adoption decision is made without extensive thought or deliberation (Guiltinan 1999). Since the product is already known by customers or is a substitute of an existing one and thus has similar features and can be used for similar purposes, customers will more easily make a trial purchase first and

consecutive repurchases after. According to Guiltinan (1999) the level of trial a firm can achieve depends highly on the promotional methods, i.e. advertising, that help the firm to develop brand awareness and on the product availability. Customer migration aims at customer changing or adopting the new product since it represents a significant improvement or change. The significant improvement or change is related either to an improvement in the price/performance of an existing product or to an upgrade of the product that replaces an existing offering (Guiltinan 1999). Thus, the new product provides more value to customers than competitor's products do and hence can replace them (Earle & Anderson 2001). Guiltinan (1999) proposes that the launch plan for this type of buying behavior should be concerned with creating discontinuance. Innovation adoption and diffusion is related to products that are new to the consumers and to the market (Earle & Anderson 2001). This type of buying behavior follows the product diffusion cycle. However, the diffusion curve can vary greatly since there may be variations based on the relationship between the product adoption and customers (Earle & Anderson 2001) and on the product characteristics (Rogers 1995; Guiltinan 1999). Earle & Anderson (2001) affirm that launch tactics can affect the diffusion and adoption of the product and thus, promotion and advertising are crucial so that customers are aware of the existence of the product. Guiltinan (1999) recognizes the importance of word-of-mouth in order to achieve adoption.

In order to achieve a greater demand firms need to develop products which diffusion and acceptance in the market is relatively easy. Therefore, the faster the diffusion and acceptance of a product within a market is, the more chances for an increased demand are. Guiltinan (1999) identifies the particular features and relative innovativeness of a product as the determinants of the product relative advantage and compatibility. Both strategic and tactical launch decisions influence the perception of relative advantage and compatibility and thus it is important that these decisions are made carefully so that customers realize the features or benefits offered by the product because otherwise the relative advantage of the product remains low (Guiltinan 1999).

The desired demand outcomes of the new product launch set the basis for defining the strategy and the activities while the actual launch will determine the sales (Earle & Anderson 2001). According to Guiltinan (1999), the degree to which the product and the launch activities meet the requirements of the target market in terms of relative advantage and compatibility will determine the probability of achieving the desired demand outcomes.

2.2.2.1   New product launch tactics in demand creation

According to Guiltinan (1999), launch tactics are *"the decisions and activities used to clarify or leverage relative advantage and to demonstrate or enhance compatibility to the target market"*. Therefore, launch tactics are concerned with the actual actions or

activities performed by a firm in order to realize its launch strategy. The literature has identified several categories of launch tactics that are shown in Table 2.

Table 3. *Categories of launch tactics.*

Launch tactic	Source
Promotion	
Advertising	(Hultink et al. 1997; Guiltinan 1999; di Benedetto 1999; Calantone et al. 2011)
Publicity / Educational campaigns	(Guiltinan 1999)
Reference test sites	(Guiltinan 1999)
Distribution and sales	
Shows and demonstrations	(Guiltinan 1999; Hultink et al. 2000)
Technical support	(Guiltinan 1999; di Benedetto 1999; Calantone et al. 2011)
Distribution channels	(Guiltinan 1999; Hultink et al. 1999; Chiu et al. 2006)
Product availability	(Hultink et al. 1997; Guiltinan 1999; Calantone et al. 2011)
Sales force effort	(Hultink et al. 1997; di Benedetto 1999)
Pricing	
Price strategy	(Guiltinan 1999; Hultink et al. 1999; Hultink et al. 2000; Chiu et al. 2006)
Price level	(di Benedetto 1999; Guiltinan 1999; Hultink et al. 2000; Calantone et al. 2011)
Product	
Branding	(Guiltinan 1999; Hultink et al. 1999; Hultink et al. 2000; Chiu et al. 2006)
Breadth of assortment	(Guiltinan 1999; Hultink et al. 1999; Hultink et al. 2000; Chiu et al. 2006; Lambkin 1988)
Timing	
Deletion of old products	(Guiltinan 1999)
Pre-announcement	(Guiltinan 1999)

The overall choice of tactics and its implementation will have an impact on the expectations of the value the new product offers and thus will have a direct impact on the new product demand and success. Table 3 illustrates how the previously identified launch tactics can influence the demand outcomes.

Table 4. *Launch tactics impact on demand outcomes.*

Launch tactic	Impact on demand outcomes
Promotion	
Advertising	Advertisement is used to create awareness and it is most effective when it leads to customers trying the product (Rogers 1995). It can take multiple forms such as media (TV, radio, printed) advertisement (Hultink et al. 1998, 2000), coupons (Guiltinan 1999) or samples (Guiltinan 1999). Media advertisement can be useful to create

awareness so that the product reaches a wider audience. Also, coupons are beneficial to strengthen awareness (Reina 1995). Samples enable customers to test the product before buying decision and thus, it is beneficial when the product advantage is better perceived by testing. Samples can accelerate the product adoption in the marketplace (Heiman & Muller 1996). In addition, internet can be used to complement traditional advertising and promotion tools (Mohr et al. 2005).

Publicity / Educational campaigns	It can be used as a means of 'educating' a certain market that is not aware of the product's existence or its benefits. Lectures, seminars, and roadshows can be used to build awareness (Beard & Easinwood 1996). Moreover, maintaining good relations with the media is very important in order to nurture a positive image and thus, high-technology firms should not ignore the value that can be achieved by maintaining a positive public image (Mohr et al. 2005).
Reference test sites	They are a common means of communicating the product benefits to the customers. It significantly increases the trial of the product and can be used as references for other potential buyers (Beard & Easinwood 1996).

Distribution and sales

Shows and demonstrations	Trade shows and demonstrations can be used as a means of promotion or as a complement to other promotion activities. They can enhance the corporate image of the firm and are beneficial for clarifying product's features so that the customers can better perceive the value (Gopalakrishna & Lilien 1995).
Technical support	Providing technical support to customers reduce possible compatibility problems. In addition, it supports customization (Althaide et al. 1996).
Distribution channels	They must ensure the product availability and must fit to the market's buying behavior (Hultink et al. 2000). Direct channels support product information sharing, customization, and quality assurance. Indirect channels support assortment and availability. (Rangan et al. 1992) Effective distribution channels allow firms to identify redundancies and inefficiencies, to develop relationships and alliances with key players and to achieve cost advantages as well as better customer satisfaction (Mohr et al. 2005).
Product availability	Product availability must be ensured at the launch time in order to increase the chances of a successful launch and demand outcomes. Therefore, sufficient inventory must be available (Calantone et al. 2011).
Sales force effort	If well-trained, sales force can increase the product's competitive advantage that customers perceive (di Benedetto 1999) and hence, the product success and demand.

Pricing

Price strategy	It depends on the scale of entry. When entry scale is small, skimming is recommended and when entry scale is large, penetration is preferred (Hultink et. al 2000). According to Mohr et al. (2005) the pricing strategy in high-technology environments is affected by ever-shortening product life cycles, customer's perceptions of the cost/benefit of the new technology or product and competition.
Price level	Since the price level is usually an indicator of product quality and benefits for customers and thus reflects the product's competitive position, a high price is usually related with highly innovative products (Hultink et al. 2000). If the product is launched into a market with many competitors, the price should be lower.
Product	
Branding	Brand enhances the chances of trial and thus helps to achieve product's acceptance within the market. Moreover, brand can influence demand by creating an appealing image of the product and the firm (Sullivan 1998).
Breadth of assortment	Facilitates the customization of new industrial products (Hultink et al. 1997) as well as new product categories introduction (Lambkin 1988).
Timing	
Deletion of old products	Slow deletion is recommended for substitute products that do not provide a strong relative advantage. On the contrary, new products with high relative advantage will facilitate fast deletion of old products. (Guiltinan 1999)
Pre-announcement	Builds expectation around the new product launch and enhances the awareness so that more customers are aware of the launching. Also, builds acceptance for the new product or technology and allows customers to learn about the new product use or new technology (Eliashberg & Thomas 1988; Robertson et al. 1995). Pre-announcements can also be used as a means of stimulating demand. By developing word of mouth and opinion leader support, pre-announcements can accelerate the adoption and diffusion of the innovation when the new product is released to the market (Mohr et al. 2005). Pre-announcements can be also utilized in order to stimulate the demand of complement products (Lilly & Walters 1997).

2.2.3. New product launch success and failure

Several studies (Cooper 1979, 1980, 1983; Calantone & di Benedetto 1988) have shown that a well-designed and consistent product launch can significantly improve the chances of success of the product. Green et al. (1995) argue that launch strategies that receive execution support in terms of resources affect positively the product

performance within the marketplace. According to di Benedetto (1999), successful new product launches were related to superior skills in marketing research, sales force, distribution, promotion, R&D, and engineering. Therefore, both technical and marketing resources of a firm are important factors in determining a new product launch success or failure.

According to di Benedetto (1999) a marketing strategy that defines the target market, positioning and marketing mix has to be clearly planned and developed prior to the product launch. It must contain statements in order to control the launch and its timing as well as possible competitive responses. In addition, all elements of the marketing mix have to be taken into account in developing the marketing strategy and planning the launch activities (di Benedetto 1999). Otherwise the launch strategy may be incomplete or inadequate in relationship with the target market leading to a product launch failure. Therefore, marketing skills must be carefully evaluated in order to determine whether they are adequate or not. Guiltinan (1999) suggests that marketing should be coordinated with the rest of stages of development and thus, even though the actual launch takes place at the end of the NPD process, marketing strategy and launch planning should be developed in parallel with product development and testing.

In addition, it has been previously studied the relationship between NPD performance and different tactical launch elements. For example, it has been shown that NPD performance is expected to be higher when the effort put in advertising is higher (Lambkin 1988; Yoon & Lilien 1985), the relative price is lower (Biggadike 1979; Choffray & Lilien 1984; Lambkin 1988), and the relative breadth of product assortment is broader (Biggadike 1979; Lambkin 1988; Hultink et al. 2000).

Regarding the relationship of strategic launch decisions and new product launch success, Hultink et al. (2000) pointed out that product innovativeness and newness are associated with more success and thus, if the new product that is going to be launched is more innovative and/or provides more value than of its competitors, the chances of success are higher. In addition, it contributes to enhancing the firm's image within an existing market (Hultink et al. 2000). Moreover, in the B2B context, successful products are usually developed in shorter life cycles and introduced into markets which have a higher growth rate (Hultink et. al 2000).

Also the timing of the launch plays a key role in determining whether the new product succeeds in the market or not. Timing is related to the moment when the launch takes place from the point of view of the firm, the customers and the competition (di Benedetto 1999). Several studies (Crawford 1977; Lilien & Yoon 1990; Ali et al. 1995; Green et al. 1995; di Benedetto 1999) have demonstrated the relationship between launch timing, product performance and success rate. Di Benedetto (1999) proposes that with a better understanding of launch timing, firms can take steps in order to control the factors that may affect negatively to future product launches.

Logistics and inventory strategy have also an important influence in new product success or failure. By integrating the logistics function with marketing, manufacturing and operations, firms can enhance their ability to handle the new product demand by managing uncertainties and making adjustments when necessary (di Benedetto 1999). Therefore, a correct and efficient logistics and inventory management can maximize the chances of a successful new product launch.

Finally, information-gathering activities such as market research, market testing, or customer feedback have been proved to be very important to successful launches (di Benedetto 1999) since they support both strategic and tactical launch activities and thus, the information gathered can be very beneficial in order to design a successful launch strategy.

2.3.   The value of experiences

2.3.1.   Introduction to experiences

Conventionally, marketing activities have been focused on examining the characteristics of products and services in order to achieve success in the marketplace. Later, the emphasis of marketing activities shifted to creating value for customers (e.g. Woodruff 1997; Butz & Goodstein 1996; Clutterbuck & Goldsmith 1998) and more recently, many scholars have put a stronger focus on the customer and thus affirm that creating engaging and lasting experiences for customers can be a main source of competitive advantage (Carbone 1988; Pine & Gilmore 1998; Berry et al. 2000; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2000; Wyner 2000; Gilmore & Pine 2002).

Berry et al. (2002) state that whenever a customer purchases a product or acquire a service from a firm, he or she will have an experience – good, bad or indifferent and thus, firms must manage these experiences effectively since the way a customer experiences a service or product will have an impact on how the customer feels about the firm and in the customer's future behavior (Laiming & Mason 2014). Therefore, firms need to provide experiences that lead to customer satisfaction (Pine & Gilmore 1998) since firms that success in providing an engaging experience to its customers will more likely be able to achieve customer loyalty. It is crucial then for firms to put effort into understanding the type of experiences customers find valuable.

