

**A FRAMEWORK OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE:
STUDY OF THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY**

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**A FRAMEWORK OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE:
STUDY OF THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY**

by

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CERTIFICATE

The thesis titled, “**A Framework of Customer Experience: Study of the Hospitality Industry**” being submitted by **Ms. Shikha Sota** to the **Indian Institute of Technology Delhi**, for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** is a record of bonafide research work carried out by her. She has worked under my guidance and supervision and has fulfilled all the requirements for the submission of this thesis, which has attained the standard required for a Ph.D. degree of this institute. The results presented in this thesis have not been submitted elsewhere for the award of any degree or diploma.

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ABSTRACT

In an increasingly competitive marketplace, where choices are numerous and switching costs are low, the survival of organizations becomes a challenge. Various scholars of marketing have always emphasized the importance of customer-centricity for the success of an organization. Over the past few years, Customer Experience (CX) has emerged to be a widely popular phenomenon that can provide organizations with a competitive advantage. Not just academicians, but practitioners are giving CX paramount importance as well. Customer Experience is not a new concept, although it has become quite a movement in the past few years. A simple Google Scholar search for CX yields many relevant research papers, dating back to the 1980s, which reveals that it is not a latest concept. However, it is only very recently that the concept has exploded into business consciousness. Experience is defined as “take away impression formed by people’s encounters with products, services, and businesses, a perception produced when humans consolidate sensory information”. Despite the fact the CX research began nearly four decades ago, there is no concrete view of CX as a standalone construct. The latest studies on CX posit that there is still a lack of consensus on its conceptual distinctiveness and measurement.

To understand the scope and magnitude of studies done on CX, the entire literature has been reviewed in an organized manner. It has been done in two ways; systematic literature review, where articles are analyzed in a descriptive manner and a construct life cycle framework, where the entire research on CX is classified under the ambit of this framework. Based on the review of literature, the research gaps have been identified. These are that there is an overlap with service quality & use of proxy measures in the measurement of CX. There is also a lack of theoretical foundation in empirical studies of CX and a mismatch between the conceptualization &

empirical structure of CX. The gaps also show that the role of customers is not considered in the measurement studies of CX, also there is scant work on the outcomes of CX.

This thesis fills the above-mentioned research gaps by conducting three studies, one qualitative and two quantitative. The primary aim of the thesis is to propose and empirically test a framework of CX. Hospitality industry is chosen as the context for all the studies, therefore all the understanding and analysis of CX is done through the lens of the customers of hotel i.e. hotel guests. A qualitative study precedes quantitative studies, where semi-structured interviews are used to explore the drivers of CX. An extensive literature review coupled with a qualitative study is used to propose a framework of antecedents of CX. This framework consists of both the organizational factors and individual factors that may have an influence on the experiences of the customer. It fills the gaps by considering the role of customers in determining CX, along with the role of the organization. It is followed by empirical testing of the framework. The data for this study is collected using the survey method. An exploratory factor analysis is conducted for all the constructs of the study followed by path analysis. The theoretical framework is analyzed using Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Further, the outcomes of CX are also analyzed through an empirical study. An additional study is conducted after the CX framework consisting of its antecedents, dimensions and outcomes is tested. This empirical study is done to gauge the impact of one of the outcomes of CX on purchase intentions. A conceptual framework based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model is proposed. Nine hypotheses are proposed in this model and a survey-based research is done.

The most significant finding of this thesis is the CX framework. It is a holistic framework consisting of its antecedents, dimensions, and outcomes. The results also indicate that not only organizational factors but personal factors also lead to CX. It is seen that personality and goals

have a noteworthy impact on CX. Although varied aspects of organizational as well as personal factors have an impact on CX, some factors significantly influence the cognitive aspect of CX, while the others have an impact on affective and a few others have a significant impact on the physical dimensions of CX. As far as the outcomes of CX are concerned, the results show that CX significantly influences customer satisfaction, which in turn has a significant effect on word of mouth (WOM) & Decreased Price Consciousness (DPC). Further, the results of the last empirical study show that not all aspects of e-WOM influence hotel booking intentions and the impact varies with changes in usage frequency.

The thesis has significant theoretical and managerial significations. With an aim to develop a stronger understanding of CX as a separate construct, it has developed a holistic framework of CX. It enriches the theory by providing a theory-based framework of CX which is multi-dimensional in nature. It also builds the CX literature by a systematic review of the literature and analyzing the literature under the ambit of construct life cycle framework. The drivers of CX proposed and tested in this thesis can be used by hospitality managers to design experiences. They can focus on antecedents that have a strong impact on experiences and channelize their resources wisely. Managers can also look at the outcomes of CX and their impact on purchase consideration to have a better understanding of customers' buying behaviour.

Overall, this thesis provides direction to both academicians and practitioners in the understanding of the concept of CX better. This thesis adds to the theoretical advancement of CX and serves as a basis for future researchers for further development of the field.

सार

तेजी से प्रतिस्पर्धी बाजार में, जहां विकल्प कई हैं और स्विचिंग लागत कम है, संगठनों का अस्तित्व एक चुनौती बन जाता है। विपणन के विभिन्न विद्वानों ने हमेशा एक संगठन की सफलता के लिए ग्राहक-केंद्रितता के महत्व पर जोर दिया है। पिछले कुछ वर्षों में, कस्टमर एक्सपीरियंस (सीएक्स) एक व्यापक रूप से लोकप्रिय घटना बनकर उभरी है, जो संगठनों को एक प्रतियोगी लाभ प्रदान कर सकती है। न केवल शिक्षाविद, बल्कि चिकित्सक भी सीएक्स को सर्वोपरि महत्व दे रहे हैं। ग्राहक अनुभव एक नई अवधारणा नहीं है, हालांकि यह पिछले कुछ वर्षों में काफी आंदोलन बन गया है। सीएक्स के लिए एक सरल Google विद्वान खोज कई प्रासंगिक शोध पत्रों को जन्म देती है, जो 1980 के दशक में वापस डेटिंग करते हैं, जिससे पता चलता है कि यह एक नवीनतम अवधारणा नहीं है। हालांकि, यह केवल हाल ही में है कि अवधारणा ने व्यावसायिक चेतना में विस्फोट किया है। कार्बन और हैकेल (1994, पी। 9) ने अनुभव को "उत्पादों, सेवाओं और व्यवसायों के साथ लोगों की मुठभेड़ों द्वारा गठित धारणा को दूर ले जाने के रूप में परिभाषित किया है, जब मनुष्य संवेदी सूचना को समेकित करते हैं तो एक धारणा उत्पन्न होती है"। इस तथ्य के बावजूद कि लगभग चार दशक पहले सीएक्स अनुसंधान शुरू हुआ था, स्टैंडअलोन निर्माण के रूप में सीएक्स का कोई ठोस दृष्टिकोण नहीं है। सीएक्स पोज़िट पर नवीनतम अध्ययनों में अभी भी इसकी वैचारिक विशिष्टता और माप पर सहमति की कमी है।

सीएक्स पर किए गए अध्ययन के दायरे और परिमाण को समझने के लिए, पूरे साहित्य की समीक्षा एक संगठित तरीके से की गई है। यह दो तरह से किया गया है; व्यवस्थित साहित्य समीक्षा, जहां लेखों का वर्णन वर्णनात्मक तरीके से किया जाता है और एक निर्माण जीवन चक्र ढांचा, जहां सीएक्स पर संपूर्ण शोध को इस ढांचे के दायरे में वर्गीकृत किया जाता है। साहित्य की समीक्षा के आधार पर, अनुसंधान अंतराल की पहचान की गई है। ये हैं कि सीएक्स के मापन में छद्म उपायों की सेवा गुणवत्ता और उपयोग के साथ एक ओवरलैप है। सीएक्स के अनुभवजन्य अध्ययनों में सैद्धांतिक नींव की कमी है और सीएक्स के वैचारिककरण और अनुभवजन्य संरचना के बीच एक बेमेल संबंध है। अंतराल यह भी दिखाते हैं कि सीएक्स के माप अध्ययन में ग्राहकों की भूमिका पर विचार नहीं किया जाता है, सीएक्स के परिणामों पर भी काम होता है।