When addressing experiences, three different categories must be distinguished: user experience (UX), customer experience (CX) and brand experience (BX). UX is a concept that originated from usability research in the field of human-computer interaction (HCI) in the late 1970s. UX is focused in the design, development, and evaluation of a technology as well as in the interaction with it (Väätäjä et al. 2014) whereas CX includes the set of interactions between a customer and a product, a

company or part of it, which provoke a reaction (Shaw & Ivens 2002; LaSalle & Britton 2003). Therefore, a distinction between UX and CX is important because, even though both definitions have many similarities, these two concepts should not be treated as synonyms (Reichelt 2012). UX has a more product-oriented focus (Bargas-Avila & Hornbæk 2011) and thus, it emphasizes the experience the user has when interacting with the system (Hassenzahl 2003; ISO 9241-210 2010) while CX is focused on the experiences and response customers have when they establish a direct or indirect contact with a firm (Meyer & Schwager 2007). Hence, UX can be seen as a factor that shapes and enhances the overall CX.

Many scholars remark that brand experience is closely related to customer experience (Berry 2000; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004; de Chernatony 2006; Sandström et al. 2008). This can be inferred from de Chernatony's (2006) brand definition as *"a cluster of functional and emotional values, which promise a unique and welcome experience"*. Therefore, it is important that customer experience is consistently delivered upon the brand promise of the firm (Clatworthy 2012). Laiming & Maison (2014) state that the purpose of customer experience is to drive brand success and thus firms need to create a brand-based customer experience that differentiate from competitors'. Hence, CX shapes the overall perception a customer has of a brand.

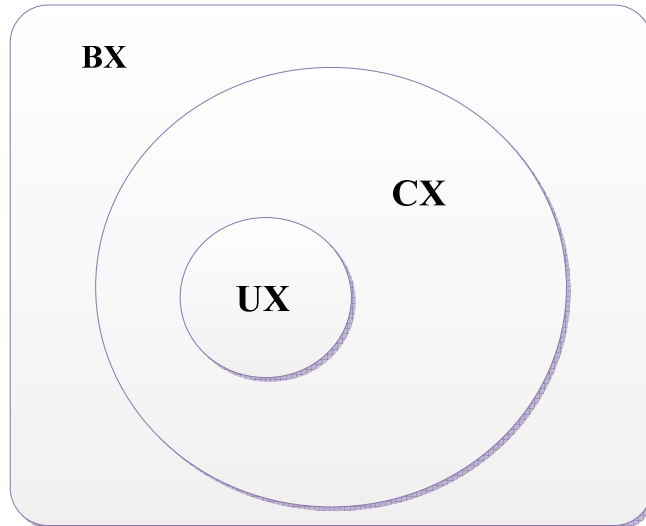Figure 4 shows how UX, CX and BX are related.

Figure 4. UX,CX, and BX relationship.

The following sections focus on defining UX, CX and BX and demonstrating its importance in adding competitive advantage to businesses.

2.3.1.1   User experience

There have been difficulties in gaining a common agreement on the nature and scope of UX despite of its growing interest (Law et al. 2009). In fact, as stated by Law et al. (2009), there is a broad range of variables within the UX research which are included or excluded depending on the author's background and interest. Therefore, it is difficult to get a universal definition of UX. According to Law et al. (2008), *"UX is seen as something desirable, though what exactly something means remains open and debatable"*. One of the reasons for this is that the landscape of UX research is fragmented by diverse theoretical models focusing on different aspects such as pragmatism, emotion, affect, experience, value, hedonic quality, etc. (Karat 1997; Forlizzi & Ford 2000; Lockwood 2009; Karapanos et al. 2010).

Alben (1996) defined experience as the way an interactive product feels in user's hands, how well users understand how the product works, how they feel while they are using it, how well the product serves their purposes, and how well the product fits into the entire context of use. This definition gives concrete examples of the qualities of user experience since all aspects of how users use an interactive product are taken into account.

In an attempt of reaching a more unified definition of UX, The International Organization for Standardization, ISO, defined the term as a *"person's perceptions and responses resulting from the use and/or anticipated use of a product, system or service"* (ISO 9241-210 2010). This definition includes the following aspects:

- User experience includes all the user's emotions, beliefs, preferences, perceptions, physical and psychological responses, behaviors and accomplishments that occur before, during and after use.

- User experience is a consequence of brand image, presentation, functionality, system performance, interactive behavior and assistive capabilities of the interactive system, the user's internal and physical state resulting from prior experiences, attitudes, skills and personality, and the context of use.

- Usability, when interpreted from the perspective of the user's personal goals, can include the kind of perceptual and emotional aspects typically associated with user experience. Usability criteria can be used to assess aspects of user experience.

The previous definitions emphasizes that UX is affected by the user's skills, beliefs, and previous experiences that take place before, during, and after the use of a product. In accordance to this, Bevan (2009) remarks the importance of achieving improved UX over the whole lifecycle of user involvement with the product and thus, the author puts emphasis on the importance of methods that help to understand what can be done in

order to improve UX through the whole lifecycle of user involvement. In addition, UX is highly context-dependent. Hassenzahl & Tractinsky (2006) consider UX a consequence of the context or environment within which the interaction occurs combined with the user's internal state and the characteristics of the designed system.

In this study, the definition of UX provided by The International Organization for Standardization (ISO 9241-210 2010) is used emphasizing that UX is affected by different factors such as user's skills and previous experience regarding the used product.

Understanding experience is a critical issue. Therefore, in order to understand experience and the user experience that results from interacting with products, research activities focused on the interactions between people and products as well as the experience that results from that interaction is needed (Forlizzi & Battarbee 2004). However, it has been discussed whether it is possible to design user experience or not. According to Hassenzahl (2001), there may be differences in how designers think of a product and how the users perceive it as the correspondence of intended and perceived quality of a product can be low (Kurosu & Kashimura 1995). Therefore, UX is not only concerned with the final design of a product but with the way the use of the product is experienced by the user. It is crucial then, to understand the user's needs and expectations as well as their influence in the user experience. Utilizing a user-centered model can help the designers to understand the users who will use the products in a work context (Forlizzi & Battarbee 2004). By correctly understanding how a product is used and the aspects that can lead to a positive or negative experience, it is possible to create products that provide a good experience.

Designing experiences and developing products that provide better UX requires the involvement of various stakeholders. User participation is extremely important so that user's needs and expectations can be understood and taken into account in the product development. Gulliksen et al. (2003) consider active user participation throughout the project, in analysis, design, development and evaluation as one of the most important principles in user-centered system design. Regarding the skills of the involved users, Gulliksen et al. (2003) distinguish work domain experts that are involved continuously through the development project and actual end-users in order to evaluate the design results.

UX can be a source of advantage to businesses. The business benefits of UX have been studied in both B2C and B2B context (eg. Mayhew 1994; Schaffer 2004; Garett 2006; Keefer 2009; Lindgreen et al. 2011; Väätäjä et al. 2014). However, the specific benefits UX may provide vary widely within the literature. According to Mayhew (1994), effective UX can result in reduced training time, better system acceptance, savings in support costs and development costs, and improved efficiency of users' work. Garett (2006) argues that products that provide users with good UX can lead to increasing

customer loyalty. Keefer (2009) adds that by incorporating UX into the engineering and development process, firms can decrease development costs and increase sales. Moreover, focusing on the final product delivered to the user, Schaffer (2004) states that products that are usable and satisfying to operate may have a positive impact on sales or enrollment and may also have an impact on the customer's behavior leading to willingness to pay fees or larger number of items purchased.

UX can also be seen as a source of product/service innovation that can lead to an advantage in competition (Lindgreen et al. 2011). Providing customers an improved offering with better UX can lead to greater perceived value by the customer (Väätäjä et al. 2014) and thus, enhance the overall position of the firm within the marketplace.

2.3.1.2 Customer experience

As it was previously mentioned, while UX is more product-oriented and thus is mainly focused on the interaction between a user and a product, CX takes a wider approach and is concerned with the overall interaction with a firm and its products or services. Hence, customer experience is defined as the user's interpretation of his or her total interaction with the brand (Frow & Payne 2007) and thus CX originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of it, which provoke a reaction (LaSalle and Britton 2003; Shaw & Ivens 2005).

Dhebar (2013) defines customer touchpoints as the *"points of human, product, service, communication, spatial, and electronic interaction collectively constituting the interface between an enterprise and its customers over the course of customers' experience cycles"*. Therefore, firms need to ensure that the customer experience is consistent and reinforces the enterprise's value promise at every stage or touchpoint within the customer experience cycle (Dhebar 2013). Meyer & Schwager (2007) also remark the importance of customer touchpoints in their definition of CX as they consider that customer experience involves every aspect of the company's offering such as the quality of customer care, advertising, packaging, product and service features, ease of use or reliability of the product and thus, customer experience is defined as the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company. In addition, Shaw & Ivens (2005) define customer experience as a *"blend of a company's physical performance and the emotions evoked, intuitively measured against customer expectations across all moments of contacts"* and they emphasize that customer experience should be supported in every ´moment of contact´ or customer touchpoint. Therefore, the customer experience cycle can be broken down in different stages as shown in Figure 5 covering all the different phases from decision-making whether to purchase or not a product to the post-experience when the product has been purchased and tested.
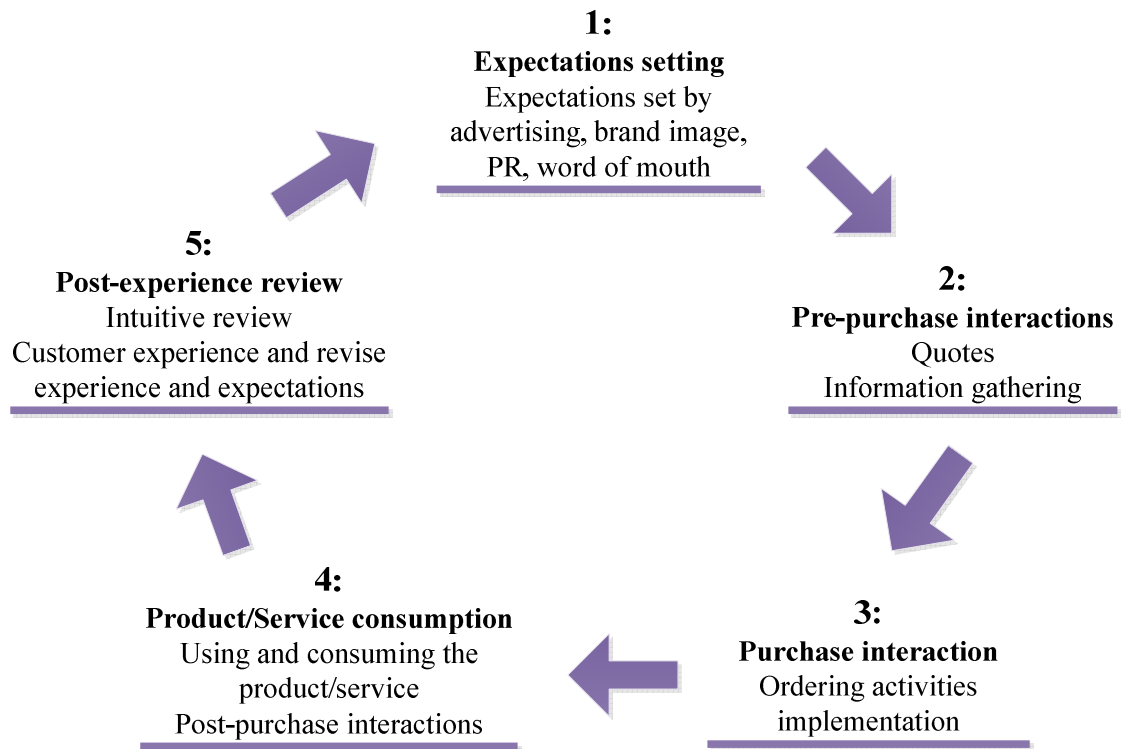
1:
Expectations setting
Expectations set by
advertising, brand image,
PR, word of mouth

5:
Post-experience review
Intuitive review
Customer experience and revise
experience and expectations

2:
Pre-purchase interactions
Quotes
Information gathering

4:
Product/Service consumption
Using and consuming the
product/service
Post-purchase interactions

3:
Purchase interaction
Ordering activities
implementation

Figure 5. Stages of customer experience (Adapted from Shaw & Ivens 2005).

Since every customer is different and thus can have divergent perceptions, each experience is strictly personal. Laiming & Maison (2014) distinguish between physical and emotional experiences occurring through all the interactions with a product or a brand when defining CX. Moreover, Shaw & Ivens (2005) define physical and emotional as the two elements that shape customer experience. LaSalle & Britton (2003) proposes four categories of customer involvement when having an experience: physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. Schmitt (1999) proposes a modular conceptualization of the concept of CX and identifies five categories: sensory experiences, affective experiences, creative cognitive experiences, physical experiences, and social-identity experiences that result from relating to a reference group or culture.

As each experience is personal, they cannot be equally evaluated. Therefore, it may be possible that the same product or interaction with a firm causes different perceptions and thus different reactions depending on the customer. The evaluation of each experience thus depends on the customer's expectations and the incentives coming from the interaction with the company throughout the different moments of contact or customer touchpoints with the product/service offering or with the firm (LaSalle & Britton 2003; Shaw & Ivens 2005).

In this study, CX is defined based on Shaw & Ivens's (2005) definition and therefore, CX involves all the interactions or customer touchpoints that take place between a customer and a firm and the reactions evoked measured against customer expectations.

Firms need to ensure that the overall CX offered meets their customers' needs and expectations. To carry out such a strategy, companies must gain an understanding of the customer journey (Berry et al. 2002) and thus, firms need to take into account not only the UX related to the final product but the entire experience the customers have with the firm. Customer journey is defined as the sequence of events, whether designed or not, that customers go through to learn about, purchase and interact with company offerings (Norton & Pine 2013). According to Berry et al. (2002) a customer journey involves all the different existing touchpoints between the firm and the customer; in other words, from the expectations customers have before the experience occurs to the assessments they are likely to make when the experience is over. Customer journey should be properly managed and thus, follow a planned sequence of events designed in order to deliver value to the customer, profitability to the company and differentiation from the competition (Norton & Pine 2013).

Different models for designing and assessing CX can be found in the literature (Bitner 1992; Carbone & Haeckel 1994; Stauss & Weinlich 1997; Shaw & Ivens 2002; Stuart & Tax 2004; Berry & Carbone 2007; Pickles et al. 2008; Zomerdijk & Voss 2010; Jhonston & Kong 2014). These models involve the evaluation and (re)design of every touchpoint so that the exchange of value during each customer interaction can be maximized. In order to maximize the exchanged value in each touchpoint, Loshin & Reifer (2013) propose the following steps: 1) identifying all the customer touchpoints, 2) isolating the types and magnitude of the value exchanged, 3) prioritizing the touchpoints in terms of goals for increased value for all involved parties, 4) determining what information is needed so that value can be increased, and 5) determining the business processes to be updated in order to take advantage of that information.

Several authors (eg. Pine & Gilmore 1998; Shaw & Ivens 2005; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004; Meyer & Schwager 2007) have identified CX as a means of providing new ways of competitions for firms. Therefore, managers have lately become aware of the need to create value for their customers in the form of experiences (Berry et al. 2002). Providing good customer experience can have a positive impact on customer satisfaction (Liljander & Strandvik 1997) and customer loyalty (Yu & Dean 2001; Pullman & Gross 2004). Moreover, it can influence the expectations customers have about a product (Johnson & Mathews 1997; Flanagan et al. 2005) and enhances the firm's trustworthiness (Peppers Don Rogers 2013).

2.3.1.3   Brand experience

There are different approaches in the literature regarding the definition of brand. Brand has been defined from the consumers' perspective and/or from the brand owner's perspective (Wood 2000). The American Marketing Association (1960) proposed a company-oriented definition of brand as *"a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors"*. However, this definition has been criticized for being too product-oriented (Arnold, 1992; Crainer, 1995) but nevertheless, the definition has been adopted and modified by many practitioners (Watkins 1986; Aaker 1991; Stanton et al. 1991; Doyle 1994; Kotler et al. 1996). Ambler (1992) takes a customer-oriented approach and defines brand as *"the promise of the bundles of attributes that someone buys and provide satisfaction... The attributes that make up a brand may be real or illusory, rational or emotional, tangible or invisible"*. Moreover, following a customer-oriented approach, Wheeler (2006) defines brand as *"the promise, the big idea, and the expeditions that reside in each customer's mind about a product, service, or company"*.

In addition, brand is sometimes defined in terms of its purpose, and described by their characteristics. According to de Chernatony (2006) a brand is defined by the following eight characteristics:

- Sign of ownership
- Differentiation device
- Communicator of functional capability
- Device for customer self-expression
- Risk reducing device
- Shorthand communication device
- Legal device
- Strategic device

Brand experience is defined as the *"sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity"* (Brakus et al. 2009). Therefore, BX is related to the knowledge and familiarity customers have with a brand or brand category (Alba & Hutchinson 1987). According to Brakus et al. (2009), brand experiences occur in a variety of settings when customers search for, purchase and consume brands. Since brand experience is related to subjective customer responses, Brakus et. al (2009), proposes that BX is composed of four dimensions: sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral. Depending on how many of these dimensions are evoked and the intensity of the stimulation, the resulting brand experience can be more or less intense.

In this study, the definition of BX provided by Brakus et al. (2009) is used with acknowledgement that it is crucial for firms to be able to deliver their promise in order to deliver better BX.

Mohr et al. (2005) state that customers expect strong brands to supply a steady stream of innovations in exchange for their loyalty and thus, firms need to deliver the value they promise in order to develop a strong brand. In high-technology environment, branding is not only a marketing concern but a financial concern since brand equity is positively related to the firm's financial performance (Aaker & Jacobson 2001). In such environment, Mohr et al. (2005) propose the following strategies for branding:

- Creating a steady stream of innovations with a strong value proposition
- Emphasizing traditional media advertising and public relations rather than sales promotion
- Influencing the influencers and stimulating word of mouth
- Branding the company, platform, or idea
- Relying on symbols or imagery to create brand personality
- Managing all points of contact
- Co-branding
- Using the internet effectively

Many authors have studied brand experience as a factor providing advantages to firms (Berry 2000; Ha & Perks 2005; Klaus & Maklan 2007). Kotler & Pfoertsch (2006) identified BX management as a source of increasing information efficiency so that customers can easily gather and process information regarding a product, reducing risks and creating value added image of the firm. In addition, BX can lead to customers trusting the brand (Ha & Perks 2005) and thus, to an increased customer loyalty if the overall experience produce a deeper meaning and is memorable to the customer. Brand loyalty is important for business purchases and thus it may play a key role in repurchasing (Bennet et al. 2005) since satisfied customers that have a favorable experience with the brand will more likely re-purchase from the same brand instead of changing to another brand.

All in all, BX success is highly dependent on the ability of firms to inspire customers with the brand promise. Therefore, it is required for firms to deliver excellent performance throughout every experience point that customers have with the brand, products or services in order to gain advantage through BX.

2.4. Experience as a source of competitive advantage in demand creation

Strategy is viewed as the set of objectives and the plans or actions to be done in order to achieve those (Andrews 1971). Strategy formulation requires deep analysis and ready-to-implement, adaptable solution programs since its implementation will determine in the long term whether the firm survives in the marketplace or not (Chevalier-Roignant et al. 2012).

Competing in a global market has nowadays become more difficult and thus, firms aim at formulating strategies that enable them to create long-lasting competitive advantage that will permit them to compete and survive in the market. Competitive advantage is related to firms being able to create more value than its competitors (Porter 1985; Peteraf 1993; Peteraf & Barney 2003) as stated in section 2.1.2., research in the field of strategic management has been focused in analyzing how competitive advantage can be achieved and sustained.

The firm's environment and the firm's opportunities and threats (Porter 1980, 1985), and firm's core competencies (Bowen et al. 1994; Prahalad & Hamel 1990; Stalk et al. 1992) have been studied as potential sources of competitive advantage. Recently many scholars advocate that one of the main routes to achieve competitive advantage is by putting a much stronger focus on the customer (Peppers & Rogers 2000; Kotler & Keller 2006).

When a new product is released to the market, its success is dependent on different factors. Within the NPD process, the launch stage has been identified as strategically important as at that point the management of the new product effort changes from development to commercialization (Crawford & Di Benedetto 2008) an thus, the formulated launch strategy and the executed launch tactics play a key role in determining the success of a new product as previously discussed in sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3. A proper launch execution can increase the reputational value of the firm in the distribution channel, boost sales, provide a pioneering advantage to the firm, and ultimately affect positively the firm's value (Bowersox 1995; Bowersox et al. 1999). Regarding good launch strategy as a means of adding competitive advantage to firms, Green & Ryans (1990) have stated that "the launch strategy provides the platform from which competitive advantage must be gained and sustained throughout the product life cycle".

A successful new product launch requires intensive research, planning and a skilled marketing team. The launched product must meet consumer needs and provide an emotional connection through its promise and brand. Therefore, it is important to focus on the customer and the way he/she experiences the product and the relationship with the brand when developing the launch strategy so that the product launch is successful

and the expected demand outcome can be realized. However, the focus on the customer should be put not only in the launch stage but in all the different stages of the NPD process in order to enhance the overall NPD performance (Ernst et al. 2010).

Considering experience and its value, three different categories of experience must be distinguished: user experience (UX), customer experience (CX) and brand experience (BX). UX is defined as a *"person's perceptions and response resulting from the use and/or anticipated use of a product, system or service"* (ISO 9241-210 2010). Meyer & Schwager (2007) defined CX as *"the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company"*. Therefore, CX occurs every time a customer interacts with a firm and their offerings (Rintamäki et al. 2007). BX is defined as *"a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors"* (American Marketing Association 1960). Taking a more customer-oriented approach, Brakus et al. (2009) have defined BX as the *"sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity"*. As it was pointed out in section 2.3.1, UX and CX should not be treated as synonyms (Reichelt 2012). UX can be considered as a component of CX each playing an important role in the overall success of a product and the reputation of the brand.

Creating superior experiences is regarded as an emerging enabler for differentiation (Gebauer et al. 2005; Meyer & Schwager 2007; Palmer 2010; Verganti 2011; Rawson et al. 2013). Palmer (2010) suggests that experience may be a differentiator in markets where relationships have ceased to be a point of competitive differential advantage. Therefore, providing good experiences can be considered as a source of competitive advantage. In order to maintain such advantage, it has been proposed that user-oriented design should be integrated through the different stages of the NPD process (Berry et al. 2002; Veryzer & de Mozota 2005; Meyer & Schwager 2007) rather than focusing on the customer experience in isolated areas of the business. According to Veryzer & de Mozota (2005), integrating user-oriented design through NPD can result in a superior product or service and moreover, the incorporation of user-oriented design within the NPD usually leads to products that are faster adopted by users since the developed product is more in tune with the customers toward which it is targeted.

Understanding customer needs, aspirations and the context of interaction between a customer and a firm is critical for firms in order to develop products that provide a better UX. In addition, it is also required for firms to gain an understanding of the customer journey in order to ensure that the overall CX offered meets their customer' needs (Berry et al. 2002). Customer journey includes all the events that customers go through when interacting with company offerings (Norton & Pine 2013). Firms must shift to experience-based mindset in order to design and provide better experiences for their customers. Therefore, firms need to design and manage properly the customer

journey and understand customer experience. For this purpose, it is needed to capture information across all customer interactions with the service provider and even other service providers that support the overall customer activity (Teixeira et al. 2012) and make sure customer experience is truly compelling at every interaction over the course of the entire experience cycle (Dhebar 2013).

Figure 6 presents the benefits of introducing a focus on the customer and experiences over the NPD process and in the launch stage so that it can positively affect the demand outcome. As previously discussed a user-oriented focus can enable firms to achieve its strategic goals (Veryzer & de Mozota 2005) and thus, proper experience management can result in a source of competitive advantage.

It is proposed in the literature that products providing good UX have better acceptance and the training time required in order to learn the product features and its use is less than products which UX is not good. Therefore, the efficiency of users' work can be improved. In addition, better UX can result in savings in support costs and development costs.

Providing a superior CX has been regarded as a means of providing new ways of competition. Customers that have a good overall experience with a firm and its products are usually more satisfied and more loyal to the firm resulting in enhanced firm's trustworthiness.

By creating products with good user experience and properly managing the overall customer experience, firms can create better BX that will add more value to the customers' image of the band. BX is related to the ability of the firm to develop the brand promise. Those companies that deliver on this promise tend to build enduring customer relationships and profitable businesses as customer loyalty and trust is increased and therefore, customers are more likely to choose and re-purchase from that brand over others.
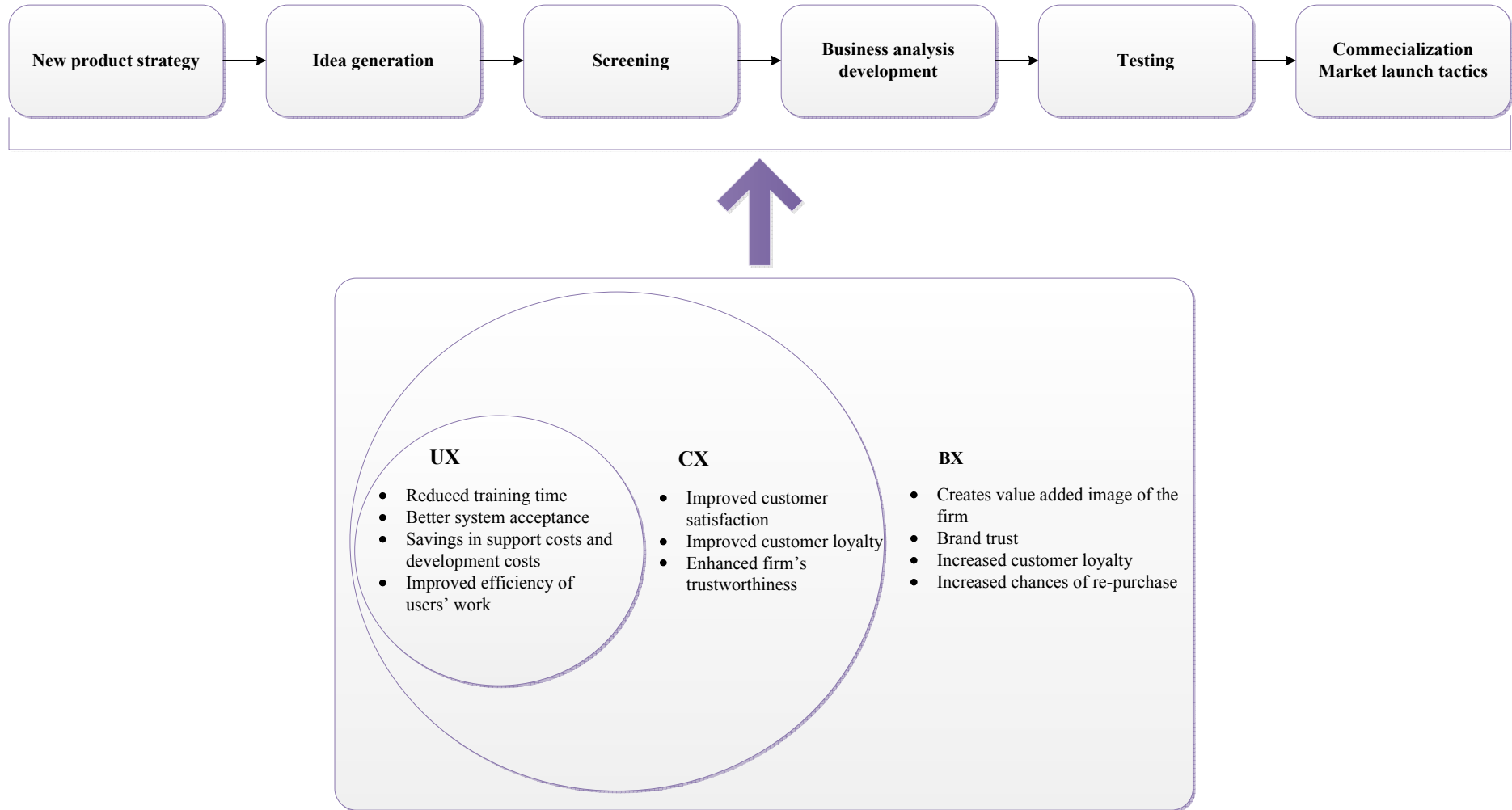
Figure 6. Benefits of experience in NPD and new product launch.