यह थीसिस तीन अध्ययनों, एक गुणात्मक और दो मात्रात्मक का संचालन करके उपर्युक्त अनुसंधान अंतराल को भरता है। थीसिस का प्राथमिक उद्देश्य प्रस्ताव और अनुभवजन्य रूप से सीएक्स के एक ढांचे का परीक्षण करना है। आतिथ्य उद्योग को सभी अध्ययनों के लिए संदर्भ के रूप में चुना जाता है, इसलिए सीएक्स की सभी समझ और विश्लेषण होटल के ग्राहकों के लेंस के माध्यम से किया जाता है यानी होटल के मेहमान। एक गुणात्मक अध्ययन मात्रात्मक अध्ययन से पहले होता है, जहां अर्ध-संरचित साक्षात्कार का उपयोग सीएक्स के चालकों का पता लगाने के लिए किया जाता है। गुणात्मक अध्ययन के साथ युग्मित एक व्यापक साहित्य समीक्षा का उपयोग सीएक्स के एंटेकेडेंट्स के एक ढांचे का प्रस्ताव करने के

लिए किया जाता है। इस ढांचे में संगठनात्मक कारक और व्यक्तिगत कारक दोनों शामिल हैं जो ग्राहक के अनुभवों पर प्रभाव डाल सकते हैं। यह संगठन की भूमिका के साथ, सीएक्स का निर्धारण करने में ग्राहकों की भूमिका पर विचार करके अंतराल को भरता है। यह ढाँचे के अनुभवजन्य परीक्षण के बाद है। इस अध्ययन का डेटा सर्वेक्षण पद्धति का उपयोग करके एकत्र किया गया है। पथ विश्लेषण के बाद अध्ययन के सभी निर्माणों के लिए एक खोजपूर्ण कारक विश्लेषण किया जाता है। सैद्धांतिक ढांचे का विश्लेषण करने और परिकल्पनाओं का परीक्षण करने के लिए आंशिक कमाना वर्ग आधारित संरचनात्मक समीकरण मॉडलिंग (PLS-SEM) को अपनाया गया। इसके अलावा, एक अनुभवजन्य अध्ययन के माध्यम से सीएक्स के परिणामों का भी विश्लेषण किया जाता है। यह अध्ययन सीएक्स के व्यवहार परिणामों को समझने के लिए किया जाता है।

सीएक्स ढांचे के बाद एक अतिरिक्त अध्ययन आयोजित किया जाता है जिसमें इसके एंटीकेडेंट्स होते हैं, आयामों का परीक्षण किया जाता है। खरीद के इरादों पर सीएक्स के परिणामों में से एक के प्रभाव को नापने के लिए यह अनुभवजन्य अध्ययन किया जाता है। यह अध्ययन मुख्य रूप से उपभोक्ताओं के खरीद व्यवहार और आतिथ्य में खरीद के निर्णयों को प्रभावित करने के लिए किया जाता है। एलेविज़न लाइकैलिटी मॉडल पर आधारित एक वैचारिक रूपरेखा प्रस्तावित है। इस मॉडल में नौ परिकल्पनाएँ प्रस्तावित हैं और एक सर्वेक्षण आधारित शोध किया गया है।