3. RESEARCH METHOD AND MATERIAL

3.1. Research design

In order to conduct a research there are different research strategies that could be employed. Each strategy can be used for exploratory, descriptive and explanatory research (Yin 2003). It is important to remark that research strategies should not be thought of as being mutually exclusive (Saunders et al. 2009) and thus, it is possible to use several strategies as part of a research. Saunders et al. (2009) propose the following research strategies:

- Experiment
- Survey
- Action research
- Grounded theory
- Ethnography
- Archival research
- Case study

First, experiment is related to studying casual links (Saunders et al. 2009). It allows allocating samples to different experimental conditions (Weijun 2008) that can be controlled and altered by the researcher in order to adjust the results. Second, survey strategy allows collecting quantitative data and it is usually associated with the deductive approach (Weijun 2008; Saunders et al. 2009). Third, action research is concerned with the researcher being a part of the organization within the research and the change process are taking place (Coghlan and Brannick 2005). It is also concerned with the iterative process of diagnosing, planning, taking action and evaluating (Saunders et al. 2009). Fourth, grounded theory is developed from data generated by a series of observation (Weijun 2008) and thus it is helpful to predict and explain behavior (Goulding 2002). Fifth, ethnography's purpose is to describe and explain the social world the research subjects inhabit in the way in which they interpret it (Saunders et al. 2009). Sixth, archival research makes use of existing records and documents as the main source of data (Saunders et al. 2009) and thus it is useful to analyze the past data and changes over time. Finally, case study involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon (Weijun 2008).

The objective of this study is to analyze the influence of experiences in enhancing new product launches so that the demand outcome is higher. Since the research aims at investigating a particular contemporary phenomenon, the primary research strategy

chosen for this study is case study. Case study is claimed to be one of the most powerful research strategies in the field of management (Voss et al. 2002). It consists of a detailed investigation by utilizing data collected over a period of time of phenomena within a certain context (Cassell & Symon 2004). The aim of case study research is to provide knowledge regarding any area of uncertainty (Zikmund et al. 2012) by analyzing the context and processes related to the theoretical issues that are being studied. Case study strategy is used in order to answer questions such as 'why' and 'how' so that more in-depth knowledge of the studied phenomenon can be obtained (Saunders et al. 2009).

Yin (2003) distinguishes between two case study strategies: single case strategy and multiple case strategy. A single case strategy is often used when the research is based on a critical, extreme or unique case whereas multiple case strategy is used when it is needed to generalize the findings of the research since multiple cases are incorporated within the research and thus, it is possible to establish whether the findings of one case occur in other cases (Saunders et al. 2009). This research is based on multiple case studies in order to gain a broader understanding of the topic and avoid uniqueness and artificial conditions (Yin 2009, p. 61). In addition, by analyzing multiple cases, the results and findings can be easily generalized.

In order to address the research questions proposed in this thesis, four cases have been studied. The cases consisted of different new disruptive product launches within the metal and engineering industry in Finland and were selected due to the importance experience had during the new product development as well as in the planning and execution of the launch strategy. Therefore, the chosen companies aimed at gaining competitive advantage and thus increased demand outcome by launching products with a superior UX for users that will enhance the overall CX and BX. In addition, the selected companies participate in the UXUS (User Experience & Usability in Complex Systems) research program and thus the selected companies' philosophy is highly experience-oriented and its product offering has a strong UX focus. Moreover, selecting cases of companies that are part of the UXUS research program ensured the access to the required information and the commitment of the selected companies

3.2. Data collection

In business and management case studies, both quantitative and qualitative data gathering methods can be used. However, according to Gummesson (1993) it is more common to utilize qualitative methods since they provide a better and improved understanding of the topic that it is being studied. Gummesson (1993) categorized data gathering methods into five groups that are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. *Data gathering methods (Gummesson 1993).*

Data gathering method	Description
Existing materials	Refers to material that is carried by other media than human beings e.g. books, reports, articles.
Questionnaire surveys	Even though questionnaires are usually associated with quantitative methods, they are used to standardize and formalize interviews.
Qualitative interviews	They are the most common way of generating data in case study research. Interviews can be guided by the interviewer and thus, valuable information can be obtained.
Observation	Includes direct observation as well as participant observation in order to gather the data.
Action science	The researcher becomes an active participant influencing the object under study. Action science can contain all other data gathering methods.

In order to gather the required data for this study, the data gathering methods utilized were using existing materials and conducting qualitative interviews. First, regarding the existing materials, websites of the companies, brochures and reports were studied in order to find relevant information connected to the topic of study. Second, empirical data was collected through semi-structured interviews. In semi-structured interviews the interviewer has a list of themes and questions to be covered, however, the questions and its order may vary from interview to interview and depending on the flow of the conversation (Saunders et al. 2009). Therefore, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to focus the interview so that the adequate information can be obtained. According to Cohen & Crabtree (2006), if performed correctly, semi-structured interviews can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data.

As for the preparation for the interviews, prior research and planning regarding the companies and its products was made in order to increase the level of knowledge so that more valuable answers could be obtained. The existing materials together with the literature review, which was conducted so that the understanding of the topic was increased, were used as supporting material to design and develop the outline for the interviews. The outline of the conducted interviews can be found in Appendix 1. However, each interview outline was slightly modified based on the previous knowledge regarding both the company and the product.

Before the semi-structured interviews took place, a case description for each of the cases was developed based on the existing information regarding the company and the studied launched product. In order to build the cases different type of data and

information was considered. The information categories regarding the firm background and the product gathered to build the cases are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. *Information categories considered in the cases.*

Company	Product
Company overview	Product overview and features
Sales	Background of the previous technology
Customer segments	Launch tactics
	Product sales

The interviews were conducted by the researcher and they all were conducted on the interviewee's workplace. The thesis supervisors helped in selecting and contacting the respondents. An interview with a respondent who had a wide knowledge regarding the selected product and its launch was conducted for each case and thus four interviews were conducted in total. The average length of the interviews was 41 minutes. Table 7 shows detailed information of the interviews.

Table 7. *Interview information.*

Company	Interviewee's title	Duration
Company A	Technical product manager	38 minutes
Company B	Marketing and communications manager	38 minutes
Company C	Marketing and communications director	35 minutes
Company D	Product manager	53 minutes

3.3. Data analysis

The cases were focused in analyzing the different launch tactics each firm utilized when releasing the product and the role of experiences in the overall launch strategy. In addition, the overall outcome of the product was also analyzed in order to extract the relationship between the launch tactics used and the demand outcome in each case. Therefore, the interviews aimed at obtaining detailed information regarding the launch tactics used for each product as well as the importance experiences had in the design and implementation of the new product launch strategy. Moreover, the interviews aimed at analyzing the demand outcome each of the products achieved. The information

gathered through the interviews was added to the information acquired by analyzing different existing materials in order to build the cases and extract the results.

In order to develop the cases and make sure all the relevant information was taken into account the cases were built iteratively. Therefore, for each case all the possible available information regarding both, the company and product was collected at first. In the first iterations, the information considered was mainly collected through existing materials such as company's website, reports, or brochures. This information was then iteratively analyzed and cross-checked with the information gathered for the rest of the cases so that the case was built considering the necessary and relevant information. The process is shown in Figure 7.
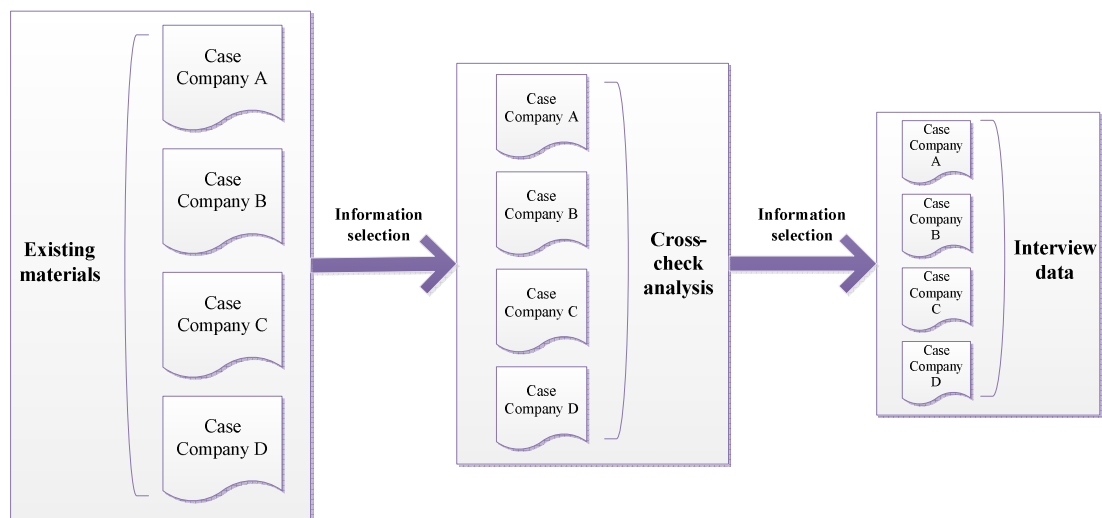

Figure 7. Case building process.

After completing the interviews the cases were complemented with the information gathered from them. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by an external provider. The transcripts were reviewed while listening to the recording in order to ensure that the transcripts did not contain any error or gap and to familiarize with the data. The data analysis consisted the following process: first, the interview transcripts were coded into different categories in order to recognize relationships and further develop the categories (Saunders et al. 2009). Second, the data of each interview and case company was analyzed. Finally, a cross-case analysis was performed so that similarities and differences between case companies were found.

Using multiple methods to analyze and ensure that the collected data is rich and robust and thus, the cases are well-developed can be useful to gain a better understanding of the topic and validate the data through cross-verification. Studies that use only one method are more vulnerable to errors or mistakes related to the used method (Patton 1999). Many scholars (eg. O'Donoghue & Punch 2003; Altrichter et al. 2008; Creswell

2012) identify triangulation as a technique aiming at increasing the credibility and validity of the results in qualitative research. According to the four types of triangulation techniques identified by Denzin (1978), this study presents methodology and data triangulation since different methods to gather data such as existing materials and interviews have been used in this research. Furthermore, the data collected from the interviews has been compared to the data obtained from existing materials and resources such as companies' websites, reports or brochures.

Finally, it is important to mention that even though qualitative interview is one of the most important and common data gathering methods in qualitative research, it is also susceptible to errors and biases. Myers & Newman (2007) identified several potential difficulties or problems in using the qualitative interview that could be applied to this study. Therefore, the results may be twisted or distorted due to the artificiality of the interview situation since the interviewer and interviewee are completely strangers to each other leading to a lack of trust. Moreover, there is a chance that inaccurate questions have been asked as well as that some important or relevant facts have been omitted in the answers because the interviewee may have considered them as obvious or common due to his/her high knowledge on the topic.

4.   EMPIRICAL CASES

4.1.   Introduction

In this research, four case companies were studied. All selected companies operate within the metal and engineering industry and are based in Finland but also operate abroad. The selected companies collaborate with the UXUS research program and thus UX plays a key role within the company's philosophy and product offering making them suitable case examples for the objective of this study. For each company a representative disruptive product launch has been selected. Table 8 presents an introduction to the cases.

In order to secure the anonymity of the case companies the fictional names Company A, Company B, Company C and Company D are used and detailed information is not provided concerning the case companies or products. The same applies to the products' names and thus the fictional names Product A, Product B, Product C and Product D will be used to refer to the case companies' products respectively.

Table 8. *Introduction of the cases.*

Company	Company description	Product description	Net Sales*
Company A	Control system and robot cells supplier	Control system software with close integration to Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems	<100
Company B	Intelligent material handling solutions and services provider	Counterbalance truck with ergonomic and functional design	>100
Company C	Elevator and escalator provider	High-rise elevator hoisting technology that allows elevators to travel considerably higher distances	>1000
Company D	Technologies, automation and services supplier	Single automation system for process, machine, drive and quality controls	>1000

* in million Euros

The following subsections will provide a wider overview of the case companies and case products selected in this study.

4.2. Company A

4.2.1. Company overview

Company A is a global supplier of control systems and robot cells to the metal cutting industries so that the manufacturing and processes can be automated. The company offers a wide range of systems that can be customized based on customer needs.

The company employs more than 500 employees and it is headquartered in Finland. In addition, the company has several subsidiaries worldwide. The company's vision is to constantly enable the effective use of machine tools and thus the company's professionals are specialists in factory automation and committed to meet customers' needs.

Company A's main customer segment is the aerospace industry. Moreover, the company has customers within the construction and mining machinery industry as well as vehicle and general machine manufacturing industries. Other important customers of Company A are mechanical engineering companies and component manufacturing and assembly factories.

4.2.2. Product overview

Control systems are manufacturing systems with a degree of flexibility that allows the system to introduce changes or adapt based on the item being produced. The innovation of control systems was related to gaining competitive advantage in new environments where the market became more complex and thus in order to remain profitable firms needed to be able to customize its product offering in order to satisfy different market segments. In addition, speed of delivery became a crucial customer need and thus firms needed to operate in a more flexible way and faster.

Usually the control software determines the ultimate flexibility of the control system and thus, the software needs to be frequently modified in order to adapt to the changing production requirements (Smith 1996). Product A is control system software with close integration with ERP that offers different features such as intelligent resource planning, predictive scheduling and real-time production reporting.

UX has been a critical factor in the development of Product A and as a consequence all user interfaces are browser based enabling its access anywhere with a laptop or tablet. Moreover, all the operations are shown on a touch-screen operation panel so that the access is easier and more intuitive for the operator. Also, the graphical user interfaces are optimized according to the applications of the intended user.

4.3. Company B

4.3.1. Company overview

Company B provides intelligent material handling solutions and services. It offers a full line of serially manufactured modular solutions that are tailored and adapted to its customers' applications.

The company is based in Finland and employs more than 500 professionals in Finland, Denmark and Russia. The company's philosophy involves continuous innovation, user-friendly design and customer-driven services as the basis for their products and services. The company aims at analyzing and further developing customer processes and needs in order to differentiate from its competitors.

Company B has an important role within the electric warehouse and counterbalance trucks markets in Europe as well as automated guided vehicles globally. Moreover, Company B's main customer segments are warehouse and logistic, production, paper, and food and beverage industries.

4.3.2. Product overview

A forklift truck is an industrial equipment that is used to lift and move materials. There are different types of forklift trucks such as counterbalance forklifts trucks, reach trucks, powered pallet trucks, or hand pallet trucks. Forklifts are extendedly used in warehouses, logistic centers and production and shipping companies and thus are critical equipment in such industries. Therefore, it is crucial that forklifts are designed ensuring efficient and effective use as well as safety.

Product B is a counterbalance truck. These types of trucks are characterized by the forks jutting out from the front of the machine so that the truck can be driven up to the precise location where the load is. Product B design is ergonomic and functional ensuring optimal performance and optimal user experience at the same time. It provides remarkable residual lift capacities so that larger loads can be lifted and its 100° rear axle steering permits using the equipment in tight spaces. Moreover, product B, which is designed for both, indoors and outdoors usage, presents excellent maneuverability and high stability and visibility. Its performance can be tailored according to the driver's needs thanks to its two pre-set modes. Regarding the ergonomics of the product, the equipment has ergonomic access and offers comfortable driving position since it can be fully adjusted. Its usage is meant to be easy and intuitive for drivers. Therefore, all the required information is shown on a display and the equipment has instinctive fingertip controls. Finally, Product B does not require complex nor expensive maintenance.

4.4. Company C

4.4.1. Company overview

Company C is a global leader in the elevator and escalator industry which provides innovative solutions. The company's portfolio includes elevators, escalators, auto walks, automatic doors and monitoring and access control systems for all types of buildings. The company provides solutions and services throughout the entire lifecycle of the equipment covering the supply and installation of new equipment, the maintenance for equipment in operation and the modernization of the existing material.

The company employs more than 4000 employees. Its head office is placed in Finland and the company also has authorized distributors worldwide. Company C's philosophy is highly customer-oriented and therefore, the company aims at providing the best customer experience through understanding its customer needs.

Company C's main customer segments include different types of buildings such as residential, hotels, or retail buildings. In addition, the company provides its services and products to special buildings such as leisure and education centers, industrial properties, and ships.

4.4.2. Product overview

Existing technology used in lifting elevators presents a challenge when the distance the elevator has to go through is very long. The weight of the steel cable presents several limitations, including the elevator's travel height. Due to the increasing number of skyscrapers around the world nowadays there is a need for a solution that enables elevators to travel such long distances so that these types of buildings do not require a transfer floor or 'sky lobby' where people have to change the elevator in order to reach the higher floors of the building.

Product C aims at overcoming the previously mentioned challenge by utilizing a technology that eliminates the disadvantages of conventional steel rope and enables the elevator to travel twice the distance that is currently feasible. The material used is extremely light so that the energy consumption in high-rise buildings is considerably reduced. In addition, the overall weight of elevator moving masses are reduced due to the reduction in rope weight and as a consequence the benefits the technology provides are higher as travel distance increases. Finally, the material used is highly strong and resistant and thus, it has a longer lifetime in comparison with the current materials used.

4.5. Company D

4.5.1. Company overview

Company D is a global developer and supplier of technologies and automation services. The company's offered services include maintenance outsourcing, mill and plant improvements as well as spare parts. Moreover, the company's advanced automation solutions range from single measurements to mill automation projects.

The company, headquartered in Finland, employs 12000 employees around the world. The company's vision is very customer-focused and thus it is committed to enhance its customers' performance in order to become the global champion in serving customers with sustainability as a success factor.

Company D operates within the pulping and fiber, board and paper, tissue, energy, and biofuels and biomaterials industries as well as in other industries such as mining, chemical, oil and gas, marine, food, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals industries.

4.5.2. Product overview

A distributed control system (DCS) is a dedicated system used in order to control continuous or batch-oriented manufacturing processes. Whereas non-distributed systems use a single controller at a central location, DCSs a hierarchy of controllers and sensors are connected to each other through communication networks in order to command and monitoring.

Product D is an automation system that covers information management along with mechanical and field device condition monitoring and thus, it can be used for different functions such as process, machine, drive and quality controls.

The product provides user experience-based tools for operators, maintenance and management. Therefore, its intuitive and straightforward user interface enables quick problem solving and efficient decision-making since functions have been designed according to users' needs. Compatibility and connectivity between generations as well as scalability from a single stand-alone controller to plant systems are provided.

The product offers many benefits such as high process availability, reduced risk, improved process performance, compatibility and upgradeability or optimized total cost of ownership through life-cycle services.

5.   RESULTS

The following chapter presents the results of the study. First, the empirical findings of each of the cases are detailed. For this purpose, experience management in each of the case companies as well as launch strategies and tactics used in each product launch are described. Quotes extracted from the interviews have been added in order to highlight relevant and important aspects from each case.

After this, a comparison between the empirical results is discussed in order to address the research questions of the study. The launch tactics categories defined in 2.2.2.1 have been considered in order to analyze the launch tactics utilized in each of the case companies.

5.1.   Company A

5.1.1.   Experience management in Company A

Company A offers training to its customers and puts a lot of effort in the training development so that the company's products can help customers optimize their processes and overall performance. Moreover, technical support such as remote troubleshooting and problem solving, control support, diagnostic services, systems data backup or online systems monitoring is offered. In addition, Company A offers customized and modular solutions to its customers to provide more efficient service resulting in high productivity solutions.

In order to provide and maintain good customer experience, Company A arranges different kinds of events and company visits so that customers can get familiarized with the company brand and product offering.

Finally, branding is crucial in Company A. The company's goal is to improve its customer's competitiveness with the company's systems and devices that allow customers to utilize all the working hours within a year for efficient production. This is illustrated in the company logo which is visible in all the company products.

5.1.2.   Product A launch strategy and tactics

Product A was launched to the market in 2011. When the first version of the product was almost finished and ready to be launched, several meetings with marketing took

place so that they could create the necessary marketing material and the product launch strategy could be defined and planned. The product was first presented to customers in the biggest fair in the company's operating business.

The launch was pre-announced and prior to the launch there were also announcements and advertisement in technical magazines. Moreover, the launch of the product was also mentioned and presented in the fair's own publications so all potential customers were aware of the existence of the product before the actual launch. Even though the marketing and tactics differ from other types of products and thus the marketing was focused on a certain customer segment, pre-announcement was helpful in order to create awareness of the product prior to its launch. Figure 8 presents the timeline of the product launch.
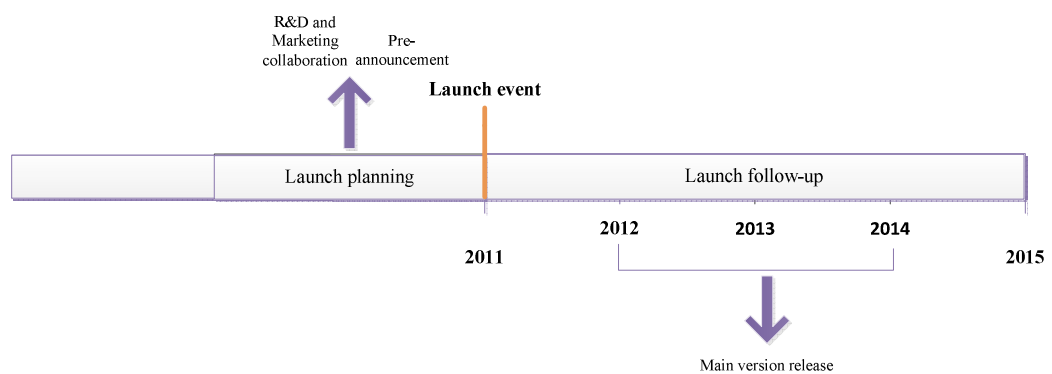

Figure 8. Product A's launch timeline.

Product A is complex and thus it may be difficult to explain quickly and clearly all the features it offers. In order to overcome this challenge and communicate the benefits of the product to the customers, the concept "15 minute story" was developed. The goal was that the benefits of the product should be explained and communicated in 15 minutes and thus, anyone should be able to tell the same story after hearing it.

> *"We put a lot of effort in the launching to the story, what to tell our customers. Not telling some technical figures, but instead tell a short story, how it can be used, what is the benefit for you and how easy it is to use."*

> Company A's technical product manager

After the product was launched, it has been further developed as new versions have been released yearly and minor versions with small improvements have been released monthly approximately. Marketing has been involved every time a new main version has been released. However, according to the respondent more involvement would have been needed.

"Every time when we have this main version released, our marketing has been involved, more or less. I would like that they would be involved more than they do at the moment. But we have cooperation with them."

Company A's technical product manager

Table 9 summarizes the overall choice of tactics that were implemented in Product A's launch to the market.

Table 9. Product A's launch tactics.

Launch tactic	
Promotion	
Advertising	Brochures
	Videos
Publicity / Educational campaigns	15-minutes story (education for customers and dealers)
Reference test sites	Product and benefits description in several reference websites
Distribution and sales	
Shows and demonstrations	Launch event
Technical support	Customer training
	Technical support
Distribution channels	
Product availability	
Sales force effort	
Pricing	
Price strategy	
Price level	
Product	
Branding	Company's slogan aims at illustrating that with the company's systems and devices, customers can utilize all the working hours within a year for efficient production.
Breadth of assortment	
Timing	
Deletion of old products	
Pre-announcement	Launch was pre-announced in technical magazines. Moreover, the launch was pre-announced in the launch event publications.

The key factors of success of Product A were usability and reliability. After the product launch, the business went well and the product got the expected demand. However, the demand of the product has fluctuated over the years since the product was first released to the market. Some of the challenges in getting demand may have been that the previous version of the product was too good some customers were reticent to change as they were used to it.

"Our customers and our sales were very used to that old software. Therefore, it was quite difficult to change their mind to use a new product which is working in a different way."

Company A's technical product manager

In order to overcome the mentioned challenge, the respondent identified the important role continuous improvement and customers' training has within the company's business. Therefore, Company A offers a training package which is included in every delivery so that customers have more information regarding the benefits of the product.