इस थीसिस की सबसे महत्वपूर्ण खोज सीएक्स फ्रेमवर्क है। यह एक समग्र ढांचा है जिसमें इसके पूर्ववृत्त, आयाम और परिणाम शामिल हैं। परिणाम यह भी इंगित करते हैं कि न केवल संगठनात्मक कारक, बल्कि व्यक्तिगत कारक भी सीएक्स का नेतृत्व करते हैं। यह देखा गया है कि व्यक्तित्व और लक्ष्यों का सीएक्स पर महत्वपूर्ण प्रभाव पड़ता है। हालांकि संगठनात्मक के विभिन्न पहलुओं के साथ-साथ व्यक्तिगत कारकों का सीएक्स पर प्रभाव पड़ता है, कुछ कारक सीएक्स के संज्ञानात्मक पहलू को महत्वपूर्ण रूप से प्रभावित करते हैं, जबकि अन्य का प्रभाव एफएक्स पर होता है और कुछ अन्य का सीएक्स के भौतिक आयामों पर महत्वपूर्ण प्रभाव पड़ता है। जहां तक सीएक्स के परिणामों का संबंध है, परिणाम बताते हैं कि सीएक्स का ग्राहक संतुष्टि पर महत्वपूर्ण प्रभाव पड़ता है, जिसके परिणामस्वरूप मुंह के शब्द (डब्ल्यूओएम) और घटी हुई कीमत चेतना (डीपीसी) पर महत्वपूर्ण प्रभाव पड़ता है। इसके अलावा, पिछले अनुभवजन्य अध्ययन के परिणाम बताते हैं कि ई-डब्ल्यूओएम के सभी पहलुओं का होटल बुकिंग के इरादों पर प्रभाव नहीं पड़ता है और प्रभाव उपयोग आवृत्ति में परिवर्तन के साथ भिन्न होता है।

थीसिस के महत्वपूर्ण सैद्धांतिक और प्रबंधकीय महत्व हैं। इसका उद्देश्य ग्राहक अनुभव के समग्र ढांचे को विकसित करना है। इसका उद्देश्य एक अलग निर्माण के रूप में ग्राहक अनुभव की एक मजबूत समझ विकसित करना है। यह सीएक्स का एक सिद्धांत आधारित ढांचा प्रदान करके सिद्धांत को समृद्ध करता है जो प्रकृति में बहुआयामी है। यह सीएक्स साहित्य को साहित्य की व्यवस्थित समीक्षा और निर्माण जीवन चक्र ढांचे के दायरे में साहित्य का विश्लेषण करके भी बनाता है। इस थीसिस में प्रस्तावित और परीक्षण

किए गए सीएक्स के ड्राइव का उपयोग आतिथ्य प्रबंधकों द्वारा अनुभवों को डिजाइन करने के लिए किया जा सकता है। वे एंटीकेडेंट्स पर ध्यान केंद्रित कर सकते हैं जो अनुभवों पर एक मजबूत प्रभाव डालते हैं और अपने संसाधनों को बुद्धिमानी से चैनल करते हैं।

कुल मिलाकर, यह थीसिस सीएएक्स की अवधारणा को बेहतर ढंग से समझने में शिक्षाविदों और चिकित्सकों दोनों को मार्गदर्शन प्रदान करती है। यह थीसिस सीएएक्स की वैचारिक उन्नति को जोड़ता है और भविष्य के शोधकर्ताओं के लिए क्षेत्र के आगे विकास के लिए एक आधार के रूप में कार्य करता है।

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List of abbreviations

ACV	Attributes, Consequences, Values
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
BFF	Big Five Factor
CAT	Cognitive Appraisal Theory
CR	Composite Reliability
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
CX	Customer Experience
CXPA	Customer Experience Professionals Association
CXM	Customer Experience Management
DPC	Decreased Price Consciousness
DV	Dependent Variable
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
e-WOM	Electronic Word of Mouth
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GX	Guest Experience
H&T	Hospitality & Tourism

IV	Independent Variable
KMO	Kiaser-Meyer-Olkin
MEC	Means End Chain
OR	Online Reviews
PII	Personal Identifying Information
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Square Structure Equation Modeling
SEM	Structure Equation Modeling
WOM	Word of Mouth
WTTC	World Travel and Trade Council