Product A supposed the change to a completely new architecture and development tools and thus, it required a lot of effort not only regarding the training offered to the customers but also regarding the training of the development, sales and marketing departments within the company so that they were able to develop, launch and commercialize a completely new product that works with a completely new philosophy. Therefore, the respondent recognized as a learning lesson from this project that in the forthcoming development projects changes should be done gradually.

"We have also discussed a lot about this internally, that now when we are next time launching something completely new, we cannot change everything at the same time. It must be changed somehow step by step."

"When it is new for every area, then it is quite challenging to have all the training, all the documentation, and everything running smoothly. It takes time."

Company A's technical product manager

Moreover, the respondent considered that more involvement from marketing during the development process would have been needed. In addition, the training offered to the customers should be more tailored and adapted to customer's processes.

"There is a training package included in every delivery, but we have found that it is not, or it has not been sufficient. We should offer even more and more, and more detailed training and training that is more focusing to the customers' processes, how to adapt our system to customer's production processes better."

Company A's technical product manager

5.2. Company B

5.2.1. Experience management in Company B

Company B aims at enlarging its customer's profit and productivity by offering good user experience. User experience is understood as providing customers with products that offer them the best possible experience when being used. As a consequence, best user experience in the market is the main design driver for product development in Company B. By concentrating in UX aspects within the development phase, the final product will provide a better experience to the end user and enhance the end user's satisfaction regarding the product and eventually the company. This is considered as a means of creating superior CX.

Creating good CX is also very important in Company B. In order to create good CX, Company B is continuously researching different customer touchpoints such as sales situations, service visits or launch events. All the different touchpoints are analyzed in order to create the best possible customer experience. For example, the company does sales work analysis for each brand and creates new sales material for specific markets based on their needs or special characteristics.

All experiences, UX, CX and BX are linked to each other and thus, through these Company B makes sure that the delivered message to their customers is adequate.

> *"I think the three experiences actually, the brand experience, user experience and customer experience they are all linked to each other naturally. And we need to make sure that the message we give out is consistent. Consistent and it's supporting each other, in that sense."*

Company's B marketing and communications manager

Company B is a part of an industrial vehicles and distribution systems manufacturer and seller and has been appointed as the global design center. Therefore, the company is responsible for R&D of electric warehouse and counterbalance trucks for the European market. The company develops and produces products in three different categories and each of the brands has their own identity. Therefore, each brand identity is taken into account when designing, manufacturing and marketing.

5.2.2. Product B launch strategy and tactics

Product B was launched in June 2014. The product is characterized by a brand which is very technology oriented and has a long history. Therefore, when planning and designing the launch strategy and launch tactics the strong heritage coming from the brand was taken into account and combined with new and innovative ways of

communicating and presenting the product. Figure 9 shows the timeline of the product launch.
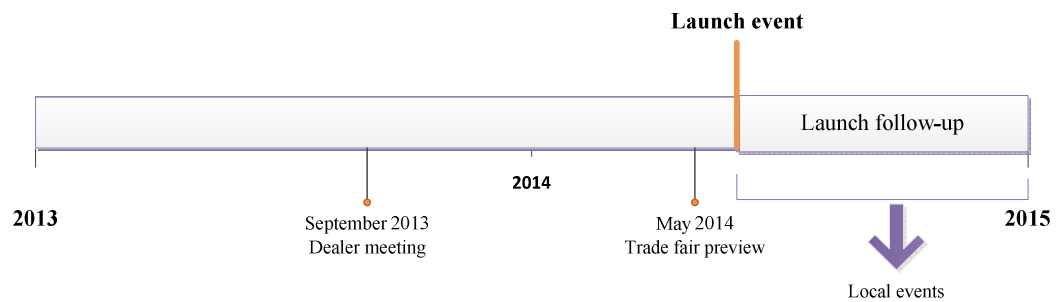

Figure 9. Product B's launch timeline.

Traditionally, in other launches a launch package containing a brochure with some explanations of the key features of the product as well as pictures was sent to the company's dealers and sales representatives. The launch package was also created and used for Product B's launch. However, since the design and development of the product was done based on user experience, in fact already during the development phase different product prototypes were tested in order to evaluate the user experience of the product, Company B incorporated UX in the product launch strategy and tactics. Therefore, an experimental programme in which the usability of the product was highly remarked and emphasized was performed during the launch event and thus, testing the product played a key role within the launch event.

> *"The aim of having the best user experience is not itself that we state that with this product you get the best user experience, but it is that we win at those demo situations. We need to deliver that promise in real life situations. And the best way we can convince the customer is by having this demo so that the users can test."*

> Company's B marketing and communications manager

The main European dealers were invited to the launch event. Apart from the traditional presentations, an experimental programme was carried out during this event as previously mentioned. Therefore, dealers were divided into groups and did a test so that they could try the product and compare it with competitor's products. By testing the product, it was easier for the participants to understand the product's features and its benefits in comparison with competitor's products.

> *"It was so much easier to explain than if you see a Powerpoint presentation of some feature, you don´t really know how this thing works."*

> *"It was like both experience to them and both teaching them at the same time which worked very well with us."*

After testing the product, participants were interviewed on-site so that they could express their opinion regarding the product and its use. Moreover, video recordings were made out of the tests and interviews and were lately provided to the dealers in order to facilitate their sales representatives teaching as not all of them were present in the launch event.

In addition, the event programme contained several innovative activities that combined training, sales and fun. These activities aimed at educating the participants on the product and its features in an active and original way. Therefore, a quiz around the city where the launch event was held was organized so that dealer teams had to visit different places around the city and answer questions related to the product. The winner of the quiz was the team with the most correct answers. Furthermore, the sales portal was opened during the event and in order to increase the sales, a competition was organized so that the one that will order more units of the product already in the launch event would get a prize.

The launch event was opened with an animation video expressing in a non-traditional way some of the features of the product. As it had not been done before, there were certain doubts on whether the animation video would fit to the brand. However, it was presented because it was considered to be a new approach that will bring more human touch to both, the company and the brand.

> *"People can see that this is a cool company, they can actually make a bit of jokes, also. They are not that dead serious about their products. But still keeping the brand image intact."*

<div align="right">Company's B marketing and communications manager</div>

The launch event got very positive feedback from the dealers. According to them, the highlights were the possibility to test the product against the competitors and the video material since it improved the sales personnel training. After the launch event, local events intended to the sub-dealers that could not attend the main event were arranged. In the local events it was also possible to test and try the product.

Company B provided its dealers with different materials to support sales and training such as videos and advertising templates in different sizes and with different messages that are consistent with the brand message. Dealers could add their logo in a certain spot but they could not modify the template. Those materials were placed in the extranet for the company's dealer network so that the materials can be downloaded and used when necessary. In addition, a technical support package containing an operation manual that includes spare parts and maintenance coverage was also offered. Besides, online tools and web sites to support the sales are offered to dealers as well as to end customers.

Pre-announcement was very important in the demand outcome of the product. In May 2014 a preview of the product was shown in an important trade fair where all the main players within the company's business were present. Besides, in September 2013 the company organized a dealer meeting in order to present the product and its features. Pre-announcement raised the expectation of the dealers and had a very positive impact on the sales once the product was released to the market.

> *"I think it (pre-annoucement) really woke them up really nicely because we had this kind of teaser already in the dealer event so we created the hype already nine months before the actual launch."*

> *"I think in that way that if we had not said anything in the dealer meetings the nine months before, I don't think the order would have kicked up so rapidly. That was definitely one very good point within the launch strategy."*

Company's B marketing and communications manager

Table 10 summarizes the overall choice of tactics that were implemented in Product B's launch to the market.

Table 10. *Product B's launch tactics.*

Launch tactic	
Promotion	
Advertising	Brochures
	Advertising templates for dealers
Publicity / Educational campaigns	Videos and animation
	Experimental programme during the launch event (quizzes, competitions)
	Demo testing
Reference test sites	
Distribution and sales	
Shows and demonstrations	Launch event
	Local events
	Trade fairs
Technical support	Technical support package (operation manual, spare parts and maintenance)
Distribution channels	
Product availability	
Sales force effort	Sales personnel received training and marketing and sales tools
Pricing	
Price strategy	
Price level	
Product	
Branding	Brand message includes continuous innovation, user-friendly design and customer-driven service as the basis for the company's operations and products.

Breadth of assortment	
Timing	
Deletion of old products	Smoothly. Aiming at avoid overlapping between products.
Pre-announcement	Dealer meeting presenting the product nine months before the launch
	Preview of the product in a trade fair a month before the launch

The demand outcome exceeded the company's expectations since the volume of orders was relatively high since already in the launch event the product had a big demand and after the launch, the demand of the product was very high compared with other products of the company. In addition, the dealers and customers provided excellent feedback about the product.

It is important to remark that the product was the winner of an international product design prize. Being awarded with that prize helped in increasing the demand in certain market areas as well as in building the brand since an external and neutral source validated the quality of the product and therefore, makes the brand message stronger.

> *"I think it helps a lot. When visiting customer they are explaining that not only we are saying that it's a great product but also that outside experts and drivers have tested it."*

> Company's B marketing and communications manager

5.3.   Company C

5.3.1. Experience management in Company C

Company C interacts with its B2B customers through different channels or touchpoints and thus, it defines and manages the customer experience through the whole interaction cycle in order to ensure that good customer experience is provided. Therefore, all the customer touchpoints are carefully designed.

Within the customer interaction cycle two stages can be distinguished: pre-sales CX and after-sales CX. First, pre-sales CX includes the different touchpoints that take place before the contract with the customer is signed. Usually, the communication with customers takes place through the sales person who interacts directly with the customers on a more personal basis. Marketing is responsible of providing the salesperson with different support materials and tools that are used in sales meetings. Moreover, the company is also investing in other types of communication channels such as campaigns, on-line marketing, customer events, company visits, or showrooms. Furthermore, the company offers its customers the possibility of visiting its testing facilities so that they can see and experience the company's products. Customer experience has a key role in

those channels since it determines the way customer experience the company´s products and services. In addition, the company's website is also carefully designed so it provides a good user experience. Second, after-sales CX relates to the way customers experience the brand and the product once it is acquired and thus, after-sales CX has a big impact on the company's brand image. Therefore, in order to ensure good CX, the company offers regular maintenance service and keeps the customer informed about the maintenance work at every moment.

Company C has a customer experience department whose focus is sales development. The department is responsible of developing sales and training programs as well as personnel training in order to ensure good customer experience is provided. They also work on developing customer segmentation and value propositions and therefore they develop training programmes on how to sell customer value instead of technical features. Moreover, they are also responsible for different types of surveys aiming at measuring customer loyalty and satisfaction.

Generally, marketing takes care of managing correctly the customer experience throughout the whole interaction process by analyzing and defining customer touchpoints throughout the different interaction phases with the customers.

> *"From a marketing perspective, we are looking at this whole process and thinking what are the different touchpoints with the customers in the different channels, pre-sales and then after-sales. We need to consider how the customer experience us so that we are giving the right image to the customer of this whole process."*

<div align="right">Company C's marketing and communications director</div>

However, during the after-sales stage some other parties within the organization such as installation experts may be involved in creating the customer experience and thus, marketing together with the customer experience department support them so that customer experience is taken into account when providing the service or interacting with customers.

Among other customer satisfaction measurement methods, Company C adopted the Net Promoter Score (NPS) as the main tool for measuring customer experience and gathering information about customers. The NPS is a management tool that can be used to measure the loyalty customers has towards a firm. It was introduced by Fred Reichheld, Bain & Company, and Satmetrix in 2003 (Bain & Company 2013). The measurement system is based on the likelihood of the respondent to recommend the firm (or a product/service) to a friend or colleague. NPS classifies customers into three groups. A score from zero to six means the customer is a detractor. A score of seven or eight means the customer is passive and thus they cannot be considered loyal. A score of nine or ten is given by loyal customers.

Since the company is a B2B brand, effort is primarily focused in building the brand for B2B customers. The company operates mainly in two different businesses and thus the brand is built for different types of customer segments based on the business line. Therefore, branding is built towards the different target groups. Additionally, products are also branded with the logo and company name so that end users can also recognize and experience the brand.

> *"We have a very broad base of customers so we are building the brand and the key messages around the brand to these different types of target groups"*

> Company C's marketing and communications director

5.3.2. Product C launch strategy and tactics

Product C was a very long development project in Company C's R&D. Launch planning begun around a year prior to the product launch and marketing got involved then in the project in order to plan the product launch. In the product launch strategy followed two phases can be distinguished. The first phase took place together with the R&D and business teams in order to identify and analyze what were the key benefits of the solution to the company's customers based on the driver of the development project. The second phase consisted of making launch decisions concerning the target audience and timing of the launch to get the maximum attention from both, media and customers. Launch tactics were also planned and designed during this phase.

Product C was launched to the market in 2013. However, the launch continued over the past two years and thus, the product has been presented in different events since it was introduced to the market. The product launch was planned around a first launch event that took place in a strategic location which is a meeting point for different customers within the company's customer base. Key customers from the global customer base as well as media were invited to the event. This event was later replicated in different locations so that the customers that did not attend the launch event could be reached. In addition, a special event with key members from media was organized in order to prove the success of the company within the company business and get more attention from media. The timeline of the launch is presented in Figure 10.
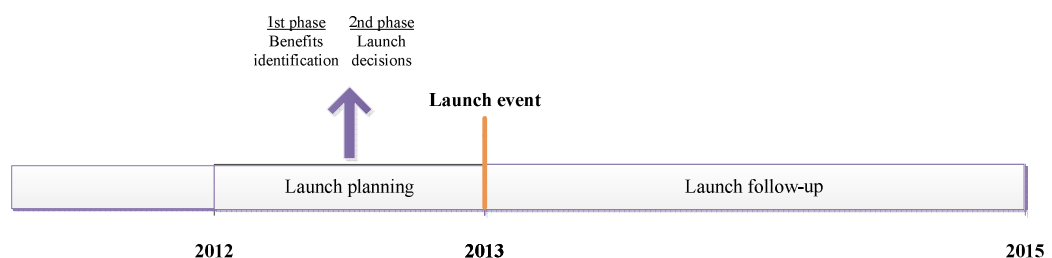

Figure 10. Product C's launch timeline.

The launch event was designed based on a concept and thus the invitations, presentations and outline of the event followed the same idea. At the event it was possible for attendants to see samples of the product that could be compared to previous solutions so that the benefits of the product could be demonstrated. By presenting a sample in the event customers were able to interact with the product so that the event was not only intended to present the product but also to establish a discussion with the attendants.

> *"That is something that we have really considered very useful in our industry, having something to show and really tangible things that the customer can see it with his own eyes and test it."*

Company C's marketing and communications director

Media played an important role in the launch of Product C. The company worked with an agency that helped in selecting the right type of journalists and media that should be invited to the launch event. Media helped in creating awareness and reaching a wider audience since due to the nature of the innovation, not only specialized media but also general media were interested in the topic. However, media did not play a key role in reaching the customers since the target market was a very specific segment and thus the marketing strategy as well as the launch strategy, launch decisions and launch tactics were very focused on a certain, specific segment and the main channels to reach the customers were through the salesperson and the customer events and conferences.

Different materials were used in order to support the product launch and make the marketing message clear. Therefore, a 3D animation presenting the product benefits by identifying the customer's challenges and illustrating how Product C will solve those challenges was developed. According to Company C's marketing and communications director, the animation also helped to create more awareness about the product since it was widely used by the media and different websites. Moreover, a leaflet, a presentation set as well as a book about the company's references within the market were developed and used in the product launch. Furthermore, the product was also presented in the company's own stakeholder magazine intended for sharing interesting views, cases, and topics that will impact industry now and in the future.

Table 11 summarizes the overall choice of tactics that were implemented in Product C's launch to the market.

Table 11. Product C's launch tactics.

Launch tactic	
Promotion	
Advertising	Videos
	Website
	Leaflets

	Own stakeholder magazine
	References from the product's customers
Publicity / Educational campaigns	3D animation
	Media
	Samples
Reference test sites	
Distribution and sales	
Shows and demonstrations	Launch event
	Launch event replications and conferences
	Media events
Technical support	After-sales maintenance
Distribution channels	
Product availability	
Sales force effort	
Pricing	
Price strategy	
Price level	
Product	
Branding	From the company's slogan it can be inferred that the firm is continually striving to expand their understanding of customers' needs so that the best customer experience can be provided.
Breadth of assortment	
Timing	
Deletion of old products	
Pre-announcement	

Company C's marketing and communications director affirmed that the demand outcome of the product after its launching was positive.

> *"I think we did achieve the things we were setting out to do. We wanted to have a high-profile event with right customer, we wanted to get good media attention and also have a concept that we were able to take around the world so that we would reach out to different parts of our market."*

> Company C's marketing and communications director

After the launch of the product, customers that have acquired it have been used as a reference in order to reach more attention from the media since according to the respondent, reference is very important within the company's business and states that…

> *"Some new innovation is great but until somebody actually is buying it, then it is still just a thought on paper and it does not get that credibility"*

> Company C's marketing and communications director

The respondent remarks the importance of internal communications and marketing inside the organization and considers that sales and marketing should work together so

that salespeople are well-trained prior to the launch of the product and thus a clear sales strategy and tactics are defined so that salespeople are able to better present the product and compare it to competitor's solutions as well as better address customers' answers.

Finally, it has to be noted that Product C's launch was oriented to a much focused market segment. The launch took place on a global level whereas usually mass market launches take place on a local level so that the planning of events or campaigns is done usually locally under the global function support.

5.4. Company D

5.4.1. Experience management in Company D

Regarding UX and CX the respondent identified that it is crucial to understand the customers' needs so that customers perceive their needs are being understood and fulfilled. In addition, the respondent highlighted that the importance of both, UX and CX is now increasing within the organization. As a result, it is nowadays understood within the organization that UX has to be taken into account already in the early stages of any NPD process.

> *"Awareness is better now in our organization and it is getting more and more important. People understand that it has to be part of the design process in the early phase also."*

> *"I think that generally the idea of the user experience is rising, for example in the whole organizational level, even the management level. This is good."*

<div align="right">Company D's product manager</div>

Company D is committed to enhance the performance of its customers by providing them with systems and tools that meet their needs and thus, the company´s vision is to become a global leader in serving its customers.

In Company D, brand is created by proving that the company is capable to deliver its promise. Therefore, branding is not concerned with just delivering a creative message but with providing customers with the solutions and products they are expecting.

> *"We have a good system and we can provide the tools to help the customer. That's the brand creation, not that we make some fancy slides. In my opinion, brand is created when you do what we do."*

<div align="right">Company D's product manager</div>

5.4.2. Product D launch strategy and tactics

Product D was an update from a previous system. Among the new features of the product it can be distinguished the system's scalability, intuitive tools that help the user in all process situations, intuitive interfaces and reliable controls. As the product was an update from an earlier version, a big launch was not made. However, seminars and small launches were done when major changes in the different releases of the product were introduced. The events and seminars were organized with the purpose of getting closer to the customers and introducing the new features of the product to them. Figure 11 shows the timeline of Product D's launch.
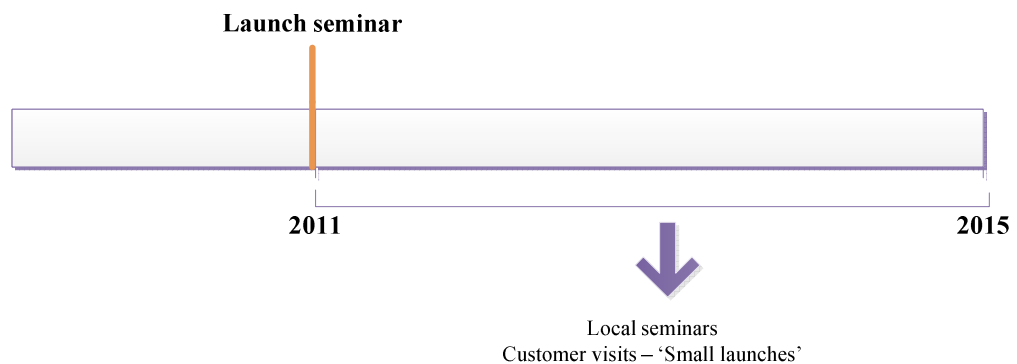
Launch seminar

2011   2015

Local seminars
Customer visits – 'Small launches'

Figure 11. Product D's launch timeline.

In order to present the product and its features as well as its benefits a presentation was utilized in the launch seminars and events. The presentation was designed so that the importance of the technicalities of the product as well as UX was emphasized. The main idea of the presentation was presenting a reliable system that will make customers feel that everything is under control. Therefore, not only the technical information regarding the features of the product was taken into account but also the customers that will utilize the product and thus customer comments and selected quotes from representative customers were introduced in order to reinforce the message. Moreover, comparisons were also included so that customers could see the results and how they can benefit from the product. Furthermore, a real case was used as an example to demonstrate the characteristics and benefits of the system. Finally, the presentation ended with some humor and a summary welcoming potential customer to test the product, to experience the product.

Compatibility was emphasized in the launch. Due to the nature of the product, its life cycle is long and thus ensuring compatibility with older or previous systems is used in order to enhance CX as customers can rely on the company since even though a new product is coming they will be able to upgrade their own systems anytime. Within the

company industry compatibility with existing systems needs to be emphasized in every launch.

> *"It is an experience that okay, even something new is coming, they can rely that they can upgrade their own system, there is no dead end."*

<div align="right">Company D's product manager</div>

It is important to notice that the presentation was adapted and modified based on the customer and according to the customer's needs. For instance, compatibility within the different existing versions of the system was emphasized for old customers whereas long experience in developing systems was emphasized for new customers that are not very familiar with the company. Also, when adapting the presentation cultural differences with the customer as well as personal differences were taken into account since some of the salespeople may have a very UX-oriented mindset whereas others do not, even though the importance of UX is increasing.

In addition, different marketing materials were used. The same story presented in the launch presentation was incorporated in the company´s customer magazine and a conference paper within a more scientific context was published.

Other launch tactics were also used in Product D's launch. Internal sales training was offered to sales people. Therefore, sales people were provided with recordings and training on how to do a presentation of the product as well as how to address potential questions from customers. Moreover, personal launches in customer´s locations were arranged and according to the respondent they were helpful to get closer to the customers in order to better understand their needs and create awareness about the system.

> *"Usually we go closer to the customer, make regional seminars there and be closer to the customer because then we can discuss with the customer. Customer visit and customer seminars are main thing because if we put something in the magazine nobody reads it. It´s too abstract."*

<div align="right">Company D's product manager</div>

Also the product was presented in a few exhibitions and shows even though the presence in such events is nowadays decreasing. Furthermore, technical support is offered and usually service technicians are residents in customers' location so that they can provide better service. In addition, support is also offered in the company webpage. However, since the system has many features and configurations depending on the customer's industry, support regarding all the special features is not detailed in the webpage. Therefore, the webpage is a general platform that contains support details

regarding each industry on a more general basis. Finally, the product was pre-announced in press releases.

References were found to be very important since usually customers want to know if someone has used the system before. Therefore, the company put effort in finding a technology innovator that will adapt to the new product or version.

The key factor in the success of the launch was taking into account customer's needs and understanding what the customer wants so that the system could fulfill their needs. According to Company D's product manager, understanding and fulfilling customer needs is crucial within the B2B context.

> *"In a business-to-business environment many times marketing is quite technology-oriented and result-oriented. You have to give or provide product or tools for the other industry to fulfil their needs."*

> Company D's product manager

Therefore, the system was customized and tailored based on customers' needs. For certain customers, feature testing and usability tests were performed in order to determine which features or technologies fit best to that particular customer.

Finally, collaboration between R&D and sales and marketing in the early stages of the NPD was crucial. Research was done and used as a marketing tool since providing the customer with a research study gave more credibility and reliability than providing a brochure. Providing customers with a scientific research aimed at getting more acceptance since customers can see their needs are understood and the company is capable of fulfilling those needs.

Table 11 summarizes the overall choice of tactics that were implemented in Product B's launch to the market.

Table 12. Product D's launch tactics.

Launch tactic	
Promotion	
Advertising	Customer magazine
Publicity / Educational campaigns	Seminars
	Scientific research
	Conference paper
Reference test sites	
Distribution and sales	
Shows and demonstrations	Few selected exhibitions
Technical support	Support on-site and online
Distribution channels	
Product availability	

Sales force effort	Sales personnel received training
Pricing	
Price strategy	
Price level	
Product	
Branding	The company´s vision is to become a global leader in serving its customers by understanding and fulfilling its needs
Breadth of assortment	Customized based on customer's specific needs
Timing	
Deletion of old products	
Pre-announcement	Data sheets and press releases

5.5. Discussion

5.5.1. Launch tactics in creating demand in B2B new product launches

Experience was key factor in the launch strategy and tactics used in the product launch of all company cases. Therefore, the way the product was presented to customers and how the message and features concerning the product were delivered was crucial in all of the launches. Shows and demonstrations have been identified as a launch tactic (Guiltinan 1999; Hultink et al. 2000) that is valuable so that potential customers can better perceive the value the product offers (Gopalakrishna & Lilien 1995). The results show that launch events and seminars were important in order to present the product, its features and its value to potential customers. Company B and Company C replicated the launch event in different strategic locations in order to reach a wider customer base and to facilitate the assistance to potential customers that could not attend to the main event. Company D arranged local seminars and customer visits in different locations close to potential customers.

Moreover, different materials that are aligned with the theory such as advertising (Hultink et al. 1997; Guiltinan 1999; di Benedetto 1999; Calantone et al. 2011) and publicity or educational campaigns (Guiltinan 1999) were used in order to communicate the product features and benefits to customers. Hence, Company A developed a concept to explain the product characteristics in a simple and easy way. Company B and Company C used animations that illustrated the products' use and features in a visually and creatively way. Company D designed a presentation that not only included technical features and characteristics of the product, but also customer experience and usability were taken into account and emphasized in the presentation.

In addition, different launch tactics were used based on the product and field in which each company operates. Company A offered training packages together with the delivery of the product in order to ensure customers could obtain the maximum benefits

when using the product. In Company B's launch event, the programme was highly focused in communicating the product's benefits by testing the product and thus it was possible to test and compare it to competitors' products. Similarly, Company C showed product samples in the launch event that helped attendants to better understand the way the technology being presented worked as it was not possible to test the actual product due to its nature. Company D conducted a scientific research and published a conference paper that was used as marketing material in order to prove the product´s and company´s reliability.

Media was important in Company C's product launch. Even though it was not a key factor in reaching the customers, it was beneficial in creating awareness about the product. Besides media, the results proved pre-announcement to be an important launch tactic in creating awareness and stimulating demand. Pre-announcement was identified by Company B as extremely important in order to create awareness and expectation. In addition, Company B recognized pre-announcement as beneficial in building acceptance for the product prior to its launch since it allowed customers to learnt about the product use and features in advance as Eliashberg & Thomas (1988) and Robertson et al. (1995) previously argued. Company A and Company D also pre-announced their products prior to the launch.

The results show that after the launch of the product, customers that have acquired it have been used as a reference in order to reach more attention from the media since according to Company's C respondent references are very important within the company's business. Equally, Company´s D respondent affirmed that references from customers that have already adopted the product can be crucial for potential customers to make a decision on whether to adopt the product or not.

The results showed that branding is an essential launch tactic. This is aligned with the theory since many scholars (Guiltinan 1999; Hultink et al. 1999; Hultink et al. 2000; Chiu et al. 2006) have argued the importance of branding within the new product launch tactics categories. As stated by Sullivan (1998), branding facilitates demand creation as it helps to create an attractive and engaging image of the product and brand and therefore, branding was identified as a vital launch tactic in all the company cases studied within this research. Hence, all the companies pay special attention in building the brand and incorporating experience as a main brand design driver so that customers get the best possible CX when interacting with the brand and the best UX when interacting with the company products.

Table 13 presents a comparison between the launch tactics used in each company case.

Table 13. Launch tactics comparison.

Launch tactic	Company A	Company B	Company C	Company D
Promotion				

Advertising	X	X	X	
Publicity / Educational campaigns	X	X	X	X
Reference test sites	X			
Distribution and sales				
Shows and demonstrations	X	X	X	X
Technical support		X	X	X
Distribution channels				
Product availability				
Sales force effort		X		X
Pricing				
Price strategy				
Price level				
Product				
Branding	X	X	X	X
Breadth of assortment				X
Timing				
Deletion of old products		X		
Pre-announcement	X	X		X

Regarding the planning and design of the new product launch prior to the actual launch, all respondents from all companies acknowledged the importance of marketing and R&D collaboration since early stages within the NPD process. This finding is in line with Guiltinan (1999), who state that marketing strategy and launch planning need to be developed in parallel with product development and testing. By establishing a collaboration between marketing and R&D, it is easier for marketing plan and develop the launch strategy so that the value is clearly communicated to potential customers.

5.5.2. Experience management in creating competitive advantage

The four selected companies in this research study have a very experience-oriented philosophy and thus, all of them aim at managing correctly the experiences offered to customers so that they are valuable. Moreover, the considered companies have a strong UX focus in their product offering and thus, UX is a critical factor already taken into account during the development process so that the products offer the best possible experience.

UX can be considered as a factor shaping and enhancing the overall interaction of a customer with a company as well as the customer's perception of the brand and thus, UX and CX are linked to each other. Company B's main design driver is to create the best user experience so that their customer's profit and productivity can be enhanced. Therefore, by providing good user experience the company aims at creating and offering good CX at the same time. Company A offers tailored solutions, support as

well as customer training in order to ensure its customer's needs are fulfilled and customers get the best experience when interacting with the company's products. Company D also offers tailored systems and support to its customers.

Managing appropriately the overall CX is crucial for all the companies and thus, effort is put in researching different customer touchpoints so that they can be analyzed and defined in order to provide good CX. Company visits was identified as a crucial touchpoint by all respondents. Company B's respondent added sales situations and launch events as customer touchpoints and Company C's respondent identified several customer touchpoints within the pre-sales phase such as the salesperson, campaigns, on-line marketing, website, showrooms or events and in addition, the installation and maintenance work were identified as customer touchpoints within the after-sales phase.

Branding is essential in all the case companies. Company B operates within three different brands and thus brand is defined differently based on each brand's identity. Equally, Company C builds the brand differently for its different types of customer segments. Moreover, both, Company A and Company C brand their products with the company name and logo so that customers interact with the brand. Company D creates its brand by delivering the company´s promise and thus, by enhancing their customer's performance with the provided solutions and systems.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Main outcome of the study

The objective of this thesis was to provide an overview of the actions or tactics that can be used in a new product launch in order to increase the demand outcome within the B2B context. A sub-objective of the thesis was related to the role of experience management in enhancing competitive advantage and increasing demand in B2B environments. In order to address these objectives, a literature review was complemented with four representative product launch case studies in the metal and engineering industry companies in Finland. For each case, the launch strategy and tactics used were analyzed. Moreover, when analyzing the launch strategies and launch tactics, the role of experiences customers have when interacting with a firm and its product offering (UX, CX and BX) was highlighted and therefore, the role of experience management as a source of competitive advantage and factor of demand creation was studied.

Regarding the main objective, the results were aligned with previous findings in the literature. Based on the cases different launch tactics were identified to be more convenient and effective in order to improve the demand outcomes in the B2B environment. Therefore, publicity and educational campaigns (Guiltinan 1999), shows and demonstrations (Guiltinan 1999; Hultink et al. 2000), branding (Guiltinan 1999; Hultink et al. 1999; Hultink et al. 2000; Chiu et al. 2006) and pre-announcement (Guiltinan 1999) were found to be successful tactics in all the studied cases. The most valuable identified launch tactics were those that enabled firms to clearly present the benefits and features of the product to its customers. Hence, marketing material and launch events were crucial in communicating the product features and value. Furthermore, branding was crucial in order to prove that the companies are able to deliver its promise. Hence, by correctly managing the brand image the perception of the firm customers have can be enhanced. Finally, pre-announcement was found to be important in order to create awareness of the existence of the product prior to its launch so that better and faster acceptance of the product within the market place can be achieved.

As for the sub-objective of the thesis, the results contribute to Veryzer & de Mozota's (2005) findings on firms achieving its strategic goals by adopting a user-oriented mindset. Hence, findings show that managing correctly the different experiences a customer has with a firm is crucial in enhancing the firm´s competitive advantage and consequently, in increasing the demand outcome when a product is released to the

market. The cases showed the importance of managing appropriately the overall CX and thus, effort needs to be put in defining, analyzing and designing different customer touchpoints so that the best experience can be provided for customers when interacting with the firm. Moreover, by providing a good CX, firms can create better BX that will result in an improved customer's image of the firm. In addition, the results proved that UX is becoming more important within the B2B environment and thus providing products with better UX can shape and enhance the overall interaction and perception of the brand. In addition, it is important to remark the importance of taking UX into account in the early stages of the NPD so that the final product has good UX.

Finally, relating experience management and new product launch strategy and tactics, the importance of introducing the different experiences in the selected launch tactics was remarked in the results as a means of achieving better demand outcomes. Therefore, developing marketing materials that deliver a clear message and are not focused only on the technicalities but also consider UX factors as well as designing launch events where the importance of UX was highlighted were found to be successful launch tactics in increasing demand.

6.2.   Limitations of the study

The case studies provided an overview of the launch tactics in B2B that can enhance the demand creation as well as the importance of experience management in creating demand. However, the presented results in this thesis may be subjected to certain limitations due to existing restrictions on the research method and material. Lincoln & Guba (1985) presented the following criteria for judging qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility refers to the results being believable and congruent with the reality. The research methods were appropriate and suitable for examining and addressing the research objectives. Member checks are considered the single most important method to validate the credibility of qualitative research (Guba 1981; Silverman 2007). Therefore, the case descriptions and results were checked by the respondents of the interviews in order to validate the credibility of the study. However, the respondents were purposefully selected and thus, the results may be subjected to some bias as the results were derived from the interviewees' subjective opinions. Moreover, the information was gathered only by existing sources and interviews and therefore, triangulation was limited.

Transferability is concerned with the degree to which the results can be generalized or transferred to a different context. Shenton (2004) proposes that a dense description of

the fieldwork is needed in order to allow transferability. In this study, sufficient description regarding the cases, respondents, and data collection and analysis methods was provided.

Dependability is related to the changing context and settings within which the research takes place and refers to the ability to repeat the study and end up with the same results. In this aspect, the research design and data collection and analysis process as well as the cases were described and detailed so that the study could be replicated and the same results could be obtained. However, it is challenging to justify the repetition of the interviews since the discussions tend to evolve differently even though they were based on a preliminary outline. In addition, regarding the interviews, the researcher's inexperience in conducting interviews is a limitation to be taken into account. A learning process within the interview cycle could be noticed and thus, later interviews were improved based on the early interviews analysis and results. Therefore, the dependability would have been improved if the researcher had had more experience in designing and conducting interviews. Conducting semi-structured interviews was beneficial in order to obtain a broader type of information; however, it is important to mention that the responses and questions varied based on the respondent's knowledge and points of view. Considering UX matters, the four case companies can be considered to be UX-oriented since they were participating in the UXUS research programme. This may have affected the results presented in this study since the importance of UX and experience in general may have been over-estimated.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results can be confirmed or corroborated. Confirmability was enhanced by comparing different sources of information and contrasting the data obtained from the interviews with the company's webpages and materials such as publications and reports. In addition, in the reported findings, several quotes are used to prove that the ideas and responses have truly come from the interviewees and are not interpretations of the researcher. Finally, two Senior Researchers who are familiar with the companies and their informants reviewed the manuscript in order to validate whether the interpretations made by the researcher were plausible.

6.3. Future research

This study presents just a momentary point of view of the marketing trends and the perception of the experience management due to the temporal limitations. However, a longitudinal study which explores these topics in more detail could be done as it would be interesting in order to analyze the impact of UX in the marketing trends during different periods in time.

Moreover, the present study has been conducted by using a case method and therefore, only qualitative case interviews have been included. Nevertheless, it would be interesting and valuable for future studies to include some quantitative methods as it could provide another source of information and at the same time it could increment the reliability of the results.

In addition, other proposal for future research could be the study of how customers perceive the launch as well as their likes and dislikes in the used launch tactics which in turn define what are the reasons why a certain customer buys this certain product.

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APPENDIX 1: Interview outline

- ➢ Interview background and preparation
  - Thank for participating
  - Own presentation
  - Background about the thesis
  - Confidentiality and anonymity. Name of the company is not going to be used in the thesis
  - Ask for recording permission
  - Summary of the topics that are going to be covered during the interview. Estimated time of duration
- ➢ Interviewee background
  - What's your position? How long have you been working in that position? How long have you worked in the company?

Branding

- What kind of role does branding play within your organization?

Customer experience

- What kind of role does customer experience play within your organization? How is it created?

Product launch and tactics

- Could you describe the launch strategy followed?
- Which launch tactics were used? Choose from:
  - Advertising
  - Publicity/Educational campaigns
  - Reference test sites
  - Shows and demonstrations
  - Technical support
  - Distribution channels
  - Product availability
  - Any other?
  - Sales force effort
  - Price strategy
  - Price level
  - Branding
  - Breadth of assortment
  - Deletion of old products
  - Pre-announcement
- For each chosen launch tactic:
  - Advertising
    - What kind of advertising? Media, printed, samples, internet, etc?
  - Publicity / Educational campaigns
    - What kind of publicity / educational campaign?
    - How was developed?

- o Reference test sites
  - What kinds of reference sites were used?
- o Shows and demonstrations
  - Was the product presented in a trade show / demonstration before or after being launched to the market? / Was the trade shows used for market testing purposes?
  - What was the trade show strategy? Why was it chosen? How was it planned?
  - Did they bring new customers?
- o Technical support
  - How is the technical support provided?
  - When is it provided? After sales? Pre-sales?
- o Distribution channels & product availability
  - What is your distribution strategy? What type of distribution channels do you use? Direct, indirect, dealers, etc?
- o Sales force effort
  - What was the role of sales-force in increasing the demand of the product?
  - Was the sales-force trained so that they could sell the product's features more efficiently?
  - Was the sales-force involved or did they collaborate with any other department/unit during any of the NPD process stages? If yes, which ones?
- o Price strategy
  - What was the pricing strategy for the product?
  - Which influence had the pricing strategy on the demand outcome, if any?
- o Price level
  - What was the price level for the product?
  - Which influence had the price level on the demand outcome, if any?
- o Branding
  - What role plays UX in the branding strategy?
- o Breadth of assortment
  - On what factors depends the breadth of assortment of the product?
  - Is UX/CX taken into account when defining the breadth of assortment of the product?
- o Deletion of old products
  - What factors were considered when deleting previous products?
- o Pre-announcement

- Do you think pre-announcing enhanced the awareness of the product launch?
- Do you consider the product had a faster adoption and diffusion due to the pre-announcement?
- Was UX incorporated in any of the used launch tactic? If yes, how? / What was the role of U/C/BX in the implemented launch strategy?

Sales and demand outcome

- Did the product achieve the expected sales? If not, what could have been the possible reasons why?
- Did U/C/B X have any positive impact on the demand outcome?

➢ Ending
- Free words, comments
- Thank for participating